

NATIONS AND NAVIGATION

CRACKING THE CODE:

Shattering the Cybersecurity Glass Ceiling

COCAINE ISN'T VEGAN

LA LEY DE MEMORIA DEMOCRÁTICA

UNITED NO LONGER?

Why Scotland is reconsidering its role in the UK

HATRED FOR GENERATION CLIMATE

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FROM THE TEAM

ear Readers,

The winter of 2023 has undoubtedly proven to be a deeply unsettling and arduous period. In the east, the brave people of Ukraine continue their year-long struggle to preserve their independence and sovereignty against the onslaught of Russian aggression. In France, demonstrations persist as citizens voice their concerns and discontent. In the Middle East, Israel faces the possibility of lapsing into autocracy, while the citizens of Turkey and Syria struggle to recover from the series of devastating earthquakes that have caused immense suffering and loss of life.

Against the backdrop of this upheaval and uncertainty, we are dedicating this edition to women, their rights, and their empowerment. More than ever, we believe it is crucial to shine a light on the important role that women play in our society and to support their efforts to achieve equality and justice.

As we confront these challenging times, it is essential that we recognize the significant obstacles that women face, from gender-based discrimination to violence and abuse. We stand in solidarity with women everywhere who are fighting for their rights and working to create a more just and equitable world.

In order to broaden our audience, we have made the decision to create our very own podcast-POLEMICS REC. This new platform will provide a fresh and engaging way for us to explore important topics and issues affecting our world. We already have two episodes available for you to listen to. In the first episode, we invited a distinguished guest - Dr. Gerhard Mangott - to discuss the current state of affairs in Ukraine and reflect on the conflict's actual and potential geopolitical ramifications. In the second episode, we delve into the topic of women's rights and empowerment by commemorating women's month. The four keynote high-level speakers bring insights into women's role in several key areas, including but not limited to agriculture, sustainable development, health, political development, and international relations. We hope that our podcast will be a valuable addition to the conversations and discussions that are taking place in our community and beyond.

Lastly, we are proud to say that women form a majority on both our editorial board and writing staff. As such, the articles in this issue showcase the voices and perspectives of women from a wide range of backgrounds and contexts. We hope that these stories will inspire and empower you to take action in your own communities and support the ongoing struggle for gender equality.

Thank you for your unwavering support, and we hope this edition will serve as a rallying cry for change and progress.

Sincerely,

The Editorial Board





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JEHAN SADAT:

MAKING THE PRIVATE PUBLIC AS THE FIRST LADY OF EGYPT

Written by: Anna Riggs Edited by: Jason Kancylarz

ehan Sadat once told her husband, former President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat, "Over half of our population are women, Anwar. Egypt will not be a democracy until our women are as free as men. As leader of our country, it is your duty to make that happen." Mrs. Sadat went on to make notable changes in her country, and used her platform to advance the role of women in society. However, she always said that she wanted her legacy to be one of peace, which she and her husband tried to advance in Egypt and the Middle East.

Since Anwar Sadat's peace agreements with Israel after meeting at Camp David in 1978, he gradually lost popularity around the country for abandoning previous goals of Arab nationalism that depended on unwavering opposition to Israel.



Ex-president Sadat is often seen as having betrayed the pan-Arab goals of his popular predecessor, Gamal Abdel Nasser, by making peace with their Israeli neighbors. This agreement especially angered members of the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamic fundamentalist group found throughout the Arab World, which prompted the planned assassination of the president on October 6, 1981. Jehan Sadat defended her husband's controversial views for the rest of

"Peace," she wrote, "this word, this idea – this goal – is the defining theme of my life."

her life. She carried on his legacy of promoting peace despite her husband's relative unpopularity.

However, Jehan Sadat refused to be defined only by her status in relation to her husband.

Before becoming the First Lady of Egypt, Jehan was an advocate for women's rights, education, social justice, and poverty relief. Early on in her career, she spoke out for women's equality, as well as against female genital mutilation. In the 1960s, she developed the Talla Society, a microfinancing organization that helped women in rural areas develop skills to enter the workforce and become financially independent. A few years later, she created the Wafa'Wal Amal (Faith and Hope) Society, which was devoted to providing medical care and rehabilitation to war veterans. She also founded the SOS Children's Village, which now serves over 300,000 children facing housing insecurity around

the world. In 1975 and 1980, she led the Egyptian delegation to UN Conferences on Women in Mexico City and Copenhagen. While her husband was in office, she pushed him to make progressive reforms for women. Most notably, in 1979 she championed the adoption of legislation (later called "Jehan's Laws") that gave women better access to divorce, alimony, and custody over their children. A separate law was included that also reserved 30 seats in Egyptian parliament specifically for women.

Jehan Sadat was an impossible figure to ignore in Egyptian politics throughout the 1970s. She stood out even more so because of her unconventional approach to her role as first lady. Her active public role in politics was not only unique to first ladies in the Arab World at this time, but in the entire international system. Cynthia Enloe, a feminist critical theorist in international relations, emphasizes in her book



Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making **Feminist** Sense International Politics (2015), that political and diplomatic leaders' wives are typically expected to "enhance" their husbands' efforts to reach their goals, limiting their ability to have their own separate careers and leadership roles. While this remains an issue in politics today, Jehan Sadat was ahead of her time in pursuing her own political leadership agenda. Additionally, she not only strengthened Anwar Sadat's political agenda, but took initiative in directly influencing his policies herself. After encouraging her husband to expand women's rights, President Sadat then went on to draft "Jehan's Laws," which gave women access to divorce, alimony, and child custody, as well as seats in the Egyptian parliament. This shows that few female figures had as much public influence in politics as Jehan did in the 1970s, especially in this region.

Jehan Sadat's work is especially important to acknowledge in the context of the Arab world at this time. Much of her work was taking place against a backdrop of growing Islamic fundamentalist (most notably, groups Muslim Brotherhood), which sought to eliminate women's roles in public society, who went on to coordinate Anwar Sadat's assassination in 1981. Sadat's activities, like her husband's, were heavily criticized by pro-Arab nationalists, fundamentalist groups, and other political figures in the Arab World. While she was acutely aware of this criticism and the risks it posed, she continued to advocate for their shared causes even after Anwar Sadat's death. Sadat said she knew that their lives were at risk after the Camp David Accords—but her and her husband's common goal was to commit to peace in Egypt.

Soon after the assassination, Sadat moved to the United States after completing her PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of Cairo. She continued to speak out about her political views and activism, continuing to turn Enloe's theory on wives of politicians on its head. She also revealed more about her life as the First Lady and how much she was actually able to play an active role in shaping her husband's policies, including making peace with Israel. She became a professor of peace studies at the University of Cairo, and later continued to teach at the University of Maryland and the American University in Washington, DC. In 1987, she published her autobiography, A Woman of Egypt, which documents her early life. marriage, and career of activism. Before her death in 2021 at the age of 87, Sadat said she hoped to be remembered for her commitment

to peace. "Peace," she wrote, "this word, this idea - this goal - is the defining theme of my life." As the two-year anniversary of her death approaches, this legacy is fought for in her home country and surrounding Arab countries. However, she and her legacy is still honored in Egypt. After her death, she received a national medal and military funeral, the first and only woman to receive this kind of honor in Egypt. As the struggle for democracy in the Middle East continues, time will tell to see how Sadat's legacy lives on.



COCAINE ISN'T VEGAN:

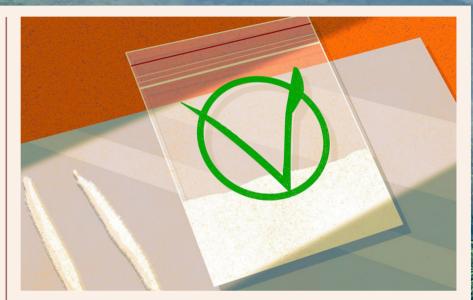
THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN COST OF Transnational Organized Crime

Written by: **Annkathrin Rest** Edited by: **Viktor Kharyton**

The exploitation of the environment can constitute criminal activity in and of itself. Criminal groups profit from illegal logging, fishing, and mining while depleting fish stocks, eroding soil and polluting bodies of water as well as the atmosphere. During a recent interview, Walter Kemp, professor at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna who also works at the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime underscored that climate change creates new opportunities for criminal groups:

"We need to put a lot more focus on the link between climate change and the impact of organized crime on the environment," Kemp explains further. "That's a connection that is still not being made sufficiently: people are profiting from the destruction of our planet."

Climate-related migration, triggered by rising sea levels and natural disasters, opens up markets for human smuggling. In a future scarcity of commodities, sand, water, charcoal and certain minerals will likely subject these resources to illegal trafficking in the years to come. As highlighted in the latest World Drug Report published by the UNODC in 2022, there is also an important linkage to be made between illicit drug economies and the environment. However, since



this field of research is rather new, there is relatively little awareness of the environmental harm done by illicit crop cultivation and drug manufacturing.

Deforestation, soil erosion, water pollution and biodiversity loss pose serious threats to the environments of the world's largest illicit coca cultivators: Bolivia. Colombia. and Peru. Illegal coca cultivation is associated with up to 58% of deforestation in the Andean region, and nearly half of all illicit coca bush cultivation occurs in specially protected areas including national parks, forest reserves, indigenous reserves and land reserved for the Afro-Colombian population. Land-use change, i.e. turning forests into crop fields, releases significant amounts of CO2e. The UNODC 2022 World Drug Report estimated that "manufacturing of 1 kg of cocaine generates 590 kg of

CO2e, which is 84 times higher than growing coffee beans and 30 times higher than growing cocoa beans" (UNODC World Drug Report, 2022: 44).

Crop Substitution

Although the policy of crop substitution could thus provide more sustainable and climatefriendly alternatives, it also presents substantial challenges. Firstly, cultivating coca is simply a more lucrative activity. Furthermore, whilst coffee beans can only be harvested once a year, making farmers vulnerable to fluctuating weather conditions, coca bushes can be harvested up to six times a year. As Kemp highlights, "replacing an illicit crop with a licit one is only part of the solution. You need the infrastructure to manufacture, transport and sell licit crops; and for this you need market demand."

Crop Eradication

An even more problematic policy is crop eradication through aerial spraying, practiced in Colombia between 1994 and 2015. This method releases toxic chemicals into the atmosphere, harming the surrounding flora and fauna. On top of the environmental detrimental impact, UNODC found that crop eradication triggers a 'Balloon Effect,' meaning that coca cultivation is simply relocated municipalities. adiacent Highlighting this point, Kemp asserts that "eradication in and of itself is insufficient: any kind of drug control strategy that is dealing with organic crops has to find a way to deal with the livelihood of those people." Expanding on the ways to counter the eradication issue, Kemp states that addressing the environmental consequences of the illicit drug economy "is important, but it needs to be part of a much broader set of interventions." There must be sustainable development, resilient civil societies and available opportunities for young people and individuals from marginalized communities. "Most of all, you need to reduce demand for these [illicit] goods," points out Kemp.

Society and Culture

While the environmental repercussions of cocaine trafficking attract increasingly more international attention, the often-sidelined cultural context should not be forgotten. From an indigenous point of view, coca leaves are of great cultural and historical importance. The people of the Andes have cultivated coca bush for over 8,000 years. In the Incan Culture, coca leaves play an important role in sacred ceremonies and rituals, and indigenous communities continue to use the leaves today to combat altitude sickness, relieve pain, and relax muscles. Yet, as underscored by Kemp, it is important to distinguish between the traditional use of coca leaves for chewing or brewing of tea and manufactured cocaine consumption in the Western world. Similarly, one should not conflate regulated traditional use with the legalization of cocaine. Even though traditional coca use has been implemented in Bolivia and Colombia, "that market is tiny compared to the coca leaf that is grown for people consuming cocaine in other parts of the world", Kemp notes. "Enabling the traditional use of coca will not eliminate the supply of coca leaves that form the basis of production for cocaine."

"The whole idea of a war on drugs is misplaced because it is not a war that you can win. It's a problem that we are always going to have. You can't necessarily solve it, but you can manage it more effectively."

Peace and Security

The supply of coca leaves, as well as transnational organized crime more broadly, must also be understood in the context of peace and security. Having recently attended a conference in Colombia on President Gustavo Petro's 'Plan for Total Peace', Kemp remarks that "the policy being promoted by the President of Colombia deserves a lot of attention because it is the first time that a government has seriously tried to tackle, as a policy, dealing with armed groups involved in illicit economies." Nonetheless, the Colombian government is undoubtedly facing an immensely challenging task. "What does peace look like in terms of total peace? Less homicides, or something more?" Kemp asks, noting the importance of preventing a "criminal peace" and acknowledging the "potential minefields" and "moral hazards" the Colombian government must be cautious of.

The policy of "Total Peace" being attempted in Colombia is different from militarized responses being used against drugs in other parts of the world. Kemp cautions that "the whole idea of a war on drugs is misplaced because it is not a war that you can win. It's a problem that we are always going to have. You can't necessarily solve it, but you can manage it more effectively."

Instead, Kemp highlights the need for a comprehensive approach that is both top-down and bottom-up. He explains that "on the one hand it is important to work top down in these kinds of situations to deal with the ecosystem of the culture of protection that some of these criminal groups enjoy. But at the same time, you have to work from the bottom up: resilience and community level development are crucial." To implement this, the Global Initiative, which believes that "there is safety in numbers, in networking and solidarity," has launched the Resilience Fund which supports brave, yet vulnerable civil society groups that stand up against organized crime and corruption. More generally, there is room for a more strategic response towards dealing with illicit economies. Kemp is currently engaged in formulating a global strategy against organized crime. He partly credits the inspiration for spearheading this strategy as a result of inclass discussions about the future of organized crime at the Diplomatic Academy. "I had the feeling that students were not convinced by the answers on how to deal more effectively with this problem. That motivated me to try harder," said Kemp. This, and the fact that one of the members of his team is a recent graduate from the DA, "shows how the Diplomatic Academy can be a workshop for generating new ideas and new approaches to effective multilateralism."



HATRED FOR GENERATION CLIMATE

THE STRAW THAT BREAKS THE CAMEL'S BACK

Written by: Judith Bauer Edited by: Leander Kränzle

ystemic capitalism, rather than the actions of individuals, is the root of the disproportionate climate change. The apparent insatiability of markets and the relentless strive for evergrowing wealth obscure the chances of voluntary sustainable behaviour of firms and civilians alike. As economist Milton Friedman famously put it, the social responsibility of businesses is to increase their profits. Taking care of negative values such as CO2 emissions, sewage or waste arising as byproducts of the businesses' profit-increasing cannot be turned into profits by these firms or even cost them money. Thus, there is little motivation to keep these negative values under control if that means losses for the firm. This neglect of climate issues has been ignored for the longest time and has led to increasingly curious forms of protests.

In a free market, any issue not threatening shortand middle-term surpluses will rarely be addressed, leading to unsustainable business practices to persist through their more "competitive" prices. As a result, governing bodies are needed as advocates for the people to protect them from their own economic choices. An insatiable market needs boundaries, allowing a future society to



live in a prosperous world. This prosperity can be measured but is hard to convey as it does not concern surplus values. Subsequently, the very same negative values are ignored by profitoriented firms. Most irritatingly, at the same time, greenwashing however is on every corner.

The Last Straw

NGOs such as Last Generation Austria are calling for governments to fulfil their environmental commitments regarding CO2e and are speaking out against the practice of policy-makers and international companies hunting for greenwashed loopholes. In recent months, the Austrian division of Last Generation has stirred up local political and public nuisance with a form of protest aiming for disturbance: nonviolent civil resistance. This appears to be the last straw for the climate activists, feeling unheard and ignored by policy-makers. There have been several occasions of climate activists gluing themselves on streets during rush hour in Vienna, drawing the ire of the obstructed drivers and those sympathising with the motorists. Yet, activists and non-supporters alike agree that civil society will not change through mere moral certainty. Last Generation Austria takes this as a motivation to expressively state they are not aiming to get public approval or change. They believe serious change can only be reached with national and international policies, and the group emphasises that "Civil resistance is no popularity contest" on their website letztegeneration.at. Therefore, some do not want to change and the others are certain that they will not change their modus operandi, posing the question of why climate activists protest in a way that adversely affects civic society?

organisation explains, they The believe the majority of society supports their agenda, "but despite this majority, politicians do not act because they prefer to listen to the fossil fuel lobby". However, when considering media attention, the public neither sympathises with the goals nor the means of the climate activists. This ambiguous outcome raises some questions: if their voters do not revolt and the economy grows, why would a politician stop listening to a lobby? Whose politics will be promoted by the protests - those of supporters or opponents of sustainable political decisions? Last Generation Austria refers to Erica Chenoweth's assumption that a 3.5% participation in protest is enough to achieve societal transformation. Civil Resistance, as referred to in Chenoweth's paper, is known to be successful in countries experiencing radical political change, especially when lacking rule of law and infringing human rights. Now, it is used in the context of climate protests - but to what extent does this success of minority groups apply in a politically stable country bound to capitalism? For the Last Generation's cause, the answer is yet to be found. However, why the organisation is adopting this hard-line stance, despite backlash and pushbacks - both figuratively and literally - is explained easily: what other choice do they have left?

The Camel's Back

While the protests do not appear to be of much efficiency regarding policy changes, they certainly are efficient in gathering the attention the topic sought so desperately while paying with a crumbling social cohesion as a price. The cumulative emotional and mental burden that political polarisation has imposed on each person in the last years is both barely noted and presented as statistically insignificant; something to grin about and bear with. As long as the world keeps turning faster and everyone needs to keep pace, there will be steadily less consideration and grace. As long as this is a fight of the ones against the others, a solution can hardly be found. As long as there is a demand for harmful unsustainable goods and as long as the Tragedy of the Commons persists, we will still have a long way to go until we return to mutual consideration and appreciation, unattached to values and opinions.

Polarisation, hatred and latently erupting aggression increasingly shaped online behaviour over the last couple of years. With open displays of civil resistance, these behaviours appear to have manifested in the offline world. Street-blocking activists were insulted, dragged, beaten and kicked by civilians. In online forums, these physical and verbal assaults are mostly either endorsed, celebrated or judged to be not violent enough, sometimes even insinuating running over the activists. The missing indignation, more so even schadenfreude, about open brutality is nothing to disregard: in our increasingly divided society, there is little sympathy for alternate opinions. The culmination of major events in recent human history seems to have heightened the propensity to use violence in thought, word, and deed. While climate action is so desperately needed on a material level, the social level is deeply damaged. With societal interaction already on the verge of collapse, this last straw the activists are clinging on to broke the proverbial camel's back. There is only so much a human can deal with before failing to control their anger and aggressions. For climate activists to have crossed this red line indicates that social propriety and its normative value has been eroded immensely, indicating a trend of more radical and public demonstrations for social movements in the years to come.



EU Regulation defines cybersecurity as "the activities necessary to protect network and information systems, the users of such systems, and other persons affected by cyber threats". The relevance and popularity of this field has grown in recent years thanks to the increased digitalisation of business, and has eventually risen to prominence with the pivot to remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic. As with most STEM careers, cybersecurity-related positions are mainly male-dominated, yet there is margin for improvement and a need for women to join the field.

According to both the World Bank and the 2020 ENISA Report on Women in Cybersecurity, the underrepresentation of female professionals in the industry impacts the overall growth of businesses. In 2020, women represented only 7% of the cybersecurity workforce in the EU; at the global level, only 20% of cybersecurity professionals were women — despite the overall number of women in the workforce being closer to half. Additionally, the 2021 European Parliament resolution on closing the digital gender gap identified the need to have more women in leadership positions at the EUwide level. Numerous publications and reports, both by private sector entities as well as public organisations, have been decrying the gender pay and skills gap since 2019, when it was indeed assessed that not only women, but also women of colour were disproportionately underrepresented in the cybersecurity realm. Though the number of women employed in cybersecurity has been increasing in





recent years, with a promising double-digit increase between 2013 and 2019, the gap is far from being filled. The World Economic Forum recommended engaging even more girls and women in STEM, so as to keep up the increase in number and counter the predicted staff shortage. Non-governmental organisations and initiatives have also sprung up all over the world: from the

US-based nonprofit Women's Society Cyberjutsu, to Karlie Kloss's With Kode Klossy, input has been given by women for women.

Yet, it is undeniable that the inclusion of women in the cybersecurity workforce at large would

benefit business, as they bring a new perspective to the table. It is also irrefutable that women have made history in cybersecurity: from their pioneering work cryptography during World War II, to the female-European Cybersecurity Forum (CYBERSEC), to Katie Moussouris's testimony "Data Security and Bug Bounty Programs" at the US Senate in early 2018, women have been at the forefront of cybersecurity innovation and dialogue since its inception.

Women face the same issues within the cybersecurity realm that they already face elsewhere lack of opportunities, the gender pay gap, workplace bias and discrimination, and difficulties in achieving a satisfactory worklife balance as they mostly act as primary caregivers for the children and elderly within their families. Women are also often overlooked for career advancement and promotions. The inadequate representation at all levels, but especially at the leadership ranks, makes it even more challenging for them

to enter the field and advance their careers. It is also important to underline that, while these issues affect all women, they disproportionately impact more women of colour and non-binary people. Unfortunately, the lack of statistics and research on this topic hinders us from providing concrete numbers, and simply further highlights the need for more inclusivity in this field.

"In 2020, women represented only 7% of the cybersecurity workforce in the EU; at the global level, only 20% of cybersecurity professionals were women — despite the overall number of women in the workforce being closer to half."

On top of all this, women and girls also have to contend with gender-based cyber-violence and hate speech. Women more likely be victims of non-consensual sharing private images, blackmail, threats, stalking, defamation, as well as the

establishment of fake profiles using their personal details, their pictures, or both. Another major issue that is often overlooked is the interconnectedness between online and offline crimes: online stalking is oftentimes linked to in-person behaviour. These risks feed into the negative perception of some women towards this field and, as such, might discourage them from pursuing careers in cybersecurity.

Naturally, one of the ways to solve all these issues and advance cybersecurity research and best practices would be by proactively pursuing a more diverse workforce and actively fighting against all forms of discrimination. The inclusion of multiple perspectives into a male-dominated industry would help to stimulate innovative and variegated solutions to any issues that will arise. Women should be encouraged and incentivized to pursue careers in cybersecurity, including both non-technical positions (e.g. governance and compliance) and technical roles which remain to be dominated by men.



Written by: Reed McIntire, Edited by: Maryam Sindi

Cince Brexit took effect in 2020, the United Kingdom has gone through crisis after crisis. The island nation has notably gone through a recent dramatic crisis of leadership since the departure of Boris Johnson from the position of Prime Minister. A severe financial crisis is pushing many workers to take to the streets and strike against unfair wages. Another potential crisis is on the horizon. The one that might change the political landscape of the UK irrevocably: the possibility of Scottish independence.

Scotland has been a part of the United Kingdom since 1707, when the Acts of Union entered into force and legally bound the country's throne to that of England. Almost 300 years later, the Scottish people are progressively questioning the union. In 2014, the Scottish government held a referendum asking its citizens whether they wished to be independent from the United Kingdom; the results were split with 55% voting against and 44% voting in favor. Eight years later, the country is once again debating its future in the union, so what has changed?

As the discourse over Scottish independence continues, it is critical to understand the nuanced differences between Scotland and England, rooted in their distinct histories and cultural identities. From centuries of continuous clashes, including two wars of independence for the Scots from English domination in the 14th century, to a rapprochement under their shared monarch King James I in the 18th century, the relationship between these two countries has been complex. These cultural differences between the two countries have over time seeped into their contemporary politics and economics.

Scotland's pro-European Union stance has widened the divide with England in the wake of Brexit. According to the Guardian, in the 2016 EU referendum, 62% of Scottish voters wished to remain in the European Union. The repercussions of the UK's departure from the EU caused disruptions and ongoing troubles managing its European commerce which have been exacting a toll on the British economy. The added difficulties engaging in commerce with the United Kingdom's largest trading partner have put even more strain on Anglo-Scottish relations and exacerbated the political differences between the two countries as well.

After Theresa May, who took office after the decision to leave had been made, resigned as Prime Minister in 2016, the United Kingdom was led by Boris Johnson, another member of the Conservatives who pushed the country through the Brexit process. However, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, public opinion turned on Johnson, pushing him to resign as well. The following power vacuum was shortly filled by Liz Truss, whose proposed policies caused a sharp decline in British stock markets and a downturn in the overall economy. After just seven weeks in office, Truss was replaced by Rishi Sunak, another Conservative, who pushes for standard liberalization efforts in the financial sphere. Throughout this time, Scotland has remained under the governance of the Scottish National Party (SNP), whose policies often oppose those implemented by the Conservative-led British government.

Scotland's government, autonomous from the government of England, maintains its own legislature and executive positions, despite being subject to the jurisdiction and control of the Prime Minister and Parliament. Since 2011, the



clear advantage Scotland leaving the United Kingdom would be cutting off political domination by London,"

SNP, Scotland's largest party, has dominated Scottish politics, running on a social democratic, nationalist platform that emphasizes Scottish autonomy from England. Unlike their English counterparts, Scottish voters and government often swing left-wing. Recently, the British Parliament came into conflict with the Scottish government over legislation aimed to reduce the prerequisites that Scottish youth needed to pursue gender-affirming care. Amidst this debate, the First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, announced her retirement from the position. Sturgeon, who had held the office for more than eight years, said that her resignation had nothing to do with the recent disputes. Nevertheless, she promised that the SNP would continue pursuing trans rights legislation as well as continuing inquiries into another referendum for independence.

The push for self-determination hit aroad block when the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom ruled that another referendum on independence was illegal without the British Parliament's consent. Despite the ruling, Sturgeon reaffirmed her commitment to Scottish independence, remarking "Scottish democracy will not be denied" and reinforcing the plans to continue down this path. Even without a referendum, the next general election could play a significant role in independence efforts for Scotland, with Sturgeon and the SNP viewing the next election cycle as a chance for de facto independence from the United Kingdom. However, there are still some Scots who do not support independence and view the union with England positively.

Despite the many differences and disputes between Scotland and England there remain some positive aspects, which for some are enough to stay in the union. Notably, the Scottish economy is dwarfed by that of England. While the Scottish oil industry once boomed and, according to the Scottish government, provided an excess of 9 billion GBP to the economy in 2012, this has since diminished to only 22.5 million in 2019, only 0.25% of what it once was. Additionally, as a part of the UK, Scotland would remain associated with the cultural and scientific achievements the United Kingdom has seen. Furthermore, and most importantly, the United Kingdom provides security to the small nation. With only five million residents, Scotland is tiny compared to the rest of the island and its defense would be difficult to maintain without the support of the broader United Kingdom. While Scotland may attempt to re-enter the European Union on its own, that would require years of waiting, which could present severe economic issues to the country. However, the benefits can be even more enticing to some.

A clear advantage of Scotland leaving the United Kingdom would be cutting off political domination by London. Despite its autonomous status, Scotland remains at the whims of Parliament in London. Which, considering the population difference between the two, is dominated by the English. Independence from the United Kingdom then would also mean increased internal decision making. Furthermore, an independent Scotland would have the potential to join the European Union on its own and reap the benefits of membership. On a broader level, the Scottish could develop their own proper relations with the rest of the world without going through London first.

As it stands, the future of Scotland remains uncertain. Many on both sides are voicing their opinions and pushing for what they believe to be the best possible path for their country. One thing is for certain though, as the United Kingdom remains embroiled in political and economic tribulations, the question of Scottish independence might get an answer sooner than expected.

QATARGATE:

EU'S BIG GAS HEADACHE

Written by: **Ema Odra Raščan** Edited by: **Leander Kränzle**

I

In December 2022, news broke out that Belgian police had raided homes and apartments of EU officials across Brussels. At first, four suspects were rounded up on suspicion of money laundering and corruption, among them Vice-President of the European Parliament, Eva Kaili, her partner, Francesco Giorgi, and a parliamentary staffer, Pier Antonio Panzeri. Four months later, officials noted the involvement of at least two more MEPs. Ongoing investigations have also shed light on other EU institutions, revealing questionable behavior of Commissioners, such as that of Director-General for Mobility and Transport Henrik Hololei, who took nine free businessclass trips on Qatar Airways between 2015 and 2021 while negotiating an "open skies" deal with Doha.

Roberta Metsola, president of the European Parliament (EP), addressed her peers during a crisis session and declared boldly that "European democracy is under assault." The scandal has been dubbed "Qatargate" as the involved EU officials were receiving money from the energy-rich Gulf state. Apart from questioning the legitimacy of the democratic processes that underpin the entire political system of 27 member states, one of the biggest corruption scandals comes at a time when new partnerships are being formed to secure energy supplies.

What is "Qatargate"?

In December 2022, evidence was presented that Kaili and her partner Panzeri received payments in return for performing the bidding in EP regarding human rights and labor laws on behalf of Qatar and possibly Morocco. After news of corrupt behavior between EU officials and Doha broke out, a Qatari diplomat rejected any allegations associating the Qatari government with misconduct and meddling in EU affairs. Subsequently, new dimensions have been added pointing to the involvement of



other institutions like the Commission as well as gaining proof that the corruption scandal had begun with Morocco.

Federal police officers in Belgium "suspected a nation from the Persian Gulf of affecting economic and political decisions of EP". Nearly €1.5 million was confiscated by Belgian authorities. According to Belgian and Italian sources, Mr. Giorgi and Mr. Panzeri both agreed to a plea bargain, pleading guilty to a reduced charge. Investigative journalists point to the extent of Panzeri's corrupt behavior which began in Morocco and only continued with Qatar.

Investigations for similar allegations are ongoing, as a warrant was issued in February against MEPs Maria Arena and Alessandra Moretti. The two form a "quadrumvirate" with Cozzolino and MEP Marc Tarabella, a quartet that carried out the orders of Panzeri, who is accused of being the brains behind the network that operated within the EP. EU officials were supposedly encouraged to polish up the image of Qatar's migrant employees and give a better version of its labor rights, especially in light of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. This scandal has once again brought to the forefront the often-criticized issue of MEPs not needing to reveal their expenditure, which is close to €5,000 per month, on top of a generous annual salary. This may also be the reason why out of all EU institutions, the EP was chosen by Qatar. The EP is the only directlyelected institution and has a colegislative function, but MEPs have a high level of autonomy when it comes to spending, having side jobs, and even working as lobbyists once they are no longer MEPs (suggestion to shorten these two sentences and merge them into one: "Perhaps this is why Qatar chose the European Parliament (EP) from among all EU institutions, since the EP is the only directly elected body with colegislative powers, and MEPs have significant autonomy in terms of spending and side-jobs, including lobbying after their term.).

What's Qatargot to do with it? Member States have a strong economic reliance on Oatar.

Especially looking at the two biggest EU powers, the secondand third-largest beneficiaries of Qatari capital in Europe are France (estimated \$27 billion investments) and Germany (estimated \$24 billion investments) respectively. The Qatar Investment Authority, the sovereign wealth fund of the emirate, and members of Qatar's ruling family have built significant stakes in some of Germany's most recognizable corporate names over the past ten years, including an 11 % stake in VW, the nation's largest automaker, and a 6 % stake in Deutsche Bank, its largest bank. Moreover, the Qataris acquired a 5% stake in Porsche last autumn, elevating the emirate to the position of one of the company's major owners. These generous investments cannot be overlooked and are currently being welcomed by individual Member States.

Although Qatar has made investments in the United Kingdom (investments in the Ritz hotel, Harrods department store, and Shard) and France (purchasing Paris Saint-Germain football club) on a comparable scale, its focus in Germany has been on infrastructure improvements rather than flashy prize acquisitions. Qatar revealed a \$2.38 billion investment in October 2022 to help German oil giant RWE purchase US Con Edison Clean Energy, effectively lending RWE money to spend in the United States. With this agreement, Qatar accomplished two goals at once: it helped a major European ally and gained entry into a growing energy market in the US. while looking for ways to establish itself as a partner of the West, the emirate is strategically investing in Europe.

Qatar is also benefiting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as the EU is diverting to the Gulf Peninsula for energy supplies. For most of 2022, Qatar supplied 16% of its liquid natural gas (LNG) shipments to the EU. It ranks ahead of Russia as the second-largest provider to the EU, only behind the US. Member States have also bilaterally reached longterm agreements for LNG supplies; starting in 2026, Germany will receive 2mn tons of LNG annually for at least 15 years. As a result of this, about 3% of Germany's yearly

gas demand will be met by Qatar. This will help alleviate the energy crisis in a nation that has suffered greatly from Putin's use of energy as a political tool.

"Mo Money Mo Problems"

With the extent of investments, and LNG supplies, Member States have become dependent on Qatari. After evidence of Qatari involvement in one of the biggest EU scandals had been published, neither Germany nor France commented on it. The only thing on the agenda is securing LNG and making Member States attractive for investments. This proves that governments of the EU-27 find themselves detached from Brussels, ignoring scandals of EU institutions, and working for their best national interest. At the same time, if we focus solely on human rights issues, it is questionable why Qatari energy supplies can be imported to Europe, despite the corruption scandal, whereas a huge fuss had been made over Russian energy supplies. An outstanding issue is whether the EU has taken heed of the need for energy supply diversification and is exploring a range of supply options beyond the

"Qatargate" has caused irreparable damage to values supposedly nurtured within the European Union's institutions. A lot of talk about separate ethical bodies can be heard from EU leaders, which will probably grow as the 2024 elections get closer. On the other hand, the MEPs will definitely have to be more diligent in providing their budget allocations, and in making sure to decline free trips and dinners. Many reform plans are already being shaped, such as a cooling off period for MEPs who are no longer in office and wish to lobby, or more diligent reporting on meetings with interest and diplomatic representatives, etc. However, Qatar is here to stay. Given the decrease in demand for Russian energy supplies, the EU has to cultivate other partnerships and the Gulf is especially attractive. The question is how to ensure that the EU has more skin in the game.

CREATIVE CORNER





FEATURED ART

Illustrations of Landmarks in Vienna

BY LU HAN

I came to Vienna in January 2020 for my internship. After two months of amazing Viennese life, I experienced my first lockdown in life. Life was full of uncertainty and anxiety at that moment. I applied to be an illustrator for a NGO working on creating illustrations of famous cities for children's multimedia classes. No wonder I chose Vienna, a city I lived in and am still building up all kinds of connection with.







Uncrossed Paths

A typical cold Viennese wind blew and my hand faltered slightly
It annoyed me that the wine in the glass spilled—I am ever so clumsy.
But came a whisper: "Love, the spill was not supposed to leave an ugly stain.
It was meant to wash over you and carry with it the leftover pain."

Yet like the hands that yearn to light a cigarette out of habit I craved affection even when I knew I no longer wanted it. Ultimately, I blame myself for my lungs that are choked in tar But I blame you for this heart that now nurses an ugly scar.

I don't know why I mistook you for my destination,
The road has been long and I wanted to find redemption.
But you were just a milestone as my life played out in colorful motion
Goodbye stranger, I shall leave you this poem as a gift and move on.

Can we just go back to that one blissful day in spring
When the skies were clear, the air was warm, and the flowers were in full swing
A boy biked past and quickly disappeared down a city street
And a girl quietly took the bus home, their paths never to meet.



by: Pragmatic Poet



RISING INTEREST RATES:

THE END OF THE ERA OF FREE MONEY

Written by: Adithyan Puthen Veettil, Edited by: Shaira Rabi

I

Inflation. In the past year, this word has been repeatedly mentioned everywhere in virtually every form of media. Why is everyone talking about it? And why was this such a foreign concept to most people before February 2022?

Until quite recently, very few people in the West had direct experience with high levels of inflation. Unless you studied economics or history, inflation was nothing but a vague term occasionally associated with the economies of distant countries. For people used to the comfort and stability of the West, inflation was something that affects only developing countries, or so many people thought. Many poke fun at the trillion Zimbabwean dollar notes printed by the Mugabe regime in 2008. More recently, the world saw Venezuela go through hyperinflation. It is much more common to see periods of unstable prices in the developing world, since these economies are more prone to shocks. Few expected that Europe, the US and other parts of the developed world would see the return of high inflation.

Why is this current wave of inflation so widely talked about? Why is this so important? For starters, this is the highest wave of inflation the West has seen in 40 years. The last time inflation was this high was in the 1980s. Prices have been relatively low and stable since. The era of globalisation and low-cost manufacturing abroad has brought inflation down to a record low. Double-digit inflation is completely unheard of for many people who were born from the 90s and beyond.

The graph shows us that the current wave of inflation in the US is the



highest since the beginning of the 21st century.

Inflation is also seriously hurting developing countries. While inflation is not a new experience for the developing world, this current episode of price hikes has been quite unexpected and volatile. Inflation affects the middle and lower classes the most by eating into people's savings. The pain is especially acute when prices rise for essential goods like food, commodities and petroleum products. Many economists have called off the

alarm, saying that the worst is behind us. Inflation has peaked and believe it or not, it is falling. The latest data on inflation coming from the Fed suggests that the inflation rate is coming down, even though it is still a record high.

The precise causes of this current inflationary wave are intensely debated in economic and political circles. There were early warning signs: interest rates were at record lows since the pandemic, government spending rapidly increased to provide stimulus to the economy. Some economists warned that this massive flush of government stimulus money would drive inflation. famous economist, Milton The Friedman cautioned that "inflation is always and everywhere a monetary phenomenon." The Covid-19 crisis caused supply shocks and a slowdown in most economies. Governments around the world reverted to the timetested policy of increasing spending to combat the contracting economy. This injected a lot of money into the system.

"Double-digit inflation is completely unheard of for many people who were born from the 90s and beyond."

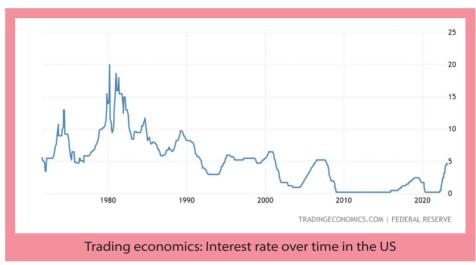




There were already telltale signs that inflation was picking up even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The spike in government spending during and after the pandemic has led to inflationary prices in developing countries. However, many academics believe that Western economies have moved past the stage when government spending could influence inflation. In a way, economies have become resilient to government interventions.

Just as supply chains were just slowly returning to normal in early 2022 and economies were just starting to speed up recovery from the pandemic, the war in Ukraine happened and created a double whammy on the global economy. Sanctions, food shortages and energy supply disruptions drove prices through the roof. People suddenly started feeling the effects of the war all over the world.

To reign in inflation, central banks increased interest rates. This is another timetested policy used by governments facing high inflation. However, inflation still remains persistent, even though it has fallen from its peak. Helpless and without any alternative tool, central banks have continued raising interest rates, despite fears that doing so will dampen economic growth.

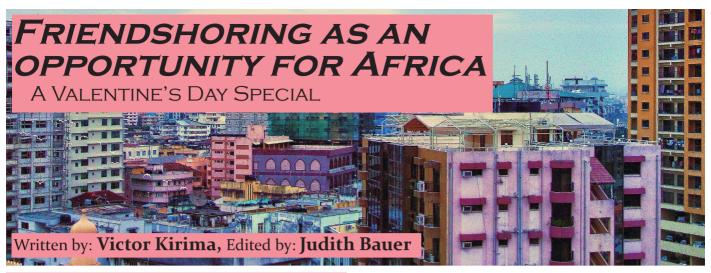


The resulting spike in interest rates came as a shock to many. When one looks at the data, interest rates are not at sky-high levels. In the past, there were periods when interest rates were much higher and remained high for a long time. The 1980s saw interest rates in the double digits. For comparison, current rates are still lower than it was during the lead-up to the financial crisis of 2008. But for the last decade, people became accustomed to very low-interest rates and when interest rates rose, many panicked.

Inflation was almost a forgotten word in Western discourse. The current inflationary crisis brought to the forefront some of the old challenges. Should we try something different this time?

Finally, most people are wondering whether this rise in interest rates is going to stay for a while. In the current situation, the chance of interest rates going back to pre-February 2022 levels any time soon is remote. This is because inflation is still high and the most important job of any central bank is to curb inflation. Central banks have typically done this by increasing interest rates.

Maybe people have to get used to the new reality that interest rates will remain high for a while. Maybe the era of free money is over after all. The impact of this move is still to be seen. The dissolution of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) can be partly blamed on the interest rate hike. It awaits to be seen how high interest rates will affect other financial institutions across the world.



ROSES ARE RED
VIOLETS ARE BLUE
THIS ERA IS RESHORING GALORE
AND FRIENDSHORING HAS COME TO THE FORE
DECOUPLING THEY CHERISH MORE AND MORE
RICARDO'S FREE TRADE THEY NO LONGER ADORE
WILL PERIPHERAL AFRICA LEARN FROM THE CORE
OR BURY ITS HEAD IN THE SAND LIKE HERETOFORE?
-KIRIMA

Valentine's Day without some Iflowers and chocolate would be rather underwhelming. In the EU, about 85% of cocoa beans used in chocolate manufacturing are imported from West Africa and 38% of cut flowers are sourced from Kenya. As such, the benefits of international trade are explicit. Nonetheless. the 2020S witnessing far-reaching shifts in the liberal trade order. The pervasive anti-globalisation sentiment of the 2010s was the tip of the iceberg. Moreover, memories of 1930s protectionism are now rekindled. COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and the ever rising geopolitical tensions between the US and China have exacerbated the decline of the golden age of trade and friendship. Even though it was assumed that disruption of the global value chains (GVCs) during the pandemic was a passing cloud, it is now being recalibrated solely on the basis of geopolitical and geo-economic interests. Priorities are now upside down, with protectionism on the rise whilst efficiency is forced to take a back seat.

David Ricardo's theory Comparative Advantage underpinning the liberal trade order is now disregarded by nations that have championed for it for two centuries. The theory espouses that a country should specialise

in goods and services it can produce the most efficiently. This leads to more economic welfare and cheaper goods. The model is the foundation of globalisation, which led to the development of global value chains as we know them. For instance, a car could be produced in different parts of the world, with the various components being manufactured in multiple countries. However, reshoring, which entails returning manufacturing of goods back to the company's country of origin, and friendshoring, which transfers production to ally countries, are taking precedence. Moreover, government subsidies for 'strategic' like semiconductors, sectors export controls and local content requirements are dismantling the free trade model. Sacrificing economic efficiency for political strategy will come at a cost. Just like the rest of the world, Africa must also reorient its economic relations with the world.

The relationship between trade, economic growth and poverty is intertwined. While trade alone is not sufficient for economic growth, it is

an essential condition. Historically, no country has grown economically through autarky. Ironically, Africa has been integrated into the global trade system since time immemorial, yet the continent currently captures only a tiny portion of global trade. Moreover, despite its rich resources and trade networks, the World Bank estimates that by the end of this decade, 90% of incidences of extreme poverty will be found in Africa.

It seems that to be rich, one must not only trade, but trade in the right commodities. As dependency theorists posit, those who mainly trade in primary goods remain poor yet those who trade in manufactures grow richer. This explains the global north and the global south economic disparities. It is not rocket science: primary commodities are cheap whilst finished goods fetch higher prices. Recent trade statistics from the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) demonstrate that whereas most of Africa is part of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the General Agreement on Tariffs & Trade (GATT), its global trade in export merchandise stands at a measly 3%. The effects of globalisation in Africa are evident, however, premature deindustrialisation, high unemployment rates and income disparity continue to belabour the continent.

A Tale of Two 'Cities'

The dwindling fortunes in Africa visà-vis Asia could partly be explained by the industrialisation trajectory of both regions which share a similar history of

underdevelopment. Although most African countries are part of the institutions of the liberal trade order, they barely feature in GVCs. Conversely, Asia, regarded as 'the world's factory' has benefited immensely from its integration in GVCs. The current friendshoring by the rich world, led by the US and the EU, presents an opportunity for Africa's inclusion in highervalue segments of the supply chain, through investments in Africa's manufacturing sector. Attracting these investments would reduce extreme poverty, spur industrialisation and create the much-needed jobs for the demographically-young continent. Unfortunately, as is custom, economic strategies by both the US and EU show that Africa is not among the 'BFFs list' who will be part of supply chain 'friendshoring', contrary to diplomatic pleasantries often used by Heads of State during speeches. In May 2022, the US launched the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) with partners and key allies in Asia and Oceania, anchoring trade and value chains among its main negotiation pillars. The partnership was criticised by China as a pretext by the US to not only counter it strategically but also hasten decoupling from China's industries. Apple, the American tech giant, historically relied on Chinese factories for the production of most of its products. Nonetheless, a recent move by the company shifted production of the iPhone from China to India, while MacBooks will henceforth be produced in Vietnam, demonstrating a prime example of decoupling and friendshoring. Comparing the IPEF with the Build Back Better World (B3W) project—a G7 initiative led by the US to counter China's relations with Africa—plans for inclusion of African countries in value chain initiatives are barely featured. Additionally, of the five objectives of the EU's Global Gateway Initiative, including Africa in GVCs is not mentioned. Despite promises of solidarity, Africa, it seems, cannot count on the developed North.

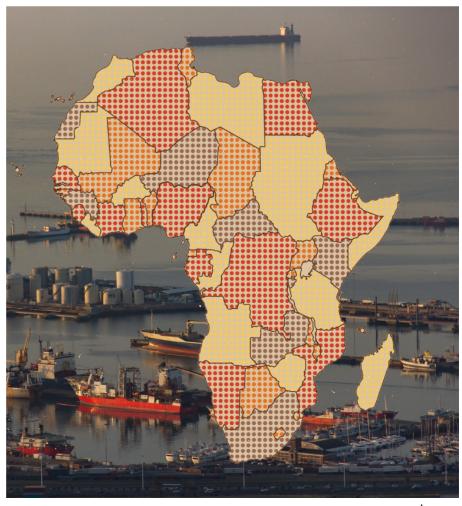
Step One

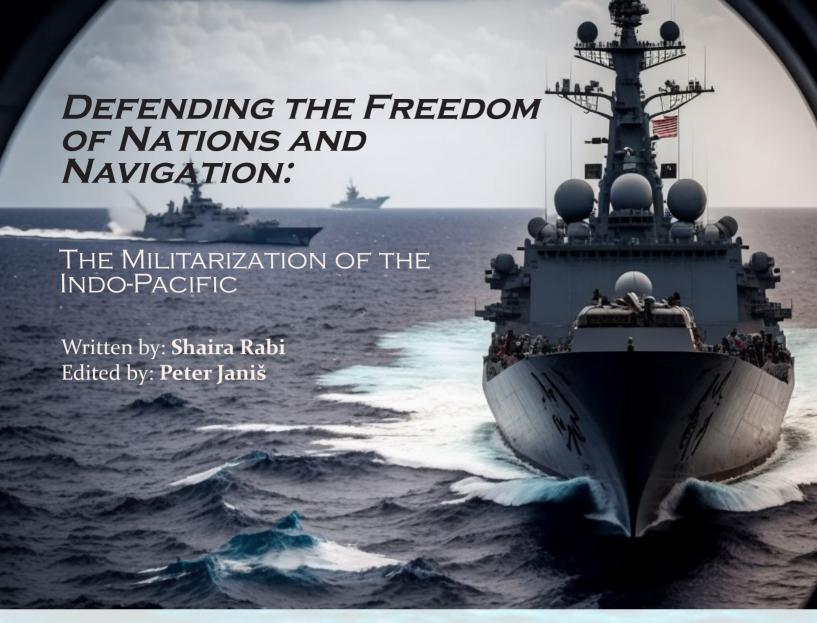
The African Union's (AU) theme of the year 2023 is: "The Year of African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA): Acceleration of

AfCFTA Implementation". In the context of reshoring and friendshoring, this theme could not have come at a better time. Just three years after its establishment in 2018, AfCFTA is one of the world's largest free trade areas. Its fundamental objective is to boost intra-African trade from the current 18%. Juxtaposing Africa with the rest of the world, this figure is dismal; intra-EU trade is more than 70% and intra-North American trade is approximately 60%. Consequently, success of AfCFTA is essential in bolstering Africa's position in the global market by eliminating the current market fragmentation of the 55 AU economies. Ironically, even though Africa does not trade a lot internally as mentioned earlier, it trades the most in goods manufactured within Africa. This is proof that fostering regional value chains (RVCs) instead of the global value chains (GVCs) will be indispensable in building resilience in times of disruption. Kenya knows this best: at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Kenyan horticulture sector took a serious hit as exports to the EU-its main market—were severely hampered.

A New Epoch

Free trade is as relevant now as it was during the time of David Ricardo. Specialisation and free trade encouraged competition and led to more innovation and lower prices. A British person can enjoy Kenyan tea while the Kenyan relishes a bottle of Scotch. Unfortunately, times have changed and free trade is now bound by political goals. In light of the rising geopolitical tensions, the danger of unchecked dependency on trading partners is now wellrecognized as commodities could be used as a geopolitical weapon. Fortunately, Africa is cognisant of the fact that it remains a primary commodities producer and has been unable to industrialise and move to higher-value goods. Evidently, other regions have different priorities on who they consider worthy to trade with. The current trends in international trade offer a new dawn for the continent to look more inward and build industrial and technological capacity at home through intra-African partnerships. For a good cause, like a neglected lover, Africa must now be ready for some 'self love' and focus on itself.





In February 2023, the United States and the Philippines reached a level of military cooperation not seen in nearly three decades. Following the signing of an Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement with the Philippines, the US now has access to four new military bases, bringing the total number to nine. In April 2023, the Philippine Armed Forces (AFP) and the US Navy will conduct its biggest joint military exercises in decades: according to Philippine officials, nearly 12,000 US and 5,000 Philippine servicemen will participate in the so-called "balikatan" exercises, meaning "shoulder-toshoulder". However, it is pertinent to note that diplomatic relations weren't always this warm and rosy. In 1991, the American Bases Agreement was not renewed by the Philippine Congress, thus marking the end of decades of permanent American presence in the country. Moreover, between 2016 and 2022 Manila sharply pivoted towards Beijing under the administration of the former President Duterte. Today, it seems the proverbial Uncle Sam is triumphantly back in the Philippine

islands, and in the greater Indo-Pacific region as well.

A Reckoning with a New Power For many decades, the political, military, and diplomatic establishments were preoccupied with its ventures in the Middle East: the 1990-1991 Gulf War, the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan from 2001-2021, and the 2003 Iraq invasion framed in the context of securing US national and security interests abroad. Meanwhile, China's spectacular economic rise provided itself with the resources and influence it needed to become a global power. Under President Obama, Washington finally realized that the bigger challenge is in the Far East, not the Middle East. The much-discussed "pivot to Asia" refers to the US policy to devote more of attention to East Asia, which has now been integrated into the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy. Central to this strategy is balancing against China's growing influence

and assertiveness in the region, most

exemplified in its growing military and naval capabilities.

In a span of only two decades, China has built up a large and modern military, which also features a formidable bluewater navy that is nearly a competitor of the US Navy according to some metrics. This ability to project power in the seas emboldened China to claim nearly 90% of the South China Sea (SCS). Despite protests from its neighbors, China has now fully militarized three artificially-reclaimed islands near the Philippines. Today, these islands in the SCS host a growing number of military installations and infrastructure, including runways, fighter jets, missile arsenals, ports, radar systems, and more. From Washington's point of view, these defacto Chinese bases threaten the wellestablished principle of the freedom of the high seas and innocent passage, and indeed jeopardize the overall regional security and stability. The SCS is a vital route for seaborne trade (roughly a third of global shipping transits here) bound to and



from the US, its allies Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and indeed China itself. Economic considerations aside, China's control over the SCS and the "first island chain" — the trail of islands from the Japanese archipelago, to Taiwan, the Philippines, and Borneo marking the first line of defense of China — might compromise the ability of the US to defend Taiwan and its allies in case of a conflict with China. The SCS is now at risk of becoming a "Chinese lake".

Racing to Rearmament

Within this context, the countries in the region are working towards boosting their security. Japan, breaking away from its post-WW2 pacifist tradition, increased significantly its defense spending in 2023 by 26% to \$51 billion, specifically committing to acquire offensive counter-strike missile capabilities. Moreover, Japan and the Philippines, both US treaty-allies, signed a new bilateral defense agreement which allows Japan to send troops for humanitarian missions and disaster response in the Philippines, seen by both Tokyo and Manila as a stepping stone towards future joint military exercises and wider defense cooperation. Meanwhile, the recently signed AUKUS deal between the US, UK, and Australia provides for various defense arrangements, including the delivery of nuclear-powered submarines to Australia. The reaction from China was curt but ominous: the Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin warned in a statement that AUKUS is "walking further and further down the path of error and danger". President Xi Jinping, in his first address to the National People's Congress since being confirmed for an unprecedented third presidential term, vowed that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) will be reinforced and built into a "great wall of steel". Unsurprisingly, in late 2022 Taiwan closed a \$1.1 billion arms deal with the US, granting it access to advanced US-made missiles and air defense systems. Singapore, for its part, renewed in 2019 the Military Facilities Agreement with the US, dating back to 1990, while India has significantly deepened defense ties with the US, receiving training, trade-restricted advanced technologies, capacity-building financing, and critical intelligence from the US. Lastly, Thailand, a US treaty ally since 1954, holds Cobra Gold with American forces every year, the region's largest and longest running multinational military exercise.

All of these developments are taking place in an already tense regional environment. Chinese warplanes cross into Taiwan's air defense identification zone on an almost daily basis, Chinese vessels sail near Japan's Senkaku islands which China claims as its own, PLA combat aircraft routinely fly past US planes in the South China Sea, North Korea is conducting more missile tests than ever (including inter-continental ballistic missiles), and the Chinese coast guard continues to intimidate passing Philippine vessels within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone — the region could very well be one mistake or collision away from descending into a conflict.

Red Lines in the Indo-Pacific

Beijing has valid reasons to think that the US and its closest regional partners are pursuing a policy of "containment" towards China. In truth, the region is dotted with US allies that are all beefing up their respective capabilities and cooperation with Washington. However, China's predicament is also partly of its own doing — its aggressive rhetoric and bold display of capabilities are driving the region's major players into militarizing in an attempt to reinforce their self-defense capabilities. The US, for its part, is determined to uphold the longstanding norm of freedom of navigation in the SCS, both for its own and its allies' interest. Lastly, resolving the Taiwan question is one of the most precarious geopolitical issues between the two superpowers, with China designating Taiwan as one of its non-negotiable "red lines" and the US increasingly consolidating its own resolve to defend the self-ruling island nation. The Taiwan question will probably constitute the defining moment for the future of the region.

Taking stock of his country's journey from defeat to global power status, President Xi, in the same NPC speech above, declared: "The Chinese people have become the masters of their own destiny. [...] The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation has entered an irreversible historical process." But whether China can finally end its "century of humiliation" through a victorious reunification with Taiwan, or end up in another century of defeat, will be determined in the waters of the Indo-Pacific.

OLD HABITS DIE HARD:

THE U.S.' NEW FOREVER WAR

Written by: Reed McIntire, Edited by: Jason Kancylarz

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On January 27th, 2017, 160 civilians were killed in an airstrike on a displaced persons' settlement in Nigeria. The region was and continues to be notorious for the presence of the terrorist organization Boko Haram, which the Nigerian government has been tirelessly working to defeat. However, this attack did not come from the insurgents, but rather a Nigerian military air strike supported by the United States military. While this may have initially seemed like a tragic accident, this strike is only the tip of the iceberg for U.S. involvement in the region. To get the bigger picture, it is first necessary to consider the history of U.S. operations in Africa, beginning first and foremost with the establishment of the United States Africa Command, or AFRICOM.

AFRICOM Founded in 2007, encompasses the full range of the U.S.' counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations in Africa. These forces are intended to protect American assets, aid in peacekeeping, and help African governments with state security. However, unlike most American military operations, this campaign is largely hidden from the public eye, and even from Congress. In 2022, a group of five Democrat congressmen and women filed an official inquiry into the ongoing operations of AFRICOM after the airstrike came to light. Yet the Department of Defense was reluctant to answer, so reluctant in fact that they never responded to the inquiry. The U.S. Constitution explicitly grants

Congress the capacity to provide for common defense as well as make rules and regulations for the military, meaning this lack of oversight is a bizarre development. While this is certainly not the first time the U.S. military has carried out clandestine operations, they are normally of much smaller scale. This begs the question: what exactly is the U.S. military doing across Africa, and why?

Through its military operations, the United States government is also pushing for rapprochements with governments in the region. Notably, the Somalian president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, agreed to let U.S. forces inside his nation to aid with state security. This deal aligns with the United States government's current view of the pressing issues of the region. Instead

of dealing with hunger, poverty, and economic underdevelopment through humanitarian means, it instead views these issues as a security matter requiring a military response. The deal with the Somali government would give U.S. drones a carte blanche on the use of force in regions controlled by the local insurgent group – Al-Shabab. Therefore, it would not be hard to imagine an increased U.S. military presence giving way to greater overall American influence in Somalia and nearby regions.

It is no secret that China, the United States's most significant geopolitical competitor, is also moving in on Africa in a bid to expand its influence, mostly through economic means. Through its Belt and Road Initiative, the Chinese government and state-owned corporations are investing heavily



in African infrastructure and business. The mass movement of Chinese labor and capital also invites a Chinese military presence, to prevent any unforeseen complications. A situation reminiscent of the Cold War then emerges, with two rival powers from opposite corners of the globe vying for influence and allies in a nominally neutral region.

Furthermore, when not directly intervening in countries, the United States military still has a role through its connections with foreign militaries. As part of its partnerships, the U.S. military conducts joint exercises with soldiers from other nations. These trainings are supposedly intended strengthen counter-insurgency equipping recipient measures. militaries with necessary tools and skills to deal with rebel and terrorist groups. However, the soldiers that participate in these training sessions have a track record of becoming insurgents themselves. The 2022 coup d'état in Burkina Faso was led by one such soldier, former Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandoago Damiba.

Damiba was a career military officer in the Burkinabé military where he led counter-terrorist operations against Islamist groups in the country. During his career, he attended seven different training courses conducted by the U.S. between 2010 and 2022. Before the coup, Damiba was part of a small rebel group intent on overthrowing the democratically elected Burkinabé president at the time, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré. While this may seem like a coincidence, an anomaly in an otherwise benevolent partnership, he is not the first U.S.-trained insurgent in Africa, much less in Burkina Faso. In fact, the West African nation underwent a revolution in 2014, led by Lieutenant Colonel Yacouba Isaac Zida, another U.S.-trained soldier. Yet, in an ironic twist, Zida's new government itself was overthrown by a different American trained officer, General Gilbert Diendéré.

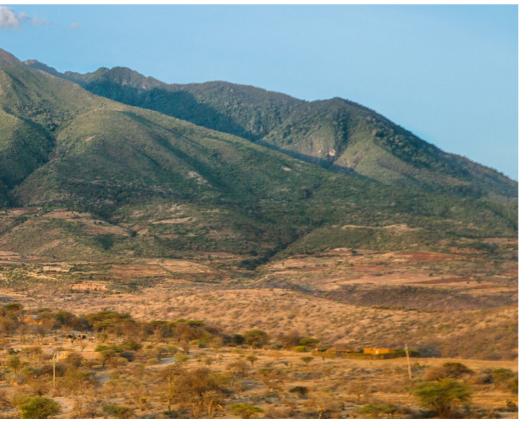
For many, this sort of interference might appear to be the result of a post-9/11 security concern, often referred to as "the War on Terror". Certainly, these actions have increasingly entered the public eye since and during the U.S. occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, yet they have a history longer than most realize. As far back as the Cold War years, the United States was already employing nefarious tactics to gain influence and intervene in the internal politics of other countries.

Africa is not the only region in the Global South where the United States

U.S. intelligence agencies and military conducted multiple operations and clandestine efforts in South America and Asia. The most infamous of these programs was Operation Condor which entailed the U.S., as well as France, aiding and abetting campaigns of state terrorism across Latin America. The stated goal of the operation was to eliminate Marxist subversives, but the methods employed resulted in mass killings, kidnappings, and assassinations. Augusto Pinochet, the infamous former dictator of Chile, came into power from a U.S.supported coup d'état. The Brazilian military dictatorship from 1964-1985 was supported by American agents. Furthermore, the United States engaged in similar actions in Indonesia whose right-wing regime at the time was undergoing a campaign of mass executions of suspected leftists which resulted in the deaths of an estimated one million people. The CIA both provided information to the Indonesian government and helped finance the death squads which carried out the campaign of state-sponsored terror. These instances of regime change suppressed civil liberties and democratic principles, all while being supported by a purported guardian of democracy worldwide. While some of these countries are fortunate enough to have left this tumultuous period behind, the U.S. continues to propagate this sort of interventionism, only in Africa now.

has interfered in. From 1975 to 1989,

Current U.S. President Ioe Biden declared that with the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan, the "forever wars" were over. It is clear now though that this is not the case. Contemporary U.S. engagements in Africa may not be termed 'war' by policymakers in Washington, but they are just as destructive to the locals nonetheless. Whether it be to curb the ambitions of China in Africa or to expand its influence, the United States will keep engaging in interventionist policies for the foreseeable future when its defined national interests require it. The U.S. might be spending billions under the guise of shared security, but it is ultimately the innocent civilians who pay the greatest price-their lives.





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On 7 December 2022, a wave of protests erupted in various regions of Peru following the impeachment and subsequent arrest of elected President Pedro Castillo by the Peruvian Congress. These events were set in motion by Castillo's attempt to dissolve the Congress and impose a new emergency government, which many have characterized as a coup attempt. However, the underlying political challenges faced in the country are far more complex and have been brewing for some time, as explored in an interview with Alcides Benavente Ponce, who is an economist and Latin America expert, and co-founder of the Latin American Academic

Cultural Centre (LAK). The protests, which have now lasted for over three months, have been marked by a staggering death toll of over 60 people. In many ways, the social unrest seen in Peru shares similarities with other social movements that have occurred in various Latin American countries in recent years and raises the question of political stability on the continent.

After the arrest of President Castillo, former Vice President Dina Boluarte assumed the presidency, with the intention of completing Castillo's term till the year 2026. The public reaction to the change was split between those who supported Boularte and Castillo's supporters, notably Indigenous and rural peoples, who came to Lima to protest the new government. These protestors demanded earlier elections, the resignation of Boularte with some even calling for the release of Castillo and the creation of a new constitution through a popular assembly. The current government has reacted to the protests with an alarming degree of violence which has resulted in the loss of over 60 lives, caused hundreds of injuries and led to the detention of several hundred individuals by law enforcement agencies. The additional lack of transparency and clear communication with the population has further aggravated the situation.

The democratic history Peru has been turbulent. Since 2016, Peru has had six different presidents, indicating an unstable and challenging political climate. In 2021, Pedro Castillo narrowly defeated right-wing politician Keiko Fujimori, who is in control of Congress, in an election criticized by some for irregularities and potential fraud. Castillo, a former schoolteacher coming from a poor and rural area, faced challenges with gaining support from the wider population and certain segments of the elite political establishment. In recent years, Congress has made it almost impossible for the executive branch, including Castillo, to achieve significant progress on economic and social welfare issues. Furthermore, impeachment due to alleged "moral incapacity," as was the case with Castillo, has been widely used by Congress to influence the executive branch. According to Benavente Ponce, the country's democracy is at risk from systemic corruption as several presidents have faced allegations and others have been prosecuted on suspicions of the crime.

Benavente Ponce also states that, contrary to the political situation, Peru's economy has thrived in the last decades thanks to strong mining and natural gas industries as well as foreign investments. It has become one of the strongest and fastest growing economies in Latin America. This "economic miracle," as it is commonly known, dates to the 1990s and former dictator Alberto Fujimori's constitution. The constitution establishes the Peruvian Central Bank as an independent institution, hindering the government from market intervention and controlling prices. However, while the GDP rises and industry booms, the gap between the rich and poor continues to grow. In Peru, the concentration of wealth is mainly seen in the coastal areas of the country surrounding its capital, leaving the population of rural areas, in which most of the inhabitants are indigenous, exposed to poverty and social exclusion. The country's wealth has not been invested in infrastructure, health, or education to benefit the



majority, and policymakers have instead focused on privatization, the promotion of the free-market economy and international trade. Important trading relationships include countries such as the USA and China, which raises the question of the economic and subsequent political interests these states might have regarding Peru's political situation, as well as the general fear of left-wing populism in the region.

However, the Peruvian situation is not an isolated incident on the continent. In the past few years, Latin America has seen waves of protests and social mobilization. While the circumstances and causes for these are unique to each nation, the continent faces several common complex issues. Benavente Ponce states that the dissatisfaction of the population has grown, as decades of neoliberal policies have left most of the population without basic public services such as free healthcare or public education. Latin American countries, especially those affected by political unrest, are among the states with the least trust in its democratic institutions. If there is a general distrust in the genuine intentions of governments and institutions, democratic processes like elections and law-making are certainly hindered.

The ongoing crisis in Peru highlights the need for longterm solutions instead of stopgap measures. Whether it be in the form of a new constitution or reforms of the existing political system, structural changes are necessary prevent similar situations from recurring in the future and undermining democracy within the nation. The fight against corruption, economic reforms to redistribute the country's wealth more equally and political reform to increase trust in government institutions are essential. Although it remains uncertain whether the ongoing protests will achieve their objectives, they have the potential to serve as a catalyst for redirecting the nation towards a path of peaceful and sustainable democratic stability and progress.

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LA LEY DE MEMORIA DEMOCRÁTICA:

EL CONFLICTO ENTRE RECORDAR Y OLVIDAR

Escribo por **Katharina Joó** Editado por: **Laura Victoria Mendoza Velandia**

"Desde el fin de las guerras civiles y conflictos mundiales que asolaron Europa en el siglo XX, y especialmente desde el Holocausto, el impulso de las políticas de memoria democrática se ha convertido en un deber moral que es indispensable fortalecer para neutralizar el olvido y evitar la repetición de los episodios más trágicos de la historia. El firme compromiso con la pedagogía del «nunca más» se ha convertido en un imperativo ético fundamental en las sociedades democráticas en todo el mundo."

- Preámbulo de la Ley 20/2022, de 19 de octubre, de Memoria Democrática

on estas palabras abre el preámbulo de la recientemente aprobada Ley 20/2022, de 19 de octubre, denominada Ley de Memoria Democrática. Sujeto polémico de muchos debates, la ley aborda la cuestión de la recuperación, la recompensación y el reconocimiento de las victimas de la Guerra Civil y la dictadura franquista opresora que la seguía. El objetivo tal y como se establece en el preámbulo, es centrarse en la "no repetición". En la sociedad moderna se puede observar cada vez más la importancia de recordar, sobre todo dado el peligro de que lo ocurrido durante gran parte del siglo 20 caiga en el olvido.

La memoria, en contrario a la historia, no recuenta el pasado, sino que conecta el pasado con el presente. Recordar supone un proceso continuo, sujeto a cambios, expuesto constantemente al diálogo con su homólogo olvidar e inevitablemente vulnerable a manipulaciones. Según el célebre historiador Pierre Nora, la memoria es a la vez diversa y específica, plural e individual. De esta manera, la política de la memoria intenta crear una memoria común influyendo la forma en que las personas recuerdan y comprenden el pasado colectivo al establecer una identidad común. Como consecuencia, puede ser adaptada fácilmente a los objetivos del imponente utilizándola. El régimen de memoria impuesto por Francisco Franco perseguía sin duda otro fin que el de la siguiente Transición, que se caracterizaba por una política de reconciliación. Afortunadamente, hoy ya no se evita la confrontación con el pasado.

Tras las heridas duraderas causadas por las atrocidades cometidas durante la Guerra Civil y la dictadura franquista, la ley de Memoria democrática marca un nuevo hito histórico. Es considerada como la primera ley que condena el golpe de estado del 18 julio de 1936 y la posterior dictadura. Ella sustituye, actualiza y amplia la Ley de Memoria Histórica de 2007 y deroga la Ley de Amnistía de 1977. Esta última impidió la investigación de los crímenes del franquismo con el fin de cerrar ese capítulo de la historia y ofrecer una base legal para entender la transición en la España del siglo XX. Si bien la ley de Memoria Histórica siguió las demandas a favor de por fin reconocer y reparar las violaciones de derechos humanos, el año pasado el gobierno cedió a los reclamos de múltiples movimientos sociales y la comunidad internacional, pidiendo su reforma.

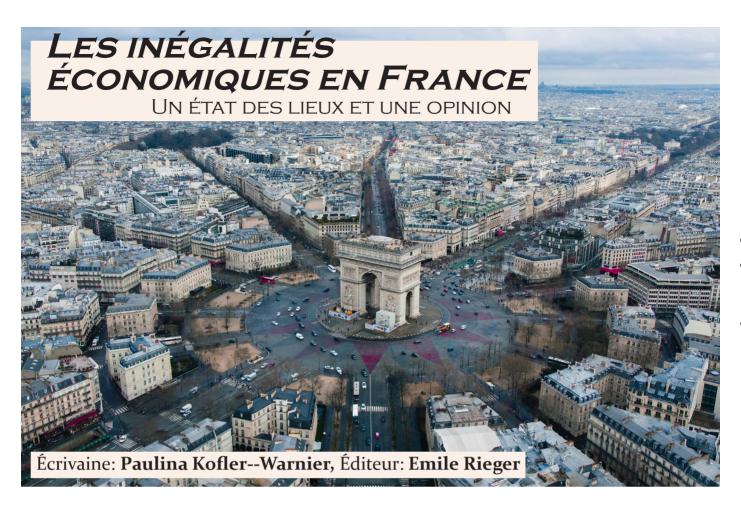
"La represión será reconocida en la enseñanza, destacando por primera vez el papel de las mujeres en el reconocimiento y la reparación."

El enfoque de la ley está en las victimas. Se ofrece una definición nueva y más amplia de las mismas y ellas son puestas en el centro de la acción del gobierno. Por ende, se crea un registro de víctimas así como un banco de ADN para facilitar la búsqueda de las aproximadamente 124 000 víctimas en paradero desconocido. Asimismo, la ley establece que todos los símbolos franquistas deben ser retirados y el Valle de los Caídos, donde se ubican los restos mortales de Franco, pasará a llamarse Valle de Cuelgamuros. La enmienda prevé acciones judiciales, que incluyen multas de hasta 150 000 euros por delitos de apología del franquismo. Pero no sólo se sancionarán delitos cometidos entre 1936 y 1978, sino que también serán condenados aquellos de los años posteriores hasta 1983. Además, la represión será reconocida en la enseñanza, destacando por primera vez el papel de las mujeres en el reconocimiento y la reparación. Sin embargo, según el punto de vista latinoamericano, la ley, en primer lugar, brilla por una disposición especial, que estipula que los descendientes de las victimas exiliados puedan adquirir la nacionalidad española - la llamada Ley de Nietos. Gran gesto en la teoría que sin embargo quizás no funcione tan bien en la práctica: las trabas burocráticas podrían perjudicar a los interesados.

Con objetivos tan nobles, es difícil imaginar que el proyecto de ley no cuente con pleno apoyo (político); ahora bien, es precisamente ese el caso. Aprobado con 128 votos a favor y 113 en contra, es obvio que gran parte no apoya la imposición de la ley. Félix Bolaños, ministro de la Presidencia, Relaciones

con las Cortes y Memoria Democrática, critica la falta de soporte de las agrupaciones políticas de derecha, que consideran la ley como innecesaria; una "mirada atrás", que no aporta nada nuevo, pero abre un capítulo histórico que ya ha sido cerrado con la imposición de la Ley de Amnistía. Además, se puede cuestionar el valor práctico de la ley. En general se quiere recompensar las víctimas de la dictadura fascista que por gran parte ya no están, sino que hay una nueva generación que siente rabia sobre lo que imagina que haya pasado. Asimismo, se critica que se pretende imponer una versión de la historia a la población y castigarla por defender otro punto de vista.

Ahora bien, en la sociedad y en la comunidad internacional, lasvoces discrepantes son minoritarias y la mayoría está de acuerdo en que el objetivo de la Ley de Memoria Democrática ni es de abrir heridas, ni de provocar disputas, sino de reconocer a las víctimas, dándoles dignidad y subrayando los valores democráticos y fundamentales. La tarea de la Ley de 20/2022 es contrarrestar el olvido, ya sea elegido conscientemente para borrar los recuerdos, como resultado de experiencias traumáticas o como proceso natural de olvidar. Con la desaparición de la memoria espontánea, la memoria de lo que ha vivido uno mismo, es imprescindible tener archivos, monumentos, costumbre y leyes - los famosos lieux de memoire de Pierre Nora – que la mantienen viva.



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Décembre 2022: Bernard Arnault, actionnaire majoritaire et PDG du groupe de luxe LVMH, devient l'homme le plus riche au monde en dépassant Elon Musk. La même année, il est estimé que 10 % de la population en France vit avec moins de 1 000 euros par mois, et 30 % avec moins de 1 500€. À Bernard Arnault s'ajoute Françoise Bettencourt Meyers, la femme la plus riche au monde, qui doit sa fortune à L'Oréal. Le taux de pauvreté a augmenté depuis le milieu des années 2000 et se trouvait à 14,6% de la population en 2019. Le coefficient de Gini est principalement utilisé par la Banque Mondiale pour calculer le niveau des inégalités de revenus dans le monde et fonctionne de la manière suivante: o correspond à une égalité parfaite et 1 au taux le plus inégalitaire. La France est passée d'un indice de 0,266 en 2007 à 0,308 en 2011, le plus haut niveau d'inégalité, et s'élevait désormais à 0,293 en 2021.

Comment la France en est-elle venue à avoir de telles richesses alors que les classes sociales populaires stagnent? La France est-elle un pays favorable aux très grosses fortunes? Fait-elle des efforts pour sa population la plus défavorisée?

Commençons par un bilan:

7,6% de la population vivait sous le seuil de pauvreté en 2020. Parmi cette population, 2,4% se trouvait dans une situation de grande pauvreté. En 2021, les cinq patrons les mieux payés en France ont touché 151,4 millions d'euros, soit 10 250 années de smic (salaire minimum interprofessionnel de croissance). La personne la mieux rémunérée est Carlos Tavares, qui touche 66,7 millions d'euros par an. Il faudrait à un employé au smic 4500 ans pour gagner autant. En 2019, les 10 % les plus riches percevaient en moyenne 60 170 euros par an chacun, contre 8710 pour les 10 % les plus démunis. Plus de 51 000 euros les séparent, tout cela après impôts et prestations sociales. En 1996, l'écart était de 39 427 euros. Lorsqu' on observe les inégalités de revenus absolues, celles-ci ont purement et simplement augmenté. Les français riches en patrimoine présentent un bilan similaire: à eux seuls, les 10% les plus fortunés possèdent 46,4% de l'ensemble du patrimoine des ménages.

La pauvreté chez les jeunes a quant à elle augmenté de 50% depuis 2002. En 2014, le taux de pauvreté monétaire chez les jeunes âgés de 18 à 24 ans était de 26%. Ce taux fait des jeunes la tranche la plus touchée par la pauvreté monétaire. Malgré un système de sécurité sociale et maladie considéré comme un des meilleurs du monde, tous les Français n'ont pas accès aux mêmes soins. L'assurance maladie ne rembourse pas tous les soins et beaucoup d'interventions médicales nécessitent un paiement remboursé par la suite. Ainsi, 25% de la population déclare avoir renoncé à des soins pour des raisons financières.

Dans l'ensemble, le niveau de vie a augmenté pour tout le monde, mais la tendance à la hausse des revenus a



été beaucoup plus lente pour les classes sociales les plus basses et les 0,1 % les plus riches se sont enrichis de manière exponentielle.

Un historique:

Une des premières victoires pour l'égalité économique des Français date de 1936 lorsque le parti socialiste sous Léon Blum forme un gouvernement avec le parti communiste et le parti radical (au centre de l'échiquier politique en 1936). Un grève générale paralyse l'industrie et les Accords de Matignon garantissent les congés payés, la semaine de 40h, les contrats collectifs et la liberté syndicale. Des aspects bien normaux de nos jours mais la victoire vient du fait que toutes les principales réformes réclamées par le monde ouvrier ont été acceptées.

Passons à un passé plus récent, 2007. Qu'a fait Nicolas Sarkozy pour limiter les inégalités économiques? À première vue, il aurait augmenté les impôts des plus riches: les hautes tranches payent plus, une nouvelle taxe sur les très hauts revenus est instaurée. Mais la forte baisse de l'impôt sur la fortune et des droits de donation et succession font en sorte que les 1% les plus riches de France en ont finalement profité. François Hollande s'est donné plus

de mal, mais ses réformes n'ont eu

qu'un effet restreint. Les réformes des

prestations et prélèvements de 2015 ont eu pour effet une légère redistribution des 30% les plus aisés vers le reste de la population. Le changement des allocations familiales en fonction des revenus a eu pour conséquence une baisse des prestations parmi les 20% les plus riches.

Hollande dit de son successeur qu'il " n'est pas le président des riches, il est le président des très riches". Les Français qui ont voté pour Emmanuel Macron avaient des attentes: un jeune candidat centriste, dynamique, environnemental pourrait mener la France dans une meilleure direction. Les mesures sociales et fiscales mises en place par l'État sous Macron ont rapporté presque 500 € en moyenne par an aux 30% les plus riches contre 90 € aux 50% les plus pauvres. Les mesures visant les plus aisés ont été détendues, alors qu'elles représentaient 90% du budget des mesures de soutien, soit un montant de 11,1 milliards d'euros. À cela s'ajoute un refus total d'augmenter le smic en pleine inflation et un recours régulier à la théorie du ruissellement, pourtant contestée par beaucoup d'économistes justement parce qu'elle augmente les inégalités. Macron a également supprimé l'impôt sur la fortune, ce qui a allégé les actionnaires, et l'a remplacé

par un impôt sur le patrimoine immobilier, qui touche davantage la classe moyenne. Seulement 6,5% des gains liés aux mesures budgétaires du gouvernement sous Macron vont aux plus pauvres, tandis que les plus aisés en profitent de 22,1%. Le quinquennat d'Emmanuel Macron a donc profité 3,4 fois plus aux plus riches qu'aux plus précaires. La politique sociale de Macron témoigne du mépris et de l'arrogance qui lui sont reprochés.

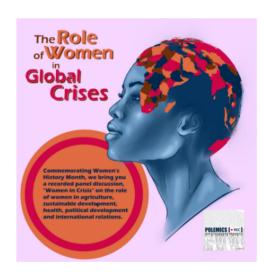
Un bilan honteux pour un pays fier Bien sûr, la France est l'un des pays les plus riches au monde et même les plus démunis ont des avantages par rapport à la pauvreté mondiale. Et si l'on compare avec un pays sous un règne totalitaire, les outils à la disposition des Français pour assurer leur égalité, que ce soit le vote, les syndicats ou la révolte, sont inestimables. Sans la qualité de notre modèle social, des milliers de familles vivraient dans des conditions bien pires. Cela n'empêche pas que la misère existe toujours bel et bien et que les inégalités de revenus continuent à s'accentuer malgré les efforts plus ou moins persistants du gouvernement.





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