EDITOR’S NOTE

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the first issue of this academic year!

The Dialogue team is extremely proud to present you with the 16th issue of Dialogue. The theme of this new edition is ‘Governance in the Digital Age’. As many of the articles will convey, the internet and other technologies are undoubtedly shaping how political institutions and political actors work. Thought-provoking topics regarding the legal loopholes that have been created by the digital era, the internet censorship in the Middle East, and Donald Trump’s use of Twitter—amongst many others are covered in this issue.

We would like to thank Ivona Victoria Moro, who has designed this wonderful cover. We would also like to extend our sincerest appreciation to the Department of Political Economy for supporting us.

Finally, thank you for, once again, reading and enjoying a new Dialogue issue. Make sure you like our Facebook page and send us your feedback to kcldialogue@gmail.com.

Happy reading and warm thank you!
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People don’t like listening to lawyers: they can be boring, dull, and easily excitable about abstract complexities nobody cares about. After all, when has anybody ever tuned in to a securities lawyer explain a bank’s right under a mortgage to seize the property whenever it sees fit? Oh right, when these abstract complexities begin to influence your person and your desires. Then, the lawyer suddenly shines like a bright light at the end of a tunnel. You can like lawyers and you can despise them, but when they delineate all the legal loopholes that the digital age has allowed enterprises and countries to exploit, you will think twice before shutting down a lawyer’s complex explanation.

Louis Brown, in his book “Preventive Law”, said that “it usually costs less to avoid getting into trouble than to pay for getting out of trouble” (Brown, 1951). He laid the groundwork for the proactive law movement, one that seeks to act ex ante, before an event. If we take the analogy to medicine by Finnish professor Kaisa Sorsa, Brown’s preventive law medicine prevents ill health; Sorsa’s proactive law medicine, the successor of the preventive law movement, promotes well-being (Sorsa, 2011). With Norway and Finland pioneering such legislative practices, the movement took off in the 1990s, offering an alternative to the usual ex post, after an event, reactionary legislation. But in the digital age we live in today, is it still possible to legislate proactively? Is it possible, when technological advancements move faster than humans, let alone legislators, could ever imagine? It may sound existential, but in all honesty, is technology driving our lives and existences?

The answer is clear: a profound no, we cannot direct technology and legislate over it anymore. It is beyond us. Yet citizens barely have a clue how influential government policy in the digital sector is and can be. Most people are not even aware that last month the UK passed the most stringent surveillance laws in the world under the Investigatory Powers Act 2016; instead they were watching the Supreme Court’s hearing on the triggering of Article 50, at best. Most people are not even aware that the EU passed seminal legislation under the General Data Protection Regulation (“GDPR”) last year, which will come into effect in 2018, to simply create a whole new set of rights for citizens under digital parameters. Yes, today you have more than just your traditional French Revolution and Enlightenment political rights, and it’s more than just a “right to privacy”. Ever heard of the Right to be Forgotten, now the Right to Erasure? Or the Right to Restrict Processing? Or the Data Portability Right? Or the Right to Object to Automated Decision-Making?

Governance in the digital age is reactive, it happens slower than the internet. There lies the challenge: enabling our governments to legislate proactively, something that some entities such as the EU, in implementing the GDPR, have only begun to tackle. People like to think that the internet is too complicated to handle or regulate, but you only need to read Facebook, Snapchat, or Instagram’s Terms and Conditions to realize how influential the legal and intellectual property sector of data protection is. You only need to browse the EU-US Privacy Shield website, a scheme allowing for data interchange across the Atlantic to facilitate consumerism, to appreciate the legal behemoth that envelops the internet. And no, the solution is not to retract and live like the Amish do.

It is up to our generation, we who grew up with the internet, we whose baby cousins can shift through pictures on an iPad faster than our grandparents can understand the concept of a touch screen, we whose lives, personal information, and society revolve around the internet, to rise to the challenge. It is our generation that must perhaps, as Sir Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the world wide web, suggested, clamor for an Internet Bill of Rights. Most importantly, it is up to our generation to listen to the lawyers, raise awareness,
“governance in the
digital age is not,
cannot, and will never
be easy. Yes, the
internet is scary, but
so was the moon in
the 1960s.”

and emphasize that
governance in the
digital age is not,
cannot, and will never
be easy. Yes, the
internet is scary, but
so was the moon in
the 1960s. To
contextualize
President Kennedy’s
words, our generation should choose to govern the
internet “in this decade and do the other things, not
because they are easy, but because they are hard,
because that goal will serve to organize and measure
the best of our energies and skills, because that
challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we
are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to
win”. We must find a way to proactively legislate, even
with the internet.

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Do attitudes towards immigration affects support for UKIP? A strong statistical test
by Mollie Roberts

Introduction

In this paper I will be focusing on the research question: why do some people like UKIP and others
do not? My main hypothesis is well-known; I expect
that as the view that immigration is good for the
economy increases, support for UKIP decreases. My
contribution is that I will offer a strong statistical test
of this hypothesis based on 2015 post-election survey
data. I use a wide range of control variables as to
isolate the effect of attitudes towards immigration on
support for UKIP.

Describing the variables and data

To conduct my analysis, I am using the 2015 British
post-election face-to-face survey data. This survey was
conducted on a representative sample of more than a
thousand British citizens in the weeks following the
2015 general election. In 2015 the UKIP obtained an
unprecedented score of 12.6%. It is almost 10 points
more compared to the previous general election.

My dependent variable is based on the survey question:
how much do you like UKIP on a scale from 0
(strongly dislike) to 10 (strongly like). More than 31%
of the respondents of my sample said that they
strongly dislike UKIP. This category has the greatest
frequency. In contrast, about 5% of the sample said
they strongly liked UKIP. When summarising the data,
the mean score of UKIP was around 3.2 with a
standard deviation at 3.1. Figure 1 below reports the
distribution of this variable, which is strongly skewed.

UKIP is a party that divides UK citizens: a lot of them
strongly dislike it, whereas some strongly support it

My main independent variable is whether people think
immigration is good or bad for Britain’s economy on a
scale of 1 (bad) to 7 (good). 17% of the respondents
of my sample gave a score of 0, indicating they believe
immigration has a bad impact on the economy. In
contrast, 9% of the sample, gave a score of 6,
indicating they believe that immigration has a good
impact on the economy. When summarising the data,
the mean was 2.9 and the standard deviation was 1.9.

Figure 2 below shows that the variable is almost
normally distributed. Some British citizens think that
immigration has a positive impact on the economy,
others do not, but most of them have a mixed view on
this topic.
Results

I firstly run the regression with just my main independent variable, attitudes towards immigration, shown in Table 1 (model 1). The proportion of variance of support for UKIP, explained by the view of immigration’s impact on the economy, is 9%. The coefficient is \(-0.55\); this means as the view of immigration having a good impact on the economy increases by one unit, the support for UKIP decreases by 0.55. This effect is statistically significant at a level of \(p<0.01\). Furthermore, I run the same regression for which I add some control variables. These control variables are: the age of the respondents, if they are part of a union- trade union, no union, or staff association, how they see themselves on a 0-to-10 scale ranging from left to right, their social class position- being part of middle class, working class or no class, and their gender. Adding these variables helps avoid having omitted variable bias. Intuitively, we can think that all these control variables can affect support for the UKIP. In adding them to the model, it increases the accuracy of the results and isolates the unique effect of the main independent variable.

Results are shown in Figure 1 (model 2). The \(R^2\) is around 17%, which means the proportion of variance, of support for UKIP, explained by all the variables combined is 17%. The coefficient associated to attitudes towards immigration is \(-0.5\), which means as the view that immigration has a good impact on the economy increases by one unit, there is a decrease in the support for UKIP by 0.5, all other things being equal. Again, this effect is statistically significant at a level of \(p<0.01\). This means that my hypothesis is confirmed: even in adding a wide range of control variables, the view that immigration is bad for the economy increase support for UKIP.

Table 1: Regression results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(Model 1)</th>
<th>(Model 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration has a good impact on the economy</td>
<td>-0.54*** (0.05)</td>
<td>-0.50*** (0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-right self-placement</td>
<td>0.35*** (0.04)</td>
<td>Left-right self-placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being part of a union (part of a trade union as the reference)</td>
<td>1 (staff association) -1.26** (0.61) 2 (no association) -0.23 (0.22)</td>
<td>Being part of a union (part of a trade union as the reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being female</td>
<td>-0.56*** (0.17)</td>
<td>Being female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a member of the upper class</td>
<td>-0.16*** (0.05)</td>
<td>Being a member of the upper class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.01*** (0.01)</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.89*** (0.17)</td>
<td>2.80*** (0.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1,201</td>
<td>1,201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(R^2)</td>
<td>9.87%</td>
<td>16.57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Entries are parameters estimated with OLS regressions. Standard errors are in parentheses. *** \(p<0.01\), ** \(p<0.05\), * \(p<0.1\)

Conclusion

In the 2015 general election, the UKIP obtained an extraordinary score of more than 12%. Many commentators said that the motivation behind voting for the UKIP related to immigration. In this paper, I offer a strong statistical test of this hypothesis. I use 2015 post-election survey data and a wide range of control variables, and I find that the attitudes towards immigration has a strong effect on support for UKIP.

MOLLIE ROBERTS is a second year BSc Politics student studying at King’s College London.
Global Cybersecurity: Making Policy in an Uncertain World
by Dr Tim Stevens

There is little doubt that 2016 was the year in which computer hacking and geopolitics collided in the global public imagination. Centred on the US presidential election that put Donald Trump in the White House, there emerged a toxic mix of cyberwarfare and information warfare that marked a sea-change in how states and the international community should view and respond to this new convergence of technology and politics.

Amidst the voluminous and often hyperbolic commentary on the alleged involvement of Russian intelligence agencies in US democratic politics, one question has been overlooked: What do these events and processes portend for the global governance of cybersecurity? Expressed alternately, what effect will they have on the ability of the international community to work together to address the real and long-standing security problems of the Internet?

In an important sense, that this aspect of international affairs has been somewhat ignored is revealing in itself. Recent years have not been kind, for instance, to the prospects of an international regime for the regulation of cyber activities or the prohibition of offensive cyber operations. If anything, the incidence of computer network-enabled crime, espionage and conflict has surged, and the digital fingerprints of states are increasingly found on the tools that enable these actions. It is hardly surprising our analyses resolve to the bilateral US-Russia frame rather than a multilateral one, when global cybersecurity governance has been so apparently ineffectual.

However, this ignores the many actors engaged actively in trying to “clean up” global cyberspace.

The state signatories to the Council of Europe's Convention on Cybercrime (2001) continue to grow in number, particularly outside Europe. The Convention is not perfect but it demonstrates the willingness of fifty-plus states, including the US, to harmonise cybercrime legislation and facilitate cross-border investigations of inherently transnational crimes. It also illustrates to the international community that multilateral cybercrime initiatives are worth pursuing and the Convention remains open for new state signatories.

In the more glamorous world of cyberwarfare, NATO countries are promoting the Tallinn Manual Process on the applicability of international law to cyber conflict. This strongly supports the relevance of jus ad bellum and international humanitarian law to the use of cyber capabilities in conflict. Although non-binding, the Tallinn Manual performs an important normative function in demonstrating the continued relevance of international law in an arena where some have been quick to assume it cannot or should not apply. The second volume is due in March 2017 and will deal with cyber operations below the level of “armed attacks”. This is likely to be the most significant international legal intervention to date on issues of cyber sovereignty, the global commons and human rights.

One of the persistent features of the Internet is that some digital goods can be used for good and for ill. Surveillance software can be used for beneficial social purposes, or to undermine human rights. Similarly, knowledge of “zero-day” vulnerabilities can be used legitimately to patch software bugs or further cybersecurity research, but can also be exploited for criminal gain, political surveillance, or other forms of intrusion and exploitation. The Wassenaar Arrangement is a multilateral export control regime for dual-use technologies supported by forty-one countries, including the US and Russia. It has recently attempted to regulate the transnational trade in...
illegitimate deployment of these goods and services. Critics contend this will stifle security research but the Arrangement’s members at least agree in principle that regulation of dual-use cyber tools is both desirable and achievable.

These three examples are but well-known formal outcomes of significant diplomatic labour on the many issues of cyber insecurity. There are others too, which makes the constant refrain that because no global treaty mechanism exists on the issue of cybersecurity, it is either not possible to develop one or it is foolish to try. This line of reasoning is both circular and tired and ignores practical measures that show global governance in practice rather than as it is sometimes caricatured: as perfectly formed and seamlessly global in scope. It is perhaps time that cybersecurity experts and policy-makers recognise all global governance regimes are intrinsically fragmented. As such, they should seek improvement rather than perfection.

The challenges are, however, significant. At a technical level, code is not like conventional weaponry or most other items subject to regulation or prohibition. It does not have physical form that allows it to be located and it can be copied and transmitted infinitely. This presents serious problems for control regimes that rely on compliance, verification and monitoring. How would you begin to implement a prohibition on offensive cyber tools (sometimes called “cyberweapons”) if the existence of just one on a portable hard drive threatens the efficacy of the whole regime? Technical problems tend in time to generate technical solutions but global cybersecurity governance is difficult for other more traditional reasons too.

Laws around regulation and prohibition of certain goods and activities are sanctions on the non-observance of rules set out by the particular community to which they apply. In contrast, norms are shared understandings that promote the positive observance of communal rules. In the absence of any overarching legal regime governing cybersecurity, key parties are in the business instead of promoting norms for the use of the Internet. The Tallinn Manual Process, for instance, does not alter existing international law in any way. Rather, it aims to promote the observance by states of international law in cyberspace. It has a normative, not strictly legal, function. But this is where the problems really begin.

In the specific instance of the Tallinn Manual, its findings are rejected by Russia and China on the grounds that it serves American national interests above those of the international community. In response, Russia stands accused of wishing to shape international law on cyber conflict in its interests. Neither position is unreasonable in the context of US leadership of NATO and historical antipathy between NATO and its major strategic adversaries. It also highlights that law is a social institution that both constrains and enables depending on how it is interpreted and applied. Realpolitik would demand that all major powers shape the legal environment to their own ends.

The disagreement over the Tallinn Manual is indicative of a much longer standoff between “East” and “West” on cybersecurity issues. Arguments over definitions of key terms remain unresolved and illustrate fundamental disagreements over the norms pertaining to cyberspace and to statehood. The US is broadly resolved to promote an open Internet that facilitates transnational information exchange. Russia and China seek a more robust assertion of state sovereignty that prioritises states’ sovereign rights to control information within and across their borders. It is no coincidence that these diplomatic stances correlate strongly with the relevant indicators of freedom of speech and expression in each country.

The events of 2016, particularly the alleged Russian interference in the US presidential election, will not have helped resolve this disagreement over future visions of Internet sovereignty. Russia rejects all and any actions it is accused of by US intelligence agencies and American allies like the UK. In a novel twist, so does the new US president, Donald Trump. His earlier indictments of the US intelligence community have given way to less strident assessments but the president’s position on Russia remains ambiguous.

“If US-Russia relations do not attempt to suppress their own damaging cyber operations, cybersecurity will suffer, as great power activities disincentives’ other state actors and usher in a “new normalcy” of persistent cyber conflict”
Commentators routinely offer hope that closer interpersonal ties between presidents Trump and Putin may bring about rapprochement between the two countries. In cybersecurity, this might mean a renewed effort to deal with problems of cyberespionage and interference in each other’s domestic politics. What is more likely is an informal strongman’s agreement, sealed with a nod and a wink, which gives each leader carte blanche in cyberspace as long as this does not impinge on the other’s national security. Easing sanctions designed to prevent the export of information technologies to Russian intelligence services may be the first in a series of US measures likely to alarm cybersecurity professionals everywhere.

If US-Russia relations do not attempt to suppress their own damaging cyber operations, cybersecurity will suffer, as great power activities disincentives’ other state actors and usher in a “new normalcy” of persistent cyber conflict. It will also be a very unstable situation, not least as Trump is woefully illiterate in strategic affairs, including those involving “the cyber”. One misstep and the whole situation could be thrown into dangerous disequilibrium. In addition, Trump’s ambivalence to NATO may present opportunities for increased Russian cyber operations, particularly in eastern Europe.

Trump’s opposition to multilateral agreements and international organisations may have other impacts on prospects for effective global cybersecurity governance. The US has historically not sought an international legal treaty on cybersecurity and has resisted Russian and Chinese calls for one. In fora like the International Telecommunications Union, the UN agency responsible for information communication technologies, the US has been a self-appointed bulwark against these treaty proposals.

If the US retreats from UN engagement, or actively works to undermine its integrity, as Trump has suggested it might, the prospects for a global treaty that enshrines control over freedom of speech and expression improve. At the same time, Trump’s disdain for erstwhile European allies threatens important cybercrime cooperation and the sharing of threat intelligence. We do not know the Trump administration’s position on the Convention on Cybercrime.

The US is a pivotal country in global cybersecurity governance. Although it is not keen on formal legal mechanisms, it recognises the importance of cooperation on key issues like cybercrime and commercial cyberespionage and emerging threats such as cyberterrorism. Its leadership in international initiatives like the Tallinn Manual is a crucial driver of the development of norms and institutions for governing global cyber insecurity.

It achieves this by engagement not isolationism and by aligning itself with the values of the UN Charter. We can certainly question how the actions of the US National Security Agency in particular have exposed a rather hypocritical approach to those values but if we need global “rules of the road”, we might imagine the US a more desirable author of these than the obvious alternatives of Russia and China. Whether we will be able to say the same one year into a Trump presidency is moot.

Global cybersecurity governance is a political challenge as much as it is a technical one. The events of 2016 thrust cybersecurity into the global spotlight and an underqualified president into the White House. The early signs are that a Trump presidency may actually be damaging to cybersecurity on the strategic level, surely not what the White House intends but no less important for that. An executive order on cybersecurity scheduled for early February 2017 has been postponed but the draft document makes no mention of international cooperation or the Department of State. Indeed, the only association the draft document makes with entities outside the US is as threats to American national security. Where this leaves the prospects for more effective global cybersecurity governance is uncertain. It is concerning that a Trump presidency may normalise the sorts of cyber operations we saw in 2016, whilst simultaneously undermining the nascent norms and institutions developed to deal with them.

**DR TIM STEVENS** is a Lecturer in Global Security at the War Studies Department in King’s College London. His research looks critically at global security practices, with specific interests in cybersecurity and digital surveillance. He also written on time and temporality in International Relations theory.
The following three articles provide short commentaries on Russian, British, and American interaction with the cyber-sphere in governance. These articles assess the benefits of engaging in malicious cyber-capabilities, digital humanism, and covert operations, but also its drawbacks.

**Russia- A pact that could turn into a nightmare**

Russia is always on the brink. A self-perpetuating history of chaos and political instability, this unlikely empire is home to centuries of different experiments in governance. Vladimir Putin’s latest experiment lies in maintaining three pillars of Russian state legitimacy: domestic order, economic prosperity and demonstration of great power status internationally. These pillars root the seemingly random sequence of Russian actions in the information space. While Russian actions come in many forms, use many actors, and attack a broad spectrum of targets, its cyber-policy is firmly rooted in a desire for stability.

A balancing act between state intelligence and the military in the Kremlin ensured the prominence of information warfare in Russian strategic doctrine. Since the bloody Chechnya experience of the 1980-90s, Russian military doctrine became particularly concerned with the reflexive relationship between information and warfare. What became apparent was that ‘prior implementation of measures of information warfare in order to achieve political objectives without the utilization of military force (would) shape favourable opinion towards the use of the military from the world community (and locally)’. Information warfare, would not only prepare military actions, but also constitute a crucial wing of Russia’s “new combined warfare” involving both military and intelligence actors.

With thinning economic resources and diminishing diplomatic clout (in its neighbourhood), Russia has committed itself to utilising asymmetric power to provide evidence of its continuing relevance in world affairs. When I interviewed students in Moscow on “what makes a great power”, a prominent answer was: “A great power shapes and disrupts the world order”. Their answers were in line with the political consensus; A great power can, perhaps tautologically, project great disorder to create new order. Cyber offensive operations subvert the strengths and exploit the weaknesses of Western democracies (who benefit most from the current world order). In Eastern Europe and vis-à-vis NATO, Russian cyber-attacks take advantage of the attribution problem (and lack of a NATO cyber strategy) to probe NATO/EU defences and undermine competing energy-related deals while dodging institutional punishments. This year, through the barely deniable aliases “Cozy Bear” and “Fancy Bear”, Russia subverted the U.S. political system by leaking the election’s most important talking point – a huge victory for securing Russia’s economic interests in Eastern Europe (Clinton wasn’t a fan of Russia’s European ambitions) and for affirming Russia’s “great power”. At home, this year’s decision to force all foreign companies operating within Ru-net to store their data in Russian centres, was one-step towards reducing Western clout and competition in the domestic information space.

Which begs the questions: What does Russia’s cybersecurity apparatus look like? Who are these hackers? Beyond fulfilling the interests of the state, the Russian cyber-hydra lacks any of the distinct features of a military-political organisation. Observers point to Russia’s 5-th Dimension Cyber Army and its connections to the Russian Business Network (thought to own and operate the second largest Botnet in the world). But it is the state’s buccaneering relationship with the criminal underworld that defines Russian cyber-activity. As nine of the Top 15 programming universities in the world are Russian, these academies reliably produce formidable talent. Due to the lack of opportunities and the difficult entrepreneurial environment however, many young coders turn to cyber-crime for easy money. Similar to how the British used pirates to destroy Spanish Caribbean trade in the 16th century, Russia has partnered with many underground organisations to further its strategic and domestic aims. Some of these criminals are ‘given a choice to work for the intelligence services instead of going to prison’. Others commit to broadening the Botnets and developing the complex attack toolkits...
that Russia uses. The underworld thus controls (at least partly) the source and the means of power projection in the 5th domain; a major threat to Russia’s “monopoly on violence”. Appreciating this, Russia employs these criminal actors to harness such violence and ultimately distract the actors from understanding their potential to foment domestic instability. Cyber policy thus falls under the remit of the Security Council of the Russian Federation (primarily concerned with internal national security).

Cyberwarfare has provided Russia with an unprecedented ability to project power towards securing its three strategic objectives: domestic order, economic prosperity and great power status. The use of cyber tools has aligned military, political and intelligence interests. Yet in promoting and leveraging the power of the cyber underworld, Russia has lost its monopoly of force and has signed a pact with the devil. Rather than projecting power abroad, this deal may empower the cyber underworld to turn its back on the Kremlin and ignite a new source of instability.

UK- When you go through darkness, keep on going

For all prevailing concern about the potential of the internet to dehumanise the people of a now almost uniformly plugged in world, there is one way in which the nature of a digital network is identical to the nature of a human: they are both inherently insecure.

Judging by the history of political human insecurity, and by rights on the cybersecurity ticket, society must be doomed. And yet, interestingly, it seems that the ardently functional nature of the Internet of Things, as cold in its indifference to human capability as the universe itself, is one of the few things big enough overcome even the most powerful political ineptitudes; leafing through the UK government's National Cyber Security Strategy 2016-2021, it seems that public policy has been composed far more sensitively to broader needs (i.e. to both public and corporate needs and interests on the subject) than such policy tends to be in other spheres of public life. Perhaps the notion of cyber security is just more immune to the charms and barbs of political ideology than landed conflict once was. Because, make no mistake, the question of cybersecurity is asked principally on the age-old field of human conflict; only now, we declare that conflict ironically through the agonised sounds of an old dial-up modem, instead of with a klaxon.

In a sense, cybersecurity may prove to be one of the digital world's great forces of political socialisation. Mentioning the indifferent role political ideology makes in considerations of its methods and measures – both Conservatives and Labour and politicians otherwise hate bad IP addresses just as much as each other, and as much as you - note that the reason war was once the luxury choice of a few was because of traditionally uneven distribution of political assets and utilities. In an age where the horizontal organisation of the internet has gone about dismantling a history full of vertical hierarchies, there comes a logic in looking outside of the chambers of commerce and debate for hands to help carry this particular political process. Because? Well, because the ones who know best are outside. The UK's cybersecurity initiative, one to last across a term to run til what will likely end with Theresa May's premiership, has a notional political nucleus. But, unlike a government usually more bullish with healthcare or economic legislature, the guide is filled with sobering but oddly reassuring admissions of our “vulnerability and dependency” to cyber-attacks, of “the scale and [dynamism] of cyber threats”. The real action, it seems, will not use the Commons as its conduit, but will rather be channelled through the “industry” and the newly established National Cyber Security Centre.

For but a brief moment, where everything glimmered and we were overcome by a short but intense heat, it seems that the British government embraced digital
digital humanism. In this sector of public safety so much less understood in its finer details, and thus one so much less likely to arouse hysteria of prop- or opposition for its finer points, it seems that the UK government has created a system of policy that is not short-termist, and that is positivist, collaborative and highly socialised. There is little grandstanding in evidence in the strategy, no sloganeering of a contrived or proscribed nature; just a fairly dense outline of “a compelling vision [of cyber-safety] to share with the public and private sector, civil society, academia and the wider population.”

Extortion by OCGs and ransomware; the fake news of Twitterbots; state-backed espionage; vigilante hacktivists: the threat of cyber malfeasance spans pretty much every accessible digital dimension. In a time where much of the UK groans with dissatisfaction over matters of ideal, it can at least look with some reassurance to its cyber-safety which, at least in the expressed intention of its departments, has been acknowledged as far too great in its present and coming importance to be grasped and torn at by a party system.

US- The nightmare of keeping secrets

Intelligence agencies have always prided themselves with their perceived ‘cloak and dagger’. The ability to strike anywhere in the world with utter secrecy. Their covert operations only coming to light years after the event has happened…or sometimes never at all. However, secrecy is beginning to become a luxury for States in the digital age. In 2013 Edward Snowden released a series of documents exposing the extensive surveillance operations the National Security Agency (NSA) was conducting on United States soil and abroad. His leaks revealed wiring tapping of foreign leaders, mass surveillance of US citizens, and access to information provided by private sector tech companies. Many questioned the justification the NSA had for mass surveillance, even in the name of national security. President Obama was forced to justify the conduct of the intelligence agencies under his administration. However, whistle-blowers are nothing new: 1971 saw the release of the “Pentagon Papers”, a 7,000-page account of the US administration’s activities in Vietnam from 1945-1967, by the research analyst Daniel Ellsberg. The Pentagon Papers revealed US military and financial involvement in Vietnam unknown to the public and mainstream media. It emphasized the dishonesty of the Johnson administration to the American people. The whistle-blowers of today represent a much bigger threat to State secrets than before. The distinct difference in whistle-blowers of the digital era is their ability to release more sensitive material to a wider audience. Snowden was able make away, supposedly, with 900,000 files from the NSA, of which thousands are readable online. This is a far cry from the photocopied 7,000-page Pentagon papers distributed to news outlets. Moreover, anyone with access to the internet can read his released documents online. The staggering amount of information able to be smuggled, because of digital storage, makes any digitized secret document vulnerable.

In 1961 the US sent a CIA sponsored brigade of exiled Cubans to invade Cuba and remove Castro’s communist government. The operation, later to be called the “Bay of Pigs invasion”, failed to remove the government and resulted in a massive blow to US foreign policy. While the US lost credibility it did not lose much tactically, only a few thousand trained men taken prisoner. However, with cyber-weapons like Stuxnet, the US lost both credibility and control over its weapons. Stuxnet is a sophisticated worm, allegedly jointly designed by the NSA and Israel’s intelligence corps “Unit 8200”. The worm was used to infiltrate Iranian nuclear reactors and destroy a fifth of its centrifuges. US/Israel goal was to make the nuclear facilities appear faulty and slow down Iran’s nuclear program. Unpredictably, the worm managed to copy itself onto public servers and was eventually discovered and made public. The US was accused of orchestrating the hostile covert operation. In response, Iran has increased its nuclear program and has supposedly created its own Cyber army. Additionally, this complex worm, that took over a decade to produce, is now available to states and non-state actors alike on the internet. The US has once again taken a blow to its credibility, but worse more has lost control over a cyber-weapon it has created.

“However, secrecy is beginning to become a luxury for States in the digital age.”

WONK BRIDGE CREATIVE TEAM is a group of undergraduate and Master students researching the impact technology has on society, government institutions and international relations. Reachable at editor@wonkbridge.com
On 23 December, Vladimir Putin held his annual Q&A session, where for nearly four hours he answered questions on topics, varying from military affairs to state support for chess. Nathan Hodge, a journalist from the Wall Street Journal, asked whether it was possible to hold early presidential elections in 2017. “In which country?,” chuckled Putin. His confidence can certainly be justified, as the past year has been a rather successful one for his regime. Despite economic sanctions, domestic problems and decreasing population, Russia has successfully defended its bid to be a leading player on the international stage and has become bolder and more ambitious in its actions.

In 2016, the Putin regime achieved some considerable success in solidifying its position and establishing Russia’s great power status. Legitimacy has been an important instrument of these successes. The Russian government has utilized and even manipulated the perception of legitimacy of certain actors and activities in order to further its agenda. This can be observed both in the domestic realm, as exemplified by the electoral process, and in the international sphere, where Putin’s actions and interactions have been aimed at raising Russia’s profile as a great power.

It is difficult to claim greatness, when the real income of the population is falling (it fell by 8.3% in the first half of 2016 – the biggest fall in the past seven years), when doping scandals mar the reputation of some of Russia’s best athletes and when the nation is facing the gravest issue of depopulation. Yet, Russia has managed to influence world events with a remarkable resolve without any real threat to the perceived legitimacy of the government. The parliamentary elections of 2016 brought about almost no change – the same four parties constituted the new Duma, with United Russia gaining even more seats. Although the turnout of the election was less than 50%, political experts like Dmitry Oreshkin argue that those elections were “more transparent and ‘cleaner’”. This gives the regime an opportunity to showcase its strength by demonstrating its capability to rally public support, despite domestic shortcomings. For Putin, the legitimacy gained from elections is both an end goal and an enabler of his policies. On one hand, his assertive foreign policy appeals to Russians and is necessary in order to keep his approval ratings high. On the other, he must secure his political dominance at home, so as to pursue his ambitious endeavours abroad. With virtually no change in the parliament, the President is likely to face little opposition to his current strategy.

While elections brought little change in Russia, they resulted in a bombshell elsewhere. The victory of Donald Trump was controversial for many, but generally welcomed in Russia. The legitimacy of the outcome, however, became questionable after accusations that Russian hackers leaked DNC emails to WikiLeaks. At the time of writing, Julian Assange, founder of WikiLeaks, still denies Russian involvement in the hacking, despite the official stance of U.S. intelligence services. The fact that the elections were potentially tampered with can erode the legitimacy of the president-elect and of the state’s capability to ensure that the electoral process is safe from foreign agents. What the hackers did, however, was reveal sensitive information, which led to Hillary Clinton losing her legitimacy in the eyes of the American voter. The cyberattacks were important not only because they might have affected the outcome of the US election, but because they highlighted the vulnerability of the electoral process. Such realization is an embarrassment to the US, which has prided itself as the champion of democracy and often scolded Russia for its own understandings of “managed democracy”. Even if Russia did not directly participate in leaking DNC information, it certainly benefitted from the shaken image of US democracy.

As Europe enters election season as well, fears of cyberattacks and how they could influence the results...
have reached one of the strongest states on the continent – Germany. Merkel's Christian Democratic Union has previously suffered from Russian cyberattacks and other nations on the continent, like France and the Netherlands, also fear Russian manipulations during the electoral process. Even if Russia does not interfere in any way, the concerns that it is capable of doing so already strengthens its image as a powerful state, willing to manage not only its own democracy, but also those of other states. On the other hand, if Moscow does actively engage in foreign elections by supporting a candidate with money, intelligence or cyberattacks on their opponent, Russia may benefit from a popularly elected pro-Russian candidate, who can claim legitimacy on the basis of the electoral result. Yet of course, it is possible that voters choose to elect a pro-Russian leader themselves – as it was the case in Bulgaria in November 2016 (although President-elect Rumen Radev never proclaimed himself as a Russophile, he does believe that a more diplomatic, friendlier relationship with Russia will be healthier to his country than economic sanctions and condemnation of Kremlin’s policies).

In 2017, the world may end up with more leaders, sympathetic to Putin’s government, than those who defend the continuation of sanctions. The outcomes of the upcoming elections in Europe as well as Donald Trump’s first steps as US president will be crucial for Russia. They would either continue the tradition of partnering with Russia if convenient but rejecting its claim for great power status, or legitimizing the claim by showing fear, respect and softness towards Russia. Putin may well be on his way to restoring his country’s great power status and potentially becoming its president-elect for the fourth time.

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‘Well I did warn you…’ — The Danger of Westminster’s anti-Expert Sentiment
by Benjamin Alford

Theresa May, the British Prime Minister, has stated that she intends to begin Brexit negotiations – and the activation of Article 50 to bring the UK out of the European Union – by the end of March this year. The UK will be entering on a massive disadvantage, however, if Westminster’s anti-expert tirade continues.

There is no better example of a such rejection of expert advice than the shock resignation of Sir Ivan Rogers. Rogers, who was Britain’s ambassador to the EU since 2013, was seen as a key advisor with strong experience and knowledge of both the EU system and its major diplomats. More importantly, he was highly respected by said diplomats: Guy Verhofstadt, Chief Negotiator of the European Parliament, tweeted that Rogers ‘knew what he was talking about’.

This reveals the sense of frustration on the European front at Britain’s Brexit approach. people were not too content either, with recent political turmoil and a not so recent economic recession, the Olympics were achieving ever-declining approval ratings. By August 2016, only 40% of the population were looking forward to the Games, as opposed to 64% approval seen in 2013.

European front at Britain’s Brexit approach. Brexit Secretary David Davis suggested that the UK will pay to remain in the single market without adhering to common movement of people (a red-line for many EU members), whilst Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson
European front at Britain’s Brexit approach. Brexit Secretary David Davis suggested that the UK will pay to remain in the single market without adhering to common movement of people (a red-line for many EU members), whilst Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson claimed that British people will still be able: ‘to live; to travel; to study; to buy homes and settle down’ whilst also being given automatic access to the single market and not having to pay into it (again, quickly rejected by many European statespersons and diplomats). Indeed, the lack of coherent strategy is giving European strategists a headache as nobody is sure as to what kind of Brexit they should be preparing to negotiate for.

At first glance, this may seem like an advantage for the U.K. government: surely they will hold all the cards as they choose the Brexit they want, to which the European negotiators will have to respond? Well, not exactly. Here, we go back to Verhofstadt’s comment that Rogers knew what he was talking about. He does. His role required him to give the UK government’s position on Brexit and, in return, detail to Westminster the position of the European states. However, in a letter announcing his resignation in a farewell to fellow British diplomats in Brussels, he implies that his advice to Westminster is being ignored. He complained that ‘we [UK Brussels diplomats] do not yet know what the government will set as negotiating objectives’, further adding that ‘serious multilateral negotiating experience is in short supply in Whitehall’ – a problem, he admits, the EU is not facing. Notably, he states that: ‘The government will only achieve the best for the country if it harnesses the best experience we have’.

It does not matter what your opinion on Brexit, or indeed the EU, is; everyone should agree that the advice of EU experts should not be ignored, especially with the complexity of the task ahead for the UK.

The think tank Chatham House, the Royal institute for International Affairs, beloved by many an IR student, argued that Theresa May’s first step towards Brexit should be the establishment of negotiating teams to engage with the EU in the negotiations. Compiling such a team will be a gargantuan effort should the rejection of experts on the basis of political opinion, or Westminster’s continued policy of ignoring hard truths, continue. An understanding of 27 countries’ positions on Brexit will be required, as will an understanding of: Britain’s spending commitments to the EU; the transfer of regulation; EU law; the European energy market; UK commitments to the UN made through the EU; adherence to EU sanctions, especially against Russia; security arrangements; fishing rights and, vitally, immigration requirements. This is but a small snapshot of the many requirements that will be needed of Brexit negotiators, not to mention the fact that it will be a conduction of 27 simultaneous – not bilateral – negotiations.

Obviously, Westminster cannot be expected to be fully informed on all of these policy points. This is where a reliance on experts comes in, along with a pile of other problems. The European Institute at the London School of Economics, ranked best in the country for European Studies, saw many of its top academics barred from giving Brexit advice to ministers on the ground that they weren’t British. If rejecting foreign nationals from the negotiating arena is, then, British policy, Britain has a grand total of zero negotiators – perhaps a bit of an exaggeration, but certainly the figure put forward by the former head of Westminster’s EU department, Oliver Letwin. Not only does the UK need to take advantage of every EU expert it can, especially those at think tanks and Universities, it should also consider hiring foreign nationals to its negotiating teams.

The politics of the EU referendum were divisive and much of the country remains divided. The Prime Minister’s New Year’s message urged unity, yet her government continues to play politics in strategy, with pro-remain experts accused of being disloyal and
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experts on the pro-leave side accused of ignorance. There is a difference between the advice experts give and the opinions they offer. The former is what can be expected from think-tanks, universities and civil servants and is what Westminster requires. The latter comes in the form of a passion either for one side of the debate or the other (and more often comes from Ministers). The two must be untangled, that much is evident; but whilst a critical eye towards advice is healthy, the tough and complex negotiations to come will require advice and wisdom from those on both sides of the debate to be listened to in the first place, especially those with the experience and knowledge of the EU and its workings.

Theresa May stated that Brexit means Brexit and it will be red, white and blue. However, unless Westminster starts adhering to the advice of its senior advisors, along with the advice from academics and EU experts, Brexit will mean floundering and it will be black and blue for the UK.

Until such a time when experts are once more respected and listened to, Rogers' advice to his fellow advisors must be repeated and repeated: 'I hope you will continue to challenge ill-founded arguments and muddled thinking and that you will never be afraid to speak the truth to those in power'.

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Populism and Social Media in Europe
by Noelia Weistroff Perez

With the beginning of 2017 and before saying goodbye to 2016, we should discuss populism: a word that has become the centre of many political debates around institutional separatism and human integration. So much that should be considered the word of the year. It seems that the definition of populism has evolved from its lexical origin towards our understanding of it today. Even today, there are still disagreements over its meaning. One way of understanding populism is as a political doctrine that defends mass interests. Another way of interpreting populism is as a type of political discourse that proposes simple policies and appeals to the deepest emotions of the human being. In order to clarify the political debate that has taken place in Europe in the past years, we should ask ourselves important questions: what is a populist party? Can we identify populist parties through their use of new mass media? Are emotions the particular tool of populist parties? What is clear is that, even if in the literature populism is a descriptive word, the definition of populism has incorporated a negative connotation in ordinary people's mind. One can find many examples in European countries since the so called 'populists parties' are more and more present in everyday political life: Le Pen in France, Podemos in Spain, UKIP in the UK, have become increasingly representative. Some almost made it to the government such as the FPO in Poland and some of them, like Syzira in Greece, are actually in power. These parties can be either far-right or far-left. But what is fascinating is how fast (and wrongly in some cases) these new currents have been categorised as 'populists', particularly in Southern Europe.

Media has been considered the fourth power and is known to have a tremendous impact on people's understanding of current issues. Experts are warning about

“Evidence suggests that followers on platforms such as Facebook are more numerous than formal members for parties already categorised as populist: the Facebook membership of these organisations is larger than formal membership.”
Facebook being the only source of information for many people. But more generally, journalists decide which stories are important and which are not, as well as the information relevant within these stories. But the consequences of selective information are not taken into account seriously enough, despite their direct impact on elections. As such, media gains a propagandist role, focusing on attracting audiences by covering mostly sensationalist news. For instance, the more a candidate is talked about, the more likely that he is to win an election. This could be called the ‘Trump phenomena’: any publicity is good publicity. Therefore, since media is central to the democratic process and people have different understandings of what populism is, a fair question to ask is whether we can identify populist parties through their use of new mass media.

One can observe a contagion of populist rhetoric towards mainstreaming parties. Up until now, a way of recognising populist parties was through the kind of discourses they used and whether they appealed to reasons or feelings. So, are populist parties those that use populist discourse or those that actually apply populist policies? It is well known that parties do not strictly follow the programs they advocate…

Importantly, we are in a crossroad to define populism. Another important point is that populist parties move mass. Consequently, a way of looking at populism is through its followers. It is interesting to compare “online populists” to formal party members. Broadly, it could be argued that the more followers a party has in social media, the more likely it is to be a populist party. Evidence suggests that followers on platforms such as Facebook are more numerous than formal members for parties already categorised as populist: the Facebook membership of these organisations is larger than formal membership. For instance, “the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ), or Austrian Freedom Party, claims approximately 40,000 formal members—but has twice as many Facebook fans. Similarly, the British National Party (BNP) has just under 15,000 formal members and over 80,000 Facebook fans” (Bartlet et al., 2011).

However, is that trend similar to mainstreaming parties? Evidence of this cannot be found in the literature. This indicates a problem of activism, which is on the downside, and complicates even more our understanding of what populism is, since the definition cannot come from the type of electorate each party has. Finally, another line of argument would be to say that mainstream parties have control over mainstreaming channels such as television (and more concretely, public television). Therefore, populist parties must make themselves seen through new media such as Twitter, Facebook, and so on. However, since we do not understand the reasons behind following, ‘online followers’ is not a variable useful in order to establish a definition of populism. Emotions could be considered as the main tool of populist parties and new media such as Facebook and Twitter are very much based on emotions: Like, Love, Hate and retweet if you like it! If we base our definition of populism on ‘attracting voters by appealing to their emotions’, is it possible that every party is in a way populist? Does democracy require parties to appeal to emotions in order to win elections?

The fact is that populism has been the most used word in countries such as Spain and France and that is has become central to the political debate in the European Union. Since the definition of populism can vary according to one’s political ideology, there is a need to find empirical evidence to determine how to characterize populist parties. Students or scholars will hopefully be inspired to define more precisely what can and cannot be considered a populist party, as there is a necessity to solve this controversy, so that new forms of politics and traditional populism can be distinguished from one another.

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Rio de Janeiro: a violent storm in the making?
by Benjy Cox

Not so long ago, the world had its eyes firmly on the city of Rio de Janeiro, as it played host to the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. However, just as quickly as they had come, the Games and the hoards that came with them were gone. Left behind was the stark reality of today’s Brazil, and unfortunately for the 200 million people that call Brazil their home, things are not getting better. Indeed, one needed only take a look at the well publicised photos of the former Olympic venues in states of utter disrepair to see a visual example of the dire straits that Brazil is in. Then we saw the mass, and seemingly uncontrollable violence which erupted in the capital of the state of Espírito Santo, Vitória at the beginning of February as a result of strike action launched by the police. At the time of writing, over 100 people had been reported killed during a six-day strike. Clearly something is going very badly wrong, and if anything at all the motive for the strike, the perceived low-pay of the police in the state of Espírito Santo hints at the reason - the economy, or more specifically, continued economic inequality.

The deep-rooted social problems facing modern Brazil are well documented, and they have only been exacerbated by the ongoing fiscal crisis which started following the global financial crisis in 2009. There has always been a huge disparity between the various states that make up the Federal Republic of Brazil, and this was documented in a study by Brazilian Economist Edmar Bacha back in 1974 in what he nicknamed ‘Belíndia’ - a rich region centred around the capital, and the economic powerhouse of the state of São Paulo which he likened to Belgium, surrounded by a much poorer, and less prosperous area which he likened to India. Whilst the situation may have improved somewhat since his study, it still presents a situation where the government of Espírito Santo says that it is unable to pay its police force any higher due to the ongoing economic crisis.

This is not something confined only to Espírito Santo either - the state of Rio de Janeiro is also on the brink of collapse financially, having to pay some 38% of its public sector workers their October salaries over seven separate instalments as the cash was just not available to pay them as normal. As of April 2016 the state of Rio de Janeiro’s public debt was equal to 201% of its GDP. As a result of the collapse of global oil prices, and the state’s dependence upon it, the situation has become intolerable for many, with violence in Rio up considerably in the last year. This situation is further compounded by the dependence of the state with a declared ‘fiscal calamity’ on federal funds to pay its bills, rendering increased investment in policing and security unlikely.

Yet despite all this, the Financial Times reports that foreign direct investment in Brazil achieved a record monthly high of $15.4bn in December 2016 and a 23% increase of the Brazilian Real against the US dollar, despite the estimated 3.49% contraction of the economy during the year. As one of the most unequal countries in the world, Brazil is now continuing to see a problem which has plagued other countries for years - however much an economy may grow, or however much investment may be going into an economy as a whole, if so little of the prosperity makes it down to ordinary people, as is happening today in Brazil, then it is the start of a dangerous process. If economic recovery takes the form of ‘Belíndia’, re-centralising the recovery only in the more prosperous areas, then the already persistent equality will only widen. One only has to have even a small amount of contact with ordinary Brazilians to realise that so many feel disenfranchised by their politicians. Indeed, the recent events of the United Kingdom’s decision to leave the European Union (EU), and the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States show an interesting correlation between those who live in unprosperous, post-industrial areas, with high rates of unemployment, (or in other words, disenfranchised) and voting in favour of ‘Brexit’ or Donald Trump. Given the 17% drop in industrial productivity in the last three years across Brazil, and particularly the staggering drop in industrial output within the state of Rio de Janeiro in...
the last thirty years, the question must be raised as to whether Brazil is heading for yet another shock event. Of course, there is only so much comparison that one can make between the examples of the UK and the US and Brazil. Both the UK and US are well-known for their stable, and effective political systems, with a respect for the judiciary and a plurality of ideas. Although the complexities of the Brazilian constitution and electoral system perhaps make it rather difficult for a shock event to happen through electoral means, Brazilians have shown time and time again their ability to protest via peaceful, and less peaceful means - an extension of the events of Espírito Santo into the state of Rio de Janeiro could be devastating, especially against the backdrop of the unstable and polarised Brazilian political system.

As Marcos Casarin notes, ‘Brazil is always going to be volatile’. Economically, politically and culturally this is certainly true, and as a result Brazil, but particularly the state of Rio de Janeiro remain in a very precarious situation. Although Casarin thinks that economically this volatility is ‘in an upward trend’, in many ways the city of Rio de Janeiro is perhaps a perfect storm in the making—crippling public debt and high unemployment, in an already violent city with limited policing. Brazil must be careful to try to ensure that through their exit from recession, that further inequality does not provoke an altogether more widespread, violent and ‘volatile’ reaction.

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THE ROUTE OUT OF VENEZUELA
by Carly Greenfield

Immigration was a popular topic in 2016 elections worldwide and looks to be a focal point in 2017. From the refugee crisis in Europe, to Britain’s decision to ‘take back control’ of its borders from the European Union (EU), to President Donald Trump’s vow to deport millions of undocumented immigrants from the United States, it has become a source of controversy and tension. What oftentimes receives less attention, however, is intra-regional migration outside of the developed world. While the refugee crisis hitting Europe seemed to appear out of nowhere following the Syrian Civil War, internal displacement and regional migration had been occurring for years. The same has been happening in South America: Venezuelans have been emigrating out of Venezuela in higher and higher numbers each month. The main destinations, as expected, are those closest by— Colombia and Brazil.

Venezuela, formerly one of the most prosperous countries in the region, albeit still with high levels of inequality, faced radical changes when Hugo Chávez came into power. The groups departing Venezuela at that time, then, are best compared to those leaving Cuba following Fidel Castro’s ascendance into power: wealthier, skilled, and educated. Now, however, the people fleeing Venezuela are not facing a political crackdown or wealth redistribution; the people are facing starvation. The situation in Venezuela is dire. According to Transparency International, Venezuela ranks the highest in the entire region for corruption, tying with the historically poorest state in the Americas: Haiti. Venezuela being ranked the 158th most corrupt state out of 167 in the world only makes its economic collapse more pointed. Along with the drop in oil prices over the last few years and the extreme inflation of the Venezuela into a social and
economic crisis. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted a 500% inflation rate for the bolivar by the end of 2016, and it only looks to rise in 2017. What this has turned into is an extreme shortage of basic supplies and food; families are even bringing their own medicine to hospitals.

Venezuela, internally, is facing three main issues: the disintegration of democracy, severe rationing of basic goods, and an increase in violence because of it. On the final day of May in 2016, the Organization of American States (OAS) called an emergency meeting to discuss the region’s stance towards Venezuela’s loss of democracy. Then, in October, the steps towards a recall referendum on President Nicolás Maduro were suspended. Maduro has politicised the courts to help block opposition members in the National Assembly, along with avoiding implementing legislation brought forward by the opposition. By disenfranchising the opposition and postponing local elections, Maduro has successfully furthered the erosion of democracy in Venezuela. The main reasons for Maduro’s choices and the crisis itself, of course, lie in the economic environment; government crackdowns on the black-market are increasing and price-controlled grocery stores are facing growing customer bases. Stores have been ransacked and customers arrested for waiting in queues longer than what is permissible. Much of the movement across borders began, and continues to be, in search of basic commodities. The country is also facing mass violence: while Venezuela never quieted its violence, 2016 recorded the most murders in its history. Now, of the 50 most violent cities in the world, disregarding those in wartime, 41 are in Latin America. Still, the murder number should give pause to those who would write this off as business as usual. Gangs are gaining power and becoming more prevalent in small towns and government crackdowns are violent, as well.

All of these problems feed into mass migration. In Colombia, many Venezuelans cross the border to buy goods such as rice and shampoo and then return to Venezuela. The number of people who have returned, however, is unreliable as more migrants are increasingly staying in Colombia. Since Venezuelans can enter Colombia on tourist visas, the number disappearing to work in the interior of Colombia is unknown, although authorities believe the number is on the rise. In July, when Venezuela and Colombia came to an agreement to open the border for a weekend, over 100,000 people crossed. Then, in December, another crisis hit: Maduro closed the border with Colombia. The smuggling of 100 bolivar notes was the government’s reason for closing the border, but it left many Venezuelans without a way to buy basic commodities. Since Colombia and Venezuela share its largest border and a common language, it has become a flashpoint for the black-market, crime, and a slew of border crossings.

Colombia is not the only state to feel the pressure of a starving neighbour: border towns in the Brazilian state of Roraima have become busy towns, with locals selling basic goods to Venezuelans and migrants looking for work. Hospitals in the area, too, have been overwhelmed by migrants. Venezuelans make up the majority of hospital visits along the border, making it more difficult for local Brazilians as these hospitals begin to face shortages, too. Those who have begun working in the area, like in Colombia, usually are unable to obtain a visa or permit to work, meaning they are working illegally and face deportation if discovered. Still, around 30,000 Venezuelans have moved into the region since 2015, and Brazil is heightening its military presence in the state. Perhaps the most dangerous crossing, and still the most uncommon, is the escape to Curaçao. Only 60 miles off of the Venezuelan border, it has become an attractive destination for those living on the Northern shores of Venezuela. Curaçao has prepared for the arrival, albeit not always in the way the migrants would like. The island nation and its neighbour, Aruba, have set cash requirements for Venezuelans entering the country and Aruba has even begun using a stadium to house Venezuelans being prepared for deportation. Like many crossings in the Caribbean, it comes with risk—most embarking on the journey are not riding on boats well equipped for the choppy waters, and disappearances have occurred, leaving families on both sides of the water with few answers. As inflation rises and the crisis worsens, the food shortages will affect a larger percentage of the Venezuelan population, only magnifying the migration crisis. Government officials in states further away, such as Chile and Panama, are bracing themselves for migrant populations of their own. Considering the
migration, occurring north into the Caribbean, west into Colombia, and south into Brazil, it would be a natural step for Venezuelans to cast their nets in other waters.

Maduro’s short-term solutions and government crackdowns are unlikely to prove a match for the shortages and violent gangs that have come to dominate the Venezuelan landscape. While the region looks to keep Venezuela from becoming an internal disaster, Maduro’s anti-interventionist rhetoric does little to feed his people or calm inflation.

Attractive destination for those living on the Northern shores of Venezuela. Curacao has prepared for the arrival, albeit not always in the way the migrants would like. The island nation and its neighbour, Aruba, have set cash requirements for Venezuelans entering the country and Aruba has even begun using a stadium to house Venezuelans being prepared for deportation. Like many crossings in the Caribbean, it comes with risk—most embarking on the journey are not riding on boats well equipped for the choppy waters, and disappearances have occurred, leaving families on both sides of the water with few answers.

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Donald Trump and his Twitter: a Love Affair
by Carly Greenfield

3:00 am: he wakes up in a sweat. His temple throbs; someone, somewhere, has insulted him. He quickly fires off a tweet about liberal media, bias, and sad losers. Suddenly, his headache is cleared and he lays back down into a peaceful rest.

Of course, this is a completely made-up scenario, and President Trump may very well plan his tweets in advance. Still, one has to wonder the role of Twitter as part of his overall strategy. The plethora of tweets has set off financial markets, forced comments from multinational companies, and feels exceptionally personal. It gives him the ability to subvert the conventional and, according to President Trump, biased, media, and also gives him a space to express his views with little advisor oversight.

Technological advancements have consistently changed the way governments interact with their populations. From Goebbels and his skill with using film and radio for Nazi propaganda to Franklin D. Roosevelt and his fireside chats, radio as a medium revolutionized how personal a politician could get with the citizens: he could be heard speaking in their own living rooms. The advancements in television, like in the infamous Kennedy-Nixon presidential debate, brought to the limelight how much a good tan could charm voters. Former President Obama was noted for his savvy use of technology in his 2008 run, especially against a more traditional opponent like Senator John McCain.

Trump, then, is not setting a precedent by trying to connect directly to the American population; the President of the United States has an official Twitter account, as do many governments worldwide. Twitter, however, is a specific instrument, and the 140-character limit requires Trump to simplify his statements in a way that leaves out necessary nuance. As tweeted on the 9th of February, “SEE YOU IN COURT, THE SECURITY OF OUR NATION IS AT STAKE!”

“Trump’s distrust of the media is to be expected, considering how few newspapers or media sources endorsed him during the campaign, but now, as President, his refusal to be professionally critiqued is dangerous and visible through his tweets.”

President Trump has found difficulty interacting with the American press. Although the media used to be referred to as the fourth branch of the federal government, Trump seems unlikely to keep that tradition alive. The media’s critiques have brought cries of unfair treatment, or that they are twisting his words. This should be expected, however, when Trump skirts facts with his tweets, like his one on the 8th of January:

“It is a disgrace that my full Cabinet is still not in place, the longest such delay in the history of our country. Obstruction by Democrats!”

Trump is correct in that he has fewer selections approved at this point than the last four Presidents—but it is not the longest delay for the entire cabinet. Former President Obama holds that record. However, in Twitter format, President Trump is unable to share these details, and instead opts for a sensationalist tweet. The half-truth leads to strong reactions from his base and his opponents.

Rather than a formal response from his team, Trump prefers to make his statements directly to the people in a simple format. What occurs, then, is little discussion around his plan but rather a trading of insults between Trump and journalists. Trump’s distrust of the media is to be expected, considering how few newspapers or media sources endorsed him during the campaign, but now, as President, his refusal to be professionally critiqued is dangerous and visible through his tweets. As former President Theodore Roosevelt wrote, almost 100 years ago,

“...the President is merely the most important among a large number of public servants. He should be supported or opposed exactly to the degree which is warranted by his good conduct or bad conduct, his efficiency or inefficiency in rendering loyal, able, and disinterested service to the Nation as a whole.” (Kansas City Star, 1918)
Many journalists, and even those less politically inclined, have had difficulty interacting with the President, such as sportswriter David Roth:

“Regret to inform that I cannot see the Trump tweets you’re referring to, as I am blocked by the fucking President of the United States.”

Since Trump has held a Twitter account for so long, especially prior to his presidential campaign, it is not uncommon to find oneself blocked by the President on his personal Twitter. His refusal to take criticism leaves his tweets with little analysis, making it difficult for Americans to always have the full context.

It is not only journalists who are struggling with how to respond to Trump’s tweets: companies, too, are finding themselves in hot water with the President.

Above is Trump’s tweet regarding Toyota’s new plant in Mexico, and below is Toyota’s response. Toyota is required to give a more measured response, both for its relationship with the President and how its company is perceived. Trump, on the other hand, became popular through his brash speech, making his tweet expected and welcome to many of his supporters.

What is driving Trump’s Twitter use? Theories abound. It could simply be that Trump enjoys threatening companies— or, it could be that he is using his tweets to fit the optics of making huge decisions and influencing multinational brands. There is a streak of cunning, if one believes Trump uses his Twitter strategically: his supporters enjoy seeing him put his ‘enemies’ in place, and it shows a level of action. On top of that, most companies, as stated above, have their hands tied; the less impassioned the response, the better. Whether or not a large amount of jobs will actually be brought into the United States is not the issue. In reality, Trump functions as he always has: as a businessman. Looking busy and making people think he is accomplishing things is just as important as actually getting the job done. Indeed, Toyota’s stock did momentarily fall following the tweet, revealing the amount of influence Trump is levying through his account.

Finally, his tweets become personal and bitter when individuals oppose him openly. His transition team has had the most difficulty handling the personal attacks because they serve little political purpose and show him to be still paying attention to any mention of his own name. The individuals have ranged from Mark Cuban, to Meryl Streep, to union leader Chuck Jones.

The well-documented attack on the latter made many in the press uncomfortable because Jones has little space to respond compared to Trump: his reach is much smaller, his job is more risk-prone, and his name has little clout. Trump tweeted

“Chuck Jones, who is President of United Steelworkers 1999, has done a terrible job representing workers. No wonder companies flee country! (...) If United Steelworkers 1999 were any good, they would have kept those jobs in Indiana. Spend more time working-less time talking. Reduce dues [.]”
Still, Trump felt comfortable attacking him, primarily because he was personally insulted. The President views critiques as wrongs that must be righted, no matter where the critique emanates from. This is uncharted water for a President, and an alarming precedent to set for politicians in the future.

And yet, Trump loves his Twitter. While the usual political playbook would not allow for this type of action, it is what Trump thrives off of. Twitter allows him to make statements without consulting his team, gives him the freedom to make those statements at any time, and avoid the media that he feels so attacked by. As international issues gain more attention, however, it remains to be seen just how well his Twitter will do in a world of nuance and background deals, or simply a world where one has to hold their tongue— even the President of the United States.

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Trump and Transatlantic Relations: The First Six Months
by Rachel Rizzo

President Donald Trump has inherited a foreign policy agenda rife with complexity, and he has entered office at one of the most consequential moments in the transatlantic alliance's history. Both the United States and Europe have experienced major pressures during the last decade; from the rise of populism, to waves of mass migration, to a revanchist Russia, to non-state actors bent on shaking western societies to their core. Indeed, there is no question that the transatlantic relationship is under immense strain. But even in the face of these major issues, it is still difficult to determine whether Europe will be on President Trump's priority list. At a time when Europe and America need each other more than ever, Trump should ensure he makes it clear that the transatlantic relationship plays an important role in his foreign policy agenda. However, even if early on it becomes clear that Trump will focus on other issues, which is certainly probable, there are a few steps he should take at the outset of his presidency to reassure America’s European allies.

First, within the first six months of taking office, Donald Trump must plan a presidential trip to Europe. While it is true that Donald Trump has made disparaging remarks about Europe, stating that he does not believe that the European Union matters much to the United States, that comment could not be farther from the truth. The European Union and the United States are each other's closest allies and largest trading partners—we are not only connected through western values and institutions, but also our relationship is economically beneficial to both sides. To allow the transatlantic relationship to falter would prove to be a dire misstep. It would cause long-term economic harm and damage the overall standing of the United States on the world stage.

“...To allow the transatlantic relationship to falter would prove to be a dire misstep. It would cause long-term economic harm and damage the overall standing of the United States on the world stage. Moreover, it would foster long-term mistrust and resentment in the transatlantic alliance. President Trump must understand this, and a high-level trip to Europe to meet with leaders of the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the NATO Secretary General would give him a sense of just how important this relationship is.

Second, Trump must make it clear that, while it is important that Europe pays its share of defense spending, the United States will never abandon our treaty commitments. This is especially true of our commitments to the NATO alliance. Today, Europe, but NATO in particular, faces enormous political and
security pressures from abroad and from within. Over the last few years, alliance members have answered international calls and worked hard to reverse years of defense spending declines. While only five members of the NATO alliance meet the 2% of GDP on defense spending goal (the US, UK, Estonia, Greece, and Poland), the truth is that the overall spending decline trend is reversing. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia intend to triple annual spending to $670 million on arms and military equipment by 2018, in direct response to Russian aggression and its annexation of Crimea. Furthermore, Germany, Romania, Portugal, Hungary, and the Czech Republic have all made significant increases to their defense budgets during the last few years. While Trump’s complaints that Europeans are not meeting defense spending targets surely resonate; he must publicly recognize the great strides that Europeans have made. Failure to do so will greatly diminish the efforts of our alliance members.

Third, President Trump must lay out a clear strategy toward Russia. Today, relations between Russia and the West have escalated to the point of danger, which is neither beneficial nor safe for anyone. Leaders in both the United States and Europe would agree that de-escalating tensions between the two sides would be the best way forward for everyone—the problem is creating a climate in which long-term de-escalation is possible. Putin has proven time and time again to be cunning and untrustworthy; one must simply point to Russian involvement in the Syrian conflict, its unabashed hacking and influence campaign in the US-election, its support for far-right parties throughout Europe, and its brazen grab of Ukraine’s sovereign territory in 2014, to prove this point.

It is no secret that President Trump’s rhetoric thus far has been more “pro-Russia” than the Obama administration’s, which has made Atlanticists in both the United States and Europe concerned about what that might mean for US-European relations going forward. By now, it is clear that one of Trump’s long-term goals is improving relations with Russia, but no one is quite sure how he intends to achieve that goal. In the first few months of Trump’s presidency, he must publicly present a strategy toward Russia, which includes concrete steps on how exactly he intends to improve upon US-Russian relations, and how he will respond to continuously destabilizing Russian actions in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States. But two things are certain: to pursue better relations with Russia at the expense of our European allies would be a mistake, as would rolling back sanctions without Russia fulfilling any of its Minsk commitments demanded by many within the US Congress and Europe.

Today, it is still too early to tell where Europe will fall on Trump’s long-term presidential priority list. Frankly, those of us who spend our time promoting and advocating for strong transatlantic relations are worried. The hope is that with time, Trump will come to understand that strong US relations with Europe, and its membership of the NATO alliance are non-negotiable. Trump must try to send the message to Europe that the United States will do its part to create a mutually beneficial long-term transatlantic relationship, leading to continued and increased prosperity. The United States helped create the European project, and it is of vital interest to see it succeed.

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Post-Truth, No Truth?
by Honor Brady

Traditionally, there are three topics which should not be mentioned in polite conversation: money, religion, and politics. In this century, these controversial and divisive subjects are discussed avidly: publicly and privately; with friends or strangers hidden behind screens on the internet; wherever there are people, there is talk. Politics has become something which almost everyone has a vocal opinion on, whether it is based on research and long standing beliefs, or a post they saw on Facebook, and people are not afraid to loudly announce it and to defend their point of view staunchly.

It has been said that we are living in a ‘post-truth’ era, where millions of people are neglecting traditional sources of information, from experts and officials, to the government and the printed press, in favour of 140 character tirades and rants on various forms of social media. Claims may not have been substantiated, yet brim with emotion and righteous anger. These have the potential to be far more persuasive than a pun riddled headline above a story concerning the mannequin challenge gracing the front page of a newspaper for sale.

Social media is an endless pit of information, some deeply based in fact, some not, and it is easy to pick and choose which information to believe, discarding truth for what seems more compatible with your beliefs. So perhaps, in the words of Robert Fisk, rather than living in a post-truth era, we are living in an era of lies.

This has never been so evident as it has during the presidential campaigns of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. In the same year that Leave campaigners for Brexit claimed that the alleged £350 million a week spent on EU membership would instead be spent on the NHS, the new president of the United States was gleefully discussing plans to build a giant wall along the border of Mexico. We have ‘handed journalism to social media’ (Fisk), and it becomes harder to criticise outlandish statements spread by these politicians in their campaigns, when lies are being perpetuated every day, from stories emerging from the Aleppo crisis, to far less significant matters. Lies are not only being spread, they are being accepted, and even being caught out for not telling the truth is not a major problem.

One simply needs to look at Donald Trump’s twitter account to see evidential proof of false information being spread to millions of people instantaneously, from someone who is now one of the most powerful people in the world. People want to believe that experts can be trusted, and social media enables us to connect and interact with them. By writing that global warming is a myth invented by the Chinese, next to tweets telling Robert Pattinson not to take back Kristen Stewart because ‘he can do much better’, issues which will affect the future of the world are being trivialised through social media. When millions of people read that the President of the United States believes that climate change is a myth, they are being told something which could have critical consequences. But a quick Google search comes up with millions of results, many of them agreeing with Trump, and it becomes easy to ignore the results with scientific proof to negate such claims.

In the words of Trump himself, ‘You know, it doesn’t really matter what [the media] write as long as you’ve
got a young and beautiful piece of ass’, and however repellent and outdated this statement may be, he disregards and mocks much of the mainstream global press that denounce him as a joke. This sends a message that conventional forms of media are seen as almost irrelevant to Trump, and despite worldwide condemnation, he still won the election.

The role of the media has been avidly discussed and debated since January, especially with Trump’s recent attack on reporters being ‘dishonest’. Such claims that the media spreads lies and does not speak for the public, selectively publishing allegedly fake news, are particularly ironic. These are words spoken by the man who in the same week was making false claims at a rally in Florida, yet bemoans the dishonesty of an industry focussed on making people aware of current affairs. Are people, public figures especially, bothered about objectivity and truth in the media if what is being said fits with their views and supports their attitudes? Rather than the media being ‘the enemy of the American people’, perhaps it is dishonesty, widespread belief in incorrect claims circulated by public figures and anonymous faces hidden by screens.

Do social media and the internet bring countries and democracies together by enabling everyone to voice their opinion and allow access to unlimited information? Or do they simply spread disinformation? The line between fact and fiction is almost irrevocably blurred online, and it can be hard to discern what is true and what is a myth, spreading faster than it could be believed possible. The next four years will certainly be interesting, and the world will be watching, and reporting, avidly.

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Whilst Internet access in China has been continuously on the rise, the government’s infamous censorship regime has simultaneously been strengthening its already tense grip. Promoting its censorship strategies internationally, the nation has seen online censorship, surveillance and punishment increase and occurrence of citizens’ digital activism decrease as the President has declared ‘cyberspace sovereignty’ among China’s key policy priorities. This article explores some of these strategies, focusing particularly on the pervasiveness of self-censorship, which serves as a tribute to the success of the Chinese government’s repressive online strategy.

Although the Chinese Constitution proclaims rights of freedom of speech and publication[6], in reality these promises are of no avail. A lack of specific laws on Internet discourse allows agency regulations and policy decisions to dictate the limits of speech. Both traditional print and online media are subject to censorship and potential punishments, and are encouraged to self-censor.

Firstly, instances of domestic media are carefully censored and controlled. Coverage of sensitive events, such as the 2015 Tianjin chemical explosion and the 2016 Panama Papers scandal, is either constrained or non-existent. Where local scandals may lead to controversial criticism, entire areas have had their Internet access shut down. Additionally, access to critical foreign online media, including The Economist and the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post, is generally blocked.

Furthermore, foreign journalists may be subject to retaliation including travel restrictions, and harassment of staff, sources and employers. Essentially, the media is restrained from embracing its role as the ‘public watchdog’ promoting accountability and transparency, whilst journalists, both domestic and foreign, are encouraged to practice proactive self-censorship to avoid arbitrary punishment without means for redress. Secondly, online materials are similarly monitored. The types of content subject to censorship are constantly under review and continuously subject to change, whilst automated mechanisms and government employees monitor online discourse to block and filter relevant material. Generally, some small-scale critical content is allowed, typically where it is found informal, specific and harmless.

As most global social media, including Facebook and Twitter, are blocked, ‘home-grown’ Chinese alternatives such as WeChat, QQ, Youku, and Sina Weibo monopolise the market. These Chinese platforms fully cooperate with the regime’s censoring and monitoring demands, and any foreign online platform seeking access to the market must be similarly willing to compromise on issues including user privacy, anonymity and freedom of speech. Famously, Facebook has repeatedly failed to be unblocked, despite promises of new censorship technologies deemed inadequate.

Under Chinese law, privacy protection is close to non-existent. The Constitution declares the freedom of citizens to be ‘inviolable’, yet online anonymity is increasingly unavailable, hindering effective surveillance and monitoring, as online requirements of real-name registration are expanding, eroding personal privacy and anonymity, whilst censorship technology can access users’ personal texts and communications, which are admissible as evidence before the courts. Whilst censorship prevents access to critical materials, extensive surveillance ensures access to information about users, disregarding their privacy and anonymity.

Generally, as extensive online censorship requires careful manual assessment and can thus only be done after material has been published, the vast number of online public discourse across a wide range of forums, instantaneous and adequate censorship is impossible. As such, censorship can only be effective
impossible. As such, censorship can only be effective to a point – critical materials published remain accessible until detected, and censorship will struggle to keep up with the sheer quantity of content. The public will always find some ways to access critical content. Thus, the Internet's functions to an extent as a 'quasi-public' space for discourse.

This discourse is; however, rendered almost meaningless by the culture of self-censorship created by intimidation and fear of punitive action. For many Chinese citizens, without certainty as to the scope and limits of acceptable expression, the natural reaction is that of 'better safe than sorry'. Digital activism has seen a marked decrease in recent years following stricter censorship and punishment, as online anonymity is increasingly difficult and the number of high-profile prosecutions grows whilst patterns of censorship are unreliable and unpredictable.

In supporting government digital politics of censorship and self-censorship, the presence and use of law is as telling as the lack of law. In a regime criticised for adherence to the ‘rule of politics’ above the ‘rule of law’, extra-legal punishment and retaliation for digital activities remains a looming threat to netizens and dissidents. Censorship laws in China are decidedly ambiguous, censorship decisions are generally taken in secret and resulting punishments are ambiguous, inconsistent and unevenly administered.

In recent times, authors of online content perceived as overly critical have been subject to forms of retaliation including cyber-attacks; disciplinary warnings and job loss; detention of selves or of relatives; and house arrest and loss of access to online connections. Moreover, as of September 2015, Reporters Without Borders documented that China held the highest number of detained journalists of any country, whilst Committee to Protect Journalists reported the same in 2016. Additionally, various pieces of legislation have been employed to investigate and prosecute Internet users for digital crimes such as disseminating misinformation. Ambiguously drafted laws may be constructed in ways favouring the current regime policies, as prosecutors exploit unclear provisions of China's criminal code, especially, laws governing prints and publications; laws on subversion, separatism and antiterrorism; and state secrets legislation, to prosecute citizens for online activity. The definition of state secrets remains vague, and can thus be construed to justify arbitrary censorship of discourse and current events or withhold information.

Simultaneously, various changes and amendments to the law have also codified existing regime practices and legitimised stronger punishment for citizens engaging in online discourse deemed ‘harmful’. Examples of this include the December 2015 anti-terrorism law compelling companies to restrict content and websites; the November 2015 criminal law amendment increasing sentences for spreading misinformation; and requirements for internet users to register with their full names and platform providers.

Essentially, uncertainty as to which types of discourse are not allowed encourages pro-active self-censorship even where the discourse would be allowed. Increased legal restrictions and similarly increasing number of prosecutions also increase the prevalence of self-censorship, as digital activism decreases. And whilst action is only taken against a “… tiny percentage of the overall user population…”, the deterrent effect of their arbitrary and harsh sentences has wide implications of self-censorship.

Those who looked to increased accessibility of the Internet in China as a route towards greater freedom of information and wider scope for regime critique have been largely disappointed by the development of the past decade. On the contrary, the officials have mastered the exploitation of Internet's social and commercial benefits, promoting their own political agenda, censoring politically sensitive topics and further cementing its top-down control of the state. Instead of empowering Chinese citizens with a louder voice, the mass spread of the Internet has turned into a valuable self-promotion tool of the government.

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Technology has reinvented the ways in which we learn, travel, date and eat. Companies that have stumbled upon new successful business models have created a new identity; those that have failed to embrace the world of low-cost high-efficiency user-friendly phone apps are left in the dust. This trajectory seems to echo the tortoise and hare race. Yet, amidst the revolution, one industry carries on as if times hadn’t really changed all that much since the days of Charles Dickens. Lawyers continue to provide high-cost customised advice and many sneer at the idea that their work could ever be completed by an app. After all, most managing partners have been sleeping four hours a night for twenty odd years to make it to their firm’s stratosphere and now they are eager to reap the fees. However, many outsiders and insiders of the legal profession see the future in different colours – according to some, law may be approaching its Uber moment after all.

Understandably, a 21st-century lawyer cannot just rely on the physical tomes stacked high in his library. Victory in the court may well rest on whether an additional hour was spent looking up an obscure point of law. In the Internet age, a good lawyer must be able to harness and make use of information and data. Information can be overwhelming. A poor search query entered into an electronic case database will throw out search results that run into the hundreds if not thousands. It is no longer the case where the more you have, the more you know. While technology is a great enabler, there is also an inconvenient truth – the more one can access, the more time one will need to separate the chaff from the wheat. According to INTELLLEX estimates, about 30-40 per cent of research time eventually ends up being written off and unbillable. And with fees for billable hours rising to astronomic heights, legal services are becoming not only slow, but also increasingly unaffordable – especially for smaller companies that often take the risks with google, rather than paying for legal counsel. In effect, law firms are thus losing revenue. The verdict is straightforward - lawyers need smarter technologies. This is where 21st century legal research platforms come in.

As an ex-intern of the Singaporean legal tech start-up INTELLLEX, I can understand why some who are seeing ripples are also anticipating waves in the legal industry. INTELLLEX was founded with one single purpose – to help the legal fraternity (Lawyers, Law Courts and Law Students – hence the 3 ‘L’s in the company name) turn their knowledge into assets. Their mission is to solve the legal practice’s longstanding challenge of information overload through a productivity suite built upon a smart knowledge management system. This smart knowledge management system ‘Lex Quanta’ contains cases, statutes and commentaries, serving as a connective centre for lawyers to store, collaborate and share knowledge. INTELLLEX creates a living information ecosystem within the firm that is easy to use and empowers users with knowledge that can be easily retrieved and applied. Lex Quanta combines legal domain knowledge with statistical and programming knowhow to build law-first data models sensitive to legal principles and tailored to industry requirements.

Yes, the fancy schmancy lingo sounds like a sci-fi movie script. But if you pause there for a moment, it may dawn on you that these developments are revolutionising the real-world way of lawyering. What INTELLLEX has set up is a cloud-based productivity suite. In other words, they are creating a “living system” that automatically updates, categorises and indexes information so that lawyers can generate, share and maintain the flow of information and knowledge easily. By equipping lawyers with the analytic tools necessary to turn the information overabundance problem into an opportunity to draw
out deep legal insights grounded on all relevant data, INTELLLEX is on the mission to solve the most pressing conundrum of the legal profession.

The start-up has designed online account that acts like a personal task manager able to save results for future reference and organise cases according to each lawyer’s needs. Like other up and coming web-based legal research platforms, INTELLLEX sees the virtue of inviting the community of lawyers and law students to become involved in the developmental process. As the company has shared, “Sometimes, the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts; take for example, gingerbread latte. That is why INTELLLEX believes that great features can only come if we build it together with our users.” There are hopes that an online space will facilitate collaboration and potentially become a central location for communal access to each other’s work. Perhaps when tied together effectively, technology can reshape the values that connect legal professionals.

Paradoxically or not, legal research has seen a shift from the mechanical search engine to a personalised sharing space. Long gone are the days when lawyer’s tools were his or her law books. In those days, a firm’s library was very manageable. There were few commentaries and the text of the law – cases and legislation – was self-contained. In Singapore, local case law that was reported took up only a volume each year in the Malayan Law Journal. Older firms may have had the early Kyshe’s law reports. Statutes were contained in four volumes. DK Walters, who had written the definitive commentary on Municipal Ordinances, was published in one volume. Roland Braddell’s ‘The Law of the Straits Settlements’ was another volume. For a litigator, there was the Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code and the Evidence Act, the same volumes used by lawyers. And that was it.

The time is ripe for the extension of artificial intelligence to the law. An increasing number of legal technology start-ups are working to blend computer algorithms, data analytics methods and legal reasoning. These companies can help lawyers and law firms extract more value from the knowledge already in their possession. The application of artificial intelligence will result in an innovative information infrastructure, and free lawyers from having to fine comb through messy data and libraries of law journals. With inefficiencies minimised, lawyers and law firms can focus on their clients’ needs and therefore create more value. 2017 presents an opportunity to actualise dreams from the past. There is no better time than now to reimagine the way law can be practised.

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The US-China-India Triad: Shifting Power Balances
by Chris Ogden

As China and India both continue to emerge to prominence in the international system, and as we witness a concurrent passing of economic and military power to the Asia sphere, what does this mean for US preponderance and the very notion of hegemony within international affairs? For Beijing and New Delhi, the search for hegemony is alien to their foreign policy making, with both countries preferring a more multipolar vision of world order in which there are four or five major powers, none of which has complete supremacy. As they continue to rise, such ideas will gain great salience, legitimacy and – if
adhered to by enough supportive countries – acceptance.

While US dominance appears as an undeniable reality within the current international system, such hegemony – both as a material or ideational fact, or as the critical reference point for international affairs itself – is increasingly at odds with elite perspectives in China and India. If anything, Beijing and New Delhi see hegemony as resting upon positive benevolence rather than the negative use of force - an element that reflects their past and present dealings with the system, whereby they were opened up to (western) imperialism, occupation, humiliation and exploitation.

Furthermore, both Asia’s largest countries are amassing considerable economic and military power that is positioning them in the upper echelons of global politics, making them both into two of the most powerful and – by extension – influential powers. In terms of GDP (in price purchasing parity terms), China now ranks first on such a scale, with India positioned fourth behind the US and the European Union. As such, the very emergence of New Delhi and Beijing as global power centres is altering the relative balance of power with Washington and the west, in terms of both the projection and the formal actualization of their particular worldviews.

In these ways, although both Sino-US and Indo-US relations are mainly premised upon closer economic cooperation as per the liberal capitalist nature of the present system, this innate difference leads to competition between India and China’s and Washington’s desired world orders, concerning multipolarity and hegemony, respectively. This divergence is fuelled in part by the centre of the world economy (and military spending) shifting to Asia, which will give Beijing and New Delhi a greater say in how that world functions. Their own identities, norms and cultures, as derived from elite experience, history and memory, are also highly different from those of western states, especially concerning their negative colonial and imperial interactions.

Within these overall dynamics, Sino-US ties are the most important within Washington’s roster, and have the most significance for global stability as a whole. They are also the relationship that featured most prominently in President-elect Donald Trump’s successful election campaign and consequent transition to the White House. Crucially, the importance of self/other perceptions dictates the nature of these relations concerning how elites in both countries view each other and their relative intentions. Thus, if seen in a negative light, Beijing’s foreign policy will take on an expansive and aggressive realist tone as it seeks material resources to extend its economic and military clout, inexorably bringing it into conflict-inducing competition with the United States.

However, if seen positively, China’s increasing political, economic and systemic interdependence will bring increased common ground, leading to cooperation premised upon a liberalist Chinese foreign policy whose peaceful rise is accepted by others, including the United States. In the latter formulation, US hegemony will not be openly challenged, and in the former it will – eventualities wholly dependent upon how elites in Washington and Beijing decide to engage with other and how they evaluate different power quotients. These assertions highlight the interactional, co-constitutive and evolving nature of great power politics, which is dependent upon material and ideational sources. How the new US President decides to act will critically inform this outcome.

Such assertions are equally relevant to the Indo-US relationship, which has similarly oscillated between negativity (during the Cold War) and positivity (from the late 1990s onwards). Thus, elements of distrust and anti-imperialism have contemporarily been largely overtaken by complementary interests – such as trade, counter-terrorism and shared political values – as part of an ever-deepening relationship between the two sides. Changing US interests and structural dynamics have aided this
positive change, in much the same way as US attitudes towards Beijing negatively hardened after the end of the Cold War, chiefly via Washington’s need for Asian allies.

Of particular note here is the observation that India will remain a self-sufficient and autonomous power, and will not be unwittingly used to balance against the rise of Chinese power in Asia. Whilst New Delhi can be considered a partner of Washington’s – if their interests continue to align – it cannot be considered an all-weather ally. As such, Indo-US relations also have scope to change and evolve over time in line with their relative material and ideational power sources, and in terms of how these sources are perceived by their leaders and elites at any future juncture. It is of note that the new US President has not made much reference to India but both Trump and the ruling BJP are highly pro-capitalist and will plausibly agree on the importance of mutual trade.

However, with a longer-term perspective, it is for this reason that Washington and New Delhi may also emerge as rivals in the future, particularly if India overtakes China on key material power measures. Crucially, India’s population is far younger than either China’s or the US’s, and looks set to be the world’s largest by 2030. For this same reason, China’s economy looks poised to stall just as Japan’s did on the 1990s and 2000s, as its workforce declines and the cost of public services provision rises. In contrast, India’s potential workforce will be larger, which may presage New Delhi having the world’s largest economy by the mid-point of the twenty-first century.

As Beijing and New Delhi continue to acquire material power at a faster rate than Washington, as indicated by current and historical growth rates, their influence in the international system will also increase. With the international system invariably reflecting the values and principles of its largest entities (think of the United Nations after the Second World War for example), as the twenty-first century progresses, we will see the creation of a multipolar world that will challenge ideas of hegemony both as a concept and as a reality. How the US, China and India respond to such a change – as a threat or as an opportunity – will determine the nature of the world around us. Such an evolution could even also be accelerated if China–India bipolarity were ever to exist.

“Within these overall dynamics, Sino-US ties are the most important within Washington’s roster, and have the most significance for global stability as a whole.”

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South Africa’s foreign policy: past indicative, future uncertain
by J E Spence OBE, FKC

In a famous article in *Foreign Affairs* (1994) Nelson Mandela, South Africa's President in waiting, claimed that the protection and assertion of human rights would be 'the light that guides our foreign policy'. In the early years of the new democratic government expectations were high at home and abroad that blessed with the advantage of a "rectitude base" of good governance and Mandela's iconic leadership, South Africa would become a major player advancing the cause of human rights at the United Nations (UN) and other international and regional organisations.

The hope was that South Africa might buck the 'realist' pressures of world politics and espouse liberal causes consistent with the ruling party's history as a staunch opponent of racism, global inequalities between peoples and states and become a fervent supporter of humanitarian intervention whenever and wherever this would promote welfare and poverty reduction.

A second driver of foreign policy was the assumption that maintaining indeed increasing trade and investment links with Western states was essential to promote growth and prosperity and to help repair the damage apartheid inflicted on the impoverished black majority. Certainly Mandela's aspiration for a 'liberal' foreign policy was reflected in his government's engagement in a variety of peace-keeping and peace-building initiatives in Angola, Burundi, Mozambique and the Sudan.

Running parallel with these policies – most notably during Thabo Mbeki's presidency in the early years of the new century – was a commitment to find 'African solutions to African problems' via the country's role in the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). This strategy was – at least in part – motivated by a deeply felt ambition to avoid too heavy a dependence on rich northern states for trade and investment. This attitude in part arises from a visceral hostility to what is perceived to be the excessive influence of Western capitalism – its theory and practice – on the structure and process of international relations.

These at times conflicting objectives of foreign policy had somehow to be reconciled. Indeed, a complex balancing act was required to satisfy the various constituencies with interest in foreign policy: liberals, realists, nationalists, communists all had to be placated. This was not always easy as Mandela himself found to his cost when African governments took strong exception to his critical outburst against the Nigerian government's execution of Ken Sara-Wiwa and his colleagues in November 1995. Secondly, the military intervention in Lesotho in 1998 ended in disaster demonstrating yet again the difficulty of reconciling a Western style concern for human rights and necessitating compromises with the traditional African commitment to the twin principals of domestic jurisdiction and non-interference.

On the other hand, realism surfaced in the country's foreign policy as Mandela and his successors felt obliged to maintain ties of gratitude to, for example, Libya and Algeria for their help in the anti-apartheid struggle despite their unimpressive human rights record. And this was equally true of decisions to recognise the People's Republic of China in preference to Taiwan. In all these cases principle clashed with pragmatism, and the latter won.

A recent study by Suzanne Graham of the University of Johannesburg (Palgrave, 2016) demonstrates with painstaking statistical analysis how the country's voting record on human rights 'between 1994 and 2014 has been mixed … The promotion of human rights is not the priority it once was, despite government assurances to the contrary … what is most evident is South Africa's determination not to be lost in the crowd and to take, in its own words,
principled decisions when voting. But what principles exactly? ... South Africa's repeated commitment to the promotion of human rights and democracy meant nothing when it failed to do just that in Myanmar, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Uzbekistan, and Belarus. This reflects inconsistency in South Africa's human rights foreign policy.'

This finding should not surprise us: after all, states which profess support for the maintenance, indeed effective diffusion of human rights across the globe inevitably find themselves caught in a clash of 'liberal' principles and 'realist' and other pressing claims of national interest surface especially with respect to economic benefit (e.g., it might be argued, the UK selling arms to Saudi Arabia). In practice, decisions rarely involve a simple choice between good and bad courses of action, choosing between evils, the trick being to choose the lesser one. Or so the realist argues.

Of course, in this context some states make a virtue out of necessity: the Scandinavian quartet, Canada, Switzerland, the Papacy have all carved out a niche in international society enabling them to enjoy a high degree of legitimacy as mediators, neutral go-betweens using good offices to bring warring combatants to the conference table, in effect to 'knock heads together'. This role, particularly, has been successful in many cases not least paradoxically because they lacked resources and capability to engage in coercive diplomacy. Indeed, they had to rely, therefore, on 'soft power' to exert influence on warring parties. Their governments are, in effect, agents of conflict resolution, but again they set themselves limited achievable goals rather than seek influence in a wider global society. And in this enterprise, combining goodwill with neutrality and diplomatic skill. These niche players have the advantage of a 'rectitude base' that is a reputation second to none, for good governance, due respect for human rights at home and effective economic performance.

By contrast, the South African government has always had aspirations to be a 'mover and shaker' on wider global issues and to this end – after persistent lobbying – was invited to become a member of the so-called BRIC grouping of states late in 2010 (Brazil, Russia, India, China). This outcome was a 'realist' calculation on the part of policy makers but we should note the incisive words of R W Johnson in How Long Will South Africa Survive: 'South Africa thus entered BRICS in a state of complete naivety, apparently unaware that each of these members had its own reasons for joining ... which had nothing to do with developing Africa, let alone promoting South Africa's ambitions to act as a midwife of such development ... the Alliance is particularly ideological. South Africa does little trade with Russia, while the other three BRICS members are all major trade competitors.'
Yet to a disinterested observer the BRICS grouping may seem an artificial construct. It was, after all, the brain child of Jim O’Neill of Goldman Sachs who, interestingly enough took exception to South Africa’s admission on the grounds that states such as Indonesia, Mexico, and Turkey "all had stronger claims".

At best, South Africa is a 'middle power' as compared with the great power claims of its partners. Thus its very presence, influence and resource base seems disproportionate in comparison with the advantages enjoyed by BRICS colleagues. Indeed, one can only conclude that South Africa regards membership as giving its government status and influence in global politics. Yet, Mandela's aspiration for his country to be a global human rights standard bearer looks forlorn given the very different perceptions that govern the policies of South Africa's partners with respect to human rights, etc.

And it could be argued that a decisive and continuing impact by the BRICS will not be easily achieved. The group lacks the cohesion, and the multilateral and mutual commitment of an orthodox military alliance providing and maintaining security in the face of so-called 'new' global threats eg. terrorism; international crime; failing and collapsing statehood; climate change; nuclear proliferation. Several of these threats require, inter-alia, a highly sophisticated capacity for intelligence sharing by like-minded states. Is this likely, indeed possible with a loose grouping such as the BRICS? And what contribution, if any, could South Africa make in this context?

Secondly, all five BRICS have major domestic preoccupations. All have to cope with population growth, massive job creation and a crucial need to raise living standards in line with popular expectations. These commitments must set limits to what can be done by way of maximising and sustaining international pressure for major institutional reform both at home and abroad. And in this context it will be difficult if not impossible to organise a BRICS wide trading regime governed by diplomatic negotiation via a bureaucratic structure capable of operating across several continents. We should also bear in mind the great variation in the political and social culture of the five BRICS. Some approximation here is surely essential as the example of the history and development of the European Union amply demonstrates.

Thirdly, the international system is undergoing profound change: much will depend on the way in which China and the USA relate to each other in the coming decades; India and Russia will seek to increase their influence both in their respective regions and further abroad. We may well see the emergence of a new balance of power with the four major BRICS constituting alternative poles in that balance, but requiring subtle diplomacy to maintain a reasonable semblance of international order.

What contribution, if any, will South Africa make to this complex structure is open to question. No-one doubts its capacity to play a regional hegemonic role. But does it have the capacity to play a role comparable to the global ambitions of its BRIC partners? Certainly, its electorate may well come to feel that an excessive concern with grandiose foreign policy ambitions is no substitute for failure to make significant progress on economic and social issues at home.

The recent electoral losses in local government elections in three major urban areas and the ANC's total vote falling below 60% would seem to confirm the priority of domestic concerns over foreign policy achievements for the great bulk of the electorate. Trying to be one of the 'big beasts' of the BRIC constellation may well be beyond South Africa's political and diplomatic prowess hampered by the defining reputation of President Zuma and clear evidence of corruption in the public sector. It does seem reasonable to conclude that on wider global issues South Africa will remain a supplicant for development aid, economic assistance, etc. rather than a mover and shaker unlike its weightier BRIC partners.

“At best, South Africa is a 'middle power' as compared with the great power claims of its partners.”

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Internet censorship is in vogue in the Middle East. From Iran's imitation of China's Great Firewall; to the reactionary control of post-Arab Spring Egypt; and social media blackouts in Iraq to prevent cheating in school examinations, attempts to control the digital public sphere are widespread across the region. Beyond instances of direct censorship and Internet restrictions, governments in the Middle East have created a pervasive atmosphere of self-censorship among journalists, citizens and activists. The cumulative effect of control and self-censorship creates the impression that governments in the Middle East have successfully established a necessary bulwark against any and all real and perceived threats to their regimes. However, this control is, in fact, partial, incomplete and, at times, counterproductive. More dangerously for the governments of the Middle East, it may ultimately prove to be illusory and could in fact contain within it dangers to the very regime survival it is intended to secure.

**Ctrl, Alt, Delete**

To varying degrees, countries in the Middle East view the dominant (mostly American) social media companies, and by extension the "Western controlled" Internet as a whole, as direct threats to their stability and survival. This attitude is expressed with the most vitriol in Iran where despite Ayatollah Khomeini's official presence on Facebook, the regime views the platform as "the West's weapon in its soft war against Iran" and continues to block access to it in Iran.[1]

Following the Arab Spring, a powerful idea has become entrenched in the minds of Middle Eastern leaders, that the Internet (and social media in particular) played a significant, perhaps even decisive, role in civil unrest and the toppling of long-standing dictatorships. Their reaction has been clear: control, alter, and delete information online to preserve stability and clamp down on potential signs of unrest.

The effect of this has been to entangle the governments of the Middle East in a cat and mouse game with their young, technologically literate and internationally engaged citizens. With large, youthful populations, the Middle East is experiencing the single largest transition to adulthood in its history.[2] A significant proportion of these young people are technologically literate, connected to the Internet through ubiquitous smart phones and well versed in the technical means to circumvent restrictions and preserve their anonymity online. Although fully accurate numbers are hard to come by, proxy servers and virtual private networks (VPNs) are widely available and readily used in the region. Take Iran - the Islamic Republic regularly ranks in the top 10 ranking of countries with the most number of VPN users as individuals attempt to bypass restrictions on everything from foreign news sites to social media platforms such as Facebook.[3] It is in this ongoing contest over Internet freedom that we see the limits of control.

**The Limits of Control**

For the regimes that survived or emerged from the upheavals of 2011 there is a shared assumption that, unchecked, the Internet is one of the most potent threats to their long-term stability. The instinct of these governments (with the notable and laudable exception of post-Arab Spring Tunisia which has so far largely resisted calls to reinstate censorship, filtering and control) is toward greater control of online content and discourse through censorship, intimidation and the application of sweeping legislation.

However, there are limits to control. State implemented content restrictions, filtering and internet blackouts are intended to restrict internet users to a controlled bubble where only approved information is consumed and access to outside content is at least severely restricted if not completely blocked. The questionable assumption at the core of this approach is that the Internet is in fact fundamentally controllable by a nation state. While the level of control undoubtedly varies from country to country, the parameters of the debate are clear. On the one hand, we have the example of China and its massive and sophisticated, albeit imperfect, system of control; on the other we have the Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace that flatly states that governments have no sovereignty over the Internet.
Independence of Cyberspace that flatly states that governments have no sovereignty over the Internet. Some degree of online control is achievable, that much is clear from the countless examples we see today, many of them in the Middle East. Yet total control and the establishment of a truly national Internet is an unrealisable ambition for even the most sophisticated Internet gatekeepers.

More than this, the illusion of control can fundamentally undermine every stability these governments are attempting to secure. The governments in the Middle East that most actively censor online content; prohibit access to information; or target online users with draconian punishments under vaguely worded cyber crime laws are often treating the symptoms and expressions of unrest rather than the root causes.[4] Illusory control over the digital sphere does little to address sclerotic economies, high youth unemployment, and a growing gap between public aspirations and ideals and the ability of governments to fulfil them. Remaining wedded to the mantra of control means the governments of the Middle East have learned entirely the wrong lessons from the upheavals of the past six years.

**Conclusion**

Governments, those “weary giants of flesh and steel” in John Perry Barlow’s declaration of cyberspace’s independence have not fallen before the liberating sovereign power of the Internet.[5] Instead we have seen a worrying trend towards the Balkanisation of the Internet with an increasing number of countries erecting digital borders to protect their sovereignty and implementing technical, legal and political measures to control Internet access and content. Yet there are limits to this control and it is likely that the Internet will remain the primary means through which citizens in the Middle East can break free of government filter bubbles as well as organise movements to challenge control, censorship and authoritarianism. Call it Arab Spring 2.0.

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The States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) enter 2017 with a mixture of trepidation and optimism. The prospect of a refreshed and strengthened alliance with the United States as President Barack Obama stepped down from power is very real. But while President Donald J. Trump appears to be the type of leader the Gulf States can do business with, very real concerns about his administration’s beliefs concerning Muslims, alongside promises to move the Embassy of the United States in Israel to Jerusalem, mean that the Gulf States remain on their guard.

Regardless of who occupies the White House, it is clear that the US-Gulf relationship was in serious need of attention. For eight years the relationship between the United States and its Gulf partners had become increasingly distant, with tempers fraying on both sides, bringing into question the long standing security architecture that had existed since 1944, when the United States began to supplant Great Britain as the suzerain in the region.

As the regional order in the Middle East stretched to breaking point following the Arab Uprisings of 2011, cracks in outlook between the US and its Gulf partners quickly began to appear. The unwillingness of the Obama administration to support long standing Gulf allies, such as Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak, were seen as signs of US disinterest for Gulf regional concerns. Additionally the US engagement with Iran, the Gulf’s major rival, over its nuclear enrichment programme leading to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) of 2015, was seen as legitimising Iran’s return to the world, a move which was regarded by the Gulf States as a reward for Iranian bad behaviour. Conversely, as Syria fragmented, leading to the rise of the Islamic State which spread across into Iraq, the US became visibly frustrated at Gulf fixation on Iran as the primary threat in the region. Accusations from President Obama that the Gulf States were “free riders” only served to reify the deep divide which had set in between increasingly divergent world views.

And so, with the Obama era over, and the Trump administration’s National Security Advisor Michael Flynn’s warning to “put Iran on notice”, Riyadh in particular will welcome a new willingness on the part of Washington to get tough with the Iranians. But the proof will be in the delivery, and tough words require action if they are to mean anything, especially in a world where Iran has so decisively established its foothold across the region. Iranian allies in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq have tightened their grip on security control at the expense of the States within which they operate. Escalating US rhetoric, and even an engineered collapse of the JCPOA, is no guarantee that the Gulf States will see a region that is free from Iran’s influence. Short of a totally implausible US-led military campaign across the Mashreq to dislodge Iranian regional proxies, it is certain they will remain in place for many years to come, thereby ensuring Tehran’s influence is maintained.

Furthermore, the increasing rapprochement between the US and Russia led by Mr Trump may well mean that Gulf regional interests are pushed aside. Moscow’s forceful backing of key Iranian ally Bashar al Assad in Syria has more or less ended any hopes that Gulf States held of removing the dictator from power. Quite how Saudi Arabia, and the rest of the Gulf can assert their regional influence in the face of this overwhelming show of military force, backed with what seems to be tacit-US approval, is unclear. This rather bleak outlook is made infinitely more complex by the Saudi-led two year conflict in Yemen against Houthi rebels, which has drained Gulf financial resources and sucked Saudi Arabia into an unwinnable war from which it is having difficulty extricating itself.

For minimal financial support and effort, Tehran has managed to divert Gulf attention away from the key battle grounds of Lebanon Syria and Iraq, allowing it to further secure its hold across the region. All the while, Saudi Arabia appears unable to respond in kind, and with little available additional resources to push
the Iranians back, Riyadh may well have to accept that it is on the back foot for the moment. The one option for the Gulf will be to cut their losses on Syria, in favour of a US-led attempt to curtail Iranian regional activity through tough sanctions, and a possible collapse of the JCPOA. Iran would be unlikely to hand an easy victory to its Gulf rivalries by openly cheating on the Nuclear deal, but a US President in lock step with the House and Senate, all willing to scrap the deal and place a crippling new round of sanctions on Tehran would undoubtedly be a big win for the Gulf States.

On the domestic front the Gulf States have shown little desire to open the doors to freedom of expression and debate, and if anything have regressed in their progress towards social and political liberalisation. Fearful of encouraging the type of instability that swept across the region in 2011, they’ve preferred instead to offer more largesse from government coffers to smooth over any flickers of internal dissent. Governments have trucked no compromise with their own citizens who have called for change – rather, internal security structures have been beefed up, and harsh laws governing expression on the internet or over social media have seen citizens and expatriate workers alike detained without trial. Nevertheless, political and social issues are hotly debated across the Gulf. Young tech savvy citizens in each country are adept at producing creative media and finding ways to express themselves in ways that do not cross accepted boundaries, or spill over into outright dissent.

But given that a sustained period of low oil prices has meant that across the region national budgets are tightening, and privileges are being cut or withdrawn, Gulf citizens are no longer assured of endless state spending for their benefit. Rather, they are being asked to contribute more toward the running of their country - male citizens in the UAE and Qatar are now conscripted into national service, all the while sales taxes are being introduced alongside the gradual removal of subsidies on fuel, water and electricity. Although the good times are not quite over, it does behove thinking about what future societies and economies in the Gulf will look like in the coming years, as socio-economic change gathers pace. This does not mean instability; on the contrary, most citizens in the Gulf are happy to trade political freedoms for relative stability and prosperity at the present time. If Gulf rulers can skilfully manage to transition to a less rentier style economy, it will do much to build strong foundations for Gulf polities in the long term.

These are uncertain times for the Gulf, but the GCC is simply too important to both the US (and also the UK) to be allowed to fail, or become victim to any Iranian meddling. Strong security partnerships are likely to be further solidified, and calls from Western powers for social and political reform will be dimmed in favour of realpolitik style relationships, in which short term stability and prosperity is favoured. It will be an uncomfortable bargain for the West to strike, but during this period in which Iran is once again viewed as the regional bogey man, a defence led relationship is all but inevitable.

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