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A special thanks to our three interviewees: Guido Sandleris, Martin Kobler, and Professor Ho-Fung Hung for their time and precious insights. Finally, we would like to give thanks to the SAIS Europe community, including students and alumni, whose contributions are fundamental to the success of the Journal.
Dear Reader,

We are excited to present the 23rd edition of the SAIS Europe Journal of Global Affairs. We hope this publication will stimulate discussion about the important topics of our era and encourage thought-provoking scholarship at SAIS Europe.

We chose this year’s theme: Against the Grain, before the COVID-19 pandemic evolved from a regional outbreak to a global epidemic. At the time, social movements and mass protests were pulsing through nearly every region of the world—some of them part of familiar patterns, while others were unexpected.

Though these movements have diverse origins, tactics and inflexion points, all of which are explored in this volume, they all share an important commonality. The theme pays tribute not only to the individual leaders of each movement, but also to the sinews and fibers of these movements, which serve as a key source of their strength. From this base of support, leaders can guide their movements to reshape a nation’s social contract, demand greater accountability from governments and dismantle illegitimate institutions. In other words, the ability of a movement to cut “against the grain” is derived from its popular support.

A phenomenon of the scope and magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic is generation-defining. As we emerge from sweeping lockdowns and chart a course back to economic growth, humanity faces a choice over whether to return to the status quo ante or venture towards a horizon of progress. In the meantime, however, dark trends have emerged. In Europe, a region with a deep tradition of rule of law, illiberal forces have seized on the chaos of the virus to supplant already weakened democratic institutions in their countries. In Hong Kong, popular discontent has been met with zealous repression. In Syria, climate change has exacerbated the long-simmering civil war. In Latin America, protests in Chile, Ecuador and Bolivia prove small sparks can challenge ossified institutions. Elsewhere, in Argentina, populists have regained power through the democratic process and must now avert plunging the country into financial ruin. The economic chaos that follows in the wake of the virus will further embolden illiberal forces around the world. But the movements that emerged before the pandemic to challenge these forces will not simply go away. They will evolve into different forms and continue to be a source of study for the years ahead.

This collection of essays and interviews, comprised of contributions from graduate students, academics and professionals across the world, attempts to analyze these movements and answer important questions about their underlying causes and their trajectories. Most essays in the 23rd edition come from our fellow SAIS students whose contributions are imperative to our success. Intellectual curiosity encouraged by SAIS faculty has no doubt compelled many students to join the dialogue in these pages. We would like to thank the entire SAIS Europe community for making this publication possible.

Due to the disruption of the pandemic, this year’s Journal will not feature a print edition. However, we are eager to announce that thanks to the diligent efforts of our SAIS Europe IT team, we have unveiled a new website (https://www.saisjournal.eu) where readers can engage with this latest issue and access our archives.
An Introduction from the Director of SAIS Europe

I am delighted to write a foreword to this year’s edition of the SAIS Europe Journal of Global Affairs. The Journal enjoys a long tradition of excellence and has always been a provocative forum for the exchange of ideas, tuned to the challenges of the day. It is student-designed and run and therefore reflects the priorities of the new generation of SAIS students, to great effect. The wide variety of topics it typically tackles spans the entire spectrum of the multidisciplinary subjects that we cover at SAIS, and then some. I am always greatly impressed by the energy, creativity and effort that students put into the Journal, with well-earned pride and dedication. This year is particularly remarkable given the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the associated challenges, the Journal and its editors did not miss a beat. Such efforts are truly commendable and indicative of strong character and purpose.

The theme of this year’s issue, Against the Grain, is a very interesting and, of course, appropriate choice. Indeed, the topic encompasses in many ways what SAIS seeks to prepare its students to be able to do: challenge the status quo using strong analytical tools and from a multidisciplinary perspective. As John Maynard Keynes once famously quipped, “The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong are more powerful than is commonly understood…[Those] who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually slaves of some defunct economist.” The key is to decipher the right from the wrong, and in the process we must be prepared to go against the grain. To do so requires strong analytical preparation.

The focus of the issue is on emerging social movements and discourse in the second decade of the 21st century. The topic certainly covers a lot of ground: In Europe, the United States, and across the world civic engagement in various areas and forms has become instrumental in political dialogue and its expression has expanded from the street to include the net. The contributions to Against the Grain are eclectic and thought-provoking, including an interesting overview of the fascinating life and influence of Murray Bookchin, an analytical perspective on the decision-making challenges facing the EU, and the rise of transnational advocacy groups.

On behalf of the Administration, I’d like to extend our thanks and appreciation to the staff of the SAIS Journal of Global Affairs for their herculean efforts. While many participated and I understand that the organizational structure this year was quite horizontal, I would like to especially thank: the Managing Editors (Anonymous, Will Marshall, Olivia Northrop and Marc Cortadellas Mancini), the Executive Editors (Emma Bapt, Michael Guterbock, Eleonora Mazzucchi, Adam DuBard, Sofija Aleksandrovic, and Niklas Hintermayer), and the Design Lead, Hamza A. Dastagir.

I know that everyone will enjoy this year’s issue.

Michael G. Plummer,
Director, SAIS Europe and Eni Professor of International Economics
An interview with Professor Ho-Fung Hung


In April 2020, the SAIS Europe Journal spoke with Professor Ho-fung Hung on the evolving situation in Hong Kong, where protests have taken place since last year. The following has been edited for brevity and clarity.

Protests in Hong Kong
From the Extradition Law to Coronavirus

Europe Journal:
Many recent protests around the world are tied to economic distress or inequality. This does not seem to be the case in Hong Kong, where demands have centered on political representation. Nevertheless - have economic or class-based grievances played some role in driving protests?

Ho-fung Hung:
The demands of the Hong Kong protesters are mostly political, including universal suffrage, investigation of police violence, or even broader appeal for self-determination of Hong Kong. There are also surveys showing protesters come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. But it is generally believed that certain economic grievances are behind the protests. One of the grievances is about the increasing domination of Chinese capital in the local economy. Beginning in the fall of 2019, when some protesters turned to more disruptive tactics such as vandalizing shops and property, the storefronts of Chinese companies and Chinese state-owned banks were often the targets. Before the protests erupted, there was a lot of discussion about the expanding monopoly of Chinese companies in different realms of people's everyday lives. This rising monopoly not only means diminished opportunity for local young people (for example, Chinese financial firms that now dominate Hong Kong's financial sector tend to hire those with a mainland Chinese background), but it also helps to extend Beijing's political control (a few state-owned bookstores and publishers now enjoy monopoly status in the local book business, and they have been openly exercising censorship of what books can be published and sold). To many young protesters, the expanding economic monopoly of Chinese companies is part of a "colonization" process that they are resisting.

Europe Journal:
How much support do you think other countries (the US or UK, for instance) can realistically provide to the protesters' cause? Would this support be counterproductive?

Ho-fung Hung:
Verbal or moral support by foreign governments does not help most of the time. Some might think it is counterproductive, as the suspicion of "foreign intervention" would harden Beijing's stance on protesters. But I don't believe the "counterproductive" consideration is crucial, as Beijing has been constantly suspicious of foreign intervention behind any dissident voice and would crack down hard on dissenting acts anyway, as many protests in mainland China and in Hong Kong that had no foreign involvement and little foreign sympathy in the past show.

Even though Beijing invariably talks tough against "foreign intervention," international attention on the status of liberty and autonomy in Hong Kong does constrain Beijing's options on how to crack down on the Hong Kong protests. Since the inception of protests last summer (and in the Occupy movement in 2014), there has been a lot of fear and speculation that Beijing would deploy the PLA (People's Liberation Army) to enter Hong Kong for a bloody crackdown. But so far, the PLA has been remarkably restrained, and Beijing has been reliant on the Hong Kong police force to control the situation through less than lethal (though still brutal)
forces. The head of the PLA garrison in Hong Kong even reportedly offered a guarantee to its US counterpart the PLA would not leave its barracks to intervene in the handling of the protest. Beijing worried a PLA mobilization over Hong Kong would create an unduly international reaction that would jeopardize Beijing's interests in Hong Kong. After all, Hong Kong's role as China's offshore financial center hinges a lot on the international recognition of Hong Kong as a separate entity vis-a-vis mainland China on capital control, trade policy, and immigration. The US has specific laws – the US-Hong Kong Policy Act and now the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act – stating that the US would revoke its recognition of Hong Kong as a separate customs territory should Washington decide that Hong Kong is no longer sufficiently autonomous from Beijing. As such, Beijing's crackdown has to be carried out without jeopardizing Hong Kong's internationally recognized status. International attention and sympathy of Hong Kong protesters are therefore, essential and do pose constraints on Beijing.

Europe Journal:
A constant issue in the confrontation between protesters and Hong Kong authorities has been police brutality. Anger over the police's disproportionate use of force and unaccountability strengthens protesters' claims. Do you think there will be moves to rein in the police or hold them accountable?

Ho-fung Hung:
Back in the colonial days before the 1970s, the Royal Hong Kong Police Force used to be very brutal and corrupt. It took spontaneous riots by youngsters in 1966 and a CCP-instigated insurgency in 1967 to force the colonial government to take serious action and reform the police force in the 1970s. By the 1980s, the police had become a clean, law-abiding, and professional body widely respected and admired by Hong Kong citizens. The Police Force after 1997 inherited this late colonial legacy. But scandals in recent years and the disproportionate brutality, as well as alleged collaboration between the police and gangster organizations, which employed mob violence against protesters, have swiftly destroyed the reputation of the police force, as public opinion surveys repeatedly show. This is undoubtedly reversible, and reform and restoration of that reputation are definitely feasible, just as was the case in the late colonial period. But I'm not optimistic. With the deployment of the PLA out of the question, the HKSAR government, as well as Beijing, have only the police force to rely on in repressing local dissent, which will surely grow. The authorities are likely to give the police a free hand to do whatever they see necessary to root out protest, which has resulted in escalating use of confrontational and even violent tactics. A vicious cycle is already happening.

Europe Journal:
The media entrepreneur Jimmy Lai and two Hong Kong politicians were arrested during what was considered a peaceful protest. This seems to break with the past practice of arresting only activist leaders or those in obvious breach of the city's ordinances. What does this reveal about the Hong Kong and central government's evolving strategy?

Ho-fung Hung:
Beijing's policy on Hong Kong is becoming increasingly hardline. It is not only about Hong Kong. Beijing's postures in Xinjiang, toward Taiwan, over the South China Sea, and toward the US and other countries, are all becoming more aggressive and confrontational. It is a shift across the board under Xi Jinping. In Hong Kong, radical, confrontational protests used to be quite marginal. Still, with the crackdown on the moderates and on advocates of peaceful protest, Beijing is making the radical and confrontational voice more mainstream. Polarization and escalating conflict will be the consequence, and this is worrying.

Europe Journal:
To what extent have Hong Kong protests been about Chief Executive Carrie Lam (protests began in response to her proposed extradition bill in February 2019 but have continued after the formal withdrawal of the bill in October)? Her administration's slow and initially lax response to the coronavirus outbreak has been seen as more evidence of Lam's inability to act in the public interest.

Ho-fung Hung:
The protest's initial concern was the Bill, but the way Carrie Lam handled it and her unconditional support of the police force made her and police brutality the central focus. It is why the rally went on even after the Bill was withdrawn. Opinion surveys show a vast majority of Hong Kong residents are angry with her and the police force. Now even many establishment figures and business tycoons, who are supposed to be very conservative, openly express their dissatisfaction with her. Her tone-deaf approach to handling crisis – including both the protest and the coronavirus outbreak – makes her the target of widespread discontent. It doesn't change even when the epidemic appears to be decreasing in Hong Kong.

Europe Journal:
The coronavirus epidemic has meant demonstrations are smaller and less frequent. Is this a sign that they will peter out, or a testament to their endurance?

Ho-fung Hung:
As I speak, protests are resurging while the epidemic is abating. Rallies and demonstrations are being planned in the upcoming weeks and months as the anniversary of the protests approaches. And the outcry over the last two weeks shows the police force has not stepped back from its tough approach, as even peaceful singing rallies in shopping malls invoke full-scale crackdowns and arrests by the police. After a hiatus during the epidemic, protest and confrontation appear to be escalating again.

Europe Journal:
Are there specific ways in which the virus is being politicized in Hong Kong, by the government, the protesters or both?

Ho-fung Hung:
As containment of epidemics always involves the governing capability of the authorities, it inevitably becomes a political issue. At the beginning of the outbreak, the government was slow in responding, and it took a medical workers and other essential workers’ strike to force the govern-
ment to adopt specific policies (such as restriction of cross-border traffic along Hong Kong's border with the mainland) in fighting the disease. Fortunately, the memory of SARS motivated many Hong Kong people to adopt social distancing and other necessary measures voluntarily, so the epidemic never got as bad as people feared. But few people would attribute this success to the Carrie Lam government.

**Europe Journal:**
What overall political impact is the epidemic having on public opinion in Hong Kong? In mainland China there was anger over the silencing of coronavirus whistleblowers, but as the number of infected people flattened, opinions shifted.

Ho-fung Hung:
As mentioned, the epidemic was not as bad as feared, but people generally did not think the government deserved much credit for that. The fact that the government was taking advantage of the crisis and people’s inability to protest in order to tighten its grip infuriated people. Some of the grip-tightening measures included the arrest of moderate democrats and Jimmy Lai, a discussion on reintroducing national security legislation, and an official statement that the Beijing office in Hong Kong (the Liaison Office) is not bound by the Basic Law and enjoys supervisory power over Hong Kong politics. As soon as the epidemic is gone, the protests will flare up again. The discontent will continue to grow when the economic repercussions of the epidemic become more apparent. The Chinese economy has been contracting and it is likely to get worse as the global economy is battered. Hong Kong’s economy, which has been reliant on financial speculation and real estate bubbles for so long, might undergo a more painful adjustment than many other places. A deep economic downturn will only aggravate existing grievances and conflicts.

**Europe Journal:**
The death of Dr. Li Wenliang in February 2020, who had tried to warn the authorities, it inevitably becomes a political issue. At the beginning of the outbreak, the government was slow in responding, and it took a medical workers and other essential workers’ strike to force the govern-
ment to adopt specific policies (such as restriction of cross-border traffic along Hong Kong's border with the mainland) in fighting the disease. Fortunately, the memory of SARS motivated many Hong Kong people to adopt social distancing and other necessary measures voluntarily, so the epidemic never got as bad as people feared. But few people would attribute this success to the Carrie Lam government.

**Europe Journal:**
Looking at the long term, is there the possibility that Hong Kong’s more democratic system of governance will influence mainland China? Or is it more likely that Hong Kong itself will be governed like the mainland? Can the “One country, two systems” principle hold?

Ho-fung Hung:
This is the most difficult question to answer. From a broader, longer-term perspective, how the Hong Kong question is resolved is related to how US-China relations will evolve. One of the strongest factors in helping to maintain Hong Kong’s status quo has been the sufficient autonomy certification under the US-Hong Kong Policy Act. Beijing has made the calculation that a creeping increase in control over Hong Kong without a drastic crossing of “red lines” in the view of the international community (such as deployment of the PLA) can keep Washington from revoking its recognition of Hong Kong as a separate customs territory. This balance hinges on an amicable US-China relationship, which has been deteriorating rapidly in recent years.

What is most important is what will happen to Hong Kong after 2047. The Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law designate the maintenance of the “One Country, Two Systems” arrangement until then, 50 years after the handover. It is uncertain what will be the official status of Hong Kong beyond 2047 and how this is going to be determined. The question has not been on the minds of the older, moderate democrats who will not be around when the time comes. And many of them expected, back in the 1980s, that China would become a democracy by 2047, so it was never seen as that important. With the hope becoming ever dimmer that China will democratize anytime soon, younger democrats in Hong Kong have finally put this on the agenda. The recent rise of localist radicals who call for self-determination or even independence of Hong Kong shows new attention being placed on the territory’s status beyond 2047. Though people now worry Hong Kong’s “One Country, Two Systems” will become “One Country, One System” long before 2047, at least the Basic Law and the Sino-British Joint Declaration are still valid as a foundation on which the opposition can make demands for autonomy and universal suffrage. As the two documents will become irrelevant after 2047, the constitutional status of Hong Kong beyond then is the biggest unknown. How this is resolved will have a profound impact on the unfolding battle between different socio-political forces in Hong Kong in the years to come.

**Update:** On May 22, the National People’s Congress [Chinese parliament] proposed a National Security Law for Hong Kong that will almost certainly pass and is set to take effect in July 2020. The SAIS Europe Journal asked Professor Hung what this new legislation spells out for the territory.

Ho-fung Hung:
Many said the National Security Law, which could be used to persecute Hong Kong citizens for their speech, opinions, and personal connections, is an endgame for Hong Kong. I would say it is not. Rather it will foment the beginning of a new round of turmoil. For one thing, Beijing’s need to take this drastic step to bypass any pretension of “one country, two systems” to legislate on the NSL directly shows it has run out of options for tightening control of Hong Kong without risking the loss of Hong Kong’s economic use to China. Now the world is reacting to the NSL by revoking recognition of Hong Kong’s autonomy from Beijing. The US has started dismantling the special statuses that it has granted Hong Kong since the handover, concerning visas, the tech industry and finance. China is going to lose Hong Kong as its backdoor to gain access to sensitive high-tech equipment and software with US compo-
Financial sanctions against banks complicit in destroying Hong Kong's freedom are in the making. The business community in Hong Kong, including foreign investors, fear Beijing will heighten its effort to bully them into showing their political loyalty. Businesses will become vulnerable to political revenge (like fabricated allegations of spying or supporting subversive elements) by their politically well-connected Chinese competitors. Associations representing foreign businesses in Hong Kong have voiced their concerns. Talk of relocating to safer places for business is in the air.

Therefore, the NSL will incur great economic costs for Beijing. Yet, the will of the Hong Kong people to defy Beijing's control, as shown in the 2019 protest, suggests that the resistance will not easily die down because of the NSL. The US, UK, Taiwan, and other governments are going to offer an exit option like political asylum for persecuted Hong Kong citizens. This would keep the resistance alive. The movement might go underground, waiting for new opportunities to flare up again, but it won't go away easily. More worrying is that with the imposition of yet another structure of control, including Chinese public security officials stationing in Hong Kong, Beijing is injecting another source of instability among the establishment elite. Local business elite and pro-establishment politicians, whom Beijing has relied on in the governance of Hong Kong, were sidelined and even kept in the dark in the NSL legislative process. They now would need to fear whether they could be potential victims of the NSL themselves. Infighting behind closed doors between elite factions linked to competing vested interests in Beijing has been becoming more and more apparent in recent years. It is likely to intensify in the years to come.

In sum, the NSL is not likely to make Hong Kong more stable. It may tranquilize the city for a short while, but in the long run, it will be a recipe for more unrest.
Who Decides in Europe?

Ulrike Guérot is a Professor at Danube University Krems where she heads the Department for European Policy and the Study of Democracy (DED). She also founded the European Democracy Lab (EuDemLab) in Berlin, a think tank dedicated to the future of European democracy. Ulrike Guérot lives in Krems and Berlin.

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The EU is broken – long live Europe? We can and we should move towards a completely redesigned Europe to save the European project. If we do not, it may end in a dystopia dominated by populism and nationalism. We have forgotten that without utopia, there is no better future. As the great Swiss composer Ernst Bloch once said, a society needs a permanent stream of utopian thinking. Europe needs this now, more than ever, as the continent is shaken by multiple crises. Serbian human rights activist Vorka Pavicevic wrote the sentence: ‘The refugees come to ask us who we are. And we need to answer them.’ Right now, the European Union does not have a sufficient answer. The ebbing out of utopian energy is therefore the most ardent problem in Europe. It is thus time to rediscover what Europe once wanted to be: A veritable transnational, European democracy. That democracy can be in bad hands when left to nationalist movements is not only the European experience of the 1930s: it is repeating in front of our eyes today. And precisely this was the motivation for the foundation of the European Union: to disentangle democracy from the nation state to avoid nationalism. Europe thus needs a reset. It must go back to the roots of its own founding idea. The utopia is simple: One market, one currency, one democracy. That’s all. Two of them – the market and the currency – have already been achieved (most of) the European Union today. As much as national elites were willing to Euro-fiscalize the market and currency, they were unwilling to do so in the political arena. As such, in recent years, they administered their national democracies through largely neutralized grand coalition schemes lacking political contours, leading to a perfect erosion of state functions on the national level.

National elites fiercely resisted every idea to build channels of communication, processes of mutual recognition or transnational voting and party systems, which would allow the European citizens to merge their interests. For this would also have challenged the monopoly of representation of the national ruling classes, both internally and at the supranational level, thus clearing them as the only interlocutors of ‘their’ citizens regarding the European institutions. In other words: the all so desired ‘politicization’ of Europe, where the arbitrage of political decision-making could have been organized beyond nation state sovereignty, never took place. The political system of the EU with the EU Council as its ‘grail’ inherently mirrors this pattern: things in the collective interest of all European citizens are systemically torpedoed by ‘national cards’, be that a common refugee policy or a European unemployment scheme.

The European citizens know this and currently put the EU institutions under pressure from different sides. A rough half of them wants to go back to nationalism; the other half wants a more united Europe. A part of the civil society, especially young people, is therefore, more and more passionate about renewing old structures of the EU and its so-called ‘Trinity’, which does not appropriately represent the will of the European people, but is only governed by the European Council in an opaque and barely accountable manner.

This raises the question of what we are doing in this nearly Hegelian mode of power in the political system of Europe: The nation state or the EU? And how is it legitimized?

Who decides?
Time to let the EU and to move away from ‘United States of Europe’. Time to discover the citizens in the European project and to remember, en passant, that citizens, not states, are sovereign. The Maastricht Treaty promised de facto a ‘Union of States’ and a ‘Union of Citizens’. Yet, only the former materialized. To make this concrete: In essence, British citizens, now affected by Brexit, would – in theory – stay European citizens, despite the fact of the United Kingdom leaving the EU. Nothing demonstrated more clearly that ‘European citizenship’ right now is only an empty shell. Thousands of British citizens living in continental Europe are affected by Brexit, as much as many European citizens, living and working in the UK. Focusing on the notion of ‘European citizenship’ when thinking about ways and steps to change and improve European democracy thus is important.

But when it comes to what the French sociologist Pierre Rosanvallon calls ‘le sacre du citoyen’, i.e. the sacred good of the citizen, the essence of citizenship, we cannot be described as European citizens.1 The one principle that needs to be applied to Europe is this: in a democracy, citizens are all equal in front of the law: equal in voting, taxes and social rights. Europeans citizens remain compartmentalized by national law containers. A political project can never function like this. If we want to realize one European democracy, we need to strive for the principle of equal citizenship. If the French revolution brought legal equality beyond national laws, the European revolution of the 21st century must bring legal equality beyond nations. That would be a compelling offer for Europeans citizens to unite behind, from South to North, from East to West. This is

probably the only compelling offer capable of healing the wounds of the cumulated European crises. Europe cannot succeed if, within the same political project, the nation state is basically used as tool for competition, be it on taxes or on welfare. The entire reshuffling of the political system of Europe stems from the principle of political equality, which is also the condition sine qua non for a fully fledged transnational, representative parliamentarian democracy in Europe, corresponding to the principle of division of powers. The principle of political equality and the principle of division of powers are two things never put into question in national democracies: time to grant European democracy this treatment.

A general, direct and equal voting system ('one person, one vote') for all European citizens would thus be the next important step in establishing a political unity on the continent. The objection that such a move outweighs the citizens of the small states – e.g., Luxembourg or Malta – by the big states, especially Germany is illegitimate. It is precisely the parliamentarisation of the vote which would de-homogenize the German vote because not all Germans vote the same. Through full parliamentarisation, the system would be shifted from 'nationally aggregated' voting towards a 'politics-tops-nation' system, in which the political orientation matters more than the ethnic or national background. It does not matter which nationality one has, when it comes to the question, whether one would like to see European unemployment insurance. In this precise decision, probably Germans citizens would have given a diversified vote, whereas the German representative in the European Council as aggregated vote opted against.

Recently, the EU has finally, albeit a bit late, discovered its 'misunderstood citizens' (or 'verkannte Bürger' in the words of the German social historian Hartmut Kaelble) as political subjects. It was only in 2018 and 2019 that countless citizens’ consultations were carried out in all European member states as per EU Council decision in the run-up to the European elections. However, the problem has never been that we do not know what the citizens of Europe really want, it is the lacking possibilities for its implementation that is the problem. In fact, the crucial problem seems to be that we are now constantly talking about European citizens, but the crux of the matter is, of course, that none of us is really a European citizen. When it comes to European democracy - and the question of how European citizens will be able to participate in the future - the citizens themselves are the real players.

The 'Delors approach' could still serve us well today and should inspire us. This means that it is important to set a timeframe in case you cannot achieve something immediately. This requires a treaty, a clear goal, a timeframe and clearly defined intermediate steps, or milestones. And finally, a cut-off date for the changeover to a European system. The introduction of the Euro followed the same approach: A treaty was made, which specified a deadline and a cut-off date, the project was divided into intermediate steps and everybody was committed to one European goal. There were three steps: The European Monetary Union was created in 1994, and the exchange were rates fixed in 1999. And finally, on 1 January 2002, all coins and banknotes were converted. According to this approach – treaty, timeframe, intermediate steps, deadline – we could bring about a European citizenship via a treaty over the next 5, 10, 15 or 20 years. We could define intermediate steps – a European social security number by 2030, a European tax number by 2035, and finally a uniform European ID card by 2040. If this seems too daring, one could implement this with a neutral impact on the existing population, i.e. the change would only apply to European citizens born after conclusion of the treaty. Over the next 18 years we would thus socialize future generations into a European citizenship and hence into a European democracy, just like we have socialized everybody into the euro since 2002 and children nowadays cannot even remember that things used to be any different. The establishment of a true European citizenship, which would give European citizens that triad of civil, political and social rights, would then basically mean the completion of a political union in Europe, where European citizens would have equal rights and could start to establish a real European democracy.

Latin America’s ‘Autumn of Discontent’
Protests in Bolivia, Chile and Ecuador Highlight Consistent Inefficiencies

Protests have raged through Bolivia, Chile, and Ecuador in the latter half of 2019, sending South America into a frenzy all too familiar in the continent’s history. Whether it was a presidential run in violation of the Constitution, an increase in metro fares, or a slash in gas subsidies, respectively, citizens throughout the countries are taking their voices to the streets, protesting for weeks, even months, in hopes of bringing change.

While the protests are all separate in their grievances, hints of the same issues ring throughout the protests: government distrust, inefficiency, and bureaucratic entitlements. South Americans are growing tired of institutions that are often dated, they are unhappy with low income and low employment levels, and they have lost faith in their once valiant leadership.

Bolivia: The End of Evo Morales’ Fourteen Year Reign
On November 10th, 2019, former President Evo Morales resigned from the presidency of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. Following accusations of fraudulent elections and over two weeks of violent protests, the population is over 60% indigenous, giving hope to a previous oppressed population. During his first term, he altered the constitution to allow for a president to run for a second term.

As of 2001, Bolivian law states that presidential operations must not be suspended, so that whoever is next in succession assumes the presidency ipso facto, that is without the need to have a quorum, but they also must call elections within 90 days. Bolivia must also elect new members of the Electoral Supreme Court, as the previous members had been arrested and accused of fraud. On November 20th, 2019, the interim government began the first phase of the process to call new elections by sending a proposal to Parliament.

Áñez’ promised Bolivia would have a new government by January 22, 2020, a federal holiday and the day Bolivia celebrates the anniversary of officially becoming a plurinational state, yet this proved complicated and polemic. Controversy with Áñez emerged with her interim government on issues such as bringing religion into politics, alleged arrest of political enemies, and Áñez presenting herself as candidate for president.

Shortly after she began the process to call elections for a new president, Áñez presented herself as a candidate for election, a decision with which many disagreed. Áñez made this decision based on her feelings that no other candidate can unify the country against the MAS party, as MAS still retains the legislative majority.

However, many claim this violates the transitional process and that elections would no longer be neutral. Unrest with Áñez and the opposition built up, leading to more violent protests erupting in the streets. The protests showed no political allegiance, as this time they called for Áñez’ resignation. Presidential elections will be held in Bolivia on May 3, 2020, marking the first election in almost 20 years in which Evo Morales is not a candidate.

The Rise and Fall of Evo Morales
In 2006, Morales became the first indigenous president of a country in which the population is over 60% indigenous, giving hope to a previously neglected population. During his first term, he altered the constitution to allow for a president to run for a second term. This was passed in 2009, the same year in which he won his second term and governed until 2014. Morales then stated in 2014 that he would not run for reelection in what would have been his third term. However, he did so and won after he filed an appeal claiming he should be able to run because his first term did not count given that it was under the previous constitution. During this third term, he held a referendum in 2016 appealing to Bolivians for a chance to run for a fourth consecutive term, a referendum which he narrowly lost. At the time, he claimed he would respect the results, but in October 2019 he showed otherwise, running for office for a fourth time.
Moraless claimed victory despite not legally being able to run for office. Allegations of fraud and false counts emerged on the night of the election, and protesters took to the streets as a reaction. To win the presidency in Bolivia, a candidate must either receive 50% of the vote or 40% of the vote and have a 10-point lead. Bolivia runs on a two-count system: there is a quick count, which has no legal bearing, and then an overall count when all the votes are tallied. The Organization of American States (OAS), a regional body comprised of the countries of the Americas (except Cuba) and representatives, sent an electoral mission to monitor the election, as they do with many elections in the region. What they found, however, were several irregularities, according to a report.\(^1\) After this initial report, Morales invited a team of OAS auditors to audit the election results. They found irregularities in both the voter count and technical systems of the election, issuing a report claiming “biased transmission systems for preliminary election results and the final count” and “forged signatures and alteration of tally sheets.”\(^2\) This led to increased protests and violence in the streets.

Following this report and days of protests, both the police and armed forces of Bolivia turned their backs on Morales. Following this dramatic shift in loyalty, the commander of the military, Williams Kaliman, publicly suggested that Morales step down, which Morales did shortly after.\(^3\)

What does this mean for Bolivia’s future?

An official source, who requested anonymity, claimed that Bolivia was a polarized country under Morales. “[When you arrive in Bolivia], the external perception is confirmed. MAS has control of practically every thing, all the state agencies, the executive, the assembly, the judicial pow er, and the electoral power. They abide by the law when it’s convenient. There’s pressure on those who are critical of the government. There’s no censorship like there is with Chavismo [Hugo Chavez, former president of Venezuela], but there are other indirect forms of pressure. There’s pressure against the political opposition.”\(^4\)

Given this, it is no surprise that many people were upset with Morales claiming victory, but it is also important to note that a large propor tion of Bolivians still support him, and it will be hard to change their minds. The future of the Bolivian presidency, as well as the polarization it brings, will be determined in 2020. Elections have been postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic; the proposed timeline is between June 28th and September 27th, 2020.\(^5\)

Bolivia is currently under a full, strict quarantine given the rise of COVID-19 in the country. Borders are closed, citizens can only leave once a week to purchase groceries and other needs; the military has been brought into their homes during certain hours and they can only leave once a week to buy groceries and other needs; the military has been brought into their homes.\(^6\)\(^7\)\(^8\)\(^9\)\(^10\)

Chile: Youth Call for Changes to Dictatorship-Era Consti tution and Institutions

For years now, Chile earned the label of poster child for Latin American countries, both politically and economically, largely due to the period of growth started under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. During this time, Milton Friedman and other economists from the University of Chicago jumpstarted Chile’s economic growth the country still enjoyed today. Yet as protests in recent months have shown, this economic growth has not been enough to satisfy all Chileans, and they are bringing their feelings to the streets.

A proposed increase in metro fees in October 2019 was the last straw for many Chileans who struggle to make ends meet with the wages they currently earn. After accounting for taxes and essentials such as healthcare, education, and transportation, the average Chilean is left with a small percentage of his or her paycheck.

Another area in which the country has not seen growth, or change, since the dictatorship era is its institutions. The grievances with which Chileans have issues include the healthcare, education, and transportation systems. Whether public or private, these fees can dig into a minimum wage paycheck. Transportation alone can be up to 20% of their take-home pay. Protestors are also upset with the pension system in Chile, the privatized water system, and increasing prices of electricity.\(^10\) Wages have not grown proportionally to the economic growth in the country, and the population has felt the effects.

Elsewhere, protesters have brought attention to Chile’s constitution, written in 1982 under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Many Chileans claim that the Constitution and the institutions are outdated, written and established during a time of horror in the country, and need to be changed. Protestors have called for the writing of a new constitution, a problem in itself when it comes to bringing parties to the table to write a new document.\(^11\) Nonetheless, the Chilean government has proposed a plebiscite to take place in April 2020 to decide on the writing of a new constitution; if this passes, during the months following and into 2021, those who will rewrite the Constitution will be elected by Chilean cit izens and rewrite a document to be voted on in the months following, also by Chilean citizens.\(^12\)

The protesters have taken to the streets countrywide, in a unified form, to protest against multiple grievances. Many of the protesters are young, often university-age students, who seek a better future through govern ment changes. However, their means have sometimes been question able: they range from signs and chants, to the bashing of pots and pans, known throughout Latin America as cacerolazos, to the burning of buses, metro stations, and other public spaces.

Thousands of protestors, most seemingly between 16 and 30 years old, congregate in the streets with Chilean flags and signs with messages ranging from “Fuerza Piñera” (Pinya Out), “¡Chile Despierta” (Chile’s Awake), “No Estamos en Guerra” (We are not at War), “Educacion Li ber y Digna” (Free and Worthwhile Education), “No Son $30, Son 30 Anos, #NuevaConstitucion” (It’s not 30 [Chileans] pesos [50.04 USD], it’s 30 years, #NewConstitution), referring to the Chilean Constitution of 1980. Signs also calling for Piñera to step down fly throughout the city as well, protestors say they will not stop until he steps down.

However, the government has been slow to respond. Sebastian Piñera, the millionaire president in his second non-consecutive elected term (the constitution of 1982 does not permit consecutive terms), has slowly made changes, including requesting the resignation of his entire cabinet, yet this has not been enough for protestors’ demands.

The nationwide protests have been met with violence from the Chilean police and military. Hundreds of Chilean protesters have lost vision and been badly injured, met with violence, tear gas, and rubber bullets in the streets. Often scenes of army tanks strolling through the streets populate both local and international media, with scenes of up to 4 army tanks on one street. Piñera also has sent the army tanks to patrol the streets for anyone who violates the curfew, an image that Haunts Chileans with the memory of the military dictatorship that created economic growth at the cost of roughly 3,000 human lives.

From 1973 to 1990, Augusto Pinochet ruled over Chile, at the height of the Cold War, following a US-assisted military coup of Salvador Allende. Under Pinochet, thousands of Chileans were kidnapped, tortured and killed, a memory that still plagues the country today. The present-day brutality is a memory that has been nothing short of traumatic for Chileans who remember the dictatorship well, or at least know the stories they have been told.

At the time of writing, the protests seemed to have calmed down, and Chileans await the plebiscite of the rewriting of a new constitution in April 2020. Yet the vote on the new constitution has been delayed given the rise of COVID-19 in Chile. Chile’s response to the virus was slow, and the country does not have a unified quarantine strategy. The borders are closed, but Piñera, among others such as Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil, has been accused of focusing more on the health of the economy than of the Chilean people.

Ecuador: Lenin Moreno’s Battle with Ecuador’s Indigenous Population

In Ecuador, the tune does not ring as far back as the legacy of a dictator or a president in power for nearly 14 consecutive years. However, in Ecuador, the enemy was two-fold, and one more common than the other: the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Indeed, the region has found itself at odds for quite some time with the DC-based institution. The relationship between the IMF and several countries’ governments over the last 30 years has been nothing short of tumultuous. From Argentina to Brazil and now Ecuador, the institution has brokered deals for the lending of large sums of money in exchange for fiscal reforms and strict austerity measures. However, Ecuador was one country in which the deal collapsed even before it started.

Following an announcement by Ecuadorian president Lenin Moreno regarding the elimination of fuel subsidies as part of a potential economic assistance package to be accepted by the IMF, Ecuador, one of two members of OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) in the Americas,\(^13\) saw a shift in its social scene it had not for nearly 20 years. Protests led by indigenous groups took to the streets against the elim...
Following weeks of protests in the country, mainly in the capital city of Quito, the government and the indigenous groups entered into a dialogue to quell the violence and exchange ideas. An agreement was reached on October 14, 2019, which repealed the law that was to eliminate fuel subsidies among other parts of the agreement, and the violence and protests in Ecuador calmed. At the time of writing, no further protests in Ecuador have occurred surrounding the fuel subsidies. Citizens resumed their normal lives, and there have been no protests since.

However, Ecuador finds itself as one of the worst victims of COVID-19 in Latin America. In Guayaquil, a city with a similar-sized population to Quito and the business capital of Ecuador, bodies have been left in streets as an effect of the damage COVID-19 has raved on Ecuador. The country is currently under quarantine, with borders closed, as it continues to combat the virus.

Where do Bolivia, Chile, and Ecuador go from here?

Given the rise of COVID-19 in the region, the Bolivian government is focused on confronting the virus, choosing to militarize some of its large streets as an effect of the damage COVID-19 has raved on Bolivia. The tension between political parties remained, and elections were slated to take place before protests rang through the streets for weeks, leading to the death of seven, more than 1,100 arrests, and 3,340 injured.

In 2001, Argentina’s then-president Fernando de la Rúa fled the presidential residence by helicopter amid deadly riots against the government’s response to a deep financial crisis. Argentina’s subsequent default on its sovereign debt effectively barred it from borrowing in global financial markets for years and ushered in over a decade of populist policies under the subsequent Peronist administrations of the Kirchner political dynasty.

Today, Argentina faces another crisis as it scrambles to avoid its ninth sovereign debt default. The administration of recently elected President Alberto Fernández finds itself in a precarious financial situation due to questionable policies of preceding governments, compounded by international sanctions from the IMF, low commodity prices, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2019, Argentina reached an agreement with the IMF to reduce its debt to sustainable levels. However, the agreement was met with widespread opposition from the public, and protests erupted nationwide. The government has since struggled to implement the necessary economic reforms.

Argentina is facing a bleak economic future, with high unemployment rates, inflation, and a weakened currency. The country’s debt-to-GDP ratio remains dangerously high, and the government’s ability to service its debt is in question. The country’s credit rating has been downgraded, and foreign investment has dried up.

Guido Sandleris: One of the things that is puzzling about Argentina is that when we look at the recent economic history of the country you see that systematically, almost every decade, we are hit with a financial crisis. Every financial crisis is due to a combination of factors. First, I believe that Argentina missed an opportunity to really change the fundamental underlying factors of the economy at a time of very high commodity prices, which are important for a big exporter like Argentina. This occurred under two Peronist governments: those of Presidents, Néstor Kirchner and then Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, his wife. Second, the Macri administration tried to correct the economic imbalances that it inherited, but it was unable to achieve growth and low inflation at the same time.

Let me explain this in more detail, when you look at the economy that former President Macri inherited, you see a large fiscal deficit, and this was something that basically was the result of increased government spending for 12 years thanks to populist policies. In Argentina, it used to be the case for many, many years that the government’s expenditure amounted to approximately 25% of GDP. Between 2003 and 2015, it went up to almost 41% of GDP. Basically, the windfall from high commodity prices was used to expand government spending and not in the most productive fashion.

On top of that, you had other distortions in the economy. The exchange rate was overvalued. That made Argentina’s exports expensive, and its imports cheap. This led to an overvaluation of imports and an undervaluation of exports. The government tried to correct the economic imbalances that it inherited, but it was not able to achieve growth and low inflation at the same time.

Argentina on the Brink:
A Sovereign Debt Crisis with Consequences for the Country’s Economy and Social Fabric

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Then came this last decade in which things didn’t go as well. The region last decade but the previous one. That was fantastic for the region. And they grew relatively fast. Chile did it a bit before. Mexico did it a bit before. When you look at the last eight years, Argentina hasn't grown. You had inflation averaging 30%. When you look at the average for the region, inflation was below 5%. Most economies also grew, though only slightly. Latin America is one of the regions in the world, alongside the European Union, that has grown the least: around 1.2% on average in the last decade, with the world average at 3.5%.

Guido Sandleris: Argentina is distinct from the region because I think we are in some respects, at least in the macroeconomic area, in a different situation. When you look at the last eight years, Argentina hasn't grown. You had inflation averaging 30%. When you look at the average for the region, inflation was below 5%. Most economies also grew, though only slightly. Latin America is one of the regions in the world, alongside the European Union, that has grown the least: around 1.2% on average in the last decade, with the world average at 3.5%.

So I think that part of our discontent is associated with the fact that when you look at the last decade, you have an economy that has grown very little. And when you look at the last 40 years, you see an economy that in only 5 of the last 40 years had two things happening at the same time: positive growth and inflation below 5%.

In Argentina we’re not growing because the economy is hitting the wall of financial distress almost every decade. So it's in a worse situation although the starting point is probably better because the level of income is higher than most countries in the region. When you look at what's going on in the region, I think what we are seeing is there was a period, not in the last decade but the in the decade before that, in which high commodity prices allowed most of these economies to achieve stability. And they grew relatively fast. Chile did it a bit before. Mexico did it around the same time. Others like Peru, Bolivia, Uruguay did not this last decade but the previous one. That was fantastic for the region.

However, there is what I would call "austerity fatigue" in the country. In the initial months of the Fernández administration, they relaxed the fiscal stance but less than what many expected. Fernández adjusted public pensions but he also delayed utility price hikes. He has tried to achieve fiscal consolidation without threatening stability. Of course, I think that what has been going on in the region, and in the world, is affecting how policies have been shaped in Argentina.
Europe Journal:
Since you mentioned Vice President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, there’s an interesting dynamic in the government now where she represents the far-left populist wing of the Peronist party and President Alberto Fernández represents the center-left. Recently, she appears to have preempted the government (and the president) by saying she wants Argentina’s creditors to take a haircut. Do you think this was a tactical play on the part of the administration or is this evidence of the center-left vs. far-left dynamic in this government and will that be tenable?

Guido Sandleris:
I think it’s a combination of both things. I agree with your description; Alberto Fernández is more moderate than Cristina Fernández in terms of economic policy and the negotiation strategy. I think what we are now seeing is Alberto Fernández and his economic team calling the shots. I think the Peronist government understands that the IMF doesn’t take a haircut. Instead what they do is postpone some of the payments, and perhaps lower the interest rate below the market rate. So I don’t think it is significant if Cristina Fernández is trying to push President Fernández into any one position by saying she wants Argentina’s creditors to take a haircut. Do you think this was a tactical play on the part of the administration or is this evidence of the center-left vs. far-left dynamic in this government and will that be tenable?

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Europe Journal:
President Fernández has said there is no way the government will pursue austerity policies despite what the IMF has requested. Is that because of the midterm elections next year or do you think it’s rhetorical – part things in the past: when there is financing, it borrow. When there is no financing, it prints money, which leads to high inflation. That process has led to a roughly once-a-decade financial crisis. So, I think that one of the things that will be crucial is that this administration is able to continue with the fiscal consolidation of the previous administration. If we achieve that – if we have two very different parties with very different views of how the economy works but can still agree on the fiscal front – I think it would be a big step forward.

Europe Journal:
Typically, when you see the IMF come into a country, it opens the floodgates for foreign investment. Has that been the case in Argentina? Do you think the multiple defaults have been a hindrance to sustained foreign investment?

Guido Sandleris:
No. In Argentina, it didn’t happen. I don’t think the reason is the history of the defaults. I think it’s something that goes deeper in which the history of default is just one symptom of the lack of political consensus on some basic issues. If you look at Peru, Uruguay, Chile, or Colombia, even Bolivia with the recent unrest, you see economies where macroeconomic policies are more or less consistent. So, although the political system might be in a crisis, you don’t observe a complete disruption of the fiscal economics. You don’t observe inflation spiking, or a huge depreciation of the currency. We still need to achieve that in Argentina. That is, I think the biggest challenge for Argentine political leaders is to be able to achieve consensus. Once that consensus is there, we will be able to move on to more interesting questions. How do we grow? How do we make ourselves more productive? Most countries in the world have been able to reach this consensus. We haven’t. It’s insane how a presidential election in Argentina can cause the amount of disruption that it causes. That doesn’t happen in other countries in which the political system is in a worse state of crisis than ours.

Europe Journal:
Argentina has been in ongoing negotiations with the IMF and we’ve seen widespread anti-austerity protests in recent months. How do you think these negotiations are going to shape the future of Argentina?

Guido Sandleris:
The IMF is not popular in Argentina. They are the ones who come in and lend to a country when it has lost market access. In exchange, they impose some conditions on reforms that they think would be good. People tend to resent that. Another issue with the IMF that may make it unpopular is that it tends to be bureaucratic. When you are making policy with real-world consequences, having to wait for 10,000 committees of the IMF to approve something is a bit frustrating. But I think that the IMF plays an important role in the world economy.

Argentina is a big debtor of the IMF right now. (Former President Mauricio Macri brokered Argentina’s $57bn deal – the biggest in the IMF’s history – originally set to be repaid by 2023.) I think negotiations between the Argentine government and the IMF will continue, and it’s likely Argentina will not have to start making payments until next year. So it’s likely that those payments will be postponed until a new program is in place by next year.

Europe Journal:
By next year?

Guido Sandleris:
Maybe earlier. For sure, the payment deadline is before next year, but my guess is that the government will try to roll that payment over. So the way you go forward is with a new program. We are already seeing some negotiations with the Fund. I think that the process of the debt restructuring might benefit from some IMF involvement. So maybe we’ll see some progress before next year.

Europe Journal:
Thanks for your time. A lot to watch in the coming months.

Guido Sandleris:
Yes. My pleasure.
Guilherme Feierabend currently works for the UNDP-DPPA Joint Program in New York. He supports the analysis of conflict sensitive countries and facilitates development projects aimed at resolution or prevention of conflict. Previously, Guilherme has been assigned to Syria on several occasions between 2017 and 2020, where he worked in different humanitarian and development projects. Living in the country allowed him to establish a solid network of contacts with the (customary) local leadership of rural areas, where the consequences of environmental and political issues hit the hardest. Guilherme is Brazilian and holds a master’s degree in Law from The University of São Paulo and the Université de Lyon II, as well as a master’s in advanced international studies from the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna.

The current literature on the Syrian conflict focuses on different causes for triggering the disputes. Some blame the Assad regime, while others blame the “deep religious divides” within Syrian society, or economic factors. However, qualifying the conflict as sectarian, or purely political, is not satisfactory. The conflict found its roots in a myriad of factors. Contrary to what is often portrayed, the diverse ethno-religious communities of Syria have accomplished a role of harmonization of the conflict throughout Syrian history. Additional-ly, most research on Syria was conducted before the conflict started in 2011. The following years proved to be difficult for western researchers to access the country, impeding up-to-date and unbiased field research made during the conflict. Thus, this paper intends to share the most recent information directly from the field, from investigations run during the conflict between 2017 and 2020 in Damascus, Malikula, Homs and Aleppo.

In its first part, this article will focus on the effects of climate change that contributed to triggering the first rebellions in Syria by 2011, by investigating the deterioration of drought cycles in the country. These droughts, specifically the one that took place between 2006 and 2010, led to the depletion of natural resources and arable land in the rural areas, as well as the displacement of the impoverished and rebellious peasantry to the outskirts of the main cities by the end of the decade. Consequently, the droughts, summed to other socio-political grudges, might be connected to an increase in popular dissatisfaction and pressure on the government. In short, the article will investigate the correlation between the Syrian conflict and climate change.

In its second part, the research will analyze the 1951 Geneva Convention’s scope of protection of refugees. As the effects of climate change become more apparent – rising ocean levels, more severe cycles of drought, diminishing precipitation levels, all contributing to populational tension – international organizations start considering it as a “threat multiplier” and holding countries accountable for the degradation of their natural resources. Furthermore, in January 2020, there was a groundbreaking precedent established on “Tuiuti v Chief Executive Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment of New Zealand”, opening the possibility of applying non-refoulment to individuals prevenient from regions affected by climate change. Non-refoulment is a key principle from the refugee protection framework that prohibits hostor transit countries to send asylum seekers and refugees back to their countries of origin. Ultimately, the research will aim to defend a potential expansion of the 1951 Geneva Convention’s scope of protection to include individuals, or social groups, seeking asylum due to environmental reasons that pose an immediate threat to their lives.

As sources to the article, the investigation relies on academic articles with in-depth weather analysis of the Levant, and reports from the United Nations. Also, the research will utilize the author’s findings gathered on the field in Syria during the conflict.
The Droughts of Syria and its Effects on the Peasantry - Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

In the last decades, the small country - though Syria is big, only 25% of its land is arable - became overpopulated. It faced a population growth from 3 million people in 1946 to almost 23 million in 2010. On top of that, Syria's economy became unstable, contributing to the tenuous situation. According to the World Bank, until 2011 more than 20% of the country's GDP consisted of agricultural output, while 17% of its population was employed in this sector. Therefore, with the cycles of droughts and their increased severity in the last two decades, the country's production and income suffered drastic variations.

Droughts are not uncommon in semi-arid Syria. For centuries, the peasants of the region have endured its endless cycles. As a rule of thumb, the peasants of Malula say that rainfall cycles would last four or five years, then drought would arrive, forcing the local population to resort to their previous years' savings and guarantee their subsistence. On top of the drought, farmers were also affected by constant sandstorms which, according to peasants interviewed in Chatel's article, would "burn their crops" and remove the crop's nutritious topsoil. In addition to the environmental hazards, some farms would use diesel powered water pumps in century-old wells, draining them far more than their capacities to be replenished, and other farmers would herd their goats in overgrazed areas, both anthropogenic factors contributing to the desertification of the biome.

Fundamentally, the scarce resources, the aggressive grazing, the mechanical pumping of water from deep beds, the constant droughts and the exponential growth of the birth rate - creating population stress over water, land and food - culminated in an over-exploitation of the available resources and their eventual exhaustion in certain areas. Often quite in contemporary Syrian history, due to droughts there were intense migrations of peasants from rural areas to the cities, and then back again to their farms.

As soon as the conflict started in 2011, Syrians sought refuge in neighboring countries, and eventually were granted the status of refugees. The definition of refugee is given by the 1st article, paragraph 2 of the Geneva Convention of 1951 as an individual who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." In short, it is about an individual who sees his eventual return to the country of his nationality as an immediate threat to his life or freedom. The scope of protection for refugees is comprehensive, and it is based on the non-refoulement principle, that states that refugees cannot be returned to their country of origin. However, this framework only covers individuals, or social groups, persecuted due to race, religion, political affiliation or nationality and who are unwilling to let their protection remain under the responsibility of the country they fled from. However, this limitation can fail to guarantee an overarching safeguard to other migrants, as those impoverished in economic-crisis-stricken countries like Venezuela and Zambia; and even migrants who fled their homes due to climate related life-threatening situations, such as pre-war Syrians who had their livelihoods affected by drought, desertification and soil erosion, as well as the case of Mr. Teitiota who fled the island of Kiribati due to the threat posed to his livelihood and basic human rights by the rising sea level, which will be discussed in the next chapters.

The Gaps in Protection

People forced to migrate across international borders due to climate change or environmental hazards do not find official definition or recognition under international law. Meaning that those who fled and were unable to prove political persecution from where they came from would fall through the gaps of the Convention's protection. However, the Intergovernmental Panel on climate change (IPCC) stated that almost 10% of the world's population (600 million people), who live in low-lying coastal areas, called climate-hotspots, such as the south-eastern Asian mega deltas and islands, will be directly at risk of rising sea level, which will be discussed in the next chapters.

Under our current international law's framework, these cross-border migrations should not be afforded little to no protection or assistance mechanisms, as the first Syrian climate migrants could not find before and during the war. Mainly because these hordes of climate migrants crossing borders are nonexistent in today's international law, since they are not configured nor defined in our existing treaties and conventions. If the limitation is not solved after in the coming years, the potential of massive social disasters and breaches to very basic human rights is immense, due to lack of coordination and preparedness by the international community to manage these communities. Hence the absolute necessity of expanding the scope of protection of the convention, aiming to guarantee a coordinated and human rights-based approach to this modality of migration. One can wonder whether the popular dissatisfaction of the Syrians of 2011 would have been as strong as they were, had they found international and national coordinated assistance and protection during the drought and desertification of their lands.

It is important to mention that climate change is not a natural phenomenon; there are several natural disasters such as hurricanes or earthquakes, as the IPCC on 2013 has assessed that "it is extremely likely (90%) that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century." Meaning that climate change is almost certainly human-driven, therefore can be held up against governments to make them liable for unsustainable degradation of its environment.

Accordingly, the United Nations Framework Convention on climate change (UNFCCC) established the concept of common but differentiated responsibilities, which posits that each state is responsible for combating climate change, according to its respective capabilities and resources. Thus, each country is responsible for the degradation of their environmental resources, having an obligation to guarantee a safe environment for its citizens and counterparts. Whenever the government neglects its environment, it neglects its citizens, if this negligence is targeted to a certain community, it can configure persecution. This idea that governments are responsible for the degradation of the environment will resonate with the following paragraphs and open a new perspective on guaranteeing international protection and assistance to climate-migrants.

As a consequence, it is imperative to understand that "climate refugees" are not simply "climate victims" but "climate pushers." The ruling stated that sending asylum seekers home when their lives are threatened by the climate crisis "may expose individuals to a violation of non-refoulement to Mr. Teitiota. The idea that governments are responsible for the degradation of the environment will resonate with the following paragraphs and open a new perspective on guaranteeing international protection and assistance to climate-migrants.

Teitiota vs New Zealand – Threat Multiplier

In January 2020, an unprecedented decision took place in the case between Mr. Teitiota and New Zealand. In the case, the host country decided to send asylum to Mr. Teitiota and threatened to send him back to Kiribati, a Pacific Island in risk of being entirely submerged by rising sea levels. The rise in sea level, along with other climate distortions rendered the island uninhabitable. Teitiota witnessed violent disputes for land that became scarce, while degradation of the local environment rendered subsistence farming impossible, as the fresh water supply was contaminated by fresh water. The UN, worried about the risks to the asylum seeker's life, pressured a non-binding ruling concerning the guarantee of non-refoulement to Mr. Teitiota.

The ruling stated that sending asylum seekers home when their lives are threatened by the climate crisis "may expose individuals to a violation of their rights. Given that the risk of an entire country becoming submerged under water is such an extreme risk, the conditions of life in such a country may become incompatible with the right to life with dignity before the risk is realized. The ruling also stated that the asylum seekers are not required to prove that they would face imminent harm,
There are different paths to guarantee a comprehensive protection to climate-refugees. One must understand that reforming an international treaty depends on every signing party’s agreement. It is a difficult, slow and multifaceted process, but it is legally possible. Reform would mean that the signatory countries would reassemble and put the Convention under revision. However, this is politically quite impossible and might end up in more restrictions than expansion of rights, due to the populist agendas of many stakeholders, especially after the migration events in 2015 in Europe.

If reform is tricky, a second option would be for countries to meet and draft a new convention focused on the protection of climate-migrants. This, as difficult as it may seem, could officially put the concept of climate migrants and refugees in the annals of international law and guarantee assistance and protection to these communities in the future.

As a last resort, avoiding much political debate or intergovernmental coordination, the international community could agree to a broader interpretation of the definitions of persecution and social groups, predicted on the Geneva Convention of 1951. As previously stated, persecution was left undefined to guarantee flexibility and encompass the new forms of persecution. The customary international law, based on IPRs and multilateral funding (IPCC), starts to see persecution as a form human rights abuse - or serious harm - happening often, but not always, with a systematic or repetitive element; specially if targeted at a single social group (climate migrants). Thus, a targeted systematic disrespect to life (caused by drought, famine, thirst, desertification, or rising sea level) rooted in human-caused climate change could be interpreted as persecution. Especially in cases where there is clear State negligence, namely failing to fight the causes and effects of climate changes in favor of its most vulnerable citizens, to a determined social group, the climate migrants.

Conclusion

Nevertheless, the ruling of the UN over Teitiota’s case, as well as the work scholars who research on the situation of climate migrants and the assessments of the developments of climate change made by multilateral groups, such as the IPCC and the UNFCCC, demonstrate a certain pre-disposition of the international community to work in favor of climate migrants.

The main goal of these stakeholders, one can say, is to avoid unbearable and uncoordinated migration issues and massive breaches to human rights in the near future, where hordes of climate migrants cross international borders fleecing famine, drought, or invading the seas.

On a specific tone, due to the lien correlating climate change and the wars triggered by the revolts of 2011. To avoid “ifs” in history, this article emphasizes the utmost importance of guaranteeing a comprehensive framework of climate related protection and assistance to returnee Syrian migrants who will resettle on climate change affected areas, in order to avoid the breach of human rights by sending them to desertification ridden and overgrazed lands.

On a general tone, based on the predictions made by the IPCC for the coming years, a more inclusive migration policy is of the utmost necessary. Before the century is over, 600 million climate migrants all over the world will be forced to flee their lands due to the rising of sea levels and other climate distortions. Our current legal framework lacks reach and agency to deal with that magnitude. By today’s legal standards, these peoples would find themselves in a legal void, within extremely threatening situations lacking guidance or protection, and risk being sent back to their submerged or famine-stricken countries. If not expanded, the current framework of protection would give space for disastrous humanitarian crises to take place.

Ultimately, putting the Convention under revision is virtually possible, however politically impossible as it risks bringing more setbacks than expansions to refugee’s protection. On the same note, drafting a new Convention that defines climate migrants legally and guarantees their own set of protections, though ideal, demands an unprecedented level of intergovernmental coordination to guarantee its universality. Therefore, to avoid much political debate and intergovernmental coordination, the fastest solutions for the issues at hand can come with a broader interpretation of the terminology proposed by the 1951 Geneva Convention, namely “persecution” and “social group”, to include a comprehensive protection to climate migrants.

Syria: The First Large Scale Climate War and the First Climate Refugees

There is, as investigated above, a connection among climate change as a threat multiplier; the growing dissatisfaction within the peasant community, and the triggering of the full-fledged conflict that caused the mass migration – alongside other concomitant political, economic and geopolitical factors.

Most importantly, one must be reminded that on top of the destruction caused by warfare, the already scarce structure and resources of Syria have been further exhausted during the last ten years by over-exploitation, over-population, sanctions, and the increase of climate change effects on the country. Even with peace, returns can find themselves in a worse situation than before and face immediate life-threatening dangers.

The first peasants who fled to the outskirts of the main cities in 2007, in a worse situation than before and face immediate life-threatening conditions caused by warfare, the already scarce structure and resources of Syria were sent back or remained. If not expanded, the current framework of protection would give space for disastrous humanitarian crises to take place.

Can the Gap be Filled?

There are different paths to guarantee a comprehensive protection to climate-migrants. One must understand that reforming an international treaty depends on every signing party’s agreement. It is a difficult, slow and multifaceted process, but it is legally possible. Reform would mean that the signatory countries would reassemble and put the Convention under revision. However, this is politically quite impossible and might end up in more restrictions than expansion of rights, due to the populist agendas of many stakeholders, especially after the migration events in 2015 in Europe.

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The Arab Spring came to Yemen in January 2011 and over the course of the year the Yemeni state slowly weakened as various tribal confederations and political movements turned against President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Saleh rejected various deals to transfer power until an assassination attempt in June forced Saleh to flee to Saudi Arabia. By February 2012, elections were held which inaugurated Vice President Abd Rabbo Mansur Hadi as the new President. However, Yemen’s problems were only beginning.

The Yemeni state continued to disintegrate and the country is now convulsed by numerous conflicts and political movements. From the conflict between the Houthis and the internationally recognized government led by Hadi, to the conflict between Hadi and the Southern Transitional Council (STC), each province faces a unique political situation. Many local political actors continue to agitate for local autonomy, furthering the proliferation of armed political groups. For some, such as the STC, this extends to full-scale independence; other political actors want a transition to a federal system within a united Yemen.

One of the most intriguing and complex cases is Mahra. Located on the eastern end of Yemen, Mahra lies at the intersection of Saudi and Omani influence, as well as along important trade routes. Isolated by vast deserts and mountains, it maintains a unique culture and language that shares more in common with Dhofar, western Oman, than with the rest of Yemen. However, its population is small, estimated at

Mahra
The Eye of Geopolitical Storm
Volume 23

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cultural ties and an opposition to foreign forces in Mahra that un-
emerged as one of the main opposition leaders to the Saudi presence in
Like al-Afar, al-Hurayzi receives support from Oman. In Sep-
termination from Governor Bin Kuddah, the UAE offered increased food assis-
ters from the STC in that it supports Yemeni unity. It is primarily shared
Council (SNSC – also called Southern Salvation Council SSC) and urged
in and prepared for further violence.11
The Hadi government remains resistant to Saudi advances in Mahra, stating on May 5th 2019 “[we want] our allies in the coalition to march
The deployment by Saudi Arabia of Apache helicopters to al-Ghaydah in June 2019 indicates Saudi Arabia is digging in and prepared for further violence.11
Border restrictions implemented by Saudi Arabia also limited local trade
Finally, the arrival of hundreds of Salafists from Dammaj, Saada to
networks across the border into Oman.14 So far local protests have not
significantly constrained the growth of Saudi military installations in Mahra.
While Oman has denied allowing the smuggling of weapons through its borders to Mahra, this area has long been known for informal smug-
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attacks by Iran have only heightened those fears. Secondly preventing the smuggling of arms through Mahra to the Houthis is vital for Saudi Arabia’s war effort.

Oman’s Interest in Mahra
Oman’s interest in Mahra dates back to the 1970s during the Dhofar War. Partially due to shared linguistic, cultural, tribal connections, and
partially due to support by the South Yemeni government, Mahra served as a safe haven for rebels fighting against Oman. Since the war, Oman
has viewed Mahra as strategically important to Oman’s security and cul-
tivated friendly ties with local leaders to project their influence.14 While Oman does not seek to stoke this conflict and consequently has rejected
requests for heavier weapons by al-Hurayzi, they will continue to pro-
vide other support to local groups in order to maintain their position in the region.15
For Oman, there are several strategic issues in Mahra. First, it is a useful
buffer which keeps the Yemeni Civil War from spilling over into Oman.
Secondly, the presence of Salafists and Salafi centers in Mahra present an
ideological and cultural threat not only to locals in Mahra, but also to Oman’s predominantly Badii populace.20

Saudi Interests in Mahra
Saudi Arabia has two primary strategic objectives in Mahra. The primary
issue is to secure an alternate route to export oil that bypasses both the
Bah Al-Mandab Strait and the Strait of Hormuz. Both straits present an
enormous vulnerability to Saudi Arabia’s ability to export oil and recent
attacks by Iran have only heightened those fears. Secondly preventing the smuggling of arms through Mahra to the Houthis is vital for Saudi Arabia’s war effort.

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borders to Mahra, this area has long been known for informal smug-
gen. In 2015, the UN Panel of Experts on Yemen determined
that Iran made ballistic missile components were smuggled through
Mahra, either through the border with Oman or by sea to Nishtun.22
Despite Oman’s denials it is likely they are tacitly aware of this smuggling
and their attempts to remain neutral implicitly offer support to Iran.

Saudi Arabia – Oman Relations
Oman’s traditional foreign policy has relied on a delicate balancing act
between Saudi Arabia and Iran. In light of Iranian attacks against oil
tankers and Saudi oil facilities in Abqaiq, maintaining neutrality is be-
coming increasingly difficult. Oman’s refusal to join Saudi Arabia’s emb-
argo against Qatar and its refusal to support the coalition against the
Houthis in Yemen aggravates Saudi Arabia.23 However, if Saudi Arabia
responds forcefully to Al-Afar, it will further alienate the people of Mah-
ra and risk violently escalating the current protests. Any escalation in
the conflict risks forcing Oman to increase its support for local protest
movements in Mahra.

The Impact of Oil
Currently Saudi Arabia is beginning construction on an oil export
some 120,000. Until 1967 Mahra and the island of Socotra had existed
for hundreds of years as an independent state.1 As the British withdrew
from Yemen after 1967 this state was forcibly incorporated into the Peo-
ples’s Democratic Republic of Yemen, a Marxist state aligned with the
Soviet Union.5 Since the dissolution of the central government in Yemen
in 2011-2012, local politics have reasserted themselves in these distinct
regions.

In 2012 local sheikhs from the General Council of the People of Mah-
ra and Socotra appointed Sultan Abdullah bin Essa al-Afar, son of the
former Sultan of Mahra, as head of the council.1 In May 2018 Sultan
al-Afar returned to Mahra from exile in Muscat, Oman. From the be-
inning Saudi Arabia tried to limit his reception but this was thoroughly
rebuffed by local Mehri sheikhs and instead al-Afar was received by thousands of Mehri. Al-Afar’s speech calling for the Saudis to withdraw
from Mahra galvanized anti-Saudi sentiment and led to a list of de-
mands which included amongst other things; the empowerment of local
authorities in matters of governance, security, trade, and the transfer of
the al-Ghaydah airport to civilian control.4 As a traditional tribal leader,
al-Afar is typically subdued in his rhetoric in order to preserve unity
amongst the sheikhs in the General Council.2

Another important local political leader is Ali Saleh al-Hurayzi, a for-
ermer deputy governor of Mahra and an ally of Sultan al-Afar, who has emerged as one of the main opposition leaders to the Saudi presence in
Mahra. Like al-Afar, al-Hurayzi receives support from Oman. In Sep-
tember 2019, al-Hurayzi established the Southern National Salvation
Council (SNSC – also called Southern Salvation Council SSC) and urged
the people of Mahra to resist Saudi forces.9 The level of support for
the SNSC is unclear, while it includes groups across Southern Yemen, it dif-
fers from the STC in that it supports Yemeni unity. It is primarily shared

due to its geographic isolation, Mahra has so far been relatively un-
touched by the Yemeni Civil War. From August 2015 to late 2017, the
UAE operated limited military forces in the region, and attempted to
develop local security forces under its direction.5 This has been a common
policy which the UAE used to build influence in other regions in South
Yemen and the Security Belt Forces, which make up the military wing of
the STC, were created under similar programs.8 After securing coopera-
tion from Governor Bin Kuddah, the UAE offered increased food assis-
tance and financial aid as a way of gaining support within the province.9
In response, Oman increased its financial support to local tribal leaders,
providing generators to resolve an electricity shortage, and mobilized the
General Council to force the UAE to follow local tribal authorities.
Instead the UAE withdrew from the region. Subsequent UAE efforts to
involve their proxy forces, the STC, were resisted by both al-Afar’s Gen-
eral Council and al-Hurayzi’s SNSC.

However, in late 2017 Saudi Arabia began to replace the UAE and deploy
military forces to Mahra. They swiftly occupied the capital, al-Ghayd-
ab, the port of Nishtun, and border crossings at Shabim and Surfa. By
November Saudi influence over Hadi prevailed and Governor Bin Kud-
dah was replaced with Governor Rajeh Bakri who is more amenable to
Saudi interests.10 So far only a few violent skirmishes have occurred and
casualties were minimal. The Mehri Grievances

Mehri view the deployment of Saudi and UAE troops as a violation of
their sovereignty and frequently protest the construction of Saudi mil-
tary facilities. In particular, locals protest the usage of the only major
airport in the region, al-Ghaydah airport, as a Saudi military base which
is presently closed to civilian traffic.12 Likewise, in Nishtun, Saudi troops
closed nearby waters to local fishermen, jeopardising their livelihoods.13

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ra and risk violently escalating the current protests. Any escalation in
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movements in Mahra.

The Impact of Oil
Currently Saudi Arabia is beginning construction on an oil export
terminal in Nishtun and plans to connect it with an oil pipeline to Al-Khawbah, Saudi Arabia. Initially, the port of Nishtun would have an export capacity of 2,000 tons of oil per day, or some 15,000 barrels per day, and an import capacity of 200 tons of commercial freight per day. Previous plans indicate that Saudi Arabia plans for the pipeline to Nishtun to have a capacity of 500,000 barrels per day, so further expansion of port infrastructure in Nishtun is likely once this pipeline infrastructure is in place. Since Saudi Arabia continues to invest significant military forces in the region, it is clear that they are planning to remain in the region for the long term.

Saudi Arabia’s oil production fell by half, or some 5.7 million barrels of oil per day, after the Abqaiq attacks in September 2019. Saudi oil exports eventually recovered, but these attacks gave added impetus to Saudi Arabia to find alternative ways of exporting their oil. The pipeline to Nishtun will still be vulnerable to drone or missile attacks by the Houthis, as well as by local rebels, so it will reduce but not eliminate the risk from transporting oil through the Strait of Hormuz. The primary impact will not be on the oil market, but on the local people living in Mahra who will continue to be opposed to what they see as an infringement on their sovereignty.

Conclusion

Calls for independence in Mahra are not universally supported, but may become more popular over time. There is an ongoing debate, with some groups, such as those led by al-Hurayzi calling for a united Yemeni state, while other sheikhs in the General Council call for a federal system in Yemen. What unites the protest movements in Mahra is opposition to the foreign military presence in the region. This military presence will not end as long as Saudi Arabia sees Mahra as strategically important. If Mahri demands go unaddressed it is possible that an initially peaceful protest movement may turn to violence. Irrespective of external actors’ attempts to control the politics of Mahra, the local people will continue to advocate for their own interests and maintain their own distinctive identity.


Ibid.
Earlier this year, the SAIS Europe Journal talked to Martin Kobler to discuss the United Nations’ role and challenges it currently faces, its use of force and effects on legitimacy, and the underlying factors of recent dissent in the DRC, the CAR, Mali, Iraq among others. The following transcript has been edited for brevity and clarity.

Europe Journal:
Starting with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we've seen protests occurring over the past months against both France's presence in the region and the UN in general. Local populations have questioned the legitimacy of the UN's stabilization mission MONUSCO (since 2010) and its ability to ensure security and stability in the Congo. You probably experienced similar situations working in the DRC in 2013. How might the UN ensure its legitimacy in such circumstances and how would you assess the present situation in the DRC?

Martin Kobler:
The core of the problem is that people tend to think that it's the responsibility of the UN to solve their problems. The first thing, therefore, is expectation management: you have to tell them what the UN can and cannot do. The second is to communicate, communication is 90% of the whole work. The message must be: this is the Congo, those are Congo-lese problems, and these must be your solutions. We (UN) are here to assist but we cannot take over, we cannot replace your political elites to solve the country's problems but we can moderate. We have a convening power, but it is your government that has to solve the problem.

As for expectation management, what could we have done with, say, 20,000 troops during my time? Also keep in mind the Congo is a subcontinent; if you look at a map, with 20,000 people and only 3000 fighting, it is just not feasible to be everywhere. There were of course exceptions such as Cambodia (UNTAC), Namibia (UNTAG), and Kosovo, where the UN was running the countries and the elections. But usually countries arrange elections themselves and the UN ensures that nothing goes wrong. These are the basics to guarantee the UN's legitimacy.

Another way is to improve the performance of the UN. I do not want to
say that everything is up to those countries, it's also the procedures of the UN and the way we perform with regard to the protection of civilians. The civic unrest in Beni (DRC) was a protest against the UN; we partly do not perform well. Protection of civilians used to mean that when rebels attacked a village, in particular the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebel group in the Beni area, the UN would open its base camp gates for people to seek refuge. Protection of civilians now means that when rebels attack a village we ask the villagers to stay in their houses whilt our limited personnel (100 people) goes out to chase the rebels. We had a relatively good experience changing the UN's tactics towards the rebels in the DRC. But I must say that in principle, traditional troops are risk averse. They often have in- structions from their own country not to have casualties. When I started in the DRC there were neither night patrols nor foot patrols. The Force Commander and myself changed this. He instructed them to go out at night, on foot, and to leave the armored cars and the safe APCs... I think this made a very good impression on the people. The Force Commander and myself went with the troops even on midnight foot patrols in the middle of rebel areas. If you show that you are taking risks, including the Force Commander and perhaps also the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), then even if you don't succeed you show that you do your best. If you manage to communicate the 'do your best' philosophy and do not hide behind barriers, this enhances the credibility of the UN. Europe Journal: Did you experience any dissent first-hand against UN personnel and, if so, what kind of dissent? We've also seen unrest in 2019 in the CAR and in Mali where UN missions are drastically losing legitimacy. Do you see any parallels from your time there? Martin Kohler: There is no 'one-size-fits-all' in the CAR, DRC, and elsewhere. One im- portant form of action is disarming rebels and transforming rebel groups into a civil kind of structure, what we call DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration). One technique we tried in the DRC, and this is ongoing but not very successful, is the force intervention brigade: 3000 soldiers from Tanzania, South Africa, and Malawi. This was a trial and error during my time, it was never done before: a first in modern UN times. The UN got the mandate from the Security Council to use force actively. It was a highly disputed concept within the UN itself. The UN headquarters in New York told the new Force Commander and myself: 'we give you the means for an intervention brigade but it should work by deterrence, better not to use it'... In the CAR, there is no intervention brigade, we want to increase the deterrence, better not to use it’. The idea of complicity is particularly interesting when you look at Mali in the Congo there were neither night patrols nor foot patrols. The Force Commander and myself changed this. He instructed them to go out at night, on foot, and to leave the armored cars and the safe APCs... I think this made a very good impression on the people. The Force Commander and myself went with the troops even on midnight foot patrols in the middle of rebel areas. If you show that you are taking risks, including the Force Commander and perhaps also the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), then even if you don't succeed you show that you do your best. If you manage to communicate the 'do your best' philosophy and do not hide behind barriers, this enhances the credibility of the UN.

Europe Journal: Anti-terror fighting is a difficult task of the UN. Of course, you could do it because of what we call the 'Christmas tree mandate': the mandates are very broad, they allow for vast activities. However, the 2015 High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report, the last on improving the efficiency of peacekeeping, says clearly that anti-terror fight is not a task the UN should take on. There are also risk adverse states. Many troops in Mali rarely leave their camp to avoid casualties. The UN cannot do anti-terror fight with this kind of risk averse mentality. Secondly, the UN needs to cooperate with other forces on the ground. We have seen it in Afghanistan where we had a civilian mandate to work together with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). ISAF tried to do the military job and the UN did most of the civilian work. It's important that the players sit around the table and combine a mix of anti-terror, protection of civilians, and in particular the civilian follow-up. It's very important not to limit the UN to the military but also to have a follow up centered on civilians. So, there is the military, and within the military what the UN can do, but the follow-up is also part of the game. Most discussions focus on how effective the military is, but what happens after they have proven effective? What happens between the liberation of a rebel-held area and the start of real development programs? This is often overlooked because UN agencies have determined planning cycles. It's difficult to coordinate and harmonize with the military agenda of the UN.

Europe Journal: There seems to be a strong risk diversity mentality in the Congo but also in Mali. Do you think a leadership issue would also help explain this or rather a structural problem associated with these peacekeeping missions? Martin Kohler: The UN faces a structural problem in that the SRSG or even the best leader can't do everything. But never give up! Say you have between 25 and 30 agencies, funds and programs in the Congo. The coordination between these, as well as bringing the political, military, and develop- ment perspectives together is something which is almost impossible. As a leader you can say it's a structural problem and therefore choose not to address it. This was never my approach; I am very interested in the UN legitimacy comundrum. The UN has to take care of the civilian follow up and include civilians, even roughly, in the military planning at an early stage. But the issue is that within the country teams, the political/mili- tary part and the development agencies want to be separate. Afghanistan is a typical example, where even the cars are painted differently: you have the UNAMA cars painted in black, and the development and hu- manitarian organizations painted in blue. This separation is a structural issue. But it is indeed also about leadership. It is up to the leadership to compensate for the structural deficits of the system.

Europe Journal: Iraq has also been an interesting case recently. We could be interested to hear your opinion on the recent protests observed in the country, and whether you think they have had traction and impact on the current politics in Iraq. Martin Kohler: The civil unrest we've seen in Iraq is directed against the government. Iraq has a serious governance problem. This is the result of the failure of the Western coalition there, but also of the UN. We are too often complicit with governments. We've spoken about UN complicity with groups and non-state actors, but the UN can also be complicit with gov- ernments. In Afghanistan, billions of US dollars of development aid are ending up in Dubai in real estate projects. The government's corruption, and corruption in general, is a huge problem. Despite international assis- tance, the government does not provide basic services for the people like wastewater management, electricity, clean water. This has driven recent unrest in Iraq. Going back to the UN, putting more stress on govern- ance, anti corruption, and not being complicit with the government is one thing. The second is impunity. An inefficient or absent legal system frustrates the population and sooner or later people are going to rebel. The failure to be held accountable for corruption is one of the major issues in these countries, and the UN should work with governments to
not tolerate this kind of behavior.

**Europe Journal:**
I would argue governance issues are very much linked to the perception of outside influence. Iranian influence in Iraq is clear. Where would you place the role of the UN Assistance mission in Iraq in addressing these concerns?

**Martin Kobler:**
Iranian influence in Iraq can’t be disputed, but if there is no basis for popular dissatisfaction it will not work in the long run. In Libya, for example, you can “buy” civic unrest, so to say, but you cannot do so in Iraq. Yes there is Iranian influence in Iraq, but Iran relies on Iraq’s popular dissatisfaction with its own Shia government. The civic unrest we’ve seen is a popular reaction to the Iraqi government which is not in a position to cater for the most basic needs of the population.

I remember in Kosovo in 1998 the electricity plant did not work. Ten years later the power plant in Kosovo still did not work. I hope it works today! These kinds of things have angered local populations, rightly so.

**Europe Journal:**
What is your take on this? Do you place any blame on UN missions that run these kinds of projects?

**Martin Kobler:**
It depends on the mandate. Let’s take the example of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), where the UN had executive power. As head of the mission you must cater to the needs of the people. Security is of course the first priority because you need to guarantee security to allow people for example to go out and do their work without fear of being shot at. The UN together with the host governments have to address the questions of a peace economy. People have to earn their living. There is usually a general clause in the mandate to get the economy up and running. Promoting private companies is probably not explicitly mentioned, but it is so important to promote framework conditions for private companies.

**Europe Journal:**
One of the reasons why the missions are not necessarily proactive is that UN actions on the ground do not have backup from UN headquarters in New York. The UN does not have the capabilities to be more proactive and failure could result in the termination of a mission.

**Martin Kobler:**
The Heads of Mission are responsible to the UN Security Council. The UN Secretary General and the Secretariat support the mission. The SRSG justifies what is done on the ground to the UN Security Council once every three months. The SRSG goes to the UN Security Council in New York to have an internal discussion on what has been done and what should be done. If you tell the Security Council you want to get a power plant up and running within three years in Kosovo, for example, nobody would object. So it is possible to get the backing. It’s up to the Head of Mission. I put a lot of emphasis on economy, education and humanitarian action so people can live a decent life in peace. If the people need an electricity plant for this, so organize it! If there are no funds, look for funding. I have never experienced reasonable projects not being funded. There is so much money for military purposes which destroy infrastructure during conflict, there must also be money to rebuild a destroyed country.

**Europe Journal:**
What you mentioned about UN personnel staying in their bases and having no or very little contact with local populations on the ground, do you see that as the fundamental problem? Do you think dissent or civic unrest could be avoided if UN personnel were more in touch with these populations, showing that they are engaging with them to protect them? Where do you factor this lack of contact in episodes of dissent we’re seeing today around the world?

**Martin Kobler:**
This is one of the main problems in high risk environments. If you send a member of UN personnel to a tribal meeting in Libya, for example, you need to finance their security. In Iraq, personnel stays in the green zone designing projects; there is often a real detachment from the people. Many colleagues are not exposed to direct contact with local populations. What I tried in Libya, and left to my successor, was to send political messages via tweets. I started in the Congo, where I used Twitter to spread political messages to become at least virtually closer to the people. My successor in Libya arranged 70 conferences all over the country with people from all across the country. This was direct democracy, a little bit like local Loya Jirgas (legal assembly) in Afghanistan. This brings UN personnel into contact with tribal leaders, albeit mostly men. It gives the people the opportunity to talk. We need to know what they think and what they want, we should not focus on the views of the governments only. I took many colleagues from my mission with me just to listen. But you are right: in high risk environments it’s much more complicated.

There is no short term solution for it. That’s why security is the most important task at the beginning in countries where UN missions are deployed. In Afghanistan, for example, UNICEF had polio vaccination campaigns. Vaccinating children in Taliban controlled areas proved difficult, but colleagues managed to organize vaccinations even under the most difficult circumstances and being very close to the population. Building schools and wells, delivering humanitarian aid are other examples where the UN cooperates very closely and directly with the people.
Charlie Lawrie recently completed the first year of a SAIS MA over Zoom. He previously worked in Lebanon, which has over one thousand municipalities.

“Almost every major revolution has been a conflict between the local community and the centralised state…”

(Murray Bookchin, Limits of the City)

In 2020, human societies face ecological pandemonium, yawning economic inequality and a rural-urban divide. Forests burn in Australia, California, and Brazil. Glaciers melt. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce’ own National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, January 2020 was the warmest on record. Economic contradictions become starker: Credit Suisse reports that the top 1 percent of the population owns 45 percent of all global personal wealth, while the bottom 50 percent owns less than 1 percent. Insurance companies have begun to factor in the expected cost of climate change into their models, with the expectation that insurance premia could become unaffordable. The gap between the urban rich and the rural poor is complicated by the emergence of a respiratory virus, which affects metropolitan areas hardest.

Recent climate protest movements have focused on the need to achieve social and economic justice as well as effect a successful transition away from fossil fuels. Campaigning groups such as Extinction Rebellion and Fridays for Future have highlighted the systemic conditions that underpin global warming, while the Green New Deal campaigns in the U.S. and Europe have called for mass employment in green jobs as well as the decentralisation of the democratic process. All advocate the creation of ‘citizens assemblies’, groups of individuals making decisions at the community level.

It would be difficult to credit a single person with the development of these concepts. Indeed, the one figure to whom much of the credit is due would likely have been reluctant to claim it. Mortimore ‘Murray’ Bookchin (1921-2006), father of the social ecology movement, seems to have been as modest as he was dogged. Foundry worker, union rep, writer, community organiser, professor, speechmaker: Bookchin played a whole series of roles during his life, movingly documented in Janet Biehl’s Ecology or Catastrophe: The Life of Murray Bookchin. The definition of an ‘outsider’ activist, he eschewed mainstream political life, choosing instead to agitate through his writings, speeches and teaching.

Ecology or Catastrophe darts in and out of Bookchin’s life, interspersing biography with an account of contemporary political developments. The book is as much a wistful chronicle of 20th century radicalism as it is of Bookchin’s life. We learn of mass Communist support in interwar New York, the anti-war and anti-racism movements in the U.S. and in Europe, and the growing green movement towards the end of the 20th
Beyond Hierarchy
Bookchin is best known today as the father of libertarian municipalism; the belief that authentic politics is done at the local level. Yet his initial writing was motivated by the negative relationship between urban and rural in the contemporary United States. Inspired by William Vogt’s *The Road to Survival*, Fairfield Osborn’s *Our Plundered Planet* and Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities*, he spent much of the 1950s writing and researching the impact of pesticides and fertilisers on human health. This work, ultimately became *Our Synthetic Environment* (1962).

The rejection of *Our Synthetic Environment* stemmed not so much from its systematic examination of agrochemicals and their harmful effects on humans but from its diagnosis of the underlying issue: the organisation of modern life. Bookchin explicitly linked human health to the contemporary mode of economic and social organisation. Cities—dehumanising to human health and impossible to live in—were necessary preconditions for modern capitalism. The megalopolis had to be dismantled and replaced with smaller, self-sustaining communities, which Bookchin described as “eco-decentralisation”. This big-picture argument set the book apart from Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, which largely eclipsed *Our Synthetic Environment*. While *Silent Spring* was doubtless the more popular book, its failure to address the social and economic structures promoting pesticide use meant that, in the words of historian Yvonne Garb, it “...brought its readers to the threshold of difficult questions...” but Carson’s avoidance of politics, abetted by her conceptions of nature, helped lead them away again.

Over the course of his life, Bookchin would come to see Marxist movements as principally concerned with obtaining and consolidating power for themselves. Crucially for Bookchin, who came to be concerned with questions of ecology, Marxism treated the environment as something to be tamed and exploited by workers themselves. In other words, its desire to achieve man’s mastery over the natural world was no less chauvinistic than capitalism’s.

As it was a young revolutionary that Bookchin developed the rhetorical skills that would come to define his later career. More fascinated by revolution than schoolbooks, he dropped out of public school and was given a job as a street-corner orator by the CPUSA. Yet Bookchin became increasingly alienated by the Marxist-Leninists during his teens and into his twenties. While key tenets of Marxism—principally, Hegelian dialectics—were valuable in laying the foundations for his systemic critique, Bookchin questioned the YCL’s doctrinaire support for Stalin’s increasingly authoritarian tendencies and was finally expelled from the League. Bookchin’s grandmother’s death, he joined the Young Communist League (YCL), the youth wing of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA).

Bookchin’s growing interest in anarchism was an archaic as a model for political organisation. His love affair with Marxism-Leninism was over, as it had erroneously predicted that economic and social forces would inevitably lead the world to socialism. The classical workers’ movement had ended because, in Bookchin’s words, “[it] never really had the revolutionary potential that Marx attributed to it... the factory, [..] in fact had created habits of mind in the worker that served to regiment the worker”. Marxian, in other words, simply reproduced hierarchy. Anarchism, on the other hand, explicitly interrogated it: in families, sexual relationships, schools or ethnic groups. Anarchist theory, Bookchin believed, would place the responsibility firmly in the hands of individuals to create societies free from domination. The idea of domination, derived from anarchist theory, was central to his rejection of environmentalism, which sought to instrumentalise the environment, perpetuating domination over nature and ecology; a form of social organisation which removed dominance from humanity’s relationship with the natural world.

For these societies to be achievable, however, they would need to be self-sustaining. Bookchin’s subsequent work was the product of this intellectual fusion of anarchism and ecology. In his next book, *Crisis in Our Cities* (1965), Bookchin argued that the deurbanisation of cities would require newly created, small-scale communities to grow their own food, generate their own power and heat their own houses. Technology would play an essential role: solar, wind, and geothermal energy could provide electricity, while small-scale rotating fields could provide sustainable, pesticide-free sources of food. *Ecology and Revolutionary Thought* (1964) argued that only an ecological movement could create the social transformation required to avert ecological crisis.

Bookchin spent the 1960s and 1970s writing, organising and teaching. He joined the New York branch of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), a non-violent movement that had fought racial segregation in the American South. He would become a field organiser for CORE and was arrested for non-violent civil disobedience at the World’s Fair in 1964. These non-violent movements were quickly replaced, however, by groups such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) inspired by Franz Fanon, Herbert Marcuse, and Mao. In late 1967, they deployed ‘mobile tactics’, smashing windows and entering direct confrontation with the police during the Draft Week. Bookchin took part in Stop the Draft as a peaceful protestor but was agitated at what he saw as the increasingly Marxist tendencies of the student movements. In Biehl’s words, Bookchin believed that revolutions should act as catalysts, but never as organisers.

The early 1980s saw green movements make substantial gains across Europe: in particular, the West German Greens (Die Grünen), founded in January 1980, championed ecological and social issues in their four pillar: ecology, social justice, grassroots democracy and non-violence. At the same time, Bookchin’s work was being translated into Italian, French, Greek, and German. He was invited to speak at various European venues, where he was exposed to the complexities of anarchism in contemporary Europe: in Italy, where anarchist movements had been consigned to irrelevance due to their refusal to participate in the political process, and in Germany, where the Greens were fiercely debating whether to go into coalition with the Social Democrats (SPD). Bookchin, convinced the Greens should avoid parliamentary politics at all costs, gave a series of speeches alongside figures such as Jutta Ditfurth, arguing that the Greens should instead create citizens assemblies at the neighbourhood level. To Bookchin’s dismay, the Greens eventually went into coalition with the SPD. Once again, the dream of municipal organisation had been sacrificed at the altar of party politics.

Returning to the U.S., Bookchin saw an opportunity to put his anarchist vision into practice. Burlington, where he had lived since the early 1970s, had just elected Bernard Sanders on a platform of local community interest. Sanders proceeded to pursue a series of tactics to mobilise local opposition: letters to newspapers, press conferences, educational forums, and nature walks along the waterfront. To pass, the referendum needed a two-thirds majority, but only received 53 percent. The Greens and their allies had won this time.

But this early success was undermined by subsequent events. In a March 1990 city council election, collusion between the Green and Progressive candidates tainted the election; the Greens consequently disbanded. Shortly afterwards, Bookchin announced his retirement from politics. His hopes of securing tangible political change had come to an end.

**Death of an Ecologist**

How might the success of an activist’s life be measured? Despite everything, Bookchin died in 2006 believing that his project had ultimately failed. The writing, the book tours, the speeches, the teaching, the conversations had, in his view, come to nothing. Capitalism continued to wreak havoc on people’s bodies, dull their brains and destroy their natural environments. A sense of melancholy, even anguish, thus permeates *Ecology or Catastrophe*. We watch as Bookchin, constantly on the lookout for self-organised local movements that could launch the beginning of the new ecological community, gradually came to accept that the time of revolution had come to an end. Clear-eyed about Marxism’s mistaken faith in the inevitability of revolution, he never forgot that it would require individual effort to persuade others of the urgency of his task. When anarchism failed to translate into a mass political project in his lifetime, the future must bear felt personal. For someone whose life’s work centered on the belief that social and economic relations could—and, in the face of impending ecological disaster, had to—be transformed into decentralised communities based on rationality and kindliness, capitalism’s continued triumph at the end of the millennium must have felt catalytic.

In her portrayal of Bookchin’s miserable final years, Biehl does not sim-
ple point the finger at capitalism. Bookchin's detractors are lined up for inspection, too. In the latter stages of the book—with three hundred pages of Bookchin's heroism firmly in our minds—Biehl presents various critics, mostly Leftists, who launched barbed attacks against Bookchin's writings. Individual readers will have to draw their own conclusions as to the validity of these critiques, although Bookchin approached a bewildering amount of invective, largely on the grounds of jealousy. There is a slight sense that the book has a chip on its shoulder; Biehl presents Bookchin not simply as a hero but a tragic one, betrayed by his supporters, let down by history, and failing by ideology.

Biehl's vital supporting role in Bookchin's later years must have eased the pain considerably. The two first met in 1986 during a summer course taught by Bookchin. The age difference—Bookchin was sixty, Biehl thirty-three—was irrelevant and they would go on to spend thirty years together until Bookchin's death. Biehl became secretary, publisher and editor, as well as primary caregiver. She was well placed to perform the role of biographer, then, which on balance she performs well, with rare personal interjections and a biographer's critical tone. She quietly hints at the extraordinary amount of care and labour that she was required to provide Bookchin, who suffered from osteoarthritis in his old age. The relationship was nonetheless a two-way street and clearly gave Biehl the confidence to forge her own career as an author and campaigner. Intriguingly, she has distanced herself from the social ecology movement, which Extinction Rebellion and Fridays for Future have been able to mobilise support for
citizens assemblies to "determine the wide-ranging policy changes needed to transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions and halt the extinction of species."4

Two assumptions are made here. The first is that citizens assemblies will take more enlightened, progressive decision-making than the representatives in whom decision-making power has traditionally been vested. This has proven to be the case in several scenarios: citizens assemblies have been responsible for passing pro-abortion laws in Ireland, electoral reform in Canada, city planning in Australia and labour issues in Belgium. The second related assumption is that these assemblies will limit their ambit to exclusively "progressive" issues, however defined. It is easy to imagine a scenario where other interest groups also demand direct forms of democracy. If there were to be citizen assemblies on climate change in the UK, why not on migration policy?5 Even on climate change, it must be remembered that many citizens in European countries remain considerably concerned with the threat posed to fossil fuel-linked industries. Such angst creates strange bedfellows. At the end of 2018, the Polish union Solidarity issued a joint statement with conservative U.S. think tank The Heartland Institute that expressed extreme scepticism about the climate narrative. It was in the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's view that the world stands at the edge of a catastrophic catastrophe.6

As for technology's role in activism, Bookchin, of course, did not have the advantages Bookchin's detractors have been delighted by Extinction Rebellion's unrepentantly anarchist attempts to co-opt the climate narrative, but there is a chance he would have been able to adapt them to their specific needs and contexts. Though Bookchin never lived to see them, citizen movements across nations and continents have put his ideas into practice.

Today's protest movements continue to grapple with the fundamental tension, explored by Bookchin, between the overlapping echelons of political action. The truth, they argue, is that modern, global problems—climate change, the refugee crisis and automation inter alia—pose threats to the fabric of local communities. They depict a world where decision-making power has traditionally been vested in the hands of elites, who are then distanced from the local communities. This has proven to be the case in several scenarios: citizens assemblies have been responsible for passing pro-abortion laws in Ireland, electoral reform in Canada, city planning in Australia and labour issues in Belgium. The second related assumption is that these assemblies will limit their ambit to exclusively "progressive" issues, however defined. It is easy to imagine a scenario where other interest groups also demand direct forms of democracy. If there were to be citizen assemblies on climate change in the UK, why not on migration policy? Even on climate change, it must be remembered that many citizens in European countries remain considerably concerned with the threat posed to fossil fuel-linked industries. Such angst creates strange bedfellows. At the end of 2018, the Polish union Solidarity issued a joint statement with conservative U.S. think tank The Heartland Institute that expressed extreme scepticism about the climate narrative. It was in the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's view that the world stands at the edge of a catastrophic catastrophe.

Bookchin's work while in solitary confinement and developed a political movement known as 'Democratic Confederalism' based explicitly on Bookchin's ideas. The Kurdish autonomous region in Rojava, northern Syria, was founded in 2012 on the core principles of assembly democracy, ecology and a cooperative economy. The strength of Bookchin's ideas lies in their applicability, different communities across the world have been able to adapt them to their specific needs and contexts. Though Bookchin never lived to see them, citizen movements across nations and continents have put his ideas into practice.

Of course, the current pandemic lockdown has rendered much physical organisation impossible. Activists may be moving online, f1ckvesterke is slowly being replaced by f1ckvestraktekineen, and, in countries where physical gatherings remain possible, protesters are still mobilising on the streets of two metres apart. The longer the lockdown continues, the more the momentum is lost. Physical disobedience also risks a loss of credibility; the pandemic has imbued the state with a moral authority that is difficult to contradict. Climate activists, often sceptical of national governments, are urging people to stay at home. Indeed, the protests that have attracted the most attention have been those organised by right-wing libertarian movements in the U.S. Yet the lockdown has also served as a visceral reminder of the importance of communities, with mutual aid groups organising in the absence of the centralised state.

Key Takeaways for Love and Rage

Even if we all suddenly find ourselves inhabiting Bookchin's preferred modus vivendi, none of this is to suggest his was the better project. His steadfast refusal to engage with mainstream party politics, which he saw as corrupted, corrupting and opposed so to his vision of the ideal society, clearly and drastically limited his programme's potential for change. His anarchist model would require not just a vast collective will to effect true change: by restoring decision making to local communities, it would be necessary to devolve, autonomous organisation, and to foster a so-called regenerative culture among its members. It is difficult to see how this transformation would take place without the willingness of political activists to agitate for change in the mainstream. Had Bookchin been more willing to grit his teeth and lobby the mainstream for change, he might have ended his life in a state of less profound gloom.

What lessons can be learned from Bookchin's project? We identify three. First, that the local cannot be neglected as a site of politics. Not only are communities vital for our individual survival, they allow us to negotiate power, articulate collective interests and solve shared problems without the inevitable alienation involved in the removal of politics to centralised centres of power. Secondly, Bookchin's personal failure to achieve change in his lifetime reminds us of the enduring tension between the local and the national in the age of the nation-state, and the fact that the local must remember the national if it is to survive. Last of all, Bookchin's work is a reminder that change takes time, and that activists may not live to witness the change they work to achieve. But who would be willing to contemplate that possibility?7

In 2019, people across the world took to the streets to express anger at their governments for economic and political reasons, including the rising cost of living and a perceived lack of representative policymaking. While protest movements have had different causes, the UN argues “a connecting thread (...) is deep rising frustration with inequalities”.

The United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) Human Development Report (HDR), released in December 2019, was presented as a manual to help leaders “understand why people take to the streets in protest and what leaders can do about it.” The 2019 HDR’s analysis of inequality and policy recommendations echo protesters’ grievances about entrenched power imbalances.

The annual HDR provides “independent, analytically and empirically grounded discussions of major development issues, trends and policies” with a subtheme each year. This report supplements and informs the UN’s Human Development Index (HDI), which “is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living.” Together, the HDI and HDR aim to capture quantitative and qualitative trends in human development.

The 2019 HDR, “Beyond Income, Beyond Averages, Beyond Today,” focuses on how to capture the qualitative dimensions of inequality. The report uses a capabilities approach to elaborate on how inequalities manifest in people’s lives beyond their paychecks. This approach refers to the theory, first presented as a framework by Indian economist and philosopher Amartya Sen, that inequality should be measured by gaps in people’s freedoms to do and be what they want. Another way to think of capabilities theory is to examine how systems of oppression can limit the choices people make and what outcomes they can achieve.

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The report conceptualizes these systemic barriers through three dichotomies: horizontal versus vertical inequality, convergence versus divergence of achievement, and basic versus enhanced capabilities. Horizontal inequality relates to inequality among groups, for example based on race, gender, orientation, caste, whereas vertical inequality relates to inequality among individuals. The report also discusses convergence and divergence to refer to decreasing versus increasing inequality in capabilities—the inequality in people’s freedom to make life choices. Finally, it defines basic capabilities as those that allow people freedom from “extreme deprivation”, including primary education and the right to vote. On the other hand, enhanced capabilities reflect people’s desire for “greater agency in [their] lives”, which include high-quality education and health, and access to tertiary education.

The report finds that while many countries are slowly achieving convergence in basic capabilities, they are rapidly experiencing diverging in enhanced capabilities. These divergences have increased horizontal inequality. For example, while more people around the world have access to primary education, regardless of income or human development, people’s access to university education continues to be determined by their human development group. Further still, the gaps between those who are able and unable to access tertiary education continue to widen.

These widening gaps reflect power imbalances in society, which become institutionalized as those with less power are trapped and unable to access enhanced capabilities. In turn, power imbalances become more entrenched and a cycle of widening inequality continues. The report notes that this widening inequality is directly linked to deepening power imbalances. As the cycle evolves, people become frustrated and channel their anger through protests. To break the cycle of inequality and disempowerment, the HDR proposes that policymakers identify and address these inequality traps.

**Analysis**

The report provides a useful framework for explaining a sense of disatisfaction or unfairness that unifies various protest movements around the world. Indeed, it describes how inequality traps can institutionalize power imbalances and skew political incentives to serve the powerful over the many; inequality-driven clientelism sits at the heart of many of the protests. For the UN, the solution to unrest is to take steps to resolve socioeconomic inequality. However, its report does not provide leaders with policy solutions to change or improve the political institutions that make citizens feel powerless. On the surface, protests may respond to a gas tax or fare increase, but the anger driving the protests existed long before these measures were enacted. The protests seize on incremental policies that exacerbate inequality to underscore that governments are not responsive to people’s basic needs nor do they represent their citizens’ interests.

As indicated by the HDR, a sense of clientelism helps explain protesters’ deep discontent with the French government. They are angry that Macron seems out of touch with the working class, especially outside Paris. In the first year, focusing on addressing factors of inequality, as the report recommends, would address only part of people’s demands. The protests press for a restructuring of French democracy that allows for more participation of citizens in governance measures, including specific anti-corruption measures, to help alleviate inequality. As countries address corruption and clientelism, policymakers are more likely to implement economic reforms that reflect the interests of their citizens rather than of entrenched special interests. Nevertheless, leaders should expand their scope of good governance measures and respond to broader demands for more and better participatory mechanisms. To address protesters’ frustrations, they should embrace available political solutions for expanding participation and alleviating the power imbalances that prompt people to take to the streets in the first place.

**The 2019 Human Development Report attributes global protests to growing inequality and its resulting power imbalances. Likewise, its recommendations focus on combating inequality as a way to empower people within a country. However, the report does not fully address the political frustrations that protesters have harbored—namely that governments are not sufficiently responsive to citizens’ concerns. The demand for good governance measures, including specific anti-corruption measures, can help alleviate inequality. As countries address corruption and clientelism, policymakers are more likely to implement economic reforms that reflect the interests of their citizens rather than of entrenched special interests. Nevertheless, leaders should expand their scope of good governance measures and respond to broader demands for more and better participatory mechanisms. To address protesters’ frustrations, they should embrace available political solutions for expanding participation and alleviating the power imbalances that prompt people to take to the streets in the first place.**

**Political Demands are Important**

Similar demands for expanded and responsive democracy are at the core of other protest movements. In Hong Kong, protesters have reacted specifically to the prospect of encroachment by the Beijing government.4 Hong Kong is more prosperous than mainland China; the territory is ranked fourth in human development where China is 81st.5 However, as Hong Kong’s inequality and corruption rise, and protesters would argue that ‘mainlandisation’, or an increased mainland Chinese political, economic, and cultural presence in Hong Kong, has contributed to high-er costs of living with stagnating incomes. Although inequality may have had a role in motivating protesters, it can also be viewed as integral to the broader set of political concerns stemming from the perception that Hong Kong is ceding its autonomy to the Beijing government. The 2019 protests began as a response to a bill that would allow the Hong Kong government to extradite criminals to the Chinese mainland. Protesters saw this legislation as the latest development in ‘mainlandisation’.6 Indeed, researchers have argued the fears of mainlandisation have ‘fuelled’ the protest movement.21

Hong Kong demonstrators’ five main demands focus on improving governance and justice. Namely, these are for the Hong Kong government to: withdraw the extradition bill (now formally withdrawn as of Septem- ber 2019); provide amnesty for all arrested protesters; stop classifying the protests as riots; conduct an independent investigation into allegations of police brutality; and implement new elections for Chief Executive and all Legislative Council positions with universal suffrage. Though the first four demands center on the protests in the immediate sense, the fifth calls for reform of Hong Kong’s political institutions and processes. For protesters concerned with mainlandisation, the ambitious aim of direct elections reflects the basic desire for political representatives beholden to Hong Kong’s interests rather than to Beijing’s.7

In France, Hong Kong, and elsewhere, leaders should take seriously these demands for democratic reform. Some demands, such as those for executive resignations or full independence for an autonomous region, may be unrealistic. However, leaders can meet protesters halfway and create new pathways for citizens to effect change within their governments. These could include more referendums at the national and local level and the creation of citizens assemblies, as proposed by protesters in Hong Kong.32 Moreover, the 2019 Human Development Report attributes global protests to growing inequality and its resulting power imbalances. Likewise, its recommendations focus on combating inequality as a way to empower people within a country. However, the report does not fully address the political frustrations that protesters have harbored—namely that governments are not sufficiently responsive to citizens’ concerns. The demand for good governance measures, including specific anti-corruption measures, can help alleviate inequality. As countries address corruption and clientelism, policymakers are more likely to implement economic reforms that reflect the interests of their citizens rather than of entrenched special interests. Nevertheless, leaders should expand their scope of good governance measures and respond to broader demands for more and better participatory mechanisms. To address protesters’ frustrations, they should embrace available political solutions for expanding participation and alleviating the power imbalances that prompt people to take to the streets in the first place.

**Conclusion**

The 2019 Human Development Report attributes global protests to growing inequality and its resulting power imbalances. Likewise, its recommendations focus on combating inequality as a way to empower people within a country. However, the report does not fully address the political frustrations that protesters have harbored—namely that governments are not sufficiently responsive to citizens’ concerns. The demand for good governance measures, including specific anti-corruption measures, can help alleviate inequality. As countries address corruption and clientelism, policymakers are more likely to implement economic reforms that reflect the interests of their citizens rather than of entrenched special interests. Nevertheless, leaders should expand their scope of good governance measures and respond to broader demands for more and better participatory mechanisms. To address protesters’ frustrations, they should embrace available political solutions for expanding participation and alleviating the power imbalances that prompt people to take to the streets in the first place.**
As an exponential growth in technology in recent decades has facilitated the acceleration of communication across the world, advocacy campaigns appear increasingly transnational. However, building transnational networks has been an important aspect of successful advocacy campaigns for centuries. In this article, I will review some of the key literature on transnational advocacy groups and networks and compare various case studies to analyse the key factors underlying the building of transnational networks.

I refer to advocacy groups and actors as organisations or individuals who advocate for a change in both public opinion on an issue, and/or a change in government or corporate policy. The target of such advocacy movements can therefore be the national or international public, national governments, or transnational corporations.

For the purpose of this article I will use the definition of transnational networks from Margaret Keck and Katherine Sikkink in their seminal 1998 work: a “transnational advocacy network [is] a set of relevant organizations working internationally with shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information.” Therefore, the main factors that will define a transnational network in my work are: 1) a shared aim and discourse within the network; and 2) a clear and relevant exchange of information.

This article will argue that there are three main conditions in advocacy movements that drive the creation of transnational networks:

1. A shared aim and discourse within the network.
2. A clear and relevant exchange of information.
3. A shared strategy and tactics for achieving the goal.
Adaptations of The Boomerang Model: Neo-Colonialism and Neighbourhood Solidarity

Academic and peace campaigner Alex De Waal considers a similar framework to the boomerang model in which colonised countries turn specifically to Western governments.3 However, as we can see through the female suffrage movement, these connections were established from developing countries to developed countries. De Waal brushes over the transnational connections built between movements in neighbouring countries in the Pan African Movement which were important for building popular local support for independence in addition to sharing tactics. Similar connections were also seen during the 2011 Arab Spring revolutions, where citizens fighting for increased democracy in the Middle East were blocked from their government and as a result built dense exchanges of information and tactics between neighbouring countries. Particularly in recent times with the rise of digital activism, pressure no longer has to go through international organisations or other states. Activists blocked from impacting their own government can build transnational networks through social media pages to share tactics and publicly shame their government into action. However, I would argue this often still follows the traditional boomerang model because campaigns, such as Fridays for Future, the recent transnational student movement campaigning for stronger policies against climate change, frequently do not gain traction until legitimised by international organisations. Greta Thunberg rose to fame after her iconic speech to the UN, showing while the boomerang model can be applied to regional solidarity, traditional global power structures are still prevalent.

Colonial overtones are also still relevant in the analysis of transnational advocacy campaigns when established advocacy activists or organisations reach out to perceived oppressed peoples to advocate for them. As a result, such cases can not be denied the legacy of the colonial relationship that fostered the movement. Where success is relying on the support of Western governments, or Western politicians, to sustain, build, and grow the movement, this involves the use of the political power of Western governments, their public policy, or a transnational norm. Yet the nature of these transnational efforts is dependent on how a movement defines success and how to get there. The ban on landmines is a transnational issue because the use of landmines was prevalent in many countries, therefore unified transnational campaigning was vital in banning their use. Transnational networks are built and used in very different structures dependent on how a movement defines success and how to get there.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Keck and Sikkink’s boomerang model is still a useful tool with which to analyse why advocacy groups build transnational connections, however, to be relevant in today’s increasingly digital world, the model should be broadened. The proliferation of digital communication methods means domestic advocacy groups have increasingly direct access to changing public opinion and to shaming governments into action. However, despite the internet being a valuable tool for information dissemination and gaining support, transnational norm change and policy change is predominantly only cemented with significant international organisation and government support. Moreover, the varied nature of possible blocks between domestic advocacy groups and their government defines the varied nature of the transnational networks built.

Transnational Issues: The Future of Transnational Advocacy

Transnational advocacy campaigns where established groups, often in the West, will reach out and build transnational connections to campaigns for groups often without a pre-existing consolidated movement. However, the success of such movements lies significantly in whether their support is perceived as neo-colonial and whether local groups take up the campaign.

Finally, transnational advocacy networks are seen as fundamental to legitimacy in a campaign against a transnational corporation, global public policy, or a transnational norm. Yet the nature of these transnational networks differs significantly based on the definition of success for the movement. Where success is changing the policy of a transnational corporation, the network can often be more superficial as it is simply designed to show enough support for the movement in that corpora- tion's customer base to threaten board members into action. However, for transnational norm change a much more comprehensive and engage- ment focused network is needed, while global policy change requires a strategic network of influential players in international power structures and at international conferences. Many transnational advocacy networks demonstrate a combination of these key determinants and as the digital world changes how the public and policy makers interact with advocacy, campaigns will continue to adapt how they build transnational networks.


