

The New Presence

Prague's Journal of Central European Affairs

Spring 2011

William A. Cohn

Roman Joch

Ivan Malý

Leora Moreno

Pelin Ayan Musil

Vanda Thorne



Democracy Now?

www.new-presence.com

<i>Introduction</i>	2
---------------------------	---

DEMOCRACY NOW?

<i>The Fall of the Last Pharaoh – Omar Kamal</i>	3
<i>Turkish Democracy as a Model for the Middle East? – Pelin Ayan Musil</i>	12
<i>Revolutions from Below – Vanda Thorne</i>	20
<i>Does Social Media Technology Promote Democracy? – Hana Grill</i>	27
<i>Tyranny and Dissent: America's Imperial Contradictions – William A. Cohn</i>	34
<i>Latin America's Democratic Dilemma – Melissa Rossi</i>	46
<i>Political Assassination: Rights, Wrongs and Realpolitik – Paul Morris</i>	55
<i>Israel, Democracy and Delegitimization – Leora Moreno</i>	69
<i>The Need for Political Parties – Miloš Brunclík</i>	75
<i>Equal Voting Rights: Anachronism or Necessity? – Roman Joch</i>	81
<i>The Legitimization of Political Power – Ivan Malý</i>	87
<i>A Declining Civic Democracy, A Crisis of Politics – Pavel Kopecký</i>	93

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

<i>No Papers, No Rights: Migration Detention in the EU – Katrine Hogganvik</i>	97
<i>Censorship, Fidesz, and the Presidency of the EU – Robert Gordon</i>	104

CULTURE

<i>The Resurgence of Turbofolk – Robert Rigney</i>	111
--	-----

INTERVIEW

<i>The End of Bin Laden and the Beginning of the End in Afghanistan: An Interview with Daud Khattak – John Jack Rooney</i>	124
--	-----

Introduction

Democracy

Pronunciation: /dɪ'mɒkrəsi/

- a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives
- a state governed under a system of democracy
- control of an organization or group by the majority of its members
- the practice or principles of social equality

Oxford English Dictionary

The origins of this term can be traced back to ancient Greece; yet it is a recent phenomenon that democracy has become the dominant form of governance across the globe.

The recent revolts and revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East have reminded us of what we, in the Western world, take for granted. This issue of *The New Presence* poses the question, Democracy Now?, with the aim of exploring this region's potential for democratic transformation, and reflecting on the current state of democracy in the Western world.

What we have learned is that democracy across the globe is in peril. Current trends in Europe and the United States show the tempestuous relationship with democracy that even the most democratically indoctrinated nations share.

If these supposed strongholds of democratic ideology are floundering, what hope do aspiring democratic societies have?

The Fall of the Last Pharaoh

Omar Kamal*

On 11 February 2011, Omar Suleiman read one of the shortest, yet most significant speeches in the history of Egypt. In only 32 seconds, the man who had been vice President for only a couple of days declared, in clear and simple words that President Hosni Mubarak had resigned. After 18 days of protests, which grew to an estimate of tens of millions of demonstrators, the man who had been described as the Pharaoh of Egypt had fallen along with his regime.

The uprising that led to Mubarak's fall was organized by the youth of Egypt, which had previously been described as being the worst generation in Egyptian modern history. Thought to have no goals, no principles and to be extremely superficial, the "Facebook Generation" – a term used in Egypt before the revolution to describe the fact that this new generation cared solely for fun and entertainment illustrated by Facebook – gave no hope for the future in the eyes of the older generations. Yet, it was this generation, which was born and raised under the rule of Mubarak, that would trigger the end of his three decade long reign.

In order to understand the reasons behind this historical uprising, one must understand the way Mubarak's regime functioned, its performance in different areas, and the mistakes it committed that inevitably led to its final fall.

* Omar Kamal is an Egyptian national. He has a MA in International Relations and Diplomacy, and is a political commentator and analyst living in Prague, Czech Republic.

DEMOCRACY NOW? / TNP SPRING 2011

After the assassination of Anwar Sadat in October 1981, Mubarak, who was vice President at that time, assumed power as the new President of Egypt and as the head of the National Democratic Party (NDP) that had been ruling Egypt ever since its creation in 1978 by Sadat. As the Constitution stated at that time, Mubarak obtained the necessary two thirds of the votes of the People's Assembly – the lower chamber of the Egyptian parliament – and then succeeded in the following referendum, thus becoming the fourth President of Egypt.

The beginning of Mubarak's rule seemed promising. He started by liberating the political prisoners that had been incarcerated by Sadat in his last years. He negotiated the final withdrawal of all Israeli troops from the Egyptian territories they had invaded in 1967. He also succeeded in re-integrating Egypt into the Arab League after its membership had been suspended due to the ratification of the peace treaty with Israel. Even the economy seemed to be promising and many said that Egypt would soon feel the benefits of the open and free market that had been initiated by Sadat and continued under Mubarak. However, despite all of these good omens, things turned grim very quickly, worsening to the point that during the last decade at least, a large majority of Egyptians would



Election portrait of Hosni Mubarak. Courtesy of Papillus. Creative Commons.

describe Mubarak as the worst ruler in the country's modern history.

As the mandates of Mubarak were repeatedly renewed and the NDP's power continued to increase, the members of the party and Mubarak's entourage gradually gained a political stronghold. This monopoly over political and economic life opened the door to unprecedented levels of corruption to the point that even issuing a driving license required paying a bribe or calling a "friend." The regime turned a blind eye to all unethical and irregular behaviors. Deals were brokered behind the scenes to double the wealth of those in power. Laws were passed by the NDP-controlled parliament to maintain the monopoly of the party and Mubarak over all aspects of life in Egypt.

Protecting this system were two major elements: the emergency laws and the large police force. The emergency laws had been in force in Egypt since the time of Sadat, and despite many demands to eradicate them, the regime turned a deaf ear and continued their renewal, citing threats to the national security. In practice, these laws were used against forms of opposition, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, and until late against many bloggers as well. Under these laws, expressing one's opinion or taking any action on the streets could be found to be a threat to the national security, and lead to incarceration, often without trial.

Hand in hand with the application of the emergency laws came the vast police force that was estimated to be comprised of approximately 1.5 million soldiers. Within this police force, one bureau was aimed specifically at squelching all opposition and political movements: the State Security Bureau, or *Amn Al Dawla* in Arabic. It is said that this bureau had files on every citizen who could be a potential risk for the state's security. The bureau also recorded phone calls, filmed the bedrooms of those deemed as a threat (with the intent to use the private videos against them if needed), and tortured, raped and killed many, both men and women.

DEMOCRACY NOW? / TNP SPRING 2011

With these two elements, the regime succeeded in paralyzing the opposition to a very large extent, and maintaining its hold over power by using its steel arm of repression and fear. This ultimately let political and economic corruptions mount to a level which continues to surprise the Egyptian people, even after the regime's collapse.

The Egyptian economy performed well in the last decade, with an economic growth varying between 4 and 6 percent every year. Foreign investments flowed into the country, large businesses were prospering and trade was doing well. However, these positive indicators failed to impact the lives of average Egyptians. On the contrary, everyday life in Egypt grew more and more difficult, leading many to be convinced that the regime's only concern were big businessmen and the accumulation of an enormous wealth, among the Egyptian elite.

Despite this economic growth, poverty in Egypt continued to grow as the percentage of people living under the poverty line passed from 16.7 percent in 2000 to 22 percent in 2008 (World Bank Data). Unemployment also increased in recent years, reaching 9.4 percent in 2009 according to the World Bank. In addition to this came an extreme inflation to the prices of basic products during the last three to four years, while salaries remained the same. During the last couple of years, private Egyptian newspapers reported daily on the rising prices of vegetables, meat and bread, while Egyptian state owned papers continued to talk about the economic growth and the major development projects of the government. Poor neighborhoods were deprived in many cases of basic services such as water and electricity in order to feed the needs of the wealthy neighborhoods of the country.

The public's anger and frustration with Mubarak's regime and its corruption, which was draining out all the benefits of the economic growth, increased more and more. Protests and strikes had spread throughout the country starting in 2005, demanding the end of all forms of corruption, a control over inflation, an equal distribution of

wealth and changes in the social and economic spheres of the country. As those protests continued to be small in number, the regime ignored them, hoping that this “freedom of expression” would dissuade the people from rising against the regime. However, when in 2010 the NDP won over 92 percent of the seats in parliament, the clock to the revolution started counting down, leading to the inevitable collapse of Mubarak’s regime, his State Security Bureau, his entourage and his ruling party, the NDP.

The Egyptian revolution was seen positively in many parts of the globe and received great international media attention. However, after the resignation of Mubarak and the passing of power to the Military Council, many questions arose regarding the role of the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamist movements in the future of Egypt, the



A young man carrying a card during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution in El Tahrir Square saying "Protesting Until Mubarak Resigns." Photo courtesy of Essam Sharaf. Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike.

role that the army would play, and how effective the “secular” parties could be in the Egyptian political scene. It is of course very difficult to predict how exactly events will unfold in Egypt, as everyday brings additional surprises and unexpected situations. Nevertheless, at least for the three groups mentioned above, one could attempt to predict the roles they will play in the future of the country and how they too might change with time.

Analysts had always viewed the Muslim Brotherhood as the only organized opposition in Egypt, and therefore, the only group that could lead the country after the fall of the regime. The regime had used the Muslim Brotherhood on numerous occasions to scare the West, non-Muslim minorities in the country and the secular parties, claiming that if Mubarak’s regime fell from power, the Muslim Brotherhood would put in place an Iranian style regime. Many are now reevaluating these two beliefs about the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist movements, as recent events have shed new light on the subject. Recent developments have shown that the Islamist movements in Egypt are quite divided. The country today has at least three groups of Islamists. The most recent movement to appear on the Egyptian political scene is the fundamentalist Salafi movement, which has no experience in politics and a limited popular base, however their capacity to act, their extremist ideology, their violent actions and their lack of experience in politics makes them a major concern on the Egyptian scene today. Recent events ranging from protests against the killing of Bin Laden, the take over of certain mosques by force, and several violent actions claimed to be done by Salafi movements, have led many to harshly criticize the group.

Another important group within the Islamist political scene in Egypt is the Wasat party, which accepts the modern form of state, and the equality for all and so presents itself as an equivalent force to the Christian Democrats of Europe. This party has succeeded in the last months to gain sympathy on the Egyptian scene,

mainly because of its moderate and modern views. Last, but certainly not least, comes the Muslim Brotherhood which are themselves divided between the more conservative leaders and the more liberal youth, making it difficult to define their ideological orientation, especially when different and sometimes contradictory statements come out of the movement. Recently, the movement has taken a step forward in its organization by declaring the establishment of its official “secular” party called the Freedom and Justice Party. It claims to be inspired by the recent Turkish experience with the Justice and Development Party that has been in power in Turkey since 2003. The movement claimed that the new party is financially, administratively and politically separated from the Muslim Brotherhood, despite the fact that its leaders were chosen from within the movement. This decision was strongly criticized by the youth within the Muslim Brotherhood and other parties on the scene. This split of the Islamist movement has led to a division among their supporters, especially those of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is now facing a conflict from within. As the days pass by, these divisions could lead to the failure of some of these movements especially when it comes to organizing the upcoming electoral campaigns.

When the military was handed power after Mubarak’s resignation, many feared a return to the events of 1952 when the army took power to reform the country and then remained in power only with civil outfits. However, the army has issued numerous statements clarifying that they do not intend to remain in power and that they wish to pass it on to a civil authority as soon as possible. In order to do so, the army organized a referendum on the constitutional amendments and has declared that parliamentary elections be organized in September 2011, followed a few months later by Presidential elections. This insistence on passing power to a civil government is so strong that it has led many politicians to ask the Military Council to take more time to prepare the political scene for the upcoming elections, but without success. Many parties fear that without the needed time to prepare

themselves for elections, after 30 years of oppression, the results of the elections would bring a parliament dominated by two main groups: The Muslim Brotherhood, being the most organized movement on the scene today, and the ex-members of the NDP who have the financial means and notoriety, especially in rural areas, to gain much of the votes.

However, the results of the referendum finalized this debate when the results came with a majority having agreed to the constitutional amendments, and thus accepted the road map proposed by the army, thus forcing the parties to prepare themselves for elections in September. It is possible to expect that once the army is out of power, their role will be redefined to a protector of the state and post-revolutionary values – to ensure that no person or party will monopolize power again, and more importantly, that the country will not fall into a Khomeini style regime (Khomeini took control of Iran in 1979 after a popular revolution against the Shah, the monarch of the country, and put in place the Islamic regime that is still in existence in Iran today). With its strong secular orientation, its close ties to the West, and its positive reputation among the Egyptian people, it is expected that the Egyptian army will ensure that the modern, civil and secular regime that the protesters called for in Tahrir square will come to be. Such a role will probably be played from behind the scenes once a new parliament and President are elected.

As for the secular political parties, it is difficult to predict what their future will be in the country. Today, these parties are divided into two groups: those that existed before the revolution and those that arose afterwards. The secular parties that existed before the revolution now face a dilemma due to their previous failures in bringing about change during the last three decades, and the fact that their leadership does not include any of the faces or names that shaped the events at Tahrir square. As for the new secular parties that have come out of Tahrir square itself, they face an equally difficult situation, that they are not ready or organized enough to enter into elections

in an effective manner. The effervescence of the political scene today in Egypt is unprecedented since the overthrow of the monarchy in 1952. New political parties continue to be formed and preparations for the elections are on the go at high speed in order to ensure a parliament that reflects the significant political diversity in Egypt. This effervescence and constant changes on the political scene will be visible in the upcoming parliamentary elections and during the years that will follow. A natural political selection and filtering will take place, leaving the weaker parties out to fall into oblivion, and only the more organized and effective parties to succeed, survive and become an integral part of Egyptian political life. It is this goal that all political parties today, especially the secular parties, aim to reach in order to survive the upcoming elections.

There is no doubt that the Egyptian revolution of 2011 has changed the history of the country and the region as a whole. It brought down a corrupt, brutal and authoritarian regime and inspired many that positive change is possible. The difficulties that the Egyptian youth faced during the protests – police brutality, killing and difficult conditions – are incomparable to the difficulties the country faces in this delicate and crucial period of building a new regime. Between the rising fears of the fundamentalists, the concern for security in the country and significant economic slow down, Egypt needs time to regain its previous safety and stability, while maintaining the gains of the revolution. As the days pass, Egypt will continue to surprise us and prove that Egyptian society and politics are far more complex than one would imagine. One can only wait and observe as a new page of history is written.

Turkish Democracy as a Model for the Middle East?

Pelin Ayan Musil *

Following the uprisings in the Middle East, we observe the visibility of a new phrase that dominates the discourse of the media nowadays: “Turkish democracy as a model for the Middle East” or more briefly, the “Turkish model.” Yet, what is actually meant by this concept? What does it constitute?

This article attempts to deconstruct the meaning of the “Turkish model” and show where it stands in the debate regarding Islam’s compatibility with democracy. In this respect, the article first overviews the determinants of democratization, and the role Islamic values play in this process. Then, it evaluates the concept of the ‘Turkish model’ in two steps: First, it shows the implicit bias in the media against the essence

of Islam in discussing the ‘model,’ and second, by questioning to what extent the Turkish experience in interpreting Islam can be a model. Finally, it concludes that one should be aware of the shortcomings of the Turkish experience before considering it as a model since it is full of unresolved internal tensions in the practice of religion and democracy.



Turkish Flag. Courtesy of Tomas Maltby.

* Dr. Pelin Ayan Musil is a lecturer at the School of International Relations and Diplomacy at Anglo-American University. Her research mainly includes democratization, party structures and Turkish politics.

Religious Attitudes and Democratization

As the revolts against the authoritarian regimes in the Middle East spread from Tunisia to Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Jordan and Yemen, their intensity continues to mount. Scholars of politics, the media and policy experts have posed the question more often: ‘*Is democracy possible in the Middle East?*’ Attention was given to re-evaluating the conditions that were deemed sufficient to expect such an institutional change in each country. The conditions that bring transition to democracy are usually found in economic, political and attitudinal orientations in a regime. For instance, just prior to the revolts in Egypt, the country went through a process of liberalization, in which the economy expanded about seven percent a year and the country became more connected with the world through new communication technologies. The change in structure brought transformations and new demands in the economic sphere, which the authoritarian regime failed to meet.¹ On the other hand, experts pointed to the fact that the political culture in Egypt for long undermined the development of a strong civil society; shutting down the media, bribing judges, jailing politicians and undermining intellectual life. Thus, unlike the advantageous economic conditions for democratization, Egypt has yet to liberalize politically, and suffers from a weak civil society.

The third and more widely disputed attitudinal dimension has focused on whether the values and attitudes derived from Islam meet the needs of democratic development in each Arab country. To what extent is Muslim culture supporting democratic values? In other words, is *Islam compatible with democracy* in the first place? The distinction between two opposing views is important in this regard. The essentialist view asserts that:

¹ Fareed Zakaria, “How Democracy can Work in the Middle East” *Time Magazine*, 3 February 2011

Whereas democracy requires openness, competition, pluralism, and tolerance of diversity, Islam ... encourages intellectual conformity and an uncritical acceptance of authority. Equally important, Islam is said to be antidemocratic because it vests sovereignty in God, who is the sole source of political authority and from whose divine law must come all regulations governing the community of believers.²

Still, many others reject the suggestion that Islam is an enemy in the struggle for democratic government. In fact, some empirical evidence from the Arab world – long before the revolts – challenge the essentialist view: According to the research conducted in 1988 in Egypt, Morocco, Palestine and Algeria, it is found that while religious orientations bear a statistically significant relationship to democratic values only in 5 of 22 instances, this relationship is, in fact, statistically not very strong.³ On the contrary, it shows that support for democracy is not necessarily lower among those individuals with the strongest Islamic attachments.

Hence, according to this opposite view, it cannot be the essence of Islam, but the forces of history and its interpretation that accounts for the absence of democratic governance in much of the Arab world.⁴

Media Debate on the ‘Turkish Model’

Within this ongoing debate on Islam and democracy, Turkey is often cited as a *model country* for the Arab world, as a result of being a Muslim country with successful experience in popular democracy. Yet, what is actually meant by this

² Mark Tessler, “Islam and Democracy in the Middle East” *Comparative Politics* Vol. 34, No. 3 (April, 2002)

³ Ibid.

⁴ Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (CSID), *Muslim Democrat* Vol. 2, No.3 (Nov. 2000) Washington DC

model is often taken for granted. In fact, the way it has been presented in the media implicitly affirms the essentialist view to Islam as it reduces the problem of democratization in the Middle East to religion. During the revolts in Egypt, for instance, we have observed that the media particularly focused on the success of the Turkish model in merging Islam with democracy. It was possible to read excerpts that resemble the one below:

Despite all its shortcomings, Turkish democracy is a unique inspiration for the Middle East. Turkey has successfully melded its Muslim population with an officially secular and working democracy. If Turkey has been able to maintain its religious and secular identity within a pluralist democracy — and the republic's 80-year experience is one of success — then, leave alone Egypt and Iran too, will one day approach the Turkish model.⁵

Yet, such statements are essentialist in a significant way. It indirectly supports the opinion that Islam is a barrier that needs to be overcome in demo-



Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and first president of the Republic of Turkey at the first parliament building. Image in the public domain.

⁵ The statement in original belongs to Eyup Can Saglik, editor-in-chief of the Turkish *Radikal* Newspaper, which was also quoted in *Time Magazine*, 'A Model of Middle East Democracy, Turkey Calls for Change in Egypt' by Pelin Turgut, Feb. 2, 2011.

cratization efforts and that is what Turkey has managed to do. It simplifies the democracy problem of the Arab world by downgrading the causes of authoritarianism to Islam and neglects the economic and political aspects, which have caused a major block against the liberalization of these regimes. On the contrary, the revolts in the Middle East are not merely based on attitudinal changes, but rather largely stem from social and economic unrest, that have led to political uprisings against the authoritarian leaders. The focus on the 'Turkish model' in the media, thus, disregards the merits of the revolts and distorts the message that one should take from the Arab world.

The Turkish Experience in Religion and Democracy

It is surprising that an analysis of the Turkish experience in religion and democracy is also neglected in the 'model' debate. Islam was long interpreted in an authoritarian way not only by the political parties (i.e. the Welfare and Virtue Party) but also by the bureaucratic state elite such as the military and judiciary in Turkey. In fact, the vestiges of this authoritarian interpretation are still the cause for the most severe problems in Turkish democracy such as the polarization between the secular and religious segments of the society.

Following the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, modern state institutions copied from the Western models replaced the old state apparatus. A new elite following the Kemalist principles and led by the Republican People's Party (RPP) at that time controlled critical positions of the state, one of whose policy agenda was *secularization*. Secularization meant changing, for the first time in the history of Islam, the source of legitimacy and the basis of the sovereignty of state power from religion to nation.⁶ The state has openly and publicly controlled Islam

⁶ Hakan Yavuz, "Islam, Sovereignty and Democracy: A Turkish View" *Middle East Journal* Vol. 61, No.3 (Summer 2007)

through its State Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) under the supervision of the Prime Minister. Today, the DRA is still responsible for nominating religious officials, including Imams and muezzins, as well as controlling Islamic religious education and training.

In this respect, as political analyst and professor Hakan Yavuz argues, the function of the DRA is equivalent of a church, in which the state's monopolization of religious instruction acts as an effective check against the formation of an autonomous religious intelligentsia which would produce a political ideology out of Islam.⁷ Yet, while the strict separation of religion from political affairs is reasonable and required, what is problematic is the question of whether the state goes too far in the complete sublimation of Islam in society. In this sense, probably the most severe state intervention in religious affairs was observed when the 1980 military coup triggered the expansion of state-run religious services, the introduction of religious education as a compulsory subject in public schools as well as the use of the DRA for the promotion of national solidarity and integration.

For the sake of controlling religion to establish a secular regime, the over-expansion of the state over religious matters may trigger polarization in the society as the Turkish case clearly presents. Perhaps, an important indicator, today, is still the ongoing debate regarding women's headscarves in Turkey. While the seculars perceive the headscarf as a threat to Turkish identity that should supersede all other affiliations in the public realm, the religious segments and the current party in government, the Justice and Development Party (JDP) perceive it as a part of the cultural Muslim identity. Until recently, the jurisprudence of high courts and of the Constitutional Court in Turkey has promoted a republican vision of secularism, aiming to regulate and limit the visibility of religion in the public sphere.⁸ Yet, the

⁷ Yavuz, "Islam, Sovereignty and Democracy: A Turkish View."

⁸ Amelie Barras, "A rights-based discourse to contest the boundaries of state secularism? The case of the headscarf bans in France and Turkey" *Democratization* Vol. 16, No. 6 (Dec. 2009)

recent constitutional amendments in 2010 introduced by the JDP and accepted by popular vote, have brought a different structure of the judiciary that might favor the latter view on headscarf in the future. What remains, still, is an increase in polarization and hostility between the government and seculars in Turkey, and it poses one of the biggest challenges to Turkish democracy today.

To put it in a nutshell, the ‘Turkish model’ of interpreting Islam in a system of democracy contains unresolved internal tensions, which makes it questionable to what extent it can provide a successful example to Arab countries (i.e. the question of the degree of state control over the religion). A democratic interpretation of Islam and all religions, yet, is the one that builds a system that aims to liberate the mind from any external impositions, either *for* or *against* religion. In other words, it is to build the practice of separating religion and state so that state remains a neutral institution and Islam - as well as other religions - is not corrupted by modern politics.

Conclusion

There is no scholarly agreement on the debate whether Islam is compatible with democracy. However the criticisms on the essentialist view on Islam provide important evidence that it is not the religion, but rather how it is interpreted that matters for the democratic development of a country. A democratic interpretation of any religion - including Islam - requires that religion should not have any authority over public affairs and that the state should be kept neutral in religious matters. Yet, Islam has, for long, been a part of the political and public life in the Middle Eastern countries, which undermined any possibility of its democratic interpretation.

Even though Turkey is often cited as a ‘model’ for the Arab world due to its Muslim society and a functioning electoral democracy, this article has argued that this model

contains a major internal tension. The Turkish experience with the excessive degree of state control over religion, in fact, is closer to an authoritarian interpretation of Islam. Even though the recent constitutional amendments signal that if the termination of such an interpretation is a possibility, it has not been tested in time yet. Thus, we must first question the dilemmas and shortcomings of the Turkish experience before proposing it as a model for another Muslim country.

In addition to the problem within the very substance of the concept of ‘Turkish model’, this article has also argued that the way it is presented to the public by the media is problematic. By focusing on the Turkish model, the media should not shift the focus to the debate on Islam and democracy since the causes of the revolts are mainly grounded in economic and social unrest. One should question, for instance, why isn’t it the democratic transition of a country having faced similar economic concerns, but especially a Muslim country’s transition that dominates the media discourse? Alternatively, why isn’t it the experience of a Christian country in interpreting religion that has received attention in the democratization debate of these countries?

Nevertheless, if the ‘model’ maintains its popularity and is discussed more often in the future, we can hope that the shortcomings of the ‘model’ will be equally known to public opinion, most importantly comparing it to other possible models in interpreting the role of religion (not necessarily Islam) in democratization.

Revolutions from Below: The Arab Revolts vs. the End of Communism

Vanda Thorne*

The peaceful mass rallies in Cairo's Tahrir Square this winter, which ended the 30-year reign of Hosni Mubarak, created imagery and emotions comparable only to the euphoria that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall and subsequent collapse of European communism. As the revolutions initiated and sustained from below continue to spread through North Africa and the Middle East, many have suggested a direct connection to the events in Central and Eastern Europe at the end of 1989. While these two revolutionary waves do share some striking similarities, there are also numerous subtle, yet important, differences that will have far-reaching consequences on both the nature of the on-going revolts and their aftermath.

The revolutions now occurring in the Arab world and those that preceded the overthrow of communist rule in Europe are characterized by unprecedented mass participation. The masses in both the Arab and communist revolts spontaneously came together to expose the weaknesses and contradictions of their governing regimes through public protests. This eventually led to further involvement of an even wider spectrum of society, creating, if only for a brief period of time, the vision of democracy actively achieved through publicly shared interpersonal

* Vanda Thorne teaches sociology at New York University in Prague and Charles University. Her research focuses on the themes of mass mentality, social movements, and collective civil action in totalitarian and post-totalitarian regimes.

communication. Such powerful moments of uncensored rational-critical debates of different groups of participants create an open social space reminiscent of the concept of the public sphere developed by a German sociologist Jurgen Habermas. For a fleeting moment, we witness an ideal society, in which the public discussions of previously politically passive people now have direct political consequences, as debates of citizens on the streets directly affect decisions at the highest political and governmental level. This unique environment disappears as soon as the traditional forms of democracy assume place and the masses elect their political representatives, thereby voluntarily reducing their participation in governing their country. Nevertheless, the temporary involvement of the public in rebuilding the political system from below is an extremely unifying and empowering social experience that characterizes both the Arab and the communist revolutions.

At the same time, these two revolts, set a generation apart, also differ in many respects. The Arab uprisings utilize entirely new means of mass communication, with the crowds summoned via Facebook and Twitter. They are also closely tied to Islam, and strive for a version of democracy that the West may find hard to accommodate. Unlike in Central and Eastern Europe, there is no democratic precedent to return to in the Arab countries experiencing the revolution. Finally, the role of the still powerful dictators, especially Muammar Gaddafi, will also be one of the decisive factors in these revolutions. Rulers like Gaddafi are still able and willing to use the most extreme measures to keep the revolting population at bay. Conversely, in the cases of the communist Central and Eastern European regimes, with the exception of Ceausescu's Romania, the public lost their fear of, and respect for, their leaders long before the revolutions even began.

When the wave of revolutions swept through Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, the speed and extent of the transformations were two of their crucial aspects. Within a matter of days in former Czechoslovakia, weeks in Bulgaria, and months in East

Germany, the previously untouchable governments stepped down. Communist heads of state made way for the former dissidents or newly-formed opposition group's



Tahrir Square in Cairo. Photo courtesy of Mariam Soliman.
Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike.

leaders without the revolutions coming to violence. It seemed that the cynically obedient communist masses from the early 1980s finally broke away from their assigned roles in society and began to act spontaneously, even unpredictably. The crowds of protesters assembled impulsively in

unapproved locations. People stopped using empty ideological phrases and began to voice their demands publicly. The active involvement of average citizens in these protests was an incredible change from their previous complacency. They were suddenly willing to risk their livelihood, if not their lives, for greater goals.

The current Arab revolutions are also characterized by incredibly swift and dramatic changes initiated from below. Within two months, the Tunisian political scene transformed from having one party, to more than thirty. In Egypt, President Mubarak was forced to step down from his office after a series of massive protests organized by mostly young people who successfully used the modern technologies of social networking to organize themselves. The element of social networking in the Egyptian revolution testifies to a powerful emergence of completely new and potentially uncontrollable social spaces that span across the globe and can reach even the seemingly powerless. The use of an initially social virtual space for

political and ideological purposes is the most crucial difference between the revolutions in 1989 and now, and it is not just a technological one. It implies a different format of mass communication and action that, with the use of advanced technology, transforms mostly apolitical private social networking into public political activity. Arguably, the revolts of 1989 worked the other way round, with the dissident groups and other nascent civic activities forming primarily around political and philosophical goals that would be later combined with broader social issues and culminate in revolutions that became equally intensive political and social events.

The type of democracy that the North African and Middle Eastern public wants is not the same as the one demanded by the crowds in 1989 Central and Eastern Europe. Central and Eastern Europeans living under communism in the late 1980s had a lot in common. They shared similarly unified lifestyles and problems related to them. They lived in forcefully homogenized societies where previous ethnic, social and cultural diversity had been forcefully suppressed. With the exception of Poland, where the Catholic Church maintained a strong presence, most other communist governments of the former Eastern Bloc (e.g., Czechoslovakia, Soviet Union, Albania) persecuted religious followers, and often turned religious institutions into state-run organizations. Their centrally directed economies were collapsing as the governments desperately tried to appease the frustrated citizens with a wide safety net of social security, guaranteed employment and subsidized goods. These societies struggled under the stifling supervision of the Party planners. Yet underneath the surface of official culture, burgeoning civic communities slowly gained strength, and people were becoming increasingly vocal about problems such as environmental damage, missile deployment and human rights. The main demands of the revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe therefore focused on restoring democracy and basic human rights alongside the return to functioning market economies.

In contrast, the nations of North Africa are culturally, socially and ethnically diversified. Many of them have never experienced democracy as the West defines it. Tribal relationships still play a significant role alongside Islam, which remains a central authority in these societies, with its influence often surpassing the highest state institutions and representatives. While the newly emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe welcomed reinstated religious institutions as a natural part of their societies, they also placed them outside of the state, insisting on the necessity to separate the two. This is not the case of the Muslim countries in North Africa. As many predict, Islam will play a decisive role in both the revolts and their aftermath. As a result, the social significance of independently formed civic communities in the Arab world has to be interpreted within the intertwined state-religion-society framework. Such development is quite distinct from the events in Central and Eastern Europe, but that does not imply that it is an impossible form of coexistence. The West must allow the Arab countries to negotiate their own versions of democracies, because its democratic model is not strictly applicable to the Arab world. Islamic democracies must address questions like women's rights or political pluralism, but the West needs to accept that they will do so only within the context of their own transformation of the relationship between religion and society.

Finally, extending the participation in the Arab revolts from students, frustrated young workers and the angry unemployed to the wider population, as it happened in Central and Eastern Europe, remains the crucial condition for these revolutions to keep their momentum. It is essential that the protesters represent a broad social spectrum of citizens. This is particularly questionable in Libya, where the situation might still become reduced to a clash between narrowly defined rebel groups and Gaddafi, with the fearful masses standing on the sidelines awaiting the outcome. Thousands of Libyans trample on Gaddafi's portraits, and refuse to gather in central squares to show support for him. Yet vast numbers of ordinary Libyans still fear they have too much to lose by joining either side. They are angry, but also cautious.

DEMOCRACY NOW? / TNP SPRING 2011

They complain, but only in private. Gaddafi boasts that the West has neither the mandate nor the will to actually “put boots on the ground”, which gives him the feeling of invincibility and makes the outcome in Libya unpredictable. The latest massacres of civilians by pro-Gaddafi forces are clearly meant to intimidate those who might be reconsidering their allegiance to the regime.

Similarly to Stalin, Colonel Gaddafi boasts that all Libyan people are dedicated to him and prepared to die for his cause. This is directly in line with communist propaganda claims of unanimous support from the masses. The Libyan masses fake genuine support for their ostensibly beloved leader and few dare to contest this blatant lie publicly. True supporters are not necessary to Gaddafi, as they were not to the communist dictators; what matters is a public show of love for the regime. Gaddafi argues that without his supervision, society becomes uncontrollable – just look at the rebel groups, the “uncivilized hordes” that align themselves with the West and plot to ruin Libya. Gaddafi claims that he stands as the last bulwark against the chaos the rebels would unleash. His rhetoric echoes the traditional crowd rule theories of the end of the 19th century, in which authors like Gustave le Bon depicted the masses as brutal, impulsive and irritable, even bordering on the criminal. Le Bon, similarly as Friedrich Nietzsche, argued that the only way to contain the masses is through the iron fist of a strong leader. Yet the 20th Century governments most closely associated with this maxim were the totalitarian regimes in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.



The Velvet Revolution in 1989, Prague and the 2011 revolution in Tahrir Square, Cairo. Images courtesy of Piercetp and Ramy Raoof (Creative Commons Attribution 2.0)

Gaddafi publicly follows the same logic, claiming he is only restoring the necessary order and thus, in fact, protecting the public. But he is faced with increasingly unruly citizens. With more and more people violating the established symbolic representations of the regime (burning the Libyan flags, trampling on Gaddafi's portraits), and crossing the imposed distances (rioting, storming of armories), it will become nearly impossible to maintain this premise. Initially, Gaddafi tried desperately to restore at least the visual semblance of order – after hiring mercenaries to kill innocent citizens, he then ordered the cities be cleaned of bodies and other “mess” to create the impression that nothing outside the ordinary had happened. Eventually, overwhelmed with the scale of the protests, he resorted to more direct forms of attacking his opponents, crimes too great to hide, and perhaps he no longer cares about world opinion.

In Libya, the masses are still being forcefully disbanded and isolated in the essence of the totalitarian condition. But their situation is not hopeless; the recent developments suggest that in some parts of the country, the seemingly unruly crowds are increasingly in charge. Writing about confrontations between the powerless and the powerful, a Yale professor of political science James C. Scott noted that the dominated masses are never completely helpless – relations of domination are also relations of resistance. Every ruler, however powerful, has to count on what Scott describes as considerable friction coming from the oppressed masses. Once an ideologically engaged society publicly exposes tyrants through direct but non-violent confrontation, the formerly oppressed citizens regain their confidence for mass resistance. Thus, what might have seemed unthinkable until just a few months ago – the overthrow of Arab autocracies by collective pressure – is happening, and it is just as unexpected and fascinating as the revolutions of 1989.

Does Social Media Technology Promote Democracy?

Hana Grill*

Today, there are more than 70,000,000 videos on YouTube, over 113,000,000 blogs, more than 29,700,500,268 Tweets on Twitter since its launch in 2006, and more than 200,000,000 active Facebook users, 100,000,000 of which log onto Facebook at least once a day. There is no denying the growing power and potential of social media, which since its creation has never experienced a decline in contribution. Whether it is networking, live streams, blogging or Wikipedia, social media has taken hold of today's society and does not seem to be letting go any time soon. Some question the benefits of this new form of participation and communication.

Although there exists a great temptation to believe these technologies promote democracy, technology is only a means of communication, and the true promoters of democracy are those that use the tools of communication available to them to spread democracy. Social media and the Internet have facilitated the spread of information, which can be powerful. However, due to its shortcomings and focus on profits, social media cannot act as a true promoter of democracy because it lacks transparency and any safeguard of the quality and message of content.

* Hana Grill is an Australian Business Administration student graduating from Empire State College and the University of New York in Prague.

Social Media as a Means of Communication

Promoters of social media have praised the Internet for its ability to promote direct democracy; we are ever more linked to our political representatives, through Twitter, Facebook and other social networking sites than ever before. However, these communication mediums do not change a non-political individual's level of political participation per se. The recent protests in Egypt for example were organized through Facebook and transmitted to the world via YouTube; however, if the desire for change did not exist in the minds of the citizens of Egypt in the first place, the call for these protests either would not have been made or not have been heeded. Revolutions in the past have occurred due to a desire of a significant proportion of the population for social change, not due to the mode of communication used to organize these revolutions. This distinction notwithstanding, the demonstrations in Egypt were greatly facilitated by the rapid mass communication made available through Facebook.

Prone to Manipulation

Social media is susceptible to manipulation, censorship and abuse for propaganda purposes like all other forms of communication. Only if the people accessing the social media on iPhones, BlackBerrys and laptops believe in democracy, and actively seek it, then social media technology can be a medium of exchange for democratic ideas between those who are active participants.

Despite its shortcomings, social media technology does promote democracy because it enables a democratic message to be spread. It gives a voice to those previously silenced by more traditional communication mediums and it connects people around the world to spread a message of democracy and the notion of self rule that it carries, to the remote points in the world. Social media and the Internet are an

additional means for people to pressure governments; nevertheless, laptop activism will not promote real change. By voicing their opinions, those with access to the Internet can add pressure on governments, but without truly taking part and being involved in active participatory citizenship, no real changes can be made. Real improvements in democracy can only come about when the citizens themselves get out of their homes and participate. Web pages can show opinion, however simply clicking “like” on a Facebook page promoting democratic change, will not result in change unless there are true activists behind the campaigns doing more.

Time magazine recently selected its 100 most influential people for the year. Amongst those profiled was Wael Ghonim, a 30-year-old Google executive who helped lead the Egyptian revolution in early 2011. As described by ElBaradei in the piece, “Over the past few years, Wael, 30, began working outside the box to make his peers understand that only their unstoppable people power could effect real change. He quickly grasped that social media, notably Facebook, were emerging as the most powerful communication tools to mobilize and develop ideas.”

In some parts of the world social media and the Internet have helped to reduce government censorship by allowing unfiltered messages to be spread. Looking at the Egyptian revolts, online means were used to organize rallies. Unfortunately, in a number of other countries - with China being a well-known example - government censorship of the web is still an all-powerful force, with the invention and subsequent use of high-tech Internet control and monitoring systems such as the “Great Firewall of China.” People in countries such as Vietnam and China, whose autocrats use these sophisticated censorship tools, have little idea about what information is being withheld from them, as the governments work hard to create the illusion that they are accessing uncensored information. For example, in China, during the recent upheaval of the political regime in Egypt, all links to the word “Egypt” in search engines were blocked. If the fear that social media sites instill on

autocratic regimes is an indication of the growing power of these sites, the tables may turn in favor of “Facebook” revolutions backed by physical political activism.

It is also easier for governments to track political dissidents when they use public online social networking sites instead of traditional private meetings. In a number of countries many dissidents have been arrested due to their online campaigning. This again speaks to the growing power of social media in regard to its ability to connect with and communicate to a large number of people.

According to the *Economist* magazine, the governments of Iran, Vietnam and China have effectively made it very difficult for global social networking sites to become popular in their countries due to their actions to restrict easy access to these sites using firewalls. These three countries have developed their own state-condoned versions of these sites. These are strictly censored and controlled and employ large numbers of people to monitor their content. In Iran the dominant social media site is called Cloob, in China it is Qzone and in Vietnam, Zing, whereas the dominant site in the rest of the world, excluding Russia, is Facebook.

Dispersing Information, Not Reasoning Skills

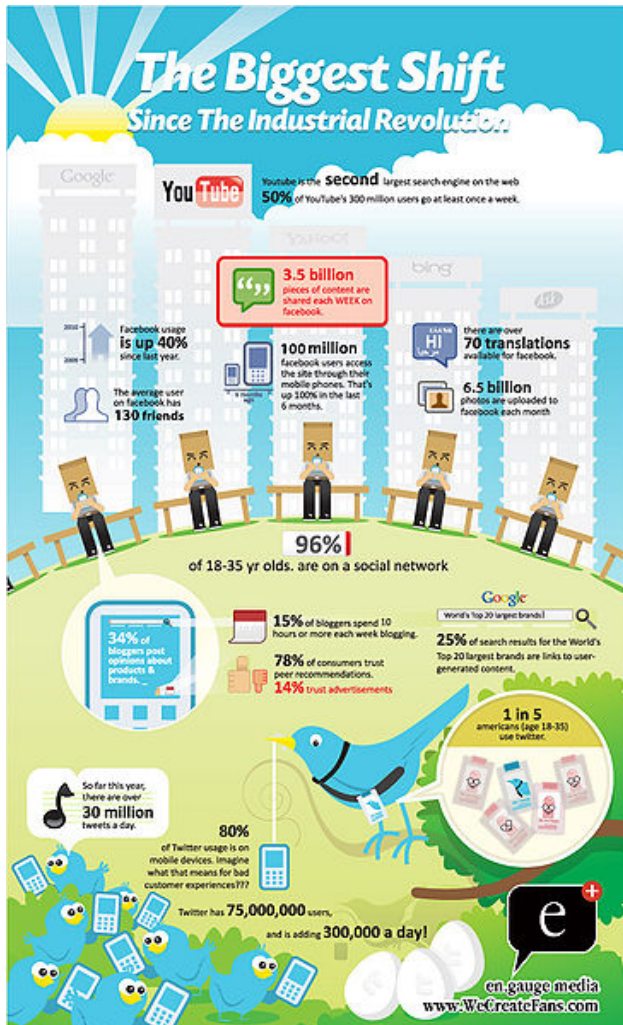
It is believed that social media and the Internet allow a dispersal of information that deters corruption and promotes transparency. Cass R. Sunstein, who is the head of the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs was quoted saying that “the Web makes virtually unlimited amounts of information available” and “that a vigorous exchange of information is critical to the democratic process.” Both these claims are true, but nevertheless not all information carries the same truth-value. The Internet provides more information but it does not make necessarily allow the public to interpret it. Massimo Pigliucci argued in *The Prague Post* that even though we

live in an era in which information is constantly available, we are overloaded, and lack the basic skills to reflect on the information we have access to.

An untrue story on a social media site, for example, of a government-supported beating of civilians, can be highly effective in swaying opinions but it does not bring the citizens closer to the truth. The political messages and information on social

media sites are only as truthful and transparent as the individuals who create them.

We cannot forget that social media can be used to promote undemocratic ideas as well. Gabriel Weimann explores this issue in his journal article “Terror on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.” According to his studies, terrorist groups are using social media and other forms of Internet communication more and more, as they allow for a wide distribution and almost complete anonymity, in order to spread propaganda about their plight. Sites such as Facebook also provide little to no deterrent to terrorists and other anti-



Infographic on how social media is used, and its impact. Infographic courtesy of Mentionablehonor. Creative Commons.

democratic groups to handpick potential recruits, as individual photos and information are available for public access.

If we take this one step further, we can see that social networking does not enforce accountability of information either; all that is needed to open an account is an email address, and all other information needed can be falsified. Nobody is held accountable for the truthfulness of information contained on the social networking sites, while traditional forms of media such as newspapers are held accountable for the validity and truth of the information they publish. Transparency cannot exist without accountability.

The Profits of Social Media

Social media technology is highly commercialized and spreads western consumerist ideas along with democratic concepts. It is a profit-driven industry aimed at creating young consumers across the world rather than educated, democratic-minded political activists. Facebook, for example, is expected to make a profit of \$1 billion USD this year from advertising. Companies pay top dollar to advertise on social networking sites, as they allow direct advertising targeted to potential clients based on the personal information users are required to give to establish social media sites accounts. Once information is uploaded onto many social media sites, the information which was previously private and confidential belongs to the sites themselves. These sites can sell the databases to any number of bidders.

As social media is a profit-based creation, it also promotes inequality due to a digital divide between the have and have-nots. Telecommunications infrastructure is severely underdeveloped in many countries, giving unequal access to those that cannot afford the technology or live in an area where connectivity to the Internet is impossible. Until the price of access to the Internet and social media networks is

reduced, social media's claim that it is a means of promoting democracy is flawed. It merely represents another unequal distribution of resources in the classic plight of democracy.

Ultimately we must ask if we are truly freer to communicate through social media technology or if we are moving to a form of dictatorship controlled by the owners of the social media sites. Social media networks are guiding and influencing the young and impressionable. Rather than getting outside and being involved in the community, young people are learning life lessons through virtual networks. The messages that these networks portray shape the ideals of tomorrow's leaders.

The Internet and social media sites have brought us into a new era of information and communication. Our skills of interpretation of truth and logic have unfortunately remained the same, leading us toward increasing struggles against manipulation and misrepresentation of the truth. Truth and transparency are two critical aspects of democracy; a means of communication such as social media will not alone bring us closer to democracy. The promotion of democracy needs inspired and strong-willed individuals, who are willing to go against the powerful regimes that manipulate our sources of information, to provide truthful uncensored information to all those that seek it, through whichever means of communication best fits their circumstances.



Tyranny & Dissent: America's Imperial Contradictions

William A. Cohn *

What is the effect of American foreign policy? Does it shape history? promote freedom? oppression? What is its aim? Why the emphasis on hard power over soft power? These issues arise once again as US fighter planes bomb Libya.

This article contends that US foreign policy fails to fulfill its stated aims because of the democracy deficit at home. Recent revelations: of CIA operatives in Benghazi prior to military intervention against Qaddafi, Wikileaks secret diplomatic cables postings, and the Raymond Davis case in Pakistan corroborate that American diplomats actively promote US business interests abroad and that foreign policy operates in murky ways. Foreign policy is complex and not populist, but in an avowed democracy it should not be driven by the interests of a small elite group. Yet the latest rationale for war is new: the responsibility to protect innocent civilians from human rights abuses by their own state ("R2P"). And who can be against that?

* William A. Cohn, a member of the California Bar and lecturer at the University of New York in Prague, is a constitutional law scholar and TNP contributing writer. He studied international politics at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and at Stanford University where he earned a degree in international relations. His "Degradation of the rule of law in response to terrorism: a failed approach," will be published this fall by Palgrave Macmillan in its textbook "Ethical Challenges in the War on Terror."

Pull Back the Curtain

For decades, Arabs (like Asians and Hispanics) have been denied democracy by regimes financed, armed and trained by the US. Of the 22 members of the Arab League, 8 are American-ally monarchies which, although called moderate by politicians and pundits, are all tyrannies to varying degrees. Eight other autocratic states of the League are also Western allies which like the monarchies mostly use torture to stifle opposition - and all deny free speech. Thus, US avowed support for Arab democracy must be viewed with skepticism.

Western allies in the Arab world are highly corrupt. The guns, tanks and tear gas being used against protesters are supplied mainly by the West. Saudi Arabia, a repressive monarchy and the main American ally in the Arab world, sent troops and tanks to Bahrain to help put down the uprising there. The Arab uprisings have exposed the moral failings and strategic folly of American foreign policy. Waging war in the name of humanitarian intervention in Libya while turning a blind eye to atrocities in Bahrain (home to its naval base) and Yemen (perceived as vital to anti-



Support for protestors in Libya. This image is in the public domain.

terror policy) is blatantly hypocritical. The so-called Arab Awakening is as much about America and Europe as it is about Arabs.

Alexis de Tocqueville's 1835 classic *Democracy in America* warns that the newest incarnation of despotism was likely to be ushered in by the "avowed lover of liberty" who is a "hidden servant of tyranny." American foreign policy has long been seen as idealistic and naïve. Others view it as calculated and hubristic. American author and Korean War veteran William Pfaff says that Woodrow Wilson, who as the 28th American President shaped US foreign policy towards morality-based internationalism, had a very American determination "not to be confused by reality or bound by the past."¹ Wilson was more missionary than Constitution drafter Thomas Jefferson - who was more concerned with protecting democracy at home than exporting it abroad.

Words & Deeds

American foreign policy veers back and forth between intervention, isolationism, realism, idealism and ethical realism. But core contradictions are always present. Canadian author turned politician Michael Ignatieff contends that contradiction lies at the core of the American experience: "It's impossible to untangle the contradictions of American freedom without thinking about Jefferson and the spiritual abyss that separates his pronouncement that "all men are created equal" from the reality of the human beings he owned, slept with and never imagined as fellow citizens. American freedom aspires to be universal, but it has always been exceptional because America is the only modern democratic experiment that began in slavery."

When forced to choose, the US opted for stability at the price of liberty during the Cold War, as Czechs and other East and Central Europeans know all too well.

¹ One is reminded of G.W. Bush's press spokesman asserting that the administration was not "reality bound" – prompting comedian Stephen Colbert to coin the phrase "truthiness."

George Kennan's containment strategy no doubt fostered global stability while the NUTs (Nuclear Utilization Theorists) battled the MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) men in nuclear war-fighting exercises. The 1975 Helsinki Accords aimed to reduce Cold War tensions, but in the 1980s Jeane Kirkpatrick, President Reagan's ambassador to the United Nations, articulated US policy as distinguishing totalitarian repression as being much worse than authoritarian repression.

Does the torture victim feel less pain when tortured by one rather than the other? To critics, Kirkpatrick's distinction between human rights abuses by totalitarian versus authoritarian regimes was a Machiavellian rationalization exposing American policy as placing strategic interests clearly above values/rights. Now, President Obama asserts international human rights values but America still shuns signing many multilateral treaties.

A look back is instructive: The Shah in Iran, Zia ul-Haq in Pakistan, Mobutu in Zaire, Marcos in Philippines, Papa Doc in Haiti, Somoza in Nicaragua, Suharto in Indonesia and Pinochet in Chile – and the list goes on - the road to freedom is littered with carnage. Pfaff argues that history favors those who exercise restraint and patience, and that these qualities are conspicuously absent from American foreign policy. Pfaff sees US power subordinating ethical values “to an ideology of national triumphalism” which rests upon “extreme ideological violence.” Following 9/11, then-President Bush said the proper response was to “export death and violence to the four corners of the earth in defense of our great nation.”

The Arab World

Historian Andrew Bacevich notes that Britain was the first principal enforcer of intervention in the Middle East but since the 1956 Suez Crisis the US has carried the mantle – but “[d]espite stupendous Western expenditures – the US spent trillions

trying to decide the fate of Iraq alone – the region as a whole has remained unpacified, untamed, unstable and unpredictable.” Why believe Afghanistan will be different? The US is spending billions of dollars to train security forces of the corrupt Karzai regime by the planned 2014 withdrawal date, but the Afghans are not the least interested in playing the role envisioned for them. The savage folly of war and wasted resources continues.

Bacevich concludes that since the uprising in Tunisia, Arabs have demolished “the patronizing notion that they need outside oversight, guidance or protection . . . the century-long battle to control the Middle East is ending. We lost. They won.” Yet the mainstream narrative of the Arab uprising is that the West is winning – democracy is spreading. Is this self-delusion? purposeful deception? Who are the rebels in Benghazi? Have we a clue? Many of the groups we deem fighting for democracy are more aptly described as fighting age-old internecine battles.

Most of the Arab revolts have deeper roots than the simplified tyrant versus oppressed scenario parroted in the media. Bahrain is a Sunni monarch with a mainly Shiite population – as is the part of Saudi Arabia near Bahrain. The Sunni-Shiite divide is also largely economic and class-based. This also affects Iran and Iraq. Yemen confronts tribal and historical conflicts between north and south. Libya’s divisions are also regional and tribal. Policymakers grossly oversimplify what is happening in the Arab world.

War Mentality & Hubris

Is America growing more cavalier about using force abroad? The Cold War generation was well-schooled in Russian history, language and culture, whereas those in the Green Zone knew almost nothing about the history, people or culture of

Iraq. Likewise, their counterparts in Afghanistan and Libya know precious little of these peoples and places.

Self-confidence founded on ignorance makes for a lethal mix. Hans Morgenthau wrote that the refusal to acknowledge the legitimate interests of others provokes “the distortion of judgment which, in the blindness of crusading frenzy, destroys nations and civilizations,” and Otto von Bismarck reportedly said “God has a special providence for fools, drunks and the United States of America.”

What to make of Libya? So much is transparently wrong with this picture: Who are we giving arms to now (remember bin Laden – one more cautionary tale on giving arms to zealots)? Is Libya not still ruled by Bedouin values of tribe, family and religion? Why is Qatar the only Arab member of the latest military “coalition”? What is Qatar other than a US military base? Why was the CIA active early in Libyan regime change? (and so absent in Ivory Coast and Zimbabwe)? Is this



President Barack Obama speaks from the National Defense University on 28 March 2011 about US military action in Libya. This image is in the public domain.

regime change via global police action (Is it lawful? What precedent? What impact?)? Is regime change lawful pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1973?

Bacevich asserts that “Western intervention in Libya will have little effect on the drama now unfolding in the Middle East. Pundits can talk of the US shaping history. The truth is that history is shaping itself while we are left to bear witness.” International relations scholar Stephen Kinzer recently wrote: “Military interventions always end badly.... The real winner in Libya may turn out to be Al Qaeda, which profits whenever chaos engulfs a Muslim country.”

In the Name of Democracy

That America excuses and accommodates tyranny in the pursuit of stability in the Middle East has been exposed. The Arab Awakening has shed light on the unholy alliance between the US and Saudi Arabia, based primarily on oil, arms, and containing Iran. Consider that: Libya (at 158) ranked higher than Saudi Arabia (at 160) in the *Economist's* 2010 democracy index of 167 countries; and, when defense secretary Gates went to Riyadh recently following a rebuff from King Abdullah, *The New York Times* reported, “Pentagon officials were pleased that the king, the United States’ most important Arab ally, agreed to receive Mr. Gates.”² Who’s in control?

The Obama administration plans to sell Saudi Arabia some \$90 billion dollars worth of arms in the coming decade in its biggest ever weapons sale. The *International Herald Tribune* reports that scores of F-15 fighter planes, Apache attack and Black Hawk helicopters are part of the package, noting: “The purchase of these US combat systems and related military support, including American trainers, would allow the US armed forces to operate seamlessly in that part of the world, according to

² April 7, 2011, “Saudis and U.S. seek to dispel tensions,” by Elisabeth Bumiller

Pentagon officials.” Is this aimed at spreading freedom? building empire? hanging on by improvisation? promoting short term profits? seeking to conduct business as usual in a world in flux? To what extent was Mr. Gates recent visit to Riyadh aimed at securing lucrative business deals prior to his departure from public office at the end of June?

Critics contend that America has a runaway executive branch when it comes to waging war³ and that it plays a devious double-game, fomenting conflict from which it prospers (e.g., selling arms to both sides; funding internet activist dissidents in repressive societies while aiding the repressive state security apparatus), while others applaud the combat action in Libya as putting teeth into the UN’s 2005 R2P doctrine.

The late Howard Zinn defined modern warfare as “the indiscriminate killing of civilians.” It serves us well to consider his definition as war is once again waged in

³ On May 11, the House Armed Services Committee approved a bill reauthorizing the use of lethal military force in the war on terrorism, affirming the president’s authority to use military force, including detention without trial, against members and supporters of al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and associated forces. In a joint letter to Congress, the Center for Constitutional Rights and the American Civil Liberties Union warn: “This monumental legislation – with a large-scale and practically irrevocable delegation of war power from Congress to the president – could commit the United States to a worldwide war without clear enemies, without any geographical boundaries [or] boundary relating to time or specific objective to be achieved.” In its May 16 editorial (“A Conflict Without End”) *The New York Times* contends “This wildly expansive authorization would, in essence, make the war on terror a permanent and limitless aspect of life on earth, along with its huge potential for abuse...That deliberately vague phrase [associated forces] could include anyone who doesn’t like America, even if they are not connected in any way with the 2001 attacks.” And, it will chill free speech. Some House Democrats protested that the bill would “grant the president near unfettered authority to initiate military action around the world without further Congressional approval.” In fact, as the *Times* noted on May 14 (“U.S. faces a legal deadline on Libya war,” by Charlie Savage and Thom Shankar), despite the 1973 War Powers Resolution to reassert Congress’s constitutional role in military conflict, “That role has been eroding for several decades, as presidents of both parties, taking advantage of the large standing army left in place after World War II, increasingly initiated or escalated combat operations on their own.” The 1973 law requires the president to terminate combat operations that have not been approved by Congress within 60 days. Thus, U.S. combat operations in Libya became illegal on May 20, 2011. See: (“[The illegal war in Libya](#),” by Glenn Greenwald); “Death of the War Powers Act?” by Bruce Ackerman and Oona Hathaway, *The Washington Post*, May 18, 2011; “A Declaration of Empire,” by James Carroll, *The Boston Globe*, May 17, 2011. Harvard law professor and former chief government counsel Jack Goldsmith sees this as a significant constitutional moment as “this appears to be the first time that any president has violated the War Powers Resolution’s requirement either to terminate the use of armed forces within 60 days after the initiation of hostilities or get Congress’s support.”

the name of noble pursuits. On May 9, United Nations humanitarian affairs chief Valerie Amos called for a cease fire in Libya noting that the “use of cluster bombs, sea and landmines, as well as death and injuries caused by aerial bombing, show a callous disregard for the physical and psychological well-being of civilians.”⁴ Ultimately, reckless war and militarism kills, maims and further impoverishes the world’s poorest people. It also undermines political and economic equality of opportunity, and thus degrades democracy in the West.

Decay, Paralysis & Endless War

Has the rise of executive branch power created an imperial presidency that threatens the American constitutional order of separation of powers and checks and balances? Critics say it does, and that in abetting state secrecy it augurs a creeping authoritarian tyranny. The rise of executive order and administrative agency lawmaking, presidential signing statements, covert wiretapping, a unitary executive theory, assertions of executive privilege, and the acquiescence of Congress, the courts and the press to such claims signal a challenged democratic order in America.

President Eisenhower was prescient when, in his 1962 farewell address to the nation, he warned Americans of the unwarranted and growing influence of the military-industrial-complex on US policy in creating a permanent arms industry and war

⁴ “Top UN official urges pause in fighting in Libya to allow aid to reach those in need,” at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=38320&Cr=libya&Cr1> (noting that the humanitarian crisis has been exacerbated by the inability to deliver food, medicine and tents to war refugees trapped in unbearable conditions as ships carrying aid have been unable to dock due to shelling and other combat). See also “Libyan ‘humanitarian’ war creates humanitarian crisis” (discussing the refugee crises from “humanitarian” intervention in Somalia in 2006 and in Libya today - the [UN reports](#) some 750,000 refugees have fled Libya since the combat started). Commenting on President Obama’s May 19 speech on Arab democracy, Rep. Dennis Kucinich notes the discrepancy between America’s words and deeds in Libya where “The UN mandate to protect civilians was exceeded almost immediately and used as a pretext for regime change. The U.S. and NATO are one in Libya. Our nation, through NATO, has taken sides in a civil war which is spreading more violence throughout Libya and putting more civilians’ at risk.... NATO’s expansion as ‘globocop’ is hardly about peace and stability. It has people in Pakistan and Afghanistan in the streets loudly protesting NATO’s onslaught against innocent civilians.” ([US Actions, Not Obama’s Words, Tell Story of U.S. Middle East Policy](#)).

economy, but he could not have foreseen the degree of secrecy to come in war-making. In recent decades, Congress and the people have been eliminated from the process of declaring and waging war, with the executive branch fighting covert wars and snubbing the Constitution and the 1973 Congressional War Powers Resolution, and the use of mercenaries obviating the need for a draft.

9/11 provided a rationale for the acceleration of the path to permanent war. Iraq and Afghanistan are now America's longest wars ever, with Afghanistan in its 10th year and combat troops to remain until at least the end of 2014. And thanks to the militarization of the CIA, covert wars are now being fought in Pakistan and Yemen, primarily via predator missiles and private contractors, and elsewhere. *The New York Times* recently reported on "the blurring of the lines between soldiers and spies in secret US missions abroad... The result is that the US military and intelligence operatives are at times virtually indistinguishable from one another as they carry out classified operations in the Middle East and Central Asia."⁵ President Obama's recent war reshuffle (CIA director Leon Panetta to become Pentagon Chief and General David Petraeus taking over the CIA) ensures that no new thinking will enter the war cabinet, and that despite the elimination of enemy # 1 (Osama bin Laden), war-making will persist unabated.⁶

⁵ "[New Missions, Blurred Roles](#)," April 29, 2011, p. 2 by Marl Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt (noting that "As CIA director, Mr. Panetta hastened the transformation of the spy agency into a paramilitary organization" and that General Petraeus "has aggressively pushed the military deeper into the CIA's turf, using Special Operations troops and private security contractors to conduct secret intelligence missions." Critics contend "that this new way of war allows for scant debate about the scope and scale of military operations. In fact, the U.S. spy and military agencies operate in such secrecy now that it is often hard to come by specific information about the U.S. role in major missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and now Libya and Yemen.")

⁶ The May 1 killing of Osama bin Laden (OBL), the day after a failed apparent assassination attempt on Muammar Qaddafi by NATO forces killed one of the Libyan leader's sons and three of his grandchildren, raises provocative legal issues under American law (which prohibits US forces or agents from conducting assassinations) and international law (which prohibits assassinations and violating state territorial sovereignty). In fact, the US is carrying out many assassinations in the so-called War on Terror (including against its own citizens), mainly by means of drone strikes which are subject to less scrutiny as those killed have no opportunity to surrender. On May 2, President Obama said "Justice has been done" but Human Rights Watch Asia Director Brad Adams has a different view: "If he (OBL) wasn't shooting at the soldiers, the killing should be

Getting back to Libya, what is happening there now is full of contradictions and complexity... and tragedy. Again poor people suffer: many African refugees came to Libya to escape war in their homelands, only to re-live the horror of war and be made refugees once again. As in the run-up to war in Iraq, we again see a paralysis of mainstream skepticism. The UN endorsed military action only to protect civilians, but NATO is now stretching this limited resolution towards regime change, and few are speaking out against its obvious illegality. Where is the dissent in the march to war? Why does the press call it “limited humanitarian intervention” (what limits?) rather than war?

Awakening to Contradiction

What is democracy? Is it free and fair elections (as determined by whom)? Is it self-determination? The West’s reaction to the election of Hamas in the West Bank underscores the tension between process and results-oriented concepts of democracy.⁷ Wilson notoriously said, “I am going to teach the South American

investigated. People are saying that justice has been done, but justice has not been done. Justice is when you arrest someone and put them on trial.” For more see [“Thinking through assassination,”](#) which considers the findings of the Church committee and takes particular issue with the attempt on Qaddafi (“if we want the rest of the world to believe that the way to justice is law and not cold-blooded killing, then we need to be very careful that the killing we undertake in the name of justice remains the very rare exception, and not the rule.”) and [“The Targeted Assassination of Osama Bin Laden”](#). Leslie Gelb writes in the May 16 issue of *Newsweek* that OBL’s death makes the time ripe: “to announce substantial reductions in US troops in Afghanistan come Obama’s July deadline. The expectation is for modest trims to avoid a fight with Republicans. But the mansion where bin Laden was staying – located near military facilities in Pakistan – shows the fundamental contradiction of US policy in Afghanistan. As all are well aware, the US can’t win in Afghanistan without the support of Pakistan. Events of recent days prove that Islamabad’s genuine support is impossible. Americans are now prepared to accept the truth and consequences of this fact – withdraw almost all US combat forces before the current 2015 deadline.” Is Gelb, a former State Dept. and Pentagon official and a Washington foreign policy insider, leaking the extension of the official 2014 withdrawal deadline? Is the Obama team’s aim of “four more years” mutating into “four more wars”?

⁷ The 2006 parliamentary election in the West Bank was deemed free and fair by most international observers, but after the election of Hamas by the Palestinian people, the West refused to recognize it as the legitimate government because of its refusal to recognize Israel as a legitimate state, and its refusal to disavow violence in pursuing its political aims. Might a similar dynamic occur in the upcoming elections in Egypt, scheduled for September, should the Egyptian people vote for the Muslim Brotherhood?

DEMOCRACY NOW? / TNP SPRING 2011

Republics to elect good men!” It didn’t work then and it still doesn’t work. Curiosity, knowledge, tolerance, humility and patience are all vital to progress yet sadly lacking at the highest levels of American foreign policy - which is corrupted by war profiteers. Yet disappointment carries with it a hope and perhaps expectation that America can and should do better. Czeslaw Milosz characterizes this attitude as “despair mixed with a residue of hope.”

America is contradictory. No doubt, a trail of blood flows from American interventions from Central America and Mexico to the Congo, but America is in many ways unique – for its diversity of peoples and gestation of ideals and ideas. Consider free speech: On March 2, the Supreme Court⁸ affirmed the rights of lunatics tormenting bereaved family members whose loved ones died in combat fighting “our” war. In how many other places could that happen? Zero. Yet only the US has military bases in all corners of the world – protecting and promoting dissent and tyranny simultaneously. Where will this dialectic lead, beyond more war?

Suggested Reading:

William Pfaff, 2010, *The Irony of Manifest Destiny: The Tragedy of America’s Foreign Policy*

Michael Ignatieff, “Who are Americans to think that freedom is theirs to spread?” *The New York Times*, June 26, 2005

Andrew Bacevich, *Washington Rules: America’s Path to Permanent War* (2010) & *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (2008)

Jenny Pearce, 1982, *Under the Eagle: US Intervention in Central America and the Caribbean*

Stephen Kinzer, 1982, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*

Czeslaw Milosz, 1951, “American Ignorance of War,” *The Captive Mind*

Raymond Bonner, 1987, *Waltzing With a Dictator*

⁸ Opinion at <http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/10pdf/09-751.pdf>

Latin America's Democratic Dilemma

Melissa Rossi*

Ever since the third wave of democratization swept across Latin America in the 1980s and 90s, the world has watched with a mixture of awe and suspicion as populations in countries with difficult internal economic and political realities embrace the new political changes with renovated hopes.

A clear sign of international acknowledgment that countries spread across the region are serious about their democracies was American President Barack Obama's tour of Latin America last March, when Washington publicly acknowledged the centrality of countries such as Brazil, Chile and El Salvador as economic, political and strategic partners, as well as democratic models to be emulated. In a captivating speech given at the Municipal Theater in Rio de Janeiro, President Obama praised the democratic consolidation of countries such as Brazil, by declaring that its democratic transition in the 1980s should serve as a role model to nations in the Middle East that are currently undergoing democratic upheavals thanks to popular demonstrations.

This, however, was not always the case. Only a few decades ago, Latin American governments were regarded by their stable Northern neighbor as incapable of harboring true democratic values due to problems of endemic corruption and economic instability. The height of this impasse took place during the years of the

* Melissa Rossi is a dual-national citizen (American and Brazilian) who was brought up in Rio and studied in the United States. She holds a Master's in international relations, has worked as a researcher on Latin American regimes and taught a course on democratic transitions in Latin America at the Metropolitan University Prague.

Cold War (especially after the Cuban missile crisis) when often right-wing military authoritarian governments were “preferred” instead of their left-wing democratically elected counterparts who were deemed as threats to hemispheric stability. Authors such as Scott Mainwaring, a prominent Latin Americanist and Director of the Kellogg Institute of International Studies at Notre Dame University, have noted that such external interference was one of the variables that helped to delay Latin America’s *apertura política* for another quarter of a century, practically coinciding with the changes taking place in Eastern and Central Europe.

But what can we say about the present quality of democracies in Latin America? Why are countries such as Venezuela suffering democratic setbacks?

This article aims to address some of the fundamental questions pertaining to the democratic consolidation (or lack of) in Latin America by looking at some indicators in two states with different recent political traditions, namely Brazil and Venezuela. In reality, by choosing to investigate these countries we are actually choosing to look at two diametrically opposed political realities. In the past years, the former enjoyed considerable economic growth, though democratic consolidation runs side by side with stark social inequalities. The latter’s weak democratic institutions have fallen prey to a populist rhetoric that has sunk the country’s economy and narrowed political and civil freedoms.

Before answering this question, we should try to reach a definition of democracy that takes into consideration some of its important prerequisites. First of all, borrowing some of the elements of Peter H. Smith’s minimalist definition, democratic regimes can be considered as such when: free and fair elections are held according to the precepts of universal suffrage, political parties are free to assemble and compete for political representation and where elected rulers are held responsible for the acts both by the people who elect them and by an internal system of checks and balances that limits their power. To these three elements we can also

add the importance of upholding civil rights, where freedom of expression is unimpaired. In other words, a regime ceases to be democratic or suffers from a degree of low democratic *quality* when any of the abovementioned principles are canceled or temporarily overridden.



Venezuela: Democratic Involution?

The records of Venezuela's recent political history testify that not all is well on the Latin American democratic front. Venezuela has undergone a democratic "involution" during the second half of the twentieth century, resisting as a democratic haven during the harsh years of military dictatorships in Latin America only to fall victim to the populist rhetoric of President Hugo Chavez in the late 90s. Paradoxically, as the spiral of Venezuela's civil and political rights runs downwards, Latin America in general has become more democratic. In Venezuela's case, however, from the moment President Chavez and his political supporters have risen to power, they have meddled with the foundations of the nation's democratic

principles by lifting the limits of his presidential rule, curtailing the powers of the opposition, imposing forced privatizations on companies, expropriating private properties and infringing the freedoms of private citizens and the country's press.

At a first glance, what is most puzzling about Venezuela is that it resisted as a democratic state when most of South America's governments were under military control. By the early 1960s, as countries such as Brazil were shaken by right-wing military coups, civilian rule in Venezuela was the order of the day. As Brazil struggled through 21 years of military rule from 1964 to 1985, Venezuela enjoyed a relative level of political pluralism, which remained a constant until the early 1990s. In 1992, however, when Brazil finally was coming to terms with its democratic transition by strengthening its constitutional prerogatives, Venezuela's democratic foundations were shaken considerably after a coup d'état attempt by the military (headed by Colonel Hugo Chavez) against the democratically elected government of Carlos Andrés Pérez from the center-left's *Accion Democratica* (AD; Democratic Action) took place. Indeed, Chavez's ill attempted coup did not spur widespread popular outrage against the military but rather helped to surface a growing support for political change *by other means* due to a deep feeling of disillusionment towards mainstream political elites. Widespread disenchantment with ideologically polarized political parties, party fragmentation, and a depressed economy marked by strong social inequalities were the causes of this erosion. Riding on the wave of popular discontent and political disenchantment, Hugo Chavez was elected through democratic means in 1998.

Chavez's Bolivarian revolution quickly deteriorated into an autocratic regime. According to Michael Coppedge, a professor of Political Science at Notre Dame University with a specialization in Venezuela, Chavez managed to eliminate many of the checks and balances that Congress could use against the Executive through the drafting of a new constitution in 1999. These changes banned the former

Congress and established new legislative elections, while eliminating the country's Supreme Court and creating the Supreme Justice Tribunal conveniently cooperative with Chavez. After securing Congressional support in the 2000 elections, Chavez sealed the democratic fate of his country by shrewdly tampering with the very mechanisms designed to avoid such power excesses.

At the end of 2002, exactly when President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva from the left-wing Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT; Workers' Party) was elected democratically in Brazil with widespread consensus from different groups of the political spectrum, Chavez's government faced severe strikes from the oil and other business sectors that called for a popular referendum against the government. The referendum eventually took place in 2004 and helped to consolidate his power even further after a victory with 58 percent of the vote. By the 2006 presidential elections, Chavez had secured support from Venezuela's poorer classes thanks to a series of programs that benefited the poor, being reelected against governor Manuel Rosales from the New Time Party.

The package of anti-democratic measures that limited the power of competition and political accountability was sealed in the 2009 referendum. The referendum abolished the term limits for all major political representatives, from mayors to governors and of course for the presidential powers. This was the very last link that kept Venezuela's fragile democratic institutions from crumbling, isolating the country even further from the international community. As measured by the Freedom House's 2010 Freedom in the World review, Venezuela's ratings show a country in freefall, scoring as "partially free" (i.e. 5 points for political rights and 4 for civil liberties, where 1 represents the highest level of freedom and 7 the lowest).

The lack of civil and political rights that followed this decline is evident in the stories of thousands of Venezuelans who have been forced or have chosen to flee their country due to the growing political intimidation and the lack of security

guarantees. From an international perspective, many of Venezuela's neighbors, including Brazil, have distanced themselves politically from Chavez's radical discourse, sending a clear sign that his Bolivarian Revolution is contained geographically.

This quick summary of the history of President Chavez' relationship with power hints to a series of socio-political deficiencies in Venezuela that helped to erode democratic institutions prior to his election. First, political elites were viewed suspiciously, associated to corruption and to serving the interests of elites and foreign investors in detriment of the broader population. Second, political polarization undermined the principles of a healthy political participation and competition. Finally, the lack of a historical memory on the terrible social consequences of authoritarianism was not truly harbored due to a relatively stable recent history and the military not regarded with excessive suspicion. This political environment, worsened by socio-economic polarization (i.e. widespread social inequalities), favored the rise of a demagogic figure that quickly learned how to ride the populist wave upwards.

Brazil, a Liberal Democracy with an Inequality Issue

Brazil's authoritarian military past left strong negative marks on the country's economy but it also generated a political culture based on an acute social awareness and desire for democratic consolidation. Part of this awareness was reflected in the desire to see politicians accountable within an institutional and popular framework. So much, that when the country's very first directly elected President Fernando Collor de Mello was accused by Congress of corruption in 1992, the social outcry and institutional response that followed his accusation were so decisive that they led to his immediate impeachment. This was political accountability being exercised to its fullest in a country that wanted desperately to leave its authoritarian past behind.

One thing is for sure, despite the heavy charges of corruption against former President Collor, a military coup would have never gained popular support since the military as a whole was extremely discredited after its brutal crack down on civil and political freedoms in the past. Another part of this awareness was manifested in popular participation, which reached its highest point with the election of President Lula in 2002.

Lula was the purest manifestation of the spirit of the Brazilian people; a shoeshine boy who fled with his family to São Paulo, a cultural and business hub with a population of 12 million, from the impoverished Brazilian sertão nordestino one of the most desolate areas of the country's Northeast, where families still live in a state of semi-nomadic poverty. Despite Lula and Chavez' similar humble origins, their political and personal similarities stop there. Differently than Chavez, Lula's past was far from sharing military sympathies, having even been jailed for a month by the military in the 1970s due to his leadership in Brazil's Steel Workers' Union strikes. Moreover, although at the beginning of his political career Lula's left-wing discourse supported controversial topics such as radical land reform or against privatizations, his constant democratic defeats (Lula ran 3 times before winning his first Presidential mandate) toned down his political affirmations, distancing himself significantly from populist rhetoric. Following constitutional limits, President Lula ran for reelection only once, stepping down from power at the end of his second term willingly on 31 December 2010 and allowing thus for political competition to take its due course. After a tough plural political dispute that led to a second round (none of the major candidates reached an absolute majority of votes in the first round), the PT candidate Dilma Rousseff eventually won, becoming Brazil's very first female President.

Lula's 8-year government left a promising legacy that helped to diminish inequalities and to give rise to a new middle class. Nevertheless, endemic

inequalities are still a part of the country's reality and need to be tackled consistently if Brazil wants to ever become a fully fledged democratic nation.

However, despite the present inequalities, The Freedom House's 2010 report has defined Brazil as a "free" country receiving high marks for both its political and civil rights advances (i.e. the country scored 2 for both prerequisites). Issues such as participation, competition and freedom of the press all are seen as free, although corruption and violence due to social inequalities are ongoing problems.

In Brazil's case, all of the major precepts outlined at the beginning of this article in support of democracy have been respected. Not only does the country have a free and vibrating press, it also enjoys the lack of political polarization. Political accountability and competition are also strong and political terms are set with specific limits, the presidential term being limited to 4 years with the possibility of a single reelection term. The country's popular memory of its two-decade military regime helps to keep the military in check.

Conclusion

The most important lesson that we can draw from this reflection is that, when trying to understand the relationship between democracy and authoritarianism, we first need to grasp what are the social and political forces at play behind any transition. If a democratic government sinks into authoritarian patterns through democratic means (i.e. the popular election of an autocrat), then probably the quality of democracy of such state is not particularly high. To this extent, a low quality democracy can deteriorate into an authoritarian regime if the environment favors such a decline (i.e. weak democratic institutions, polarized political parties, high level of social inequalities) whereas authoritarianism can turn to democracy if the moment is right (i.e. popular support for democracy, a cooperative political elite that works together,

implementation of institutional checks and balances). In countries with stark social inequalities, the dangers of democratic setbacks are always greater but not insurmountable. Different variables other than social inequalities are certainly necessary to push for a democratic decline, such as in the case of Venezuela.

In Brazil's case, social inequalities certainly play a destabilizing role in democracy, but institutionally speaking democratic indicators are strong. The country's newest constitution drafted in 1988 has strengthened the role of checks and balances of the executive, judiciary and legislative ensuring that the three powers are held accountable for their acts. Although some authoritarian tools were still left in the constitution, such as the Presidential power to issue *medidas provisórias* (decree measures), which are likened to individual executive laws, such tool only becomes institutionalized as a law with Congress approval. Differently than in Venezuela, internal ideological polarization is quite low and most parties tend to gravitate politically to the center and center-left with a liberal economic twist. Freedom of speech and of the press is high in general, meaning the media often scrutinizes politicians and the electorate questions their political actions. All these factors put together have elevated Brazil to the ranks of a democratic nation.

It is fair to conclude by saying that some of the lessons drawn from the democratic transitions in Latin America could be helpful to understand other transitions currently taking place throughout the world. In the dawn of the *Arab Spring*, long-term authoritarian regimes are falling as young protestors fill the streets of their capitals calling for more political and civil freedoms. Perhaps, the Latin American experience shows us that democratic legitimacy needs to be enforced directly by the people, in an environment aware of the dangers of authoritarianism and legitimized by competitive representatives and accountable institutions.

The author would like to acknowledge Alessia de Cesaris for her insightful revision of the section regarding Venezuela.

Political Assassination: Rights, Wrongs and Realpolitik

Paul Morris*

Paul Morris analyses the dichotomy facing the Western Powers leading the ‘war on terror’ between defending their citizens and principles whilst fighting a stateless, existentialist enemy and not compromising the very ideals they are attempting to uphold and defend.

The fault lines between the US and ‘Old Europe’ moved apart a little again over the killing of terrorist leader Osama bin Laden. The death of the Al Qaeda mastermind and architect of the September 11 attacks at the hands of US special forces, saw American citizens dancing in the streets, pumping the air and chanting ‘USA, USA!’. Lurid reports of how bin Laden had cowered behind his wife soon gave way to what would seem to be the plain truth that he was killed in cold blood in a calculated manner and via a definitive order straight down the chain of command from the White House.

For Barack Obama this was no doubt his first moment in the sun since his inauguration in 2008. It established his credentials as a ‘can do’ kind of guy and realigned his image from being a timid foreign policy dove to a fully plumaged hawk. Amidst the hue and cry, however, voices, albeit quietly at first, began to question if this had been the right way of going about things. The assassination of

* Paul Morris a British writer living in Prague. He has a MA in History from Warwick University. He is interested in The Heydrich Assassination and its remembrance, as well as current affairs.

Bin Laden brackets a series of shameful episodes which have permeated the last decade, since the launch of ‘the war on terror’ in the wake of the September 11th attacks on New York and Washington.



President Obama and other US officials watch a live stream of the Navy SEALs raid on Bin Laden's home in Pakistan. Image is in the public domain.

Choosing their words carefully, the US has created an imagery of a ‘war’ to justify a series of immoral and illegal acts. They most recently declared Bin Laden a ‘legitimate military target’. Al Qaeda no doubt remains a lethal and potent threat to the US and its allies. However, it would seem that Obama and his predecessor George W. Bush are more than happy to talk up what is realistically, a loosely affiliated group of terrorists with a localized agenda based in Asia and the Middle East, into an existential threat which is greatly exaggerated. This threat allows the US to ride roughshod over institutions like the UN and flout international law. Foreign policy hawks would suggest that there was simply no other way to tackle

Bin Laden, citing the fact that the gravity of his crimes placed him in a position so morally compromised that he was beyond the pale of arrest and trial and simply had to be eliminated. The counterpoint to this cites historical precedent, pointing to the trial of leading Nazis at Nuremberg, as the manner in which democracies deal with those guilty of heinous crimes, simultaneously dealing with the criminals and also reinforcing the institutions of democracy and justice at the same time.

During a debate about the Bin Laden killing on the UK's BBC Radio 4's discussion program *The Moral Maze*, two guests took opposing views. One suggested that the Nuremberg Trials occurred after hostilities had ceased only when a clear victor had emerged. They suggested that the US policy had been more akin to the SOE (Special Operation Executive) operation to assassinate Reinhard Heydrich. The action, they suggested, was legitimized by the fact that Heydrich had committed crimes against humanity and was in the process of orchestrating more.

This year will mark the 69th anniversary of the attempted assassination and subsequent lingering death of SS Obergruppenfuhrer Reinhard Heydrich, the self-styled Nazi 'Protector of Bohemia and Moravia,' also known as the butcher or hangman of Prague. Jan Kubiš and Josef Gabčík carried out Heydrich's assassination attempt on 27 May 1942.

While the operation accomplished the primary task of killing Heydrich, the orgy of reprisal killings, including the razing of the villages of Lidice and Ležáky, has left a lingering question mark over the value of Operation Anthropoid. Arguments supporting and condemning the operation have gone back and forth from the immediate aftermath of the operation to the present day, via books, scholarly articles and more recently on websites and Internet forums.

While his chairing of the Wanasee Conference dubbed Heydrich the 'Architect of the Holocaust,' it remains a point for discussion amongst historians.

But considering his dedication and zeal to the Nazi cause his death meant a definitive blow to the Nazi regime.

The two protagonists in the debate agreed that the killing of Heydrich chimes loudly in comparison with contemporary events and therefore provides a useful reference point when discussing the rights and wrongs of state-sanctioned assassination.

US historian Saul K Padover defined assassination as “the elucidation of a political figure without due process of law. Being a political act, it is not confined to any one age, culture, county, or any type of government. It has taken place everywhere,” says Padover.

The history of political assassination begins around the time when men (and at the time it was just men and a privileged minority at that) first gathered in what could be recognized in a contemporary format as a political body. From these early beginnings, political assassination was part and parcel of the political process as rivals competed for privilege and position.

All too soon it became apparent that processes could be short circuited and routes to power shortened via the elimination of an opponent through the adroit means poison or a blade, the two weapons of choice in ancient and medieval times, much as the revolver, bomb and rifle are the hallmarks of the modern assassin.

Political assassination first occurred in ancient Greece, where it was seen as part of the form of checks and balances which prevented the long term rule of a tyrant whose demise would restore the political equilibrium, as asserted by Padover in an article on the subject of political assassination: “Ancient Greece... the matrix of Western Civilization, considered the slaying of a tyrant as an heroic deed.” One does not need to look further than the praise heaped on the team of US Navy Seals involved in the assassination of Bin Laden.



Reinhard Heydrich, the butcher of Prague.
Courtesy of the German Federal Archive.

The Romans were also quick to slay those they deemed as having outstayed their proverbial welcome and going beyond their political mandate. The most famous and well documented of these was the assassination of Julius Caesar on the steps of the Senate in 44BC. While both the ancient Greeks and Romans were keen proponents of using the tool of political assassination, they both had differing cultural perceptions of its motives and meanings. Writing in 1943, Padover presents the essential difference: “Assassins of despots, and there were many of them in the Hellenic period, were

therefore praised by philosophers and poets... The Romans, it would seem, killed without the benefit of argument or the consolation of philosophy.” So while assassination ran as a common thread between both the Greeks and Romans, the cultural weight it assumed took different forms: for the former, it presented a cultural as well as a political role, whereas for the latter it was more a matter of political expediency.

The appetite for assassination as an integral part of the political process did not abate and continued through the Middle Ages and beyond. In fact as Padover pointed out in his article “Patterns of Assassination in Occupied Territory,” this was the proverbial ‘golden age’ when assassination became a well-honed political tool, or

“the period of revolution upon which Europe entered saw the fullest development of both the theory and practice of assassination.” This continuation can in some ways be explained by the hierarchical nature of the societies in which only small elite minorities undertook an active role in politics. Therefore scores were settled or rulers eliminated via assassination rather than via the mass conflict of opposing armed forces, as Padover pointed out in his article for *Public Opinion Quarterly*: “as for the moral justification of assassination, the Italians frankly took the realistic attitude that the exigencies of the State were above individual morality and that, it was more merciful to kill a person in a responsible position than to cause the death of many innocent people.” The French Revolution and the development of mass political action and the associated conscript armies of the era saw the use of political assassination as a method of getting things settled, sidelined though by no means completely abandoned. For example, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914 acted as a trigger point if not the absolute catalyst that began the First World War. Likewise a wave of tit-for-tat assassinations in Spain in 1936 pre-empted the beginning of the Spanish Civil War.

Asymmetrical Warfare and International Humanitarian Law

If the first half of the twentieth century was the age of total war, then the second half of the twentieth and the first decade of the twenty-first are regarded as the age of asymmetrical warfare. These two types could be categorized as ‘old wars’ and ‘new wars.’ Just as the type of warfare changed, so did the role of assassination. Where the twentieth century predominantly saw assassination as the weapon of a weaker power or organization against a militarily superior state, the reverse soon became the norm in the latter parts of the 20th century and into the beginnings of the twenty-first. Examples include the CIA’s Operation Phoenix in Vietnam, the paramilitary GAL organization orchestrated by Spanish Socialist Prime Minister Felipe

Gonzalez, which killed members of the Basque separatist terrorist organization ETA, and the shooting of three IRA terrorists in Gibraltar by members of the UK's elite Special Air Service (SAS), apparently in order to prevent an imminent bomb attack. The Special Forces unit had risen to international fame after storming the Iranian Embassy in 1982, killing and seizing the terrorists and rescuing all the hostages, unarmed.

The current conflict in Afghanistan between a NATO-backed coalition and a loosely affiliated group of insurgents known as the 'Taliban' is a prime example of an asymmetrical conflict. Most interestingly, the 2003 invasion of Iraq turned from an 'old war' to a 'new war' when the Iraqi Army, representing the sovereign state, dissolved. It was replaced by a plethora of guerrilla militias of various political and religious motivations who formed an insurgency against the American-led coalition. Interestingly, during the 'surge' when the US forces were lead by General David Petraeus, he took the fight to the insurgents with the use of intelligence lead 'hit and run' raids, where small teams of heavily armed special forces targeted insurgent leaders, assassinating them and seizing prisoners before disappearing into the night - a tactic with a great effect.

Asymmetrical warfare has blurred the lines of traditional warfare. There are no fixed front lines and increasingly combatants and non-combatants are increasingly hard to define. The traditional 'rules of war' do not seem to apply. In other words, the gloves are off on both sides. The nature of the conflict has seen a resurgence of age-old tactics - namely, assassination. Two nations in particular, the USA and Israel, have pursued this tactic with zeal, as illustrated by US academic Lisa Hajar.

"In November 2000, Israel for the first time publicly acknowledged its use of assassinations as official policy, terming them 'targeted killings,' 'liquidations' and 'pre-emptive strikes.'" This policy was instituted following the beginning of the 'Second Intifada' in 2000 and was often used in response to suicide bombings by

Palestinian militants. These assassinations are illegal under international law. However, the Israeli authorities have used a legal loophole, asserting that since Palestine is not a sovereign state their targets are not ‘combatants’ but ‘terrorists.’ Therefore, the targeted Palestinians are denied the rights outlined in the Geneva Convention.

Following the attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, the US began to pursue a similar policy. As cited by Hajar writing in *The Journal of Palestinian Studies*: “In 2002, the United States began employing the tactic of assassination, which had been prohibited by executive orders since 1977. Assassinations by pilot-less drones and special forces are ongoing tactics.” The lexicography of the ‘war on terror’ has seen a number of phrases coined by those in military circles as ‘surgical or decapitation strikes’ and ‘collateral damage’ to disguise a less than palatable truth.

Hajar cites an example of how the supposed casualty-limiting drone attacks have very real and horrifying results for people if something should go wrong. In January 2006, pilot-less drones struck three houses in Pakistan’s North West Province, acting on information that Bin Laden’s Lieutenant Ayman al Zawarhi was there. He was not, but the strikes killed eight civilians, mostly women and children. In the wake of this event, it seems understandable why President Obama chose to send in a team of Special Forces to make certain only Osama bin Laden would be killed.

These actions then seem to contradict the more wholesale progression towards a world which has been making gradual (some might say glacial) progress to bringing equanimity and justice to the rules of war. This has been manifested in the form of treaties banning the use of cluster bombs and land-mines, and the establishment war crimes tribunals investigating the former Yugoslavia and Sierra Leone.

As the nature of warfare has changed, the legal framework governing the rules of war has trailed behind. The protocols of the Geneva Convention now seem

inadequate to provide definition and protection for combatants and non-combatants alike, as Hajar ably sums up: “International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is a term of art for modern laws and armed conflict. As *lex specialis*, its purpose is to govern the use of force and the treatment of enemies once peace has been broken... However, the legitimating value of IHL has been called into question on the grounds that it is irrelevant to some form of war and some enemies, thereby threatening the legal foundations of human behavior in war.”

So it would seem that there is a proverbial chasm between the theatrical legal niceties laid out in IHL and the seamier practical side of sovereign states adopting paramilitary-style executions - albeit with the latest in military hardware - to eliminate an enemy that works in the shadows. The question which seemingly needs to be asked is this: do the governments using these tactics risk getting their hands too dirty, reaching a ‘tipping point’ where they have comprised their values to such an extent that they have precious little integrity left to protect? and which reduces international humanitarian law to, at best, a fig leaf to hide behind, and at worst, a legal case of ‘the Emperor's new clothes’? The issue seems to stem from politicians being caught in a moral quandary. Should one use the tactics of the terrorist? Put a bullet in the terrorist’s head and be done with it? Or should they be arrested and brought before a court to observe due legal process?

Both processes are fraught with a plethora of problems. While it may seem easy enough in principal for a leader to say ‘take them out’, history has shown this very often not the case. For a nervous Barack Obama, the road of US foreign interventions is littered with disasters, from John F. Kennedy’s abortive 1961 Bay of Pigs disaster in Cuba, to Jimmy Carter’s failed attempts to rescue US hostages in Tehran in the 1980s. Failure can be disastrous, but the fruits of success can be bountiful as for Ronald Reagan via the invasions of Panama, Grenada and Haiti.

Tackling the legal process can also have mixed results. The most widely publicized

and probably most successful post-war court has been the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia based in The Hague. Formed in the aftermath of the fratricidal conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, the court has brought to trial a number of high profile mass murderers, many of them military and political leaders of the nations involved in the conflict. This is non-partisan justice and has seen legitimate governments of nations like Croatia hand over their own nationals to the Tribunal for trial - admittedly under some political pressure from the European Union, which used EU membership as a sweetener. Serbia to handed over Slobodan Milosevic in similar circumstances. While it can be said that Milosevic's trial was anything but swift and he technically died before a verdict could be brought successfully, it nevertheless set some important precedents. Milosevic had been handed over by his own people, showing that leaders of states could no longer kill their own people, or those of other nations, with impunity and without sanction. Finally, despite the lack of a verdict, Milosevic died not in a Presidential Palace, but in a jail cell.

The third and final option is the worst of all options pursued by the US via



Guards from the Navy Expeditionary Guard Battalion escort a detainee to a facility. This image is in the public domain.

Guantanamo Bay. This case has been farcical in the extreme. Suspects shackled, blindfolded and held in wire cages - at a camp not in the US, but in a technical limbo. The geographical limbo of Guantanamo presents a perfect metaphor for the status of the prisoners and their supposed tribunals. Guantanamo Bay is an almost ludicrous episode mirroring the show trials of the

paranoid Stalinist era.

There are some parallels between Guantanamo Bay and political assassinations: namely, political fudging and a lack of clarity. Both of these factors cause consternation and concern on both sides. Regardless of the rights and wrongs of the decision to kill Osama bin Laden, President Obama's decision was obviously a risky one - a massive political gamble, but one that seems to have paid off. However, he seems to have quickly squandered much of this political capital, which was lost on both sides of the political divide and the Atlantic.

This occurred over the veil of lies which were issued from the White House over the circumstances surrounding bin Laden's death, as US political commentator Joshua Holland, writing in the online magazine *Guernica* said: "President Obama in his address to the nation... painted a picture of a perfectly clean, morally unambiguous operation: he said the U.S was prepared to take the terror leader alive, but a major fire fight ensued and, after trying to use his wife as a human shield, Bin Laden went down with guns blazing." This version quickly was shown to be false, as leading US academic and political commentator Noam Chomsky highlighted on his blog: "It's increasingly clear that the operation was a planned assassination. There appears to have been no attempt to apprehend the unarmed victim."

Chomsky decried the assassination, pointing to the fact that the assassination violated multiple elementary norms of international law; Holland suggested that while the majority of American would lose little sleep over the decision to kill Osama bin Laden, their rejoicing might be short-lived: "Martyrdom has always been a powerful inspiration for others. I don't blame Americans for celebrating in the news of Bin Laden's death, but we may have given him the exact ending he would have wanted, and in doing so, we may have inspired others to follow his path to a 'glorious' expiration."

DEMOCRACY NOW? / TNP SPRING 2011

This analysis seems to hold water. It might be prescient for Barack Obama to take a look at Israel; its pattern of targeted assassinations, which the US has emulated, may hold terrorists in check for a while - but like the mythological hydra, the organizations soon spawn fresh heads and the martyrdom of their predecessors fuels their zeal and encouraged their supporters.

This will most likely be the case with regard to al Qaeda. Perhaps the time has come for a piece of inspired leadership? President Barack Obama does not seem to be someone who shrinks from a fight. He is the symbol of a number of firsts for US politics, most notably being the first President of African descent, so he has a unique opportunity to break even more new ground.

“Jaw, Jaw is better than war, war,” British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said, asserting that talking to your enemy is better than shooting them. This maxim proved true for Churchill’s contemporary Tony Blair, who oversaw the establishment of almost wholesale peace in Northern Ireland, something that had proved impossible for generations of British premiers before. Blair went on to squander this fine piece of statesmanship by dragging the UK into an unpopular war with Iraq.

President Obama has to look no further than the homeland of his lifelong hero, Nelson Mandela, to see the rewards which can be reaped from democratic negotiation as opposed to conflict. Many naysayers predicted South Africa would degenerate into civil war and chaos. The success of the 2010 World Cup in the ‘Rainbow Nation’ quelled these doubts, and while some issues remain to be sorted, the project of post-apartheid South Africa can be deemed a success.

Admittedly, al Qaeda presents a different problem, as it is a rootless organization with a nihilistic agenda. However, in the ongoing conflict with Afghanistan, the group labeled the ‘Taliban’ does not pursue this agenda because they have a more

localized focus than this. At this juncture, a form of negotiated settlement might allow an end to the current asymmetrical war, and free up US troops to fight al Qaeda in other spots across the globe.

Moreover, in embracing Realpolitik, the USA is simply spilling too much blood and treasure for these conflicts to be sustainable in the long term. Pursuing the current policy is unsustainable as well as damaging to the economic structure of the US. It also chips away at the social and moral fabric of the very democracy and freedoms that the country is purporting to uphold.

In an April 2008 speech at Prague Castle, Barack Obama paid tribute to the Czech people for their strength, unity, and peaceful perseverance in defeating communism. He said: “It proved that moral leadership is more powerful than any other weapon.”

Perhaps it is now time for Obama to show this moral leadership and lead the US out of the cycle of tit for tat violence, which does nothing to end terrorist activities and only risks dragging the USA and its allies into morally dubious areas which undermine the foundations of freedom and democracy.

Suggested Reading:

Saul Padover, *Patterns of Assassination in Occupied Territory* – Public Opinion Quarterly Vol. 7, No .4, – The Occupation of Enemy Territory (Winter, 1943).

Tamar Meisels, *Combatants: Lawful and Unlawful* – Law and Philosophy, Vol. 26, No 1 (Jan 2007).

Lisa Hajar, *International Humanitarian Law and 'Wars On Terror': - A Comparative Analysis of Israeli and American Doctrines and Policies* – *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.36, No 1 (Autumn 2006).

Courtesy of Honza Groh. Creative Commons.



Memorial for the Czech paratroopers who attempted to assassinate Heydrich.

The Assassination of Reinhard Heydrich – A Legal Anomaly?

The assassination of Reinhard Heydrich represents an interesting case of historical legality. Firstly was he a legitimate target? It would seem so on the face of it. He was the acting head of state which invaded Bohemia and Moravia, short of actual lethal military force and was in the process of organizing the destruction of the Czechoslovakian nation as it was known, both in the form of institutions and in the physicality destruction or displacement of people. Therefore, he was a clear and present danger to the integrity of the Czechoslovak state. Secondly, his assassination was made as part of a political process headed by President Edward Benes, leader of the Czech government in exile in Britain. Having no realistic chance of attacking Hitler's forces in the field, having demobilized it's army in 1938 after the Munich Agreement (Czech

airmen did play a role in the Battle of Britain in 1940 and the Czech Brigade also fought alongside the British Army later in the war), the deployment of the assassination squad was a prime example of asymmetrical warfare – with a smaller opponent taking on numerically superior forces using guerrilla tactics, albeit that the parachutists were agents of a sovereign state. So to some extents the assassins accrued a credible amount of legality. As to the rights and wrongs of the assassination, an estimated 5,000 people were killed in reprisals following Heydrich's death, something which can be muted or taken out of the equation. While there deaths should no way be discounted, it is not impertinent to suggest that had Heydrich continued with his plans for Czechoslovakia, many more people would have died had these despicable plans come to fruition. On a macro scale, the likelihood that Heydrich could have proved a possible successor or even challenger to Hitler suggests that depriving the Nazis of one of their best and brightest was an act which had ramifications well beyond the borders of Bohemia and Moravia and one for which many in the country and on the Allied side were grateful for. As Padover asserts: "A man who assumes political responsibility in a situation created by violence should and must know that assassination is never out of the question. He should keep in mind that mere violence or reprisal has not presented assassination in the past."



Heydrich's car after the attack. Courtesy of the German Federal Archive.

Israel, Democracy and Delegitimization

Leora Moreno *

After the United Nations approved the Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict in 2009, Israel erupted in outrage over what they saw as yet another anti-Israel declaration. The Goldstone Report, the outcome of the investigation that documents a series of war crimes committed by Israel against civilians has been viewed as the apex of an international effort to delegitimize Israel. Delegitimization has come to mean whatever Israel deems to be an “intellectual assault” that denies its right to exist and has become its deepest insecurity. Following the approval of Richard Goldstone’s investigation, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that Israel must “delegitimize the delegitimization”. Yet, the only way Israel is confronting this issue is through efforts to undermine and ostracize their delegitimizers, as opposed to addressing the internal issues at the root of the criticism.

The Reut Institute, a policy group monitoring Israeli government decision-making, has labeled the radical American and European left that promotes a strongly anti-Zionist stance and aims to tarnish Israel’s international image as the “delegitimization network”. Organizations like the Reut Institute and other prominent Israeli figures have specifically laid out the distinctions between criticism and delegitimization: while discussing changes that should be made in Israeli policy is *criticism*, boycotting, divesting or sanctioning Israeli goods, holding Israel to

* Leora Moreno grew up Jewish and surrounded by very critical opinions about Israeli policy. She traveled to Israel in February, and while there attended a symposium on combating the delegitimization of Israel, which motivated her to write this article.

double standards, or comparing Israel to apartheid South Africa is delegitimization. But what these guidelines really do is put up a wall that Israel can hide behind, and create a distraction from dealing with the real problem at hand: Israel's increasingly anti-democratic society.

Distinguishing between criticism and delegitimization is somewhat important because critics of Israel are often considered anti-Israel and excluded from the discussion, when really they are invested in Israel's future. Anti-democratic trends are pervasive in Israeli society and listening to critical viewpoints is essential for reversing them. But Israel's deep-seated insecurity that it is constantly being delegitimized merely draws attention away from the much more serious problems it faces. If it is to ever have a chance at becoming a peaceful state, Israel needs to focus more energy on realizing its Jewish-democratic ideals rather than on defending itself from the "threat" of delegitimization.

Anti-Democratic Trends

Most symptomatic of Israel's anti-democratic spiral is the discrimination against Arab-Israelis and Palestinians, which is often excused as necessary for security reasons even when there is no bearing on national security. The discrepancies between the civil rights of Israelis and Palestinians are undeniable. Despite outcries from the international community, Israel has continued to allow the building of settlements in the West Bank, Golan Heights, and East Jerusalem. The United Nations Security Council has found the settlements in Palestinian territories to be a violation of international law under the Fourth Geneva Convention which in Article 49 states that "[t]he Occupying Power shall not ...transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies."¹ Moreover, Arab housing in East Jerusalem

¹ S. Whitson. "[Israel: Expanding Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories](#)." 26 December, 2005.

is frequently bulldozed because Arab residents are systematically denied and revoked their building permits.

Political representation for the Arab minority is also a constant struggle. In 2009, the Central Elections Committee attempted to ban the United Arab List-Ta'al and Balid parties for harboring “disloyal” political aims. These initiatives of the current government are glaringly reflective of Israel’s fall from democracy. Avigdor Lieberman, Member of the Knesset and head of the Yisrael Beitenu party, is certainly no help to the democratic cause, with his nationalist and anti-Arab sentiment, most noteworthy being in 2010 when he passed a bill requiring all non-Jews to swear an oath of loyalty in order to become Israeli citizens. Prime Minister Netanyahu’s backing of Lieberman’s political moves and stubborn unwillingness to cooperate with Palestinian authorities has also been detrimental to democracy building. Israel still claims to be the only democracy in the Middle East, but, as said

by professor at the University of La Verne in southern California and frequent political commentator, William Cook, “for a state to claim it is Democratic and reserve the rights of citizenship to a select group negates its claim.”²

Anti-democratic sentiment is not only found in the Israeli political sphere, but also among the Israeli population.



Courtesy of Latuff. www.deviantart.com

² William Cook. “Israeli Democracy, Fact or Fiction?” *CounterPunch* 25 January, 2003.

Every year, the Israel Democracy Institute publishes the Israeli Democracy Index, a survey of the public's current attitudes. As reported in the 2010 index, only half of Israelis responded that they believe Arabs and Jews should have equal rights, and 53 percent said that the Israeli government should encourage Arabs to leave. When asked about Israel's double identity as a Jewish and democratic state, 43 percent of Israelis believed both characteristics to be equally important, 31 percent said the Jewish component was more important and only 20 percent said the democratic component was more important. These findings unfortunately document that Israel's authoritarian-esque policies are accepted by many, and, as the Israeli newspaper, *Ha'aretz*, printed in a 2010 editorial, "the twisted belief that democracy means the tyranny of the majority, and that equal rights for all the state's citizens is not an integral part of the democratic system."³

Even beyond the many questionable military operations and human rights abuses in the occupied territories and the segregating, oppressive policies towards Palestinians and Arab-Israelis there are many other gaping holes in Israel's "democracy". Most problematic is the lack of transparency and government accountability.

Israel tries its hardest to cover up the destitute conditions in which civilians live within Gaza. Neither Israeli nor foreign journalists are allowed in. During the Goldstone-led investigation into war crimes committed during Operation Cast Lead, Israel refused to cooperate and did not grant the United Nations commissioners entry into Gaza. Freedom of expression was also monitored during the Gaza Conflict, when peaceful protestors were met by violent police forces and many taken into custody and interrogated. This lack of transparency is entirely related to Israel's branding of its "delegitimizers"; it tries to protect its image rather than engaging criticism as motivation for change.

³ "Israel Can't Be A Democracy With Two Classes Of Citizens." *Haaretz* Editorial. 2 December, 2010.

Other problematic issues exist in Israeli society as well, such as discrimination of other minority groups and migrant workers, pervasive homophobia, and infringements on due process rights. These equally anti-democratic trends have been kept on the back burner because of the all-encompassing Arab-Israeli conflict. Arye Carmon, president of the Israel Democracy Institute, has said, “the atmosphere of constant crisis has stunted the evolution of Israel’s institutions of government, and precluded serious discussion of the Jewish and democratic values underpinning the state.” It is precisely those values that need strengthening.

Defensiveness Instead of Democracy

Instead, Israel is holding fast to its defensive tactics. Its insecurity about being under intellectual attack comes from the fear that the international community holds them to double standards. This is precisely the reason Israel refused to cooperate with the Goldstone report—it feared that the UN would be biased against Israel in its investigation. The Durban Conference in South Africa in 2001 during which Zionism was equated with racism is constantly referenced by Israel as proof that it is them against the world. The equation of Zionism with racism was in fact ignorant—Zionism at its core has nothing to do with racism. That said, it is a Zionist mindset that has bred rampant anti-Palestinian sentiment and made “ideas that were once considered too racist to be legitimately expressed...now part of the mainstream political discourse.”⁴ And while Israel may sometimes be subjected to double standards, the argument it falls back on—that other countries commit worse war crimes and human rights abuses without being criticized—is not an argument at all. Like journalist Mirav Michaeli has said, “complaining about persecution is not a

⁴ Sharon Weill and Valentina Azarov. “Israel’s Authoritarian Transformation.” *The Electronic Intifada*, 25 February, 2009.

policy, nor is it a strategy. Rather, it is a tactic that just inflicts more damage on [Israel].”

Courtesy of Ariel2060



Israel has become far too focused on what it stands against and has lost sight of what it stands for. It needs to confront both the question of its Jewish identity and its democratic one, neither of which are reflected in its current foreign or domestic policies. At the core of a democracy should be the constant struggle to better itself, but critiquing Israel has become ridiculously restricted by the terms set for what is acceptable criticism and what isn't. Israel

needs to be proactive in changing its policies instead of feeding the international community's anger with more anti-democratic developments. And rather than waging war against the intellectual assault on its right to exist, it should show more concern for beginning to demonstrate the Jewish and democratic ideals it claims to hold. To do so would simultaneously assuage the international community's protests, and only then will delegitimization be delegitimized.

The Need for Political Parties

Miloš Brunclík*

People often perceive political parties negatively and identify them with ruthless power struggles and corruption. Nevertheless, domestic and international experience proves that political parties are indeed necessary, if not key features of a democratic political process, despite their negative connotations.

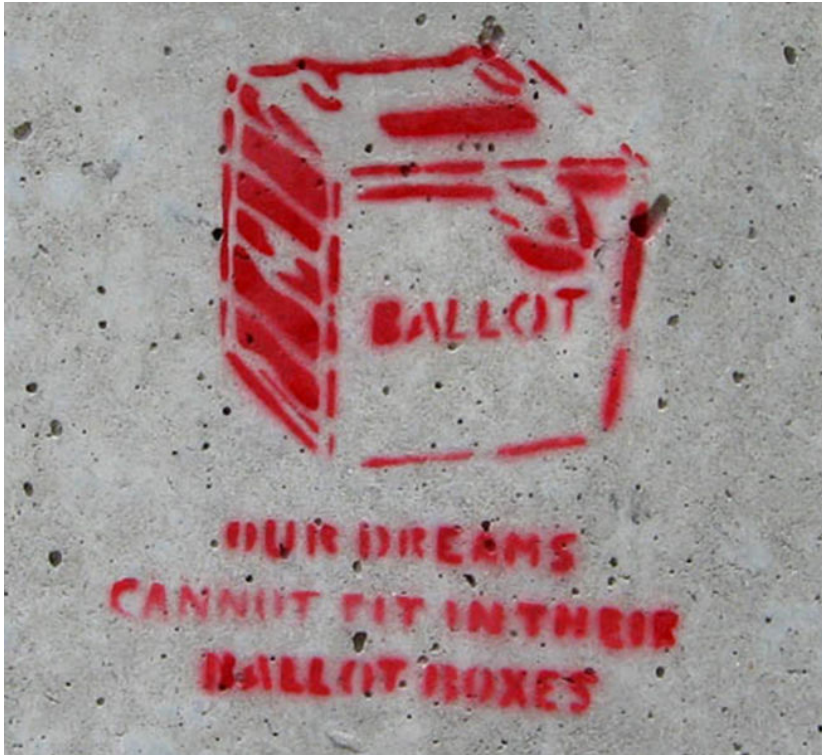
Almost any democracy can be described as ‘democracy through political parties’ - the vast majority of liberal democracies around the globe cannot function without them, with the exception of small states such as Nauru, Kiribati, Marshall’s Islands or Tuvalu. Indeed, political parties are so pervasive in the democratic process that they are nearly definitional - democracy can be understood as a process in which voters delegate the authority to make political decisions to representatives who have been nominated by political parties.

The significance of political parties for modern democracies can also be described by the functions political parties fulfill, or rather, are supposed to fulfill. German political scientist Klaus von Beyme recognizes four main functions of political parties: goal identification; articulation and aggregation of interests; mobilization and socialization of the public; and recruitment of political elites and government formation.

* Miloš Brunclík is a fellow at the CEVRO institute and lecturer at the Faculty of Social Science at Charles University.

Let us look at these functions in more detail. Political parties should define and describe their desired goals, define the means to achieve these goals and propose alternative methods and solutions to other parties' suggestions. Political parties most often lean on an ideology – a coherent set of specific values, norms, opinions and attitudes, which explain and evaluate social processes and problem areas, guide the citizens in a certain direction and offer solutions to societal issues (for example liberalism, conservatism, or socialism). Political parties form concrete programs on the basis of these general ideological conceptions and attempt to address and attract the public in elections. In other words, political parties should seek electoral support by offering a set of proposals based on certain values, and by fulfilling specific goals. Voters subsequently choose among the alternatives on offer.

This is where the first challenge arises. Instead of presenting voters with a specific vision, political parties often court voters with empty promises. They constantly follow public opinion polls, emphasize subjects preferred by the voters and build their programs accordingly. We can illustrate this voter-courting process with the direct presidential election discussion in the Czech Republic. Almost all parties agree that it is necessary to elect the president directly, even though it would paradoxically lead to a loss of political influence as currently parliamentary political parties elect the president. However, this proposal is not backed by any solid expert evaluation or rational debate, and most of the parties' arguments for the constitutional change can be refuted. The only argument that cannot be refuted is the fact that most people want direct presidential elections. Although voters often keep political parties responsible and accountable, in the case of direct presidential elections, the need to cater to constituents hinders politicians' ability to have a rational discussion and come to a conclusion that will be good for the country - looking beyond the next election year.



Stencil art. Derivative. Creative Commons Attribution 2.0

With this in mind, one may ask: what should the relationship between voters and political parties be? Is it not desirable after all that parties reflect the voters' moods in their programs and proposals? Is it not harmful to ignore the voters' opinions and create programs different from voters'

wishes? These questions are related to the second function of political parties: articulation and aggregation of interests. Political parties translate the desires of their members and voters into public discussions. They point out social problems and promote the needs of various social groups. Advocacy for certain social groups leads to the creation of a political ideology, and parties use this ideology to shape their political programs. It is indeed correct and even entirely necessary for political parties to have a close connection with their voters and their voters' interests. However, it should not be mindless and without conception. On one hand political parties offer a certain product and on the other, voters demand a great number of things. Here we can use a parallel from the business world. In a shop, sales assistants try to meet their customers' wishes. However, they do not automatically offer whatever the customer wants; they try to improve their product, add something new – an added value that will make the offer even more attractive. A politician is like a

sales person. A politician is a professional, who should spend his time evaluating voters' wishes, placing them within the framework of the entire political ecosystem - budgets, competing interests, and so on - and making a decision about what is best for the long-term well-being of his or her constituents. The average voter does not have the time or the capacity to assess the relevance of individual proposals and propositions when it comes to expert and sometimes highly complex issues. However, the voter is competent to evaluate basic value, ideological and program concepts of political parties and the credibility of their representatives. If political parties are too accommodating to voters' whims, they easily slip to populism. When the political landscape is relatively calm, this strategy might work; however, as soon as the wind starts blowing, political parties without a clear ideological base start turning and twisting like a wind vane. Voters will soon notice the too frequent changes in opinion and punish the party in the next elections.

Socialization is a process of including the individual in a society. On a political level it means a process in which people acquire information about politics, create values, formulate their relations to politics and public issues and so on and so forth. Mobilization of voters is closely connected with the process of socialization. Political parties try to address the voters in different ways, attract voters' attention to their party programs and convince them to take part in the elections and vote for them. This function is the most distinct during election campaigns. In recent years the influence of specialized marketing companies is more and more visible in election campaigns. Key political messages are



Obama's "Hope" poster. Courtesy of Andrius Burlėga. Creative Commons 3.0

packed into distinctive and attractive slogans and catch phrases. In the 2008 US presidential elections, Barack Obama ran on hope; John McCain ran as a “maverick”. Such easily digestible brands dominate the political discourse during election season. So-called negative campaigns are used more and more frequently nowadays. Political rivals are pictured in a negative light, party programs are compared in a black and white perspective or rival programs are belittled and caricatured. Elections are slowly transforming into a sporting competition to attract voters’ attention.

A more important role of political parties is recruiting political elites and nominating candidates for public functions. Nevertheless, political parties often fail in this respect. Ideally political parties should be able to recruit highly qualified people who genuinely wish to engage in politics. Politicians in the Czech Republic make their living through politics – it is a source of employment and gain rather than devotion to the cause. Public opinion polls show that the average Czech person does not consider the profession of politician to be respectable. Why is that so? Politics breeds corruption. Power, influence and money are highly exciting temptations. It is unfair to say that politics and political parties are necessarily corrupt. However, this particular sphere does require very sound personal morals from the people who work in it.

Political parties have another function as well: possible dissatisfaction or protests from the public are not directed towards basic democratic institutions or democracy as a system of values, institutions and procedures. They are ‘absorbed’ by political parties. This key function is emphasized by a number of political experts. For instance American political sociologist Seymour M. Lipset claims that party systems protect democracy from public dissatisfaction, because outraged citizens do not focus on democracy as such, however, direct their anger at political parties and

politicians who are currently in power. This is therefore beneficial to democracy overall.

The platform of political parties is another controversial question connected to the function of parties. Is the pre-election manifesto just a scrap of pointless paper, intended only to attract fickle voters? Or is the election program a real foundation on which the political party will build after elections? The theory of rational choice offers an interesting insight into political parties, which can be classified according to their targets. Political parties can be divided into vote-seeking parties, office-seeking parties and policy-seeking parties. In practice it is difficult to find parties that fit one particular group; most parties combine two or three of these targets. If a party wishes to effectively implement its program, at first it needs to win votes and acquire certain posts within the government.

The negative characteristics of political parties unfortunately occur within party systems across the globe. It is an illusion to believe that various ‘apolitical’ and ‘clean’ initiatives and groups stemming from the civic society, which are essential for the wellbeing of a democratic society, can substitute for political parties and become qualitatively and morally higher categories of political representation. There is no feasible alternative to political parties. In democratic states, where millions of people have a right to participate in political life, direct democracy (public assemblies, initiatives and referenda) is not appropriate or effective. It may be an addition to representative democracy – a democracy in which elected representatives make key decisions. Despite the challenges, the functions of political parties are indispensable and necessary for a functioning democracy.

Equal Voting Rights: Anachronism or Necessity?

Commentary by Roman Joch*

Despite the drawbacks of granting everyone the right to vote, in our time and our society (not only Czech society, but Western society as a whole) equal elections are the most practical and convenient method to choose leaders and create laws.

Let us start from the beginning. In the 5th century BC Socrates lived in Athens. Socrates was a just man and loved wisdom above all else. Even so, he was sentenced to death under Athenian democratic rule in 399 BC. His disciple, Plato, who loved his teacher very much, did not handle the situation very well and proposed a radical and fierce charge against democracy as we currently know it.

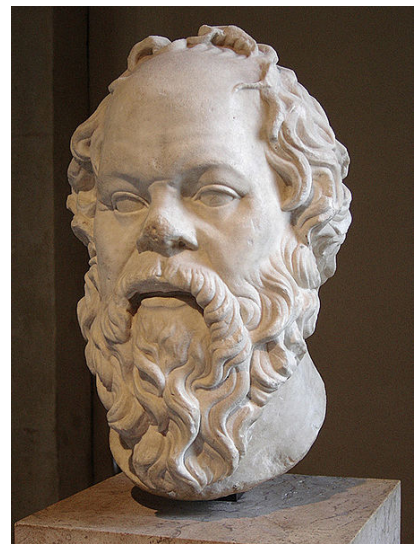
Plato argued that Socrates was not sentenced to death ‘even though’ he was just and loved wisdom above all, but precisely because of that fact. Democracy is the rule of the people, which in practice means the rule of the majority. However, in every society the majority of people are stupid and vulgar; therefore, when the majority rules, the members of the minority (the wise, educated, distinguished ones) are in danger. Democracy as the rule of the stupid and uneducated majority above the elite minority is therefore an evil, unjust and stupid form of government.

* Roman Joch is a Liberal Conservative politician and commentator. He is Prime Minister Nečas’ advisor for international and human rights and is the director of the Občanský institut (Civic Institute) in Prague.

Who Should Rule?

Well, the excellent (wise, educated and distinguished) minority. The rule of philosophers- kings, as Plato imagined it, is impractical. However, a rule where the minority governs – whether an individual (monarchy) or a small group (aristocracy) – is realistic and possible – as claimed by Plato’s disciple Aristotle. Therefore monarchy and aristocracy are better forms of government and in long-term perspective lead to greater good than democracy – the rule of the stupid, uneducated, vulgar majority.

The majority of Western intellectuals believed this argument for more than 2,000 years. In the 18th century, however, the founding fathers of the USA revitalized the notion of democracy. They did not call their form of government a ‘democracy’ per se; they called it a ‘republic’ (Aristotle’s terminology). Today, we use the words ‘democracy’ and ‘republic’ interchangeably. However, Aristotle and the founding fathers in America saw a difference. Aristotle perceived democracy as the rule of the majority over the minority and therefore considered it an evil form of government (just as tyranny or oligarchy). A republic, he thought, was the rule of the majority for the greater good; rule for everyone, even the minority. He considered it a good form of government (just like monarchy or aristocracy), however improbable in reality.



Bust of Socrates. Courtesy of Eric Gaba (Sting).

The founding fathers in the United States revitalized democracy and called it a republic. They did this by substantially limiting democracy, limiting the power of the government, the state and therefore also the majority. They did the following:

DEMOCRACY NOW? / TNP SPRING 2011

(1) They limited the power of the state with a constitution. They also divided the state into three branches – legislative, executive and judicial and set up a system of checks and balances. Only a limited power of the majority is acceptable. Democracy is therefore acceptable only and if the power of the majority is limited by the constitution, not when it is unlimited, as it was in Athens.

(2) They considered certain human rights – the right to life, liberty and legitimately acquired property – as unalienable and an inherent part of a legitimate regime. These individual rights, whether related to the smallest of minorities or just an individual, must be guarded and guaranteed by the government. The majority is permitted to rule only if it fully respects these rights.

(3) The question of religion was removed from the state's competence and entirely left to the consciousness of the individual.

(4) They changed direct democracy into an indirect democracy. A direct democracy – the rule of plebiscites and referenda – leads to a rule of passion and emotions, whereas a parliamentary democracy permits consideration and deliberation, therefore leading to a more responsible form of government.

Under these circumstances – limitations – democracy is a fully acceptable, even advantageous form of government. Why is it advantageous? Because of citizens' loyalty. It is a form of sovereignty that is based on consent of the ruled, displayed periodically at elections. People are more loyal to a democratic government, which they can select themselves, than the rule of predefined elites. This type of constitutional or liberal or representative democracy has another advantage. As philosopher Karl Popper stated, it is the only known form of government that allows for a peaceful removal of unpopular rulers: they can be simply voted out at the next election.

We can say that this form of democratic rule is appropriate and dignified as long as it adheres to the above mentioned limitations. It would cease to be appropriate and dignified if the majority would not respect these limitations; if it would not respect minorities' right to life, liberty, ownership; if the majority would persecute religious, political or any other minorities. This means that the guarantee of basic human rights and liberties is more important than a simple majority government. A majority government that does not guarantee basic individual rights has no legitimacy.

Majoritarian and Equal?

Representative forms of government were born before the American Revolution, as



Courtesy of Ben Combee. Creative Commons Attribution 2.0

seen with the British Whig's slogan "No taxation without representation." The Whigs, who became the first American patriots, were convinced that a government could be free, moderate and good only if the ones who carry the burden of taxation take part in its creation.

In other words, a government is good only if no one is

intentionally forced to pay tax for the benefit of somebody else. (This was considered very progressive up until the socialist movement, which rejected it and based its ideology on the opposite principal). The Whigs demanded that those who decide on taxes (and public expenditure) must also pay taxes. Essentially they demanded equality in taxation and voting rights.

However, not all classic liberals felt that equal voting rights were ideal. John Stuart Mill, a British philosopher and civil servant, for one, was a proponent of general voting rights (even voting rights for women) well before it was popular with the Conservatives or even liberals of his time. Please note the difference between general voting rights and equal voting rights. He wanted every adult (rich or poor, man or woman) to have at least one vote, however, not necessarily only one vote. On the contrary, according to Mills the number of votes should be determined by education. The most educated people would have more votes than uneducated. I am not aware of a country that has adopted Mills' system.

Should it change? And if it should, how?

Reintroducing property census is impossible, primarily because voting rights have been made general and equal, but also because it would not be a wise decision. According to the Whigs, it is much less of a problem if poor people (living on state support) decide on public expenditure, rather than very rich people who live and thrive on mammoth state contracts decide. This is the real problem of current democracy: the rich vote on state contracts, which they assign to themselves (through friendly political connections). However, whether it is a male or female vote is relevant. If one section of the population has voting rights – rich or poor, male or female – there is not a single reason why the other should not.

So, what is next? Voting rights for children? Some Christian-democratic politicians in German speaking countries in Europe thought it might not be a bad idea to give voting rights to children, which would be carried out by their parents before they reached legal adulthood. The end result would be strengthened political power of families with more children. I do not think it is necessarily a bad idea; however it seems there is not sufficient political will. So what do we have left? The old Plato-Mills idea of deciding political pull on education?

Certainly not. I have very little faith in our current formal academic ‘education.’ Modern universities are factories, which do not produce intellectuals, but pseudo-intellectuals, who are even worse than uneducated people, because they actually believe they are educated. Additionally, current modern universities by and large deform people’s natural sense for justice; they attempt to deconstruct it and indoctrinate their victims (students) confusing their ability to distinguish between just and unjust.

Therefore under current conditions and current moral and intellectual standard of the Western world (actually moral and intellectual regression) I tend to instinctively lean to the theory of William F. Buckley: “I would prefer the rule of the first 200 people from the Boson telephone directory, than the rule of 200 professors from Harvard University,” or perhaps the view of neo-Conservative Irving Kristol: “...the task of neo-Conservatives is to explain to ordinary people why they are right and to intellectuals why they are wrong.”

Reason and rationality dictate that the ‘one person, one vote’ principal is folly, or even madness. However from the perspective of the current Western world – with its moral and intellectual standards of the ‘elites’ and ‘intellectuals’ – it is essentially the best we have. We cannot expect we will create anything better, which the society as a whole would find acceptable.

Therefore:

Let us leave it as it is. Until other elements of society are improved, it seems the best we can do.

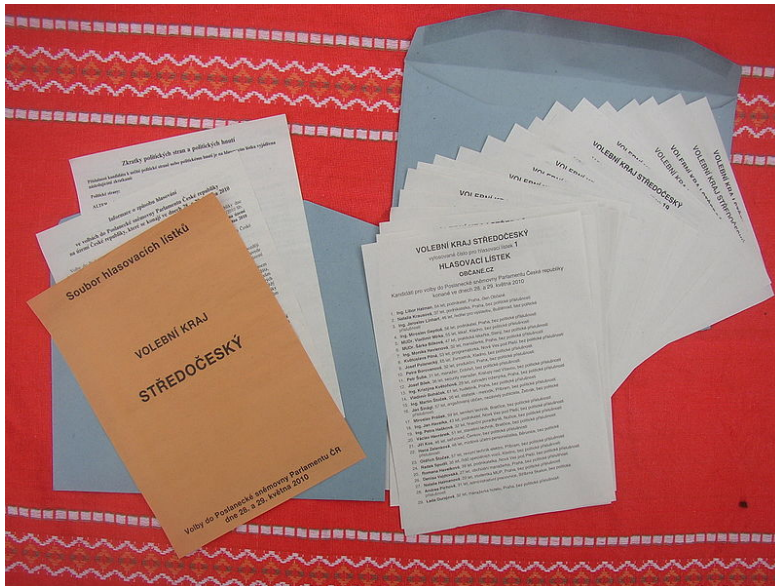
The Legitimization of Political Power

Ivan Malý*

Since the time of the Ancient Greeks, citizens have elected government representatives - an elite group to manage public affairs. This form of governmental democracy provided leaders legitimacy on which they based the validity of their rule. After all, the basic idea behind democracy is that the people will decide the character of the government and its direction with their vote. However, the reality of democracies around the world illustrates a divergence from this ideal – that the people may not be deciding a government's integrity or direction.

Democracy's recent history is directly influenced by political ideology and the number of parties and movements involved in the political process. Its form has been influenced by a number of previous attempts to justly form a government (take for example the Magna Carta Libertatum or the French Revolution). Historical experience proves that regular changes in power are essential for a legitimate government formation. Elections are an important means of accountability to one's electorate. The fact that every citizen has a right to vote is also a reflection of our time. It certainly was not common during the development of democracy. Property, gender or professional limitations were still commonplace not so long ago.

* Ivan Malý is a Czech historian, and the editor of *Přítomnost*, *The New Presence's* sister publication.



It seems that society is dealing with questions that should have been answered already. Is it right that voting – delegating political power to selected representatives – can be exercised even by criminals and those

who are supported by the state? Does anyone have the moral or legal right to take it away from them? Today, election results are to a high extent decided by the mass media and voters influenced by marketing strategies of individual political parties. The 2009 Austrian parliamentary elections present an example of this. During campaigning, the conservative party was leading over the Social Democrats until the Social Democrats' leader, Werner Faymann, published a letter in conservative Austrian tabloid *Kronen Zeitung* announcing an anti-European Union stance (via declaring support for popular referendums on all EU policies). This letter marked a turning point in the campaign, as such a stance is popular among conservative Austrians. The Social Democratic party went on to win the parliamentary elections. The influence of mass media is made even clearer by the close relationship between Faymann and the publisher of *Kronen Zeitung*; publishing his letter was likely a partisan vote of support for the Social Democrats. Democracy is reaching another level in its development.

In 18th and 19th century-era democracies, it was common that every candidate could meet with the vast majority of his voters. The only available media was print, every campaign was personal and the results were often fairly predictable. It seems

that this simplicity and clarity is long gone and elections can be predicted only through highly complex research. Statistician Nate Silver became famous during the 2008 United States presidential election for his extremely accurate and complex meta-analysis of polling data. He drew on his experience in baseball statistics, correcting for error by weighting polls and making comparisons with demographic data and using computer models to simulate the election 10,000 times per day. Ultimately, Silver correctly predicted the results of 49 out of 50 states - missing only Indiana, which fell to Obama by a margin of only 0.9 percent. The citizen's vote is lost in an ambiguous and globalized world where elections are just power transfer mechanisms for various interest groups.

Despite globalization's rapid changes to our world, not much has changed for politics in the last 100 years. There are still strong, charismatic politicians, idealists, opportunists or vassals of powerful lobby groups. Some may believe that elections are really just a chimera. After all even the socialism reign of terror shielded itself with elections and it had a very good reason for it. People really are the ones with the power. It is very difficult for any politician to claim popularity without claiming the popular vote of the people. Free elections can always change the direction the government will take. As Winston Churchill said, "No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." To vote should be everyone's personal decision and right under any regime or circumstances.

Privileged Elite, Dictatorship of the Majority (Election Rights in the Czech lands)

Voting rights were not always common in the Czech lands. Since the beginning of the 1860s voters were divided into four groups depending on the size of their assets.

In the first group (large landowners) there was one mandate for every 20 voters – in the fourth group (villagers) there was one mandate for every 129,000 voters. Only citizens from influential or financially independent backgrounds were awarded the right to vote. Eventually more groups were added.

From 1907 there were general, equal, confidential and direct voting rights for all men above the age of 24. However, men who received state support, army members and police officers were exempt from that right. General and equal voting rights, as we know them today, were introduced only after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic. General, equal, confidential and direct voting rights were included in the constitution in 1920. All citizens over the age of 21 thereby received the right to select their representatives in parliament.

Women also received the right to vote only after the establishment of the Republic. Previously only some very influential women from the upper classes were granted the right.

The first Czechoslovak Republic made great progress in terms of expanding voting rights, but its system left room for improvement. There was no minimal percentage of the popular vote for election into the parliament, which allowed for the election of too many conflicting parties. This eventually led to the formation of an informal group of the most powerful political parties (the so-called big five), which decided on state matters outside of the parliament benches. Ferdinand Peroutka, the first editor-in-chief of the *Přítomnost* magazine, reflected on the 1925 elections:

“What have the elections brought us? The new parliament, only just arising from the dust clouds of election battles, will not evoke instant approval in anyone. People from the right, left or center will not be satisfied. We have to admit they will be right, because this parliament does not work for the people from the right, left or center. Or we could say that it works for all of them. Social democrats have said that

they have had enough of the bankruptcy parliament; people will now decide the direction of our politics. Well, the people have decided. People have decided to elect a number of communists into the parliament as well as a number of clerics. People have energetically decided that we must turn to the left. They have also just as energetically decided that we must turn to the right...”

Ultimately, this system trapped the Republic in indecision. The government lacked direction due to too many competing voices.

Significant changes in the parliamentary election system came in the post World War II era together with the Soviet dominance in Central Europe. Free and fair elections did indeed take place in Czechoslovakia in May 1946. In comparison with the previous free elections, the age limit was decreased to 18 years. After the Communist putsch in February 1948, the Czechoslovak Communist Party took up the leading position. In the subsequent 1948 elections, only parties that were a member of the Communist-fueled National Front coalition were allowed on the ballot. In practice the dominant role of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and bureaucratization of life meant that elections were a government-controlled transfer of power - the people had no voice. Personal initiative of the individual was excluded and the so-called elections eliminated any form of interest pluralism.

A Reconstruction of Democracy?

This summary has been necessarily brief; however, one can conclude that by the end of the 20th century it seemed that democracy was an unstoppable force, taking root all over the world. Only twenty years later it seems that we need to ask ourselves whether our current notion of democracy is suitable for the future. It appears that without a basic revision of this particular form of power division the entire system as we know it could crumble. The ever decreasing influence of the European continent

and USA on the geopolitical world stage forces us to mobilize the basic values of the Euro-Atlantic civilization and focus on its further development and progress. Other entities will step into our power hemisphere. Therefore, we must transform the foundation stone of our civilization; re-define it and hopefully confirm it.

The basic democratic right – the right to vote – loses its meaning under the pressure of election campaigns. Current practice shows that contemporary voters express themselves negatively rather than positively. Even so, the voters still have a chance to say ‘no’ to a government they are dissatisfied with. It is also necessary to understand that elections or democracy on their own do not guarantee a successful society. They however represent people’s free choice and active approach to building a society or a state. We must continue building on this free and fertile energy. Free elections are an important step toward a truly egalitarian society, built by the active participation of its people.



Courtesy of Darwinek. Creative Commons.

A Declining Civic Democracy, A Crisis of Politics

Commentary by Pavel Kopecký*

It is said that the Czech Republic is a post-transformational society. However, often, it does not seem like it. Instead, it often looks to the past, but is unable to see or utilize any valuable lesson. This is how it works here, when it comes to reconciliation with the past. This is illustrated in politics today. Perhaps we have not come as far as we thought.

So let us take a lesson from history and ponder the function of political parties within our society. More than twenty years have passed since the fall of the Czechoslovak Communist regime, which ruled our territory for nearly four decades. It seems, however, the regime's rhetoric and traditions remain with us today, either in physical form, with Members of Parliament Miroslav Grebeníček and Marta Semelová still representing the KSČM Communist party, or in an ideological, perhaps subtler way. This is hardly a surprise. Regime change occurred frequently in the Czech lands and new regimes were not always built on fervent denouncement of the previous.

The final demise of the Communist government and its substitution with the so-called Third Republic did not lead to a return of full public plurality or party plurality. Nevertheless, twenty years have passed since the end of Communist rule and since 1989 Czechoslovakia, and the subsequently created Czech and Slovak

* Pavel Kopecký is a political scientist, historian and sociologist. He is a teacher and writer, regularly contributing to academic journals and newspapers.

Republics, is building a popular democracy. Since the beginning the conditions were not ideal: one of the first parties created in the Czech lands without the influence of the Communist Party was the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA). The force at the beginning of the competitive party system renaissance was the Civic Forum (OF).

These “Velvet Revolutionaries,” some of who left to the unsuccessful Civil Movement (OH), did not hold one opinion on how and which parties should develop. In fact, the only commonality they all shared was a loathing the departing regime. The Civic Democrat Party (ODS) held the majority of the revolutionary ethos, including its resources, and represented the pro-free market wing of the OF. Despite the parties controversies today, the ODS is still the strongest post-revolutionary (right-wing) party in the country. Established in Olomouc during a rally in April 1991, ODS just celebrated its twentieth anniversary. The creation of ODS has been a determining factor in the development of the entire country.

Party Politicians

The star of the Czech political scene, current president Václav Klaus (renowned around the world for his rejection of global climate change and his affinity for pens) has become the country’s steadfast leader. His movement into this position effectively killed first President Václav Havel’s perhaps naive concept of “apolitical politics.” Klaus was hoisted into power, seemingly with the intention of building some sort of Czech iron chancellorship, with the assistance of the highly controversial political figure, Miroslav Macek.

Despite the support, Macek, often suspected of property fraud and embezzlement, recently claimed that the anniversary of the ODS party is nothing to celebrate. It can be assumed that this statement was made in reference to the distancing of new ODS members from its older roots and the party’s general decline in popularity. During



Prime Minister Petr Nečas. Courtesy of *The Archive of the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland*

elections in May 2011, ODS ceased to be the indisputable hegemonic power on the right side of the political spectrum. Instead, it was cornered by the expertly led TOP09, an ad hoc group created by Miroslav Kalousek. This new fiscally conservative party, promoting the European Union and the free market, may cause problems for Klaus and his successors as their interest groups clash – not that Klaus does not cause enough problems of his own.

Klaus, the dissatisfied father of the economic reform, often weakened the ODS party with his

brash behavior and opinions. He is an antithesis to current ODS leader Prime Minister Petr Nečas. Intelligent and calm, Nečas remained in the party leadership for many years before running for office. The question, however, remains whether Nečas will be strong enough to handle forthcoming crises. Most were not impressed by Mr. Polite's role is quelling the latest dispute of the governing coalition.

It seems unnecessary to speak about the Czechs' 'gold digs digging' in the 1990s. Many things had to give way to the social and economic transformation. However, it appears that the old negative traits of the former regime (corruption, scandal and ineffectiveness) are coming back like a swinging pendulum. Selective memory is

possibly one of the reasons why Czech political culture (lacking any form of well organized civil society) has not changed for the better in any significant way.

In the last century, demand for a more effective economy was overshadowed by massive fraud related to public finances. Today, when we have nothing left to privatize, we privatize the state. There are plans for compulsory payments into private pension funds, to name one recent example. Political scientists in recent years also mention the country's movement towards private state security. In this regard, the Czech Republic seems to be the leader of the pack.

A strong private security company, Agentura Bílého Lva (White Lion Agency - ABL), invested vast resources into transforming one marginal party (Public Affairs, VV) limited to just one Prague district into a nation-wide entity. The role of formal party leader, was given to former TV Nova persona Radek John, parallel in popularity to TOP09's Karel Schwarzenberg. The amusing thing is that John was supposed to guarantee an effective fight against corruption in the Czech Republic, a fight against the so-called political dinosaurs. Yet John's party is in the thick of a corruption scandal and this month, he resigned from his position.

It is certain that the current "peaceful" mood within the governmental coalition formed by ODS, TOP09 and VV will eventually lead to further scandals and more misconduct related to phone line tapping and envelopes filled with 'loans.'

In any case it is becoming clear that are not experiencing a crisis of the party system, we are experiencing a crisis of politics – the fundamental administrative method of a civic democracy.

No Papers, No Rights: Migration Detention in the European Union

Katrine Hogganvik *

On 1 January 2011, state members of the European Union implemented the Return Directive, to “tackle illegal immigration.” The EU’s directive allows governments to keep migrants in confinement for up to one and a half years while authorities prepare for their deportation. Whereas the imprisonment of criminals requires a trial, the confinement of paperless migrants is a simple administrative procedure in the European Union. An official merely claims they “suspect” a migrant might not comply with their removal to order forced confinement.

Barred from the outside world and kept under heavy surveillance migrants, many of them children, are currently held in over 200 centers and detention camps across Europe. With the new directive, the EU created common procedures to facilitate the forced removals of migrants. Instead of higher standards safeguarding against arbitrary detention, the directive has legitimized the inhumane and inefficient systematic use of detention in Europe, a method highly unlikely to solve the problem of illegal immigration.

* Katrine Hogganvik is a public policy student at Anglo-American University in Prague and is currently developing her Master’s thesis on common immigration policies of the European Union in relation to Southern European migration streams.

Mismanaging Migration Flows

According to European Commission numbers, the illegal immigrant population in the EU has reached 8 million people as of 2008. During his European Union Presidency, Nicolas Sarkozy created the directive under the broader Immigration Pact. The immigration pact itself narrowly defines migration as a security concern which should be controlled with border enforcements and increased efforts to evict unwanted migrants.

Instead of combating illegal immigration, these efforts are ineffective in deterring the number of illegal immigrants. The EU is unable to prevent new entries yet highly reluctant to grant residence permits, a large part of the reason why the number of illegal immigrants has grown by 50 - 100,000 people every year since 2000. In 2010 about 80 percent of new “illegal” arrivals came to the European Union via Greece. Most of these migrants were fleeing war and turmoil in Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia. On average, only 36 of 30,000 applicants are granted refugee protection status. However, Greece sent more than 35,000 people to pre-removal centers designed to only accommodate 1000. Doctors Without Borders, an international humanitarian organization, visited Greece’s concluding that conditions have reached “emergency levels.” Cells were so crowded that the inmates did not have enough space to lie down.

The Return Directive

Upon its publication, the European Commission claimed the Return Directive would “provide clear, transparent and fair common rules concerning return, removal, use of coercive measures, temporary custody and re-entry, which take into full account the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the persons concerned.” At first the

directive appears to prevent repressive practices across the EU stating detention should only be used as a “last resort.” It urges all members to take into account the “best interest of the child”, help preserve “family life” and also consider the state of mental and physical health of the person facing deportation. With further inspection, these concerns are notoriously devoid of concrete safeguards.

The Directive states that detention is only justified in order to facilitate deportation. If deportation is justified, then detention should only be applied when authorities know they will deport someone at the end of the detention period. But this is hardly the case in the European Union. According to a major 2009 study from the migrant watchdog the London Detainee Support Group, only one out of three migrants in the United Kingdom who were detained for more than a year are eventually evicted from the country.

In order to prevent this form of arbitrary detention, the document should include a clause about detention that is justifiable only when a migrant has exhausted their right to appeal and have no right to reside beyond a reasonable doubt. In practice, migrants across the European Union are detained on arrival. Because the authority might suspect that a migrant could fail to comply with their removal order, it does not have to be based on actual demonstrated or repeated non-compliance. Detainment has become more of a first response rather than a last resort.

Proportionality

The directive also states that “the use of detention is limited and bound to the principle of proportionality” and should only be used in cases where “less coercive measures would not be sufficient.” But it offers no requirement for states to apply and exhaust less coercive alternatives before resorting to detention.

Although it is not specifically mentioned in the directive, France and Denmark have allowed migrants to reside independently on the condition that they report to the foreign police twice a month. Open centers have also been put to use in several countries allowing migrants to leave during the day but are subject to a curfew at night. These alternative policies, however, seem to be an exception, not a norm.

Failure to Protect Vulnerable Persons: Children

According to the directive, “vulnerable persons” are defined as “minors, unaccompanied minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents with minor children and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence.” However, the directive provides no legal impediment to their detention.

The Need for Better Practices

Confinement restricts freedom of movement and isolates detainees from the rest of society and loved ones. The mental stress caused by detention could be too much for some migrants to bear. Whereas the impact on children is well documented, a 2010 study showed that detention causes harm to all groups who experience it. The study, conducted by the refugee assisting organization Jesuit Refugee Service, spent 18 months researching the mental impact of lengthy detention in 23 European countries. Over 90 percent of children interviewed showed signs of mental disturbances and depression, anxiety and insomnia were common among all groups. The study also found that less than a third of inmates know why they are detained. Even fewer knew how long they would be held, what the future holds after release or deportation, considerably increasing inmates’ stress levels.

Leading Human rights organizations like Amnesty International, the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and Save the Children have been advocating for better safeguards against arbitrary detention and inhumane treatment of migrants. For more than a decade irregular migrants, asylum seekers and children throughout the EU are routinely denied their freedom of movement, held in removal centers, prisons, police stations, and moved throughout the European Union. Many migrants are denied their right to judicial review and their right to apply for asylum. They are sent straight to detention without an assessment of more humane and cost-efficient alternatives.

Thousands of families with children are detained in the European Union every year. In France up to 1,000 unaccompanied minors are detained yearly in so called “transit zones” at the Charles de Gaulle airport where legal rights are fewer than in the rest of the country. According to Human Rights Watch, one of the world’s leading Human Rights organizations, about 30 percent of children placed there are removed from the country, most without any trace of what has happened to them.

In Germany, 16 states oppose granting migrant children the same rights to protection as nationals out of fear that it would act as a “pull factor” attracting larger streams of migrant children.

Downward Harmonization

The most controversial aspect of the directive is a clause allowing member states to keep migrants in detention for as long as eighteen months, a time limit much longer than the average EU state limits previously in use.

The first draft required authorities to perform a judicial “review” in order to detain migrants for longer than one month. In the final draft however, “one month” was changed to “at reasonable intervals”, which, because of specificity, renders the clause meaningless.

In France, detention was limited to thirty days, and in Ireland, Italy and Spain, limits on detention were set at 30, 60 and 40 days respectively at the time when the Directive was created. Italy was quick to increase the upper limit from 60 days to 18 months soon after the directive was passed.

Bjarte Vandvik of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), a leading organization advocating for the legal rights of migrants, said: “While the directive

aims to harmonize practices, the practical outcome is a codification at EU level of the member states' harshest practices and policies.”

This downwards harmonization occurred in the Czech Republic, who incorporated the Return Directive into national law in January as part of wider and stricter amendments to the countries' Aliens law. “Before the new law migrants could be detained for a maximum of 180 days, this has now been extended to 545- far too long,” said lawyer Magda Faltová in a telephone interview. She is the director of the Association for Migration and Integration, an NGO that provides legal assistance and counseling services to migrants in the Czech Republic. “If they cannot expel a migrant within 6 months, they will not be able to in 18 months either” she says. She continued to explain how authorities are often unable to evict detainees because administrative problems such as the unwillingness of a migrants' home country to issue travel documents to their citizens. Migrants are often repeatedly detained without the proper documents. “If a migrant can not be sent back to their home country, they are released and may be detained again for breaching immigration laws.”

Financial Inefficiency

These harsh removal policies are not only morally reprehensible but also financially unsustainable. The United Kingdom serves as an example. According to the UK Immigration Office expulsions cost the every British taxpayer £11,000 in 2005. The UK has an estimated half a million illegal migrants residing in their territories. Even if the strategy shifted towards voluntary return strategies, which, according to the same source, cost the United Kingdom one tenth as much as their current policy, the likelihood of applying it to even the half a million migrants each year is unrealistic.

In the end, these policies serve as mere symbols of government efforts to soothe immigrant-hostile electorates who willingly demonstrate against illegal immigration.

Final Remarks

The idea of creating common standards for migrant returns has created a good institutional framework for improving detention practices, but instead, it has only encouraged even harsher and more arbitrary practices.

With harsher and more arbitrary practices, return policies in any form are highly unlikely to “control migration flows.” Governments would have to reassess the entire system, as well as nationalistic ideas, regarding rights to citizenship, which will take substantial effort and time. Meanwhile the barriers between the legally residing and the unwanted and undocumented persist, and without rights and papers, illegal migrants continue to live in the shadows of the European Union.



Refugee-immigrants being detained in in Fylakio Detention Center in Greece. Courtesy of Ggia. Creative Commons.

Censorship, Fidesz, and the Presidency of the EU

Robert Gordon *

On 1 January of 2011, Fidesz, the dominant party of the Hungarian parliament, gained council presidency of the European Union (EU). On the very same day, Fidesz passed a controversial media law criticized by many within the EU as an “authoritarian” measure. The law in question was quite opaque, stating that “the press must respect human dignity, and media content must not be capable of fomenting hatred against national, ethnic or religious communities, or offending or excluding them.”

Interestingly, however, the law was recently moderated via several amendments. Among them are limitations of the law’s scope only to national broadcasters rather than press or regional radio and television, as well as a limitation upon what qualifies as offense to incitement of hatred and discrimination. These amendments may be the result of international backlash to the law’s instatement. If so, Fidesz provides an example of the influence EU council presidency has upon member states; an influence that serves to moderate extreme policies of its members in the interest of a positive European image.

* Robert Gordon is a student at New York University currently studying political philosophy with an interest in applied ethics and international law. He has recently studied in Prague, with a focus on jurisprudence and political dissent.

The Rise of Fidesz

Fidesz arose following the fall of communism as a libertarian movement, but shifted their ideology in 1994 from liberalism to conservatism following poor election results. Since then, Fidesz has found its place as an alternative to the MSZP as well as Jobbik, a radical right-wing party suffering from accusations of fascism and anti-Semitism. This is the second time the party has taken power, the first being in 1998 when they defeated the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP, descendants of the Soviet-era Communist Party) and Independent Smallholders (a conservative, agricultural party which held power immediately preceding the communist coup, and which since has lost all parliamentary representation).

The recent media law implemented by Fidesz, and headed by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, was partially justified by the rising anti-Semitic (as well as anti-Roma) sentiments that have found root in the Hungarian right, of which Jobbik is a definite part. The law's provision that content may not foment hatred toward "national, ethnic or religious communities" was seen as a start in protecting these communities from hostile parties. In addition to minority protection, the intent of the law is the monitoring of media outlets that are deemed crude; an investigation was launched when a song by the American rapper Ice-T, translated into Hungarian, was broadcast on Tilos radio, with the new media authority asserting that the song hurts the "intellectual development" of children.

However, this assault on "crude" media appears to be implemented unequally. Fidesz must compete with Jobbik in an effort to draw right-wing voters, and has, in several instances, let anti-Semitic opinion continue unopposed so as not to agitate Jobbik's base of voters, whom they are courting. For example, the Budapest paper "Magyar Hírlap" owned by Fidesz millionaire Gábor Széles, has received regular accusations of publishing anti-Semitic material since Széles's takeover in 2005, but has received no attention from the new media authority. This inattention stands in

stark contrast to the aforementioned aggression against Tilos Radio, a longstanding anti-racism advocate.

Civil Society's Retaliation

Since the law's implementation, Hungarian civil society has become revitalized through voicing criticism towards it. Since January, there has been a swath of protests railing against the law. Just two weeks after the law was passed, approximately 15,000 protesters gathered in front of the Hungarian parliament to voice opposition to the law. The Green party organized a "No Orbán Day," on 1 February. On 15 March the largest public demonstration in Hungary since the fall of the Iron Curtain took place, with 30,000 citizens coming out in demonstration against the law.



Courtesy of HungarianWatch.wordpress.com

The opposition has found root mainly within Hungarian intellectual circles, and their criticism has received plenty of attention, mainly due to the fact that major opponents to the law are themselves members of the media. Many news organizations, usually center or left-wing publications such as *Népszabadság*, *Magyar Narancs* and *Élet és Irodalom*, have voiced opposition to the law, printing empty front pages in protest. Major blogs such as *Index* and *Origo* have put posts critical of the law on their front pages. Attila Mong, journalist of the first channel of the state radio, has voiced dissent through enacting a minute of silence during his

broadcast. The act resulted in Mong losing his position as announcer and later being suspended.

The Reaction from Fidesz

The political attitudes of Fidesz have been cause for some concern, not the least of which has come from member states within the EU. German Member of the European Parliament, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, cautioned against the “authoritarian decay” which the law suggests, while Martin Schulz, head of the Socialist Group of the European Parliament, spoke even more harshly, claiming that Hungary was not worthy of the EU Presidency. Daniel Cohn-Bendit of the Green Party went so far as to claim that Hungary was headed toward a “communist surveillance dictatorship.” After Hungary spoke to deflect criticism of the law in January at the European Parliament, stating that domestic and international issues should not be confused, Portuguese President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso claimed press freedom to be a “holy principle,” and that he would send a letter to the Hungarian government in which Brussels would criticize specific portions of the law.

In considering these criticisms, it is necessary to note that the position of the EU has outgrown much of its practical use in recent years. The Lisbon treaty, ratified in 2009, eased the decision-making process within the Union, requiring, for example, double majority rather than unanimity in passing measures within several policy areas, such as Border Controls, Immigration, and “Freedom, Security and Justice,” among others. This, along with several other modifications, has rendered a central function of the presidency, facilitating compromise between opposing parties, significantly less important. As such, the presidency now serves as a means by which to acquire prestige and a positive image within the European community.

Piotr Kaczynski, a research fellow at the Centre for European Policy Studies, was contacted for input regarding the value of the presidency to states. “The political dimension [of the presidency] has been significantly reduced...” he explained. “The role of the Prime Minister of Hungary in the first half of 2011 is marginal.” However, the value of the presidency comes not from its expressly political function, but rather in attempting to “win credibility and expand networks.” Perhaps most importantly, Kaczynski said, “The Council presidency is a test case for the country’s public administration. Poor leadership can undermine trust towards the country as during the six months the country is much more ‘in the spotlight.’”

In the Czech Republic, which held the EU presidency from January to July of 2009, the “Czech council presidency terminated the government of Mirek Topolánek, which otherwise probably would not have fallen [had the CR not held the presidency],” continued Kaczynski. Topolánek inspired controversy during his presidency for employing rhetoric suggesting anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial and Nazi sympathies. The fall of his government via a no-confidence vote from the Czech parliament during a time when the Czech Republic had its international image most in jeopardy affirms the import of maintaining one’s image during a presidential term. While the fall of Topolánek was itself a source of embarrassment, the European Commission maintained confidence in the CR and their presidency was unaffected.

In this light, the introduction of Fidesz’s media law seems particularly untimely. Not only has the law proven internally unpopular, its introduction comes at a moment when the eyes of the Union scrutinize Hungary most intensely. Fidesz has not remained idle, however. As mentioned, the law was recently moderated and its scope limited. Rather than act as a catalyst by which the party may exert its influence, the EU has served to moderate the policies of Fidesz. The powers bestowed by council Presidency do not, despite the concerns of peers, provide an

outlet for the policies of the presidential country. The lack of actual power involved in council presidency serves to normalize the attitudes of radical parties.

Several years ago, Slovakia passed a law similar to the one put forward presently by Hungary, which guaranteed politicians, state institutions, and readers a “right of reply” to criticisms leveled against them, regardless of whether or not such criticisms were valid. Despite the domestic controversy surrounding the law, it received little attention within the international sphere. This lack of attention may be due to the fact that Slovakia will not receive presidency of the EU until July 2016. Slovakia was far removed from the “spotlight” which Kaczynski cites as falling upon Hungary during its presidency, and so it did not feel the international pressure to buckle to EU norms.

Interestingly, now that light has been shed upon Hungary’s law, Slovakia has taken upon itself to soften its own law. Evident here is an unintended consequence of the EU presidency: a normalization of controversial policies.

What Fidesz May Mean For The EU

By June, Fidesz will be on its way out of the council presidency. Nevertheless, it may be that the Hungarian case will illuminate an unforeseen effect of the EU presidency upon its member states. The presidency has been preserved in large part to make smaller states feel as though they are active members. By fostering a feeling of membership, smaller states cannot remain “off the radar.” By maintaining a pseudo-figurehead position within the European Union, there is an assurance that states holding the position must check their policies for fear of being condemned publicly by their fellow members. In essence, to hold presidency does not give a state power over other members, but rather the Union power over themselves.

Once Fidesz passes on leadership of the Union to their successor, Poland, and they are subsequently removed from the spotlight, their policies may revert to their original state and none will be the better for it. The response from Hungarian civil society, however, suggests otherwise. Given the continued domestic efforts to repeal the law alongside the international pressures, it is more likely that the spotlight which has fallen upon Fidesz will do true and lasting damage to their attempts toward media censorship. Indeed, the attempts by Hungarian media outlets to bring attention to international criticism of the law only further place Fidesz between a domestic rock and an international hard place.

To identify the moderating influence of the EU over the council presidency as either positive or negative is a difficult call. In this instance, international pressure has clearly worked toward the rights of citizens, but alternative scenarios must be considered. The accountability that the presidency creates for member states is useful for maintenance of the status quo, but in cases where the status quo does not conform to the rights of the individual, the presidency may curb truly progressive measures. Given, however, the standards for human rights that the EU upholds, this scenario is a far less likely possibility, and, empirically, we lack evidence to suggest such a scenario.

So far, the political attitudes that the EU has criticized and moderated have been racist and authoritarian tendencies exhibited by parties like Fidesz and Topolánek. Should the trend continue in moderating and drawing criticism towards repressive policies such as the media law, then the presidency may be hailed as a strategic incentive to support the rights and well-being of member states' citizens.

The Resurgence of Turbofolk

Robert Rigney *

A dozen actors clad in track suits fight, scream, simulate sex, smash bottles over each other's heads, shoot each other, sing and generally raise hell to an emotive soundtrack of popular Yugo turbofolk tracks. The idea behind Oliver Frljic's play *Turbofolk* is to shed light on a phenomenon which, like it or not, has spread beyond the borders of Serbia, its country of origin, and is now taking Croatia by storm, to the consternation of politicians, parents, priests and patriots. In Frljic's piece we watch as the Balkan animal within is temporarily set loose as actors gleefully launch their attack on etiquette, abandoning themselves to orgiastic violation and in a mood of festive bliss tear down the social, cultural and moral systems on which Croatian society has structured its everyday life.

Turbofolk is a style of high-octane pop-folk music from Serbia which originated in the Milosevic years. It has traditionally been associated with Serbian chauvinism, Belgrade nouveaux riche "peasant urbanites" and is generally disdained by intellectuals and those seeking to put the Balkans on a pro-western cosmopolitan path. During the Balkan wars, and in the years immediately following the conflict between Serbia and Croatia, Serbian turbo-folk was boycotted in Croatia and banned from Croatian airwaves. Lately, however, the music has caught on among young people in Croatia, and in many ways it has become a vehicle for youthful rebellion.

* Robert Rigney is an American writer living in Berlin. He lived in the Czech Republic for five years and has traveled widely in the Balkans.

This is of great despair to the Croatian establishment, who see the essentially Serbian music as a threat to Croatian national identity, as well as a trend that undermines public morality.

Unlike its usual critics, Frljic refused to take a moral stance on turbofolk in his play presented at the Hebel Theater in Berlin. While the style has been credited by intellectuals from Belgrade to Zagreb as denigrating morality, encouraging the subjugation of women, fanning the flames of Balkan nationalism and celebrating crassly materialistic values, Frljic merely presented turbofolk as it is, in all its violence, sex, obscenity, consumption, desire, destruction and ecstasy, while not making any bones of the fact that the music is actually highly catchy.

Speaking after the play on the music and his ambiguous stance towards it, Frljic said, “I would not say turbofolk is stupid or clever. It’s just there. It’s a product. And it’s a force in the market.”

What is Turbofolk?

Turbofolk, from a purely stylistic perspective, is a hybrid music from Serbia, which unites Western pop and Balkan, Oriental inflected folk. It originated in the beginning of the nineties and is influenced by a variety of sources ranging from Greek, Turkish and Gypsy music to Russian and Hungarian romances and Euro-pop. It blends cheap synthesizers with folk-style accordion playing and a manner of melismatic singing, originating from Serbia’s 500-year Turkish occupation. It is a style of wailing (sometimes described by its detractors by the derogatory term *zavijanje* – howling) voice characteristic of some types of duo phonic singing. “Dog music” or “Dog howling from Tehran,” is how some critics have described it.

Turbofolk, in its urban-peasant *mélange* is a characteristic of Belgrade, a city that is both rural and urban at the same time. It also has its parallels in other transitional societies throughout the world, from Mexico to Nigeria to Pakistan. Montenegrin singer living in Belgrade, Rambo Amadeus, the originator of the term, coined the sobriquet not originally in reference to Serbian music but rather to characterize the sound of Pakistani *bangra* music which he had heard in London in the beginning of the nineties. Corresponding via email Amadeus writes, “Turbofolk is a social phenomenon born in a moment when a primitive person or society gets in touch with technology.”

More than its distinct sound, however, the aesthetic of turbofolk, its orientation to images of glamour, luxury, and the “good life” as imagined by Belgrade’s peasant urbanites, is particularly striking. What many intellectuals from Belgrade writing in the nineties found disturbing about turbofolk was its milieu. Turbofolk fans were, and are still considered to be “Sljac[h]i”, peasants, an embarrassment to the cosmopolitan pretensions of a city that wants to see itself in the community of European cities, and yet still is inextricably Balkan.

Many critics writing about turbo-folk in the nineties took a particularly condescending view of the typical turbo-folk fan. Turbofolk men at the time wore, according to the stereotypical image, close cropped hair, gold chains on their bare chest, had a preference for trainer sweat shirts tucked in a certain model of ‘Diesel’ jeans. They were criminal youths, drug-dealers, war-veterans, thugs, “dieselmen”, driving expensive fast cars, packing guns – expressions of a so-called “Warrior Chic.” Turbofolk women wore stiletto heels, ever-so-short skirts over fishnet stockings, plunging necklines, platinum-dyed hair, had silicone breasts and vulgar, vamp-style make-up. They were so-called “sponsored girls”, who hung out in Belgrade turbofolk *splavs*, or river raft discos like Amsterdam and Aca Lukas.

The turbo-folk style, which set the trend in Serbia in the nineties, irritated many western-leaning intellectuals. It has been reported in Belgrade that this type of nineties turbo-folk personality has been on the wane of late, but in folk clubs on the periphery of Belgrade or in the river-raft discotheques which line the Sava and Danube rivers the type is clearly still very much present.

Some turbofolk lyrics are illustrative of the lifestyle, as offered by Eric Gordy, an American turbofolk critic:

Coca-Cola, Marlboro, Suzuki

Discotheques, guitars, and bouzouki

That's life, that's not an ad

Nobody has it better than us.

Ceca, the Goddess of Turbofolk

Turbofolk as a style of music and as a lifestyle blossomed in Serbia in the nineties during the Milosevic years, yet it has its roots in musical and sociological developments in the last decades of Yugoslavia when Belgrade witnessed an influx of migrants from rural parts of Serbia into the city. While long-standing urban inhabitants of Belgrade, but also of Zagreb and Sarajevo, held a preference for rock and progressive styles of music that originated in the West, they also still maintained a sentimental affection for old fashioned *starogradske pesme* (old town songs), played in traditional cafes or *kafanas* by often Gypsy *tamburashi* (guitar) and violin players, the new arrivals from the villages remained endeared to their folk (*narodna*) music.

As rural Serbs became urbanized in the seventies and eighties folk music took on various permutations. Folk music was transformed into *Novokomponovana narodna*

muzika, (newly-composed folk music) as folk musicians came into contact with pop, rock and other western styles. Finally, with the influx of techno and electro music from the West a new mutant rural-urban style developed: turbofolk, which became the music of choice young people with one foot in the urban world of Belgrade and one foot in the world of the village.

The paradigmatic model for the turbofolk star was, and to a certain extent still is, Svetlana Velic[h]ovic[c]-Ceca, the “Serbian Cleopatra,” “Balkan Madonna,” a turbofolk singer and goddess, who it is said, had “the voice of the nation.” She was,



Ceca in concert in 2006. Courtesy of Kavkaz 13. Creative Commons.

and still is, a symbol of Belgrade. She was married to Arkan, a war profiteer, indicted war criminal and in general kind of a Balkan Rambo macho man, who robbed banks in Europe before joining the war and going into politics.

Like many Balkan female singers who later went on to become regional and in

some cases trans-regional musical legends, Ceca got her start as a child singer, performing sentimental folk songs in Serbian *kafanas*, and then rocketed to fame with the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the advent of Serbian and Balkan nationalism. Her musical style was typical turbo-folk. Her songs blended Serbian folk –accordion riffs, a melismatic style of singing (typical for Balkan folk songs), with up-beat western synth pop and rock.

It must be said that, unlike Ceca's Kosovo Albanian counterpart Adelina, a folk diva, who was often seen draping herself in the Albanian flag and singing rousing, militaristic pro-Albanian songs, Ceca never sang about nationalism; she sang turbo-folk love songs almost exclusively.

Still, Ceca's music was vehemently boycotted in Bosnia and Croatia during the war years and the years immediately following. The controversy surrounding Ceca had less to do with her music than with her private life – namely, her marriage with paramilitary leader and well-known mafioso Arkan

Ceca and Arkan's wedding was the epitome of the turbofolk wedding. Arkan showed up dressed in the costume of First World War Montenegrin duke with a 15 centimeter gold cross around his neck and a sword. There was a massive wedding procession to Ceca's hometown of Z[h]itosedo consisting of 56 jeeps led by a cherry red Jaguar, which in place of the plates had a sign with the words, "Ceca and Z[h]eljko". The cars flew the flag of the Serbian Voluntary Guard. In Z[h]itosedo the procession was met by cheering inhabitants, standing in the rain without umbrellas. Great crowds coming from miles around waited outside Ceca's house. A *trubac[h]i* brass band played Ceca's hit 'Kukavica'. Upon getting out of their jeeps many wedding guests fired their guns in the air. The wedding was described in the Serbian press as "the wedding of the decade", "a work of art", the wedding of "the princess and the commander." The *New York Times* described it as "Hollywood on the Donau in the style of Greater Serbia," with, in the words of *Times* correspondent Rodger Cohen, "Ceca as Serbian Scarlet O'Hara." The video of the Ceca-Arkan wedding sold nearly one hundred thousand copies.

Polls chose Arkan and Ceca as the "Couple of the year" and one survey of teenagers showed most boys in Belgrade wanted to be as successful as Arkan, while an equal number of girls similarly hankered for a role like Ceca's. Ceca was voted the best dressed public figure. Her style was endlessly copied on the streets of Belgrade.

There were “Ceca twin” contests held on Belgrad *splavs*. Ceca became a role model, a Serbian heroine, an icon, never seen in public without bodyguards, a symbol of Serbian pride – and ultimately the embodiment of turbo-folk culture in Serbia.

Despite the fact that Ceca never sang Serbian patriotic songs, she did manage to express chauvinistic and nationalistic opinions privately, with her support for the Party of Serbian Unity, of which Arkan was president, to statements like, “I only like men who are Serbs.” Ceca became a member of Arkan’s political party, but expressed no interest in going into politics, a la Cicolina. “I’m a completely apolitical person,” she said.

Later Arkan was shot dead in the Hotel Intercontinental by mysterious gunmen who, according to various conjectures, were government hitmen, rival mafiosi or CIA agents. Ceca went into mourning, seldom went out, never went to discos and slept with a pillow emblazoned with Arkan’s visage next to her head.

Many thought that Ceca would not sing again after Arkan’s death. When she did, crowds in Serbia chanted “Arkan! Arkan! Arkan!” at her concerts. She remains to this day Serbia’s most popular musical artist, the country’s wealthiest woman and the epitome of Serbian turbofolk.

Criticism

For all the popularity of turbofolk in Serbia, its critics were and are legion. One of the criticisms leveled at turbofolk from the right concerned its heavily Oriental inflection. This can be explained by Serbia’s 500 years of Ottoman occupation. It also has something to do with the influence of markedly more oriental Bosnian Muslim singers, and also the fact that while Serbia suffered embargo from the West

during the war years, many singers turned towards the East, to Turkish and Arabic music for inspiration.

Critics from the right, therefore, claimed that turbofolk, with its heavily Oriental inflection, was anti-Serb, impure, “Islamic. One detractor of the music referred to it is “turban-folk”. Many Serb nationalist, but not exclusively, felt that Belgrade in the nineties was becoming increasingly marked by standards of bad taste and crass materialism, and Serbian nationalists targeted turbo-folk in their self-proclaimed “struggle against kitsch.” But much more prominent were the critics from the left. Among them Serbian academic, Ivana Kronja was the most articulate, describing it in a critical evaluation, *Smrtonosni Sjaj* (Deadly Splendor), as “vulgar,” “provocative,” “pornographic,” “sexist,” “chauvinistic,” “aggressive,” “narcissistic,” and “sadistic”. Another detractor called it “porno nationalism.” The turbofolk audience was seen as being composed of “peasants” (*seljaci*) and “primitives” (*primitivici*). In the opinion of Kranja, and other turbo-folk detractors, the music was an embarrassment to Serbia. For Serb intellectuals, who saw their country as still not having fully evolved from a rural to urban phase, turbo-folk, with its folk melos, rural accordion riffs and lack of west-European orientation, was indicative of a provincial mentality that prevented Serbia from entering the ranks of sophisticated European nations; ugly, crass, dirty, un-European.

According to critics like Eric Gordy it was also implicated in the Milosevic regime for propaganda purposes, dominating state-controlled media outlets, and instrumentalized to quash the regime-critical rock-and-roll underground.

Still, to this day, it must be said, that there is no proof that Slobodan Milosevic directly subsidized turbofolk. As for the criticism often leveled that it led to the death of rock-and-roll in Serbia, many musicians in the Belgrade music scene have suggested that by the time turbo-folk came to the ascendance in Serbia, rock-and-roll was already dead.

With the fall of Milosevic, turbofolk culture became somewhat milder and less aggressive in Serbia. Foreign journalists covering the Belgrade scene wrote that turbofolk had had its day.

Yet with the declaration of Kosovo independence, turbofolk made a comeback on Serbian airwaves, so that we can say that today turbofolk is anything but an anachronism in Serbia. Sava river rafts still play turbofolk to the enjoyment of thousands of Belgraders and turbofolk still outsells all musical genres on the streets of Belgrade, while Serbia's Pink TV continues to play an endless stream of videos featuring scantily clad singers belting out the folk-inspired tunes.

The Situation in Croatia

The most interesting developments in the evolution and spread of turbofolk, however, have been in Croatia. Until recently for most Croats, Serbia was the enemy they fought in the 1991-95 independence war and all its products were shunned. Turbofolk was seen as being synonymous with Serbia, and was considered politically incorrect. However, times are changing in Croatia. Small-scale *narodnjaci* folk clubs where turbofolk is played have been established in Zagreb suburbs for over a decade, and are becoming increasingly visible in the capital. Market stalls sell alongside pictures of Croatian national hero Ante Pavelić, CDs by Ceca. A survey in the Croatian newspaper *Jutarnji List* showed that 43 percent of 17 and 18-year-olds in the biggest Croatian towns regularly listen to turbofolk, often at home.

And contrary to the image of turbofolk fans being “peasants” and “primitives”, turbofolk audiences in Croatia are smartly dressed young urban Croats, who do not fall into the convenient stereotype of all *narodnjaci* (folk fans) as being all close-shorn, macho, gold-chain wearing football fans. While being almost exclusively of Serbian origin, turbofolk has even spawned home-grown Croatian variants, most

famously in the figure of Severina, a sexy Croatian pop singer who teamed up with Serbia's Goran Bregovic to make a high-octane turbofolk album, replete with Serbian-style brass. Her hit 'Gas, Gas' can be heard not only in the clubs of Zagreb, but in the Western capitals of Berlin and Vienna wherever there are increasingly voguish Balkan parties.

During the war years Croatia adopted a policy of excluding "newly composed folk music" from the market and airwaves and Croatian singers who sang Serbian folk songs were sometimes threatened at gunpoint.

However, in 2006 Severina's song *Moja s[h]tikla (My stiletto)*, was selected to represent Croatia in the Eurovision Song Contest. This immediately sparked controversy in Croatia. The song combined deliberately nonsensical lyrics with particularly folk song and dance styles, which mostly came from Zagora and Herzegovina, and had a sound and a feel that for many Croatians seemed "too eastern," "Serbian" and "Balkan", more in keeping with Serbian turbofolk than with Croatian music.

With Croatia's Eurovision selection of a palpably Serbian-style folk song a fierce debate arose. Supporters enumerated the song's various Croatian elements, giving reasons why it did not belong to Serbian culture: e.g. it contained lind[-]o (a folk dance from Dubrovnik), ganga and rera singing from Zagora, s[h]ijava (a counting game from Dalmatia); the performance included Stjepan Vec[h]kovic['], a member of Lado, playing a lijerica (a bowed lyre used in lind[-]o); it was not 'turbofolk'.

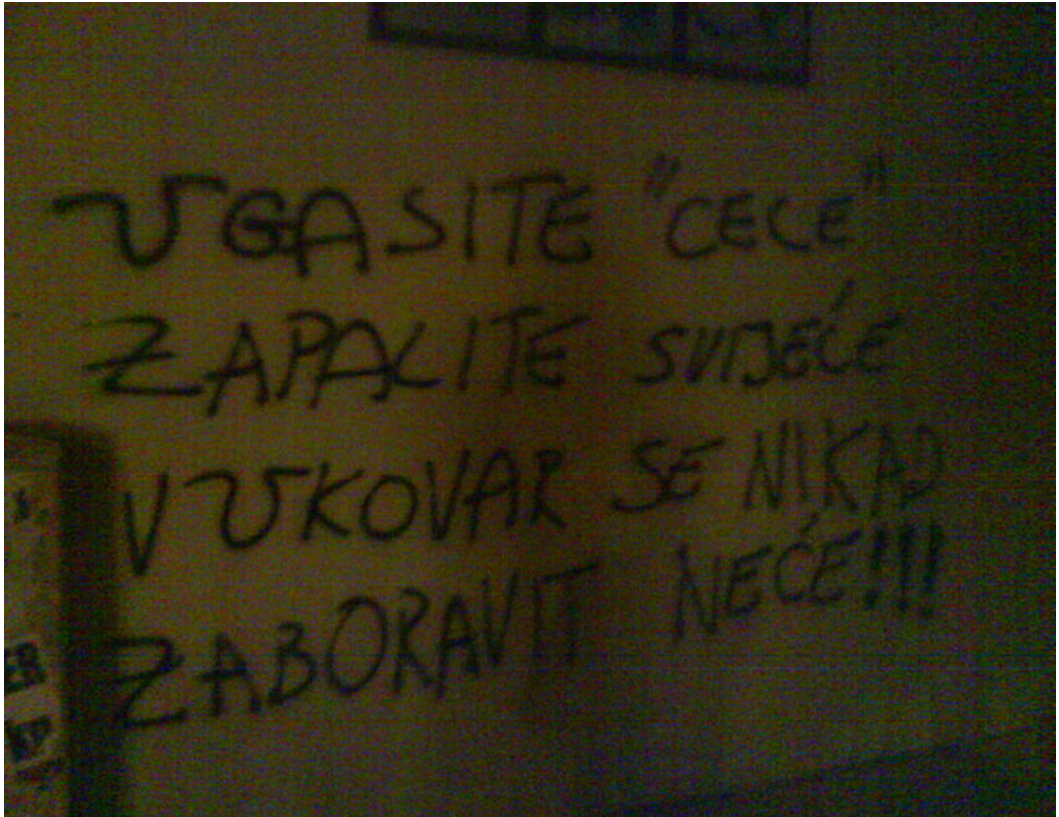
Concurrent with the Severina debate came a series of articles in the Croatian press about the disturbing rise of Serbian style turbofolk in Croatia. Croatian patriots, who for years have been obsessed with pathological Balkanophobia, portraying turbofolk in public as a dangerous, Byzantine, Oriental and underhanded embodiment of the still menacing Serb evil. Recently the Croatian press has been full of articles

lamenting the spread of turbofolk clubs, the “turbofolk ecstasy” of Croatian youth: “shaven-headed and muscular men driving fast cars and enjoying hedonistic entertainment, sexualized behavior, and stereotyped activities associated with the *kafana* environment – dancing on tables and breaking glasses”. Violent incidents in Zagreb turbofolk nightclubs were reported. Many people in Croatia feel that there is something about this “wild-eastern music” that provoked a no-holds barred Bacchanalian behavior. Much of the criticism is media hysteria, according to Dutch anthropologist Mattijs van de Port. However, he has explored the relationship between violent behavior and Balkan folk music in the environs of the Balkan *kafana* or bar in his book *Gypsies, Wars & Other Instances of the Wild*.

Until recently turbo-folk clubs were a phenomenon reserved for the outskirts of Croatian cities, patronized by new arrivals of Herzegovina (where the most “Balkan” of Croatians live), and not something relevant to the urban discourse of cities like Zagreb and Rijeka.

To the consternation of many in Croatia, this seems to be changing, as turbofolk penetrates into the urban sphere.

“We have now a lot of stars in Zagreb,” says playwright Frljic. “First you couldn’t find these kind of clubs in downtown. They were at suburbia and so on. Now you can find it in downtown. You can hear it on local radio stations. This kind of music, people play it in their cars. It’s everywhere. Young people have this melodies on their cell-phones.”



Graffiti against turbofolk music in Imotski, Croatia. Courtesy of Quahadi Añtó. Creative Commons Share Alike 2.0

The campaign against turbofolk in Croatia at the moment has all the elements of a moral panic. This is very interesting, for, up until now in the former Yugoslavia, rock-and-roll occupied the role of youthful rebellion, was associated with individualism and resistance. Now this role appears to be being usurped by turbofolk.

“For young people turbofolk is a kind of resistance against proclaimed social norms,” says Frljic. “In this era of wild capitalism, widespread frustrations over money, jobs and harassing bosses, a lot of young and middle-aged people born in towns deliberately confront the desirable cultural norms by going to turbofolk clubs,” says Croatian sociologist Drazen Lalic.

It is an irony of cultural transference that while turbofolk is a popular feature in the repertoire of every Yugo DJ in every German or Diaspora *Gastarbeiter* disco, the only place that turbofolk appears to be played in so-called “hip” Western venues, in say Vienna and Berlin, are places associated with the queer scene. In the Christopher Street Day parades in Vienna, for instance, it is not uncommon to hear Yugo-Turbofolk mingling with house and techno music.

At the same time, the rise of turbofolk in Serbia and Croatia, and its penetration from rural into urban milieu has an interesting parallel in Western cities like Vienna, Paris and Berlin, where many ex-Yugo migrants and refugees found themselves during the war years. Gradually and without the usual hype attending Western trends and fashions, for the past seven years Balkan parties organized by often Diaspora DJs have been attracting ever more and more young Europeans in Western cities, offering, with their emotive music, a kind of scene and atmosphere that is comparable to what exists in Serbian and Croatian turbofolk nightclubs and *kafanas*. Missing is the primitive machismo and violence of the Balkans, as well as the songs of Balkan turbo-folk singers like Ceca. Often Gypsy music and brass with a heavy dose of electro is offered up to the club audience. But the mood of the Serbian *kafana* is palpable. It is hedonistic, Bacchanalian, intoxicated and Eastern. And it is very much of an underground movement, which has gone largely unnoticed by the Western music establishment.

The End of Bin Laden and the Beginning of the End in Afghanistan: An Interview with Daud Khattak

John Jack Rooney *

Flying low through the mountainous twists and turns of Northern Pakistan, two helicopters cloaked with the most advanced stealth technology made hardly a sound as they cut through the night sky with muffled rotor blades and pointed singularity of purpose. Their mission: capture or kill the most infamous terrorist mastermind this world has ever known, Osama bin Laden.

This is truly the stuff of Harrison Ford and Tom Clancy. But while it's easy to be swept up in the fantasy of a Hollywood ending to this daring mission (complete with the explosion of the damaged helicopter as they ride off into the night), one must be reminded that all this transpired not on a movie set, but in the real world where things are never quite so simple.

Simmering tensions between Pakistan and the United States are now spilling over into a diplomatic crisis of veiled threats and frank criticisms, further damaging the central partnership to both the Afghan War and the greater War on Terror. In many respects, rather than resolving the US's concerns in the region, the raid against Bin Laden instead has raised a number of new difficult questions that must be resolved if the US hopes to have any confidence in winding down the most protracted conflict

* John Jack Rooney is an American freelance writer living in Prague.

INTERVIEW / TNP SPRING 2011

in the nation's history. For President Barack Obama, the July drawdown deadlines loom, and at the very least, he must now articulate a coherent strategy that addresses these new questions and stakes out a clearer path moving forward.

First and foremost, is Pakistan really a reliable partner onboard with US objectives in the region, and if not, can this critical partnership be sustained? More to the point, should the United States continue to give billions of dollars in annual aid to a Pakistan that continues to support and give sanctuary to certain elements of the enemy? What are the internal dynamics between Pakistan's civilian and military leadership and can moderate forces stem the rising tide of violent radical ideology in their country? What role do institutions like the United Nations and regional players like Iran and India have in moving forward with a diplomatic solution in Afghanistan? And finally, what does the endgame in Afghanistan really look like, and does the death of Bin Laden bring the US any closer to their objectives?

Just a week after the raid on Bin Laden's compound, I sat down with Radio Mashaal's Daud Khattak, an expert on Pakistan and Afghanistan, to see if he could shed some light on the various forces at play in this new diplomatic crisis between the US and Pakistan, and also how Afghan War policy will be moving forward. As we sat in his office at Radio Free Europe, I couldn't help but wonder how the death of Bin Laden would be viewed years from now – a critical juncture in the defeat of al Qaeda or merely a symbolic victory over an irrelevant old man?

Some say that the death of Bin Laden may mean the end of al Qaeda. How do you think the organization will change going forward now that their leader and figurehead is dead?

Al Qaeda is losing the sympathy of the people slowly and gradually, but if we think that there will be an abrupt change and everything will be ok, no I don't think so.

INTERVIEW / TNP SPRING 2011

Rather I may say in the near future there may be some kind of reaction but from al Qaeda and both from their Taliban affiliates and they may have some soft targets, just to show the world that they are still stronger.

Osama bin Laden is dead, and for the first time al Qaeda on some websites says Osama bin Laden is dead. I think they will take the events to show the world that they are stronger, and there may be some kind of reaction from al Qaeda or from Taliban inside Pakistan, or inside Afghanistan.

Their organizational structure is already to a large extent shattered. At one time they were based in Afghanistan, and then from Afghanistan they shifted to Pakistan. But in Pakistan, the Pakistan Intelligence agencies together with the American intelligence leadership hunted several al Qaeda leaders.

Their command and control system and their organizational structure was badly damaged and they were unable to continue their activities on the same lines as they were doing before 2001, 2002 and 2003. I think it will take some more time because most of the al Qaeda foot soldiers are second and third tier commanders, and they were more loyal to the personality of Osama bin Laden.

Now Ayman Al-Zawahiri is mentioned to be the al Qaeda number two, but they still did not announce their leader after Osama. And it is also likely that they will face leadership problems. There are reports that many of the al Qaeda figures don't like Zawahiri. I was reading a report today that Zawahiri is giving more preference to Egyptian al Qaeda members, so there will be problems, cracks will be emerging and al Qaeda will not be the same al Qaeda as it was before 2001, after 2001, and now after the death of Osama bin Laden. There will be a difference and with the passage of time, the world will see a difference.

You recently wrote an article about moderates in Pakistan and how it was important that they are able to stand up and make their voices heard rather than being scared by threats of violence, like for example what happened with the governor of Punjab. How do you see this playing out in the future, this kind of tension between more radical elements inside of Pakistan and moderate voices trying to emerge?

INTERVIEW / TNP SPRING 2011

Moderates are there in Pakistan, and they have enough strength. But the difference between the moderates and the radicals is that the moderates are not holding the gun, the radicals are holding the gun. They are wearing the vests, the suicide jackets, and they are out to kill anyone who comes in their way. The moderates on the other hand, are fighting with their pen; they are fighting with their words. They believe in democracy and are doing their politics.

So in such a situation where on one side there is reckless killing from one group and the other group is only using their words and writing about democratic rights, I think it is quite clear that the moderates will be staying behind. The recent killings and suicide attacks that took place in 2008 and 2009 until this time are proving to be bad losses for the moderates and for those who are opposing the ideology, the agenda and the views of the Taliban and al Qaeda.

But in the longer run, I am seeing a change in the society. People are going away from this ideology of violence, from this ideology of force, from this ideology of militancy and terrorism. I think the final victory, which cannot come in the coming months but I may say in the coming years, will be there for the moderates. In the



US, Afghan, Pakistani military men. Image is in the public domain.

Pakistani society, there are a lot of moderates. The media is presenting one picture in the streets, but those who are sitting outside the streets, those who are in a good position and are well to do, are against these acts of violence. The Pakistani society is going to two extremes. One extreme is the radicalism and the other extreme is the moderates, but I think the radicals will be growing weaker and weaker, not in the near future, but with the passage of time.

Just to move back to relations between Pakistan and the United States. There are a lot of tense words going back and forth right now between the two countries. Just yesterday the Senate Foreign Relations committee had a meeting to discuss the aid to Pakistan and possibly cutting it, which amounts to something like 3 billion dollars. One of the most senior senators, Patrick Leahy, said that it's impossible that the Pakistanis didn't know Osama bin Laden was living in that compound in Abbottabad. What do you think – do you think that there are elements in the government that maybe knew and didn't say anything or do you think they were just reckless or incompetent and didn't know he was there?

It will be a sweeping statement if I say that relations between the US and Pakistan will never be free of suspicions. Though the two countries have been allied for the past many years, they have had this love and hate relationship. Sometimes they are getting on well if we see like in '88. Then after that there were US sanctions on Pakistan and there were concerns in the US government about Pakistan's nuclear program. This tension continued until 2001.

In 1999, when General Musharraf took over, relations further went down. Then came the 9/11 attacks and after that there was the option for Pakistan whether to support the United States or take sides with the Taliban government in Afghanistan. Obviously Pakistan came to the support of the United States and this relationship once again took a new start. Pakistan was sharing intelligence and to some extent provided even some bases.

Anyhow, it supported the war on terror and the relationship improved, but after some time again the suspicions appeared on the basis that Pakistan was not cooperating fully in the war against terror, and that Pakistan created this good and bad Taliban.

INTERVIEW / TNP SPRING 2011

Now this Raymond Davis issue, his arrest and then release, further affected the relationship. This presence of Osama in a city where an army cantonment is located and a very secure area, of course, would have been the ultimate result of all this suspicion.

But to say that the United States will snap its ties and finish all this aid to Pakistan, I don't think it will happen. There may be some cards, and there may be some diplomatic pressure on Pakistan, but the United States is still fighting a war in Afghanistan against the Taliban and it has to win it. It has to win against the Taliban or agree upon a compromised success.

Since Pakistan is the closest neighbor of Afghanistan, and they share a twenty five hundred kilometers border, the United States needs the support of Pakistan. And Pakistan needs the support of the US. The economy is faced with an energy crisis, the Talibanization in Pakistan is on the rise, and the international community cannot ignore looking at the population of Pakistan. It is 180 million so they cannot ignore such a big country. Both countries, at least in the present situation, depend on each other and we cannot say that their relationship will end all at once. There will be ups and downs.

As for the question of whether the Pakistani government did not know about the presence of Osama bin Laden in that area, there is room for suspicions about the role of the Pakistani government and about the role of the Pakistani military. But still in this spy war, you cannot rule out something. You cannot give a sweeping statement that the Pakistani military were in the knowledge of everything and they kept Osama bin Laden. In this spy war, anything may happen, but then if we look at the structure of the house, the location, the cantonment, it is suspicions even for a layman, or a man in the street. This is the reason that many people in Pakistan don't believe that Osama bin Laden was living in the house in this area. But if he was living [there], this is a big security lapse on part of the Pakistani intelligence and the army and the government.

In terms of these tensions between the two governments, there have been these very public disagreements, like for example with the case of Raymond Davis¹ and now with Osama bin Laden. There are forceful statements made in public, and then behind the scenes the two governments come together and find some kind of compromise. With the Raymond Davis case and his release, what compromise do you think was reached with regard to the US having drone attacks in the country, Pakistani sovereignty etc? What do you think they agreed on so that he could be released?

I cannot say something for sure about the American public, but I can say the government in Pakistan never takes the people into confidence and are never told the full effects. They are being shown by their government, by their security agencies, only one side of the picture. And that is the big problem.

I think that is the big reason behind anti-Americanism in Pakistan. They are not shown what the US is doing on the development side in Pakistan, how much funds are being provided to the Pakistani government and military by the United States. It is not told to the public. They are told that US has come to Afghanistan to capture a Muslim country and they are subduing the Muslims and the next day they will be coming to Pakistan to take its nuclear arms.

Coming to this Raymond Davis issue, again they came to a solution through a Pakistani court. When a court decides a case, there is no questioning that. Even the government was telling the people that it was the decision of the Pakistani court and we cannot do anything in a court decision.

But what was played behind the scenes to take such a decision from the court was that they made a deal with the families of the people who were killed. Under Islamic laws, such kinds of deals are allowed if someone kills someone – it is called blood money. If the families of those people were pressured, I don't know about it, but the deal was done in line with the Islamic laws and the release of Raymond Davis was

¹ Raymond Davis is an American private security employee, contracted by the CIA, who, on January 22, 2011, shot and killed two Pakistani men in what he claims was self defense triggering a diplomatic crisis between the US and Pakistan.

ensured in line with the Pakistani laws.

Now that Osama bin Laden has been killed, there's a lot of talk in the US about ending the war in Afghanistan. I know that when Obama agreed for the troop surge, he also said that in July 2011 there would be a start to a drawdown. Some people are saying that this is an opportunity for Obama to really be serious about drawing down those troops. Others are saying that a hasty drawdown might create a dangerous vacuum in Afghanistan. You wrote a piece recently about different countries in the region and what kind of role they might play after the US starts to draw down troops. How do you see that playing out?

Might I point out, that this may prove the beginning of a new game in the region. People were saying that it is the end game, but I looked at the situation and said that if it was not handled with the utmost care, then it can be the beginning of a new game.

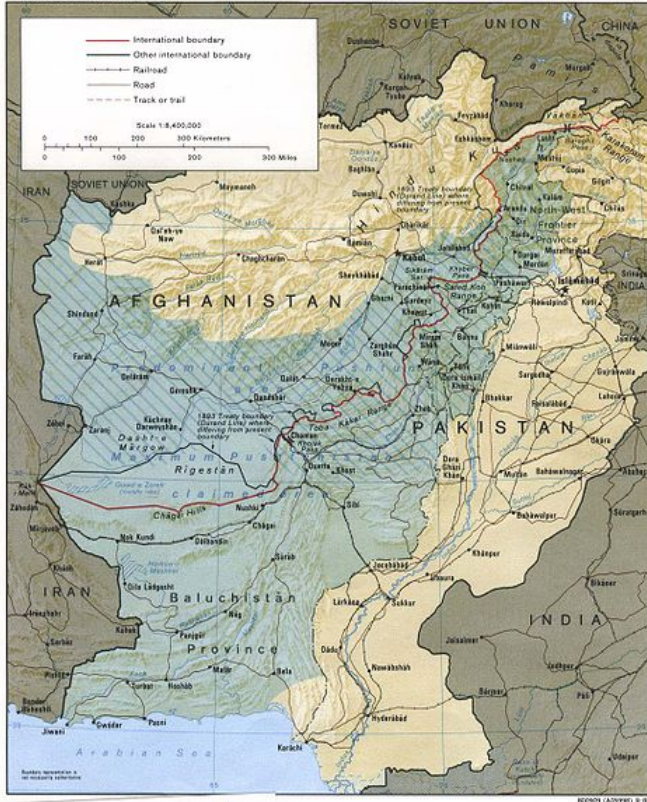
As for the withdraw of US forces, President Obama announced that July date. Osama was enemy number one and they came to Afghanistan to kill him or to capture him dead or alive. And they did it now after 10 years, but the war is still far from over in Afghanistan. The Taliban are still there, and with the passage of time, their violence increased which shows that they got strength instead of showing weakness.

The July 1 deadline does not mention how many troops will be withdrawn – one person, two person, 1000, 10,000. Maybe they are withdrawing a few thousand troops and this will be the start of a withdraw, but I think this will not be possible as they mentioned 2014 as the date for full withdraw. I cannot say that full withdraw will be possible before that date or even after it. They are also taking care of their allies and they have their own problems.

Before any withdraw from Afghanistan, there must be some sort of reconciliation with the Taliban or a full defeat for the Taliban. When we look at the previous 9 or 10 years, one cannot see for sure that there will be a complete defeat for the Taliban. If the US gets a few big leaders like Mullah Omar and some other leaders in the coming days just like they got Osama, I think it might have some effect.

But these leaders are still there and they are still strong so I think there will not be a full defeat for the Taliban. If there is no defeat then the only way to conclude the war is to have some reconciliation with the Taliban, some say with the moderate Taliban.

Afghanistan-Pakistan Border



But inside of Afghanistan, there are more problems. The society was already divided ethnically after the Afghan jihad. After the Afghan War was over the Russians left and there was civil war, and it increased the ethnic divisions while warlords got more and more power and private militias. After 2001, instead of ending the power of warlords, instead of bringing the different Afghan ethnicities together, the divisions further widened and the warlords further increased their strength. In many areas, we can see several warlords who still have their own militias.

So in such a situation, how can the international community view

Afghanistan all at once and say that well everything is ok, come and form a government. I think in this situation, unless all these issues are addressed, there will be no solution. If the international community is going to find a solution in a hurry, I think there will not be a solution.

Iran has its own interests in Afghanistan, India has its own interests in Afghanistan, Pakistan, even we can say Saudi Arabia, big neighbor Russia has its concerns, China has some concerns though they may not have direct involvement. The closest neighbors are Pakistan, India, and Iran and they have their interests and they are pursuing them. When there is a clash of interests, it will definitely increase warlordism, particularly the clash of interests of India and Pakistan and Pakistan and Iran.

INTERVIEW / TNP SPRING 2011

They will be supporting one group or another group to install government of their liking in Afghanistan.

I've noticed there have been some efforts to start a dialogue between India and Pakistan again. It seems like both of them are trying to establish their interests in Afghanistan. Where do you see these interests coming into conflict? What differences do they have in the way Afghanistan is governed?

India and Pakistan have a border dispute, which is Kashmir. This dispute is the legacy of the colonial era in this region since British rule ended in 1947. Two independent states, Pakistan and India, came into existence, and in one part, Kashmir, they fought 2 or 3 wars and then border clashes. Pakistan says Kashmir under India control is theirs, India says the Kashmir under Pakistani control is theirs. There are the UN resolutions, but they are not coming to the UN and this and that and they are trying to sort it out sometimes through wars, sometimes through proxy wars, sometimes through supporting one group or another group.

Do you think the conflict in Kashmir is related to some things that are going on in Afghanistan?

To some extent we can say that, yes. Because Pakistan and India's relationship will improve to a large extent only when this Kashmir problem is resolved. And each country is accusing the other of interference in its internal affairs. Now there is no tension at the moment, but time and again tension emerges on the border and they are keeping large armies against each other. Pakistan thinks if India comes into Afghanistan and India succeeds in establishing a pro Indian government in Afghanistan, it will be harmful for Pakistan on its western border. Its eastern border is already shared with India and there is trouble from time to time. But if a pro-India government in Afghanistan is in place, this would certainly affect Pakistani interests. Pakistan would never allow this and will struggle to install a government in Afghanistan that is Pakistan friendly. Afghanistan and Pakistan also have a border dispute – the Durand line between the two countries. Many Afghans say they have claims beyond that border, but Pakistan says this border is solved.

INTERVIEW / TNP SPRING 2011

It's like this – Pashtuns are living here and here on both sides of the Durand line. So the Afghan government has its claims beyond this border and this is also a source of concern. A pro Indian Afghan government will definitely be a concern to Pakistan. And there are some others issues between Pakistan and India like trade. There is a huge volume of legal and illegal trade between different countries in this region. India is a bigger country and it's a larger market. In case Afghanistan opens its markets to Indian goods, this will also not be good for the Pakistani to have their exports to Afghanistan. At the moment, Afghanistan is a very good and profitable market for Pakistan and also for Iran.

You were saying that an organization like the United Nations could play a role where all of these regional players (India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran) are brought to the table and diplomats then discuss some power sharing agreement. Do you think this is a viable solution or do you think the United Nations is not prepared to play this role?

If the United Nations agrees to play a role, I don't know if it has the resources because all these things will need billions of dollars. This is not a project for a month or two. It will take a long, long time to establish and ensure a peaceful and stable Afghanistan and overcome all these disputes.

Still, I can see a ray of hope if a proactive role is coming from the United Nations, particularly such members of the United Nations which have no direct role in this Afghan conflict so far. But assigning some kind of active role like a military role inside Afghanistan to any of the neighbors like India, Pakistan or Iran will not work. Iran is not acceptable to one group, Pakistan is not acceptable to another group, India is not acceptable to another.

Impartial UN members can play their role and they can deploy their military force. I think the Taliban and the other fighting groups have respect for the United Nations, but still it will need efforts on different levels and a lot of time. I was reading a report suggesting that members from the UN not from the neighboring countries would be acting in the interests of the neighboring countries, which would be brought forward for any kind of solution in Afghanistan.

I'm wondering about domestic politics inside of Pakistan, specifically President Zadari. Some people have been saying that he's been losing the confidence of some of the military establishment in Pakistan. Where do you see his future going forward? Do you think he'll be saying in power?

Pakistani politics and the military and civilian government relations always have trouble. Only a docile civilian government can continue for a full five-year term. The last government under Pervez Musharraf, an army chief, was the first since 1977 that completed its five-year term. Every civilian government has its problems with the army and the reason is that Pakistan's army has been playing a dominant role on the foreign policy front, on Afghan policy and US policy. The civilian government is there, but the army has a bigger say in these policies.

Also there are the weaknesses of the civilian leadership. We cannot say that the civilian leadership is like golden and well prepared. Democratic government in Pakistan always proved corrupt. They did not fully serve the people, and this is why after 2 or 3 years, the people who voted them into power stop supporting them.

Zadari and particularly Zadari's party, the PPP, has never been acceptable to the army. There were problems in the beginning, but then the government continued since the government is quite strong inside the parliament with a large number of MPs. The Pakistan parliament structure is that if you have a large number of MPs from your party then you can continue unless there is some military coup. It cannot be removed through constitutional means because it has the support of a large number of lawmakers in the parliament.

But if we look at the present situation, we did not hear about some problems between the government and the army because the government is saying what the army wants. For example, when the Pakistani military chief condemned a drone strike on March 17th this year, the whole government, the president, the prime minister, the parliamentarians started condemning the drone strike. Until then, no one had condemned this. They are looking to be in line with the army.

But this issue of Raymond Davis, and now this bin Laden issue may create some kind of differences. When I'm looking at their statements, Prime Minister Gillani said that the killing of bin Laden is a victory for us, but then the army chief issued a harsh statement saying this was a violation of borders and is not acceptable. Now

there is a level of anger among the Pakistani public for this operation and in the longer run, it may have some effects on the army and government's relationship.

The army will definitely try to restore its image, which has been badly damaged by this issue, and they may shift the responsibility to the civilian government. But the civilian government may say that the army is responsible for this because the army and the intelligence agencies are responsible for tracking bin Laden and arresting him and they did not do their job. And then there is the relationship with the US which will also play some kind of role. So I think there will be some kind of trouble with the government.

Also, as for the relationship between the US and Pakistani military, it seems like at some point they're going to have to sit down and work through some major differences with mistrust. Obviously the government was not informed that the US was doing this operation and it was a violation of their sovereignty. How do you see them coming together and finding some kind of resolution, particularly between the intelligence services?

Well, to say that these mistrust and suspicions will be ended between the CIA and the Pakistani intelligence agency, I don't think so. That will not finish in a day or so. There will be suspicion even if they are on working terms again. There are some suspicions but I think the US will be expecting the Pakistani security forces and intelligence agencies to help track Taliban leadership from now on. There is the Haqqani Network which is carrying out attacks inside Afghanistan and the Americans say that they are in Pakistani North Waziristan agency outside the Afghan border. There are some Pakistani groups that are supporters of these Afghan Taliban and it is also said that these people are sending fighters into Afghanistan. If you look over the past year, these US officials are asking Pakistan to launch an operation in North Waziristan. I think if Pakistan agrees to all these demands and helps arrest some on that front against Mullah Omar or Haqqani Network or some other Taliban groups who are based in North Waziristan, I think it can bring their relations back on track.

MASTHEAD / TNP 2011

Publisher:	MUDr. Martin Jan Stránský
Editor-in -Chief:	Rachel Danna
Editors of Přítomnost:	Ivan Malý and Martin Riegl
Editorial Board:	Jiří Pehe (Chairman), Petr Fleischmann, Jan Hartl, Rudolf Kučera, Jan Horálek
Publishing Assistant:	Dominik Peťko
Translator:	Petra Hainz
Internship Instructor:	Rachel Danna
Interns:	Robert Gordon Katrine Hogganvik
Editorial Assistants:	Gerald Carey-Elwes Leora Moreno Lauren Boc
Publishing Address:	Národní 11, 110 00 Prague 1 Czech Republic tel: (420) 222 075 600 fax: (420) 222 075 605 e-mail: info@vydavatelstvimsj.cz .
Webpage:	www.new-presence.com