

ABOUT

US AND THIS BOOK

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Published 2016

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Published 2016 by The Curriculum Department,
Thabyay Education Foundation, Yangon
www.thabyay.org

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Political Thoughts and Practices

A reader in critical thinking





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About this Reader...

INTRODUCTION

Political Thoughts and Practices is essentially a critical thinking course with an emphasis on writing. The short essays and articles in this reader have been compiled specifically for the purpose of teaching critical reading and writing at the higher education level.

They are carefully chosen to stretch the students intellectually and also question the conventional understanding of some of the most critical social issues of our time. Through these theoretical readings, students will be encouraged to engage with a variety of texts, while learning how to understand a writer's argument and actively critique and respond to the ideas of others.

As a critical thinking course, students will learn that writing in itself is a kind of inquiry, a way to think and learn. It is not simply a means of recording what one already knows. Most importantly, the course aims to create the conditions that allow students to gain confidence as they discover what they think through writing, helping them see that this process can be used in any subject, any discipline, and almost any situation that demands reason and structured thinking.

OBJECTIVES

In brief, each session is built to support the following list of objectives. Upon completion of the Reader, each student will be able to:

- Predict the consequences of specific political/social trends or issues
- Discuss and apply various political theories in the context of Myanmar
- Justify his/her stance on a particular theory or concept
- Analyze and evaluate the strength of the authors' claims or arguments
- Reflect on and reconsider his/her own views or biases

HOW TO USE IT

The Reader is written in upper-intermediate English, designed to span an academic term of twelve weeks and divided into separate sessions. Each session focuses on one key reading or excerpt, with guiding questions and vocabulary, and is expected to take a week to complete. Sessions have been arranged in order of increasing difficulty - both in terms of each reading's level of English as well as abstract thought. Several sessions have also been grouped together where the readings share similar themes, such as human rights or democratic transition.

While sufficient time should be allowed for discussion, questions, and writing, each teacher may use the Reader differently to adapt to the needs of his/her classroom. Some sessions may take more or less time depending on the students' level as well as the teacher's use of the Reader. The Reader may be used as a primary resource, around which to structure a course, or as a supplementary resource, when additional readings/practice is sought.

INCLUDED COMPONENTS

The structure of the Reader is made to support the students' understanding of key readings as well as provide the teacher with thought-provoking questions to engage the classroom. Included components are as follows:

Sessions:

- 1) The core **Reading** for the session as well as an **About the Author** blurb giving a brief look into the life and motives of the person behind the writing.
- 2) A list of **Key Words** with definitions. The words have been chosen in terms of how essential they are to the reading, and not just on the basis of difficulty.
- 3) A **Critical Thinking Component** of five critical thinking questions related to the reading.
- 4) Two optional **Essay Prompts** to promote independent thought/research and a more in-depth look into each reading's concepts.

Translations: A list of all the Key Words with Myanmar translations.

References: The original sources of all readings and where to access the full, unabridged versions of the readings.

NOTES TO THE TEACHER

As previously stated, the Reader can be adapted according to the specific needs/interests of each classroom and the order of readings and questions should serve as guides. Although the Reader is designed for a twelve-week term, there are fifteen sessions available so that the teacher can select which readings are most relevant to his/her students. To fit the term, several readings have been abridged (as is noted throughout the Reader). However, teachers are encouraged to access the full versions via the source provided, if time allows.

The teacher should also help to explain the critical thinking component questions as a class, as several of the questions test new skills in evaluation, analysis, etc. The boxes provided beneath each question can be used for short-answer responses or note-taking, depending on the teacher's preferences.

Lastly, it should be noted that the objectives of the Reader should be linked in with each session and discussed with the students as much as possible. This will help to reinforce the aims of the Reader and remind students of the skills they are gaining in the process.

CREDITS

The concept for the Reader was drawn up and implemented by Saw Kapi, the Executive Director of Thabyay Education Foundation. Saw Kapi worked for over 12 years in the American higher education system as University Evaluator at the University of San Francisco, Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions at the University of Maryland, College Park, and Director of Admissions and Records at California State University, Bakersfield. Since returning to Myanmar, he has actively advocated for national education reform, particularly through the Salween Institute for Public Policy. The excerpts in this book have all been selected by Saw Kapi to encourage critical thinking in his own classroom as well as exposure to some of today's most pressing political issues. He holds a B.A. in International Relations from San Francisco State University and M.A. in Development Economics from Williams College.

In Defense of a Liberal Education

Fareed Zakaria

This book excerpt from Fareed Zakaria appeared on ABC NEWS online on March 27, 2015. The excerpt is originally from Zakaria's book, *In Defense of a Liberal Education*, published by W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

If you want to live a good life these days, you know what you're supposed to do. Get into college but then drop out. Spend your days learning computer science and your nights coding. Start a technology company and take it public. That's the new American dream. If you're not quite that adventurous, you could major in electrical engineering.

What you are not supposed to do is study the liberal arts. Around the world, the idea of a broad-based "liberal" education is closely tied to the United States and its great universities and colleges. But in America itself, a liberal education is out of favor. In an age defined by technology and globalization, everyone is talking about skills-based learning. Politicians, businesspeople, and even many educators see it as the only way for the nation to stay competitive. They urge students to stop dreaming and start thinking practically about the skills they will need in the workplace. An open-ended exploration of knowledge is seen as a road to nowhere.

A classic liberal education has few defenders. Conservatives fume that it is too, well, liberal (though the term has no partisan meaning). Liberals worry it is too elitist. Students wonder what they would do with a degree in psychology. And parents fear that it will cost them their life savings.

This growing unease is apparent in the numbers. As college enrollment has grown in recent decades, the percentage of students majoring in subjects like English and philosophy has declined sharply. In 1971, for example, 7.6 percent of all bachelor's degrees were awarded in English language and literature. By 2012, that number had fallen to 3.0 percent. During the same period, the percentage of business majors in the undergraduate population rose from 13.7 to 20.5.

Some believe this pattern makes sense—that new entrants into higher education might simply prefer job training to the liberal arts. Perhaps. But in earlier periods of educational expansion, this was not the case. In the 1950s and 1960s, for instance, students saw college as more than a glorified trade school. Newcomers, often from lower-middle-class backgrounds and immigrant families with little education, enthusiastically embraced the liberal arts. They saw it as a gateway to a career, and also as a way to assimilate into American culture. "I have to speak absolutely perfect English," says Philip Roth's character Alex Portnoy, the son of immigrants and hero of the novel *Portnoy's Complaint*. Majors like English and history grew in popularity precisely during the decades of mass growth in American higher education.

The great danger facing American higher education is not that too many students are studying the liberal arts. Here are the data. In the 2011–12 academic year, 52 percent of American undergraduates were enrolled in two-year or less-than-two-year colleges, and 48 percent were enrolled in four-year institutions. At two-year colleges, the most popular area of study was health professions and related sciences (23.3 percent). An additional 11.7 percent of students studied business, management, and marketing. At four-year colleges, the pattern was the same. Business led the list of majors, accounting for 18.9 percent of students, and health was second, accounting for 13.4 percent. Another estimate found that only a third of all bachelor's degree recipients study fields that could be classified as the liberal arts. And only about 1.8 percent of all undergraduates attend classic liberal arts colleges like Amherst, Swarthmore, and Pomona. As you can see, we do not have an oversupply of students studying history, literature, philosophy, or physics and math for that matter. A majority is specializing in fields because they see them as directly related to the job market. It's true that more Americans need technical training, and all Americans need greater scientific literacy. But the drumbeat of talk about skills and jobs has not lured people into engineering and biology—not

everyone has the aptitude for science—so much as it has made them nervously forsake the humanities and take courses in business and communications. Many of these students might well have been better off taking a richer, deeper set of courses in subjects they found fascinating—and supplementing it, as we all should, with some basic knowledge of computers and math. In any event, what is clear is that the gap in technical training is not being caused by the small percentage of students who choose four-year degrees in the liberal arts. Whatever the facts, the assaults continue and have moved from the realm of rhetoric to action. The governors of Texas, Florida, North Carolina, and Wisconsin have announced that they do not intend to keep subsidizing the liberal arts at state-funded universities. “Is it a vital interest of the state to have more anthropologists?” Florida’s Rick Scott asked. “I don’t think so.” Wisconsin is planning to cut money from subjects that don’t train students for a specific job right out of college. “How many PhDs in philosophy do I need to subsidize?” the radio show host William Bennett asked North Carolina’s Patrick McCrory, a sentiment with which McCrory enthusiastically agreed. (Ironically, Bennett himself has a PhD in philosophy, which appears to have trained him well for his multiple careers in government, media, nonprofits, and the private sector.) [...]

The attacks have an effect. There is today a loss of coherence and purpose surrounding the idea of a liberal education. Its proponents are defensive about its virtues, while its opponents are convinced that it is at best an expensive luxury, at worst actively counterproductive. Does it really make sense to study English in the age of apps?

In a sense, the question is un-American. For much of its history, America was distinctive in providing an education to all that was not skills based. In their comprehensive study of education, the Harvard economists Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz note that, historically, Britain, France, and Germany tested children at a young age, educated only a few, and put them through a narrow program designed specifically to impart a set of skills thought to be key to their professions. “The American system,” they write, “can be characterized as open, forgiving, lacking universal standards, and having an academic yet practical curriculum.” America did not embrace the European model of specific training and apprenticeships

because Americans moved constantly, to new cities, counties, and territories in search of new opportunities. They were not rooted in geographic locations with long-established trades and guilds that offered the only path forward. They were also part of an economy that was new and dynamic, so that technology kept changing the nature of work and with it the requirements for jobs. Few wanted to lock themselves into a single industry for life. Finally, Goldin and Katz argue, while a general education was more expensive than specialized training, the cost for the former was not paid by students or their parents. The United States was the first country to publicly fund mass, general education, first at the secondary-school level and then in college. Even now, higher education in America is a much broader and richer universe than anywhere else. Today a high school student can go to one of fourteen hundred institutions in the United States that offer a traditional bachelor’s degree, and another fifteen hundred with a more limited course of study. Goldin and Katz point out that on a per capita basis, Britain has only half as many undergraduate institutions and Germany just one-third. Those who seek to reorient U.S. higher education into something more focused and technical should keep in mind that they would be abandoning what has been historically distinctive, even unique, in the American approach to higher education.

And yet, I get it. I understand America’s current obsession. I grew up in India in the 1960s and 1970s, when a skills-based education was seen as the only path to a good career. Indians in those days had an almost mystical faith in the power of technology. It had been embedded in the country’s DNA since it gained independence in 1947. Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first prime minister, was fervent in his faith in big engineering projects. He believed that India could move out of its economic backwardness only by embracing technology, and he did everything he could during his fourteen years in office to leave that stamp on the nation. A Fabian socialist, Nehru had watched with admiration as the Soviet Union jump-started its economy in just a few decades by following such a path. (Lenin once famously remarked, “Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country.”) Nehru described India’s new hydroelectric dams as “temples of the new age.”

I attended a private day school in Bombay (now

Mumbai), the Cathedral and John Connon School. When founded by British missionaries in the Victorian era, the school had been imbued with a broad, humanistic approach to education. It still had some of that outlook when I was there, but the country's mood was feverishly practical. The 1970s was a tough decade everywhere economically, but especially in India. And though it was a private school, the tuition was low, and Cathedral catered to a broad cross section of the middle class. As a result, all my peers and their parents were anxious about job prospects. The assumption made by almost everyone at school was that engineering and medicine were the two best careers. The real question was, which one would you pursue?

At age sixteen, we had to choose one of three academic streams: science, commerce, or the humanities. We all took a set of board exams that year—a remnant of the British educational model—that helped determine our trajectory. In those days, the choices were obvious. The smart kids would go into science, the rich kids would do commerce, and the girls would take the humanities. (Obviously I'm exaggerating, but not by that much.) Without giving the topic much thought, I streamed into the sciences.

At the end of twelfth grade, we took another set of exams. These were the big ones. They determined our educational future, as we were reminded again and again. Grades in school, class participation, extracurricular projects, and teachers' recommendations—all were deemed irrelevant compared to the exam scores. Almost all colleges admitted students based solely on these numbers. In fact, engineering colleges asked for scores in only three subjects: physics, chemistry, and mathematics. Similarly, medical schools would ask for results in just physics, chemistry, and biology. No one cared what you got in English literature. The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)—the most prestigious engineering colleges in the country—narrowed the admissions criteria even further. They administered their own entrance test, choosing applicants entirely on the basis of its results.

The increased emphasis on technology and practicality in the 1970s was in part due to domestic factors: inflation had soared, the economy had slumped, and the private sector was crippled by

nationalizations and regulations. Another big shift, however, took place far from India's borders. Until the 1970s, the top British universities offered scholarships to bright Indian students—a legacy of the raj. But as Britain went through its own hellish economic times that decade—placed under formal receivership in 1979 by the International Monetary Fund—money for foreign scholarships dried up. In an earlier era, some of the brightest graduates from India might have gone on to Oxford, Cambridge, and the University of London. Without outside money to pay for that education, they stayed home.

But culture follows power. As Britain's economic decline made its universities less attractive, colleges in the United States were rising in wealth and ambition. At my school, people started to notice that American universities had begun offering generous scholarships to foreign students. And we soon began to hear from early trailblazers about the distinctly American approach to learning. A friend from my neighborhood who had gone to Cornell came back in the summers bursting with enthusiasm about his time there. He told us of the incredible variety of courses that students could take no matter what their major. He also told tales of the richness of college life. I remember listening to him describe a film society at Cornell that held screenings and discussions of classics by Ingmar Bergman and Federico Fellini. I had never heard of Bergman or Fellini, but I was amazed that watching movies was considered an integral part of higher education. Could college really be that much fun?

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My parents did not push me to specialize. My father had been deeply interested in history and politics ever since he was a young boy. He had been orphaned at a young age but managed to get financial assistance that put him through high school and college. In 1944, he received a scholarship to attend the University of London. He arrived during the worst of the blitzkrieg, with German V-2 rockets raining down on the city.

On the long boat ride to England, the crew told him he was crazy. One member even asked, “Haven’t you read the newspapers? People are leaving London by the thousands right now. Why would you go there?” But my father was determined to get an education. History was his passion, and he worked toward a PhD in that subject. But he needed a clearer path to a profession. So, in addition, he obtained a law degree that would allow him to become a barrister upon his return to Bombay.

Though my mother was raised in better circumstances, she also faced a setback at a young age—her father died when she was eight. She briefly attended a college unusual for India at the time—a liberal arts school in the northern part of the country called the Isabella Thoburn College, founded in 1870 by an American Methodist missionary of that name. Though her education was cut short when she returned home to look after her widowed mother, my mother never forgot the place. She often fondly reminisced about its broad and engaging curriculum.

My parents’ careers were varied and diverse. My father started out as a lawyer before moving into politics and later founding a variety of colleges. He also created a small manufacturing company (to pay the bills) and always wrote books and essays. My mother began as a social worker and then became a journalist, working for newspapers and magazines. (She resigned from her last position in journalism last year, 2014, at the age of seventy-eight.) Neither of them insisted on early specialization. In retrospect, my parents must have worried about our future prospects—everyone else was worried. But to our good fortune, they did not project that particular anxiety on us. My brother, Arshad, took the first big step. He was two years older than I and fantastically accomplished academically. (He was also a very good athlete, which made following in his footsteps challenging.) He had the kind of scores on his board exams that would have easily placed him in the top engineering programs in the country. Or he could have taken the IIT exam, which he certainly would have aced. In fact, he decided not to do any of that and instead applied to American universities. A couple of his friends considered doing the same, but no one quite knew how the process worked. We learned, for example, that applicants had to take something called the Scholastic Aptitude Test, but we didn’t know much

about it. (Remember, this is 1980 in India. There was no Google. In fact, there was no color television.) We found a pamphlet about the test at the United States Information Service, the cultural branch of the U.S. embassy. It said that because the SAT was an aptitude test, there was no need to study for it. So, my brother didn’t. On the day the test was scheduled, he walked into the makeshift exam center in Bombay, an almost empty room in one of the local colleges, and took the test.

It’s difficult to convince people today how novel and risky an idea it was at the time to apply to schools in the United States. The system was still foreign and distant. People didn’t really know what it meant to get into a good American university or how that would translate into a career in India. The Harvard alumni in Bombay in the 1970s were by no means a “Who’s Who” of the influential and wealthy. Rather, they were an eclectic mix of people who either had spent time abroad (because their parents had foreign postings) or had some connection to America. A few friends of ours had ventured to the United States already, but because they hadn’t yet graduated or looked for jobs, their experiences were of little guidance.

My brother had no idea if the admissions departments at American colleges would understand the Indian system or know how to interpret his report cards and recommendations. He also had no real Plan B. If he didn’t take the slot offered by engineering schools, he wouldn’t be able to get back in line the next year. In fact, things were so unclear to us that we didn’t even realize American colleges required applications a full year in advance. As a result, he involuntarily took a gap year between school and college, waiting around to find out whether he got in anywhere.

As it happened, Arshad got in everywhere. He picked the top of the heap—accepting a scholarship offer from Harvard. While we were all thrilled and impressed, many friends remained apprehensive when told the news. It sounded prestigious to say you were going to attend Harvard, but would the education actually translate into a career?

My mother traveled to the United States to drop my brother off in the fall of 1982, an uneasy time in American history. The mood was still more 1970s malaise than 1980s boom. The country was in the midst of the worst recession since the Great

Depression. Vietnam and Watergate had shattered the nation's confidence. The Soviet Union was seen as ascendant in our minds. Riots, protests, and urban violence had turned American cities into places of genuine danger. Our images of New York came from Charles Bronson movies and news reports of crack and crime.

All of this was especially alarming to Indians. The country's traditional society had interpreted the 1960s and 1970s as a period of decay in American culture, as young people became morally lax, self-indulgent, permissive, and, perhaps most worrisome, rebellious. The idea that American youth had become disrespectful toward their elders was utterly unnerving to Indian parents. Most believed that any child who traveled to the United States would quickly cast aside family, faith, and tradition for sex, drugs, and rock and roll. If you sent your kids to America, you had to brace yourselves for the prospect that you might "lose" them.

In his first few weeks abroad, Arshad was, probably like all newcomers to Harvard, a bit nervous. My mother, on the other hand, returned from her trip clear of any anxiety. She was enchanted with the United States, its college campuses, and the undergraduate experience. She turned her observations into an article for the Times of India titled "The Other America." In it, she described how concerned she had been before the trip about permissiveness, drugs, and rebellion at American colleges. She then went on to explain how impressed she was after actually spending time on a campus to find that the place focused on education, hard work, and extracurricular activities. The students she met were bright, motivated, and, to her surprise, quite respectful. She met parents who were tearfully bidding their children good-bye, talking about their next visit, or planning a Thanksgiving reunion. "I feel I am in India," she wrote. "Could this be the heartless America where family ties have lost their hold?"

Indians had it all wrong about the United States, my mother continued. She tried to explain why they read so much bad news about the country. "America is an open society as no other. So they expose their 'failings' too as no other," she wrote. "[Americans] cheerfully join in the talk of their own decline. But the decline is relative to America's own previous strength.

It remains the world's largest economy; it still disposes of the greatest military might the world has known; refugees from terror still continue to seek shelter in this land of immigrants. It spends millions of dollars in the hope that someone, somewhere may make a valuable contribution to knowledge. America remains the yardstick by which we judge America." As you can see, she was hooked.

In those years, it was fashionable in elite Indian circles to denounce the United States for its imperialism and hegemony. During the Cold War, the Indian government routinely sided with the Soviet Union. Indira Gandhi, the populist prime minister, would often blame India's troubles on the "foreign hand," a reference to the CIA. But my mother has always been stubbornly pro-American. When my father was alive, he would sometimes criticize America for its crimes and blunders, partly to needle my brother and me and partly because, as one who had struggled for India's independence, he had absorbed the worldview of his closest allies, who were all on the left. Yet my mother remained unmoved, completely convinced that the United States was a land of amazing vitality and virtue. (I suspect it's what has helped her accept the fact that her sons chose the country as their home.)

Along with photographs and information brochures from her trip, my mother also brought back Harvard's course book. For me, it was an astonishing document. Instead of a thin pamphlet containing a dry list of subjects, as one would find at Indian universities, it was a bulging volume overflowing with ideas. It listed hundreds of classes in all kinds of fields. And the course descriptions were written like advertisements—as if the teachers wanted you to join them on an intellectual adventure. I read through the book, amazed that students didn't have to choose a major in advance and that they could take poetry and physics and history and economics. From eight thousand miles away, with little knowledge and no experience, I was falling in love with the idea of a liberal education.



About the Author

Fareed Zakaria is an Indian-born American author and journalist, well known for his work covering current affairs and pressing foreign policy issues. His writings cover topics ranging from globalization to America's role in the world and he has interviewed international leaders such as the Dalai Lama, Barack Obama, and Narendra Modi. He currently works as host of CNN's Fareed Zakaria GPS and writes for the Washington Post and the Atlantic.



Key Words

Curriculum:

(n) the content that makes up the learning plan in a school or specific course/program

Distinctive:

(adj) standing out from others as different, because of specific qualities or characteristics

Diverse:

(adj) of different kinds; very different from each other

Enrollment:

(n) the process of officially registering as a member of an institution or program (i.e. university major)

Higher education:

education beyond high school, such as colleges/universities or professional schools

Liberal arts:

the courses taught in a university that are designed to give students general knowledge on subjects such as literature, history, art, social sciences/humanities (unlike the technical subjects such as science/technology)

Profession:

(n) a paid job that requires training and formal qualifications or education

Skill:

(n) the ability to do something well, because of previous training and practice

Specialization:

(n) the practice of focusing (either in work or study) on one particular subject

Trade school:

an educational institution designed to provide students with vocational training and technical skills in order to do the tasks of a particular job (unlike academic training)

Critical Thinking Component

Session One

#1

What are the perceived pros and cons of a “liberal” education?

#2

Many people are favoring skills-based courses that will lead to a job. Do you believe that liberal arts courses such as history, literature or philosophy can teach us essential work skills?

#3

How might your own life and view of the world be different now, if you had never had access to liberal arts courses?

#4

What might be the results of more liberal arts courses in Myanmar's universities?

#5

Zakaria highlights the common belief that, "An open-ended exploration of knowledge is seen as a road to nowhere." What does this tell us about our society's priorities and values?

Essay Prompts

Option A:

In your opinion, what role should higher education play in one's life and career? Should it promote education as a means in itself or education to attain a job?

Option B:

What advice would you give a friend entering university who needs to choose between a technical field and the liberal arts. Explain your reasoning.

Young People and Education

Amartya Sen

This excerpt makes up the seventh section of “Civil Paths to Peace,” a Report of the Commonwealth Commission on Respect and Understanding, in Peace and Democratic Society (Ed. Amartya Sen, 2011). The report addresses the root causes of conflict and extremism in commonwealth countries.

Young people and the respect and understanding agenda

179 More than 60 per cent of the Commonwealth’s population are aged under 30 years; the proportion is closer to three-quarters in some member countries. Young people are the inheritors of a changing world – its economic distributions, social positions, cultural identities and historical narratives. They need not be passive recipients of these things; with appropriate support and political will young people can be an active, positive force for development, locally, nationally and internationally.

180 But for this to happen, they need to be seen and treated as potential assets and engaged in processes of dialogue and decision-making. They need to be included in forums where it is possible to listen and participate, but also to put forward their own point of view and have their own narratives heard, discussed and debated. There also needs to be a deeper understanding of the inter-generational transmission of narratives.

181 In this regard, we have to recognize the critical importance of school principals and administrators – and eventually teachers – as leaders who can potentially change social reality by the way in which they manage their schools. Schools, after all, often have diverse workforces themselves (that is, teachers) and the principal can set the tone for the entire school and thereby influence the way in which the children grow up thinking about issues such as community, religion and violence.

182 Most young people enter workforces that have either a limited demand for their skills or where there are very few opportunities for decent work at all. Between 2000 and 2015 an estimated 1 billion young men and women will enter the labour market and try to find work – but there will not be 1 billion jobs waiting for them. In terms of both the uncertainty of employment and the fact that as young people they are simply not accorded respect in many societies, they are in some senses a marginalized group. But they are also unlikely to self-identity as a group, still less to organize as a social force.

183 The Commission notes that it is essential to think about respect and understanding in an inter-generational context, and to be acutely aware of the impact of societal norms, particularly patriarchy and deference, on the self-confidence and development of young people. In many situations, authority structures need to be reconstructed so they do not silence young people, and particularly young women and other groups whose voice is normally stilled through a reference to ‘tradition’ or ‘custom’.

184 When young people are disenfranchised or humiliated or made to feel that they have little say and no future, they may become drawn into movements or ideologies that appear to guarantee them a place in the world and give them a solid identity. In some instances, inspiring or forceful leaders may draw them into conflicts as combatants, literally as foot soldiers. World-wide an estimated 300,000 people under the age of 18 are now, or have recently been, involved in armed conflict, and another 500,000 have been recruited into military or paramilitary forces.

185 But young people need not be only the victims or perpetrators of violence; they also have an important role as peace-makers. They are not so much the problem as at the heart of the solution.

186 Some of the most innovative programmes for involving young people in post-conflict reconstruction are provided by Commonwealth programmes themselves – an example is the project that explicitly

seems to build respect and understanding among and between former child soldiers, young people and adults in the former conflict zone of Northern Uganda.

187 More generally, Commonwealth programmes provide examples of how young people's presence and skills can be valued, appreciated and used in activities normally undertaken only by adults. The Commonwealth Youth Programme engages young people in its own governance structures whilst youth representatives are included as members of election observation missions.

188 Other programmes focus on working alongside stigmatized groups. Groups in society with illnesses or diseases that are seen as a social taboo are often at the harsh end of casual, and sometimes even official, vilification and hatred. Their treatment amounts to an especially offensive form of disrespect, particularly if their original ailment or suffering is the product of poverty, hardship and ignorance.

Youth Ambassadors for Positive Living

189 Respect and understanding for people living with AIDS is promoted through a 'Youth Ambassadors for Positive Living' programme, operating in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. The Youth Ambassadors are usually HIV-positive volunteers who engage in peer education and campaign for appropriate policy responses among government and civil society. Their message is one of de-stigmatization.

190 One of the future activities planned is to develop learning materials for political literacy. The aim would be to enhance the capacity of organized youth groups and others to become effective advocates for democracy and good governance through their participation in observer missions, peace-building initiatives and other governance processes. This is very much in the mould of building resilience to extremism.

191 These are just a few of many examples. The challenge is to broaden and extend the effective participation of young women and men in the development process in their own countries and regions.

Empowerment can be created through youth parliaments

192 In the Pan-Commonwealth Youth Caucus, as well as in the overall youth sector in the Pacific Islands region, there is much discussion surrounding the need for countries to host annual or bi-annual Youth Parliaments to promote good governance through positive practice. Youth Parliaments, of which there are several models throughout the world, are exercises in which young people elect their own leaders and participate in a two-week parliamentary debate on issues of their choosing. The resolutions are then passed on to relevant government departments, the national legislative assembly and donors for consideration and further action.

193 The Tonga Youth Parliament is aiming to promote good governance through a different method in the near future. Rather than only electing young leaders, the Tonga National Youth Congress, with assistance from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), will train these leaders to behave with a level of respect appropriate to members of a national legislative assembly. When the young people act in a more respectful way, the expectation is that they will influence not only other young leaders but the national legislative assembly as well. The entire Youth Parliament is televised live and is also aired on the radio throughout all of the islands.

Sport can also promote empowerment and mutual understanding

194 The Commonwealth Games, perhaps one of the most visible and well-known aspects of the Commonwealth, are another good example of how the Commonwealth already promotes respect and understanding. Also known as the 'friendly games', the Games promote the pursuit of health and provide an opportunity for young people to strive for excellence, more so since the inauguration of the four-yearly Commonwealth Youth Games in 2000.

195 Sport is a vocation open to all people, irrespective of disability, ethnicity or economic position. Rigorous training and a commitment to

winning medals for one's nation can help to overcome any perceived divides within that nation. The impact of the Games goes beyond the quadrennial event. In its commitment to the three core values of humanity, equality and destiny, the Commonwealth Games Federation also seeks to improve the lives and societies of Commonwealth people by assisting education through sport development and physical recreation.

Education is inevitably central to the cause of respect and understanding

196 In the longer run, the biggest gains in shaping shared narratives across potential divides will most likely come from investment in, and rethinking of, education. This was one of the most frequently mentioned channels through which respect and understanding could be engendered that was identified by the Commission and by the high-level submissions made to the work of the Commission.

197 Thinking strategically about education, and especially about how to deliver education as a suitable intervention means several different things. It is helpful to break these down:

- Educational participation itself can be an important symptom of embedded inequality and lack of opportunity. The distribution of education shapes tendencies towards inclusion or exclusion and, thus, general patterns that are evident in a particular society. The effects on respect and understanding can be substantial, although they may be indirect in their nature. Policy-makers are faced with the job of developing mechanisms to widen and deepen educational participation as a means of (a) overcoming societal tendencies to exclusion and/or (b) compensating for the injustice and/or barriers experienced by a particular group.
- Extending the age 'reach' of the compulsory schooling system upwards and downwards – and implementing this effectively – is extremely important. So also is extending participation in basic education in rural communities. The use of pioneering programmes to preserve household income generated through informal child working,

whilst delivering a core education programme, is another important way of extending educational participation. The 'who' aspects of education are therefore central.

- Educational content is linked with the promotion of respect and understanding – or the opposite. Thus the educational curriculum is central in embodying and communicating values and messages about the relationships and understandings between and across existing identity groups. Teaching children in the compulsory schooling system about the cultural heritage of a range of ethnic and religious communities is a typical intervention based on multicultural models of stimulating appetite for knowledge. As well as giving an understanding of comparative religion and ethnic and cultural groups, it is important to teach children that there are fundamental human values that transcend religion, cultural and ethnic boundaries – the duty to treat others with respect and dignity, and to do unto others as you wish to be treated yourself.

198 Knowledge of world history is particularly critical in helping to forge cosmopolitan identities. Equally, teaching children about the value and purpose of social cohesion based on mutual equality is another, rather more ambitious intervention. Finally, teaching can develop a range of ways to transfer knowledge in plural societies. Softer aspects of education are also relevant in relation to smoothing the adaptation of immigrants to their host or new home societies. The 'what' aspects of education are at the heart of all of these interventions.

- Educational contributions to the larger task of managing difference are important. The extent to which education plays a positive role in engendering respect for difference depends on how it is framed and used in a social context. Canadian bi-lingualism policies, for example, seek to go beyond expanding language usage and also offer an alternative way to think about education for all communities, irrespective of their particular identities or lines of heritage. Education in this sense is very much about preparing young – or younger – minds to live in and cope effectively with a world of various pluralisms.

199 Education is also an instrument for

understanding both difference and the potential for fault-lines to descend into conflict and violence. At its most effective, education can be used to reflect on and gain a better understanding of conflict itself, insofar as knowledge can be conveyed in a way that shows that every major conflict involves an interaction between economic, political, historical and cultural factors and that in many cases, group mobilization occurs along lines of ethnic, religious or ideological identity, which destroys ties of respect and understanding and replaces them with fear and mistrust. The ‘how’ aspects of education’s role in shaping much larger social cohesion lie at the heart of this kind of educational approach and one interesting example, in a context where the majority of children are still educated in faith-related schools, is the Northern Ireland Education for Mutual Understanding initiative, which has been incorporated as a curriculum requirement.

200 The question of the renewal of the Commonwealth itself cannot be lightly dismissed in the context of education. Such renewal is possible only when we are able to discover and to keep re-discovering who we really are, how our lives have been forged from that textured history of hundreds of years, of which both the idea of Pax Britannica and the Commonwealth are also products.

201 Education is not just about school and college education, it is about life-long learning, including in very particular situations. Thus, for example, it includes programmes that aim to bring conflicting parties together in peace-building activities or in political education programmes in post-conflict situations.

202 Young people can and do play a role here, including as advisers and trainers. ‘Education’ also includes providing training support for young people to engage in and participate in governance processes – in youth organizations, trade unions, National Youth Councils and Parliaments. The Commonwealth Youth Programme has a large number of innovative programmes that encourage youth participation in a variety of functions; all seek to both inform and empower young people.

203 The Commission attaches importance to quality, relevant education, regardless of whether that education is provided by the state or not. In many countries, the non-government educational

system has increased exponentially in response to lack of government resources to equip and staff government schools adequately (including valuing and remunerating teachers in ways that ensures their attendance). Bangladesh is perhaps one of the most interesting examples of this, with enormous investments by the NGO sector in children’s and adult (particularly women’s) education. The role of government then changes to one of providing a policy and regulatory framework, through which it can exert influence over wider educational objectives.

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Education is not just about school and college education, it is about life-long learning...

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204 The Commission concluded that state policies that actively promote new faith schools, whether they are Christian, Jewish, Muslim or Hindu, may be problematic if the impact of these schools is that students learn to see the world in fragmented terms, with their faith identity setting them apart from others with different faiths or no faith at all. The proliferation of faith schools today comes at a time when prioritizing religion in particular ways has been a major contributory factor to violence in many parts of the world. It is important, therefore, to insist that education is:

‘...not just about getting children, even very young ones, immersed in an old, inherited ethos. It is also about helping children to develop the ability to reason about new decisions that any grown-up person will have to take...and enhance (their) capability...to live “examined lives” as they grow up in an integrated country.’

205 Whether faith or secular, public or private, the emphasis must be on providing a high-quality, rounded education that encourages respect between all peoples and does not put forward the idea that any one dogma is pre-eminent. Faith schools are able to deliver this objective, so long as blinkered dogma is not the lens for their students.

206 There is a need for all countries to look at the

totality of their education systems, both as sources of current marginalization but also as sources of huge potential to help overcome that marginalization. Education is paramount in the process of promoting respect and understanding between people, and particularly the young – the leaders, followers, thinkers and doers of the future. What they are taught and how they are taught is critical.

207 The Commission emphasizes the critical role of education, defined in its broadest sense, in engendering a feeling of respect and understanding amongst diverse populations and particularly the young. The organizations that deliver these different educational programmes are as simple as school systems and as high-level as Commonwealth forums.



Key Words

Dialogue:

(n) an open discussion or exchange of ideas between different groups/people, often to address a specific issue or challenge

Dogma:

(n) a strict set of principles or beliefs held by a group of people as the one definite truth

Empower:

(v) to provide someone the tools to take more control over their own life or situation

Exclusion:

(n) when someone or a group of people are not allowed to participate in something

Identity group:

when someone or a group of people are not allowed to participate in something

Marginalized:

(adj) to be made to feel unimportant and/or powerless, in comparison to the majority of a population

Patriarchy:

(n) a social system which is structured in a way that men hold the most power and decision-making duties

Peacebuilding:

(n) the process of trying to create long-lasting peace and prevent the recurrence of violence, by addressing root causes and effects of conflict

Pluralism:

(n) a system in which many different people (i.e. diversity of race, religion, political beliefs) live together

Stigmatization:

(n) a process in which certain people in a society are made to feel ashamed and marked as 'different' so as to isolate them

Note: Information on the author is not available; "Civil Paths to Peace" was a collaborative project.

Critical Thinking Component

Session Two

#1

Besides age, in what other ways might young people be categorized as a "marginalized group?"

#2

What are some of the negative or positive impacts of "authority structures" in Myanmar on youth?

#3

"Education...is very much about preparing young - or younger - minds to live in and cope effectively with a world of various pluralisms." If education fails to do this, what are the possible consequences?

#4

What might be the risks or benefits of attending a faith-based school, especially in a place where ethnic/religious identities are diverse?

#5

In your opinion, what should be the relationship between education and peacebuilding? What role should it play in Myanmar?

Essay Prompts

Option A:

It is argued that, “the educational curriculum is central in embodying and communicating values and messages about the relationships and understandings between and across existing identity groups.” Do you agree that it is the role of education to promote tolerance? If so, how might this be done?

Option B:

Sen discusses the idea of education as preparing youth for life-long learning. What do you think are some essential values or skills that should be taught to support this idea?

“An ideal for which I am prepared to die”

Nelson Mandela

[Extracts from Mandela’s Statement Opening the Defense Case in the Rivonia Trial, Supreme Court, Pretoria, 20 April, 1964]

In 1962, Nelson Mandela was arrested for his opposition to the South African government’s policy of apartheid and the continued discrimination against the non-white majority in the country. He was later charged with sabotage, high treason and conspiracy to overthrow the government. The excerpt below is from his defense statement at the opening of his trial in 1964.

I have done whatever I did, both as an individual and as a leader of my people, because of my experience in South Africa and my own proudly felt African background, and not because of what any outsider might have said.

In my youth in the Transkei, I listened to the elders of my tribe telling stories of the old days. Among the tales they related to me were those of wars fought by our ancestors in defence of the fatherland. The names of Dingane and Bambata, Hintsa and Makana, Squngthi and Dalasile, Moshoeshoe and Sekhukhuni, were praised as the glory of the entire African nation. I hoped then that life might offer me the opportunity to serve my people and make my own humble contribution to their freedom struggle. This is what has motivated me in all that I have done in relation to the charges made against me. [...]

I have already mentioned that I was one of the persons who helped to form Umkhonto [Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the African National Congress]. I, and the others who started the organisation, did so for two reasons. Firstly, we believed that as a result of Government policy, violence by the African people had become inevitable, and that unless responsible leadership was given to canalise and control the feelings of our people, there would be outbreaks of terrorism which would produce an intensity of bitterness and hostility between the various races of this country which is not produced

even by war. Secondly, we felt that without violence there would be no way open to the African people to succeed in their struggle against the principle of white supremacy. All lawful modes of expressing opposition to this principle had been closed by legislation, and we were placed in a position in which we had either to accept a permanent state of inferiority, or to defy the Government. We chose to defy the law. We first broke the law in a way which avoided any recourse to violence; when this form was legislated against, and then the Government resorted to a show of force to crush opposition to its policies, only then did we decide to answer violence with violence. But the violence which we chose to adopt was not terrorism. We who formed Umkhonto were all members of the African National Congress, and had behind us the ANC tradition of non-violence and negotiation as a means of solving political disputes. We believe that South Africa belongs to all the people who live in it, and not to one group, be it black or white. We did not want an interracial war, and tried to avoid it to the last minute. [...]

In 1960 there was the shooting at Sharpeville, which resulted in the proclamation of a state of emergency and the declaration of the ANC as an unlawful organisation. My colleagues and I, after careful consideration, decided that we would not obey this decree. The African people were not part of the Government and did not make the laws by which they were governed. We believed in the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that “the will of the people shall be the basis of authority of the Government”, and for us to accept the banning was equivalent to accepting the silencing of the Africans for all time. The ANC refused to dissolve, but instead went underground. We believed it was our duty to preserve this organisation which had been built up with almost 50 years of unremitting toil. I have no doubt that no self-respecting white political organisation would disband itself if declared illegal by a government in which it had no say.

In 1960, the Government held a referendum which led to the establishment of the republic. Africans, who constituted approximately 70 per cent of the

population of South Africa, were not entitled to vote, and were not even consulted about the proposed constitutional change. All of us were apprehensive of our future under the proposed white republic, and a resolution was taken to hold an all-in African conference to call for a national convention, and to organise mass demonstrations on the eve of the unwanted republic, if the Government failed to call the convention. The conference was attended by Africans of various political persuasions. I was the secretary of the conference and undertook to be responsible for organising the national stay-at-home which was subsequently called to coincide with the declaration of the republic. As all strikes by Africans are illegal, the person organising such a strike must avoid arrest. I was chosen to be this person, and consequently I had to leave my home and family and my practice and go into hiding to avoid arrest.

The stay-at-home, in accordance with ANC policy, was to be a peaceful demonstration. Careful instructions were given to organisers and members to avoid any recourse to violence. The Government's answer was to introduce new and harsher laws, to mobilise its armed forces, and to send Saracens, armed vehicles, and soldiers into the townships in a massive show of force designed to intimidate the people. This was an indication that the Government had decided to rule by force alone, and this decision was a milestone on the road to Umkhonto. [...]

“ **But the hard facts were that 50 years of non-violence had brought the African people nothing but more and more repressive legislation and fewer and fewer rights.** ”

We had no doubt that we had to continue the fight. Anything else would have been abject surrender. Our problem was not whether to fight, but was how to continue the fight. We of the ANC had always stood for a non-racial democracy, and we shrank from any action which might drive the races further apart than they already were. But the hard facts were that 50 years of non-violence had brought the African people nothing but more and more repressive legislation,

and fewer and fewer rights. It may not be easy for this court to understand, but it is a fact that for a long time the people had been talking of violence - of the day when they would fight the white man and win back their country - and we, the leaders of the ANC, had nevertheless always prevailed upon them to avoid violence and to pursue peaceful methods. When some of us discussed this in May and June 1961, it could not be denied that our policy to achieve a non-racial state by non-violence had achieved nothing, and that our followers were beginning to lose confidence in this policy and were developing disturbing ideas of terrorism. [...]

At the beginning of June 1961, after a long and anxious assessment of the South African situation, I, and some colleagues, came to the conclusion that as violence in this country was inevitable, it would be unrealistic and wrong for African leaders to continue preaching peace and non-violence at a time when the Government met our peaceful demands with force.

This conclusion was not easily arrived at. It was only when all else had failed, when all channels of peaceful protest had been barred to us, that the decision was made to embark on violent forms of political struggle, and to form Umkhonto we Sizwe. We did so not because we desired such a course, but solely because the Government had left us with no other choice. In the Manifesto of Umkhonto published on 16 December 1961, which is Exhibit AD, we said: "The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices - submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means in our power in defence of our people, our future, and our freedom."

This was our feeling in June 1961 when we decided to press for a change in the policy of the National Liberation Movement. I can only say that I felt morally obliged to do what I did.

We who had taken this decision started to consult leaders of various organisations, including the ANC... As far as the ANC was concerned, it formed a clear view which can be summarised as follows:

A. It was a mass political organisation with a political function to fulfil. Its members had joined on the express policy of non-violence.

B. Because of all this, it could not and would not undertake violence. This must be stressed. One cannot turn such a body into the small, closely knit organisation required for sabotage. Nor would this be politically correct, because it would result in members ceasing to carry out this essential activity: political propaganda and organisation. Nor was it permissible to change the whole nature of the organisation.

C. On the other hand, in view of this situation I have described, the ANC was prepared to depart from its 50-year-old policy of non-violence to this extent that it would no longer disapprove of properly controlled violence. Hence, members who undertook such activity would not be subject to disciplinary action by the ANC.

I say "properly controlled violence" because I made it clear that if I formed the organisation I would at all times subject it to the political guidance of the ANC and would not undertake any different form of activity from that contemplated without the consent of the ANC. And I shall now tell the court how that form of violence came to be determined.

As a result of this decision, Umkhonto was formed in November 1961. When we took this decision, and subsequently formulated our plans, the ANC heritage of non-violence and racial harmony was very much with us. We felt that the country was drifting towards a civil war in which blacks and whites would fight each other. We viewed the situation with alarm. Civil war could mean the destruction of what the ANC stood for; with civil war, racial peace would be more difficult than ever to achieve. We already have examples in South African history of the results of war. It has taken more than 50 years for the scars of the South African War to disappear. How much longer would it take to eradicate the scars of inter-racial civil war, which could not be fought without a great loss of life on both sides?

The avoidance of civil war had dominated our thinking for many years, but when we decided to adopt violence as part of our policy, we realised that we might one day have to face the prospect of such a war. This had to be taken into account in formulating our plans. We required a plan which was flexible and which permitted us to act in accordance with the needs of the times; above all, the plan had to be one

which recognised civil war as the last resort, and left the decision on this question to the future. We did not want to be committed to civil war, but we wanted to be ready if it became inevitable.

Four forms of violence were possible. There is sabotage, there is guerrilla warfare, there is terrorism, and there is open revolution. We chose to adopt the first method and to exhaust it before taking any other decision.

In the light of our political background the choice was a logical one. Sabotage did not involve loss of life, and it offered the best hope for future race relations. Bitterness would be kept to a minimum and, if the policy bore fruit, democratic government could become a reality. [...]

We felt that planned destruction of power plants, and interference with rail and telephone communications, would tend to scare away capital from the country, make it more difficult for goods from the industrial areas to reach the seaports on schedule, and would in the long run be a heavy drain on the economic life of the country, thus compelling the voters of the country to reconsider their position.

Attacks on the economic life-lines of the country were to be linked with sabotage on Government buildings and other symbols of apartheid. These attacks would serve as a source of inspiration to our people. In addition, they would provide an outlet for those people who were urging the adoption of violent methods and would enable us to give concrete proof to our followers that we had adopted a stronger line and were fighting back against Government violence.

In addition, if mass action were successfully organised, and mass reprisals taken, we felt that sympathy for our cause would be roused in other countries, and that greater pressure would be brought to bear on the South African Government.

This then was the plan. Umkhonto was to perform sabotage, and strict instructions were given to its members right from the start, that on no account were they to injure or kill people in planning or carrying out operations. These instructions have been referred to in the evidence of "Mr X" and "Mr Z". [...]

Umkhonto had its first operation on 16 December

1961, when Government buildings in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Durban were attacked. The selection of targets is proof of the policy to which I have referred. Had we intended to attack life we would have selected targets where people congregated and not empty buildings and power stations. The sabotage which was committed before 16 December 1961 was the work of isolated groups and had no connection whatever with Umkhonto. In fact, some of these and a number of later acts were claimed by other organisations.

The manifesto of Umkhonto was issued on the day that operations commenced. The response to our actions and manifesto among the white population was characteristically violent. The Government threatened to take strong action, and called upon its supporters to stand firm and to ignore the demands of the Africans. The whites failed to respond by suggesting change; they responded to our call by suggesting the laager.

In contrast, the response of the Africans was one of encouragement. Suddenly there was hope again. Things were happening. People in the townships became eager for political news. A great deal of enthusiasm was generated by the initial successes, and people began to speculate on how soon freedom would be obtained.

But we in Umkhonto weighed up the white response with anxiety. The lines were being drawn. The whites and blacks were moving into separate camps, and the prospects of avoiding a civil war were made less. The white newspapers carried reports that sabotage would be punished by death. If this was so, how could we continue to keep Africans away from terrorism?

Already scores of Africans had died as a result of racial friction. In 1920 when the famous leader, Masabala, was held in Port Elizabeth jail, 24 of a group of Africans who had gathered to demand his release were killed by the police and white civilians. In 1921, more than 100 Africans died in the Bulhoek affair. In 1924, more than 200 Africans were killed when the administrator of South-west Africa led a force against a group which had rebelled against the imposition of dog tax. On 1 May 1950, 18 Africans died as a result of police shootings during the strike. On 21 March 1960, 69 unarmed Africans died at Sharpeville.

How many more Sharpevilles would there be in the history of our country? And how many more Sharpevilles could the country stand without violence and terror becoming the order of the day? And what would happen to our people when that stage was reached? In the long run we felt certain we must succeed, but at what cost to ourselves and the rest of the country? And if this happened, how could black and white ever live together again in peace and harmony?

These were the problems that faced us, and these were our decisions.

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Experience convinced us that rebellion would offer the Government limitless opportunities for the indiscriminate slaughter of our people.

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Experience convinced us that rebellion would offer the Government limitless opportunities for the indiscriminate slaughter of our people. But it was precisely because the soil of South Africa is already drenched with the blood of innocent Africans that we felt it our duty to make preparations as a long-term undertaking to use force in order to defend ourselves against force.

If war were inevitable, we wanted the fight to be conducted on terms most favourable to our people. The fight which held out prospects best for us and the least risk of life to both sides was guerrilla warfare. We decided, therefore, in our preparations for the future, to make provision for the possibility of guerrilla warfare. All whites undergo compulsory military training, but no such training was given to Africans. It was in our view essential to build up a nucleus of trained men who would be able to provide the leadership which would be required if guerrilla warfare started.

We had to prepare for such a situation before it became too late to make proper preparations. It was also necessary to build up a nucleus of men trained in civil administration and other professions, so that Africans would be equipped to participate in the

government of this country as soon as they were allowed to do so.

At this stage, it was decided that I should attend the conference of the Pan-African Freedom Movement for Central, East, and Southern Africa, which was to be held early in 1962 in Addis Ababa, and, because of our need for preparation, it was also decided that, after the conference, I would undertake a tour of the African states with a view to obtaining facilities for the training of soldiers, and that I would also solicit scholarships for the higher education of matriculated Africans. Training in both fields would be necessary, even if changes came about by peaceful means. Administrators would be necessary who would be willing and able to administer a non-racial state and so would men be necessary to control the army and police force of such a state. [...]

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Our fight is against real, and not imaginary, hardships, or, to use the language of the state prosecutor, “so-called hardships.”

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Our fight is against real, and not imaginary, hardships, or, to use the language of the state prosecutor, “so-called hardships”. Basically, we fight against two features which are the hallmarks of African life in South Africa and which are entrenched by legislation which we seek to have repealed. These features are poverty and lack of human dignity, and we do not need communists or so-called “agitators” to teach us about these things.

South Africa is the richest country in Africa, and could be one of the richest countries in the world. But it is a land of extremes and remarkable contrasts. The whites enjoy what may well be the highest standard of living in the world, while Africans live in poverty and misery. Forty per cent of the Africans live in hopelessly overcrowded and, in some cases, drought-stricken reserves, where soil erosion and the overworking of the soil makes it impossible for them to live properly off the land. Thirty per cent are labourers, labour tenants, and squatters on white farms and work and

live under conditions similar to those of the serfs of the Middle Ages. The other 30 per cent live in towns where they have developed economic and social habits which bring them closer in many respects to white standards. Yet most Africans, even in this group, are impoverished by low incomes and high cost of living.

The highest-paid and the most prosperous section of urban African life is in Johannesburg. Yet their actual position is desperate. The latest figures were given on 25 March 1964 by Mr Carr, manager of the Johannesburg Non-European Affairs Department. The poverty datum line for the average African family in Johannesburg (according to Mr Carr’s department) is R42.84 per month. He showed that the average monthly wage is R32.24 and that 46 per cent of all African families in Johannesburg do not earn enough to keep them going.

Poverty goes hand in hand with malnutrition and disease. The incidence of malnutrition and deficiency diseases is very high among Africans. Tuberculosis, pellagra, kwashiorkor, gastro-enteritis, and scurvy bring death and destruction of health. The incidence of infant mortality is one of the highest in the world. According to the medical officer of health for Pretoria, tuberculosis kills forty people a day (almost all Africans), and in 1961 there were 58,491 new cases reported.

These diseases not only destroy the vital organs of the body, but they result in retarded mental conditions and lack of initiative, and reduce powers of concentration. The secondary results of such conditions affect the whole community and the standard of work performed by African labourers.

The complaint of Africans, however, is not only that they are poor and the whites are rich, but that the laws which are made by the whites are designed to preserve this situation. There are two ways to break out of poverty. The first is by formal education, and the second is by the worker acquiring a greater skill at his work and thus higher wages. As far as Africans are concerned, both these avenues of advancement are deliberately curtailed by legislation.

The present Government has always sought to hamper Africans in their search for education. One of their early acts, after coming in to power, was to stop

subsidies for African school feeding. Many African children who attended schools depended on this supplement to their diet. This was a cruel act.

There is compulsory education for all white children at virtually no cost to their parents, be they rich or poor. Similar facilities are not provided for the African children, though there are some who receive such assistance.

African children, however, generally have to pay more for their schooling than whites. According to figures quoted by the South African Institute of Race Relations in its 1963 journal, approximately 40 per cent of African children in the age group between seven and 14 do not attend school. For those who do attend school, the standards are vastly different from those afforded to white children. In 1960-61 the per capita Government spending on African students at state-aided schools was estimated at R12.46. In the same years, the per capita spending on white children in the Cape Province (which are the only figures available to me) was R144.57. [...]

The quality of education is also different. According to the Bantu Educational Journal, only 5,660 African children in the whole of South Africa passed their Junior Certificate in 1962, and in that year only 362 passed matric. This is presumably consistent with the policy of Bantu education about which the present Prime Minister said, during the debate on the Bantu Education Bill in 1953: "When I have control of native education I will reform it so that natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them... People who believe in equality are not desirable teachers for natives. When my department controls native education it will know for what class of higher education a native is fitted, and whether he will have a chance in life to use his knowledge."

The other main obstacle to the economic advancement of the African is the industrial colour-bar under which all the better jobs of industry are reserved for whites only. Moreover, Africans who do obtain employment in the unskilled and semi-skilled occupations which are open to them are not allowed to form trade unions which have recognition under the Industrial Conciliation Act. This means that strikes of African workers are illegal, and that they are denied the right of collective bargaining which is permitted

to the better-paid white workers. The discrimination in the policy of successive South African governments towards African workers is demonstrated by the so-called "civilised labour policy" under which sheltered, unskilled Government jobs are found for those white workers who cannot make the grade in industry, at wages which far exceed the earnings of the average African employee in industry.

The Government often answers its critics by saying that Africans in South Africa are economically better off than the inhabitants of the other countries in Africa. I do not know whether this statement is true and doubt whether any comparison can be made without having regard to the cost-of-living index in such countries. But even if it is true, as far as the African people are concerned it is irrelevant. Our complaint is not that we are poor by comparison with people in other countries, but that we are poor by comparison with the white people in our own country, and that we are prevented by legislation from altering this imbalance.

The lack of human dignity experienced by Africans is the direct result of the policy of white supremacy. White supremacy implies black inferiority. Legislation designed to preserve white supremacy entrenches this notion. Menial tasks in South Africa are invariably performed by Africans. When anything has to be carried or cleaned the white man will look around for an African to do it for him, whether the African is employed by him or not. Because of this sort of attitude, whites tend to regard Africans as a separate breed. They do not look upon them as people with families of their own; they do not realise that they have emotions - that they fall in love like white people do; that they want to be with their wives and children like white people want to be with theirs; that they want to earn enough money to support their families properly, to feed and clothe them and send them to school. And what "house-boy" or "garden-boy" or labourer can ever hope to do this?

Pass laws, which to the Africans are among the most hated bits of legislation in South Africa, render any African liable to police surveillance at any time. I doubt whether there is a single African male in South Africa who has not at some stage had a brush with the police over his pass. Hundreds and thousands of Africans are thrown into jail each year under pass laws.

Even worse than this is the fact that pass laws keep husband and wife apart and lead to the breakdown of family life.

Poverty and the breakdown of family life have secondary effects. Children wander about the streets of the townships because they have no schools to go to, or no money to enable them to go to school, or no parents at home to see that they go to school, because both parents (if there be two) have to work to keep the family alive. This leads to a breakdown in moral standards, to an alarming rise in illegitimacy, and to growing violence which erupts not only politically, but everywhere.

Life in the townships is dangerous. There is not a day that goes by without somebody being stabbed or assaulted. And violence is carried out of the townships in the white living areas. People are afraid to walk alone in the streets after dark. Housebreakings and robberies are increasing, despite the fact that the death sentence can now be imposed for such offences. Death sentences cannot cure the festering sore.

Africans want to be paid a living wage. Africans want to perform work which they are capable of doing, and not work which the Government declares them to be capable of. Africans want to be allowed to live where they obtain work, and not be endorsed out of an area because they were not born there. Africans want to be allowed to own land in places where they work, and not to be obliged to live in rented houses which they can never call their own. Africans want to be part of the general population, and not confined to living in their own ghettos. African men want to have their wives and children to live with them where they work, and not be forced into an unnatural existence in men's hostels. African women want to be with their menfolk and not be left permanently widowed in the reserves. Africans want to be allowed out after 11 o'clock at night and not to be confined to their rooms like little children.

Africans want to be allowed to travel in their own country and to seek work where they want to and not where the Labour Bureau tells them to. Africans want a just share in the whole of South Africa; they want security and a stake in society. Above all, we want equal political rights, because without them our disabilities will be permanent. I know this sounds

revolutionary to the whites in this country, because the majority of voters will be Africans. This makes the white man fear democracy. But this fear cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the only solution which will guarantee racial harmony and freedom for all. It is not true that the enfranchisement of all will result in racial domination. Political division, based on colour, is entirely artificial and, when it disappears, so will the domination of one colour group by another. The ANC has spent half a century fighting against racialism. When it triumphs it will not change that policy.

This then is what the ANC is fighting. Their struggle is a truly national one. It is a struggle of the African people, inspired by their own suffering and their own experience. It is a struggle for the right to live.

During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.



About the Author

Nelson Mandela was elected as the first black president of South Africa in 1994. He was a leader in the anti-apartheid movement and organized peaceful and non-violent campaigns to fight for equal rights (i.e. boycotts, strikes). The main inspiration behind his activism in South Africa included the goals of full citizenship for everyone, land redistribution, trade union rights, and free and obligatory education for all children. Before becoming president, he had spent 27 years in prison for leading a strike.



Key Words

Civil war:

war between opposing groups within the same country who are fighting to gain political control

Dignity:

(n) one's sense of worth or value, and the state of deserving respect

Domination:

(n) the exercise of power and control over others

Harmony:

(n) peace or good relations between people living or working together

Impoverished:

(adj) to be made very poor or worse in quality

Inevitable:

(adj) when a situation will definitely happen and is impossible to avoid

Rebellion:

(n) an organized attempt to change the government or leader of a country

Repressive:

(adj) (especially of a social or political system) inhibiting or restraining personal freedom

Revolution:

(n) the overthrow of a government or social order, in efforts to establish a new political system and change ways of thinking

Supremacy:

(n) the state of having more authority/power or a higher status than others

Critical Thinking Component

Session Three

#1

Mandela states that, "white supremacy implies black inferiority." What does he mean by this?

#2

What other perceptions of superiority/inferiority can exist in a society, other than race? Give real world examples.

#3

What does Mandela say will be the inevitable results of a continued "racial divide"?

#4

Do you believe that the use of violent protest can be justified in certain situations?

#5

What other outlets of protest are available when non-violent actions fail?

Essay Prompts

Option A:

Mandela describes the experiences of poverty and lack of human dignity faced in South Africa. Explain how these two features are linked to legislation and the government's tools of oppression.

Option B:

Compare and contrast the reasons for political demonstrations and the government's response to them in South Africa and Myanmar. What conclusions can you draw from the similarities and differences?

Letter from Birmingham Jail

Martin Luther King Jr.

Now featured in his book, *Why We Can't Wait* (1964), this letter was originally written in 1963 while Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) was in jail. It was a written response to a published statement about MLK by eight clergymen in Alabama.

MY DEAR FELLOW CLERGYMEN:

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statements in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I think I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the view which argues against "outsiders coming in." I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty-five affiliated organizations across the South, and one of them is the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Frequently we share staff, educational and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago the affiliate here in Birmingham asked us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct-action program if such were deemed necessary. We readily consented, and when the hour came we lived up to our promise. So I, along with several members of my staff, am here because I was invited here I am here because I have organizational ties here.

But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ

to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations. I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city's white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action. We have gone through all of these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard, brutal facts of the case. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the latter consistently refused to engage in good-faith negotiation. [...]

As in so many past experiences, our hopes had been blasted, and the shadow of deep disappointment settled upon us. We had no alternative except to prepare for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and the national community. Mindful of the difficulties involved, we decided to undertake a process of self-purification. We began a series of workshops on nonviolence, and we repeatedly asked ourselves: "Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?" "Are you able to endure the ordeal of jail?" [...]

You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling, for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to so dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent-resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.

The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue. [...]

My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but, as

Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals.

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct-action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."

We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we stiff creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging dark of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross-country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are

never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you go forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness" then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, at first glance it may seem rather paradoxical for us consciously to break laws. One may want to ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all"

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Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust...It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority.

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Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because

segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an "I-it" relationship for an "I-thou" relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. Hence segregation is not only politically, economically and sociologically unsound, it is morally wrong and awful. Paul Tillich said that sin is separation. Is not segregation an existential expression 'of man's tragic separation, his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness? Thus it is that I can urge men to obey the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court, for it is morally right; and I can urge them to disobey segregation ordinances, for they are morally wrong.

Let us consider a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself. This is difference made legal. By the same token, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow and that it is willing to follow itself. This is sameness made legal.

Let me give another explanation. A law is unjust if it is inflicted on a minority that, as a result of being denied the right to vote, had no part in enacting or devising the law. Who can say that the legislature of Alabama which set up that state's segregation laws was democratically elected? Throughout Alabama all sorts of devious methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters, and there are some counties in which, even though Negroes constitute a majority of the population, not a single Negro is registered. Can any law enacted under such circumstances be considered democratically structured?

Sometimes a law is just on its face and unjust in its application. For instance, I have been arrested on a charge of parading without a permit. Now, there is nothing wrong in having an ordinance which requires a permit for a parade. But such an ordinance becomes unjust when it is used to maintain segregation and to deny citizens the First Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and protest. [...]

We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the

Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. If today I lived in a Communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's antireligious laws.

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and that when they fan in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress. I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that the present tension in the South is a necessary phase of the transition from an obnoxious negative peace, in which the Negro passively accepted his unjust plight, to a substantive and positive peace, in which all men will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with an its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed,

with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured.

In your statement you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But is this a logical assertion? Isn't this like condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn't this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical inquiries precipitated the act by the misguided populace in which they made him drink hemlock? Isn't this like condemning Jesus because his unique God-consciousness and never-ceasing devotion to God's will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see that, as the federal courts have consistently affirmed, it is wrong to urge an individual to cease his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because the quest may precipitate violence. Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber.

I had also hoped that the white moderate would reject the myth concerning time in relation to the struggle for freedom. I have just received a letter from a white brother in Texas. He writes: "All Christians know that the colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but it is possible that you are in too great a religious hurry. It has taken Christianity almost two thousand years to accomplish what it has. The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth." Such an attitude stems from a tragic misconception of time, from the strangely rational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually, time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively. More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than have the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people. Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this 'hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right. Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy and transform our pending national elegy

into a creative psalm of brotherhood. Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity.

You speak of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent efforts as those of an extremist. I began thinking about the fact that stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a force of complacency, made up in part of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, are so drained of self-respect and a sense of "somebodiness" that they have adjusted to segregation; and in part of a few middle class Negroes who, because of a degree of academic and economic security and because in some ways they profit by segregation, have become insensitive to the problems of the masses. The other force is one of bitterness and hatred, and it comes perilously close to advocating violence. [...]

I have tried to stand between these two forces, saying that we need emulate neither the "do-nothingism" of the complacent nor the hatred and despair of the black nationalist. For there is the more excellent way of love and nonviolent protest. I am grateful to God that, through the influence of the Negro church, the way of nonviolence became an integral part of our struggle.

If this philosophy had not emerged, by now many streets of the South would, I am convinced, be flowing with blood. And I am further convinced that if our white brothers dismiss as "rabble-rousers" and "outside agitators" those of us who employ nonviolent direct action, and if they refuse to support our nonviolent efforts, millions of Negroes will, out of frustration and despair, seek solace and security in black-nationalist ideologies a development that would inevitably lead to a frightening racial nightmare.

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and something without has reminded him that it can be gained. Consciously or unconsciously, he has been caught up by the Zeitgeist, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America and the Caribbean, the United States Negro is moving

with a sense of great urgency toward the promised land of racial justice. If one recognizes this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand why public demonstrations are taking place. The Negro has many pent-up resentments and latent frustrations, and he must release them. So let him march; let him make prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; let him go on freedom rides--and try to understand why he must do so. If his repressed emotions are not released in nonviolent ways, they will seek expression through violence; this is not a threat but a fact of history. So I have not said to my people: "Get rid of your discontent." Rather, I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled into the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. And now this approach is being termed extremist.

But though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Was not Amos an extremist for justice: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Was not Martin Luther an extremist: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." And John Bunyan: "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience." And Abraham Lincoln: "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." And Thomas Jefferson: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal ..." So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice? In that dramatic scene on Calvary's hill three men were crucified. We must never forget that all three were crucified for the same crime--the crime of extremism. Two were extremists for immorality, and thus fell below their environment. The other, Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. Perhaps the South, the nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.

I had hoped that the white moderate would see this need. Perhaps I was too optimistic; perhaps I expected too much. I suppose I should have realized that few members of the oppressor race can understand the deep groans and passionate yearnings of the oppressed race, and still fewer have the vision to see that injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent and determined action. I am thankful, however, that some of our white brothers in the South have grasped the meaning of this social revolution and committed themselves to it. They are still too few in quantity, but they are big in quality. [...]

Let me take note of my other major disappointment. I have been so greatly disappointed with the white church and its leadership. Of course, there are some notable exceptions. I am not unmindful of the fact that each of you has taken some significant stands on this issue. I commend you, Reverend Stallings, for your Christian stand on this past Sunday, in welcoming Negroes to your worship service on a non segregated basis. I commend the Catholic leaders of this state for integrating Spring Hill College several years ago.

But despite these notable exceptions, I must honestly reiterate that I have been disappointed with the church. I do not say this as one of those negative critics who can always find something wrong with the church. I say this as a minister of the gospel, who loves the church; who was nurtured in its bosom; who has been sustained by its spiritual blessings and who will remain true to it as long as the cord of Rio shall lengthen.

When I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery, Alabama, a few years ago, I felt we would be supported by the white church felt that the white ministers, priests and rabbis of the South would be among our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leader era; an too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows. [...]

I have heard numerous southern religious leaders admonish their worshipers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers declare: "Follow this decree because integration is morally right and

because the Negro is your brother." In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churchmen stand on the sideline and mouth pious. irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard many ministers say: "Those are social issues, with which the gospel has no real concern." And I have watched many churches commit themselves to a completely other worldly religion which makes a strange, on Biblical distinction between body and soul, between the sacred and the secular. [...]

There was a time when the church was very powerful in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society. [...]

Things are different now. So often the contemporary church is a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. So often it is an archdefender of the status quo. Par from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's silent and often even vocal sanction of things as they are.

But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. Every day I meet young people whose disappointment with the church has turned into outright disgust.

Perhaps I have once again been too optimistic. Is organized religion too inextricably bound to the status quo to save our nation and the world? Perhaps I must turn my faith to the inner spiritual church, the church within the church, as the true ecclesia and the hope of the world. But again I am thankful to God that some noble souls from the ranks of organized religion have broken loose from the paralyzing chains of conformity and joined us as active partners in the struggle for freedom. They have left their secure congregations and walked the streets of Albany, Georgia, with us. They have gone down the highways of the South on tortuous rides for freedom. Yes, they have gone to jail

with us. [...]

Before closing I feel impelled to mention one other point in your statement that has troubled me profoundly. You warmly commended the Birmingham police force for keeping "order" and "preventing violence." I doubt that you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen its dogs sinking their teeth into unarmed, nonviolent Negroes. I doubt that you would so quickly commend the policemen if you were to observe their ugly and inhumane treatment of Negroes here in the city jail; if you were to watch them push and curse old Negro women and young Negro girls; if you were to see them slap and kick old Negro men and young boys; if you were to observe them, as they did on two occasions, refuse to give us food because we wanted to sing our grace together. I cannot join you in your praise of the Birmingham police department.

It is true that the police have exercised a degree of discipline in handing the demonstrators. In this sense they have conducted themselves rather "nonviolently" in public. But for what purpose? To preserve the evil system of segregation. Over the past few years I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek. I have tried to make clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or perhaps even more so, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends. Perhaps Mr. Connor and his policemen have been rather nonviolent in public, as was Chief Pritchett in Albany, Georgia but they have used the moral means of nonviolence to maintain the immoral end of racial injustice. As T. S. Eliot has said: "The last temptation is the greatest treason: To do the right deed for the wrong reason."

I wish you had commended the Negro sit-inners and demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer and their amazing discipline in the midst of great provocation. One day the South will recognize its real heroes. There will be the James Merediths, with the noble sense of purpose that enables them to face jeering and hostile mobs, and with the agonizing loneliness that characterizes the life of the pioneer. There will be the old, oppressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy-two-year-old woman in Montgomery,

Alabama, who rose up with a sense of dignity and with her people decided not to ride segregated buses, and who responded with ungrammatical profundity to one who inquired about her weariness: "My feets is tired, but my soul is at rest." There will be the young high school and college students, the young ministers of the gospel and a host of their elders, courageously and nonviolently sitting in at lunch counters and willingly going to jail for conscience' sake. One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judaeo-Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

Never before have I written so long a letter. I'm afraid it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else can one do when he is alone in a narrow jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts and pray long prayers?

If I have said anything in this letter that overstates the truth and indicates an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything that understates the truth and indicates my having a patience that allows me to settle for anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me.

I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not as an integrationist or a civil rights leader but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood,

Martin Luther King, Jr.



About the Author

Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) was a social activist and Baptist minister. He was a leader in the American civil rights movement and practiced forms of peaceful protest. He fought for equality for African Americans as well as marginalized communities and victims of injustice. Due to his hard work and dedication, he helped bring about groundbreaking legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Sadly, he was assassinated in 1968.



Key Words

Activism:

(n) taking action to influence change (typically political, social, economic, or environmental) for the better; can be done via protests, advocacy/campaigning, demonstrations, etc.

Civil disobedience:

the refusal to obey certain laws that are believed to be unjust, as a peaceful form of political protest; this includes the practices of boycotting or picketing

Civil rights:

the rights of each citizen to political and social freedom/equality, regardless of race, sex, or religion

Extremist:

(n) someone who has extreme political or religious views, especially one who advocates illegal, violent, or other extreme action

Just:

(adj) morally right and fair; guided by reason and the truth

Oppression:

(n) the unfair and severe treatment of a group of people, preventing them from having the same rights as others

Prejudice:

(n) preconceived idea about or dislike for people who are different from you that is not based on reason or real experience; typically targets people of a different race, sex, religion, etc.

Segregation:

(n) the institutional separation of a minority group (ethnic, racial, religious, etc.) from the majority

Status quo:

the state of a situation as it currently exists, typically referring to social or political matters

Superiority:

(n) the quality of being better or more powerful (whether real or perceived)

Critical Thinking Component

Session Four

#1

Martin Luther King Jr. states that, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Provide a real example of injustice and explain if the statement holds true.

#2

Can the experiences of racial prejudice described in the letter be compared with similar discrimination of marginalized groups in Myanmar - either past or present? Explain.

#3

Why are the nonviolent efforts of the civil rights activists judged as "extreme"?

#4

In your opinion, how would you determine if a law is unjust?

#5

Martin Luther King Jr. criticizes the white moderate for their lack of support and claims that, "groups tend to be more immoral than individuals." What do you think causes this?

Essay Prompts

Option A:

Why is it important to always be critical of the status quo in a society? What would be the consequences of accepting the status quo?

Option B:

Can you think of a law/policy in Myanmar that the majority of the population considers just, but which you consider to be unjust? Explain why you believe your position on the issue to be right and list some possible non-violent direct actions that might help change the minds of others and those in power.

Ingredients for a Lasting Democracy

Larry Diamond

This article by Larry Diamond appeared in the Hoover Digest on March 29, 2011.

What happens when the autocrat is gone? From Libya to Syria to Jordan, people fed up with stagnation and injustice have mobilized for the kind of democratic change witnessed in Tunisia and Egypt. Will the end of despotism give way to chaos, as happened when Mobutu Sese Seko was toppled in 1997 after more than thirty years in power in Zaire? Will the military or some civilian strongman fill the void with a new autocracy, as occurred after the overthrow in the 1950s of Arab monarchs in Egypt and Iraq and as has been the norm in most of the world until recently? Or can some Arab nations produce real democracy, as we saw in most of Eastern Europe and about half the states of sub-Saharan Africa?

Regime transitions are uncertain affairs. But since the mid-1970s, more than sixty countries have found their way to democracy. Some have done so in circumstances of rapid upheaval that offer insight for reformers in Tunisia, Egypt, and other Arab countries today. Here are five lessons.

One: Unite the Democratic Opposition

When a dictatorship is on the ropes, a divided opposition can rescue it. That is why autocrats so frequently foster those divisions, secretly funding a proliferation of opposition parties. Even extremely corrupt rulers may generate significant electoral support—not the thumping majorities they claim, but enough to steal an election—when the opposition is splintered.

In the Philippines in 1986, Nicaragua in 1990, and Ukraine in 2004, the opposition united around the candidacies of Corazon Aquino, Violeta Chamorro, and Viktor Yushchenko, respectively. Broad fronts such as these—as well as the Concertación movement that swept Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin to power in Chile in 1989 after the departure of General

Augusto Pinochet—often span deep personal and ideological differences. But the time for democratic forces to debate those matters is later, once the old order is defeated and democratic institutions have been established.

Egypt is fortunate; it has at least one obvious alternative leader, Mohamed ElBaradei, whom disparate opposition elements seem to be rallying around. Whenever the next presidential election is held, ElBaradei, or anyone like him leading a broad opposition front, would probably win a resounding victory over anyone connected to Hosni Mubarak's former ruling party.

Two: Make Sure the Old Order Really is Gone

The exit of a long-ruling strongman, such as Tunisia's Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, does not necessarily mean the end of a regime. Fallen dictators often leave behind robust political and security machines. No autocrat in modern times met a more immediate fate than Romania's Nicolae Ceausescu, who was executed by a firing squad of his own soldiers in 1989 just three days after a popular revolution forced him to flee the capital. Yet his successor, Ion Iliescu, was a corrupt former communist who obstructed political reform. Most of the former Soviet states, such as Georgia and Kazakhstan, had similar experiences.

Countries are much more likely to get to democracy quickly if they identify and embrace political leaders who are untainted by the old order and are ready to roll it back.

Three: Reach an Understanding with the Old Order

Victorious democrats will not be able to completely excise the pillars of the authoritarian order. Instead, for the country to turn toward democracy, those

pillars must be neutralized or co-opted. This old order may descend into violence when, as in Iraq, broad classes of elites are stigmatized and ousted from their positions. In a successful bargain, most old-regime elites retain their freedom, their assets, and often their jobs but accept the new rules of the democratic game.

Groups that refuse to renounce violence as a way to get power, or that reject the legitimacy of democracy, have no place in the new order.

Unless the military collapses in defeat, as it did in Greece in 1974 and in Argentina after the Falklands War, it must be persuaded to at least tolerate a new democratic order. In the short run, that means guaranteeing the military significant autonomy, as well as immunity from prosecution for its crimes. Over time, civilian democratic control of the military can be extended incrementally, as was done masterfully in Brazil in the 1980s and in Chile during the 1990s. But if the professional military feels threatened and demeaned from the start, the transition is in trouble.

The same principle applies to surviving elements of the state security apparatus, the bureaucracy, and the ruling party. In South Africa, for example, old-regime elements received amnesty for their human rights abuses in exchange for fully disclosing what they had done. In this and other successful transitions, top officials were replaced but most state bureaucrats kept their jobs.

Four: Rewrite the Rules

A new democratic government needs a new constitution, but it can't be drawn up too hastily. Meanwhile, some key provisions can be altered expeditiously by either legislation, interim executive fiat, or national consensus.

In Spain, the path to democratization was opened by the law for political reform, adopted by the parliament within a year of dictator Francisco Franco's death in 1975. Poland adopted a package of amendments in 1992 after it had elected a new parliament and a new president, Lech Walesa; a new constitution followed in 1997. South Africa enacted an interim constitution to govern the country while it undertook an ambitious constitution-writing process with wide popular

consultation—the ideal arrangement.

Even extremely corrupt rulers may win significant electoral support—enough to steal an election—when the opposition is splintered.

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Groups that refuse to renounce violence as a way to get power, or that reject the legitimacy of democracy, have no place in the new order.

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An urgent priority, though, is to rewrite the rules so that free and fair elections are possible. This must happen before democratic elections can be held in Egypt and Tunisia, for example. In transitions toward democracy, there is a strong case for including as many political players as possible. This requires some form of proportional representation to ensure that emerging small parties can have a stake in the new order, while minimizing the organizational advantage of the former ruling party. In the 2005 elections in Iraq, proportional representation ensured a seat at the table for smaller minority and liberal parties that could never have won a plurality in individual districts.

Five: Isolate the Extremes

That said, not everyone can or should be brought into the new democratic order. Prosecuting particularly venal members of a former ruling family, such as those tied to the Philippines' Ferdinand Marcos, Indonesia's fallen strongman Suharto, or now Tunisia's Ben Ali, can be part of a larger reconciliation strategy. But the circle of punishment must be drawn narrowly. It may even help the transition to drive a wedge between a few old-regime cronies and the bulk of the establishment, many of whom may harbor grievances against “the family.”

A transitional government should aim for inclusion. It should test the democratic commitment of dubious players rather than inadvertently induce them to become violent opponents. However, groups that

refuse to renounce violence as a means of obtaining power, or that reject the legitimacy of democracy, have no place in the new order. That provision was part of the wisdom of the postwar German constitution.

Transitions are full of opportunists, charlatans, and erstwhile autocrats who enter the new political field with no commitment to democracy. Every democratic transition that has endured—from Spain and Portugal to Chile, South Africa, and now, hopefully, Indonesia—has trod this path.

Fragile democracies become stable when people who once had no use for democracy embrace it as the only game in town.



About the Author

Larry Diamond is a leading political sociologist and scholar in democratic studies. He is a professor of Sociology and Political Science at Stanford University and has written on issues of foreign policy, foreign aid and democracy. He has also worked as advisor to several governmental and intergovernmental organizations such as the United States Department of State, the United Nations and World Bank.



Key Words

Amnesty:

(n) an official order by a government that states that a certain group of people will be forgiven, and not punished, for past crimes

Autonomy:

(n) freedom from the control or influence of an outside power

Dictator:

(n) a ruler who holds complete power and control over a country and its government

Fragile:

(adj) of a situation, is not strong and easily affected; can become worse under pressure

Immunity:

(n) protection or exemption from something, such as punishment

Opposition:

(n) strong disagreement with or action against a plan, law, or system

Reform:

(n) the process of changing a system or government in order to make it better

Regime:

(n) an authoritarian government that was not fairly elected by the population it is supposed to represent

Stable:

(adj) not likely to move or change; steady

Transition:

(n) the quality of being better or more powerful (whether real or perceived); the process of changing from one state or situation to another

Critical Thinking Component

Session Five

#1

Which of these ingredients *do* or *don't* apply to Myanmar? Explain.

#2

Why do you think it is an "urgent priority" to establish free and fair elections early on?

#3

Diamond states that, "Countries are much more likely to get to democracy quickly if they identify and embrace political leaders who are untainted by the old order and are ready to roll it back." What difficulties might be encountered in doing this?

#4

In the context of Myanmar, how much amnesty do you think should be given to members of the old regime/military, if any? Explain.

#5

Diamond argues that there needs to be a united front for democracy, but also “as many political players as possible.” What is your opinion of this statement?

Essay Prompts

Option A:

Diamond believes that the old order needs to be part of the change and, “In the short run, that means guaranteeing the military significant autonomy, as well as immunity from prosecution for its crimes.” Discuss this proposal in the context of Myanmar.

Option B:

“Groups that refuse to renounce violence as a way to get power...have no place in the new order.” What kind of violence do you think he is referring to? Do you agree or disagree, and why?

What's Gone Wrong With Democracy

The Economist

This essay originally appeared in *The Economist* online (www.economist.com) in the March 1, 2014 issue.

THE protesters who have overturned the politics of Ukraine have many aspirations for their country. Their placards called for closer relations with the European Union (EU), an end to Russian intervention in Ukraine's politics and the establishment of a clean government to replace the kleptocracy of President Viktor Yanukovich. But their fundamental demand is one that has motivated people over many decades to take a stand against corrupt, abusive and autocratic governments. They want a rules-based democracy.

It is easy to understand why. Democracies are on average richer than non-democracies, are less likely to go to war and have a better record of fighting corruption. More fundamentally, democracy lets people speak their minds and shape their own and their children's futures. That so many people in so many different parts of the world are prepared to risk so much for this idea is testimony to its enduring appeal.

Yet these days the exhilaration generated by events like those in Kiev is mixed with anxiety, for a troubling pattern has repeated itself in capital after capital. The people mass in the main square. Regime-sanctioned thugs try to fight back but lose their nerve in the face of popular intransigence and global news coverage. The world applauds the collapse of the regime and offers to help build a democracy. But turfing out an autocrat turns out to be much easier than setting up a viable democratic government. The new regime stumbles, the economy flounders and the country finds itself in a state at least as bad as it was before. This is what happened in much of the Arab spring, and also in Ukraine's Orange revolution a decade ago. In 2004 Mr Yanukovich was ousted from office by vast street protests, only to be re-elected to the presidency (with the help of huge amounts of Russian money) in 2010, after the opposition politicians who replaced him turned out to be just as hopeless.

Democracy is going through a difficult time. Where autocrats have been driven out of office, their opponents have mostly failed to create viable democratic regimes. Even in established democracies, flaws in the system have become worryingly visible and disillusion with politics is rife. Yet just a few years ago democracy looked as though it would dominate the world.

In the second half of the 20th century, democracies had taken root in the most difficult circumstances possible—in Germany, which had been traumatised by Nazism, in India, which had the world's largest population of poor people, and, in the 1990s, in South Africa, which had been disfigured by apartheid. Decolonialisation created a host of new democracies in Africa and Asia, and autocratic regimes gave way to democracy in Greece (1974), Spain (1975), Argentina (1983), Brazil (1985) and Chile (1989). The collapse of the Soviet Union created many fledgling democracies in central Europe. By 2000 Freedom House, an American think-tank, classified 120 countries, or 63% of the world total, as democracies. [...]

The progress seen in the late 20th century has stalled in the 21st. Even though around 40% of the world's population, more people than ever before, live in countries that will hold free and fair elections this year, democracy's global advance has come to a halt, and may even have gone into reverse. Freedom House reckons that 2013 was the eighth consecutive year in which global freedom declined, and that its forward march peaked around the beginning of the century. Between 1980 and 2000 the cause of democracy experienced only a few setbacks, but since 2000 there have been many. And democracy's problems run deeper than mere numbers suggest. Many nominal democracies have slid towards autocracy, maintaining the outward appearance of democracy through elections, but without the rights and institutions that are equally important aspects of a functioning democratic system.

Faith in democracy flares up in moments of triumph, such as the overthrow of unpopular regimes in Cairo

or Kiev, only to sputter out once again. Outside the West, democracy often advances only to collapse. And within the West, democracy has too often become associated with debt and dysfunction at home and overreach abroad. Democracy has always had its critics, but now old doubts are being treated with renewed respect as the weaknesses of democracy in its Western strongholds, and the fragility of its influence elsewhere, have become increasingly apparent. Why has democracy lost its forward momentum?

The return of history

THE two main reasons are the financial crisis of 2007-08 and the rise of China. The damage the crisis did was psychological as well as financial. It revealed fundamental weaknesses in the West's political systems, undermining the self-confidence that had been one of their great assets. Governments had steadily extended entitlements over decades, allowing dangerous levels of debt to develop, and politicians came to believe that they had abolished boom-bust cycles and tamed risk. Many people became disillusioned with the workings of their political systems—particularly when governments bailed out bankers with taxpayers' money and then stood by impotently as financiers continued to pay themselves huge bonuses. The crisis turned the Washington consensus into a term of reproach across the emerging world.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Communist Party has broken the democratic world's monopoly on economic progress. Larry Summers, of Harvard University, observes that when America was growing fastest, it doubled living standards roughly every 30 years. China has been doubling living standards roughly every decade for the past 30 years. The Chinese elite argue that their model—tight control by the Communist Party, coupled with a relentless effort to recruit talented people into its upper ranks—is more efficient than democracy and less susceptible to gridlock. The political leadership changes every decade or so, and there is a constant supply of fresh talent as party cadres are promoted based on their ability to hit targets.

China's critics rightly condemn the government

for controlling public opinion in all sorts of ways, from imprisoning dissidents to censoring internet discussions. Yet the regime's obsession with control paradoxically means it pays close attention to public opinion. At the same time China's leaders have been able to tackle some of the big problems of state-building that can take decades to deal with in a democracy. In just two years China has extended pension coverage to an extra 240m rural dwellers, for example—far more than the total number of people covered by America's public-pension system.

Many Chinese are prepared to put up with their system if it delivers growth. The 2013 Pew Survey of Global Attitudes showed that 85% of Chinese were "very satisfied" with their country's direction, compared with 31% of Americans. Some Chinese intellectuals have become positively boastful. Zhang Weiwei of Fudan University argues that democracy is destroying the West, and particularly America, because it institutionalises gridlock, trivialises decision-making and throws up second-rate presidents like George Bush junior. Yu Keping of Beijing University argues that democracy makes simple things "overly complicated and frivolous" and allows "certain sweet-talking politicians to mislead the people". Wang Jisi, also of Beijing University, has observed that "many developing countries that have introduced Western values and political systems are experiencing disorder and chaos" and that China offers an alternative model. Countries from Africa (Rwanda) to the Middle East (Dubai) to South-East Asia (Vietnam) are taking this advice seriously. [...]

Meanwhile some recent recruits to the democratic camp have lost their lustre. Since the introduction of democracy in 1994 South Africa has been ruled by the same party, the African National Congress, which has become progressively more self-serving. Turkey, which once seemed to combine moderate Islam with prosperity and democracy, is descending into corruption and autocracy. In Bangladesh, Thailand and Cambodia, opposition parties have boycotted recent elections or refused to accept their results.

All this has demonstrated that building the institutions needed to sustain democracy is very slow work indeed, and has dispelled the once-popular notion that democracy will blossom rapidly and spontaneously once the seed is planted. Although

democracy may be a “universal aspiration”, as Mr Bush and Tony Blair insisted, it is a culturally rooted practice. Western countries almost all extended the right to vote long after the establishment of sophisticated political systems, with powerful civil services and entrenched constitutional rights, in societies that cherished the notions of individual rights and independent judiciaries.

Yet in recent years the very institutions that are meant to provide models for new democracies have come to seem outdated and dysfunctional in established ones. The United States has become a byword for gridlock, so obsessed with partisan point-scoring that it has come to the verge of defaulting on its debts twice in the past two years. Its democracy is also corrupted by gerrymandering, the practice of drawing constituency boundaries to entrench the power of incumbents. This encourages extremism, because politicians have to appeal only to the party faithful, and in effect disenfranchises large numbers of voters. And money talks louder than ever in American politics. Thousands of lobbyists (more than 20 for every member of Congress) add to the length and complexity of legislation, the better to smuggle in special privileges. All this creates the impression that American democracy is for sale and that the rich have more power than the poor, even as lobbyists and donors insist that political expenditure is an exercise in free speech. The result is that America’s image—and by extension that of democracy itself—has taken a terrible battering.

Nor is the EU a paragon of democracy. The decision to introduce the euro in 1999 was taken largely by technocrats; only two countries, Denmark and Sweden, held referendums on the matter (both said no). Efforts to win popular approval for the Lisbon Treaty, which consolidated power in Brussels, were abandoned when people started voting the wrong way. During the darkest days of the euro crisis the euro-elite forced Italy and Greece to replace democratically elected leaders with technocrats. The European Parliament, an unsuccessful attempt to fix Europe’s democratic deficit, is both ignored and despised. The EU has become a breeding ground for populist parties, such as Geert Wilders’s Party for Freedom in the Netherlands and Marine Le Pen’s National Front in France, which claim to defend ordinary people against an arrogant and incompetent

elite. Greece’s Golden Dawn is testing how far democracies can tolerate Nazi-style parties. A project designed to tame the beast of European populism is instead poking it back into life.

The democratic distemper

EVEN in its heartland, democracy is clearly suffering from serious structural problems, rather than a few isolated ailments. Since the dawn of the modern democratic era in the late 19th century, democracy has expressed itself through nation-states and national parliaments. People elect representatives who pull the levers of national power for a fixed period. But this arrangement is now under assault from both above and below.

From above, globalisation has changed national politics profoundly. National politicians have surrendered ever more power, for example over trade and financial flows, to global markets and supranational bodies, and may thus find that they are unable to keep promises they have made to voters. International organisations such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation and the European Union have extended their influence. There is a compelling logic to much of this: how can a single country deal with problems like climate change or tax evasion? National politicians have also responded to globalisation by limiting their discretion and handing power to unelected technocrats in some areas. The number of countries with independent central banks, for example, has increased from about 20 in 1980 to more than 160 today.

From below come equally powerful challenges: from would-be breakaway nations, such as the Catalans and the Scots, from Indian states, from American city mayors. All are trying to reclaim power from national governments. There are also a host of what Moisés Naim, of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, calls “micro-powers”, such as NGOs and lobbyists, which are disrupting traditional politics and making life harder for democratic and autocratic leaders alike. The internet makes it easier to organise and agitate; in a world where people can participate in reality-TV votes every week, or support a petition with the click of a mouse, the machinery and institutions of parliamentary democracy, where elections happen

only every few years, look increasingly anachronistic. Douglas Carswell, a British member of parliament, likens traditional politics to HMV, a chain of British record shops that went bust, in a world where people are used to calling up whatever music they want whenever they want via Spotify, a popular digital music-streaming service.

The biggest challenge to democracy, however, comes neither from above nor below but from within—from the voters themselves. Plato’s great worry about democracy, that citizens would “live from day to day, indulging the pleasure of the moment”, has proved prescient. Democratic governments got into the habit of running big structural deficits as a matter of course, borrowing to give voters what they wanted in the short term, while neglecting long-term investment. France and Italy have not balanced their budgets for more than 30 years. The financial crisis starkly exposed the unsustainability of such debt-financed democracy.

With the post-crisis stimulus winding down, politicians must now confront the difficult trade-offs they avoided during years of steady growth and easy credit. But persuading voters to adapt to a new age of austerity will not prove popular at the ballot box. Slow growth and tight budgets will provoke conflict as interest groups compete for limited resources. To make matters worse, this competition is taking place as Western populations are ageing. Older people have always been better at getting their voices heard than younger ones, voting in greater numbers and organising pressure groups like America’s mighty AARP. They will increasingly have absolute numbers on their side. Many democracies now face a fight between past and future, between inherited entitlements and future investment.

Adjusting to hard times will be made even more difficult by a growing cynicism towards politics. Party membership is declining across the developed world: only 1% of Britons are now members of political parties compared with 20% in 1950. Voter turnout is falling, too: a study of 49 democracies found that it had declined by 10 percentage points between 1980-84 and 2007-13. A survey of seven European countries in 2012 found that more than half of voters “had no trust in government” whatsoever. A YouGov opinion poll of British voters in the same year found that 62% of those polled agreed that “politicians tell lies all the

time”. [...]

Democracy’s problems in its heartland help explain its setbacks elsewhere. Democracy did well in the 20th century in part because of American hegemony: other countries naturally wanted to emulate the world’s leading power. But as China’s influence has grown, America and Europe have lost their appeal as role models and their appetite for spreading democracy. The Obama administration now seems paralysed by the fear that democracy will produce rogue regimes or empower jihadists. And why should developing countries regard democracy as the ideal form of government when the American government cannot even pass a budget, let alone plan for the future? Why should autocrats listen to lectures on democracy from Europe, when the euro-elite sacks elected leaders who get in the way of fiscal orthodoxy?

“

Democratic dysfunction goes hand in hand with democratic distemper.

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At the same time, democracies in the emerging world have encountered the same problems as those in the rich world. They too have overindulged in short-term spending rather than long-term investment. Brazil allows public-sector workers to retire at 53 but has done little to create a modern airport system. India pays off vast numbers of client groups but invests too little in infrastructure. Political systems have been captured by interest groups and undermined by anti-democratic habits. Patrick French, a British historian, notes that every member of India’s lower house under the age of 30 is a member of a political dynasty. Even within the capitalist elite, support for democracy is fraying: Indian business moguls constantly complain that India’s chaotic democracy produces rotten infrastructure while China’s authoritarian system produces highways, gleaming airports and high-speed trains. [...]

Yet China’s stunning advances conceal deeper problems. The elite is becoming a self-perpetuating and self-serving clique. The 50 richest members of the

China's National People's Congress are collectively worth \$94.7 billion—60 times as much as the 50 richest members of America's Congress. China's growth rate has slowed from 10% to below 8% and is expected to fall further—an enormous challenge for a regime whose legitimacy depends on its ability to deliver consistent growth.

At the same time, as Alexis de Tocqueville pointed out in the 19th century, democracies always look weaker than they really are: they are all confusion on the surface but have lots of hidden strengths. Being able to install alternative leaders offering alternative policies makes democracies better than autocracies at finding creative solutions to problems and rising to existential challenges, though they often take a while to zigzag to the right policies. But to succeed, both fledgling and established democracies must ensure they are built on firm foundations.

Getting democracy right

THE most striking thing about the founders of modern democracy such as James Madison and John Stuart Mill is how hard-headed they were. They regarded democracy as a powerful but imperfect mechanism: something that needed to be designed carefully, in order to harness human creativity but also to check human perversity, and then kept in good working order, constantly oiled, adjusted and worked upon.

The need for hard-headedness is particularly pressing when establishing a nascent democracy. One reason why so many democratic experiments have failed recently is that they put too much emphasis on elections and too little on the other essential features of democracy. The power of the state needs to be checked, for instance, and individual rights such as freedom of speech and freedom to organise must be guaranteed. The most successful new democracies have all worked in large part because they avoided the temptation of majoritarianism—the notion that winning an election entitles the majority to do whatever it pleases. India has survived as a democracy since 1947 (apart from a couple of years of emergency rule) and Brazil since the mid-1980s for much the same reason: both put limits on the power of the government and provided guarantees for individual rights.

Robust constitutions not only promote long-term stability, reducing the likelihood that disgruntled minorities will take against the regime. They also bolster the struggle against corruption, the bane of developing countries. Conversely, the first sign that a fledgling democracy is heading for the rocks often comes when elected rulers try to erode constraints on their power—often in the name of majority rule. Mr Morsi tried to pack Egypt's upper house with supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. Mr Yanukovich reduced the power of Ukraine's parliament. Mr Putin has ridden roughshod over Russia's independent institutions in the name of the people. Several African leaders are engaging in crude majoritarianism—removing term limits on the presidency or expanding penalties against homosexual behaviour, as Uganda's president Yoweri Museveni did on February 24th.

Foreign leaders should be more willing to speak out when rulers engage in such illiberal behaviour, even if a majority supports it. But the people who most need to learn this lesson are the architects of new democracies: they must recognise that robust checks and balances are just as vital to the establishment of a healthy democracy as the right to vote. Paradoxically even potential dictators have a lot to learn from events in Egypt and Ukraine: Mr Morsi would not be spending his life shuttling between prison and a glass box in an Egyptian court, and Mr Yanukovich would not be fleeing for his life, if they had not enraged their compatriots by accumulating so much power.

Even those lucky enough to live in mature democracies need to pay close attention to the architecture of their political systems. The combination of globalisation and the digital revolution has made some of democracy's most cherished institutions look outdated. Established democracies need to update their own political systems both to address the problems they face at home, and to revitalise democracy's image abroad. Some countries have already embarked upon this process. America's Senate has made it harder for senators to filibuster appointments. A few states have introduced open primaries and handed redistricting to independent boundary commissions. Other obvious changes would improve matters. Reform of party financing, so that the names of all donors are made public, might reduce the influence of special interests.

The European Parliament could require its MPs to present receipts with their expenses. Italy's parliament has far too many members who are paid too much, and two equally powerful chambers, which makes it difficult to get anything done.

But reformers need to be much more ambitious. The best way to constrain the power of special interests is to limit the number of goodies that the state can hand out. And the best way to address popular disillusion towards politicians is to reduce the number of promises they can make. The key to a healthier democracy, in short, is a narrower state—an idea that dates back to the American revolution. "In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men", Madison argued, "the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself." The notion of limited government was also integral to the relaunch of democracy after the second world war. The United Nations Charter (1945) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) established rights and norms that countries could not breach, even if majorities wanted to do so.

These checks and balances were motivated by fear of tyranny. But today, particularly in the West, the big dangers to democracy are harder to spot. One is the growing size of the state. The relentless expansion of government is reducing liberty and handing ever more power to special interests. The other comes from government's habit of making promises that it cannot fulfil, either by creating entitlements it cannot pay for or by waging wars that it cannot win, such as that on drugs. Both voters and governments must be persuaded of the merits of accepting restraints on the state's natural tendency to overreach. Giving control of monetary policy to independent central banks tamed the rampant inflation of the 1980s, for example. It is time to apply the same principle of limited government to a broader range of policies. Mature democracies, just like nascent ones, require appropriate checks and balances on the power of elected government.

Governments can exercise self-restraint in several different ways. They can put on a golden straitjacket by adopting tight fiscal rules—as the Swedes have done by pledging to balance their budget over the economic cycle. They can introduce "sunset clauses"

that force politicians to renew laws every ten years, say. They can ask non-partisan commissions to propose long-term reforms. The Swedes rescued their pension system from collapse when an independent commission suggested pragmatic reforms including greater use of private pensions, and linking the retirement age to life-expectancy. Chile has been particularly successful at managing the combination of the volatility of the copper market and populist pressure to spend the surplus in good times. It has introduced strict rules to ensure that it runs a surplus over the economic cycle, and appointed a commission of experts to determine how to cope with economic volatility.

Isn't this a recipe for weakening democracy by handing more power to the great and the good? Not necessarily. Self-denying rules can strengthen democracy by preventing people from voting for spending policies that produce bankruptcy and social breakdown and by protecting minorities from persecution. But technocracy can certainly be taken too far. Power must be delegated sparingly, in a few big areas such as monetary policy and entitlement reform, and the process must be open and transparent.

And delegation upwards towards grandees and technocrats must be balanced by delegation downwards, handing some decisions to ordinary people. The trick is to harness the twin forces of globalism and localism, rather than trying to ignore or resist them. With the right balance of these two approaches, the same forces that threaten established democracies from above, through globalisation, and below, through the rise of micro-powers, can reinforce rather than undermine democracy.

Tocqueville argued that local democracy frequently represented democracy at its best: "Town-meetings are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they bring it within the people's reach, they teach men how to use and enjoy it." City mayors regularly get twice the approval ratings of national politicians. Modern technology can implement a modern version of Tocqueville's town-hall meetings to promote civic involvement and innovation. An online hyperdemocracy where everything is put to an endless series of public votes would play to the hand of special-interest groups. But technocracy

and direct democracy can keep each other in check: independent budget commissions can assess the cost and feasibility of local ballot initiatives, for example.

Several places are making progress towards getting this mixture right. The most encouraging example is California. Its system of direct democracy allowed its citizens to vote for contradictory policies, such as higher spending and lower taxes, while closed primaries and gerrymandered districts institutionalised extremism. But over the past five years California has introduced a series of reforms, thanks in part to the efforts of Nicolas Berggruen, a philanthropist and investor. The state has introduced a “Think Long” committee to counteract the short-term tendencies of ballot initiatives. It has introduced open primaries and handed power to redraw boundaries to an independent commission. And it has succeeded in balancing its budget—an achievement which Darrell Steinberg, the leader of the California Senate, described as “almost surreal”.

Similarly, the Finnish government has set up a non-partisan commission to produce proposals for the future of its pension system. At the same time it is trying to harness e-democracy: parliament is obliged to consider any citizens’ initiative that gains 50,000 signatures. But many more such experiments are needed—combining technocracy with direct democracy, and upward and downward delegation—if democracy is to zigzag its way back to health.

John Adams, America’s second president, once pronounced that “democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide.” He was clearly wrong. Democracy was the great victor of the ideological clashes of the 20th century. But if democracy is to remain as successful in the 21st century as it was in the 20th, it must be both assiduously nurtured when it is young—and carefully maintained when it is mature.



About the Author

The Economist is a newspaper that covers issues in international news, politics, business, finance and science. The paper speaks from the perspective of classical and economic liberalism, in support of free trade, globalization, free migration and cultural liberalism. The authors of The Economist remain anonymous due to the fact that most of the articles are collaborative works (with the contribution of many journalists/editors) and the "belief that what is written is more important than who writes it."

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Key Words

Autocracy:

(n) a system of government in which one person or group has uncontrolled or unlimited power (absolute power)

Crisis:

(n) a time of much difficulty or trouble, in which decisions need to be made to prevent the situation from worsening even further

Democracy:

(n) a system of government in which the leaders have been elected by the people

Dysfunctional:

(adj) unable to function or work properly

Globalization:

(n) process of interaction and integration of people, companies, and governments from all over the world; global integration/development

Gridlock:

(n) a situation in which nothing can happen (i.e. no decisions can be made), often because of strong disagreement between people

Majoritarianism:

(n) rule by a majority group of people (whether defined by religion, social class, etc.) in a system that allows them control over all decision-making mechanisms

Momentum:

(n) the ability to continue increasing, developing or being more successful

Outdated:

(adj) out of date and no longer useful

Self-restraint:

(n) the ability to control oneself (or a system/government) from doing things that might have negative consequences

Critical Thinking Component

Session Six

#1

The article states that, "if democracy is to remain as successful in the 21st century as it was in the 20th, it must be both assiduously nurtured when it is young - and carefully maintained when it is mature." Why is this?

#2

How might democratic governments seek to resolve the ongoing conflict between short-term and long-term goals?

#3

Do you think the spread of globalization and the digital revolution will continue to have a positive or negative impact on democracy?

#4

What might be the consequences of democracy turned majoritarianism in Myanmar?

#5

After the financial crisis and other blows to democracy, what will it take for people to have greater faith in democracy as a sustainable political system?

Essay Prompts

Option A:

For some, China represents a successful model of rapid development and growth. Do you think a country can have good reasons for prioritizing economic growth over a democratic system of government?

Option B:

Identify and describe some of the greatest threats to the growth of democracy in Myanmar. Give suggestions on how these threats might be overcome or lessened.

Human Rights Protection

Michelle Maiese

This article by Michelle Maiese originally appeared in *Beyond Intractability* (www.beyondintractability.org) in June 2004.

What are Human Rights?

Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are considered entitled: the right to life, liberty, freedom of thought and expression, and equal treatment before the law, among others. These rights represent entitlements of the individual or groups vis-à-vis the government, as well as responsibilities of the individual and the government authorities.

Such rights are ascribed “naturally,” which means that they are not earned and cannot be denied on the basis of race, creed, ethnicity or gender. These rights are often advanced as legal rights and protected by the rule of law. However, they are distinct from and prior to law, and can be used as standards for formulating or criticizing both local and international law. It is typically thought that the conduct of governments and military forces must comply with these standards. Various “basic” rights that cannot be violated under any circumstances are set forth in international human rights documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The rights established by these documents include economic, social, cultural, political and civil rights.

While human rights are not always interpreted similarly across societies, these norms nonetheless form a common human rights vocabulary in which the claims of various cultures can be articulated. The widespread ratification of international human rights agreements such as those listed above is taken as evidence that these are widely shared values. Having human rights norms in place imposes certain requirements on governments and legitimizes the complaints of individuals in those cases where fundamental rights and freedoms are not respected.

Such norms constitute a standard for the conduct of government and the administration of force. They can be used as “universal, non-discriminatory standards” for formulating or criticizing law and act as guidelines for proper conduct.

Many conflicts are sparked by a failure to protect human rights, and the trauma that results from severe human rights violations often leads to new human rights violations. As conflict intensifies, hatred accumulates and makes restoration of peace more difficult. In order to stop this cycle of violence, states must institute policies aimed at human rights protection. Many believe that the protection of human rights “is essential to the sustainable achievement of the three agreed global priorities of peace, development and democracy.” Respect for human rights has therefore become an integral part of international law and foreign policy. The specific goal of expanding such rights is to “increase safeguards for the dignity of the person.”

Despite what resembles a widespread consensus on the importance of human rights and the expansion of international treaties on such matters, the protection of human rights still often leaves much to be desired. Although international organizations have been created or utilized to embody these values, there is little to enforce the commitments states have made to human rights. Military intervention is a rare occurrence. Sanctions have a spotty track record of effectiveness. Although not to be dismissed as insignificant, often the only consequence for failing to protect human rights is “naming and shaming.”

Interventions to Protect Human Rights

To protect human rights is to ensure that people receive some degree of decent, humane treatment. Because political systems that protect human rights are thought to reduce the threat of world conflict, all nations have a stake in promoting worldwide respect for human rights. International human rights law, humanitarian intervention law and refugee law

all protect the right to life and physical integrity and attempt to limit the unrestrained power of the state. These laws aim to preserve humanity and protect against anything that challenges people's health, economic well-being, social stability and political peace. Underlying such laws is the principle of nondiscrimination, the notion that rights apply universally.

Responsibility to protect human rights resides first and foremost with the states themselves. However, in many cases public authorities and government officials institute policies that violate basic human rights. Such abuses of power by political leaders and state authorities have devastating effects, including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. What can be done to safeguard human rights when those in power are responsible for human rights violations? Can outside forces intervene in order to protect human rights?

Humanitarian Intervention

In some cases, the perceived need to protect human rights and maintain peace has led to humanitarian intervention. There is evidence that internationally we are moving towards the notion that governments have not only a negative duty to respect human rights, but also a positive duty to safeguard these rights, preserve life and protect people from having their rights violated by others. Many believe that states' duties to intervene should not be determined by proximity, but rather by the severity of the crisis.

There are two kinds of humanitarian intervention involving the military: unilateral interventions by a single state, and collective interventions by a group of states.^[11] Because relatively few states have sufficient force and capacity to intervene on their own, most modern interventions are collective. Some also argue that there is a normative consensus that multilateral intervention is the only acceptable form at present.

There is much disagreement about when and to what extent outside countries can engage in such interventions. More specifically, there is debate about the efficacy of using military force to protect the human rights of individuals in other nations. This sort of debate stems largely from a tension between state

sovereignty and the rights of individuals.

Some defend the principles of state sovereignty and nonintervention, and argue that other states must be permitted to determine their own course. They point out that the principles of state sovereignty and the non-use of force are enshrined in the charter of the United Nations, which is regarded as an authoritative source on international legal order.

This argument suggests that different states have different conceptions of justice, and international coexistence depends on a pluralist ethic whereby each state can uphold its own conception of the good. Among this group, there is "a profound skepticism about the possibilities of realizing notions of universal justice." States that presume to judge what counts as a violation of human rights in another nation interfere with that nation's right to self-determination. Suspicions are further raised by the inconsistent respect for sovereignty (or human rights for that matter); namely, the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council have tremendous say over application of international principles. In addition, requiring some country to respect human rights is liable to cause friction and can lead to far-reaching disagreements. Thus, acts of intervention may disrupt interstate order and lead to further conflict. Even greater human suffering might thereby result if states set aside the norm of nonintervention.

Others point out that humanitarian intervention does not, in principle, threaten the territorial integrity and political independence of states. Rather than aiming to destabilize a target state and meddle in its affairs, humanitarian intervention aims to restore rule of law and promote humane treatment of individuals.

Furthermore, people who advocate this approach maintain that "only the vigilant eye of the international community can ensure the proper observance of international standards, in the interest not of one state or another but of the individuals themselves." They maintain that massive violations of human rights, such as genocide and crimes against humanity, warrant intervention, even if it causes some tension or disagreement. Certain rights are inalienable and universal, and "taking basic rights seriously means taking responsibility for their protection everywhere."

If, through its atrocious actions, a state destroys the

lives and rights of its citizens, it temporarily forfeits its claims to legitimacy and sovereignty. Outside governments then have a positive duty to take steps to protect human rights and preserve lives. In addition, it is thought that political systems that protect human rights reduce the threat of world conflict. Thus, intervention might also be justified on the ground of preserving international security, promoting justice and maintaining international order.

Nevertheless, governments are often reluctant to commit military forces and resources to defend human rights in other states. In addition, the use of violence to end human rights violations poses a moral dilemma insofar as such interventions may lead to further loss of innocent lives. Therefore, it is imperative that the least amount of force necessary to achieve humanitarian objectives be used, and that intervention not do more harm than good. Lastly, there is a need to ensure that intervention is legitimate, and motivated by genuine humanitarian concerns. The purposes of intervention must be apolitical and disinterested. However, if risks and costs of intervention are high, it is unlikely that states will intervene unless their own interests are involved. For this reason, some doubt whether interventions are ever driven by humanitarian concerns rather than self-interest.

“
If, through atrocious actions, a state destroys the lives and rights of its citizens, it temporarily forfeits its claims to legitimacy and sovereignty.
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Many note that in order to truly address human rights violations, we must strive to understand the underlying causes of these breaches. These causes have to do with underdevelopment, economic pressures, social problems and international conditions. Indeed, the roots of repression, discrimination and other denials of human rights stem from deeper and more complex political, social and economic problems. It is only by understanding and ameliorating these root causes and strengthening both democracy and civil society that we can truly

protect human rights.

Restoring Human Rights in the Peacebuilding Phase

In the aftermath of conflict, violence and suspicion often persist. Government institutions and the judiciary, which bear the main responsibility for the observation of human rights, are often severely weakened by the conflict or complicit in it. Yet, a general improvement in the human rights situation is essential for rehabilitation of war-torn societies. Many argue that healing the psychological scars caused by atrocities and reconciliation at the community level cannot take place if the truth about past crimes is not revealed and if human rights are not protected. To preserve political stability, human rights implementation must be managed effectively. Issues of mistrust and betrayal must be addressed, and the rule of law must be restored. In such an environment, the international community can often play an important supporting role in providing at least implicit guarantees that former opponents will not abandon the peace. Because all international norms are subject to cultural interpretation, external agents that assist in the restoration of human rights in post-conflict societies must be careful to find local terms with which to express human rights norms. While human rights are in theory universal, ideas about which basic needs should be guaranteed vary according to cultural, political, economic and religious circumstances.

Consequently, policies to promote and protect human rights must be culturally adapted to avoid distrust and perceptions of intrusion into internal affairs.

To promote human rights standards in post-conflict societies, many psychological issues must be addressed. Societies must either introduce new social norms or reestablish old moral standards. They must design programs that will both address past injustice and prevent future human rights violations. Human rights must not become just another compartmentalized aspect of recovery, but must be infused throughout all peacebuilding and reconstruction activities. Democratization implies the restoration of political and social rights. Government

officials and members of security and police forces have to be trained to observe basic rights in the execution of their duties. Finally, being able to forgive past violations is central to society's reconciliation.

Rights Protection Methods

Various methods to advance and protect human rights are available:

- During violent conflict, safe havens to protect refugees and war victims from any surrounding violence in their communities can sometimes help to safeguard human lives.
- As violent conflict begins to subside, peacekeeping strategies to physically separate disputants and prevent further violence are crucial. These measures, together with violence prevention mechanisms, can help to safeguard human lives. Limiting the use of violence is crucial to ensuring groups' survival and creating the necessary conditions for a return to peace.
- Education about human rights must become part of general public education. Technical and financial assistance should be provided to increase knowledge about human rights. Members of the police and security forces have to be trained to ensure the observation of human rights standards for law enforcement. Research institutes and universities should be strengthened to train lawyers and judges. To uphold human rights standards in the long-term, their values must permeate all levels of society.
- Dialogue groups that assemble people from various ethnicities should be organized to overcome mistrust, fear and grief in society. Getting to know the feelings of ordinary people of each side might help to change the demonic image of the enemy group. Dialogue also helps parties at the grassroots level to discover the truth about what has happened, and may provide opportunities for apology and forgiveness.
- External specialists can offer legislative assistance and provide guidance in drafting press freedom laws, minority legislation and laws securing gender equality. They can also assist in drafting a constitution, which guarantees fundamental political and economic rights.
- Those who perpetrate human rights violations find it much easier to do so in cases where their activities can remain secret. International witnesses, observers and reporters can exert modest pressure to bring violations of human rights to public notice and discourage further violence. Monitors should not only expose violations, but also make the public aware of any progress made in the realization of human rights. In order to ensure that proper action is taken after the results of investigations have been made public, effective mechanisms to address injustice must be in place.
- Truth commissions are sometimes established after a political transition. To distinguish them from other institutions established to deal with a legacy of human rights abuses, truth commissions can be understood as "bodies set up to investigate a past history of violations of human rights in a particular country -- which can include violations by the military or other government forces or armed opposition forces." [28] They are officially sanctioned temporary bodies that investigate a pattern of abuse in the past. Their goal is to uncover details of past abuses as a symbol of acknowledgment of past wrongs. They typically do not have the powers of courts, nor should they, since they do not have the same standards of evidence and protections for defendants. As such, they usually do not "name names" of those responsible for human rights abuses, but rather point to institutional failings that facilitated the crimes. Finally, they conclude with a report that contains recommendations to prevent a recurrence of the crimes and to provide reparations to victims.
- International war crimes tribunals are established to hold individuals criminally responsible for violations of international human rights law in special courts. The international community rarely has the will to create them. As the experiences with the war tribunals for Rwanda and Yugoslavia indicate, even where they are created, they are imperfect. They cannot hold all perpetrators accountable and typically aim for

the top leadership. However, it remains difficult to sentence the top-level decision-makers, who bear the ultimate responsibility for atrocities. They often enjoy political immunity as members of the post-conflict government. Incriminating a popular leader might lead to violent protests and sometimes even to relapse into conflict. Leaders may be necessary to negotiate and implement a peace agreement.

- Various democratization measures can help to restore political and social rights. For sustainability and long-term viability of human rights standards, strong local enforcement mechanisms have to be established. An independent judiciary that provides impartial means and protects individuals against politically influenced persecution must be restored. Election monitors who help to guarantee fair voting procedures can help to ensure stable and peaceful elections. And various social structural changes, including reallocations of resources, increased political participation, and the strengthening of civil society can help to ensure that people's basic needs are met.
- Humanitarian aid and development assistance seeks to ease the impact that violent conflict has on civilians. During conflict, the primary aim is to prevent human casualties and ensure access to basic survival needs. These basics include water, sanitation, food, shelter and health care. Aid can also assist those who have been displaced and support rehabilitation work. Once conflict has ended, development assistance helps to advance reconstruction programs that rebuild infrastructure, institutions and the economy. This assistance helps countries to undergo peaceful development rather than sliding back into conflict.

in which they will be respected in the future. They are not alternatives, but each provides important benefits in dealing with the past and envisioning a brighter future.

Conclusion

The expansion of international human rights law has often not been matched by practice. Yet, there is growing consensus that the protection of human rights is important for the resolution of conflict and to the rebuilding process afterward. To achieve these goals, the international community has identified a number of mechanisms both to bring an end to human rights abuses and to establish an environment



Key Words

Collective:

(adj) of a decision or action made by every member of a group

Consensus:

(n) general agreement around an issue

Enforce:

(v) to make people or governments obey a rule or law

Fundamental:

(adj) forming the base or core of something; necessary and important

Intervention:

(n) the act of a country getting involved or interfering with another's affairs

Sovereignty:

(n) the authority of a state to govern itself

Standard:

(n) the level that is considered to be acceptable, or the level that someone or something has achieved

Unilateral:

(adj) of a decision or action that is taken by only one actor among a group of others

Universally:

(adv) applying to everyone (in the world or in a particular group)

Violation:

(n) an action that breaks a law, agreement, or principle

Note: Information on the author is not available.

Critical Thinking Component

Session Seven

#1

What is the relationship between human rights and the law (both local and international)?

#2

The article discusses the dilemma that occurs when those responsible for protecting human rights (i.e. the government) are the ones actually committing human rights violations. What are the consequences of this?

#3

Do you agree that it should be the responsibility of national governments to protect human rights?

#4

Maiese cites the popular belief that human rights are necessary to global peace, development, and democracy. Looking forward, how might the lack of human rights interfere with Myanmar's development?

#5

Do you believe that humanitarian intervention is always justified? Explain.

Essay Prompts

Option A:

Explain a scenario in recent history when humanitarian intervention in a country, because of human rights' violations, was debated in the international community. What were the reasons for and against intervention? What was the final course of action?

Option B:

Choose three rights protection methods from the list provided by Maiese. Imagine them in the context of Myanmar and explain what might be the challenges in implementing each method as well as ways to overcome these obstacles.

Freedom from Fear

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

Following the suppression of student demonstrations in Myanmar in 1988, Aung San Suu Kyi addressed the public in the following speech. It was first released for publication to honor her as recipient of the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought 1990 and is now included in her collection of works, *Freedom from Fear: And Other Writings* (1991).

It is not power that corrupts but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it. Most Burmese are familiar with the four a-gati, the four kinds of corruption. Chanda-gati, corruption induced by desire, is deviation from the right path in pursuit of bribes or for the sake of those one loves. Dosa-gati is taking the wrong path to spite those against whom one bears ill will, and moga-gati is aberration due to ignorance. But perhaps the worst of the four is bhaya-gati, for not only does bhaya, fear, stifle and slowly destroy all sense of right and wrong, it so often lies at the root of the other three kinds of corruption. Just as chanda-gati, when not the result of sheer avarice, can be caused by fear of want or fear of losing the goodwill of those one loves, so fear of being surpassed, humiliated or injured in some way can provide the impetus for ill will. And it would be difficult to dispel ignorance unless there is freedom to pursue the truth unfettered by fear. With so close a relationship between fear and corruption it is little wonder that in any society where fear is rife corruption in all forms becomes deeply entrenched.

Public dissatisfaction with economic hardships has been seen as the chief cause of the movement for democracy in Burma, sparked off by the student demonstrations 1988. It is true that years of incoherent policies, inept official measures, burgeoning inflation and falling real income had turned the country into an economic shambles. But it was more than the difficulties of eking out a barely acceptable standard of living that had eroded the patience of a traditionally good-natured, quiescent people - it was also the humiliation of a way of life

disfigured by corruption and fear.

The students were protesting not just against the death of their comrades but against the denial of their right to life by a totalitarian regime which deprived the present of meaningfulness and held out no hope for the future. And because the students' protests articulated the frustrations of the people at large, the demonstrations quickly grew into a nationwide movement. Some of its keenest supporters were businessmen who had developed the skills and the contacts necessary not only to survive but to prosper within the system. But their affluence offered them no genuine sense of security or fulfilment, and they could not but see that if they and their fellow citizens, regardless of economic status, were to achieve a worthwhile existence, an accountable administration was at least a necessary if not a sufficient condition. The people of Burma had wearied of a precarious state of passive apprehension where they were 'as water in the cupped hands' of the powers that be.

Emerald cool we may be
As water in cupped hands
But oh that we might be
As splinters of glass
In cupped hands.

Glass splinters, the smallest with its sharp, glinting power to defend itself against hands that try to crush, could be seen as a vivid symbol of the spark of courage that is an essential attribute of those who would free themselves from the grip of oppression. Bogyoke Aung San regarded himself as a revolutionary and searched tirelessly for answers to the problems that beset Burma during her times of trial. He exhorted the people to develop courage: 'Don't just depend on the courage and intrepidity of others. Each and every one of you must make sacrifices to become a hero possessed of courage and intrepidity. Then only shall we all be able to enjoy true freedom.'

The effort necessary to remain uncorrupted in an environment where fear is an integral part of everyday existence is not immediately apparent to

those fortunate enough to live in states governed by the rule of law. Just laws do not merely prevent corruption by meting out impartial punishment to offenders. They also help to create a society in which people can fulfil the basic requirements necessary for the preservation of human dignity without recourse to corrupt practices. Where there are no such laws, the burden of upholding the principles of justice and common decency falls on the ordinary people. It is the cumulative effect on their sustained effort and steady endurance which will change a nation where reason and conscience are warped by fear into one where legal rules exist to promote man's desire for harmony and justice while restraining the less desirable destructive traits in his nature.

In an age when immense technological advances have created lethal weapons which could be, and are, used by the powerful and the unprincipled to dominate the weak and the helpless, there is a compelling need for a closer relationship between politics and ethics at both the national and international levels. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations proclaims that 'every individual and every organ of society' should strive to promote the basic rights and freedoms to which all human beings regardless of race, nationality or religion are entitled. But as long as there are governments whose authority is founded on coercion rather than on the mandate of the people, and interest groups which place short-term profits above long-term peace and prosperity, concerted international action to protect and promote human rights will remain at best a partially realized struggle. There will continue to be arenas of struggle where victims of oppression have to draw on their own inner resources to defend their inalienable rights as members of the human family.

The quintessential revolution is that of the spirit, born of an intellectual conviction of the need for change in those mental attitudes and values which shape the course of a nation's development. A revolution which aims merely at changing official policies and institutions with a view to an improvement in material conditions has little chance of genuine success. Without a revolution of the spirit, the forces which produced the iniquities of the old order would continue to be operative, posing a constant threat to the process of reform and regeneration. It is not enough merely to call for freedom, democracy and

human rights. There has to be a united determination to persevere in the struggle, to make sacrifices in the name of enduring truths, to resist the corrupting influences of desire, ill will, ignorance and fear.

Saints, it has been said, are the sinners who go on trying. So free men are the oppressed who go on trying and who in the process make themselves fit to bear the responsibilities and to uphold the disciplines which will maintain a free society. Among the basic freedoms to which men aspire that their lives might be full and uncramped, freedom from fear stands out as both a means and an end. A people who would build a nation in which strong, democratic institutions are firmly established as a guarantee against state-induced power must first learn to liberate their own minds from apathy and fear.

“**But as long as there are governments whose authority is founded on coercion rather than on the mandate of the people, and interest groups which place short-term profits above long-term peace and prosperity, concerted international action to protect and promote human rights will remain at best a partially realized struggle.**”

Always one to practise what he preached, Aung San himself constantly demonstrated courage - not just the physical sort but the kind that enabled him to speak the truth, to stand by his word, to accept criticism, to admit his faults, to correct his mistakes, to respect the opposition, to parley with the enemy and to let people be the judge of his worthiness as a leader. It is for such moral courage that he will always be loved and respected in Burma - not merely as a warrior hero but as the inspiration and conscience of the nation. The words used by Jawaharlal Nehru to describe Mahatma Gandhi could well be applied to Aung San:

'The essence of his teaching was fearlessness and truth, and action allied to these, always keeping the welfare of the masses in view.'

Gandhi, that great apostle of non-violence, and Aung San, the founder of a national army, were very

different personalities, but as there is an inevitable sameness about the challenges of authoritarian rule anywhere at any time, so there is a similarity in the intrinsic qualities of those who rise up to meet the challenge. Nehru, who considered the instillation of courage in the people of India one of Gandhi's greatest achievements, was a political modernist, but as he assessed the needs for a twentieth-century movement for independence, he found himself looking back to the philosophy of ancient India: 'The greatest gift for an individual or a nation . . . was abhaya, fearlessness, not merely bodily courage but absence of fear from the mind.'

Fearlessness may be a gift but perhaps more precious is the courage acquired through endeavour, courage that comes from cultivating the habit of refusing to let fear dictate one's actions, courage that could be described as 'grace under pressure' - grace which is renewed repeatedly in the face of harsh, unremitting pressure.

Within a system which denies the existence of basic human rights, fear tends to be the order of the day. Fear of imprisonment, fear of torture, fear of death, fear of losing friends, family, property or means of livelihood, fear of poverty, fear of isolation, fear of failure. A most insidious form of fear is that which masquerades as common sense or even wisdom, condemning as foolish, reckless, insignificant or futile the small, daily acts of courage which help to preserve man's self-respect and inherent human dignity. It is not easy for a people conditioned by fear under the iron rule of the principle that might is right to free themselves from the enervating miasma of fear. Yet even under the most crushing state machinery courage rises up again and again, for fear is not the natural state of civilized man.

The wellspring of courage and endurance in the face of unbridled power is generally a firm belief in the sanctity of ethical principles combined with a historical sense that despite all setbacks the condition of man is set on an ultimate course for both spiritual and material advancement. It is his capacity for self-improvement and self-redemption which most distinguishes man from the mere brute. At the root of human responsibility is the concept of perfection, the urge to achieve it, the intelligence to find a path towards it, and the will to follow that path if not to

the end at least the distance needed to rise above individual limitations and environmental impediments. It is man's vision of a world fit for rational, civilized humanity which leads him to dare and to suffer to build societies free from want and fear. Concepts such as truth, justice and compassion cannot be dismissed as trite when these are often the only bulwarks which stand against ruthless power.



About the Author

Aung San Suu Kyi is the State Counselor of Myanmar. She studied and lived in England, but had returned to her home country of Myanmar in 1988 during student protests against the regime's dictator, U Ne Win. The military violently brought an end to the protests and Aung San Suu Kyi started to speak out against the military government and started a nonviolent movement for democracy and human rights. For her activism against the ruling party, she was placed under house arrest for 15 of 21 years from 1989 to 2010. She was finally released in 2010 and now plays a key role in the President's cabinet as State Counselor and Minister.



Key Words

Apathy:

(n) lack of interest, enthusiasm, or concern about something

Authority:

(n) the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce people to obey

Coercion:

(n) the action of persuading someone to do something they don't want to do, especially by using threats or orders

Corruption:

(n) dishonest, illegal or immoral behavior, especially by someone in a position of power

Courage:

(n) the quality of being brave, especially in difficult situations that pose threats or dangers

Fear:

(n) an unpleasant emotion that arises when someone is worried or afraid that something bad will happen

Integral:

(adj) forming a necessary part of something; of much importance

Prosperity:

(n) the state of being successful; having money and everything that is needed for a good life

Spirit:

(n) the part of someone that cannot be seen, but is made up of the person's qualities that form their character; one's "soul"

Totalitarian:

(adj) of a centralized government in which people are powerless under the control of the government

Critical Thinking Component

Session Eight

#1

Does fear still hold a place in the political/social spheres of Myanmar? If so, explain how. What are the consequences of this?

#2

Daw Suu encourages each person to develop their own courage and not just rely on the courage of others. What do you think are the reasons for this approach?

#3

How can we know if fear is lessened in the minds of a society?

#4

What does a “revolution of the spirit” mean to you?

#5

She argues that, “Without a revolution of the spirit, the forces which produced the iniquities of the old order would continue to be operative.” What forces is she referring to?

Essay Prompts

Option A:

Do you agree or disagree with the idea that there needs to be a closer relationship between politics and ethics. Explain why?

Option B:

What role does fear play in your own political/social views? How can you try to lessen these fears?

Capitalism vs. the Climate

Naomi Klein

This essay by Naomi Klein was originally published by the Nation Weekly (www.thenation.com) on November 9, 2011.

Note: Throughout the article, Klein refers to the Heartlanders' conference she attended. The Heartland Institute's Sixth International Conference on Climate Change was a gathering of committed denialists of climate change.

When public opinion on the big social and political issues changes, the trends tend to be relatively gradual. Abrupt shifts, when they come, are usually precipitated by dramatic events. Which is why pollsters are so surprised by what has happened to perceptions about climate change over a span of just four years. A 2007 Harris poll found that 71 percent of Americans believed that the continued burning of fossil fuels would cause the climate to change. By 2009 the figure had dropped to 51 percent. In June 2011 the number of Americans who agreed was down to 44 percent—well under half the population. According to Scott Keeter, director of survey research at the Pew Research Center for People and the Press, this is “among the largest shifts over a short period of time seen in recent public opinion history.”

Even more striking, this shift has occurred almost entirely at one end of the political spectrum. As recently as 2008 (the year Newt Gingrich did a climate change TV spot with Nancy Pelosi) the issue still had a veneer of bipartisan support in the United States. Those days are decidedly over. Today, 70–75 percent of self-identified Democrats and liberals believe humans are changing the climate—a level that has remained stable or risen slightly over the past decade. In sharp contrast, Republicans, particularly Tea Party members, have overwhelmingly chosen to reject the scientific consensus. In some regions, only about 20 percent of self-identified Republicans accept the science.

Equally significant has been a shift in emotional intensity. Climate change used to be something most everyone said they cared about—just not all

that much. When Americans were asked to rank their political concerns in order of priority, climate change would reliably come in last.

But now there is a significant cohort of Republicans who care passionately, even obsessively, about climate change—though what they care about is exposing it as a “hoax” being perpetrated by liberals to force them to change their light bulbs, live in Soviet-style tenements and surrender their SUVs. For these right-wingers, opposition to climate change has become as central to their worldview as low taxes, gun ownership and opposition to abortion. Many climate scientists report receiving death threats, as do authors of articles on subjects as seemingly innocuous as energy conservation. (As one letter writer put it to Stan Cox, author of a book critical of air-conditioning, “You can pry my thermostat out of my cold dead hands.”)

This culture-war intensity is the worst news of all, because when you challenge a person's position on an issue core to his or her identity, facts and arguments are seen as little more than further attacks, easily deflected. (The deniers have even found a way to dismiss a new study confirming the reality of global warming that was partially funded by the Koch brothers, and led by a scientist sympathetic to the “skeptic” position.)

The effects of this emotional intensity have been on full display in the race to lead the Republican Party. Days into his presidential campaign, with his home state literally burning up with wildfires, Texas Governor Rick Perry delighted the base by declaring that climate scientists were manipulating data “so that they will have dollars rolling into their projects.” Meanwhile, the only candidate to consistently defend climate science, Jon Huntsman, was dead on arrival. And part of what has rescued Mitt Romney's campaign has been his flight from earlier statements supporting the scientific consensus on climate change.

But the effects of the right-wing climate conspiracies reach far beyond the Republican Party. The Democrats have mostly gone mute on the subject, not wanting to alienate independents. And the media and

culture industries have followed suit. Five years ago, celebrities were showing up at the Academy Awards in hybrids, Vanity Fair launched an annual green issue and, in 2007, the three major US networks ran 147 stories on climate change. No longer. In 2010 the networks ran just thirty-two climate change stories; limos are back in style at the Academy Awards; and the “annual” Vanity Fair green issue hasn’t been seen since 2008.

This uneasy silence has persisted through the end of the hottest decade in recorded history and yet another summer of freak natural disasters and record-breaking heat worldwide. Meanwhile, the fossil fuel industry is rushing to make multibillion-dollar investments in new infrastructure to extract oil, natural gas and coal from some of the dirtiest and highest-risk sources on the continent (the \$7 billion Keystone XL pipeline being only the highest-profile example). In the Alberta tar sands, in the Beaufort Sea, in the gas fields of Pennsylvania and the coalfields of Wyoming and Montana, the industry is betting big that the climate movement is as good as dead.

If the carbon these projects are poised to suck out is released into the atmosphere, the chance of triggering catastrophic climate change will increase dramatically (mining the oil in the Alberta tar sands alone, says NASA’s James Hansen, would be “essentially game over” for the climate).

The climate movement needs to have one hell of a comeback. For this to happen, the left is going to have to learn from the right.

All of this means that the climate movement needs to have one hell of a comeback. For this to happen, the left is going to have to learn from the right. Denialists gained traction by making climate about economics: action will destroy capitalism, they have claimed, killing jobs and sending prices soaring. But at a time when a growing number of people agree with the protesters at Occupy Wall Street, many of whom argue that capitalism-as-usual is itself the cause of lost jobs and debt slavery, there is a unique opportunity to seize the economic terrain from the right. This would require making a persuasive case that the real solutions to the climate crisis are also our best hope of building a much more enlightened economic system—one that closes deep inequalities, strengthens and transforms the public sphere,

generates plentiful, dignified work and radically reins in corporate power. It would also require a shift away from the notion that climate action is just one issue on a laundry list of worthy causes vying for progressive attention. Just as climate denialism has become a core identity issue on the right, utterly entwined with defending current systems of power and wealth, the scientific reality of climate change must, for progressives, occupy a central place in a coherent narrative about the perils of unrestrained greed and the need for real alternatives. [...]

* * *

The deniers did not decide that climate change is a left-wing conspiracy by uncovering some covert socialist plot. They arrived at this analysis by taking a hard look at what it would take to lower global emissions as drastically and as rapidly as climate science demands. They have concluded that this can be done only by radically reordering our economic and political systems in ways antithetical to their “free market” belief system. As British blogger and Heartland regular James Delingpole has pointed out, “Modern environmentalism successfully advances many of the causes dear to the left: redistribution of wealth, higher taxes, greater government intervention, regulation.” Heartland’s Bast puts it even more bluntly: For the left, “Climate change is the perfect thing.... It’s the reason why we should do everything [the left] wanted to do anyway.”

Here’s my inconvenient truth: they aren’t wrong. Before I go any further, let me be absolutely clear: as 97 percent of the world’s climate scientists attest, the Heartlanders are completely wrong about the science. The heat-trapping gases released into the atmosphere through the burning of fossil fuels are already causing temperatures to increase. If we are not on a radically different energy path by the end of this decade, we are in for a world of pain.

But when it comes to the real-world consequences of those scientific findings, specifically the kind of deep changes required not just to our energy consumption but to the underlying logic of our economic system, the crowd gathered at the Marriott Hotel may be in considerably less denial than a lot of professional environmentalists, the ones who paint a picture of global warming Armageddon, then assure us that we can avert catastrophe by buying “green” products and

creating clever markets in pollution.

The fact that the earth's atmosphere cannot safely absorb the amount of carbon we are pumping into it is a symptom of a much larger crisis, one born of the central fiction on which our economic model is based: that nature is limitless, that we will always be able to find more of what we need, and that if something runs out it can be seamlessly replaced by another resource that we can endlessly extract. But it is not just the atmosphere that we have exploited beyond its capacity to recover—we are doing the same to the oceans, to freshwater, to topsoil and to biodiversity. The expansionist, extractive mindset, which has so long governed our relationship to nature, is what the climate crisis calls into question so fundamentally. The abundance of scientific research showing we have pushed nature beyond its limits does not just demand green products and market-based solutions; it demands a new civilizational paradigm, one grounded not in dominance over nature but in respect for natural cycles of renewal—and acutely sensitive to natural limits, including the limits of human intelligence.

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It is true that responding to the climate threat requires strong government action at all levels. But real climate solutions are ones that steer these interventions to systematically disperse and devolve power and control to the community level, whether through community-controlled renewable energy, local organic agriculture or transit systems genuinely accountable to their users.

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So in a way, Chris Horner was right when he told his fellow Heartlanders that climate change isn't "the issue." In fact, it isn't an issue at all. Climate change is a message, one that is telling us that many of our culture's most cherished ideas are no longer viable. These are profoundly challenging revelations for all of us raised on Enlightenment ideals of progress, unaccustomed to having our ambitions confined by natural boundaries. And this is true for the statist left as well as the neoliberal right.

While Heartlanders like to invoke the specter of communism to terrify Americans about climate action (Czech President Vaclav Klaus, a Heartland conference favorite, says that attempts to prevent global warming are akin to "the ambitions of communist central planners to control the entire society"), the reality is that Soviet-era state socialism was a disaster for the climate. It devoured resources with as much enthusiasm as capitalism, and spewed waste just as recklessly: before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Czechs and Russians had even higher carbon footprints per capita than their counterparts in Britain, Canada and Australia. And while some point to the dizzying expansion of China's renewable energy programs to argue that only centrally controlled regimes can get the green job done, China's command-and-control economy continues to be harnessed to wage an all-out war with nature, through massively disruptive mega-dams, superhighways and extraction-based energy projects, particularly coal.

It is true that responding to the climate threat requires strong government action at all levels. But real climate solutions are ones that steer these interventions to systematically disperse and devolve power and control to the community level, whether through community-controlled renewable energy, local organic agriculture or transit systems genuinely accountable to their users.

Here is where the Heartlanders have good reason to be afraid: arriving at these new systems is going to require shredding the free-market ideology that has dominated the global economy for more than three decades. What follows is a quick-and-dirty look at what a serious climate agenda would mean in the following six arenas: public infrastructure, economic planning, corporate regulation, international trade, consumption and taxation. For hard-right ideologues like those gathered at the Heartland conference, the results are nothing short of intellectually cataclysmic.

1. Reviving and Reinventing the Public Sphere

After years of recycling, carbon offsetting and light bulb changing, it is obvious that individual action will never be an adequate response to the climate crisis. Climate change is a collective problem, and it demands collective action. One of the key areas in which this collective action must take place is big-ticket investments designed to reduce our emissions

on a mass scale. That means subways, streetcars and light-rail systems that are not only everywhere but affordable to everyone; energy-efficient affordable housing along those transit lines; smart electrical grids carrying renewable energy; and a massive research effort to ensure that we are using the best methods possible.

The private sector is ill suited to providing most of these services because they require large up-front investments and, if they are to be genuinely accessible to all, some very well may not be profitable. They are, however, decidedly in the public interest, which is why they should come from the public sector.

Traditionally, battles to protect the public sphere are cast as conflicts between irresponsible leftists who want to spend without limit and practical realists who understand that we are living beyond our economic means. But the gravity of the climate crisis cries out for a radically new conception of realism, as well as a very different understanding of limits. Government budget deficits are not nearly as dangerous as the deficits we have created in vital and complex natural systems. Changing our culture to respect those limits will require all of our collective muscle—to get ourselves off fossil fuels and to shore up communal infrastructure for the coming storms.

2. Remembering How to Plan

In addition to reversing the thirty-year privatization trend, a serious response to the climate threat involves recovering an art that has been relentlessly vilified during these decades of market fundamentalism: planning. Lots and lots of planning. And not just at the national and international levels. Every community in the world needs a plan for how it is going to transition away from fossil fuels, what the Transition Town movement calls an “energy descent action plan.” In the cities and towns that have taken this responsibility seriously, the process has opened rare spaces for participatory democracy, with neighbors packing consultation meetings at city halls to share ideas about how to reorganize their communities to lower emissions and build in resilience for tough times ahead.

Climate change demands other forms of planning as well—particularly for workers whose jobs will become obsolete as we wean ourselves off fossil fuels. A few

“green jobs” trainings aren’t enough. These workers need to know that real jobs will be waiting for them on the other side. That means bringing back the idea of planning our economies based on collective priorities rather than corporate profitability—giving laid-off employees of car plants and coal mines the tools and resources to create jobs, for example, with Cleveland’s worker-run green co-ops serving as a model.

Agriculture, too, will have to see a revival in planning if we are to address the triple crisis of soil erosion, extreme weather and dependence on fossil fuel inputs. Wes Jackson, the visionary founder of the Land Institute in Salina, Kansas, has been calling for “a fifty-year farm bill.” That’s the length of time he and his collaborators Wendell Berry and Fred Kirschenmann estimate it will take to conduct the research and put the infrastructure in place to replace many soil-depleting annual grain crops, grown in monocultures, with perennial crops, grown in polycultures. Since perennials don’t need to be replanted every year, their long roots do a much better job of storing scarce water, holding soil in place and sequestering carbon. Polycultures are also less vulnerable to pests and to being wiped out by extreme weather. Another bonus: this type of farming is much more labor intensive than industrial agriculture, which means that farming can once again be a substantial source of employment.

Outside the Heartland conference and like-minded gatherings, the return of planning is nothing to fear. We are not talking about a return to authoritarian socialism, after all, but a turn toward real democracy. The thirty-odd-year experiment in deregulated, Wild West economics is failing the vast majority of people around the world. These systemic failures are precisely why so many are in open revolt against their elites, demanding living wages and an end to corruption. Climate change doesn’t conflict with demands for a new kind of economy. Rather, it adds to them an existential imperative.

3. Reining in Corporations

A key piece of the planning we must undertake involves the rapid re-regulation of the corporate sector. Much can be done with incentives: subsidies for renewable energy and responsible land stewardship, for instance. But we are also going to have to get back into the habit of barring outright

dangerous and destructive behavior. That means getting in the way of corporations on multiple fronts, from imposing strict caps on the amount of carbon corporations can emit, to banning new coal-fired power plants, to cracking down on industrial feedlots, to shutting down dirty-energy extraction projects like the Alberta tar sands (starting with pipelines like Keystone XL that lock in expansion plans).

Only a very small sector of the population sees any restriction on corporate or consumer choice as leading down Hayek's road to serfdom—and, not coincidentally, it is precisely this sector of the population that is at the forefront of climate change denial.

4. Relocalizing Production

If strictly regulating corporations to respond to climate change sounds somewhat radical it's because, since the beginning of the 1980s, it has been an article of faith that the role of government is to get out of the way of the corporate sector—and nowhere more so than in the realm of international trade. The devastating impacts of free trade on manufacturing, local business and farming are well known. But perhaps the atmosphere has taken the hardest hit of all. The cargo ships, jumbo jets and heavy trucks that haul raw resources and finished products across the globe devour fossil fuels and spew greenhouse gases. And the cheap goods being produced—made to be replaced, almost never fixed—are consuming a huge range of other nonrenewable resources while producing far more waste than can be safely absorbed.

This model is so wasteful, in fact, that it cancels out the modest gains that have been made in reducing emissions many times over. For instance, the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences recently published a study of the emissions from industrialized countries that signed the Kyoto Protocol. It found that while they had stabilized, that was partly because international trade had allowed these countries to move their dirty production to places like China. The researchers concluded that the rise in emissions from goods produced in developing countries but consumed in industrialized ones was six times greater than the emissions savings of industrialized countries.

In an economy organized to respect natural limits, the use of energy-intensive long-haul transport would need to be rationed—reserved for those cases where goods cannot be produced locally or where local production is more carbon-intensive. (For example, growing food in greenhouses in cold parts of the United States is often more energy-intensive than growing it in the South and shipping it by light rail.)

Climate change does not demand an end to trade. But it does demand an end to the reckless form of "free trade" that governs every bilateral trade agreement as well as the World Trade Organization. This is more good news—for unemployed workers, for farmers unable to compete with cheap imports, for communities that have seen their manufacturers move offshore and their local businesses replaced with big boxes. But the challenge this poses to the capitalist project should not be underestimated: it represents the reversal of the thirty-year trend of removing every possible limit on corporate power.

5. Ending the Cult of Shopping

The past three decades of free trade, deregulation and privatization were not only the result of greedy people wanting greater corporate profits. They were also a response to the "stagflation" of the 1970s, which created intense pressure to find new avenues for rapid economic growth. The threat was real: within our current economic model, a drop in production is by definition a crisis—a recession or, if deep enough, a depression, with all the desperation and hardship that these words imply.

This growth imperative is why conventional economists reliably approach the climate crisis by asking the question, How can we reduce emissions while maintaining robust GDP growth? The usual answer is "decoupling"—the idea that renewable energy and greater efficiencies will allow us to sever economic growth from its environmental impact. And "green growth" advocates like Thomas Friedman tell us that the process of developing new green technologies and installing green infrastructure can provide a huge economic boost, sending GDP soaring and generating the wealth needed to "make America healthier, richer, more innovative, more productive, and more secure."

But here is where things get complicated. There is a

growing body of economic research on the conflict between economic growth and sound climate policy, led by ecological economist Herman Daly at the University of Maryland, as well as Peter Victor at York University, Tim Jackson of the University of Surrey and environmental law and policy expert Gus Speth. All raise serious questions about the feasibility of industrialized countries meeting the deep emissions cuts demanded by science (at least 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050) while continuing to grow their economies at even today's sluggish rates. As Victor and Jackson argue, greater efficiencies simply cannot keep up with the pace of growth, in part because greater efficiency is almost always accompanied by more consumption, reducing or even canceling out the gains (often called the "Jevons Paradox"). And so long as the savings resulting from greater energy and material efficiencies are simply plowed back into further exponential expansion of the economy, reduction in total emissions will be thwarted. As Jackson argues in *Prosperity Without Growth*, "Those who promote decoupling as an escape route from the dilemma of growth need to take a closer look at the historical evidence—and at the basic arithmetic of growth."

The bottom line is that an ecological crisis that has its roots in the overconsumption of natural resources must be addressed not just by improving the efficiency of our economies but by reducing the amount of material stuff we produce and consume. Yet that idea is anathema to the large corporations that dominate the global economy, which are controlled by footloose investors who demand ever greater profits year after year. We are therefore caught in the untenable bind of, as Jackson puts it, "trash the system or crash the planet."

The way out is to embrace a managed transition to another economic paradigm, using all the tools of planning discussed above. Growth would be reserved for parts of the world still pulling themselves out of poverty. Meanwhile, in the industrialized world, those sectors that are not governed by the drive for increased yearly profit (the public sector, co-ops, local businesses, nonprofits) would expand their share of overall economic activity, as would those sectors with minimal ecological impacts (such as the caregiving professions). A great many jobs could be created this way. But the role of the corporate sector, with

its structural demand for increased sales and profits, would have to contract.

So when the Heartlanders react to evidence of human-induced climate change as if capitalism itself were coming under threat, it's not because they are paranoid. It's because they are paying attention.

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The bottom line is that an ecological crisis that has its roots in the overconsumption of natural resources must be addressed not just by improving the efficiency of our economies but by reducing the amount of material stuff we produce and consume.

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6. Taxing the Rich and Filthy

About now a sensible reader would be asking, How on earth are we going to pay for all this? The old answer would have been easy: we'll grow our way out of it. Indeed, one of the major benefits of a growth-based economy for elites is that it allows them to constantly defer demands for social justice, claiming that if we keep growing the pie, eventually there will be enough for everyone. That was always a lie, as the current inequality crisis reveals, but in a world hitting multiple ecological limits, it is a nonstarter. So the only way to finance a meaningful response to the ecological crisis is to go where the money is.

That means taxing carbon, as well as financial speculation. It means increasing taxes on corporations and the wealthy, cutting bloated military budgets and eliminating absurd subsidies to the fossil fuel industry. And governments will have to coordinate their responses so that corporations will have nowhere to hide (this kind of robust international regulatory architecture is what Heartlanders mean when they warn that climate change will usher in a sinister "world government").

Most of all, however, we need to go after the profits of the corporations most responsible for getting us into this mess. The top five oil companies made \$900 billion in profits in the past decade; ExxonMobil alone can clear \$10 billion in profits in a single quarter. For

years, these companies have pledged to use their profits to invest in a shift to renewable energy (BP's "Beyond Petroleum" rebranding being the highest-profile example). But according to a study by the Center for American Progress, just 4 percent of the big five's \$100 billion in combined 2008 profits went to "renewable and alternative energy ventures." Instead, they continue to pour their profits into shareholder pockets, outrageous executive pay and new technologies designed to extract even dirtier and more dangerous fossil fuels. Plenty of money has also gone to paying lobbyists to beat back every piece of climate legislation that has reared its head, and to fund the denier movement gathered at the Marriott Hotel.

“ Armed with irrefutable scientific facts about who is responsible for global warming and who is suffering its effects first and worst, countries like Bolivia and Ecuador are attempting to shed the mantle of “debtor” thrust upon them by decades of International Monetary Fund and World Bank loans and are declaring themselves creditors - owed not just money and technology to cope with climate change but “atmospheric space” in which to develop.

Just as tobacco companies have been obliged to pay the costs of helping people to quit smoking, and BP has had to pay for the cleanup in the Gulf of Mexico, it is high time for the “polluter pays” principle to be applied to climate change. Beyond higher taxes on polluters, governments will have to negotiate much higher royalty rates so that less fossil fuel extraction would raise more public revenue to pay for the shift to our postcarbon future (as well as the steep costs of climate change already upon us). Since corporations can be counted on to resist any new rules that cut into their profits, nationalization—the greatest free-market taboo of all—cannot be off the table.

When Heartlanders claim, as they so often do, that climate change is a plot to “redistribute wealth” and wage class war, these are the types of policies

they most fear. They also understand that, once the reality of climate change is recognized, wealth will have to be transferred not just within wealthy countries but also from the rich countries whose emissions created the crisis to poorer ones that are on the front lines of its effects. Indeed, what makes conservatives (and plenty of liberals) so eager to bury the UN climate negotiations is that they have revived a postcolonial courage in parts of the developing world that many thought was gone for good. Armed with irrefutable scientific facts about who is responsible for global warming and who is suffering its effects first and worst, countries like Bolivia and Ecuador are attempting to shed the mantle of “debtor” thrust upon them by decades of International Monetary Fund and World Bank loans and are declaring themselves creditors—owed not just money and technology to cope with climate change but “atmospheric space” in which to develop.

Responding to climate change requires that we break every rule in the free-market playbook and that we do so with great urgency.

* * *

So let's summarize. Responding to climate change requires that we break every rule in the free-market playbook and that we do so with great urgency. We will need to rebuild the public sphere, reverse privatizations, relocalize large parts of economies, scale back overconsumption, bring back long-term planning, heavily regulate and tax corporations, maybe even nationalize some of them, cut military spending and recognize our debts to the global South. Of course, none of this has a hope in hell of happening unless it is accompanied by a massive, broad-based effort to radically reduce the influence that corporations have over the political process. That means, at a minimum, publicly funded elections and stripping corporations of their status as “people” under the law. In short, climate change supercharges the pre-existing case for virtually every progressive demand on the books, binding them into a coherent agenda based on a clear scientific imperative.

More than that, climate change implies the biggest political “I told you so” since Keynes predicted German backlash from the Treaty of Versailles. Marx wrote about capitalism's “irreparable rift” with “the natural laws of life itself,” and many on the left have

argued that an economic system built on unleashing the voracious appetites of capital would overwhelm the natural systems on which life depends. And of course indigenous peoples were issuing warnings about the dangers of disrespecting “Mother Earth” long before that. The fact that the airborne waste of industrial capitalism is causing the planet to warm, with potentially cataclysmic results, means that, well, the naysayers were right. And the people who said, “Hey, let’s get rid of all the rules and watch the magic happen” were disastrously, catastrophically wrong.

There is no joy in being right about something so terrifying. But for progressives, there is responsibility in it, because it means that our ideas—informed by indigenous teachings as well as by the failures of industrial state socialism—are more important than ever. It means that a green-left worldview, which rejects mere reformism and challenges the centrality of profit in our economy, offers humanity’s best hope of overcoming these overlapping crises.

But imagine, for a moment, how all of this looks to a guy like Heartland president Bast, who studied economics at the University of Chicago and described his personal calling to me as “freeing people from the tyranny of other people.” It looks like the end of the world. It’s not, of course. But it is, for all intents and purposes, the end of his world. Climate change detonates the ideological scaffolding on which contemporary conservatism rests. There is simply no way to square a belief system that vilifies collective action and venerates total market freedom with a problem that demands collective action on an unprecedented scale and a dramatic reining in of the market forces that created and are deepening the crisis.

* * *

At the Heartland conference—where everyone from the Ayn Rand Institute to the Heritage Foundation has a table hawking books and pamphlets—these anxieties are close to the surface. Bast is forthcoming about the fact that Heartland’s campaign against climate science grew out of fear about the policies that the science would require. “When we look at this issue, we say, This is a recipe for massive increase in government.... Before we take this step, let’s take another look at the science. So conservative and libertarian groups, I think, stopped and said, Let’s not

simply accept this as an article of faith; let’s actually do our own research.” This is a crucial point to understand: it is not opposition to the scientific facts of climate change that drives denialists but rather opposition to the real-world implications of those facts.

What Bast is describing—albeit inadvertently—is a phenomenon receiving a great deal of attention these days from a growing subset of social scientists trying to explain the dramatic shifts in belief about climate change. Researchers with Yale’s Cultural Cognition Project have found that political/cultural worldview explains “individuals’ beliefs about global warming more powerfully than any other individual characteristic.”

Those with strong “egalitarian” and “communitarian” worldviews (marked by an inclination toward collective action and social justice, concern about inequality and suspicion of corporate power) overwhelmingly accept the scientific consensus on climate change. On the other hand, those with strong “hierarchical” and “individualistic” worldviews (marked by opposition to government assistance for the poor and minorities, strong support for industry and a belief that we all get what we deserve) overwhelmingly reject the scientific consensus.

For example, among the segment of the US population that displays the strongest “hierarchical” views, only 11 percent rate climate change as a “high risk,” compared with 69 percent of the segment displaying the strongest “egalitarian” views. Yale law professor Dan Kahan, the lead author on this study, attributes this tight correlation between “worldview” and acceptance of climate science to “cultural cognition.” This refers to the process by which all of us—regardless of political leanings—filter new information in ways designed to protect our “preferred vision of the good society.” As Kahan explained in *Nature*, “People find it disconcerting to believe that behaviour that they find noble is nevertheless detrimental to society, and behaviour that they find base is beneficial to it. Because accepting such a claim could drive a wedge between them and their peers, they have a strong emotional predisposition to reject it.” In other words, it is always easier to deny reality than to watch your worldview get shattered, a fact that was as true of die-hard

Stalinists at the height of the purges as it is of libertarian climate deniers today.

When powerful ideologies are challenged by hard evidence from the real world, they rarely die off completely. Rather, they become cultlike and marginal. A few true believers always remain to tell one another that the problem wasn't with the ideology; it was the weakness of leaders who did not apply the rules with sufficient rigor. We have these types on the Stalinist left, and they exist as well on the neo-Nazi right. By this point in history, free-market fundamentalists should be exiled to a similarly marginal status, left to fondle their copies of *Free to Choose* and *Atlas Shrugged* in obscurity. They are saved from this fate only because their ideas about minimal government, no matter how demonstrably at war with reality, remain so profitable to the world's billionaires that they are kept fed and clothed in think tanks by the likes of Charles and David Koch, and ExxonMobil.

This points to the limits of theories like "cultural cognition." The deniers are doing more than protecting their cultural worldview—they are protecting powerful interests that stand to gain from muddying the waters of the climate debate. The ties between the deniers and those interests are well known and well documented. Heartland has received more than \$1 million from ExxonMobil together with foundations linked to the Koch brothers and Richard Mellon Scaife (possibly much more, but the think tank has stopped publishing its donors' names, claiming the information was distracting from the "merits of our positions").

And scientists who present at Heartland climate conferences are almost all so steeped in fossil fuel dollars that you can practically smell the fumes. To cite just two examples, the Cato Institute's Patrick Michaels, who gave the conference keynote, once told CNN that 40 percent of his consulting company's income comes from oil companies, and who knows how much of the rest comes from coal. A Greenpeace investigation into another one of the conference speakers, astrophysicist Willie Soon, found that since 2002, 100 percent of his new research grants had come from fossil fuel interests. And fossil fuel companies are not the only economic interests strongly motivated to undermine climate science.

If solving this crisis requires the kinds of profound changes to the economic order that I have outlined, then every major corporation benefiting from loose regulation, free trade and low taxes has reason to fear.

With so much at stake, it should come as little surprise that climate deniers are, on the whole, those most invested in our highly unequal and dysfunctional economic status quo. One of the most interesting findings of the studies on climate perceptions is the clear connection between a refusal to accept the science of climate change and social and economic privilege. Overwhelmingly, climate deniers are not only conservative but also white and male, a group with higher than average incomes. And they are more likely than other adults to be highly confident in their views, no matter how demonstrably false. A much-discussed paper on this topic by Aaron McCright and Riley Dunlap (memorably titled "Cool Dudes") found that confident conservative white men, as a group, were almost six times as likely to believe climate change "will never happen" than the rest of the adults surveyed. McCright and Dunlap offer a simple explanation for this discrepancy: "Conservative white males have disproportionately occupied positions of power within our economic system. Given the expansive challenge that climate change poses to the industrial capitalist economic system, it should not be surprising that conservative white males' strong system-justifying attitudes would be triggered to deny climate change."

But deniers' relative economic and social privilege doesn't just give them more to lose from a new economic order; it gives them reason to be more sanguine about the risks of climate change in the first place. This occurred to me as I listened to yet another speaker at the Heartland conference display what can only be described as an utter absence of empathy for the victims of climate change. Larry Bell, whose bio describes him as a "space architect," drew plenty of laughs when he told the crowd that a little heat isn't so bad: "I moved to Houston intentionally!" (Houston was, at that time, in the midst of what would turn out to be the state's worst single-year drought on record.) Australian geologist Bob Carter offered that "the world actually does better from our human perspective in warmer times." And Patrick Michaels said people worried about climate change should do what the French did after a devastating 2003 heat

wave killed 14,000 of their people: “they discovered Walmart and air-conditioning.”

Listening to these zingers as an estimated 13 million people in the Horn of Africa face starvation on parched land was deeply unsettling. What makes this callousness possible is the firm belief that if the deniers are wrong about climate change, a few degrees of warming isn’t something wealthy people in industrialized countries have to worry about. (“When it rains, we find shelter. When it’s hot, we find shade,” Texas Congressman Joe Barton explained at an energy and environment subcommittee hearing.)

As for everyone else, well, they should stop looking for handouts and busy themselves getting unpoor. When I asked Michaels whether rich countries have a responsibility to help poor ones pay for costly adaptations to a warmer climate, he scoffed that there is no reason to give money to countries “because, for some reason, their political system is incapable of adapting.” The real solution, he claimed, was more free trade.

* * *

This is where the intersection between hard-right ideology and climate denial gets truly dangerous. It’s not simply that these “cool dudes” deny climate science because it threatens to upend their dominance-based worldview. It is that their dominance-based worldview provides them with the intellectual tools to write off huge swaths of humanity in the developing world. Recognizing the threat posed by this empathy-exterminating mindset is a matter of great urgency, because climate change will test our moral character like little before. The US Chamber of Commerce, in its bid to prevent the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating carbon emissions, argued in a petition that in the event of global warming, “populations can acclimatize to warmer climates via a range of behavioral, physiological, and technological adaptations.” These adaptations are what I worry about most.

How will we adapt to the people made homeless and jobless by increasingly intense and frequent natural disasters? How will we treat the climate refugees who arrive on our shores in leaky boats? Will we open our borders, recognizing that we created the crisis from which they are fleeing? Or will we build ever more

high-tech fortresses and adopt ever more draconian anti-immigration laws? How will we deal with resource scarcity?

We know the answers already. The corporate quest for scarce resources will become more rapacious, more violent. Arable land in Africa will continue to be grabbed to provide food and fuel to wealthier nations. Drought and famine will continue to be used as a pretext to push genetically modified seeds, driving farmers further into debt. We will attempt to transcend peak oil and gas by using increasingly risky technologies to extract the last drops, turning ever larger swaths of our globe into sacrifice zones. We will fortress our borders and intervene in foreign conflicts over resources, or start those conflicts ourselves. “Free-market climate solutions,” as they are called, will be a magnet for speculation, fraud and crony capitalism, as we are already seeing with carbon trading and the use of forests as carbon offsets. And as climate change begins to affect not just the poor but the wealthy as well, we will increasingly look for techno-fixes to turn down the temperature, with massive and unknowable risks.

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As the world warms, the reigning ideology that tells us it’s everyone for themselves, that victims deserve their fate, that we can master nature, will take us to a very cold place indeed. And it will only get colder, as theories of racial superiority, barely under the surface in parts of the denial movement, make a raging comeback. These theories are not optional: they are necessary to justify the hardening of hearts to the largely blameless victims of climate change in the

global South, and in predominately African-American cities like New Orleans.

In *The Shock Doctrine*, I explore how the right has systematically used crises—real and trumped up—to push through a brutal ideological agenda designed not to solve the problems that created the crises but rather to enrich elites. As the climate crisis begins to bite, it will be no exception. This is entirely predictable. Finding new ways to privatize the commons and to profit from disaster are what our current system is built to do. The process is already well under way

The only wild card is whether some countervailing popular movement will step up to provide a viable alternative to this grim future. That means not just an alternative set of policy proposals but an alternative worldview to rival the one at the heart of the ecological crisis—this time, embedded in interdependence rather than hyper-individualism, reciprocity rather than dominance and cooperation rather than hierarchy.

Shifting cultural values is, admittedly, a tall order. It calls for the kind of ambitious vision that movements used to fight for a century ago, before everything was broken into single “issues” to be tackled by the appropriate sector of business-minded NGOs. Climate change is, in the words of the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change, “the greatest example of market failure we have ever seen.” By all rights, this reality should be filling progressive sails with conviction, breathing new life and urgency into longstanding fights against everything from free trade to financial speculation to industrial agriculture to third-world debt, while elegantly weaving all these struggles into a coherent narrative about how to protect life on earth.

But that isn’t happening, at least not so far. It is a painful irony that while the Heartlanders are busily calling climate change a left-wing plot, most leftists have yet to realize that climate science has handed them the most powerful argument against capitalism since William Blake’s “dark Satanic Mills” (and, of course, those mills were the beginning of climate change). When demonstrators are cursing out the corruption of their governments and corporate elites in Athens, Madrid, Cairo, Madison and New York, climate change is often little more than a footnote, when it should be the coup de grâce.

Half of the problem is that progressives—their hands full with soaring unemployment and multiple wars—tend to assume that the big green groups have the climate issue covered. The other half is that many of those big green groups have avoided, with phobic precision, any serious debate on the blindingly obvious roots of the climate crisis: globalization, deregulation and contemporary capitalism’s quest for perpetual growth (the same forces that are responsible for the destruction of the rest of the economy). The result is that those taking on the failures of capitalism and those fighting for climate action remain two solitudes, with the small but valiant climate justice movement—drawing the connections between racism, inequality and environmental vulnerability—stringing up a few swaying bridges between them.

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The right, meanwhile, has had a free hand to exploit the global economic crisis to cast climate action as a recipe for economic Armageddon, a surefire way to spike household costs and to block new, much-needed jobs drilling for oil and laying new pipelines. With virtually no loud voices offering a competing vision of how a new economic paradigm could provide a way out of both the economic and ecological crises, this fearmongering has had a ready audience.

Far from learning from past mistakes, a powerful faction in the environmental movement is pushing to go even further down the same disastrous road, arguing that the way to win on climate is to make the cause more palatable to conservative values. This can be heard from the studiously centrist Breakthrough Institute, which is calling for the movement to embrace industrial agriculture and nuclear power instead of organic farming and decentralized

renewables. It can also be heard from several of the researchers studying the rise in climate denial. Some, like Yale's Kahan, point out that while those who poll as highly "hierarchical" and "individualist" bridle at any mention of regulation, they tend to like big, centralized technologies that confirm their belief that humans can dominate nature. So, he and others argue, environmentalists should start emphasizing responses such as nuclear power and geoengineering (deliberately intervening in the climate system to counteract global warming), as well as playing up concerns about national security.

The first problem with this strategy is that it doesn't work. For years, big green groups have framed climate action as a way to assert "energy security," while "free-market solutions" are virtually the only ones on the table in the United States. Meanwhile, denialism has soared. The more troubling problem with this approach, however, is that rather than challenging the warped values motivating denialism, it reinforces them. Nuclear power and geoengineering are not solutions to the ecological crisis; they are a doubling down on exactly the kind of short-term hubristic thinking that got us into this mess.

It is not the job of a transformative social movement to reassure members of a panicked, megalomaniacal elite that they are still masters of the universe—nor is it necessary. According to McCright, co-author of the "Cool Dudes" study, the most extreme, intractable climate deniers (many of them conservative white men) are a small minority of the US population—roughly 10 percent. True, this demographic is massively overrepresented in positions of power. But the solution to that problem is not for the majority of people to change their ideas and values. It is to attempt to change the culture so that this small but disproportionately influential minority—and the reckless worldview it represents—wields significantly less power.

* * *

Some in the climate camp are pushing back hard against the appeasement strategy. Tim DeChristopher, serving a two-year jail sentence in Utah for disrupting a compromised auction of oil and gas leases, commented in May on the right-wing claim that climate action will upend the economy. "I believe we should embrace the charges," he told an interviewer.

"No, we are not trying to disrupt the economy, but yes, we do want to turn it upside down. We should not try and hide our vision about what we want to change—of the healthy, just world that we wish to create. We are not looking for small shifts: we want a radical overhaul of our economy and society." He added, "I think once we start talking about it, we will find more allies than we expect."

When DeChristopher articulated this vision for a climate movement fused with one demanding deep economic transformation, it surely sounded to most like a pipe dream. But just five months later, with Occupy Wall Street chapters seizing squares and parks in hundreds of cities, it sounds prophetic. It turns out that a great many Americans had been hungering for this kind of transformation on many fronts, from the practical to the spiritual.

Though climate change was something of an afterthought in the movement's early texts, an ecological consciousness was woven into OWS from the start—from the sophisticated "gray water" filtration system that uses dishwater to irrigate plants at Zuccotti Park, to the scrappy community garden planted at Occupy Portland. Occupy Boston's laptops and cellphones are powered by bicycle generators, and Occupy DC has installed solar panels. Meanwhile, the ultimate symbol of OWS—the human microphone—is nothing if not a postcarbon solution.

And new political connections are being made. The Rainforest Action Network, which has been targeting Bank of America for financing the coal industry, has made common cause with OWS activists taking aim at the bank over foreclosures. Anti-fracking activists have pointed out that the same economic model that is blasting the bedrock of the earth to keep the gas flowing is blasting the social bedrock to keep the profits flowing. And then there is the historic movement against the Keystone XL pipeline, which this fall has decisively yanked the climate movement out of the lobbyists' offices and into the streets (and jail cells). Anti-Keystone campaigners have noted that anyone concerned about the corporate takeover of democracy need look no further than the corrupt process that led the State Department to conclude that a pipeline carrying dirty tar sands oil across some of the most sensitive land in the country would have "limited adverse environmental impacts." As 350.

org's Phil Aroneanu put it, "If Wall Street is occupying President Obama's State Department and the halls of Congress, it's time for the people to occupy Wall Street."

But these connections go beyond a shared critique of corporate power. As Occupiers ask themselves what kind of economy should be built to displace the one crashing all around us, many are finding inspiration in the network of green economic alternatives that has taken root over the past decade—in community-controlled renewable energy projects, in community-supported agriculture and farmers' markets, in economic localization initiatives that have brought main streets back to life, and in the co-op sector. Already a group at OWS is cooking up plans to launch the movement's first green workers' co-op (a printing press); local food activists have made the call to "Occupy the Food System!"; and November 20 is "Occupy Rooftops"—a coordinated effort to use crowd-sourcing to buy solar panels for community buildings.

Not only do these economic models create jobs and revive communities while reducing emissions; they do so in a way that systematically disperses power—the antithesis of an economy by and for the 1 percent. Omar Freilla, one of the founders of Green Worker Cooperatives in the South Bronx, told me that the experience in direct democracy that thousands are having in plazas and parks has been, for many, "like flexing a muscle you didn't know you had." And, he says, now they want more democracy—not just at a meeting but also in their community planning and in their workplaces.

In other words, culture is rapidly shifting. And this is what truly sets the OWS moment apart. The Occupiers—holding signs that said GREED IS GROSS and I CARE ABOUT YOU—decided early on not to confine their protests to narrow policy demands. Instead, they took aim at the underlying values of rampant greed and individualism that created the economic crisis, while embodying—in highly visible ways—radically different ways to treat one another and relate to the natural world.

This deliberate attempt to shift cultural values is not a distraction from the "real" struggles. In the rocky future we have already made inevitable, an unshakable belief in the equal rights of all people,

and a capacity for deep compassion, will be the only things standing between humanity and barbarism. Climate change, by putting us on a firm deadline, can serve as the catalyst for precisely this profound social and ecological transformation.

Culture, after all, is fluid. It can change. It happens all the time. The delegates at the Heartland conference know this, which is why they are so determined to suppress the mountain of evidence proving that their worldview is a threat to life on earth. The task for the rest of us is to believe, based on that same evidence, that a very different worldview can be our salvation.



About the Author

Naomi Klein is a Canadian author and social activist known for her criticism of corporate capitalism. Her bestselling books have made her a key leader in the antiglobalization movement. In addition, she has campaigned for a range of social issues related to gender, capitalism, and racism. She is on the board of directors of 350.org, a global grassroots movement to address the climate crisis.



Key Words

Climate change:

a change in regional and global climate patterns, largely caused by increased levels of carbon dioxide in the air produced by the use of fossil fuels

Consumption:

(n) the act of using up something (i.e. buying and using products such as food, clothes, fuels, etc.)

Corporate:

(adj) a big company or group of companies that act as a single organization

Denialist:

(n) someone who refuses to admit the truth of something that is supported by scientific or historical evidence

Emissions:

(n) the production and release of something into the air, especially gas or radiation

Fossil fuels:

(n) a natural fuel such as coal or gas, made by the decaying of plants/animals over millions of years

Free market:

(n) an economic system in which prices are determined (without regulations) by competition between privately owned companies

Privatize:

(v) to change the ownership of something from public or government control to a private enterprise/company

Regulation:

(n) control over something, especially by rules or laws

Socialism:

(n) an economic and political system in which the means of production, distribution, and exchange should be owned or regulated by the state

Critical Thinking Component

Session Nine

#1

What is the relationship between climate change and the free market economy?

#2

Klein discusses the idea of climate change as not the issue but as the message. What is meant by this?

#3

What is the relationship between refusal to accept climate change and social/economic privilege? Why do you think this is?

#4

Countries of the global South are disproportionately affected by climate change. Why is this the case?

#5

Do you think that the immediacy of climate change will serve as a catalyst to promote change or that capitalism will continue as usual? Give reasons for your argument.

Essay Prompts

Option A:

Klein argues that, “real climate solutions are ones that steer these interventions to systematically disperse and devolve power and control to the community level, whether through community-controlled renewable energy, local organic agriculture or transit systems genuinely accountable to their users.” What is your opinion of this? Use real-world examples of such practices to provide support for or against such systems.

Option B:

In the debate between capitalism versus the climate, where does Myanmar stand? How is the future of Myanmar tied into this debate and affected by the “dominance-based worldview”?

Capitalism Beyond the Crisis

Amartya Sen

This essay by Amartya Sen first appeared in the *New York Review of Books*, Volume 56, No. 5 on March 26, 2009.

2008 was a year of crises. First, we had a food crisis, particularly threatening to poor consumers, especially in Africa. Along with that came a record increase in oil prices, threatening all oil-importing countries. Finally, rather suddenly in the fall, came the global economic downturn, and it is now gathering speed at a frightening rate. The year 2009 seems likely to offer a sharp intensification of the downturn, and many economists are anticipating a full-scale depression, perhaps even one as large as in the 1930s. While substantial fortunes have suffered steep declines, the people most affected are those who were already worst off.

The question that arises most forcefully now concerns the nature of capitalism and whether it needs to be changed. Some defenders of unfettered capitalism who resist change are convinced that capitalism is being blamed too much for short-term economic problems—problems they variously attribute to bad governance (for example by the Bush administration) and the bad behavior of some individuals (or what John McCain described during the presidential campaign as “the greed of Wall Street”). Others do, however, see truly serious defects in the existing economic arrangements and want to reform them, looking for an alternative approach that is increasingly being called “new capitalism.” [...]

Ideas about changing the organization of society in the long run are clearly needed, quite apart from strategies for dealing with an immediate crisis. I would separate out three questions from the many that can be raised. First, do we really need some kind of “new capitalism” rather than an economic system that is not monolithic, draws on a variety of institutions chosen pragmatically, and is based on social values that we can defend ethically? Should we search for a new capitalism or for a “new world”—to use the other term mentioned at the Paris meeting—that would take a different form?

The second question concerns the kind of economics that is needed today, especially in light of the present economic crisis. How do we assess what is taught and championed among academic economists as a guide to economic policy—including the revival of Keynesian thought in recent months as the crisis has grown fierce? More particularly, what does the present economic crisis tell us about the institutions and priorities to look for? Third, in addition to working our way toward a better assessment of what long-term changes are needed, we have to think—and think fast—about how to get out of the present crisis with as little damage as possible.

What are the special characteristics that make a system indubitably capitalist—old or new? If the present capitalist economic system is to be reformed, what would make the end result a new capitalism, rather than something else? It seems to be generally assumed that relying on markets for economic transactions is a necessary condition for an economy to be identified as capitalist. In a similar way, dependence on the profit motive and on individual rewards based on private ownership are seen as archetypal features of capitalism. However, if these are necessary requirements, are the economic systems we currently have, for example, in Europe and America, genuinely capitalist?

All affluent countries in the world—those in Europe, as well as the US, Canada, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Australia, and others—have, for quite some time now, depended partly on transactions and other payments that occur largely outside markets. These include unemployment benefits, public pensions, other features of social security, and the provision of education, health care, and a variety of other services distributed through nonmarket arrangements. The economic entitlements connected with such services are not based on private ownership and property rights.

Also, the market economy has depended for its own working not only on maximizing profits but also on many other activities, such as maintaining public security and supplying public services—some of

which have taken people well beyond an economy driven only by profit. The creditable performance of the so-called capitalist system, when things moved forward, drew on a combination of institutions—publicly funded education, medical care, and mass transportation are just a few of many—that went much beyond relying only on a profit-maximizing market economy and on personal entitlements confined to private ownership.

Underlying this issue is a more basic question: whether capitalism is a term that is of particular use today. The idea of capitalism did in fact have an important role historically, but by now that usefulness may well be fairly exhausted.

For example, the pioneering works of Adam Smith in the eighteenth century showed the usefulness and dynamism of the market economy, and why—and particularly how—that dynamism worked. Smith's investigation provided an illuminating diagnosis of the workings of the market just when that dynamism was powerfully emerging. The contribution that *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776, made to the understanding of what came to be called capitalism was monumental. Smith showed how the freeing of trade can very often be extremely helpful in generating economic prosperity through specialization in production and division of labor and in making good use of economies of large scale.

Those lessons remain deeply relevant even today (it is interesting that the impressive and highly sophisticated analytical work on international trade for which Paul Krugman received the latest Nobel award in economics was closely linked to Smith's far-reaching insights of more than 230 years ago). The economic analyses that followed those early expositions of markets and the use of capital in the eighteenth century have succeeded in solidly establishing the market system in the corpus of mainstream economics.

However, even as the positive contributions of capitalism through market processes were being clarified and explicated, its negative sides were also becoming clear—often to the very same analysts. While a number of socialist critics, most notably Karl Marx, influentially made a case for censuring and ultimately supplanting capitalism, the huge limitations of relying entirely on the market economy

and the profit motive were also clear enough even to Adam Smith. Indeed, early advocates of the use of markets, including Smith, did not take the pure market mechanism to be a freestanding performer of excellence, nor did they take the profit motive to be all that is needed. [...]

It is also worth mentioning in this context, especially since the “welfare state” emerged long after Smith's own time, that in his various writings, his overwhelming concern—and worry—about the fate of the poor and the disadvantaged are strikingly prominent. The most immediate failure of the market mechanism lies in the things that the market leaves undone. Smith's economic analysis went well beyond leaving everything to the invisible hand of the market mechanism. He was not only a defender of the role of the state in providing public services, such as education, and in poverty relief (along with demanding greater freedom for the indigents who received support than the Poor Laws of his day provided), he was also deeply concerned about the inequality and poverty that might survive in an otherwise successful market economy.

Lack of clarity about the distinction between the necessity and sufficiency of the market has been responsible for some misunderstandings of Smith's assessment of the market mechanism by many who would claim to be his followers. For example, Smith's defense of the food market and his criticism of restrictions by the state on the private trade in food grains have often been interpreted as arguing that any state interference would necessarily make hunger and starvation worse.

But Smith's defense of private trade only took the form of disputing the belief that stopping trade in food would reduce the burden of hunger. That does not deny in any way the need for state action to supplement the operations of the market by creating jobs and incomes (e.g., through work programs). If unemployment were to increase sharply thanks to bad economic circumstances or bad public policy, the market would not, on its own, recreate the incomes of those who have lost their jobs. The new unemployed, Smith wrote, “would either starve, or be driven to seek a subsistence either by begging, or by the perpetration perhaps of the greatest enormities,” and “want, famine, and mortality would immediately

prevail....” Smith rejects interventions that exclude the market—but not interventions that include the market while aiming to do those important things that the market may leave undone.

Smith never used the term “capitalism” (at least so far as I have been able to trace), but it would also be hard to carve out from his works any theory arguing for the sufficiency of market forces, or of the need to accept the dominance of capital. He talked about the importance of these broader values that go beyond profits in *The Wealth of Nations*, but it is in his first book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which was published exactly a quarter of a millennium ago in 1759, that he extensively investigated the strong need for actions based on values that go well beyond profit seeking. While he wrote that “prudence” was “of all the virtues that which is most useful to the individual,” Adam Smith went on to argue that “humanity, justice, generosity, and public spirit, are the qualities most useful to others.”

Smith viewed markets and capital as doing good work within their own sphere, but first, they required support from other institutions—including public services such as schools—and values other than pure profit seeking, and second, they needed restraint and correction by still other institutions—e.g., well-devised financial regulations and state assistance to the poor—for preventing instability, inequity, and injustice. If we were to look for a new approach to the organization of economic activity that included a pragmatic choice of a variety of public services and well-considered regulations, we would be following rather than departing from the agenda of reform that Smith outlined as he both defended and criticized capitalism.

Historically, capitalism did not emerge until new systems of law and economic practice protected property rights and made an economy based on ownership workable. Commercial exchange could not effectively take place until business morality made contractual behavior sustainable and inexpensive—not requiring constant suing of defaulting contractors, for example. Investment in productive businesses could not flourish until the higher rewards from corruption had been moderated. Profit-oriented capitalism has always drawn on support from other institutional values.

The moral and legal obligations and responsibilities associated with transactions have in recent years become much harder to trace, thanks to the rapid development of secondary markets involving derivatives and other financial instruments. A subprime lender who misleads a borrower into taking unwise risks can now pass off the financial assets to third parties—who are remote from the original transaction. Accountability has been badly undermined, and the need for supervision and regulation has become much stronger.

And yet the supervisory role of government in the United States in particular has been, over the same period, sharply curtailed, fed by an increasing belief in the self-regulatory nature of the market economy. Precisely as the need for state surveillance grew, the needed supervision shrank. There was, as a result, a disaster waiting to happen, which did eventually happen last year, and this has certainly contributed a great deal to the financial crisis that is plaguing the world today. The insufficient regulation of financial activities has implications not only for illegitimate practices, but also for a tendency toward overspeculation that, as Adam Smith argued, tends to grip many human beings in their breathless search for profits.

Smith called the promoters of excessive risk in search of profits “prodigals and projectors”—which is quite a good description of issuers of subprime mortgages over the past few years. Discussing laws against usury, for example, Smith wanted state regulation to protect citizens from the “prodigals and projectors” who promoted unsound loans:

A great part of the capital of the country would thus be kept out of the hands which were most likely to make a profitable and advantageous use of it, and thrown into those which were most likely to waste and destroy it.

The implicit faith in the ability of the market economy to correct itself, which is largely responsible for the removal of established regulations in the United States, tended to ignore the activities of prodigals and projectors in a way that would have shocked Adam Smith.

The present economic crisis is partly generated by a huge overestimation of the wisdom of market

processes, and the crisis is now being exacerbated by anxiety and lack of trust in the financial market and in businesses in general—responses that have been evident in the market reactions to the sequence of stimulus plans, including the \$787 billion plan signed into law in February by the new Obama administration. As it happens, these problems were already identified in the eighteenth century by Smith, even though they have been neglected by those who have been in authority in recent years, especially in the United States, and who have been busy citing Adam Smith in support of the unfettered market.

While Adam Smith has recently been much quoted, even if not much read, there has been a huge revival, even more recently, of John Maynard Keynes. Certainly, the cumulative downturn that we are observing right now, which is edging us closer to a depression, has clear Keynesian features; the reduced incomes of one group of persons has led to reduced purchases by them, in turn causing a further reduction in the income of others.

However, Keynes can be our savior only to a very partial extent, and there is a need to look beyond him in understanding the present crisis. One economist whose current relevance has been far less recognized is Keynes's rival Arthur Cecil Pigou, who, like Keynes, was also in Cambridge, indeed also in Kings College, in Keynes's time. Pigou was much more concerned than Keynes with economic psychology and the ways it could influence business cycles and sharpen and harden an economic recession that could take us toward a depression (as indeed we are seeing now). Pigou attributed economic fluctuations partly to "psychological causes" consisting of variations in the tone of mind of persons whose action controls industry, emerging in errors of undue optimism or undue pessimism in their business forecasts. [...]

One of the problems that the Obama administration has to deal with is that the real crisis, arising from financial mismanagement and other transgressions, has become many times magnified by a psychological collapse. The measures that are being discussed right now in Washington and elsewhere to regenerate the credit market include bailouts—with firm requirements that subsidized financial institutions actually lend—government purchase of toxic assets, insurance against failure to repay loans, and bank

nationalization. (The last proposal scares many conservatives just as private control of the public money given to the banks worries people concerned about accountability.) As the weak response of the market to the administration's measures so far suggests, each of these policies would have to be assessed partly for their impact on the psychology of businesses and consumers, particularly in America.

The contrast between Pigou and Keynes is relevant for another reason as well. While Keynes was very involved with the question of how to increase aggregate income, he was relatively less engaged in analyzing problems of unequal distribution of wealth and of social welfare. In contrast, Pigou not only wrote the classic study of welfare economics, but he also pioneered the measurement of economic inequality as a major indicator for economic assessment and policy.⁷ Since the suffering of the most deprived people in each economy—and in the world—demands the most urgent attention, the role of supportive cooperation between business and government cannot stop only with mutually coordinated expansion of an economy. There is a critical need for paying special attention to the underdogs of society in planning a response to the current crisis, and in going beyond measures to produce general economic expansion. Families threatened with unemployment, with lack of medical care, and with social as well as economic deprivation have been hit particularly hard. The limitations of Keynesian economics to address their problems demand much greater recognition.

A third way in which Keynes needs to be supplemented concerns his relative neglect of social services—indeed even Otto von Bismarck had more to say on this subject than Keynes. That the market economy can be particularly bad in delivering public goods (such as education and health care) has been discussed by some of the leading economists of our time, including Paul Samuelson and Kenneth Arrow. (Pigou too contributed to this subject with his emphasis on the "external effects" of market transactions, where the gains and losses are not confined only to the direct buyers or sellers.) This is, of course, a long-term issue, but it is worth noting in addition that the bite of a downturn can be much fiercer when health care in particular is not guaranteed for all.

For example, in the absence of a national health service, every lost job can produce a larger exclusion from essential health care, because of loss of income or loss of employment-related private health insurance. The US has a 7.6 percent rate of unemployment now, which is beginning to cause huge deprivation. It is worth asking how the European countries, including France, Italy, and Spain, that lived with much higher levels of unemployment for decades, managed to avoid a total collapse of their quality of life. The answer is partly the way the European welfare state operates, with much stronger unemployment insurance than in America and, even more importantly, with basic medical services provided to all by the state.

The failure of the market mechanism to provide health care for all has been flagrant, most noticeably in the United States, but also in the sharp halt in the progress of health and longevity in China following its abolition of universal health coverage in 1979. Before the economic reforms of that year, every Chinese citizen had guaranteed health care provided by the state or the cooperatives, even if at a rather basic level. When China removed its counterproductive system of agricultural collectives and communes and industrial units managed by bureaucracies, it thereby made the rate of growth of gross domestic product go up faster than anywhere else in the world. But at the same time, led by its new faith in the market economy, China also abolished the system of universal health care; and, after the reforms of 1979, health insurance had to be bought by individuals (except in some relatively rare cases in which the state or some big firms provide them to their employees and dependents). With this change, China's rapid progress in longevity sharply slowed down.

This was problem enough when China's aggregate income was growing extremely fast, but it is bound to become a much bigger problem when the Chinese economy decelerates sharply, as it is currently doing. The Chinese government is now trying hard to gradually reintroduce health insurance for all, and the US government under Obama is also committed to making health coverage universal. In both China and the US, the rectifications have far to go, but they should be central elements in tackling the economic crisis, as well as in achieving long-term transformation of the two societies.

The revival of Keynes has much to contribute both to economic analysis and to policy, but the net has to be cast much wider. Even though Keynes is often seen as a kind of a "rebel" figure in contemporary economics, the fact is that he came close to being the guru of a new capitalism, who focused on trying to stabilize the fluctuations of the market economy (and then again with relatively little attention to the psychological causes of business fluctuations). Even though Smith and Pigou have the reputation of being rather conservative economists, many of the deep insights about the importance of nonmarket institutions and nonprofit values came from them, rather than from Keynes and his followers.

A crisis not only presents an immediate challenge that has to be faced. It also provides an opportunity to address long-term problems when people are willing to reconsider established conventions. This is why the present crisis also makes it important to face the neglected long-term issues like conservation of the environment and national health care, as well as the need for public transport, which has been very badly neglected in the last few decades and is also so far sidelined—as I write this article—even in the initial policies announced by the Obama administration. Economic affordability is, of course, an issue, but as the example of the Indian state of Kerala shows, it is possible to have state-guaranteed health care for all at relatively little cost. Since the Chinese dropped universal health insurance in 1979, Kerala—which continues to have it—has very substantially overtaken China in average life expectancy and in indicators such as infant mortality, despite having a much lower level of per capita income. So there are opportunities for poor countries as well. [...]

The present economic crises do not, I would argue, call for a "new capitalism," but they do demand a new understanding of older ideas, such as those of Smith and, nearer our time, of Pigou, many of which have been sadly neglected. What is also needed is a clearheaded perception of how different institutions actually work, and of how a variety of organizations—from the market to the institutions of the state—can go beyond short-term solutions and contribute to producing a more decent economic world.



About the Author

Amartya Sen is an Indian Economist and Philosopher who is recognized for groundbreaking studies in economics and social justice as well as new approaches on measuring the well-being of marginalized populations (particularly citizens of developing countries). In 1998, he was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize for his work in welfare economics. Since the 1970s, he has spent considerable time teaching and working in the United Kingdom and the United States and works today as professor of Economics and Philosophy at Harvard University.



Key Words

Accountability:

(n) the condition of being responsible for something (i.e. your actions and their consequences)

Assessment:

(n) the process of evaluating the value of something or making a judgment about it

Capitalism:

(n) an economic and political system in which businesses/trade is run mostly by private owners (i.e. companies) for profit and not the government

Indicator:

(n) a tool for measuring something

Policy:

(n) a course of action that has been officially agreed upon within an organization, government or business

Prodigal:

(n) someone who spends their money in a wasteful and reckless way, not caring about the consequences

Protector:

(n) someone (or something) that protects others

Psychology:

(n) the study of the mind and how it influences individuals' attitudes and behaviors

Values:

(n) ideas about what is right/wrong or important

Welfare:

(n) social or financial assistance to people from a city, state, or government, especially to those in need

Critical Thinking Component

Session Ten

#1

What are some positive outcomes of the economic crisis?

#2

Whether moving towards a "new capitalism" or "new world," what are the features of the current global economy that need to be addressed or changed?

#3

In today's global economy, what might be some examples of "prodigals" and "protectors?"

#4

What does human psychology have to do with either helping or hurting the market economy?

#5

How might “economic inequality” be a useful indicator for economic assessment and policy?

Essay Prompts

Option A:

In brief, what does Sen believe should be the relationship between the state and market? Do you agree or disagree, and why?

Option B:

Adam Smith argued for actions to be based on values other than profit seeking. What values do you think should guide the market?

The Nation State: An Essay

Anthony Pick

Anthony Pick's essay is an introduction to a contingent thesis (2011), made available on his website [The Nation State \(www.thenationstate.co.uk\)](http://www.thenationstate.co.uk).

The nation state as the general form of state organisation is a product of the last 100 years. Before then, most of the world was ruled by empires, whether colonial (such as the British) or territorial (such as the Russian). The Treaty of Berlin in 1878 had seven signatories, the 1919 Treaty of Versailles was signed by 32 countries, and the United Nations now has 193 members. This essay traces the origin and implications of this revolution in the world's political affairs.

Nation states have three great advantages from previous forms of state organisation. Their lack of centralised dictatorship has enabled their societies and economies to develop, they are the sole environment in which democracy can appear, and they do not have a tendency to increase their territory. They have been made possible by a form of economic prosperity which does not depend on the ownership of land but on trade, industry, and capital investment. The enormously greater economic added value of that prosperity has created in each state a civil society which adopted a cultural self-identity which we call nationality. In a nation state, that nationality is the source of legitimacy in its political system.

The problems now faced by nation states are primarily economic and environmental: population, resources, climate change, infrastructure, education, meeting their peoples' expectations, and managing the flow of world trade and finance. These problems of course arose earlier, but until about 100 years ago most states were also afflicted with actual or threatened wars, internal or external. With the end of empires and the formation of nation states, these wars have largely ceased. This remark may seem surprising given the many actual and potential conflicts which still rage, but in comparative historical terms it is true. The major wars of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries were not caused primarily by nationalism, as is commonly supposed, but by the ambitions of empires (actual or

attempted), countered by other empires or by nation states. The relatively few present-day wars are due to boundary disputes or disputes within nation states which have yet to be formed, and to al-Qa'eda's war against the nation state itself.

The essay has three principal theses, one relating to the nature of a state, one relating to the origin of nation states and the third to their development from previous forms of government. We first note that origin of political power lies with legitimate authority. A legitimate ruler can expect to have his or her instructions obeyed. When civil wars occur, as they have in the history of most countries, the cause is invariably a dispute between two or more authorities claiming to be legitimate.

Secondly, we relate the origin of nation states at a particular time and place, namely the western edge of Europe in the 16th and 17th century, and for a specific historical reason. Until then and in other places, the primary loyalty of states was not to a nation but to a ruler or dynasty, or sometimes to an oligarchy, army, church, or tribal chieftain. These forms of government were legitimate and stable, but their stability was impermanent. Violent conflicts over succession of rulers, territory, forms of government, or subjection to other states broke out at regular intervals and partly undid the effect of previous stability, preventing the development of a civil society and nationality. West European states were protected from these conflicts by the Holy Roman Empire in central Europe, which was strong enough to defend them from predatory states to the east but not strong enough to interfere in their internal affairs. Perhaps for this reason, the West European states benefited from long-lived and stable dynasties. Further, the Holy Roman Empire was too weak to prevent the formation of city states in Northern Europe and Italy which became very wealthy through long-distance trade. These wealth and trade patterns were eventually shared with the West European states and began development of the modern economy.

These two factors were not present to a sufficient

degree in those parts of Asia, Africa, and America where empires with strong political identities existed. Empires (such as the Chinese) could be large, stable, and efficient, but were subject to periodic invasions, rebellions and dynastic civil wars. Dynasties lasted only for a few decades or centuries. Their very efficiency as a system of government discouraged independent commercial activity. The city states which flourished in East Africa and South East Asia did not acquire sufficient wealth or independence. The unique circumstance of the Holy Roman Empire arose through the conflict of loyalties between the Empire and the Papacy, a form of dispute which did not occur elsewhere.

Our third thesis relates to our definition of a nation state as one in which political legitimacy lies within the nation. This is contrasted with states in which legitimacy lay outside the nation, which we call pre-national states and classify into eight categories: personal state (usually called monarchy), theocracy, city state, oligarchy, territorial empire, trading (or colonial) empire, military state, and tribal state. Oligarchy occurred in historic city states and in the early stages of many post-colonial states. A colonial empire generally had a nation state at its core, but its colonies were not states. A military state was one where the army was responsible only to itself, such as the Egyptian Mamluks (1250-1517) or the Iraq of Saddam and his predecessors (1958-2003), different from the temporary military rule which occurs when civil institutions fail during the development of a nation state. A tribal state was one where government was carried by negotiation between one dominant tribe and others. Pre-national government was effective because its authority lay outside the people it ruled so that it could arbitrate their disputes, and before the appearance of nationality such a form of government was the only one possible.

It follows that there is a point in the history of each nation state when the national sense becomes sufficiently strong to demand that legitimacy is transferred from the external authority to the nation, by overthrow of the pre-national ruler and/or establishment of institutions to make the ruler accountable. Such a change is a major turning-point, often accompanied by political violence, and if the institutions of national accountability are not present it can be a leap in the dark which causes temporary

political instability. It is expressed in three phases. In Phase I, the state is unified by a competent and legitimate pre-national ruler under whose government the nationality can develop. Phase II is the act of national self-assertion already described. In Phase III, a Constitution is established under which national control over the government is expressed. These three Phases can generally be identified with specific historic events in each country.

“ **Countries which have weak nationality, institutions, or civil society have often adopted an autocratic or oligarchic form of government as a sort of substitute or parallel monarchy, until sufficient social, economic, and national development has occurred for constitutional government to prevail.** ”

The essay analyses in detail the nature of these various forms of pre-national and nation state and traces their establishment and development in about 95 countries. Empires have now gone, and the sole remaining theocracy is the Vatican City. Other states lie in five categories:

1. states whose traditional institutions have adapted to nationality and constitutionalism;
2. those with a well-defined nationality but whose traditional institutions failed and which had therefore to develop new ones;
3. former colonies with a well-defined nationality, institutions, and civil society;
4. those left by their colonial administrations with weak or unclear nationality, institutions, and civil society;
5. states whose development has been distracted by theocratic or imperial ambitions.

In a few countries tribal rule still functions, but it is ineffective in modern conditions.

Countries which have weak nationality, institutions, or civil society have often adopted an autocratic or oligarchic form of government as a sort of

substitute or parallel monarchy, until sufficient social, economic, and national development has occurred for constitutional government to prevail. In these circumstances autocracy or oligarchy can be a legitimate expression of nationality so long as it does not become sectarian, and it has often been replaced, peacefully or otherwise, by constitutional rule. Since the Constitutions of autocracies and oligarchies may be weak, nominal, or (more rarely) non-existent, changes in their governments are often extra-constitutional, resulting in unpredictable and unstable regimes. Nevertheless, that has been the experience of many nation states in the course of their development.

In many states, advances have been made in recent decades in both nationality and constitutionalism. There are some, such as Libya and Syria, which are currently undergoing the painful process of transition. Whereas infrastructure and educational development is possible under any form of legitimate government, only with national and constitutional institutions and civil society can a state achieve significant social, economic, and commercial progress.

A contingent thesis of this essay is that historical research into states would be greatly illuminated if their economic added value could be ascertained, as that would determine their potential for growth of a civil society.



About the Author

Anthony Pick is a retired management consultant who worked in the IT industry, despite a lasting interest in linguistics, history, and politics. He is member of the Philological Society of Great Britain and attained his first bachelor's degrees from Cambridge and Oxford universities.



Key Words

Civil society:

a society (community) of citizens linked by common interests and collective activity

Constitution:

(n) the system of principles and set of basic laws that a country is governed by, usually contained in a single document

Development:

(n) the process of change characterized by growth or progress

Empire:

(n) a group of states or countries that are under the control of one ruler (i.e. a king)

Institution:

(n) an organization that has a specific kind of work or purpose (i.e. religious, professional, education, social)

Legitimate:

(n) in line with the law (or established rules, principles, standards, etc.) and thus allowed by it

Nationality:

(n) the status of being a legal citizen in a particular country or a group of people that share the same race, origin, language, etc.

Nation state:

a sovereign state whose population shares a common language, descent, or culture (i.e. today's countries)

Political:

(adj) relating to the government or public affairs of a country and how power is gained, divided, and exercised

State:

(n) the government or political organization of a country or a politically unified population living in a defined territory (nation)

Critical Thinking Component

Session Eleven

#1

What are some examples of a legitimate authority in the world today?

#2

What role does civil society play in the nation state?

#3

In what ways might a centralized dictatorship prevent the growth of civil society?

#4

Without the development of the nation state, how would the world look today?

#5

Pick assumes that all other states (explained in the 5 categories on page 90) should strive to become a nation state. Do you agree that the nation state is the best model for development?

Essay Prompts

Option A:

Pick argues that, “only with national and constitutional institutions and civil society can a state achieve significant social, economic, and commercial progress.” In the context of Myanmar, what is the relationship between civil society and national/constitutional institutions? How will they need to work together to achieve long-term progress?

Option B:

Spend some time researching the beginning of the nation state in International Relations. Since that time until today, how has the nation state evolved from its original form and purposes?

Federalism in Burma

Khin Maung Win

This article by Khin Maung Win originally appeared in the *Legal Issues on Burma Journal* No. 9, August 2001, published by the Burma Lawyers' Council.

Despite the fact that Burma has a highly centralized unitary government system, the issue of federalism has been a major source of debate for decades. Ever since the formation of the independence movement, the various ethnic groups in Burma have wanted to transform the country into a federal union based on equality. The Panglong Agreement provided the basic foundation for this, but post-independence Burma did not become a federal union in spite of the urgent need for this.

The non-Burman ethnic groups in Burma have not given up their demands for federalism. Most of them are still engaged in insurgency movements against the central government, which has been dominated by Burmans since 1948. The ethnic insurgency movements emerged as a result of the government's failure to deal with the demand for federalism peacefully. The non-Burman movement for federalism and political equality (the 'Federal Movement') has consistently tried to resolve the issue peacefully. The non-Burman ethnic groups even participated in the 1990 elections, with federalism as their main motive. In the elections, the UNLD (United Nationalities' League for Democracy, the alliance of ethnic parties in Burma) occupied the second largest number of seats after the NLD (National League for Democracy). However, federalism does not mean anything to the non-Burman groups unless the right to self-determination, including the right to secession, is part of it.

Following the second military coup in 1988, the democracy activists (mostly Burmans) joined the non-Burman insurgency movements in their struggle to restore democracy and human rights. The non-Burman groups managed to convince Burman politicians and activists that the only solution to Burma's ethnic conflicts and civil war is the creation of a federal system of government. Hence the issue of

federalism is no longer limited to ethnic groups, while at the same time the NLD has expressed a willingness to accept it—even though most non-Burmans see the NLD as a Burman party. So far, however, no NLD manifesto has been specific about 'federalism' and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has been criticized by ethnic leaders who consider her too reluctant to use this word. The problem is that one cannot yet freely use it as many people in Burma still have a poor understanding of the issue and would consider it as disintegration. This is mainly due to military propaganda: the junta is dead against federalism. But most opposition politicians in Burma are ready to go for federalism as they consider it the most reasonable solution to the ethnic conflicts.

Military Versus Federalists

The issue of federalism has become a major political problem in Burma because the successive military governments have failed to address the issue properly. The junta has always maintained that federalism leads to disintegration of the country and mentioned the existence of the Federal Movement as the main reason for the coup of 1962. Many Burmans, especially young people, tend to believe the junta's propaganda. This makes it difficult to educate people regarding the real aspects of federalism. Constitutional principles proposed by the junta include two major points against federalism. First, the junta's constitutional principles do not favour the division of power between the national government and the respective state governments, which is an essential aspect for any federalism. Although several artificial arrangements were made to show that constituent units were given a certain amount of power, in reality there is complete centralization of power at all levels. Second, the junta does not want to reduce the privileges of the Burman majority group. Because there are many constituent units for the Burmans alone, they are over-represented in the legislature. The junta should come closer to the views of the opposition to give federalism a chance.

Federation or Federalization

The non-Burman groups want a federation in which the federal government is not superior to but rather a partner of the state governments. The states should be independent with the right to secession. The power of the federal government should be fairly limited. The powers of the constituent states of a federation are, in principle, derived from the people of the respective states. A federation is formed when a number of states agree for some reasons to live and work together under one flag. Because there is an agreement among the member states to band together as equal partners, there arises a need for another level of government to handle matters of common interest. Accordingly, this federal or national government is given some powers by the member states. In federalism therefore, the federal or national government is not a superior government that holds all power. The various powers held by the member states are spelled out clearly in their respective constitutions. It might also be said that there are two 'sovereignties' which are intertwined, yet separated. Hence, in federalism there are two constitutions. If an existing country is divided into constituent units, these units cannot become independent. This could only be possible if they were to some extent independent prior to the creation of the federal union, for example in Australia and the United States of America.

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The non-Burman groups want a federation in which the federal government is not superior to but rather a partner of the state governments.

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In contrast, 'federalization' is applied to transform an existing country into a federal union. The member states in this system cannot determine the role of the central government. Instead, the central government determines the roles of the member states. Limited powers for the states are granted by the federal government. Hence, the emerging federal union is the result of a strong central government. The various ways in which a federal union can be created form the basis of the conflicting ideas on federalism in Burma.

The most difficult task for the Burmese federalists will be the demarcation of the constituent states. Since Burma is a multi-ethnic country, the people agree that the formation of the constituent states should be in line with ethnicity. All constitutional drafts made by the NCUB (National Council of the Union of Burma), the military junta and the NLD proposed the names of ethnic groups as the names of their respective states, but there are still different ideas in terms of demarcation. And there is the problem of the current demarcation of Burma. There are seven States and seven Divisions, all with the same rights and status. The constitutional principles as proposed by the military junta recognize the seven States for non-Burman ethnic groups, the seven Divisions would be called 'Regions', and there would be additional units called 'Union Territories'. The basic principle for the formation of ethnic states is that in an area where the majority of the population belongs to the same group, this area can be formed into a state for this particular group. However, there are many areas in Burma where there is no ethnic majority, for example Tenasserim in the south and the Irrawaddy delta in the southwest. Although it is suggested that these regions be formed into states on a geographical basis, this idea is not appreciated by the ethnic groups as they consider such a construction too closely associated with the Burmans. In contrast, the draft constitution of the NCUB proposes new titles (such as 'Nationalities State') for the States with more than one ethnic group.

The advocates of the federation theory favour the idea of "One State for One Ethnic Group". According to them, such a policy would strengthen equality. They do not recognize the existing Divisions for at least two reasons. First, they maintain that these areas are not independent units like other ethnic areas but rather created by Burman politicians. Second, the current Divisions are inhabited by a Burman majority. Many ethnic minority groups fear that in such a situation a federation will not be based on equality.

The Role of the Federal Army

The ethnic groups do not want to see the present army as a federal army. Reestablishing a federal army with a new formula is a popular idea among the non-Burman politicians in exile. They see the present army as oppressive, as too much dominated

by the Burmans, as the destroyer of democracy. A new formula for the formation of a federal army is proposed in the NCUB draft constitution. Others think that it is not the army that is suppressing the people, but militarism led by some generals, and that total reform would be necessary for the army leadership and system, not for the army itself. It is important to take into consideration the response of the present army concerning the ideas for a future federal army. The role of the federal army should be positive but it should not replace civilian rule. The army should not have a double role, it should only sustain (the transition towards) democracy. Unless there is some form of consent from the present army, any initiative for political change would be difficult, if not impossible.

The Right to Self-Determination

Self-determination in the context of Burma is more than self-government. Non-Burman groups maintain that self-determination includes the right to secession. The 1947 Constitution allowed some states of the Union of Burma to exercise the right to secede from the union. The term 'self-determination' also appears in the text of the NCUB draft constitution and is defined as follows, "In the Burmese context it is (...) the right of States to be able to exercise utmost autonomy in their internal affairs and freedom from undue interference from either the Federal Government or from the Governments of other Member States". At international level, there are several other definitions. First, the established right to be free from colonial domination, or the opposite—the right to remain dependent, if it represents the will of the people. Second, the right to dissolve a State, at least if done peacefully, and to form new states on the territory of the former one. Third, the disputed right to secede. Fourth, the right of divided States to reunite. Fifth, the right of limited autonomy, short of secession, for groups that are either territorially, ethnically, religiously or linguistically defined, as in autonomous areas within confederations. Sixth, rights of minority groups within a larger political entity, as recognised in Article 27 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and in the United Nations General Assembly 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

Seventh, the internal self-determination freedom to choose one's own form of (democratic) government.

In reality, the issue of secession derives from the right of self-determination and not from the federalism described by the Burmese junta. But as long as the majority of Burmans believe that federalism is the same as secession or disintegration, there is little chance for transformation into a federal union. Federalism and self-determination must be clearly distinguished. Separating these issues will be useful for understanding and accepting federalism. Another important aspect is that there should be no rivalry in the constitution drafting process. A federal constitution would be a vital part of the creation of a Federal Union of Burma. There are currently three rival constitution drafting processes, the most important one (based on federalism) being initiated by the NCUB in 1989. The second process was initiated by the military junta in 1993. The junta's sham National Convention laid down 104 constitutional principles, none of these in favour of federalism. The third process is sponsored by the National League for Democracy. When Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest in 1995, the NLD called upon the junta to reform its National Convention in order to involve the NLD in the constitution drafting process. The junta refused, whereupon the NLD delegates boycotted the National Convention. So far, the NLD has not yet released any of its constitutional principles as most of its leaders have been under house arrest for long periods. It is essential to combine all three drafting processes in order to come to one federal constitution.



Key Words

Advocate:

(n) a person who publicly supports something, such as a cause or policy

Centralization:

(n) the grouping of most decision-making powers within a particular group of an organization or government (i.e. the power is not evenly shared by all actors involved)

Dependent:

(adj) to rely on something in order to exist

Demarcate:

(v) to decide on and set the boundaries or limits of an area

Disintegration:

(n) the process of breaking apart and losing strength

Federalism:

(n) the organization of a government in which the political power is divided between both the central government and smaller territorial divisions (i.e. regional/state governments)

Insurgency:

(n) rebellion against higher authorities/systems of government; the attempt by a group of people to take control of the government through violence/force

Propaganda:

(n) the spread of false or biased information in order to convince to the public of certain views, typically used by political groups or the government

Secession:

(n) when a country/state officially stops being part of another country/state and becomes independent

Self-determination:

(n) the right of the people of a particular country to govern themselves and to choose the type of government they will have

Note: Information on the author is not available.

Critical Thinking Component

Session Twelve

#1

What are the main reasons in support of a federal system in Myanmar?

#2

How did such different perspectives (for or against) federalism arise in Myanmar?

#3

What role does propaganda play on the issue of federalism and what would be needed to change the public opinion in favor of a federal system?

#4

Why do you think the “right to secession” is seen as non-negotiable for most non-Burmans?

#5

How might maintaining the right to secession (and also the right to remain dependent) actually strengthen ties with the central government?

Essay Prompts

Option A:

What might Khin Maung Win say about today’s government in Myanmar? Would he think we have moved closer to or further from a federal system?

Option B:

Consider other federal systems in the world. Are there aspects of these systems that can be adapted to the context of Myanmar or is Myanmar’s situation too different?

Federalism and Self-Determination: Some reflections

Venkat Iyer

This article by Venkat Iyer originally appeared in the Legal Issues on Burma Journal No. 11, April 2002, published by the Burma Lawyer's Council.

Federalism has, for many decades now, been seen an answer to the challenges posed by multi-ethnic societies the world over. In some cases, the idea has worked, while in others it manifestly has not. Where it has failed, the reasons have often lain as much with human deficiencies as with systemic shortcomings.

Whatever the record, there is no doubt that the federal concept has come decisively under the spotlight in the post-Cold War era — an era which has been characterised by the unleashing of nationalist and ethnic tensions on a large, and even unprecedented, scale. In some cases — the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia come readily to mind — the discussion has taken place against the backdrop of bloody conflict, as people keep searching for newer and better ways to accommodate long-suppressed ethnic and other differences and live in some kind of relative harmony.

It is reasonably clear that while federations can be a binding force, enabling the creation of unity in diversity, they can also often be the first step towards secession. As one leading commentator explained in a recent book: “[D]ue in part to the constitutive nature of multiethnic federations, where provincial and ethnic boundaries coincide, the politics of nationalism is rarely far removed from the arena of federal politics, feeding into a set of grievances which in one form or another have the potential to mobilise individuals behind calls for the territorial redistribution of power, including independence”.

Whether or not a federal solution will work in a given jurisdiction, therefore, depends on a number of factors, not least the nature of the federal arrangements, the fairness with which the system is operated by all parties concerned, and the degree of political maturity displayed by the leadership at both federal and provincial levels. As long as the costs of remaining a member are not seen as excessive in relation to the benefits accruing from membership,

there is a reasonable chance of the federation succeeding.

Self-determination

Federalism is, of course, only one aspect of the broader question of self-determination. Given that the issue of self-determination often features prominently in discussions about the future of multi-ethnic societies such as Burma, this article will attempt to examine some of the legal questions surrounding this rather contentious concept.

The first thing to note about self-determination is that it is still a rather nebulous concept. In the words of one scholar, it is “one of those unexceptionable goals that can be neither defined nor opposed”. And yet it occupies pride of place in international human rights instruments, and is one of the most widely-used campaigning slogans in world politics. It has increasingly been used by diverse separatist movements who base their claims to statehood on ethnic identity.

How far are such claims tenable in law? There is no easy answer to this question. Generally speaking, national/ ethnic identity as a basis for statehood does not find much support in international law. As Diane Orentlicher notes in a recent article: “In large perspective, international law has in recent decades embraced a cosmopolitan, liberal vision of states, their relationships with their citizens, and their relations with each other. While respect for pluralism within states is part of that vision, liberal internationalists have largely disdained ethnic particularity as an organising principle of political legitimacy, emphasising instead liberal republican values of civic equality. In similar fashion, global adherence to human rights principles in the post-war decades has affirmed a cosmopolitan faith in universal norms that would displace the parochial values of an obsolete nationalism”.

The problem lies in the fact that separatist claims by ethnic minorities within a nation clashes head-on with

one of the well-entrenched principles of international law, namely the territorial integrity of established states — a principle that is often referred to as a “fortress-like concept of state sovereignty”. Under this principle, once a state had been established, it enjoyed considerable independence from interference by outside forces, and was free to decide how to deal as it pleased with separatist or other forces within its jurisdiction.

This principle finds expression in the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations which, after affirming the principle of self-determination in general terms, goes on to say: “Nothing in the foregoing paragraphs shall be construed as authorising or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States conducting themselves in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples as described above and thus possessed of a government representing the whole people belonging to the territory without distinction as to race, creed or colour”.

The only exception that was recognised was in respect of states under colonial rule. In the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1960, for example, it was made clear that all peoples “subject to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation” would have a right to self-determination by virtue of which they could “freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development”.

“**The problem lies in the fact that separatist claims by ethnic minorities within a nation clashes head-on with one of the most well-entrenched principles of international law, namely the territorial integrity of established states...**”

Interestingly, among the most strident voices in favour of limiting the right of self-determination to countries under colonial rule were the governments of the newly-independent former colonies, who were keen to ensure that secessionist movements within their territories (of which there were quite a few, especially in Africa) could not claim a further right of “internal” self-determination.

Internal self-determination

Even so, some scholars have, in recent years, advanced the view that it may yet be possible for national minorities within the boundaries of an established state to claim the right of self-determination (including secession) under certain circumstances. Frederic Kirgis, Jr., for example, suggests that the extent to which they can achieve this would vary depending on the circumstances prevailing in the country in question: “One can thus discern degrees of self-determination, with the legitimacy of each tied to the degree of representative government in the state. The relationship is inverse between the degree of representative government, on the one hand, and the extent of destabilisation that the international community will tolerate in a self-determination claim, on the other. If a government is at the high end of the scale of democracy, the only self-determination claims that will be given international credence are those with minimal destabilising effect. If a government is extremely unrepresentative, much more destabilising self-determination claims may well be recognised”.

If this analysis is to be accepted, the claims of a minority to secede from state under a repressive dictatorship would be considered legitimate. Kirgis sees the right of self-determination as existing in a continuum, with secession at one extreme and limited autonomy at the other.

A similar approach has been taken by Alan Buchanan who has argued that secession, whilst not always justified as an expression of the right to self-determination, may nevertheless be considered legitimate in certain limited circumstances. He sees the right to secede as a “remedial” right: a remedy of last resort for serious injustices. In his analysis, the following would qualify as justifying grounds for secession: (a) persistent and serious violations of

individual human rights; (b) past unredressed unjust seizure of territory; (c) discriminatory redistribution of resources within a state.

The first of these grounds (the "oppression theory") was used to justify the secession of East Pakistan from the erstwhile state of Pakistan in the early 1970s — a secession which resulted in the creation of Bangladesh, which was admitted as a member of the United Nations in 1974. But this theory is not without its problems. For a start, there is no agreed definition of what constitutes "oppression" for the purposes of the theory. One test, proposed by Onyeonoro S. Kamenu requires that "on the basis of hard empirical evidence, the members of the seceding group could no longer live in peace and security, or fulfil their legitimate individual aspirations, within the larger political community." But Kamenu adds a rider which may make the fulfilment of this test much harder than one would imagine at first blush: "However, for this rationale to be plausible it must be demonstrated that all other political arrangements capable of ensuring the aggrieved group a measure of self-determination short of outright independence have been exhausted or repudiated by the dominant majority".

Another problem with the "oppression theory" is that any intended secession will have to be achieved without outside intervention (given the rule against disruption of the unity and territorial integrity of states by foreign forces), which is practically quite difficult, if not impossible. (East Pakistan, for instance, could hardly have seceded without the help it received from India, but in this, as in other cases, politics overrode the strict requirements of the law when it came to the recognition of Bangladesh).

A further problem with the "oppression theory" is that "it does not accommodate the desires of ethnic groups to create their own nation-states. The prerequisite for secession underpinning the "oppression theory" is not ethnic differentiation but oppression. It was the fact of oppression, rather than the fact that the Bengalis were linguistically, ethnically, and culturally different from other Pakistanis, which ultimately justified the creation of Bangladesh as a separate and independent state under the oppression theory. Many ethnic groups find this an unsatisfactory basis upon which to justify secession".

The legal niceties described above do, of course,

often take a back seat in the face of realpolitik, as the Bangladesh case so starkly illustrated. A more recent example of politics intervening to throw in doubt settled legal principles concerns the former Yugoslavia where the finding of an international tribunal to the effect that the country had been subjected to dissolution rather than secession has been hotly contested. In the opinion of one of the critics, "The response of the international community to the events of Yugoslavia has done much to weaken the principle of territorial integrity and to encourage the notion that self-determination can be achieved through secession from an independent and sovereign state".

Conclusion

The right to self-determination is fraught with many difficulties, both practical and legal. Although it has been given pride of place in the post-war international human rights instruments, there is no consensus on what the contours and the content of this right are. The situation has not been helped by inconsistent international practice, which has in turn bred a certain amount of cynicism among many observers.

Increasingly, there is a trend on the part of international law to overcome some of the problems of ethnic self-determination by classifying ethnic groups as "minorities" and attempting to guarantee such groups cultural, linguistic and religious freedoms on a universal basis. And within states, attempts still continue, as they have done over the decades, at accommodating ethnic and other differences through such mechanisms as federalism, autonomy and the like. Just over a decade ago, one commentator spoke of "a federal revolution sweeping the world" 11 : it is a moot question whether that claim can be made today when the world is facing at once the contradictory pressures of globalisation and fragmentation.



Key Words

Accommodate:

(v) to accept and try to respect someone's opinions or demands, even if they are not in line with your own

Destabilization:

(n) the process of becoming weaker or unstable (such as a government's power)

Fragmentation:

(n) the process of being broken down into smaller pieces

Independence:

(n) political freedom from the authority of an outside government

Jurisdiction:

(n) the official power to make legal decisions on an issue

Nationalism:

(n) advocacy by a group of people of the same race, origin, or language, to have their own independent nation

Suppression:

(n) the action of preventing people from practicing their rights, such as expressing opposition to the government

Tension:

(n) feeling of distrust or unease due to poor relations between people

Territorial integrity:

the principle in international law that a country's border should be understood as final, and that no subdivisions within the country should be able to break away (secede)

Unity:

(n) groups of people being joined together as a whole

Note: Information on the author is not available.

Critical Thinking Component

Session Thirteen

#1

Iyer claims that, "As long as the costs of remaining a member are not seen as excessive in relation to the benefits accruing from membership, there is a reasonable chance of the federation succeeding." What kinds of "costs" and "benefits" might he be referring to?

#2

Why do you think the "right to self-determination" has been such a popular concept in campaigning slogans around the world?

#3

Why, in the international community, is it seen as a priority to protect state sovereignty?

#4

Why do you think that the strongest voices in limiting the right to self-determination often came from newly-independent former colonies?

#5

What does the author mean when he refers to the “contradictory pressures of globalization and fragmentation?” How is this dilemma experienced in Myanmar?

Essay Prompts

Option A:

Spend some time researching a country that has had similar debates about diverse ethnicities, the right to self-determination, and the idea of federalism. What are the similarities and differences from Myanmar’s situation? What actions were taken, if any?

Option B:

In your opinion, do you believe that certain minority groups in Myanmar should have the right to secede based on past and current oppressions? Explain.

How Intellectuals Create a Public

Corey Robin

This article by Corey Robin originally appeared in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Volume 62, Issue 20, January 2016.

As an archetype, the public intellectual is a conflicted being, torn in two competing directions.

On the one hand, he's supposed to be called by some combination of the two vocations Max Weber set out in his lectures in Munich: that of the scholar and that of the statesman. Neither academic nor activist but both, the public intellectual is a monkish figure of austere purpose and unadorned truth. Think Noam Chomsky.

On the other hand, the public intellectual is supposed to possess a distinct and self-conscious sense of style, calling attention to itself and to the stylist. More akin to a celebrity, this public intellectual bears little resemblance to Weber's man of knowledge or man of action. He lacks the integrity and intensity of both. He makes us feel as if we are in the presence of an actor too attentive to his audience, a mind too mindful of its reception. Think Bernard-Henri Lévy.

Yet that attention to image and style, audience and reception, may not only be not antithetical to the vocation of the public intellectual; it may actually serve it. The public intellectual stands between Weber's two vocations because he wants his writing to do something in the world. "He never wrote a sentence that has any interest in itself," Ezra Pound said of Lenin, "but he evolved almost a new medium, a sort of expression halfway between writing and action."

The public intellectual is not simply interested in a wide audience of readers, in shopping her ideas on the op-ed page to sell more books. She's not looking for markets or hungry for a brand. She's not an explainer or a popularizer. She is instead the literary equivalent of the epic political actor, who sees her writing as a transformative mode of action, a thought-deed in the world. The transformation she seeks may be a far-reaching change of policy, an education of manners and morals, or a renovation of the human

estate. Her watch may be wound for tomorrow or today. But whatever her aim or time frame, the public intellectual wants her writing to have an effect, to have all the power of power itself.

To have that effect, however, she must be attuned to the sensitivities of her audience. Not because she wishes to massage or assuage them but because she wants to tear them apart. Her aim is to turn her readers from what they are into what they are not, to alienate her readers from themselves. The public intellectual I have in mind is not indifferent to her readers; her project is not complete without them. But there's a thin line separating her needing readers from her being needy of and for readers. And it is on that thin line — that tension wire between thinker and actor, intellectual and celebrity — that she must stand and balance herself. "I want to make 200 million people change their minds," said Gore Vidal, a writer who, not coincidentally, stretched that wire to its breaking point.

Though the public intellectual is a political actor, a performer on stage, what differentiates her from the celebrity or publicity hound is that she is writing for an audience that does not yet exist. Unlike the ordinary journalist or enterprising scholar, she is writing for a reader she hopes to bring into being. She never speaks to the reader as he is; she speaks to the reader as he might be. Her common reader is an uncommon reader.

The reason for this has less to do with the elitism of the intellectual — mine is no brief for an avant garde or philosopher king — than with the existence, really, the nonexistence, of the public. Publics, as John Dewey argued, never simply exist; they are always created. Created out of groups of people who are made and mangled by the actions of other people. Capital acts upon labor, subjugating men and women at work, making them miserable at home. Those workers are not yet a public. But when someone says — someone writes — "Workers of the world, unite!," they become a public that is willing and able to act upon its shared situation. It is in the writing of such words, the naming of such names — "Workers of the world" or "We, the

People,” even “The Problem That Has No Name” — that a public is summoned into being. In the act of writing for a public, intellectuals create the public for which they write. [...]

The problem with our public intellectuals today is that they are writing for readers who already exist, as they exist.

Like many academics of his generation, Cass Sunstein came of age in opposition to the legal liberalism of the 1960s and the market conservatism of the 1970s. Hoping to speak to a country polarized by the Rights Revolution and the Reagan Revolution, Sunstein turned to civic republicanism as the basis of a revamped liberalism of virtue. Politics was now conceived as democratic citizens deliberating about the common good, subjecting their interests and preferences to a common reason. Through sensible argument, citizens would alter their desires and beliefs.

While the Sunstein of today still believes that the individual’s preferences can be transformed, and that politics is the transformation of those preferences, the subject of those preferences and the instruments of their transformation have been recast. In a series of increasingly ambitious books — *Nudge*, which he co-wrote with the economist Richard Thaler, and *Why Nudge?* — Sunstein has argued for what he calls “libertarian paternalism.” The aim is no longer for citizens to deliberate with each other about their ends or beliefs. Instead, the state should nudge men and women to make better choices. [...]

It is that desired transformation — of the self, and of the society in which the self becomes a self — that marks Sunstein as a public intellectual. And marks the ground of his failure. For the polity Sunstein would like to bring into being looks like the polity that already exists. Its setting is the regulatory state and capitalist economy we already have. Its ideology is the market fundamentalism we already pay obeisance to: “a respect for competition,” Sunstein stipulates, “is central to behaviorally informed regulation.” And its actors are the consumers we already are. What we are witnesses to here is not a public being summoned but a public being dismissed.

To get a sense of how un-public Sunstein’s vision is, allow me a historical detour. Let me take you back

three-quarters of a century, to the world John Dewey made, and introduce you to Roscoe Filburn.

A fifth-generation farmer from Ohio, Roscoe Filburn wasn’t the sort of man who liked to be told what to do, so he wasn’t going to limit himself to growing 11 acres of wheat just because the federal government said he couldn’t grow more. The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 authorized the government to institute annual harvest quotas — if the farmers affected by these quotas voted to approve them, by a two-thirds supermajority, in government-organized referendums. In 1941, 81 percent of farmers approved the government’s quota of 11.1 acres. Filburn wasn’t one of them. He harvested 23 acres, was fined \$117, and sued. The case went to the Supreme Court.

Since 1937, the Court had been relying upon a broad interpretation of the Commerce Clause to justify expanding the federal government’s power over the economy. But Filburn intended his wheat solely for his farm, not the local market or the interstate economy. In *Wickard v. Filburn*, Justice Robert Jackson ruled that while the effect of Filburn growing wheat for his farm might be “trivial by itself,” it was “far from trivial” when “taken together with that of many others similarly situated.” What has come to be known as the “aggregate effects” doctrine gave the green light to state intervention throughout the economy.

Set against Sunstein’s nudge, *Wickard v. Filburn* reads like the lost script of an ancient civilization. Across-the-board mandates like that farm quota, which affect everyone regardless of individual circumstance, are the other of nudge politics precisely because they affect everyone regardless of individual circumstance. But that is their public power: They create a commons by forcing a question on everyone with no opt-out provisions of the sort that Sunstein is always on the lookout for. By requiring economic actors to think of themselves as part of a class “of many others similarly situated,” by recasting a private decision to opt out of the market as a choice of collective portent, mandates force men and women to think politically. They turn us into a public.

That’s also how public intellectuals work. By virtue of the demands they make upon the reader, they force a reckoning. They summon a public into being — if nothing else a public conjured out of opposition to their writing. Democratic publics are always formed

in opposition and conflict: “to form itself,” wrote Dewey, “the public has to break existing political forms.” So are reading publics. Sometimes they are formed in opposition to the targets identified by the writer: Think of the readers of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* or Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow*. Sometimes they are formed in opposition to the writer: Think of the readers of Hannah Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Regardless of the fallout, the public intellectual forces a question, establishes a divide, and demands that her readers orient themselves around that divide.

It is precisely that sense of a public — summoned into being by a writer’s demands; divided, forced to take sides — that Sunstein’s writing is in flight from. And not just Sunstein’s writing but the vast college of knowledge from which it emanates and the polity it seeks to insinuate.

Anyone familiar with Ta-Nehisi Coates will come to *Between the World and Me* with great expectations: of not only its author’s formidable mind and considerable gifts but also of a public not often present in contemporary culture. From his blog, articles, and engagement with critics high and low, we know that Coates is a writer with an appetite and talent for readers. And not just any readers but readers hungry for the pleasure of prose and the application of intelligence to the most fractious issues of the day.

Anyone who has read *Between the World and Me* will find those expectations fulfilled. The first page opens with the body, the last closes with fear. From Machiavelli to Judith Shklar, the body and fear have been touchstones of our modern political canon. Given this marriage of talent and topic, we have every reason to receive *Between the World and Me* as a major intervention in public life and letters, as perhaps the signal text of today’s civic culture. [...]

It is also that humanism that makes *Between the World and Me* such an exemplary text. While many have voiced their frustration with the overt anti-politics of the text, there is a politics going on there but on the lower frequencies. It is the naming of an experience we have grown all too familiar with — the unhurried disposal of black bodies — and the defamiliarizing insistence that this is not only a black problem but also a white problem. This is where

Coates’s humanism truly bites: It is a challenge to whites who believe that they are safe and whose believed-in safety comes at black expense.

Even though his text is not directed at whites — indeed, it often seems directed at no one at all — Coates dares whites to prove that we do not believe ourselves to be separate from black people, that we understand that we cannot escape the ramifications of the fate we have assigned to African-Americans. And dares us in such a way that the very alacrity with which we try to prove him wrong — by words, always by words — only serves to prove him right. Your actions, says Coates — the daily ease with which you tolerate the policing, incarceration, and murder of black citizens; the daily ease with which your white life goes on amid so much black death — shows that you have no desire, intention, or need to end my situation. Because it is the precondition of your situation.

Arendt said her task was to think what we are doing; Coates sets as his task to think what we are not doing. Against an age grown so sensitive to language, that sees politics in the tiniest policing of words, Coates asks us to ignore our words and pay attention to our deeds. He uses words to declare the nullity of words, to expose the abyss of our inaction. And in so doing, creates the possibility for action, around issues like reparations and an end to mass incarceration, which he has pushed and pressed in two densely reported and tightly argued articles in *The Atlantic*. That is the way publics are sometimes summoned: by the announcement that they cannot be so summoned, by the declaration that their language has grown so corrupt that it can no longer serve as the means of their conveyance. That was certainly Adorno’s tack. It appears to be Coates’s.

Yet this public, born of the shock at not only the condition of black America but also America’s toleration of that condition, may not be a public at all. It may instead be the readers we — all of us, black, brown, white — already are.

Ever since the end of the Cold War, we have been primed for texts like these, which rest their universalism on the cruelties men and women inflict upon the human body. After 1989, when intellectuals declared their exhaustion with the ideological ambitions of the 20th century, it was said that the only principle we could now believe in was that cruelty

— and the fear it inspired — was an evil, the worst evil, to be shunned at all costs. All politics was to be erected upon this negative foundation, which would constrain those ideological architects who aimed their edifices into the sky. Judith Shklar was the first to make this argument in her essay “The Liberalism of Fear.” But philosophers and journalists like Richard Rorty, Michael Ignatieff, and Philip Gourevitch elaborated and extended it.

In its first decade, the liberalism of fear found its materials in the victims of ethnic cleansing and genocide in the Balkans and Rwanda. After 9/11, it was the victims of Islamist and Saddamist terror. Both sets of victims prompted humanitarian interventions from the United States and Western powers.

Those rescue projects gave the Hobbesian game away: Where the 20th century’s progressive ideologies made the victims of domination the agents of their emancipation, the liberals of fear could posit no such agent. If cruelty and fear were to serve as universally recognized foundations, they had to be understood as so incontestably terrible that no one, save their perpetrators, could defend them. The only kind of victims that proved eligible for this description were political innocents, abject and without agency, men and women who wouldn’t hurt a fly because they couldn’t hurt a fly. The only way to deliver them from their suffering without inviting the ideological mass politics of the 20th century was rescue from abroad: An all-powerful sovereign would swoop in to stop the bloodshed. Not unlike Hobbes’s Leviathan.

In recent years, however, liberals have grown exhausted by these projects; after Afghanistan and Iraq, it’s hard to believe in rescue from abroad. Their gaze has turned inward; the liberalism of fear has come home. To our own victims of violence, cruelty, and fear. But with the same sense of futility that has overwhelmed these international projects. Think David Simon’s *The Wire*.

In crucial ways, Coates departs from these texts. He does not believe that black Americans are innocents. Nor does he ask white America to rescue them. If anything, he believes whites need to rescue themselves. “I do not believe that we can stop them,” Coates tells his son; “they must ultimately stop themselves.” He also believes that the enterprise of security, of seeking a place of greater safety, is

a misbegotten fantasy, an escape from the human condition of finitude and frailty.

Yet Coates is not immune to the imperatives that drove Shklar and her successors. The physicality of his understanding of fear recalls some of the most harrowing passages of Ignatieff and Gourevitch: “Racism is a visceral experience,” he writes. “It dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth.” “To be black in the Baltimore of my youth was to be naked before the elements of the world, before all the guns, fists, knives, crack, rape, and disease.” “When they shatter the body they shatter everything.” While the accuracy of these descriptions isn’t in doubt, they are choices, which reveal something about the writer who wrote them and the culture that receives them.

When James Baldwin, with whom Coates is in dialogue, talked about white supremacy, he focused on cultural hegemony, the ways in which whites colonized the consciousness of blacks. One finds little of that understanding in Coates’s book; his technologies of control are mostly physical. Not simply because the political world has changed since 1962 but also because that rich postwar obsession with consciousness and society has given way to the bodily understanding of rule that we see in someone like Sunstein. In the same way that Sunstein identifies a biopolitical minimum as the subject of his inquiry, so does Coates posit a biopolitical minimum at the center of his.

For Baldwin, fear is an emotion that a victim suffers, but it is also an instrument, a tool that an agent wields. And not just the agents of state; as Baldwin writes in *The Fire Next Time*, subordinate classes can wield it, too.

One needed, in order to be free, something more than a bank account. One needed a handle, a lever, a means of inspiring fear. ... Neither civilized reason nor Christian love would cause any of those people to treat you as they presumably wanted to be treated; only the fear of your power to retaliate would cause them to do that, or to seem to do it, which was (and is) good enough.

Whether you are on the receiving or giving end of the stick, Baldwin says, fear is an emotion that you can separate yourself from, stand outside of, get on

top of. For Coates, it is the opposite: Fear is an all-consuming experience, suffusing agents and abject alike.

Like Shklar and her successors, Coates comes to his concerns with the body and fear in the wake of a great disaffection. Coates once believed in Black Nationalism, but in college he freed himself from its desires and distortions. From that point on, he refused to be taken in, not by any collectivity, politics, or ism. In the body and fear, Coates found a philosophical antidote, an epistemological armor, against the toxin of ideology:

I began to see discord, argument, chaos, perhaps even fear, as a kind of power. ... The gnawing discomfort, the chaos, the intellectual vertigo was not an alarm. It was a beacon. It began to strike me that the point of my education was a kind of discomfort, was the process that would not award me my own especial Dream but would break all the dreams, all the comforting myths of Africa, of America, and everywhere, and would leave me only with humanity in all its terribleness [emphasis added].

This Shklarian background helps us understand the difficult place Coates finds himself in, where the condition of black America must be overcome but there are no political means to overcome it: "I do not believe we can stop them." One of the reasons, of course, that Coates doesn't believe "we can stop them" is that he's writing in the wake of a great defeat; it's hard to believe in the promise of Black Freedom when you can only see its paucity.

But another reason Coates believes there are no political means to overcome the condition of black America is that he has taken those means off the table. So leery is he — and the larger liberal community that reads him — of the kind of ideological mass politics that would be required to overcome that condition, of the politics of division and summoning that is the public intellectual's stock in trade, that he's almost put himself in the situation he now finds himself in.

This combination of black aspiration, white intransigence, and political disavowal — a mood that still pervades the liberal left — leads Coates not to pessimism, as many of his critics have charged, but to apocalypticism, that old standby of American

impossibilism. The catastrophe Coates imagines is not a social apocalypse of black rage and rebellion. It is a natural apocalypse, the vengeance of the earth against white America's fetish for cheap oil: [...]

It's no surprise that Sunstein and Coates wind up in the same place: with a public destroyed. The presupposition of their writing is that a politics unafraid to put division and conflict, the mobilization of a mass, on the table, is in fact off the table. The power of their writing derives from the fact that that is not merely a presupposition but an all too accurate reflection of the world we live in. A world where it is difficult to imagine the summoning of a public, beyond the intermittent, ever-more-fleeting summons we've seen these past 20 years: first in response to the inequities of the global trade regime; then in response to the Iraq War and the financial crisis; now in response to mass incarceration. We know, we hope, that something bigger, more lasting, will come. But when, and whether that "when" will come in time, we don't know.

It is here, amid the increasingly short half-lives of these movements, that we must look for the fate of our public intellectuals. Not in the fear that there are no intellectuals but in the fact that there seems to be no possibility of a public. [...]

We have the means, we have the material. What we don't have is mass. We have episodic masses, which effervesce and overflow. But it's hard to imagine masses that will endure, publics that won't disappear in the face of state repression or social intransigence but instead will dig in and charge forward. And it is that constraint on the imagination and hence the will that is the biggest obstacle to the public intellectual today. Not tenure, not the death of bohemia, not jargon, but the fear that the publics that don't yet exist — which are, after all, the only publics we've ever had — never will exist.



About the Author

Corey Robin is an American political theorist and journalist who teaches Political Science at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center. His studies focus mostly on American conservatism and neo-conservatism as well as the struggles of liberals and the New Left in dealing with American supremacy since the Cold War. He is currently writing a book on the theory of capitalism, drawing from the French revolution to neo-liberalism.



Key Words

Academia:

(n) the community involved in as well as work accomplished in research or education, typically in universities/ colleges

Activist:

(n) a person who takes action for social or political change

Audience:

(n) the group of people who read a writer's work (or watch/listen to a performance, program, etc.)

Ideology:

(n) a set of beliefs and ideals, especially of those that influence economic or political theory and policy

Intellectual:

(n) someone who is intelligent and well-educated and typically works in academia

Mass:

(n) a large group or crowd of people

Mobilization:

(n) the process of encouraging people to gather around a certain cause and take action

Public:

(n) the people that make up a community, state, or nation

Scholar:

(n) someone who specializes in a particular field of study

Statesman:

(n) a respected and experienced political or government leader

Critical Thinking Component

Session Fourteen

#1

What is the problem with, "...writing for readers who already exist, as they exist"?

#2

In your own words, what is the relationship between the public intellectual and his/her audience?

#3

The article argues that image and style are key to an activist's work. Why might this be problematic?

#4

Explain the process of how one's writing creates an audience or "public"?

#5

What role does fear play in political ideologies or beliefs about social change?

Essay Prompts

Option A:

Can you think of a public intellectual that you have been influenced by in Myanmar? How do they balance the role of the scholar and statesman and what was their impact on you personally?

Option B:

Robin worries that, "it's hard to imagine masses that will endure, publics that won't disappear in the face of state repression or social intransigence but instead will dig in and charge forward." What will it take to inspire long-term mass mobilization around an issue, and do you think it's possible?

On Liberty

John Stuart Mill

This is chapter four of John Stuart Mill's book, *On Liberty*, originally published in 1859.

WHAT, then, is the rightful limit to the sovereignty of the individual over himself? Where does the authority of society begin? How much of human life should be assigned to individuality, and how much to society?

Each will receive its proper share, if each has that which more particularly concerns it. To individuality should belong the part of life in which it is chiefly the individual that is interested; to society, the part which chiefly interests society.

Though society is not founded on a contract, and though no good purpose is answered by inventing a contract in order to deduce social obligations from it, every one who receives the protection of society owes a return for the benefit, and the fact of living in society renders it indispensable that each should be bound to observe a certain line of conduct towards the rest. This conduct consists, first, in not injuring the interests of one another; or rather certain interests, which, either by express legal provision or by tacit understanding, ought to be considered as rights; and secondly, in each person's bearing his share (to be fixed on some equitable principle) of the labors and sacrifices incurred for defending the society or its members from injury and molestation. These conditions society is justified in enforcing, at all costs to those who endeavor to withhold fulfilment. Nor is this all that society may do. The acts of an individual may be hurtful to others, or wanting in due consideration for their welfare, without going the length of violating any of their constituted rights. The offender may then be justly punished by opinion, though not by law. As soon as any part of a person's conduct affects prejudicially the interests of others, society has jurisdiction over it, and the question whether the general welfare will or will not be promoted by interfering with it, becomes open to discussion. But there is no room for entertaining any such question when a person's conduct affects the interests of no persons besides himself, or needs not affect them unless they like (all the persons

concerned being of full age, and the ordinary amount of understanding). In all such cases there should be perfect freedom, legal and social, to do the action and stand the consequences.

It would be a great misunderstanding of this doctrine, to suppose that it is one of selfish indifference, which pretends that human beings have no business with each other's conduct in life, and that they should not concern themselves about the well-doing or well-being of one another, unless their own interest is involved. Instead of any diminution, there is need of a great increase of disinterested exertion to promote the good of others. But disinterested benevolence can find other instruments to persuade people to their good, than whips and scourges, either of the literal or the metaphorical sort. I am the last person to undervalue the self-regarding virtues; they are only second in importance, if even second, to the social. It is equally the business of education to cultivate both. But even education works by conviction and persuasion as well as by compulsion, and it is by the former only that, when the period of education is past, the self-regarding virtues should be inculcated. Human beings owe to each other help to distinguish the better from the worse, and encouragement to choose the former and avoid the latter. They should be forever stimulating each other to increased exercise of their higher faculties, and increased direction of their feelings and aims towards wise instead of foolish, elevating instead of degrading, objects and contemplations. But neither one person, nor any number of persons, is warranted in saying to another human creature of ripe years, that he shall not do with his life for his own benefit what he chooses to do with it. He is the person most interested in his own well-being, the interest which any other person, except in cases of strong personal attachment, can have in it, is trifling, compared with that which he himself has; the interest which society has in him individually (except as to his conduct to others) is fractional, and altogether indirect: while, with respect to his own feelings and circumstances, the most ordinary man or woman has means of knowledge immeasurably surpassing those that can

be possessed by any one else. The interference of society to overrule his judgment and purposes in what only regards himself, must be grounded on general presumptions; which may be altogether wrong, and even if right, are as likely as not to be misapplied to individual cases, by persons no better acquainted with the circumstances of such cases than those are who look at them merely from without. In this department, therefore, of human affairs, Individuality has its proper field of action. In the conduct of human beings towards one another, it is necessary that general rules should for the most part be observed, in order that people may know what they have to expect; but in each person's own concerns, his individual spontaneity is entitled to free exercise. Considerations to aid his judgment, exhortations to strengthen his will, may be offered to him, even obtruded on him, by others; but he, himself, is the final judge. All errors which he is likely to commit against advice and warning, are far outweighed by the evil of allowing others to constrain him to what they deem his good. [...]

What I contend for is, that the inconveniences which are strictly inseparable from the unfavorable judgment of others, are the only ones to which a person should ever be subjected for that portion of his conduct and character which concerns his own good, but which does not affect the interests of others in their relations with him. Acts injurious to others require a totally different treatment. Encroachment on their rights; infliction on them of any loss or damage not justified by his own rights; falsehood or duplicity in dealing with them; unfair or ungenerous use of advantages over them; even selfish abstinence from defending them against injury--these are fit objects of moral reprobation, and, in grave cases, of moral retribution and punishment. And not only these acts, but the dispositions which lead to them, are properly immoral, and fit subjects of disapprobation which may rise to abhorrence. Cruelty of disposition; malice and ill-nature; that most anti-social and odious of all passions, envy; dissimulation and insincerity, irascibility on insufficient cause, and resentment disproportioned to the provocation; the love of domineering over others; the desire to engross more than one's share of advantages (the pleonexia of the Greeks); the pride which derives gratification from the abasement of others; the egotism which thinks self and its concerns more important than everything

else, and decides all doubtful questions in his own favor;--these are moral vices, and constitute a bad and odious moral character: unlike the self-regarding faults previously mentioned, which are not properly immoralities, and to whatever pitch they may be carried, do not constitute wickedness. They may be proofs of any amount of folly, or want of personal dignity and self-respect; but they are only a subject of moral reprobation when they involve a breach of duty to others, for whose sake the individual is bound to have care for himself. What are called duties to ourselves are not socially obligatory, unless circumstances render them at the same time duties to others. The term duty to oneself, when it means anything more than prudence, means self-respect or self-development; and for none of these is any one accountable to his fellow-creatures, because for none of them is it for the good of mankind that he be held accountable to them.

The distinction between the loss of consideration which a person may rightly incur by defect of prudence or of personal dignity, and the reprobation which is due to him for an offence against the rights of others, is not a merely nominal distinction. It makes a vast difference both in our feelings and in our conduct towards him, whether he displeases us in things in which we think we have a right to control him, or in things in which we know that we have not. If he displeases us, we may express our distaste, and we may stand aloof from a person as well as from a thing that displeases us; but we shall not therefore feel called on to make his life uncomfortable. We shall reflect that he already bears, or will bear, the whole penalty of his error; if he spoils his life by mismanagement, we shall not, for that reason, desire to spoil it still further: instead of wishing to punish him, we shall rather endeavor to alleviate his punishment, by showing him how he may avoid or cure the evils his conduct tends to bring upon him. He may be to us an object of pity, perhaps of dislike, but not of anger or resentment; we shall not treat him like an enemy of society: the worst we shall think ourselves justified in doing is leaving him to himself, If we do not interfere benevolently by showing interest or concern for him. It is far otherwise if he has infringed the rules necessary for the protection of his fellow-creatures, individually or collectively. The evil consequences of his acts do not then fall on himself, but on others; and society, as the protector of all its

members, must retaliate on him; must inflict pain on him for the express purpose of punishment, and must take care that it be sufficiently severe. In the one case, he is an offender at our bar, and we are called on not only to sit in judgment on him, but, in one shape or another, to execute our own sentence: in the other case, it is not our part to inflict any suffering on him, except what may incidentally follow from our using the same liberty in the regulation of our own affairs, which we allow to him in his.

The distinction here pointed out between the part of a person's life which concerns only himself, and that which concerns others, many persons will refuse to admit. How (it may be asked) can any part of the conduct of a member of society be a matter of indifference to the other members? No person is an entirely isolated being; it is impossible for a person to do anything seriously or permanently hurtful to himself, without mischief reaching at least to his near connections, and often far beyond them. If he injures his property, he does harm to those who directly or indirectly derived support from it, and usually diminishes, by a greater or less amount, the general resources of the community. If he deteriorates his bodily or mental faculties, he not only brings evil upon all who depended on him for any portion of their happiness, but disqualifies himself for rendering the services which he owes to his fellow-creatures generally; perhaps becomes a burden on their affection or benevolence; and if such conduct were very frequent, hardly any offence that is committed would detract more from the general sum of good. Finally, if by his vices or follies a person does no direct harm to others, he is nevertheless (it may be said) injurious by his example; and ought to be compelled to control himself, for the sake of those whom the sight or knowledge of his conduct might corrupt or mislead.

And even (it will be added) if the consequences of misconduct could be confined to the vicious or thoughtless individual, ought society to abandon to their own guidance those who are manifestly unfit for it? If protection against themselves is confessedly due to children and persons under age, is not society equally bound to afford it to persons of mature years who are equally incapable of self-government? If gambling, or drunkenness, or incontinence, or idleness, or uncleanness, are as injurious to

happiness, and as great a hindrance to improvement, as many or most of the acts prohibited by law, why (it may be asked) should not law, so far as is consistent with practicability and social convenience, endeavor to repress these also? And as a supplement to the unavoidable imperfections of law, ought not opinion at least to organize a powerful police against these vices, and visit rigidly with social penalties those who are known to practise them? There is no question here (it may be said) about restricting individuality, or impeding the trial of new and original experiments in living. The only things it is sought to prevent are things which have been tried and condemned from the beginning of the world until now; things which experience has shown not to be useful or suitable to any person's individuality. There must be some length of time and amount of experience, after which a moral or prudential truth may be regarded as established, and it is merely desired to prevent generation after generation from falling over the same precipice which has been fatal to their predecessors.

I fully admit that the mischief which a person does to himself, may seriously affect, both through their sympathies and their interests, those nearly connected with him, and in a minor degree, society at large. When, by conduct of this sort, a person is led to violate a distinct and assignable obligation to any other person or persons, the case is taken out of the self-regarding class, and becomes amenable to moral disapprobation in the proper sense of the term. If, for example, a man, through intemperance or extravagance, becomes unable to pay his debts, or, having undertaken the moral responsibility of a family, becomes from the same cause incapable of supporting or educating them, he is deservedly reprobated, and might be justly punished; but it is for the breach of duty to his family or creditors, not for the extravagance. If the resources which ought to have been devoted to them, had been diverted from them for the most prudent investment, the moral culpability would have been the same. George Barnwell murdered his uncle to get money for his mistress, but if he had done it to set himself up in business, he would equally have been hanged. Again, in the frequent case of a man who causes grief to his family by addiction to bad habits, he deserves reproach for his unkindness or ingratitude; but so he may for cultivating habits not in themselves vicious, if they are painful to those with whom he passes his

life, or who from personal ties are dependent on him for their comfort. Whoever fails in the consideration generally due to the interests and feelings of others, not being compelled by some more imperative duty, or justified by allowable self-preference, is a subject of moral disapprobation for that failure, but not for the cause of it, nor for the errors, merely personal to himself, which may have remotely led to it. In like manner, when a person disables himself, by conduct purely self-regarding, from the performance of some definite duty incumbent on him to the public, he is guilty of a social offence. No person ought to be punished simply for being drunk; but a soldier or a policeman should be punished for being drunk on duty. Whenever, in short, there is a definite damage, or a definite risk of damage, either to an individual or to the public, the case is taken out of the province of liberty, and placed in that of morality or law.

But with regard to the merely contingent or, as it may be called, constructive injury which a person causes to society, by conduct which neither violates any specific duty to the public, nor occasions perceptible hurt to any assignable individual except himself; the inconvenience is one which society can afford to bear, for the sake of the greater good of human freedom. If grown persons are to be punished for not taking proper care of themselves, I would rather it were for their own sake, than under pretence of preventing them from impairing their capacity of rendering to society benefits which society does not pretend it has a right to exact. But I cannot consent to argue the point as if society had no means of bringing its weaker members up to its ordinary standard of rational conduct, except waiting till they do something irrational, and then punishing them, legally or morally, for it. Society has had absolute power over them during all the early portion of their existence: it has had the whole period of childhood and nonage in which to try whether it could make them capable of rational conduct in life. The existing generation is master both of the training and the entire circumstances of the generation to come; it cannot indeed make them perfectly wise and good, because it is itself so lamentably deficient in goodness and wisdom; and its best efforts are not always, in individual cases, its most successful ones; but it is perfectly well able to make the rising generation, as a whole, as good as, and a little better than, itself. If society lets any considerable number of its members

grow up mere children, incapable of being acted on by rational consideration of distant motives, society has itself to blame for the consequences. Armed not only with all the powers of education, but with the ascendancy which the authority of a received opinion always exercises over the minds who are least fitted to judge for themselves; and aided by the natural penalties which cannot be prevented from falling on those who incur the distaste or the contempt of those who know them; let not society pretend that it needs, besides all this, the power to issue commands and enforce obedience in the personal concerns of individuals, in which, on all principles of justice and policy, the decision ought to rest with those who are to abide the consequences. Nor is there anything which tends more to discredit and frustrate the better means of influencing conduct, than a resort to the worse. If there be among those whom it is attempted to coerce into prudence or temperance, any of the material of which vigorous and independent characters are made, they will infallibly rebel against the yoke. No such person will ever feel that others have a right to control him in his concerns, such as they have to prevent him from injuring them in theirs; and it easily comes to be considered a mark of spirit and courage to fly in the face of such usurped authority, and do with ostentation the exact opposite of what it enjoins; as in the fashion of grossness which succeeded, in the time of Charles II., to the fanatical moral intolerance of the Puritans. With respect to what is said of the necessity of protecting society from the bad example set to others by the vicious or the self-indulgent; it is true that bad example may have a pernicious effect, especially the example of doing wrong to others with impunity to the wrong-doer. But we are now speaking of conduct which, while it does no wrong to others, is supposed to do great harm to the agent himself: and I do not see how those who believe this, can think otherwise than that the example, on the whole, must be more salutary than hurtful, since, if it displays the misconduct, it displays also the painful or degrading consequences which, if the conduct is justly censured, must be supposed to be in all or most cases attendant on it.

But the strongest of all the arguments against the interference of the public with purely personal conduct, is that when it does interfere, the odds are that it interferes wrongly, and in the wrong place. On questions of social morality, of duty to others, the

opinion of the public, that is, of an overruling majority, though often wrong, is likely to be still oftener right; because on such questions they are only required to judge of their own interests; of the manner in which some mode of conduct, if allowed to be practised, would affect themselves. But the opinion of a similar majority, imposed as a law on the minority, on questions of self-regarding conduct, is quite as likely to be wrong as right; for in these cases public opinion means, at the best, some people's opinion of what is good or bad for other people; while very often it does not even mean that; the public, with the most perfect indifference, passing over the pleasure or convenience of those whose conduct they censure, and considering only their own preference. There are many who consider as an injury to themselves any conduct which they have a distaste for, and resent it as an outrage to their feelings; as a religious bigot, when charged with disregarding the religious feelings of others, has been known to retort that they disregard his feelings, by persisting in their abominable worship or creed. But there is no parity between the feeling of a person for his own opinion, and the feeling of another who is offended at his holding it; no more than between the desire of a thief to take a purse, and the desire of the right owner to keep it. And a person's taste is as much his own peculiar concern as his opinion or his purse. It is easy for any one to imagine an ideal public, which leaves the freedom and choice of individuals in all uncertain matters undisturbed, and only requires them to abstain from modes of conduct which universal experience has condemned. But where has there been seen a public which set any such limit to its censorship? or when does the public trouble itself about universal experience. In its interferences with personal conduct it is seldom thinking of anything but the enormity of acting or feeling differently from itself; and this standard of judgment, thinly disguised, is held up to mankind as the dictate of religion and philosophy, by nine tenths of all moralists and speculative writers. These teach that things are right because they are right; because we feel them to be so. They tell us to search in our own minds and hearts for laws of conduct binding on ourselves and on all others. What can the poor public do but apply these instructions, and make their own personal feelings of good and evil, if they are tolerably unanimous in them, obligatory on all the world?

The evil here pointed out is not one which exists

only in theory; and it may perhaps be expected that I should specify the instances in which the public of this age and country improperly invests its own preferences with the character of moral laws. I am not writing an essay on the aberrations of existing moral feeling. That is too weighty a subject to be discussed parenthetically, and by way of illustration. Yet examples are necessary, to show that the principle I maintain is of serious and practical moment, and that I am not endeavoring to erect a barrier against imaginary evils. And it is not difficult to show, by abundant instances, that to extend the bounds of what may be called moral police, until it encroaches on the most unquestionably legitimate liberty of the individual, is one of the most universal of all human propensities.

As a first instance, consider the antipathies which men cherish on no better grounds than that persons whose religious opinions are different from theirs, do not practise their religious observances, especially their religious abstinences. To cite a rather trivial example, nothing in the creed or practice of Christians does more to envenom the hatred of Mahomedans against them, than the fact of their eating pork. There are few acts which Christians and Europeans regard with more unaffected disgust, than Mussulmans regard this particular mode of satisfying hunger. It is, in the first place, an offence against their religion; but this circumstance by no means explains either the degree or the kind of their repugnance; for wine also is forbidden by their religion, and to partake of it is by all Mussulmans accounted wrong, but not disgusting. Their aversion to the flesh of the "unclean beast" is, on the contrary, of that peculiar character, resembling an instinctive antipathy, which the idea of uncleanness, when once it thoroughly sinks into the feelings, seems always to excite even in those whose personal habits are anything but scrupulously cleanly and of which the sentiment of religious impurity, so intense in the Hindoos, is a remarkable example. Suppose now that in a people, of whom the majority were Mussulmans, that majority should insist upon not permitting pork to be eaten within the limits of the country. This would be nothing new in Mahomedan countries. [1] Would it be a legitimate exercise of the moral authority of public opinion? and if not, why not? The practice is really revolting to such a public. They also sincerely think that it is forbidden and abhorred by the Deity. Neither could the prohibition be censured

as religious persecution. It might be religious in its origin, but it would not be persecution for religion, since nobody's religion makes it a duty to eat pork. The only tenable ground of condemnation would be, that with the personal tastes and self-regarding concerns of individuals the public has no business to interfere.

To come somewhat nearer home: the majority of Spaniards consider it a gross impiety, offensive in the highest degree to the Supreme Being, to worship him in any other manner than the Roman Catholic; and no other public worship is lawful on Spanish soil. The people of all Southern Europe look upon a married clergy as not only irreligious, but unchaste, indecent, gross, disgusting. What do Protestants think of these perfectly sincere feelings, and of the attempt to enforce them against non-Catholics? Yet, if mankind are justified in interfering with each other's liberty in things which do not concern the interests of others, on what principle is it possible consistently to exclude these cases? or who can blame people for desiring to suppress what they regard as a scandal in the sight of God and man?

No stronger case can be shown for prohibiting anything which is regarded as a personal immorality, than is made out for suppressing these practices in the eyes of those who regard them as impieties; and unless we are willing to adopt the logic of persecutors, and to say that we may persecute others because we are right, and that they must not persecute us because they are wrong, we must beware of admitting a principle of which we should resent as a gross injustice the application to ourselves.

The preceding instances may be objected to, although unreasonably, as drawn from contingencies impossible among us: opinion, in this country, not being likely to enforce abstinence from meats, or to interfere with people for worshipping, and for either marrying or not marrying, according to their creed or inclination. The next example, however, shall be taken from an interference with liberty which we have by no means passed all danger of. Wherever the Puritans have been sufficiently powerful, as in New England, and in Great Britain at the time of the Commonwealth, they have endeavored, with considerable success, to put down all public, and nearly all private, amusements: especially music,

dancing, public games, or other assemblages for purposes of diversion, and the theatre. There are still in this country large bodies of persons by whose notions of morality and religion these recreations are condemned; and those persons belonging chiefly to the middle class, who are the ascendant power in the present social and political condition of the kingdom, it is by no means impossible that persons of these sentiments may at some time or other command a majority in Parliament. How will the remaining portion of the community like to have the amusements that shall be permitted to them regulated by the religious and moral sentiments of the stricter Calvinists and Methodists? Would they not, with considerable peremptoriness, desire these intrusively pious members of society to mind their own business? This is precisely what should be said to every government and every public, who have the pretension that no person shall enjoy any pleasure which they think wrong. But if the principle of the pretension be admitted, no one can reasonably object to its being acted on in the sense of the majority, or other preponderating power in the country; and all persons must be ready to conform to the idea of a Christian commonwealth, as understood by the early settlers in New England, if a religious profession similar to theirs should ever succeed in regaining its lost ground, as religions supposed to be declining have so often been known to do.

To imagine another contingency, perhaps more likely to be realized than the one last mentioned. There is confessedly a strong tendency in the modern world towards a democratic constitution of society, accompanied or not by popular political institutions. It is affirmed that in the country where this tendency is most completely realized--where both society and the government are most democratic--the United States--the feeling of the majority, to whom any appearance of a more showy or costly style of living than they can hope to rival is disagreeable, operates as a tolerably effectual sumptuary law, and that in many parts of the Union it is really difficult for a person possessing a very large income, to find any mode of spending it, which will not incur popular disapprobation. Though such statements as these are doubtless much exaggerated as a representation of existing facts, the state of things they describe is not only a conceivable and possible, but a probable result of democratic feeling, combined with the notion

that the public has a right to a veto on the manner in which individuals shall spend their incomes. We have only further to suppose a considerable diffusion of Socialist opinions, and it may become infamous in the eyes of the majority to possess more property than some very small amount, or any income not earned by manual labor. Opinions similar in principle to these, already prevail widely among the artisan class, and weigh oppressively on those who are amenable to the opinion chiefly of that class, namely, its own members. It is known that the bad workmen who form the majority of the operatives in many branches of industry, are decidedly of opinion that bad workmen ought to receive the same wages as good, and that no one ought to be allowed, through piecework or otherwise, to earn by superior skill or industry more than others can without it. And they employ a moral police, which occasionally becomes a physical one, to deter skilful workmen from receiving, and employers from giving, a larger remuneration for a more useful service. If the public have any jurisdiction over private concerns, I cannot see that these people are in fault, or that any individual's particular public can be blamed for asserting the same authority over his individual conduct, which the general public asserts over people in general.

But, without dwelling upon supposititious cases, there are, in our own day, gross usurpations upon the liberty of private life actually practised, and still greater ones threatened with some expectation of success, and opinions proposed which assert an unlimited right in the public not only to prohibit by law everything which it thinks wrong, but in order to get at what it thinks wrong, to prohibit any number of things which it admits to be innocent.

Under the name of preventing intemperance the people of one English colony, and of nearly half the United States, have been interdicted by law from making any use whatever of fermented drinks, except for medical purposes: for prohibition of their sale is in fact, as it is intended to be, prohibition of their use. And though the impracticability of executing the law has caused its repeal in several of the States which had adopted it, including the one from which it derives its name, an attempt has notwithstanding been commenced, and is prosecuted with considerable zeal by many of the professed philanthropists, to agitate for a similar law in this

country. The association, or "Alliance" as it terms itself, which has been formed for this purpose, has acquired some notoriety through the publicity given to a correspondence between its Secretary and one of the very few English public men who hold that a politician's opinions ought to be founded on principles. Lord Stanley's share in this correspondence is calculated to strengthen the hopes already built on him, by those who know how rare such qualities as are manifested in some of his public appearances, unhappily are among those who figure in political life. The organ of the Alliance, who would "deeply deplore the recognition of any principle which could be wrested to justify bigotry and persecution," undertakes to point out the "broad and impassable barrier" which divides such principles from those of the association. "All matters relating to thought, opinion, conscience, appear to me," he says, "to be without the sphere of legislation; all pertaining to social act, habit, relation, subject only to a discretionary power vested in the State itself, and not in the individual, to be within it." No mention is made of a third class, different from either of these, viz., acts and habits which are not social, but individual; although it is to this class, surely, that the act of drinking fermented liquors belongs. Selling fermented liquors, however, is trading, and trading is a social act. But the infringement complained of is not on the liberty of the seller, but on that of the buyer and consumer; since the State might just as well forbid him to drink wine, as purposely make it impossible for him to obtain it. The Secretary, however, says, "I claim, as a citizen, a right to legislate whenever my social rights are invaded by the social act of another." And now for the definition of these "social rights." "If anything invades my social rights, certainly the traffic in strong drink does. It destroys my primary right of security, by constantly creating and stimulating social disorder. It invades my right of equality, by deriving a profit from the creation of a misery, I am taxed to support. It impedes my right to free moral and intellectual development, by surrounding my path with dangers, and by weakening and demoralizing society, from which I have a right to claim mutual aid and intercourse." A theory of "social rights," the like of which probably never before found its way into distinct language--being nothing short of this--that it is the absolute social right of every individual, that every other individual shall act in every respect exactly as he ought; that whosoever fails thereof

in the smallest particular, violates my social right, and entitles me to demand from the legislature the removal of the grievance. So monstrous a principle is far more dangerous than any single interference with liberty; there is no violation of liberty which it would not justify; it acknowledges no right to any freedom whatever, except perhaps to that of holding opinions in secret, without ever disclosing them; for the moment an opinion which I consider noxious, passes any one's lips, it invades all the "social rights" attributed to me by the Alliance. The doctrine ascribes to all mankind a vested interest in each other's moral, intellectual, and even physical perfection, to be defined by each claimant according to his own standard.

Another important example of illegitimate interference with the rightful liberty of the individual, not simply threatened, but long since carried into triumphant effect, is Sabbatarian legislation. Without doubt, abstinence on one day in the week, so far as the exigencies of life permit, from the usual daily occupation, though in no respect religiously binding on any except Jews, is a highly beneficial custom. And inasmuch as this custom cannot be observed without a general consent to that effect among the industrious classes, therefore, in so far as some persons by working may impose the same necessity on others, it may be allowable and right that the law should guarantee to each, the observance by others of the custom, by suspending the greater operations of industry on a particular day. But this justification, grounded on the direct interest which others have in each individual's observance of the practice, does not apply to the self-chosen occupations in which a person may think fit to employ his leisure; nor does it hold good, in the smallest degree, for legal restrictions on amusements. It is true that the amusement of some is the day's work of others; but the pleasure, not to say the useful recreation, of many, is worth the labor of a few, provided the occupation is freely chosen, and can be freely resigned. The operatives are perfectly right in thinking that if all worked on Sunday, seven days' work would have to be given for six days' wages: but so long as the great mass of employments are suspended, the small number who for the enjoyment of others must still work, obtain a proportional increase of earnings; and they are not obliged to follow those occupations, if they prefer leisure to emolument. If a further remedy

is sought, it might be found in the establishment by custom of a holiday on some other day of the week for those particular classes of persons. The only ground, therefore, on which restrictions on Sunday amusements can be defended, must be that they are religiously wrong; a motive of legislation which never can be too earnestly protested against. "Deorum injuriae Diis curae." It remains to be proved that society or any of its officers holds a commission from on high to avenge any supposed offence to Omnipotence, which is not also a wrong to our fellow-creatures. The notion that it is one man's duty that another should be religious, was the foundation of all the religious persecutions ever perpetrated, and if admitted, would fully justify them. Though the feeling which breaks out in the repeated attempts to stop railway travelling on Sunday, in the resistance to the opening of Museums, and the like, has not the cruelty of the old persecutors, the state of mind indicated by it is fundamentally the same. It IS a determination not to tolerate others in doing what is permitted by their religion, because it is not permitted by the persecutor's religion. It is a belief that God not only abominates the act of the misbeliever, but will not hold us guiltless if we leave him unmolested.

I cannot refrain from adding to these examples of the little account commonly made of human liberty, the language of downright persecution which breaks out from the press of this country, whenever it feels called on to notice the remarkable phenomenon of Mormonism. Much might be said on the unexpected and instructive fact, that an alleged new revelation, and a religion, founded on it, the product of palpable imposture, not even supported by the prestige of extraordinary qualities in its founder, is believed by hundreds of thousands, and has been made the foundation of a society, in the age of newspapers, railways, and the electric telegraph. What here concerns us is, that this religion, like other and better religions, has its martyrs; that its prophet and founder was, for his teaching, put to death by a mob; that others of its adherents lost their lives by the same lawless violence; that they were forcibly expelled, in a body, from the country in which they first grew up; while, now that they have been chased into a solitary recess in the midst of a desert, many in this country openly declare that it would be right (only that it is not convenient) to send an expedition against them, and compel them by force to conform to the opinions

of other people. The article of the Mormonite doctrine which is the chief provocative to the antipathy which thus breaks through the ordinary restraints of religious tolerance, is its sanction of polygamy; which, though permitted to Mahomedans, and Hindoos, and Chinese, seems to excite unquenchable animosity when practised by persons who speak English, and profess to be a kind of Christians. No one has a deeper disapprobation than I have of this Mormon institution; both for other reasons, and because, far from being in any way countenanced by the principle of liberty, it is a direct infraction of that principle, being a mere riveting of the chains of one half of the community, and an emancipation of the other from reciprocity of obligation towards them. Still, it must be remembered that this relation is as much voluntary on the part of the women concerned in it, and who may be deemed the sufferers by it, as is the case with any other form of the marriage institution; and however surprising this fact may appear, it has its explanation in the common ideas and customs of the world, which teaching women to think marriage the one thing needful, make it intelligible that many a woman should prefer being one of several wives, to not being a wife at all. Other countries are not asked to recognize such unions, or release any portion of their inhabitants from their own laws on the score of Mormonite opinions. But when the dissentients have conceded to the hostile sentiments of others, far more than could justly be demanded; when they have left the countries to which their doctrines were unacceptable, and established themselves in a remote corner of the earth, which they have been the first to render habitable to human beings; it is difficult to see on what principles but those of tyranny they can be prevented from living there under what laws they please, provided they commit no aggression on other nations, and allow perfect freedom of departure to those who are dissatisfied with their ways. A recent writer, in some respects of considerable merit, proposes (to use his own words,) not a crusade, but a civilizade, against this polygamous community, to put an end to what seems to him a retrograde step in civilization. It also appears so to me, but I am not aware that any community has a right to force another to be civilized. So long as the sufferers by the bad law do not invoke assistance from other communities, I cannot admit that persons entirely unconnected with them ought to step in and require that a condition of things with which all who are directly interested

appear to be satisfied, should be put an end to because it is a scandal to persons some thousands of miles distant, who have no part or concern in it. Let them send missionaries, if they please, to preach against it; and let them, by any fair means, (of which silencing the teachers is not one,) oppose the progress of similar doctrines among their own people. If civilization has got the better of barbarism when barbarism had the world to itself, it is too much to profess to be afraid lest barbarism, after having been fairly got under, should revive and conquer civilization. A civilization that can thus succumb to its vanquished enemy must first have become so degenerate, that neither its appointed priests and teachers, nor anybody else, has the capacity, or will take the trouble, to stand up for it. If this be so, the sooner such a civilization receives notice to quit, the better. It can only go on from bad to worse, until destroyed and regenerated (like the Western Empire) by energetic barbarians. [1] The case of the Bombay Parsees is a curious instance in point. When this industrious and enterprising tribe, the descendants of the Persian fire-worshippers, flying from their native country before the Caliphs, arrived in Western India, they were admitted to toleration by the Hindoo sovereigns, on condition of not eating beef. When those regions afterwards fell under the dominion of Mahomedan conquerors, the Parsees obtained from them a continuance of indulgence, on condition of refraining from pork. What was at first obedience to authority became a second nature, and the Parsees to this day abstain both from beef and pork. Though not required by their religion, the double abstinence has had time to grow into a custom of their tribe; and custom, in the East, is a religion.



About the Author

John Stuart Mill was an English philosopher, economist, and political theorist. Recognized as one of the most influential philosophers of the 19th century, he wrote extensively on economics, social and political philosophy, ethics and religion. His writings often focused on the rights of the individual, including a focus on women and their right to education.



Key Words

Conduct:

(n) the way in which a person behaves (i.e. in public)

Individuality:

(n) the unique character/qualities of each person that make them different from others

Judgment:

(n) the ability to form an opinion or make a decision after reasoning

Liberty:

(n) freedom from control in society; the right to do and say what one wishes to

Limits:

(n) a point beyond which something (i.e. influence, law) cannot cross or go further than

Morality:

(n) principles or ideas about what is right and wrong behavior

Persecute:

(v) to treat someone in unfair and oppressive ways, especially because of religious or political beliefs

Principle:

(n) rules or belief about what is right and wrong (i.e. concerning one's behavior) or an accepted truth upon which rules/laws are made

Prohibit:

(v) to make an action illegal/not allowed; to forbid by rule or law

Society:

(n) people living together as members of a larger community and in relation to the law/organizations that allow them to function together

Critical Thinking Component

Session Fifteen

#1

What are examples of one's actions interfering with someone else's individual liberties?

#2

"As soon as any part of a person's conduct affects prejudicially the interests of others, society has jurisdiction over it..." Do you believe that this should be the case?

#3

In your opinion, what should be the role of laws in protecting society? In protecting individual rights?

#4

Mill states that, "to say that we may persecute others because we are right, and that they must not persecute us because they are wrong, we must beware of admitting a principle of which we should resent as a gross injustice the application to ourselves." In your own words, what is meant by this?

#5

Why is the relationship between morality and law so complex?

Essay Prompts

Option A:

In the context of Myanmar, are there any laws based in morality that might infringe on individuals' rights? If so, give an example and describe some possible consequences of it.

Option B:

Explain the nature of the conflict between the protection of society and the protection of individual rights. Give real life examples to support your answer.

Glossary

A

- Academia: ပညာရေးနယ်ပယ်
- Accommodate: တစ်ပါးသူ၏အမြင်ကိုလက်ခံသည်
- Accountability: တာဝန်ခံမှု
- Activism: နိုင်ငံရေး(သို့) လူမှုရေးပြောင်းလဲရန်လှုပ်ရှားမှု
- Activist: နိုင်ငံရေး(သို့) လူမှုရေးပြောင်းလဲရန်လှုပ်ရှားသူ
- Advocate: ထောက်ခံပြောဆိုသူ
- Amnesty: လွတ်ငြိမ်းချမ်းသာပေးခြင်း
- Apathy: စိတ်ဝင်စားမှုမရှိခြင်း
- Assessment: အကဲဖြတ်စစ်ဆေးခြင်း
- Audience: ပရိတ်သတ်
- Authority: အခွင့်အာဏာ
- Autocracy: အာဏာရှင်စနစ်
- Autonomy: ကိုယ်ပိုင်အုပ်ချုပ်ခွင့်

B

C

- Capitalism: အရင်းရှင်စနစ်
- Centralization: ဗဟိုမှချုပ်ကိုင်ထားမှု
- Civil disobedience: အာဏာဖီဆန်မှု
- Civil rights: နိုင်ငံသားအခွင့်အရေး
- Civil society: လူထုအခြေပြုအဖွဲ့အစည်း
- Civil war: ပြည်တွင်းစစ်
- Climate change: ရာသီဥတုပြောင်းလဲမှု
- Coercion: နှိပ်ကွပ်ခြင်း

- Collective: တစ်စုတစ်စည်းတည်းရှိခြင်း
- Conduct: ကျင့်ကြံပြုမူခြင်း
- Consensus: အများသဘောတူညီမှု
- Constitution: ဖွဲ့စည်းပုံအခြေခံဥပဒေ
- Consumption: စားသုံးခြင်း
- Corporate: အစုအဖွဲ့ဖြစ်သော
- Corruption: အကျင့်ပျက်ခြစားမှု
- Courage: ရဲစွမ်းသတ္တိ
- Crisis: အကျပ်အတည်း
- Curriculum: သင်ရိုးညွှန်းတမ်း

D

- Demarcate: နယ်နိမိတ်သတ်မှတ်သည်
- Democracy: ဒီမိုကရေစီ
- Denialist: မဟုတ်မမှန်ငြင်းဆိုသူ
- Dependent: မှီခိုသည်
- Destabilization: မတည်ငြိမ်မှု
- Development: ဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်မှု
- Dialogue: ဆွေးနွေးပြောဆိုခြင်း
- Dictator: အာဏာရှင်
- Dignity: ဂုဏ်သိက္ခာ
- Disintegration: ပြိုကွဲရေး
- Distinctive: ထူးခြားသော
- Diverse: မတူညီကွဲပြားသော
- Dogma: တရားသေအယူဝါဒ

Domination: လွှမ်းမိုးမှု

Dysfunctional: အလုပ်မဖြစ်မှု

E

Emissions: ထုတ်လွှတ်မှု

Empire: အင်ပါယာနိုင်ငံ

Empower: စွမ်းဆောင်ရည်မြှင့်တင်ပေးသည်

Enforce: ဥပဒေသက်ရောက်သည်

Enrollment: စာရင်းသွင်းသည်

Exclusion: ဘေးဖယ်/ ထုတ်ပယ်ထားခြင်း

Extremist: အစွန်းရောက်မှု

F

Fear: ကြောက်ရွံ့ခြင်း

Federalism: ဖယ်ဒရယ်စနစ်

Fossil fuels: ကျောက်ဖြစ်ရုပ်ကြွင်းလောင်စာများ

Fragile: ထိခိုက်လွယ်သော

Fragmentation: အကွဲကွဲအပြားပြား

Free market: လွတ်လပ်သောဈေးကွက်စနစ်

Fundamental: အခြေခံကျသော

G

Globalization: ဂလိုဘယ်လိုင်းဇေးရှင်း

Gridlock: ချောင်ပိတ်မိနေခြင်း

H

Harmony: သဟဇာတဖြစ်ခြင်း

Higher education: အဆင့်မြင့်ပညာရေး

I

Identity group: ဝိသေသလက္ခဏာများနှင့်အုပ်စု

Ideology: နိုင်ငံရေး၊စီးပွားရေးဝါဒသဘောတရား

Immunity: ကင်းလွတ်ခွင့်

Impoverished: ဆင်းရဲမွဲတေသော

Independence: လွတ်လပ်ရေး

Indicator: တိုင်းတာသောအရာ

Individuality: တစ်သီးတစ်ခြား

Inevitable: ရှောင်လွှဲ၍မရသော

Institution: အဖွဲ့အစည်း

Insurgency: ထကြွသောင်းကျန်းမှု

Integral: အဓိကကျသည့်ကဏ္ဍ

Intellectual: အသိဉာဏ်ပညာရှိသော

Intervention: ဝင်ရောက်စွက်ဖက်ခြင်း

J

Judgment: တရားစီရင်ချက်

Jurisdiction: အခွင့်အာဏာ

Just: တရားမျှတသော

K

L

Legitimate: တရားဥပဒေအတိုင်းဖြစ်သော

Liberal arts: ပညာရေးဆိုင်ရာလက်တွေ့အသုံးချဘာသာရပ်များ

Liberty: လွတ်လပ်ခြင်း

Limits: ကန့်သတ်ချက်များ

M

Majoritarianism: လူအများစုဝါဒ
Marginalized: အပယ်ခံများ
Mass: လူအုပ်၊ လူစုလူဝေး
Mobilization: လူထုပါဝင်မှုရှိစေရန်နိုးဆော်ခြင်း
Momentum: အရှိန်အဟုန်
Morality: ကိုယ်ကျင့်တရား

N

Nationalism: အမျိုးသားရေးဝါဒ
Nationality: နိုင်ငံသား
Nation state: အချုပ်အခြာနိုင်ငံ

O

Opposition: အတိုက်အခံ
Oppression: ဖိနှိပ်ချုပ်ချယ်သော
Outdated: ခေတ်နှင့်အညီမရှိသော

P

Patriarchy: လူမျိုးအဖတို့ဖွဲ့စည်းအုပ်ချုပ်သည့်စနစ်
Peacebuilding: ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေးတည်ဆောက်ခြင်း
Persecute: ညှဉ်းပန်းနှိပ်စက်ခြင်း
Pluralism: ဗဟုဝါဒ
Policy: မူဝါဒ
Political: နိုင်ငံရေးအရဖြစ်သော
Prejudice: နှိမ်၍ဆက်ဆံခြင်း
Principle: နိယာမ
Privatize: ပုဂ္ဂလိကပိုင်ပြုသည်

Prodigal: ဖြုန်းတီးခြင်း
Profession: အလုပ်အကိုင်
Prohibit: တားမြစ်သည်
Propaganda: ဝါဒဖြန့်ခြင်း
Prosperity: သာယာဝပြောမှု
Protector: ကာကွယ်သူ
Psychology: စိတ်ပညာ
Public: အများပြည်သူ

Q

R

Rebellion: တော်လှန်ပုန်ကန်ခြင်း
Reform: ပြုပြင်ပြောင်းလဲရေး
Regime: စစ်အစိုးရ
Regulation: စည်းမျဉ်းစည်းကမ်း
Repressive: အဖိနှိပ်ခံဖြစ်သော
Revolution: တော်လှန်ရေး

S

Scholar: ပညာရှင်
Secession: ခွဲထွက်ခြင်း
Self-determination: ကိုယ်ပိုင်ပြဌာန်းခွင့်
Self-restraint: မိမိကိုယ်ကိုထိန်းသိမ်းခြင်း
Skill: ကျွမ်းကျင်မှု
Segregation: (လူမျိုး၊ဘာသာ၊အသားအရောင်)ခွဲခြားခြင်း
Socialism: ဆိုရှယ်လစ်စနစ်
Society: လူ့အဖွဲ့အစည်း

Sovereignty: အချုပ်အခြာအာဏာ

W

Specialization: အထူးပြုမှု

Welfare: လူမှုဖူလုံရေး

Spirit: စိတ်ဓာတ်

Stable: တည်ငြိမ်မှုရှိသော

X

Standard: အဆင့်အတန်း

Y

State: နိုင်ငံ

Z

Statesman: နိုင်ငံရေးခေါင်းဆောင်(သို့) အစိုးရအကြီးအကဲ

Status quo: ရှိနေမြဲအတိုင်း

Stigmatization: ဂုဏ်သိက္ခာထိခိုက်ကျဆင်းအောင်ပြုလုပ်ခြင်း

Superiority: သာလွန်ကောင်းမွန်ခြင်း

Suppression: ဖိနှိပ်မှု

Supremacy: အချုပ်အခြာအာဏာရှိခြင်း

I

Tensions: တင်းမာမှု

Territorial integrity: နယ်နိမိတ်စည်းမျဉ်း

Totalitarian: အာဏာရှင်ဆန်သော

Trade school: အသက်မွေးဝမ်းကြောင်းဆိုင်ရာလက်မှုသင်-
တန်းကျောင်း

Transition: အကူးအပြောင်း

U

Unilateral: တဖက်သတ်ဖြစ်သော

Unity: စည်းလုံးမှု

Universally: အားလုံးနှင့်ဆိုင်သော

V

Values: တန်ဖိုးထားမှု၊ တန်ဖိုး

Violation: ချိုးဖောက်ခြင်း

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Session 7

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Political Thoughts and Practices

A reader in critical thinking

The Political Thoughts and Practices reader is designed for Myanmar adult learners interested in taking a deeper look into the most pressing political and social issues of our time. The book includes a collection of essays and articles, from academics and activists from around the world, and touches on a range of issues from climate change and human rights to federalism in Myanmar.

The selection of readings was chosen to equip students with critical thinking skills - to predict the consequences of specific political trends, apply various political theories in the context of Myanmar, and analyze the strength of authors' arguments.

The reader is broken into 15 sessions, either for a taught course or self-study, each containing the following elements:

- The core reading of the session along with key vocabulary and definitions
- A critical thinking component of five questions for discussion or composition
- Two optional essay prompts

Additionally, the reader contains a list of the book's key words with English to Myanmar translations and the references of each reading (including a link to the full text online). Far from promoting a narrow understanding of today's political and social issues, the reader pushes each student to question not only the perspective of the author, but also his/her own beliefs.



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