CONFLICT AND DISCORD

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Editorial Note

Our issue this term focuses around the topic of "*Conflict and Discord*". While this may appear quite a broad choice, we wanted a subject that would encompass the current political climate. We are living in period of immense political change. The UK is on the verge of leaving the EU while her major political parties faction and are unable to agree on a Brexit deal, we have seen the rise and decline of ISIS and the world waits with baited breath to see whether the US will elect Donald Trump as President for a second term. We have been witness to the recent China-US trade war in a very unusual confrontation between the two superpowers and in an even more unprecedented move, North Korea has begun to move away from its usual isolation policy and has been in talk with the US.

In the last 80 years, the very definition of *war* has drastically changed and the world has added nuclear weapons, biological weapons and cyber warfare to its artillery. Intolerance and ignorance have been reoccurring themes in the world's history of war. In World War II we saw the horrific persecution of the Jews, the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia were responsible for the deaths over 21% of the Cambodian population in the 1970s and in 1994, over half a million Tutsi people were slaughtered during the Rwandan civil war. Despite rapid globalisation and the huge technological advances of the 21st century, it is apparent that these themes remain prevalent in modern day. The Rohingya in Myanmar and the Yazidis in Iraq are just two of a number of groups in the world that are currently facing brutal genocide.

The war on terror has led to the mistreatment of another group, primarily through ignorance and fear. The attack on two mosques in New Zealand ended with the deaths of 49 innocent Muslims and reports have recently surfaced that China has been forcing its Muslim population in Xinjiang into re-education camps. The word *terrorism* today is often too quickly associated with Islam, which, coupled with ignorant fear, has led to the wrongful treatment of Muslims who have no more in common with islamic extremist groups than a Sikh or a Christian does. Lest we forget, it was not too long ago that the word *terrorist* was used to describe members of the IRA who were predominated affiliated with Catholicism, yet we do not think of Catholics as terrorists.

In this issue, our writers will be discussing a number of conflicts and issues of discord across the world. Yun Xie looks at education in midst of civil war in Syria while Anna Plunkett discusses the possibility of peace in Myanmar after years of civil war. William Hereward gives a fascinating analysis of Trump's hardline immigration policies while Imogen Harding looks at the increasing prevalent role that media plays in terror. Alex Partridge looks at the possibility of fiscal reform in light of the *mouvement des gilets jaunes* in Paris and Sam Waters investigates reports of the parts of the Muslim population in China being put in 're-education' camps in China. Last but by no means least, Edward Sell examines the consequences of mass emigration from Venezuela after hyperinflation and severe national debt.

It is of vital importance that we keep ourselves educated and well informed on the major issues of the world today, without falling victim to *fake news*. Our generation is in a unique position of privilege in that we have access to so much information in a way that our forefathers did not. Furthermore in this age of social media, we have the power to share information so much faster and more efficiently than any generation before us. Political movements have been able to gain worldwide followings almost overnight through Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms. This year alone, Greta Thunberg, a 16 year old Swedish political activist, was able to instigate an international protest of over 20,000 students across 270 cities for climate change, predominantly through social media. We have incredible tools at our fingertips to hold our governments to account and it is our responsibility and prerogative to keep ourselves and each other informed.

Lydia Gethin

President of Vox Journal

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'In the Wake of the 'Yellow Vest' Protests in Paris, is it Time for the French Government to Rethink its Fiscal Policy Stance?'

By Alex Partridge

Abstract

As the quintessential welfare state, France has long been a bastion of the high-taxation fiscal model. Modern-day France is now under considerable pressure to reconsider this model. The 'yellow vest' protests, on streets across the country, have signified the considerable demand for fiscal reform. The fundamental causes of the 'yellow vest' crisis centre around excessively high levels of taxation and the inequitable nature of President Macron's current path to reform. The political dangers of fiscal reform remain ever-present, but a legitimate new fiscal model can be implemented; France's excessive current taxation levels, the initial motivation for the protests, can be reduced following a meaningful readjustment of public expenditure. With correct economic governance, France can become a 21st Century welfare state.

Introduction

As I write this piece, the streets of France are experiencing their worst violent protests in half a century. The protestors, aptly labelled the *gilet jaunes* ('yellow vests'), have taken to the streets across the country to voice their concerns over the state of French economic governance. This essay seeks to clarify the background to the protests, with a specific focus on the antagonistic nature of the French high-taxation model. I argue that France's current fiscal model, as well as recent government policy misjudgements, accompany the high cost of living as the key motivating factors underpinning the *gilet jaunes* movement. Additionally, through the analysis of recent economic

evidence, I demonstrate that it is time for fiscal policy reform in France.

The Yellow Vest: A Powerful Symbol

The *gilet jaunes* have already accomplished what every political protest movement seeks to do above all: be noticed. We have witnessed an extremely successful mobilisation of those who feel forgotten by the French government, and wearing the yellow vest has acted as a metaphoric cry for attention. In this case, the crucial aim has been to turn the head of the French President, Emmanuel Macron (Agnew and Hall, 2018).

Image source:
https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/yellow-vests-protesters-block-the-road-leading-to-the-news-photo/1067972378

In 2017, Macron was elected in confidence that he would be the economic reformist that France desperately required, but his economic reforms have so far received varying degrees of criticism. For instance, economists have widely regarded Macron's labour market flexibility program as a successful operation (Strauss, 2018). Macron's fiscal policy measures, however, have been met with far sterner opposition by his most important critics – the people of France. The *gilet jaunes* have made it

clear that a specific taxation policy, the proposed increase in diesel and petrol duty, was the tipping point for many working individuals. The fuel tax rise was set to increase the burden on many working-class commuters living outside of Paris, the very people who have consistently felt the greatest financial strain of rising living costs (BBC, 2018).

The Road to Fiscal Reform

President Macron's ongoing fiscal policy program is a consequence of his commitment to meet the European Union's SGP (Stability and Growth Pact) budget deficit requirement. Slow economic growth, coupled with the exorbitant expenditure outlay of the French welfare system continues to hinder the meeting of this commitment (Deutsche Welle, 2018). Nevertheless, France has successfully operated with a high-taxation, high-expenditure model for several decades and many regard France as *the* traditional welfare state. However, the current French government recognises the emerging discontent towards this outdated model.

A recent OECD statistical report announced France as the most heavily taxed developed nation in the world. French Tax revenues in 2017 increased to 46.2% total economic output, a figure which is 12.4% higher than the OECD average (OECD, 2018). These figures suggest that France has now effectively reached the limits of feasible taxation, a conclusion that is generally aligned with the dialogue coming out of Paris. However, the rhetoric has not been substantiated with effective policy. There are two crucial reasons why the French government's fiscal consolidation policies have been antagonistic to the public: First, the resulting effects of current fiscal policies have been deemed to be harshest on the poorest members of society. Second, any sensible fiscal policies (by way of

expenditure reductions) have been overshadowed by misguided and controversial tax policies.

There is significant economic evidence to support this initial point concerning the inequity of Macron's fiscal policy outcomes. The work of *Institute des Politiques Publiques* economists Ben Jelloul *et al.* (2018), analyses the societal impact of the policy proposals within the French government's 2018-19 budget. The findings suggest that Budget policies will leave the vast majority of the bottom 24% of households, measured in terms of disposable income distribution, with a reduced level of disposable income. In contrast, the top 1% will see an almost 6% rise in disposable income following the decision to abolish the ISF wealth tax (Ben Jelloul *et al.*, 2018, pg. 22; Strauss, 2018). This is a single example of the disparity in President Macron's fiscal reform programme, one which has incited significant anger amongst those most affected. This further highlights how tax rises have become unfavourable in France due to the visible reductions in disposable income that they impose. Addressing my second point, I recognise the 'yellow vest' protests as a reflex to fiscal policy *misjudgements*, rather than a vociferous reaction to overall reform. Macron's government has progressed with reform at such a rapid rate, that unpopular, poorly thought-out policy was inevitable at some stage. President Macron must now take the right road to reform, in order to avoid further social fragmentation.

The Political Dilemma of Fiscal Consolidation

Unfortunately, politicians understand that carrying out the duty of fiscal consolidation is inherently unpopular. On the one hand, reducing expenditure on sensitive areas of government and primary public services can result in visible reductions in social

welfare, if implemented unfairly. For example, when structuring government spending reductions in the health sector, one should focus on maintaining services for low-income individuals rather than pursuing overall blanket cuts. The harmful impact that poor public health can have on economic growth must be acknowledged (Quaglio *et al.*, 2013). On the other hand, fiscal consolidation through excessive taxation hikes has been met with considerable anger throughout history, as exhibited by the 'yellow vest' protests on the streets of Paris. The principle example of a similar scale movement in the United Kingdom was the 'poll tax' riots of March 1990. Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government proposed the implementation of a new flat-rate 'community charge' to replace the longstanding property tax. The theory of the poll tax suggested that greater levels of local government accountability would consequently lead to more efficient revenue allocation. In practise, the complex and ill-thought-out mechanics of the poll tax resulted in an average tax bill 30% higher than government predictions (Smith, 1991). These particular episodes, such as Thatcher's poll tax debacle and the 'yellow vest' protests against his fuel duty rise, should serve as an adequate admonition to President Macron. Historically, the controversy that typically surrounds taxation blunders rarely spares their political architects in the voting booths.

A New Fiscal Model

As previously discussed, France is now at an effective ceiling for taxation. Yet, fiscal reform should be seen as a significant economic opportunity, regardless of how arduous a task, due to the considerable size of the French state. More specifically, France has significant headroom for expenditure reductions, before needing to restructure previously mentioned sensitive public sector areas. Macron must continue

to target more malleable areas of the French public sector, such as state administration, for spending reductions (Schofield, 2018).

Recent economic evidence estimates expenditure reductions to be less harmful than revenue-based methods of fiscal consolidation. Furthermore, fiscal adjustments can be expansionary when motioned in conjunction with a wider range of economic policies, such as reducing regulation (Alesina and Ardagna, 2013). The underlying aspiration, as expressed forcefully by the *gilet jaunes,* must be a new fiscal model for France, based on lower expenditure that can be translated into lower taxation for the people of France.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this essay has outlined the requirement for a new fiscal model for France. The public demand for radical fiscal reform has been displayed on the streets of Paris, through the often-violent 'yellow vest' protests. I have interpreted the fundamental causes of the protests to be largely due to France's outdated high-taxation model, and I also believe political misjudgements, such as introducing a contentious budget, have exacerbated the dissatisfaction with such a model. France is now in a situation where significant spending reductions can take place, and this approach should consequently translate into reduced taxation levels. Crucially, despite the political challenges of fiscal reform, current and future governments must strive to provide a fiscal model that works for modern-day France.

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The 'Spoilers' and the Spoilt: Who is Really Spoiling in Myanmar's National Ceasefire Agreement?

By Anna Plunkett

In October, two of the largest groups in Myanmar's National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) suspended their membership, bringing the seminal agreement into doubt. Following on from an escalation of violence in May over the Tatmadaw's road building within Karen National Union (KNU) held territory, both the KNU and Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) took the decision to suspend (Wansai, 2018)[1]. Despite peace and reconciliation being the key priority of Aung San Suu Kyi's democratically elected government, this move can be viewed as another symptom of slowly failing peace process within Myanmar. This paper will analyse the moves taken by the KNU and RCSS in relation to the phenomenon of spoilers and spoiling within peace accords to (See: Stedman, 1997). It will compare these actions with that of the military and the context of the NCA to highlight that whilst both the KNU and RCSS do display spoiling behaviour, they are not the largest threat to Myanmar's ceasefire agreement.

Myanmar has been at war for over sixty years, since its independence from the British in 1947 (Chia, 2016). Wars have been waged against the state by numerous armed groups, each with varying levels of success. Most notably the Karen conflict which held the title for 'longest civil war' in the world (Chia, 2016). Today, whilst most of these wars have ended or been suspended, the Kachin continue their offensive against the Tatmadaw in the North and violence in Arakan has begun to escalate once more (Mizzima, 2019). These lesser known war zones have been overshadowed by the devastation created by the ongoing Rohingya crisis, with over half a million now residing along the border with Bangladesh (Ellis-Petersen et al., 2018). It is a country still heavily plagued by war and violence.

Peace and stability within Myanmar, however, has been a priority for both of the last two governments. Since the transition to a quasi-civilian government in 2011, there have been moves taken by both government and military officials to create ceasefires with armed groups attempting to secede from the union (Naing Oo, 2015). The most noteworthy being the bilateral agreement with the KNU in 2012, effectively ending the longest current war in the world (Tun, 2012). This culminated in the signing of the NCA in 2015. The NCA was the first multilateral ceasefire signed in Myanmar's long history of negotiations. Yet, the pressure to sign the agreement before a change in government meant only eight of the sixteen original invitees became signatories in 2015 (SHAN, 2015). The agreement itself was a basic agreement to the cessation of armed conflict with further negotiation to define additional terms and practices within the accord.

At the start of 2018, there was hope of a reinvigorated peace process with two new signatories joining the NCA (Plunkett, 2018). Yet, by the end of the year, the voluntary suspension of its two largest members undermined all progress made within the fledgling agreement. The ceasefire negotiations themselves have become more frustrating for members as

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[1] The Tatmadaw is the title given to the Military in Myanmar the two terms here will be used interchangeably.

an increasingly stubborn stalemate grows between the government, the military and the ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) (Anderson, 2018). With continuing skirmishes outside of the halls of Naypyidaw between those within the agreement itself, the durability of the NCA is facing attacks from all vantage points.

Spoilers, Spoiling and the Spoilt

Stedman (1997) defines spoilers as 'leaders and parties who believe the peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview and interests, and use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it.' He then provides the typology of limited – those with specific grievances; greedy - those whose demands vary depending on the situation; or total – those who lack any flexibility within their demands and are unwilling to compromise. While this can provide a helpful method of analysis for understanding actors within a peace process, as Mac Ginty (2006) notes these labels lack flexibility and do not account for the varying levels of access actors have to key institutions such as the media and the international community. Access to such institutions can help redefine who are viewed as spoilers and who are not in the eyes of the public and thus help sway public opinion and the legitimisation of certain group causes.

The suspension of participation by the KNU and RCSS on the surface can be observed as a very common case of spoiling. As the possibility of secession from the Union of Myanmar is removed from the table and talks of a unified military continue, few of the armed groups are likely to achieve their preferred vision of peace. This increases the likelihood of spoiling as outlined in the initial part of Stedman's definition. However, the ability to categorise either party as a spoiler becomes murkier in relation to the latter part of the definition: '[the] use of violence

to undermine attempts to achieve [peace]'. The start of the rainy season last year did witness an escalation in violence over the attempted road building in KNU Brigade 5's territory. However, this came after heightened tensions between the Tatmadaw and the KNU over similar actions within Karen State and the action itself was seen to be in violation of the agreement (Interview 6, 2018). These episodes of violence, often categorised as skirmishes, do not have the intention to 'undermine' but rather are a response to escalations and actions within the field.

There is one party to the NCA which has displayed conformity to the former and latter parts of Stedman's definition. That is the actions of the Tatmadaw, who could be defined as total spoilers. They have an inflexible vision of one unified armed force, under the control of the Tatmadaw and their priority is the unity of the Union (Callahan, 2005). As such, they are unwilling to negotiate on the definitions or terms of the military or state institutions which are central to the NCA (Hae and Wah, 2018). It is difficult to envision the Tatmadaw's version of peace with all of the armed groups wanting some level of independence or secession and an ardent belief in the right to remain armed until a more comprehensive agreement can be signed. The military maintains its legitimate right to the use of force and has used such rights in land confiscations among many actions both outside of ceasefire territories and within them (Slow, 2018). Further, it was the actions of the military within ceasefire areas that caused the escalation within the KNU held territory, an area under the jurisdiction of the NCA.

Demonstrably, violence is a broad term that goes beyond its direct implications. Myanmar has multiple examples of direct violence. However, within the ceasefire areas, this has reduced and been replaced by indirect versions. This is not atypical, as

exemplified in Berdal and Suhrke's book that typifies violence within the post-war state (2012). Nor is it atypical of Myanmar politics, as Jones highlights, during ceasefires the military have historically used their role as security forces as well as economic development to dominate and further their position of control (2016). Their actions have greatly undermined EAO's trust in the peace process but also their ability to negotiate by removing their sources of financing and power. Mac Ginty identifies that deliberate spoiling aims to undermine the peace accord and the public support of it through 'spark[ing] a security overreaction' (2006). The military's ability to achieve this has left EAO's threatened resulting in the escalation towards direct violence as seen in Karen.

It is the military that is acting like a total spoiler. Although the suspension of the armed groups do pose a threat to Myanmar's peace, they are not the most vital concern. The military has the power, vision and access to deride the peace agreement to ensure the only viable version of peace is their own. Most recent developments demonstrate this is what they intend to do. Spoiling behaviour cannot only be defined by direct episodes of violence but also the indirect violence created within fragile environments. By accepting this broader definition of violence and expanding the sets of behaviour one identifies as 'spoiler', it is possible to better identify which actions and groups pose the largest threats to peace accords.

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Educational Aid for the Syrian Civil War: Meeting the Social Capital Need of Syria and Receiving Countries

By Yun Xie

Image source: https://newsdeeply.imgix.net/20160922143926/SYRIA-CONFLICT-EDUCATION-DAILY-LIFE.jpg

Syria has been undergoing a civil war since the 15th March 2011. As a consequence, many refugees fled to Turkey, Lebanon, and Europe. Throughout this period, international aid through food and shelter has carried out to meet the basic material needs of Syrians. However, these people are losing hope in making a living because of the inaccessibility to education which results in their lack of prospects. This poses great financial burden and produces social instability in refugee-receiving countries. This article aims to highlight the importance of the educational aid to refugees and Syrians and resolve this problem. Although most people are not able to go to the refugee camps in Syria and the receiving countries where we can see the real situation of these people, this article can at least provide several ideas to introduce these approaches according to the latest research.

Suffering from civil war and climate change, the economy declined sharply and the education system is largely devastated. Schools are used as shelters and for the war, so normal teaching activities cannot be continued. Like other third-world countries, Syria also has notable gender inequality. Most women are unable to live without being abused by their husbands as they are not financially independent (Freedman, 2016), not to mention in the state of war. According to Freeman (2016), many Syrian female refugees may want to flee to the recipient countries, but unfortunately, they are mostly uneducated and cannot go without their husbands.

Putnam (1993) refers to social capital as "the characteristics of an organization like trust and networks that can rise the social efficiency by facilitating certain actions" (as cited in Temple, 1993, p.32). Two important components are fields related to the structure of the society and they can facilitate particular actions of people inside the structure (Coleman, 1988). The role of education here is to give workers tasks that fit them with more up-to-date technologies and improve the quality of service they provide (Temple, 2002).

To satisfy the social capital need of education, we need to consider this in the family with three elements. Family backgrounds are one of the decisive

factors for the education outcomes of refugees. The first and the most visible one is financial capital. This is the disposable income of the family, and also includes the accessibility to learning materials, enough money to solve unforeseeable circumstances (Coleman, 1988). The other two are human capital, i.e., parents' education level, whether they can provide a good learning environment, and family relationship (Coleman, 1988). To offer effective educational aid, we need to consider the dynamic relationship between these factors. As mentioned above, most refugees suffer from considerable financial difficulties and the average level of education is low. As a result, many families may not understand the importance of education.

In Syria, education is ineffective due to lack of teaching places, with institutions suffering from heavy financial burdens and a lack of trained teachers (Visconti & Gal, 2018). In addition, the costs of attending school, including tuitions fees and other living costs pose a barrier to children's opportunity for school education (Visconti & Gal, 2018). The basic educational need is met based on Syria's current situation. Despite the unending civil war and long-term suffering of famine due to climate change, the curriculum contains basic subjects namely Arabic, mathematics, science, history, and arts (Hos, 2016) to ensure the basic literacy and numeracy of Syrians. Although the class is crowded with over 50 people (Hos, 2016), which is a barrier for effective classroom interaction, both Syrian refugees and receiving countries have tried their best to help the refugees. There are the necessary types of equipment and spaces for staff such as desks and whiteboards, teachers' and school leaders' offices (Hos, 2016). However, these subjects are academic rather than offer adequate vocational skills. Since the age and learning ability of refugees differs, and receiving countries have various sectors of industry,

educational institutions should have clear goals and policies for these people.

Educational institutions should take students' family background into account. As one of the poorest countries in the Middle East and devastated by the civil war, parents become unemployed. The low status of women and under-education means that the civil war strengthens the family tension. When the family is running out of money, girls cannot access school education which again, makes the family fall into a vicious cycle. And to ensure the quality of education and training, the institutions should have clear standards on the selection of teachers. For instance, many refugees suffer from severe depression and alienation from peers in recipient countries. This means schools not only need teachers to have certain degrees and qualifications, but also teachers who can help students with their mental health. Schools provide formal education (Rogers, 2014), but there is also informal education, what we learn from our daily experiences (Rogers, 2014). This includes how teachers' attitude and the learning atmosphere in schools can affect students. As refugees may suffer from severe physical and mental deprivation and depression, it is important to make them feel they are part of the learning community in schools and others are giving them positive responses. This kind of learning is not aimed at qualifications, and is mostly, unintentional (Rogers, 2014), but it can influence people's thoughts and behavior throughout the learning process and therefore, their learning outcomes. Schools, regardless of the age group of students, can set goals for students to make sure they really become capable, especially for the disabled students. For instance, instead of focusing on students going to reputable institutions for their further stages of education or boost the fame of school in receiving countries, schools and teachers can set more personalized goals, i.e., whether they are

making individual progress. To motivate students, teachers should give them more encouragements and support for their studies. Also, awards and ideally, scholarship can be given to those who have the top grades or made the greatest progress. These strategies can boost education outcomes by making refugee students less pressurised and ensure their proper progress in their studies and therefore, as they achieved higher level of education, they will discover their talented fields, specialise in them and become human capitals in the society.

Although these strategies may produce desirable education outcomes and make social capitals for nations, there are still several limitations. Whether basic or vocational, education given to the Syrians depends on various factors. For instance, the civil war already increased the burden of the government. As a result, there is an opportunity cost as money and other resources spent on education can be spent on other more urgent needs. And even if the teachers are carefully selected and legislating free compulsory education is successful, we cannot ensure there is absolutely no discrimination, as gender discrimination means more advanced learning resources are subjected to boys rather than girls. More importantly, every policy takes time to be fully implemented, especially in the ongoing chaos of the war.

To conclude, although there are several limitations due to the civil war and the countries' budget, introducing education in terms of academic and vocational skills is crucial in the civil war period. This can effectively break the vicious circle of limited financial capitals and reduce the financial burden of the government by providing future human capitals. To achieve these goals, certain policies and selection of teachers, especially those who can deal with mental problems need to be prioritized. Hopefully, in the future, case studies on these aspects can be carried out

and make education benefits a reality for refugees.

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Trumpian Rhetoric and Changes on Both Sides of the Immigration Debate

By William Hereward

Immigration has become one of the most contentious topics in political discourse. It has remained as such ever since the flood of refugees that came out of the Syrian war first started to try and reach Europe. For Donald Trump, it remained a critical issue on his campaign and represented a central pillar of his message of discontent. For Trump, the "flood" of immigrants entering America are another one of the multitude of forces exploiting the American people, and his constant promises to "build that wall" even sent the government into shutdown (Smith, 2019). This essay seeks to understand the effects of his message on political discourse in America, and examine exactly how much Donald Trump's "War on Immigration" has done to continue to drive the wings of American politics further apart. It will examine the effect of Donald Trump's rhetoric on the actions of his party and the change in the Democrat immigration policy and examine the danger that this polarisation represents for American life.

Trump's hardline immigration policy reflects a break from previous Republican precedent, but not necessarily one that was unforeseeable. The key elements that seem to define immigration concerns in the United States are fears of labour market competition and drain on public services, primarily among working class voters (Goneya, 2018). Trump's rhetoric capitalized on this, but added a new dimension, that being the focus on crime. The soundbite "They're bringing drugs, they're bringing crime, they're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people" (Trump, 2015) has become one of the most famous of the campaign, with it encapsulating

Trump's attitude towards immigrants, and defining his posture to the issue as a whole. Beyond that, he draws on the former concerns extensively. The fears of depressed wages

due to labour market competition drives his rhetoric about bringing jobs back to America and the fears of illegal immigrants or the children of illegal immigrants draining money from public services ties into his rhetoric of America being taken advantage of. This represents a large break from previous administrations. Ronald Reagan, one of the most influential Republican presidents in how he reshaped the ideology of his party, was opposed to the idea of putting up a border fence, saying that "Rather than putting up a fence, why don't we work out some recognition of our mutual problems?"(Reagan, 1980). This break could have been anticipated, however, with various academics positing that the Republican base was always more hawkish on immigration than the politicians were, and that Trump was the one to capitalize on this difference (Goneya, 2018).

Image source:
https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxlaw/bcrim

Immigration, especially illegal immigration, for a party long considered the party of law and order has contributed to radicalization of views on the right (Lahav and Courtemanche, 2012). The 2016 election did, however, galvanize other candidates as well, with new candidates in the 2018 midterms making their way by employing similar rhetoric to Trump (Collins, 2018). This will shift the rhetoric on immigration further to the right, as more mainstream GOP politicians are sidelined in favour of more Trumpian candidates, and the GOP's base becomes further radicalized on the issue. There is some evidence of this, as new studies have reported higher associations of immigrants with criminality, reflecting Trump's own emphasis on the topic (Flores and Schacter, 2018) whilst the effect of framing Latin Americans as outsiders means they are viewed as threats by some parts of America (Branton et al. 2011).

This represents a danger however, as the increasing ability of immigration to act as a wedge issue only serves to cast the other side as even more sharply opposed. Lack of a willingness to compromise harms the party as well, as political victories approach a zero-sum mentality, where both parties are at opposite ends of a political spectrum and therefore become more extreme to appeal to isolated voter bases. This additionally means that the goal of governing the country becomes more difficult as immigration becomes the wedge issue that drives both parties farther apart. The most recent government shutdown is an example of this, with Trump's GOP being unwilling to compromise, causing thousands of workers to have to line up for free food, whilst congress remains paralysed.

 Moreover, Trump's rhetoric has intensified the policy of the Left. The "Resistance" has resulted in massive opposition to his immigration policy. Calls to abolish the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) branch of Homeland Security have grown from grassroots movements to some major politicians calling for its abolishment, including Senator Warren (Daniella Diaz, 2018). Their shift to a more pro-immigration stance however was beginning to take place prior to Trump, the shifts were plain to see in 2012 already as Democratic political strategy shifted to turning out Latino and minority voters, along with Democrat-heavy political sectors pushing for an increase in the number of H1-B Visas available (Beinart, 2018). This coincided with a shift in the willingness of Labour Unions to accept immigrants in order to keep memberships high, along with an unusually prominent activist wing that drove Democratic leaders to push to the Left in favour of immigration (Beinart, 2018).

However, Trump's rhetoric has continued to push them further Left, towards criticizing immigration enforcement itself rather than immigration law as a matter of principle, and this shift only serves to play into the worst fears of the Republican base. The unwillingness of the Democrats to condemn the act of illegal immigration itself has been the most fundamental change in regards to their policies on borders. While previously they were willing to condemn illegal immigration, with the 2008 Democrat platform saying that "We cannot continue to allow people to enter the United States undetected, undocumented and unchecked"(UC Santa Barbara), they have started to characterize it as a human rights issue, especially as more asylum-seeking refugees have started to make their way into the United States (Lind, 2018).

Previously, while Democrats had been more dovish on the issue of immigration, they had still opposed illegal immigration and even were willing to collaborate with Republicans on border fencing in 2006 (Kelly, 2019). Following Trump's rise to

power however, they have sought to cast themselves in sharper opposition to his policies. While this may be valuable in the short term, as it allows themselves to win a larger share of the Hispanic-American population, and allows them to cast an even larger contrast to President Trump, it only serves to solidify an increasingly narrow voter base of Democrats. Immigration is one of the largest issues for the Republican voter base, and the Democrat shift on the issue will have consequences on their ability to build cross-party support in order to achieve goals on climate change and healthcare. This represents a danger for the country, as the issue of immigration becomes a sticking point in American politics that drives the two sides of politics further apart and continues to contribute to a polarization of American politics. Trump's rhetoric on immigration, and his capitalization on the issue has caused Democrats to rapidly move farther to the Left on the issue of immigration.

We can therefore see that Trump's immigration rhetoric and his "War on Immigration" has had deleterious effects on American civil society by examining his effect on the political rhetoric of his party and on the opposition party. His "War on Immigration" has capitalized on an issue that no other candidate had been able to identify, and his own rhetoric has caused the Democrats to shift farther to the Left on the issue of immigration while shifting his own party further Right. This represents a danger to American society as a whole, as political parties are unable to find common ground on issues that hold large levels of presence in the American political discourse.

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How Venezuela's Migrant Crisis is Shaping Latin America

By Edward Antonio Sell

At the turn of the twenty-first century, former President Hugo Chávez's Venezuela rapidly emerged as the envy of Latin America. Steady rises in global crude oil prices, a commodity which constitutes some 95% of the nation's export revenues (Ordoñez, 2014), fuelled expansions in state-funded social welfare programs and industrial nationalisation. By contrast, modern-day Venezuela is a state in free-fall, with its citizens emigrating in droves to more stable living conditions in order to escape hyper-inflation and economic scarcity. This paper will illuminate not only how the Venezuelan economy deteriorated to such an extent, but also how the country's subsequent migrant crisis is affecting the governments and communities of neighbouring states.

The Rentier Rollercoaster

The crux of the matter regarding rentier states – national economies whose revenues largely derive solely from external rent – is that their economic fortunes are inherently tied to the performance of the very product through which external rent is gained. When the US dollar price of crude oil more than halved between 2015 and 2016, Venezuela's petro-centric economy naturally took a substantial blow, with its 2017 per capita GDP figures recorded at 40% less since 2013 (Brodie, 2017). This turbulent period for Venezuela's economy coincided with an equally significant turbulence in its politics. Following the death of the Chávez in 2013, his successor, Nicolás Maduro promised to continue the generous social welfare programs funded by previously bumper oil revenues, trading increased national debt for sustained public support.

Following the decline in the value of crude oil, Maduro was presented with a two-pronged dilemma: allow the *bolívar soberano* (Venezuela's national currency) to depreciate freely following a reduced global demand for petroleum, and subsequently lead to escalating prices of consumer goods imports into the country; or fix the bolívar to its overvalued official exchange rate and ration imports, in an ambitious attempt to both maintain his own popularity and the economy's health. Maduro chose the latter, resulting in import prices skyrocketing due to the lack of supply from intense rationing. Whatever goods trickled into the wavering nation were often sold in the black market for far more than their official fixed prices, leaving common goods like bread and toilet paper scarce for everyday citizens. The coup de grâce to the Venezuelan economy was the mass printing of currency in a desperate attempt to curb the spiralling national debt, which led to levels of hyperinflation reaching up to one million percent (Daniels, 2018). Empty store shelves and piles of valueless cash have led to a large increase in bartering as well as cashless online transactions, but with 40% of Venezuelans without access to online banking (Daniels), many disgruntled citizens are now seeking more radical alternatives to escape the free-falling state economy.

Image source: https://astutenews.files.wordpress.com/2018/08/venezuelan-migrant-crisis.jpg?w=900

Love Thy Neighbour

The Bolivarian diaspora has seen some two million Venezuelans – 7% of the population – emigrate the country since 2015, with neighboring Colombia being the most popular destination for those seeking pastures new (Agence France-Presse, 2018; McCarthy, 2018). But the ever-increasing flow of migrants is straining relations between Venezuela and Colombia, with the influx costing the Colombian government 0.5% of GDP, or $1.5 billion US dollars, in areas such as education, water and sanitation, and public healthcare (Agence France-Presse). Unlike the vast majority of other ongoing refugee crises, wherein those from developing countries are seeking asylum in developed, mainly Western European and North American, countries, the Venezuelan migrant crisis is seeing economic refugees move from one developing Latin American country to another. Indeed, the six Latin American countries that admit the most Venezuelan migrants record $29,000 US dollars less average per-capita income than the six European countries that admit the most Mediterranean migrants (Long, 2018). Therefore, nations like Colombia often lack the necessary infrastructure to cope with such flight.

Latin American neighbours have little manoeuvrability in terms of border control. The shared borders with Venezuela of Colombia and Brazil are approximately 1,400 miles each, which make the possibility of controlled immigration infeasible both logistically and financially for two developing countries. Even those Venezuelans who successfully traverse the border find themselves in a precarious position where their currency has little purchasing power in a country whose own citizens share a growing anti-immigrant sentiment. Communal cemeteries in departments such as La Guajira, an area in northern Colombia bordering Venezuela, have become "haven[s] for the corpses of these dead migrants" as the migrant families cannot afford a proper burial themselves, where coffins alone cost forty times the average daily migrant salary (Rueda, 2018). Venezuelan migrants constitute approximately two percent of the current Colombian population, yet form a large portion of Bogotá's homeless and criminal population (Long, 2018). The way forward for countries receiving the brunt of the Venezuelan exodus is to extend offers of cooperation with Maduro's government in an effort to allocate funding to migrants, as opposed to seeking efforts to reduce those coming into the country, so they do not fall into positions of absolute poverty, crime, and death.

Beyond The Horizon

The Venezuelan migrant crisis need not be a crisis in the future. Immigrants are not inherently burdensome from an economic perspective, and output gains and an increase in a country's educated workforce may indeed outweigh per capita the cost of public welfare programs. A World Bank report cites potential economic growth acceleration of 0.2 percentage points as a result of every half a million Venezuelans of working age immigrating into Colombia (World Bank Group, 2018). Yet this encouraging prediction is conditional on the immediate and comprehensive incorporation of migrants into Colombian society by the Colombian government itself. Almost half of all Venezuelan migrant children are not enrolled in formal education in Colombia, and working age migrants are twice as likely to be unemployed as Colombian-born citizens in the same area and of the same literacy (World Bank Group). A short-term improvement of the former will lead to a long-term improvement of the latter, and ultimately help ease assimilation of migrants into local communities whose

residents, particularly in border towns, have anti-migrant sentiment.

The future of Maduro's Venezuela, and of its millions of migrants in neighbouring Colombia and elsewhere, is uncertain. Given its dependency on petroleum for the vast majority of its revenue, and a global trend in declining oil prices, it is unlikely that the level of exodus will decline in the near future. What is certain is that the countries to which migrants immigrate must extend the olive branch to integrate them into society and benefit both parties – and for discord to truly alleviate conflict.

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The Media's Role in Terror

By Imogen Harding

Terrorism is strategic violence "designed to inspire terror within a particular segment of a given society" (Bassiouni, 1981). Regarding terrorism, the media can manipulate and be manipulated. The consequences of this include media-bred prejudice - especially Islamophobia - and the global standing and political agenda of countries, whereby a country's government can influence media presentation of terror events to suit its political aims. The media can cause sensationalism of terror through the language used to depict terrorism and radicalisation through sensationalisation and overexposure of terrorism. These are evident in the media portrayal of 9/11, the 2005 London bombings, the 2004 school siege in Beslan and the media presentation of Islamic State (IS).

The media can manipulate public opinion surrounding terrorism, breeding racial prejudice and Islamophobia. Post-9/11, US media coverage centred around perceived clashes of Western and Islamic ideology (Bleich, Nisar and Abdelhamid, 2016), creating an 'us' versus 'them' narrative. In America, terror attacks committed by Muslims receive four times more media coverage than those committed by non-Muslims (Boyle et al., 2017). Such coverage is often negative: after 9/11, the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Washington Post* presented Muslims negatively, as "terrorists", and "extremists" (Ahmed and Matthes, 2017). Unsurprisingly, discrimination against Muslim Americans "increased exponentially" (Alsultany, 2013) after 9/11. Between 2000 and the end of 2001, New York hate crimes against Arabic and Islamic Americans increased by 1,600 percent (FBI, 2002, cited by Disha, Cavendish and King, 2011); 117 hate

crimes against Muslims were reported "between September 11, 2001 and March 2002" (Evans, 2005, cited in Disha, Cavendish and King, 2011). The US media portrays white terrorists very differently. Following the "racially motivated" (Garcia and Revesz, 2016) 2015 Charleston church shooting by Dylann Roof, Roof's mental health records were examined extensively, despite Roof insisting his psychological fitness (Sack, 2017). The media portrayed Roof as mentally unstable, rather than the white nationalist that he was, referring to his crime as a "shooting" (Sanchez and Payne, 2016), or "murders" (The Guardian, 2017) - rather than a terrorist attack. This illustrates that narratives of extremism are reserved for Muslim terrorists in mainstream American media.

The media portrayed Muslims negatively following the July 2005 London bombings, also known as 7/7. Less than a month after 7/7, *The Telegraph* published an article headlined "One in four Muslims sympathises with motives of terrorists", but the article reveals that YouGov found 88% of Islamic Britons to have no intent to justify the attacks (King, 2005). This misleading, biased headline illustrates the alienation of British Muslims by mainstream media after 7/7. A report analysing an average week's UK newspaper coverage between 8th May and 14th May 2006 found that 12 of 19 national newspapers portrayed Muslims negatively; 84% of coverage presented Muslims as potentially dangerous (INSTED, 2007, cited by Allen, 2012). Media-bred prejudice incites fear amongst minorities and fear of minorities amongst the majority. After 7/7, hate crimes against Asian and Arab citizens increased more than hate crimes against other ethnicities: in July 2005, there were 367 hate crimes

against Arabs or Asians - 96 more than between January 2003 and June 2005. Hate crimes against White or Black people over the same period increased by 54 (Hanes and Machin, 2014), illustrating the effects of negative media portrayal of Muslims following the 7/7 attacks. UK citizens were suspicious of Muslims before the 2005 bombings, and even before 9/11 (Koch, 2017), due to perceptions of Muslims as the 'other' (Mythen and Khan, 2005). The media played on the public's existing Islamophobia through biased portrayals of Muslims following 9/11 and 7/7, appearing to confirm and justify Islamophobic sentiments. The aftermath of the attacks demonstrates media ability to manipulate public opinion and cultivate racial hatred and prejudice.

Image source:
https://lstcccme.files.wordpress.com/201
4/06/islam-peace.jpg

Governments can manipulate the media to protect their agenda following terror attacks. Following the 2004 school siege in Beslan, Russia, which took the lives of 186 children (CNN, 2018), the censored Russian mainstream media promoted government interests through its reporting. This allowed the government to maintain its global political position by manipulating information released by the Russian media to the world: Putin falsely announced that an "international force" carried out the attack in order to weaken Russia's status as a nuclear power (Lynch, 2005). Due to negative global perception of Russian nuclear power, this gives Russia a reason to

continue its nuclear efforts. This detracts from the fact that the incident was ethnically motivated - which the mainstream media excluded due to government censorship. In reality, the siege was executed by Chechen militants. Russian conflict with Chechnya, "a tiny, oil-rich province in Russia's North Caucasus region" began with Chechnya's declaration of independence over two decades ago (Mirovalev, 2014). Chechen calls for independence were seen as threatening Russia, and the devastating Beslan attack would have emphasised that hence the media hush surrounding the attack. Thus, the media's lack of reports on the true cause of the attack allowed the Russian government to ignore tensions with Chechnya, and "to remove the Chechen issue from the political agenda" (Snetkov, 2007). This misinformation was the blame of the Russian government, and the highly censored media's failure to accurately report the siege highlights governmental ability to manipulate media for their own benefit. This is pertinent considering that following a prior attack by Chechen secessionists at the Moscow Dubrovka Theatre, the Russian media attempted to normalise Russo-Chechen relations, removing them as a cause of terror conflict by the time the Beslan siege occurred (Snetkov, 2007).

The Beslan attack was unanticipated, revealing inadequate Russian security. Failure to acknowledge the attack's true origin was likely an attempt by the Russian government to appear strong, as Russian conflict with Chechnya was perceived as highlighting Russian weakness (Lynch, 2005). Following the siege, "it took an hour for two of the country's main three television stations to go live to Beslan, and even then one of them returned to its schedule to show a drama after just 10 minutes", and Russian television stations underreported numbers of hostages taken (Tryhorn, 2004). Through censorship, the Russian government manipulated the

media to control its global and domestic image following Beslan, highlighting that governments can alter the narrative of terror attacks to their own benefit through media manipulation.

Overexposure and sensationalisation of terror in international media can breed terror. Terrorists manipulate the media to gain exposure; terrorism helps sell news, but equally, the media provides terrorists with publicity to spread their ideology (Spencer, 2012). Following the London 2005 bombings, the mainstream media was saturated with articles related to the attack. Between 8th May and 14th May 2006, there were 69 news articles related to the bombings, which occurred a year beforehand, in British mainstream newspapers (INSTED, 2007, cited by Allen, 2012). While accounts of 7/7 helped the media insofar sell stories, the media aided terrorism by spreading a message of the ideological hatred behind 7/7, demonstrating how excessive media coverage of terrorism can lead to radicalisation.

Sensationalisation of terror is prevalent regarding Islamic State. International media dubbed converted IS militant Mohammed Emwazi 'Jihadi John'. Consequently, Emwazi became a symbol for IS, and the media became flooded with reports of beheadings by Emwazi. Since the rise of Jihadi John in international media, and his death in 2015, there have been similar attempts to portray people as symbols of IS in the media: 'Jihadi Jack' (BBC News, 2018) and 'White Widow' (Telegraph Reporters, 2017) are both names that have been coined in reference to prominent IS converts. By creating a sense of celebrity surrounding the terrorists, the media could appear to portray terror organisations including IS as a way to achieve notoriety and exposure for terrorist ideology.

To summarise, the media has the power to manipulate public opinion, which can lead to racial discrimination and prejudice, and the international perception of terrorism, which in the Beslan case, allowed Russia to maintain their international image. Simultaneously, the media can also be manipulated, notably by terrorists, who use it as a vehicle to spread ideology and fear with the potential consequence of radicalisation, but also by governments in order to promote their agenda. The main conclusion to be drawn is the extent of media influence over terror in the modern day. Thus, "there can be no denying it: the media are part of the deadly game of terrorism" (Anderson, 1993), and the media's portrayal of various terror incidents can have unprecedented political implications, domestically and inter-nationally. To reduce the implications of the media's role in terror, international and domestic media should aim to portray terrorism in a factual rather than emotive sway, so as to not capitalise on fears of ethnic minorities, or encourage radicalisation through sensational coverage or overexposure of terror acts and perpetrators. Consumers of the media should also be aware of the purpose of the media they learn from, which is especially important not only in cases of sensationalism or prejudiced writing, but also in cases of censored media, as was the case of the Russian media post-Beslan.

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'Re-education' Camps in China: A Prelude to Genocide?

By Sam Waters

In the past year, reports have surfaced that China has forced its Muslim population into 're-education camps' in order to eradicate their pride and affiliation with Islam (Amnesty International, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2018; UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 2018). With up to 1 million Chinese residents rounded up against their will, there is a growing suspicion that this could be a prelude to genocide (Amnesty International, 2018). The aggression with which the culture and practices of the Uyghur and Kazakh minorities are being targeted indicates a clear acceleration of violence and coercion. In the context of a long history of intercommunal violence between the Han government and the Uyghur, along with the dehumanisation of Muslims in media campaigns across the country, the Muslims' inferior public status and the Han's terrorism: the camps could signifier a dangerous turning point in Chinese security policy. Their aim is the *immediate* cultural and religious obliteration of the Uyghur and Kazakh. However, this aim is unachievable without mass violence or at the very least a mass exodus of Muslims from China.

It is well understood in the literature that a history of intercommunal violence can potentially lead to a genocide (Jones, 2006). The region of Xinjiang - where the Muslim minorities predominantly reside - has such a history. This is largely due to the widely held belief that the Xinjiang region (formerly known as the East Turkestan Republic) was illegally annexed in 1949 by the People's Republic of China. The 2009 ethnic riots - which resulted in the death of 156 people, most of whom were Han Chinese (China's largest ethnic group) - exemplifies the deep tensions between the various ethnic groups within China. Since then, there have been multiple terrorist attacks in Beijing (2013), Kunming (2014), and Urumqi (2014) - which have all been attributed to Uyghur Muslim extremists. This has been met with an asymmetric response from the Chinese government; Xinjiang has become a police state and currently 20% of all arrests in China happen in Xinjiang, despite it harbouring only 1.5% of the population (Niewenhuis, 2018). The re-education camps are therefore only the latest step in a historical trend of inter-communal violence and oppression.

Nonetheless, they do represent a turning point in terms of the immediate danger now facing Muslim minorities in China. China's strategy to solve its security dilemma and build a culturally homogeneous nation-state is aggressive, destructive, and violent. In the interests of efficiency and time, China has decided to embark on a policy of *shock therapy* to obliterate any Islamic affiliation present in its people. In Xinjiang, re-education camps have been erected to assimilate the Muslim population into mainstream Chinese culture. Muslims have been forced to pledge allegiance to the Chinese state and renounce the Qur'an in favour of Communist ideology (Niewenhuis, 2018); there are also reports of torture, collective punishments, a ban on 'abnormal beards' and forced alcohol and pork consumption (Independent, 2018). In addition, families have been separated and many relatives have not been seen in months (Amnesty International, 2018).

This plethora of human rights abuses has been legitimatised by a state-run media campaign, which has dehumanised all Muslim minorities in the country. Research into the coverage and policies of Chinese Central TV found that in the wake of the 2009 ethnic riots there was a significant

increase in the number of reports on Uyghur separatists groups which typically branded the perpetrators as Islamic terrorists (Luqui and Yang, 2017). In addition, their corroborating study on Weibo (a Chinese social media platform) found posts made by Chinese Muslims explaining Islam or discussing Chinese ethnic policies were systematically deleted. The existence of a concerted attack to defame the Chinese Muslim minorities, which ultimately has been successful in influencing public opinion, is clear to see.

However, not all conflict areas become arenas of genocide, and not all dehumanised groups become the victims of genocide. The indigenous Adivasi communities in present-day India, for example, exist in a state of permanent low-level conflict with the *de jure* government. They are portrayed as inferior, as dangerous left-wing terrorists, and as obstacles to economic growth due to their resistance to deforestation. Great parallels to the narrative painted by the Chinese over its Muslim minorities can be drawn. However, the Adivasi are not in danger of genocide. This is because India's attempts at cultural homogenisation involves a transition period. India promotes its development agenda through urban schools, which the Adivasi children are *de facto* forced into due to the underfunding and inhumane conditions which exist in the local rural schools (one school has been reported to have only 2 toilets for 300 kids) (Boga, 2019). The urban educated Adivasi then return to the village and demand development, they accept deforestation, and they are no longer satisfied with the ancient indigenous way of life (Boga, 2019). In other words, Adivasi identity and ways of life are being encouraged to change rather than through direct coercion. So while it is regretful that the Adivasi identity is being diluted, the transitional process ensures the most

serious crimes against humanity will not be required for India to be successful.

In contrast, China's strategy to end its security dilemma and homogenise the nation is doomed to fail unless genocidal tactics are employed. This is because one's sense of group identity is deeply ingrained, it is one's customs, institutions, religion, and ethnicity, it is the demarcation between 'us' and 'them' (Castells, 2010). There is also evidence to suggest that in times of conflict, the sense of 'us' and 'them' is enhanced even further, thus China's challenge becomes even greater (Malkii, 1995). While some constructivists argue identity can and does change, this still demands the consent of the individual. And as consent requires the absence of coercion, and the re-education camps are intrinsically coercive, it is unlikely any substantial change of identity (beneath the surface) would happen. While there are clear incentives for the minorities to change their identity (most notably the threat of torture and punishment), genuine and natural identity change, as observed in the Adivasi children, is unlikely in Uyghur and Kazakh adults. Ultimately, Muslims will accept the coercion in public, but not in private. Once the Chinese understand this - the only non-transitional solution will be genocide.

In conclusion, the re-education camps currently housing over 1 million Chinese Muslim minorities represents worrying aggression which signifies an impending genocide. In the context of a long history of intercommunal struggle stretching back to at least 1949 between the Muslims and Han-majority, a serious distrust pervades the ethnic relations of Xinjiang. This is propounded by a state-run media campaign aimed at dehumanising the Uyghur, even those completely unconnected to the armed conflict. As a result, the state policy has become legitimized and enjoys public support. Torture, collective punishments, forced pork consumption have all been rife in the

camps; however genocidal practices have not yet begun. Nonetheless, China's nation-building strategy is one which refuses to accept the need for a transitional non-coercive strategy in order to truly culturally homogenise the state. While, in India, the Adivasi children are being encouraged into urban schools as a result of asymmetric funding allocation, which diverts their views away from Adivasi thinking. In China, adults with deeply held ethnoreligious ties are being forced into changing their identity. This is an impossible task; religious ties are deeply held and also accented in times of conflict. If China retains its objective to culturally homogenise without a transition period, as is currently the case, the systematic extermination of the Uyghurs and Kazakhs could very easily become the most attractive option to the Chinese leadership.

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