

# KENNEDY SCHOOL REVIEW

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**New Approaches to Policy Making**

**Frameworks for Addressing  
Climate Change**

**The Rise of Nationalism**



SPOTLIGHT

**The Power  
of Narrative**

A HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL STUDENT PUBLICATION





**HARVARD Kennedy School**

# **SHORENSTEIN CENTER** on Media, Politics and Public Policy

**THE SHORENSTEIN CENTER** analyzes the power of media, in all its forms, and its impact on public policy and politics. Through research, teaching, high-profile events and engagement, the Center plays a leading role in the discussion about media and politics in the 21st century. Digital technology pushes the impact of the Center far beyond Cambridge.



**TEACHING.** Faculty members teach and conduct research on political communication, public opinion, new media and the intersection of press, politics and policy.



**STUDENTS.** The Center offers Kennedy School students access to internships, positions as research assistants and scholarships.



**FELLOWSHIPS.** Outstanding journalists and scholars spend a semester at the Center researching and writing a paper, and participating in Harvard activities.



**PUBLIC PROGRAMS.** Weekly events with distinguished scholars and practitioners attract students, faculty and members of the community.



**GOLDSMITH AWARDS IN POLITICAL JOURNALISM.** The Goldsmith Awards include a prize for investigative reporting, two book prizes and a career award.



**RESEARCH.** Studies include research on Twitter and presidential campaigns, press coverage of the economy and the influence of conservative media.

[shorensteincenter.org](http://shorensteincenter.org) | @ShorensteinCtr



07 | Global Health and Development  
13 | What's New in the World  
15 | How Human Capital Can Help  
17 | The Role of the State  
19 | The Role of the State  
21 | The Role of the State  
23 | The Role of the State  
25 | The Role of the State  
27 | The Role of the State  
29 | The Role of the State  
31 | The Role of the State  
33 | The Role of the State  
35 | The Role of the State  
37 | The Role of the State  
39 | The Role of the State  
41 | The Role of the State  
43 | The Role of the State  
45 | The Role of the State  
47 | The Role of the State  
49 | The Role of the State  
51 | The Role of the State  
53 | The Role of the State  
55 | The Role of the State  
57 | The Role of the State  
59 | The Role of the State  
61 | The Role of the State  
63 | The Role of the State  
65 | The Role of the State  
67 | The Role of the State  
69 | The Role of the State  
71 | The Role of the State  
73 | The Role of the State  
75 | The Role of the State  
77 | The Role of the State  
79 | The Role of the State  
81 | The Role of the State  
83 | The Role of the State  
85 | The Role of the State  
87 | The Role of the State  
89 | The Role of the State  
91 | The Role of the State  
93 | The Role of the State  
95 | The Role of the State  
97 | The Role of the State  
99 | The Role of the State

The *Harvard Kennedy School Review* (ISSN: 1535-0215) is a student publication at Harvard Kennedy School. All views expressed in the journal are those of the authors and interviewees only and do not represent the views of Harvard University, the Harvard Kennedy School, and the staff of the *Harvard Kennedy School Review* or any of its affiliates.

Copyright 2017 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. All rights reserved. Except as otherwise specified, no article or portion herein is to be reproduced or adapted to other works without the expressed written consent of the editors of the *Harvard Kennedy School Review*.

Harvard Kennedy School Review  
John F. Kennedy School of Government Harvard University  
79 John F. Kennedy Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138

Telephone: (617) 496-8655  
E-mail: [harvardksr@gmail.com](mailto:harvardksr@gmail.com)

# contents

07 | **Locked Up or Locked Out**  
How Housing Insecurity Undermines  
Criminal Justice

BY MARIE LAWRENCE

13 | **Where Are All the Female  
Diplomats?**

BY LISA FEIERMAN

**Spotlight: The Power of Narrative**

15 | **The Problem with “Common Sense”  
Gun Control**

BY ELORM F. AVAKAME

17 | **Understanding the Ebola Narrative**

BY CLAIRE CHAUMONT

23 | **Why Current Voter ID Laws Are  
Harmful to American Democracy**

BY BRYNNA QUILLIN

29 | **Bipartisanship in the 115th Congress**

BY ANDREAS WESTGAARD

33 | **It’s Time to Pop the Liberal  
Bubble at Public Policy Schools**

BY NEIL THOMAS

35 | **The War on Drugs**

One Approach to Reduce Overdose Deaths in  
New York City

BY STEVEN SARAO

**Spotlight: Frameworks for Addressing Climate Change**

41 | **The Cry of the Climate and the Cry  
of the Poor**

Pope Francis’s Urgent Appeal for Climate Justice

BY TOMÁS INSUA

47 | **It Takes the Planet**

Why Collective Action on Climate Change Is  
More Important Than Ever

BY LIZ HANSON

52 | **Ask What You Can Doodle**

BY ADAM GIORGI



## 53 | Gross National Happiness

An Idea Whose Time Has Come?

BY KINGA TSHERING

### Spotlight: New Approaches to Policy Making

## 55 | How Human-Centered Design Contributes to Better Policy

BY ANGEL QUICKSEY

## 61 | One Size Does Not Fit All

The Rise of Tailor-Made Economic Policies

BY HUBERT WU

## 65 | Rich Country or Poor Country, Invest in Infrastructure

BY GONZALO HUERTAS

## 71 | Four Steps toward Fostering a High-Performing Culture in Government

BY COLIN MURPHY

## 77 | Mandatory Digital Privacy Labels

One Way to Protect Consumer Data

BY KATHERINE MANSTED

## 83 | A Blueprint for Businesses Engaging with the Indian Government

BY MALINI BOSE

## 87 | Turkey in the Age of Trump

A Path forward for US-Turkey Relations

BY TYLER RODGERS

### Spotlight: The Rise of Nationalism

## 91 | The Trump Triumph

Looking Back and Moving Forward Together

BY BOBBIE RAGSDALE

## 95 | Nastiness toward Leave Voters Isn't Going to Reverse Brexit

BY NYASHA WEINBERG

## 97 | Restoring Economic Opportunity to Working-Class America

BY JOHN SCIANIMANICO



# staff

Editor-in-Chief

Shanoor Seervai

Managing Editors, Print

Aditi Kumar David Payne

Managing Editors, Digital

Natalie Goodnow Andreas Westgaard

Managing Editors, Events & Recruitment

Jennifer Smith Lauren Windmeyer

Managing Editors, Development

Benjamin Gillies Mykola Murskyj

Associate Editors

Emma Van Susteren Alen Amini Neil Thomas Marie Lawrence

Hubert Wu Silvie Senauke James Pagano Liz Hanson

Benjamin Luxenberg Haiyang Zhang Kirsten Rulf Parker White

Publisher

Martha Foley

Faculty Advisor

Dr. Richard Parker

Layout & Design

Monique Osius

Copy Editor

Tracy Campbell

Cover Art

Doug Woodhouse

Contributors

Steven Sarao Kinga Tshering Tomás Insua Neil Thomas

Adam Giorgi Andreas Westgaard Gonzalo Huertas Malini Bose

Angelica Quicksey Hubert Wu Tyler Rodgers Brynna Quillin

John Scianimanico Marie Lawrence Liz Hanson Colin Murphy

Elorm Avakame Claire Chaumont Katherine Mansted

Bobbie Ragsdale Lisa Feierman Nyasha Weinberg



**In** its seventeenth year, the Kennedy School Review continues to provide a forum to take on the toughest challenges facing policy makers in the United States and across the globe. In our 2016–17 edition, we strive to give voice to and foster genuine dialogue between writers across the political spectrum, and from around the world.

Building on the robust digital presence created by our predecessors, we devoted even more time and energy this year to keeping our website coverage closely tied to the news cycle. Our online readership nearly doubled from 2015 to 2016, driven in no small part by the publication of at least two original, timely pieces each week.

Much of our 2016 website coverage centered on the bitterly contested presidential election at home, from on-the-ground coverage of the Democratic and Republican National Conventions to reflections on the Obama legacy and reactions to the victory of Donald Trump. In the first month of his presidency, our contributors wrote about the future of US policy, including immigration, health care, and jobs.

Drawing on the vast diversity and experience of the international student body at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, our analysis of global affairs included a series on the Brexit vote, the Syrian crisis, and challenges for China and India as they move further along the arc of development.

Our print journal showcases twenty-two scrupulously envisioned and edited pieces. We have departed from the traditional long-form format to incorporate shorter, snappier opinion columns, some of the best of our digital publications, and spotlights on issues including the rise of nationalism, the power of narrative, and climate change. And in an increasingly polarized political climate, we thought it only apt to relieve some of the tension with our first cartoon.

Our editors have worked tirelessly to put together the volume you hold in your hands, and in it we hope you find at least one idea that resonates, one you disagree with, and one that changes your mind.

*Shanoor Seervai, Editor-in-Chief*  
*David Payne and Aditi Kumar, Print Journal*  
*Managing Editors*



# MIDDLE EAST INITIATIVE at Harvard Kennedy School

The **Middle East Initiative (MEI)** at Harvard Kennedy School engages public policy issues in the Middle East by convening academic and policy experts, collaborating with regional partners, and developing the next generation of leaders.



*Strengthening good governance, seeking solutions to regional public policy challenges, and deepening Harvard Kennedy School's relationship with the peoples and institutions of the Middle East.*



HARVARD Kennedy School  
**BELFER CENTER**  
FOR SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
*Middle East Initiative*



[hks.harvard.edu/middleeast](https://hks.harvard.edu/middleeast)



@MiddleEastHKS



/HKSMiddleEast



# Locked Up or Locked Out

How Housing Insecurity Undermines Criminal Justice

by Marie Lawrence

*Marie Lawrence is a master in public policy candidate at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and an associate editor for the Harvard Kennedy School Review. She previously worked in policy research and communications roles aimed at expanding marginalized Americans' access to nonprofit services and public benefit programs.*

"MY APARTMENT IS everything I prayed for when I was locked up," Morgan\* says, his brown eyes twinkling. "Do you want to see it?"

Morgan pulls his phone from his back pocket, turns the screen toward me, and opens a photograph of a bright galley kitchen with a couple of pots resting on the electric range. He swipes left, and a shower and porcelain toilet appear. Last is an image of Morgan's front door, taken from inside his apartment. On the wall beside the doorframe he has mounted four wooden letters: H-O-M-E.

"I like leaving my apartment in the morning," Morgan says, "but coming home is the highlight of my day—walking through that front door, with my own key."

Every year, 600,000 Americans return to their communities from federal and state prisons,<sup>†</sup> and 11.4 million people are processed by local jails.<sup>‡</sup> In 2010, Morgan was one of them. After

serving a five-year sentence in Massachusetts state prisons, Morgan was released. He took a bus into the city. On the advice of another inmate, he connected with a local organization, Span, Inc., which provides social services and advocacy for people leaving prison. Span helped Morgan get into a sober house, where he spent a year. Then, with nowhere else to go, he became a long-term resident of a homeless shelter. He lived in that Boston shelter for more than eighteen months before his application for a housing voucher was approved. All told, it took Morgan more than three years to move into his own apartment.

Three years is a long time to live in limbo. The homeless shelter where Morgan stayed was sometimes "worse than prison," he said. Drug use, theft, noise, and an inflexible curfew made it hard to play by the rules and get ahead.

Still, Morgan made it. The brass keys to his apartment jingle in his pock-

\* Name was changed at the interviewee's request.

† Jails are locally operated facilities that hold people who are awaiting trial or sentencing, or who are serving sentences less than one year, typically for misdemeanor convictions. Prisons are federally or state-operated facilities that hold people who are serving longer sentences, typically for felony convictions.



et. He's working toward long-delayed plans, like finishing school and opening a barbershop. With a permanent, safe place to live, Morgan feels like his life is moving forward.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of "returning citizens" like Morgan leave prisons and jails and return to their neighborhoods, ready to reclaim their futures.

How can policy makers ensure that returning citizens find housing that supports their success?

## UNDOING MASS INCARCERATION

At the end of 2014, the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated that 6.9 million people were either incarcerated in US prisons and jails or under parole or probationary supervision in their home communities.<sup>2</sup> When those who are incarcerated return home—as over 95 percent eventually do<sup>3</sup>—they will join the 70 million to 100 million American adults with criminal records.<sup>4</sup> That's roughly the same as the number of working-age Americans with college degrees.<sup>5</sup>

The costs of America's overcrowded justice system are staggering. Researchers estimate that policing, prosecution, courts, public defense, and corrections together cost taxpayers more than \$265 billion annually.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, prisons do not adequately rehabilitate people in their custody. Forty percent of people released from state prisons return within three years, according to the Pew Charitable Trusts, a non-partisan think tank.<sup>7</sup> A 2016 report by the White House Council of Economic Advisors goes further, concluding that, "some criminal justice policies, including increased incarceration, fail a cost-benefit test."<sup>8</sup>

The financial consequences of mass incarceration have motivated policy makers on both sides of the aisle to take action.<sup>9,10</sup> A third of states have shortened their sentences for minor drug offenses over the last five years, reserving prison beds for the most serious and

habitual offenders.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, thirty states participate in the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI), a national effort to encourage states to adopt cost-efficient criminal justice policies and to reinvest the savings in proven public safety programs.<sup>12</sup> JRI-inspired laws in conservative states where one might least expect them—like Texas, Kentucky, North Carolina, and South Carolina—have reduced prison populations and yielded significant savings.<sup>13,14</sup>

As changes like these send more Americans home from prison, policy makers must ask: how does our society support—or create barriers to—successful reentry? The answer to this question is key to predicting whether efforts to reduce prison populations will stick or whether formerly incarcerated people end up back behind bars.

## THE LONG SHADOW OF A CRIMINAL RECORD

Helping returning citizens succeed requires an appreciation for the uphill climb they face in free society.

In some ways, life on the outside is harder than behind bars. Any savings that returning citizens built up before incarceration are likely exhausted over the course of their sentences;<sup>15</sup> in fact, paying fees and fines to the justice system often forces people with criminal records into debt.<sup>16</sup> The experience of incarceration also exacts both a physical and psychological toll that follows returning citizens home and can make it difficult to adjust to life on the outside.<sup>17,18</sup> Leaving prison means learning how to use cell phones, computers, and other devices most people take for granted. And, crucially, it is harder to find work. Researchers find that job applicants with criminal records are 50 percent less likely to be interviewed by employers.<sup>19</sup>

To top it off, forty-eight thousand federal and state laws<sup>20</sup> make it challenging for people with criminal records to access housing, employment, public benefits, and other services.<sup>21</sup> For example, six states prohibit people



with a felony conviction from receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, commonly referred to as food stamps.<sup>22</sup> Twenty-seven states automatically suspend or revoke the driver's licenses of people convicted of drug offenses.<sup>23</sup>

## THE IMPORTANCE AND CHALLENGE OF HOUSING

One of the most urgent questions facing returning citizens is "Where will I live?" Formerly incarcerated people understand better than anyone that stable housing is the foundation they need to re-establish their lives. Having a physical address is often a prerequisite to interviewing for jobs, applying for public benefits, regaining custody of children, and enrolling in school. Additionally, private housing offers something most people take for granted: a safe place to store personal items like prescription medication, clean clothes for an interview, or books for a class. Housing also gives returning citizens a psychological boost and—like Morgan, who loves showing off photos of his apartment—a sense of ownership and pride.

Research also shows that having housing significantly reduces the chance that formerly incarcerated people will have further contact with the justice system. Being stably housed reduces the time returning citizens spend on the street, meaning they are less likely to run afoul of laws that criminalize homelessness, such as laws against loitering, sleeping in public, and panhandling.<sup>24</sup> Housing also reduces the risk of drug use, a strong predictor of recidivism.<sup>25</sup>

These positive effects spill over into returning citizens' home communities. If returning citizens are less likely to commit new crimes, then members of their communities are less likely to experience crime. This is a major boon to low-income neighborhoods, where most returning citizens live. Very low-income people are three times more likely to be

the victims of crime than higher-income people,<sup>26</sup> and children's exposure to violence, as either a victim or a witness, harms their social-emotional and cognitive development.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, US taxpayers will spend fewer dollars on policing, sentencing, housing, and supervising these individuals in the future. These savings add up when the average cost to keep one person in state prison is over \$31,000 per year.<sup>28</sup>

Detractors are quick to assert that scarce public benefits should go to stand-up citizens who have fallen on hard times through no fault of their own. It is politically challenging to articulate why making public programs available to people who have committed crimes is actually in the public's best interest. "I can think of a thousand other issues politicians would prefer to champion," said Harvard sociologist

## IN SOME WAYS, LIFE ON THE OUTSIDE IS HARDER THAN BEHIND BARS.

Bruce Western when I interviewed him in November 2016.<sup>29</sup> But the objection "Why should we help convicted criminals?" is easily answered if promoting justice and reducing both costs and crime are the public's top goals.

Yet accessing housing is exceedingly difficult for people coming out of prison. Upon release, returning citizens face the following housing options: seek housing in the private market, move in with friends or family, apply for government-subsidized housing, or attempt to secure one of a limited number of places in a supportive housing program.

Are these even options at all?

The private housing market is virtually closed to people with criminal records. Since most returning citizens were low-income before entering the

---

‡ An individual with a family income less than \$15,000 is three times more likely to be a victim of crime than a person with a family income of \$75,000 or more.



justice system<sup>30</sup> and are likely to leave the system with debt,<sup>31</sup> they need low-cost housing. Unfortunately, there is a massive affordable housing gap in almost every US county. Across the United States, 11.3 million extremely

To make matters worse, excessively stringent tenant screening criteria mean that returning citizens who committed even low-level and non-violent offenses are often barred from accessing subsidized housing themselves, or moving

## [T]HE AVERAGE COST TO KEEP ONE PERSON IN STATE PRISON IS OVER \$31,000 PER YEAR

low-income households compete for just 610,000 affordable, unsubsidized units, according to the Urban Institute, a social and economic policy think tank.<sup>32</sup>

On top of their status as low-income and credit-challenged renters, all returning citizens have a criminal record, and roughly two-thirds are people of color.<sup>33</sup> These individuals are triply susceptible to both explicit and implicit discrimination by landlords. Because landlords are less likely to respond to renters with “Black-sounding” names<sup>34</sup> and very likely to run a criminal background check and credit check on applicants,<sup>35</sup> few returning citizens have a shot at affordable, unsubsidized housing.

Apartment seekers’ prospects are no better in the public housing market. Most housing authorities cannot begin to meet the high demand for housing assistance. For example, in New York City, the waiting list for the housing authority’s 178,000 apartments is 270,000 families long.<sup>36</sup> In Washington, DC, a much smaller jurisdiction, the waiting list is 42,000 households.<sup>37</sup>

in with family members who already live in public housing. Federal law requires housing authorities to permanently deny any application or evict any household that includes a member who (1) has been convicted of methamphetamine production while on the premises of federally assisted housing, or (2) is subject to lifetime registration requirements under state sex offender registration programs.<sup>38</sup> Beyond these federally mandated exclusions, housing authorities retain far-reaching discretion.

To counter this, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) sent out a policy statement in June 2011, and official guidance in November 2015, to encourage public housing authorities to expand access to subsidized housing<sup>39</sup> and not to use arrest records as evidence of a criminal past.<sup>40</sup> As of 2015, however, housing authorities’ screening criteria and procedures were generally out of step with HUD guidance.<sup>41</sup> Any serious effort to improve housing for formerly incarcerated people must contend with the fact that hundreds of housing authorities

§ The Urban Institute defines affordable units as “the total number of available and adequate rental units in this county affordable to extremely low-income households,” where “extremely low-income households” have no more than 30 percent of area median income. Units subsidized by programs of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development are excluded from the total stock of affordable housing because this discussion is focused on private housing available to people who cannot gain tenancy in public housing or through a Housing Choice Voucher.

¶ “Two-thirds” describes the proportion of state prisoners released in 2011 who were Black or Hispanic over the total number of Black, Hispanic, or White prisoners released in the same year. This is a rough estimation of the percent of returning citizens who are people of color, since other racial categories were excluded from the data analysis and the population under study did not include federal prisoners.



reject out of hand any applicant with a criminal record.

## DOING MORE OF WHAT WORKS TO HOUSE RETURNING CITIZENS

Since President Trump assumed office, congressional leaders have reaffirmed their commitment to criminal justice reform.<sup>42</sup> However, local organizations are less optimistic about federal initiative.<sup>43,44</sup> The good news is that states, counties, and cities are incubating effective and low-cost reentry solutions—and successfully navigating the politics to make them sustainable. In the absence of a clear commitment to returning citizens from President Trump's administration, the following three recommendations promise positive impact, even in a political environment sensitive to risk and cost.

### *Establish Local Reentry Councils*

First, organizations that serve returning citizens should create formal forums for collaboration. Public-private partnership is required to effectively assist formerly incarcerated people because of the complexity of the challenges they face.<sup>45,46</sup>

From Seattle<sup>47</sup> and San Francisco<sup>48</sup> to Marion County, Indiana, and Austin, Texas,<sup>51</sup> reentry councils offer critically important forums for collaboration and information sharing. Councils can make it easier to make client referrals between organizations, collect data on shared clients, apply for pooled funding, and advocate for common policy interests.<sup>50</sup> Importantly, elected officials and public housing authorities can feel paralyzed by the potential political fallout of easing rules on formerly incarcerated people, according to Margaret diZerega of the Vera Institute of Justice when I interviewed her in January 2017.<sup>51</sup> Often, creating bolder programs and policies requires the support of diverse

coalitions like reentry councils, which can do the research and share the risk.

### *Promote Family Reunification*

Second, public housing authorities should use their discretion to help returning citizens reunite with their families. In fact, reentry councils can give housing authorities the push—or the political cover—they need to develop a family reunification policy.

Granting whole units of subsidized housing to returning citizens is a controversial proposition because subsidized housing is often viewed as a zero-sum game: any public housing unit or housing voucher granted to a returning citizen is one less unit or voucher available to a person with a clean record. However, many returning citizens have family already living in subsidized housing. Adding a returning citizen to his or her family member's existing lease would not displace other applicants and may have positive benefits to the reunited family and the returning citizen.

Criminal justice reform advocates in New York had the same idea. In 2013, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) initiated a collaborative effort with several city agencies, community-based organizations, and the Vera Institute of Justice to develop the Family Reentry Pilot Program (FRPP).<sup>52</sup> Reentry service providers identified returning citizens interested in being reunited with family in NYCHA housing and helped eligible participants access supportive services and rejoin their families. The program engaged participants for two years, during which time they were required to follow an FRPP "action plan" in order to remain eligible to live in NYCHA housing.<sup>53</sup>

A program evaluation conducted by Vera Institute researchers found promising results: no participant was convicted of a new crime while in the program.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, the evaluation offered compelling testimony from returning

---

\*\* Some of the steps recommended to organizations looking to create a reentry initiative make clear the benefits of such collaboration.



citizens that having safe, affordable housing and reconnecting with family members stabilized their lives.

Even better, NYCHA agreed the program was a success. Since the pilot period ended in 2015, NYCHA folded FRPP into its regular operations, and the number of returning citizens placed with family members in public housing has steadily grown, up to ninety-three participants as of January 2017.<sup>55</sup> Prioritizing family reunification, New York found, is a low-risk, low-cost way to benefit returning citizens and their families, reduce recidivism, and maximize the use of the city's coveted subsidized housing.

### *Pass Fair Chance Housing Ordinances*

Finally, cities should pass fair housing policies to reduce the likelihood that private landlords deny applicants solely because of a criminal record.

Some cities have implemented housing policies similar to the popular "ban the box" measures now on the books in twenty-five states and 150 cities and counties across the country.<sup>56</sup> "Ban the box" removes the criminal history question from job applications and delays an employer's investigation of an applicant's criminal background until later in the hiring process.<sup>57</sup>

Fair housing ordinances operate the same way and express in local law what is already true at the federal level: landlords cannot reject applicants solely because they have a criminal record. Such exclusionary policies violate the Fair Housing Act because they have a disparate impact on Black and Latino Americans, who are grossly overrepresented in the US criminal justice system.<sup>58</sup> Fair housing ordinances may also specify that landlords cannot consider certain convictions that have no bearing on whether an applicant will be a safe, responsible tenant.

As this piece went to print, the cities of San Francisco, California; Richmond, California; Seattle, Washington; Urbana, Illinois; Madison, Wisconsin;

and Newark, New Jersey, had passed fair housing policies.<sup>59</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Sitting across the table from Morgan in Span's downtown office, I search for the silver bullet: "What advice would you give someone leaving prison today to come to Boston?" Morgan confidently recites his personal mantras: "Take your time. Use your head. Always be cordial. Because everything depends on you."

I press further, wanting to understand what, exactly, enabled Morgan to find a home when so many powerful forces were working against him. "What or who helped you most after you got out?" I ask.

Morgan pauses for a moment and leans forward in his chair: "I was determined."

Morgan has received significant moral and material support since his release from prison, and he is quick to recognize and thank the advocates who helped him along the way. But his response—"I was determined"—reveals a deeper truth about reentry in the United States: it requires tremendous resolve to succeed. Morgan's case is an exception to the rule. The fact is, in our current system, many people can't make it work.

As elected officials on both sides of the aisle work to improve the criminal justice system, they must keep housing for returning citizens at the top of the policy agenda. Achieving the public safety results we all want—fewer people in prison, less crime, more prosperous communities, and more efficient government spending—requires us to consider where people will go after prison and how to remove the barriers from their paths.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# Where Are All the Female Diplomats?

by Lisa Feierman

*Lisa Feierman works as a cable news associate producer in New York City. She is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, where she studied media and public policy and is passionate about shining a light on policy issues that are often overshadowed by horse race political coverage.*

WHEN MADELEINE ALBRIGHT arrived at the Democratic National Convention to see Hillary Clinton accept her party's presidential nomination, she dressed for the occasion: she wore a brooch made of shattered glass to symbolize the historic nature of her friend's achievement<sup>1</sup>—putting “the biggest crack in the glass ceiling yet,” as Clinton said.<sup>2</sup>

The first female secretary of state in US history, Albright herself is a trailblazer.<sup>3</sup> Her appointment opened doors for her female successors, Condoleezza Rice and Hillary Clinton, and demonstrated women can and should have a place at the global negotiating table. Still, many of the women she inspired are grappling with institutional barriers and gender bias.

Aspiring female diplomats for many years were faced with an all-too-familiar ultimatum: family or career, choose only one. The pressure was both explicit and implied: until 1972, the State Department banned female Foreign Service officers from being married (let alone having children),<sup>4</sup> and even after the rule was lifted, conventional wisdom dictated that the best negotiators were forceful, tough, and therefore masculine.<sup>5</sup> At every turn, women in the foreign policy arena were largely being undermined, as were their business counterparts striving for seats in the boardroom.

In light of these obstacles, there is still much work to do before women achieve parity in the foreign policy arena. An analysis of American Foreign Service Association data conducted by the Pew Research Center in July 2016 found that of the 4,600 total US ambassadors that have served in foreign nations throughout all of US history, just 9 percent have been women. The two countries in which we've had the most ambassadors posted—Russia and Spain, with seventy-four each—have had exactly zero women posted there.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps it is unsurprising that we have never appointed a female ambassador to Iran or Saudi Arabia, but what is our excuse for never sending one to Canada?

There are two important trends to glean from the American Foreign Service Association's Female US Ambassador Tracker data. The countries that have hosted the highest number of women ambassadors tend to be, first, those less central to US foreign policy (such as Lichtenstein or Micronesia) and, second, those most Americans have probably never even heard of (including Kiribati, the Kyrgyz Republic, or Palau). The countries that are most central to American foreign policy, such as China, Germany, Saudi Arabia, and Russia, have had exclusively male ambassadors, whereas the country that has hosted the most female ambas-



sadors overall is Luxembourg, a small European country with a population of just five hundred thousand.<sup>7</sup>

Today, diplomatic leadership roles still heavily skew male, but that doesn't mean we aren't making progress. More women than ever are serving in the Foreign Service, with the AFSA reporting that women currently account for approximately 40 percent of the officers corps.<sup>8</sup> Pew found that 36 percent of the 158 total ambassadorships today are held by women,<sup>9</sup> and according to one blogger who has been "obsessively" tracking Obama administration diplomatic appointees, we can thank President Obama for selecting women for ambassador vacancies one out of every three times during his two terms.<sup>10</sup> Female diplomats have even achieved parity in South and Central Asian countries, occupying exactly 50 percent of the ambassadorships in the region, according to Pew.<sup>11</sup>

A Hillary Clinton presidency wouldn't just shatter the metaphorical glass ceiling as Albright's pin quite literally signified. It has the potential to level the diplomatic playing field both at home and abroad in tangible, lasting ways. Just look at the opportunities her service as secretary of state created for female diplomats in other countries. During Clinton's tenure, Washington saw a significant uptick in the number of female diplomats to the United States from foreign countries, a phenomenon contemporaries dubbed the "Hillary effect."<sup>12</sup>

To better understand this trend, the *Washington Post* in 2010 spoke to female ambassadors who were experiencing firsthand the benefits of Clinton's service. The perception was thus: Albright and Rice might have been considered anomalies, but Clinton's appointment signaled a new normal. Claudia Fritsche, the ambassador from Liechtenstein, called the sequence of three female head diplomats "inspiring, motivating, and certainly encouraging." Amélia Matos Sumbana, Mozambique's ambassador, told the paper that Clinton's visibility made "it easier for [foreign] presidents to pick a woman for Washington," putting cracks in their respective nations' diplomatic glass ceilings as well. "The pictures of U.S. diplomacy have been strongly dominated by photos of women recently," Meera Shankar, the first female ambassador from India in more than fifty years, noted at the time. As someone who had been repeatedly mistaken for the ambassador's wife instead of

the ambassador herself, Shankar saw Clinton's legacy as the normalization of the presence of women like her in diplomacy.<sup>13</sup>

So if Clinton's role as head of the State Department could influence the decisions of countless foreign heads of state, what could her presidency do in terms of access and empowerment for her own female citizens? For women all over the world?

However, it's not like a woman president is unheard of; on the contrary, female heads of state are nothing new in many countries around the world. Indira Gandhi, Golda Meir, and Margaret Thatcher served as the Prime Ministers of India, Israel, and the United Kingdom, respectively, as early as fifty years ago, and today nations ranging from Germany to South Korea to Liberia have women leaders. But unlike newer democracies, the United States "has had two centuries to develop old-boy networks, the results of which are walls that are less easy to scale," Dan Schnur, director of the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics at the University of Southern California, told the *Los Angeles Times*.<sup>14</sup> To put a woman in the White House would mean clearing one of the more significant remaining hurdles standing between the United States and gender equality, and it would show the world we are serious about practicing what we preach.

Yet just as the election of our nation's first Black president in 2008 doesn't mean we've achieved a post-racial society, three female secretaries of state, an increasing share of female ambassadors, and a potential female president do not mean our work is over. But a woman in the White House—and a former top diplomat at that—would send a strong signal the world over that the United States trusts women to make the tough decisions and drive the hard bargains that have too long been reserved for men.

President Obama made a concerted effort to build a more inclusive administration<sup>15</sup> and encourage diversity in his national security apparatus.<sup>16</sup> If Hillary Clinton wins next week and carries on her predecessor's legacy of striving for parity in her administration, she will have her own legacy: Showing women and girls that there is nowhere—no boardroom, no embassy, no oval-shaped office—that we cannot go.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# The Problem with “Common Sense” Gun Control

by Elorm F. Avakame

*Elorm Avakame is an MD/master in public policy student at Harvard Medical School and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He is also a Sheila C. Johnson Leadership Fellow at the Kennedy School's Center for Public Leadership.*

NEWS REPORTS HIGHLIGHT the carnage of mass shootings, but they often fail to capture the full magnitude of firearm fatalities in the United States. Every year, more than 33,000 Americans die from firearm-related injuries<sup>1</sup>—roughly the same as the number that die in car accidents.<sup>2</sup> Of the roughly 16,000 homicides annually in the United States, nearly 11,000 are carried out with a firearm.<sup>3</sup> As many suicides are committed each year with a firearm—roughly 21,000—as by all other means combined.<sup>4</sup> As a future pediatrician, I am particularly disturbed by how access to firearms elevates the lethality of violence among young people. Of the roughly 4,000 homicides occurring among fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds annually<sup>5</sup>—making homicide the third leading cause of death in that age group<sup>6</sup>—more than 3,500 are by discharge of firearms.<sup>7</sup>

There are steps we can and should take to reduce the frequency of these tragedies. Even most gun owners support new regulations on firearm purchases.<sup>8</sup> So why is the conversation often a non-starter?

Although part of the difficulty is that gun manufacturers and their lobbyists use campaign contributions to influence politicians' decision making,<sup>9</sup> the messaging of gun control supporters around firearm regulation also creates barriers to productive discussion.

We often hear advocates call for “common sense” gun control legislation.<sup>10</sup> The problem with this term is that it takes for granted that certain ideas are beyond reasonable disagreement. Labeling an idea “common sense” indicates that you think anyone who disagrees is, by definition, nonsensical. It implies that you do not believe alternate views are worth considering, much less discussing.

The “No Fly, No Buy” proposal, which Democrats in the House of Representatives endorsed during their sit-in protest in June 2016,<sup>11</sup> is a case in point. One version of the bill would have automatically prevented the 1.1 million individuals in the government's Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment (TIDE) from buying a gun.<sup>12</sup> Democrats presented the argument as inherently intuitive: a person dangerous enough to be on the government's watch list should not be allowed access to firearms.

The problem is that people can be placed on the watch list at any time due to a vaguely defined “reasonable suspicion” of terrorism, without their knowledge and with no clear process to appeal their placement on the list.<sup>13</sup> No matter your position on firearm regulations, denying someone a constitutional right based on a secret, extrajudicial process is a dangerous precedent. The American Civil Liberties Union agreed, calling the watch list “error-prone and



unfair.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, there is room for reasonable disagreement on “No Fly, No Buy.”

Another popular “common sense” proposal is banning the sale and possession of the AR-15 rifle on the basis that “no one needs an assault weapon.” The AR-15, or a close variant, was the weapon of choice among perpetrators of horrific shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School, the movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, and the holiday party in San Bernardino, California.<sup>15</sup> Objectors argue that if the AR-15 can cause such devastation, it should not be available to lay citizens.

However, the AR-15 platform is the single most popular rifle among gun owners, with several million such firearms in circulation.<sup>16</sup> Why is this weapon so popular? In an essay called “Why I ‘Need’ an AR-15,” one gun owner offered his perspective:

The AR-15 is less a model of rifle than it is an open-source, modular weapons platform that can be customized for a whole range of applications, from small pest control to taking out 500-pound feral hogs to urban combat. Everything about an individual AR-15 can be changed with aftermarket parts—the caliber of ammunition, recoil, range, weight, length, hold and grip, and on and on.<sup>17</sup>

Millions of Americans, from hunters and competitive shooters to home defense buyers and law enforcement officers, value the AR-15 rifle because it is customizable, easy to use, and reliable. Millions of Americans prefer the iPhone for the same reasons. As it turns out, opponents of a ban on AR-15-style weapons are not just regressive, bloodthirsty “gun nuts” resistant to common sense.<sup>18</sup> There is room for reasonable disagreement on an AR-15 ban.

Of course, the “common sense” argument arose from legitimate frustration with the unacceptable number of American deaths from firearm injuries each year and our society’s failure to advance a solutions-based discourse. Gun control legislation can be an important part of our strategy for preventing unnecessary deaths, but it will take productive conversations to develop and pass effective legislation. Describing proposals as “common sense” when there is room for reasonable disagreement prevents us from engaging in those conversations and reduces our chance of finding solutions.

The irony is that gun owners and non-gun owners agree on some promising proposals to regulate firearms. For example, in a 2015 survey of gun owners and non-gun owners by researchers at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, nearly all respondents were in favor of requiring a background check for all gun sales to ensure the purchaser is not legally prohibited from having a gun.<sup>19</sup> In the same study, gun owners were actually more likely than non-gun owners to be in favor of requiring states to report in the background check system a person who is prohibited from buying a gun either because of involuntary commitment to a hospital for psychiatric treatment or because he was declared mentally incompetent by a court of law.

By contrast, gun owners were significantly less likely than non-gun owners to be in favor of banning the sale of military-style, semiautomatic weapons that are capable of shooting more than ten rounds of ammunition without reloading, such as the AR-15.

Both legislators and ordinary citizens seeking to advance a conversation about the preventive value of firearm legislation are bound to fail if their principal strategy is to shame those who would disagree by criticizing their lack of common sense. Instead, any such conversation should begin with proposals that are actually common sense—in other words, those proposals that are popular among gun owners and non-gun owners alike. A campaign focused on shared interests keeps from alienating those with divergent views and capitalizes on the gap between the extreme views of the gun lobby and the more moderate views of rank-and-file gun owners. Failing to use politically sensitive messaging means missing a critical opportunity to reduce unnecessary deaths and keep Americans of all stripes safer.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# Understanding the Ebola Narrative

by Claire Chaumont

*Claire Chaumont is a second-year doctoral student at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. She has spent the last decade working across Europe, Africa, and Latin America on issues related to health financing, health policy, and management in low and middle-income countries. She is particularly interested in the design and implementation of global governance mechanisms for health.*

---

*"From now on it can be said that plague was  
the concern of all of us."*

*The Plague, A. Camus, 1947<sup>1</sup>*

ON 24 JANUARY 2014, the head of Meliandou health post, a sparsely populated village in Guinea, West Africa, informed district health officials of five cases of an unknown infectious disease characterized by vomiting, diarrhea, severe dehydration, and a rapidly fatal outcome. Two months later the World Health Organization (WHO) publicly announced what would become the deadliest outbreak of the Ebola virus disease, a rare illness first discovered in 1976 in the Democratic Republic of Congo.<sup>2</sup> By 27 March 2016, the number of individuals affected by Ebola had risen to 28,646, of whom 11,323 had died from the illness.<sup>3</sup>

As the epidemic's death toll increased, so did its accounts in the Western media. The narrative that soon emerged was a well-known one: Ebola was "the coming plague,"<sup>4</sup> one of the emerging infectious diseases that the

world ought to fear. In these anxious descriptions, the media continuously ignored the clear link between Ebola's spread and the scarcity of basic infrastructure, health care workers, and medical supplies in the world's poorest countries. Indeed, when infected Western health care workers were transferred to their home countries in Europe or the United States, the disease was rapidly contained.<sup>5</sup>

The narrative around health systems is usually one of discipline and control. From the eradication of polio to the rise of family planning centers, health programs can transform the world into a safer, more controlled place. Their successes are proof that logic and reason can triumph over unpredictable natural phenomena. In this context, the persistence of an "outbreak narrative" centered on fear and loss of control is paradoxical. Its sharp contrast with more traditional narratives of



health systems as instruments of control begs an examination of the broad appeal of the outbreak narrative with the media and the public.

## EBOLA: THE EMERGENCE OF AN "OUTBREAK NARRATIVE"

Priscilla Wald, professor of English at Duke University, first coined the term "outbreak narrative" to describe the phrases, images, and storylines that are told regarding disease emergence. As she explains in her 2008 book *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers and the Outbreak Narrative*, scientific and

was, by its nature, immutable, mysterious, and fatal."<sup>11</sup>

The recent Ebola epidemic fits this outbreak plot. First, the disease itself, with its rapid transmission, high fatality rate, and spectacular symptoms, laid the groundwork in the collective imagination for the perfect "modern plague." Indeed, since its discovery, the disease has been used in books (Richard Preston's *The Hot Zone*, Peter Piot's recent autobiography *No Time to Lose*) and films (*Outbreak*, *Ebola Syndrome*) to capture the public's curiosity and fear. In addition, the epidemic was unprecedented in terms of scope and speed.

---

# [T]HE OUTBREAK NARRATIVE ALLOWS THE EBOLA OUTBREAK TO BE FRAMED AS A SINGLE EPISODE THAT DOES NOT REQUIRE LONG- TERM SOLUTIONS.

---

medical ideas about diseases are merged with cultural narratives about patient zeros, hot zones, or microbes, leading to a formulaic narrative that "begins with the identification of an emerging infection, includes discussion of the global networks throughout which it travels, and chronicles the epidemiological work that ends with its containment."<sup>6</sup> Contrary to the language of public health, characterized by rationality, statistics, and logical arguments, this is a narrative of terror, danger, and survival. These stories abound both in popular fiction and in the news.<sup>7,8,9</sup> The HIV/AIDS epidemic in particular incorporates all the markers of the epidemic narrative, sparking what the anthropologist Jean Comaroff calls "a veritable plague of images."<sup>10</sup> Indeed, observers have described the epidemic narrative as a "throwback to an era when sickness

Before 2014, the biggest Ebola epidemic, which occurred in Uganda between 2000 and 2001, affected 425 individuals.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, by 19 November 2014, 2,241 cases were reported in the span of three weeks.<sup>13</sup>

This combination of factors led to extensive media coverage of the outbreak. An analysis of four mainstream media sources between December 2013 and October 2014 shows 932 articles about Ebola were published during this period. The media coverage built upon themes of fear and panic, describing the virus as a "festering," "wily, unfamiliar pathogen," and a "killer disease." Fear of its potential spread to other parts of the world was also made clear.<sup>14</sup> This alarming interpretation of the epidemic quickly spread to the public. By August 2014, airlines had cancelled more than a third of international flights to affected countries, despite advice from the



World Health Organization that such actions would harm the already crumbling economies of these countries.<sup>15</sup> The same month, some Air France crews refused to board planes traveling to West Africa.<sup>16</sup> In October 2014, New Jersey governor Chris Christie, against CDC recommendations, imposed a mandatory quarantine on a nurse returning from Sierra Leone.<sup>17</sup>

## WHY DID SUCH A NARRATIVE EMERGE? TWO OPPOSITE HYPOTHESES

Was this “absolute hysteria” justified?<sup>18</sup> We can turn to two alternate hypotheses. The first one explains this hysteria as a real contextual shift: we might truly be observing the rise of disruptive “newly emerging infectious diseases.”<sup>19</sup> In recent decades, several previously unknown diseases have appeared, each with significant global economic and health impacts, including the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003, the H1N1 influenza in 2009, the Zika virus in 2015, and obviously, HIV/AIDS. If our existing health systems are not properly designed to tackle the emergence of unknown

(as well as their potential to spread due to increased travel), the ratio of cases per person decreased significantly.<sup>20</sup> An analysis of mortality data in the United States shows a substantial *decrease* in infectious disease mortality throughout the 20th century.<sup>21</sup> Spectacular progress in infectious disease control, in part due to the development of antibiotics and vaccines, was made throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

Furthermore, the exceptional spread of the disease can easily be explained by the lack of effective health systems in the countries where it originated (Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone) after decades of colonial rule, conflicts, and poverty. In 2005, Guinea had an average of 10 physicians per 100,000 individuals.<sup>22</sup> By contrast, France, whose health system was ranked first in the world by WHO in 2000, had 319 physicians per 100,000 in 2013. In 2013, Guinea spent an average US\$28 per capita on health. That same year, the United States spent US\$8,988, or 321 times more.<sup>23</sup> Clearly, the narrative of a deadly, uncontrollable plague does not fit *all* the facts.

Finally, the outbreak narrative is not new. The myth of patient zero can be traced back as far as Typhoid Mary, an asymptomatic carrier of typhoid fever who was presumed to have infected more than fifty individuals in New York City in the early 19th century.<sup>24</sup> Accounts of devastating plagues can be found in 19th- and 20th-century classic novels, such as Daniel Defoe’s *A Journal of*

*the Plague Year* or Albert Camus’s *The Plague*, in which the Algerian city of Oran is devastated by a catastrophic outburst of the bubonic plague. This gives us reason to believe that the narrative occurred in part because of some recurring cultural appeal it may have with the public.

## OUTBREAKS CAN LEGITIMIZE THE USE OF VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL INTERFERENCE AND GIVE GOVERNMENTS POWERS OTHERWISE PROHIBITED

diseases with uncertain outcomes, we should be rightfully worried.

However, a closer examination raises questions about this hypothesis. First, it does not match with long-term trends in infectious disease outbreaks. Between 1980 and 2013, although the absolute number of outbreaks increased



The second hypothesis is that the Ebola outbreak narrative is appealing to the media and the public not because it is rooted in facts but because it plays a role in shaping Western countries' collective imagination. This argument is grounded in a sociological theory that suggests that narratives emerge as meaningful ways for societies and individuals to produce knowledge, which not only allows them to apprehend the social reality that surrounds them, but also *produces* this reality.<sup>25</sup> In short, narratives are meaningful because they help societies articulate apparently unrelated events into a coherent knowledge framework.

In the case of Ebola, the outbreak narrative is particularly appealing to the Western media and public for three interconnected reasons: (1) it reinforces national identities in an interconnected world, (2) it strengthens global power hierarchies through structural violence mechanisms, and (3) it legitimizes the use of sovereign power by producing a narrative of crisis.

### THE OUTBREAK NARRATIVE AS A MEANS TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL IDENTITIES

The outbreak narrative plays a role in rebuilding social bonds within communities by strengthening the idea of Western nations as unified entities in a diverse, globalized world. Nations are constructed as "imagined [political] communities," fabricated in a conscious process to develop ties of kinship between individuals who perceive themselves as part of a group.<sup>26</sup> This mythology is constructed in two ways. First, social ties are reinforced by exacerbating the identity of the "self" versus the "other."<sup>27</sup> Second, nations are presented as homogeneous entities with a clear scope and mandate. But the rise of globalization challenges this concept. Not only do microbes and viruses know no border, but also their spread is enhanced by the interdependence that now exists between nations. Infections sail along

trade routes and move with travelers, revealing the porousness of borders and the frailty of migration controls. This new interconnected world, in which no government can tackle an epidemic single-handedly, challenges the sovereignty of nations.

In this context, contrasting the failure of African countries to contain Ebola with the success of their own health systems helps Western countries rebuild social links within their borders. Debates over quarantines and travel bans that occurred during the Ebola epidemic reveal how diseases can reinforce national belonging. This mechanism was also observed in previous epidemics such as the SARS outbreak, the coverage of which was shown to support the view of a "Euro-American-centered world order" by contrasting the perceived mismanagement of the crisis by the Chinese government with the positive role played by other governments.<sup>28</sup> In conclusion, the epidemic narrative creates a moral panic—that is, "an overreaction to a perceived social problem"—which in turn helps reinforce social ties.<sup>29</sup>

### THE OUTBREAK NARRATIVE AS A WAY TO REINFORCE STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE MECHANISMS

The Ebola outbreak narrative helps reinforce structural violence mechanisms at the international level. Analysis of media discourse in previous epidemics shows how news coverage helps divide the world into zones of danger and safety, reaffirming global power hierarchies and positioning third-world populations as "abject, intractable and doomed."<sup>30</sup> The outbreak narrative also portrays the epidemic as an uncontrollable external force, which reduces individual physiological susceptibility to the disease to a matter of random chance, denying the role of uneven development and exploitation between countries and individuals.

Structural violence—that is, the systemic economic and social mechanisms



which lead to extreme suffering—rests upon a differential treatment of vulnerable groups: “[The] poor are not only more likely to suffer; they are also less likely to have their suffering noticed.”<sup>31</sup> In the case of Ebola, the outbreak narrative neglects the structural reasons underlying the spread of the epidemic, including countries’ colonial pasts and the deficiencies of the current international aid system. It reduces the Ebola

**[I]T IS IMPORTANT NOT TO LOSE SIGHT OF HOW FACTS, AND ALSO NARRATIVES, SHAPE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD.**

epidemic to a problem of transmission from developing to developed countries without acknowledging the role of the developed world in perpetuating the unequal economic and social conditions that allow the virus to spread.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, by neglecting some aspects of the outbreak—for example, the economic impact of travel bans, the long-term consequences of health care workers’ deaths on health systems, or the long-term health effects suffered by Ebola survivors—the outbreak narrative allows the Ebola outbreak to be framed as a single episode that does not require long-term solutions. This helps explain what the *New Yorker* journalist James Surowiecki has nicknamed “Ebolanomics”: the lack of incentives to develop drugs for diseases that only affect poor people in poor countries.<sup>33</sup> The outbreak narrative helps justify the differential between those who benefit and those who suffer from this unequal power dynamic.

## THE OUTBREAK NARRATIVE AS A WAY TO LEGITIMIZE THE USE OF SOVEREIGN POWER

Alongside structural violence, the outbreak narrative is used as an opportunity to reaffirm the use of power by governments themselves. Outbreaks can legitimize the use of violence and political interference and give governments powers otherwise prohibited by national laws and international treaties and customs. Framing geopolitics in biomedical terms justifies Western intervention in developing countries, the quarantine of individuals, travel bans, etc. Many observers have noticed the parallel use of the war metaphor to discuss terrorism and infectious disease outbreaks.<sup>34,35</sup> Stefan Elbe, professor of international relations at the University of Sussex, cites a “biopolitical economy of power” to discuss how biological issues are turned into issues of security in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.<sup>36</sup> The Ebola epidemic was similarly presented in 2014 as a “threat” that required immediate action.<sup>37</sup> In this context, the outbreak narrative creates a state of exception that allows governments to cite a time of crisis to sidestep normal laws and regulations and express their sovereign powers more freely.<sup>38</sup> The salience of health care and diseases in international politics thus mirrors the central role given to public health in strengthening sovereign power at the national level throughout the 20th century.

## CONCLUSION

At first glance the strong appeal of the outbreak narrative observed during the 2014 Ebola epidemic is puzzling. Health systems are usually described as a way to make the world safer, as a triumph of human logic over uncontrolled natural phenomena. What is the role of a narrative built around fear



and panic—especially one not entirely sustained by facts?

Some narratives thrive because of their ability to assemble apparently unrelated events into a meaningful framework, ultimately providing meaning to the world that surrounds us. Using this lens, the appeal of the outbreak narrative observed during the Ebola epidemic can be understood for three interconnected reasons: First, by developing a narrative of “us versus them,” it strengthens the social contract of Western nations in a world that is increasingly global. Then, by framing the Ebola narrative in terms of infection and biological susceptibility, it neglects the role of structural health care factors and erases the responsibilities of Western countries for their roles in developing and maintaining structural violence mechanisms. Finally, by creating a moment of crisis, it gives sovereign powers exceptional authority beyond what would normally be permitted by law and custom.

Narratives do matter. In 2014, the World Bank estimated that the loss in GDP for Western Africa could amount to up to US\$32.6 billion in 2014 and 2015, and that part of this loss was explained by quarantines imposed on affected countries.<sup>39</sup> In the United States, a review of 179 public opinion polls about Ebola shows the outbreak may have fueled a partisan split across Democrats and Republicans as candidates used Ebola to increase their media coverage.<sup>40</sup>

The Oxford Dictionary chose “post-truth” as its word of the year for 2016.<sup>41</sup> In a moment of intense debate over what constitutes truth in news coverage, it is important not to lose sight of how facts, and also narratives, shape our understanding of the world. Policy makers, analysts, and the media must avoid inaccurate or misleading narratives. Only this can ensure that policies will be designed based on facts, not fear.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank Bridget Hanna, Jason Silverstein, and Parker White for their constructive comments on previous versions of this article.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# Why Current Voter ID Laws Are Harmful to American Democracy

by Brynna Quillin

*Brynna Quillin is a second-year master of public policy student at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She is passionate about politics, civic engagement, and reducing poverty and inequality. Brynna most recently worked as a Fall Fellow for Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, and she previously worked for the US Department of Health and Human Services, Battleground Texas and the Wendy Davis for Governor Campaign, and the Office of the Vice President.*

FOR ALMOST A MONTH after Election Day 2016, the race between incumbent North Carolina Republican governor Pat McCrory and his Democratic rival Roy Cooper remained contested. The race was tight, with just over ten thousand votes separating the two candidates. In a desperate attempt to hang on, McCrory cried fraud. McCrory's campaign filed election complaints in fifty-two of the state's one hundred counties, but his campaign focused most on Durham County.<sup>1</sup> Durham County had a series of minor issues on Election Day, including technical problems with voting machines, long lines, and delayed entry of votes, but these did not affect the vote totals.<sup>2</sup> Most county officials threw out these complaints, and after a recount of Durham County's ninety thousand votes resulted in little change in the tallies, McCrory finally conceded.<sup>3</sup>

The story, of course, is not just another sad tale of a politician desperate to hold onto his power or one con-

cerned about the integrity of elections in the United States. The history of voting in the United States is inextricably tied to race, beginning with the fact that most states historically only allowed White, male landowners to vote. To ignore the effects voting laws have on different racial groups would be, at best, irresponsible and, at worst, dangerous.

Between 2000 and 2012, African American voter registration increased by 51.1 percent in North Carolina, and African American registered voters turned out to vote at a higher rate than White registered voters in both the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections. In 2013, African American voter registration rates almost equaled those of White voters.<sup>4</sup>

After winning both chambers of the legislative branch in 2010, Republicans also won the governorship in 2012 with McCrory. This was the first time Republicans had full legislative and executive control of North Carolina since 1898.<sup>5</sup> In 2013, McCrory and the GOP passed



an omnibus election law with the stated goals of addressing voter fraud and promoting confidence in the electoral process. These goals did not align with the actions of the GOP or the data, and state officials later could not identify a

Legislators requested data on provisional voting, including out-of-precinct voting, and the data showed African Americans were disproportionately likely to vote provisionally. The 2013 law eliminated out-of-precinct voting.

## TO IGNORE THE EFFECTS VOTING LAWS HAVE ON DIFFERENT RACIAL GROUPS WOULD BE, AT BEST, IRRESPONSIBLE AND, AT WORST, DANGEROUS.

single individual who had been charged with committing in-person voter fraud.<sup>6</sup>

But GOP legislators did seem to pay attention to another kind of data. According to court documents, in 2012 and 2013, Republicans started requesting data on the racial breakdown of certain voting metrics. One email from a top aide in the North Carolina House asked for “a breakdown, by race, of those registered voters in your database that do not have a driver’s license number.”<sup>7</sup> Legislators requested data on voter ID, and the data showed African Americans disproportionately lacked the most common kind of photo ID, a driver’s license, and often used alternative forms of ID.<sup>8</sup> The 2013 law made photo ID requirements to vote more stringent and only allowed forms of ID that Whites were more likely to possess.<sup>9</sup>

That was just the beginning.

Legislators requested data on early voting, and the data showed African Americans disproportionately voted early, especially in the first seven days of voting. The 2013 law eliminated the first week of early voting and reduced the number of early voting days. Legislators requested data on same-day registration, which showed African Americans disproportionately used same-day registration to vote. The 2013 law eliminated same-day registration.

Legislators requested data on preregistration for young adults, and the data showed African Americans disproportionately used preregistration. The 2013 law eliminated preregistration.<sup>10</sup>

The North Carolina conference of the NAACP, along with other local churches and activists, took this law to court, and the federal appeals panel took note of these connections. In August 2016, they struck down the law, calling it “the most restrictive voting law North Carolina has seen since the era of Jim Crow” and noting it targeted “African Americans with almost surgical precision.”<sup>11</sup>

In response, McCrory filed an emergency petition to restore the law. The Supreme Court refused his request, and the law was prevented from taking effect for Election Day. After the results from the election came in, McCrory’s campaign started claiming widespread fraud. Several news stories came out of voters being wrongly accused of voting in multiple states or having their identities mistaken as ineligible felons. Even though the ten-thousand-vote differential was incredibly slim, it was still too large to overcome with accusations of fraud. McCrory ultimately conceded.

\*\*

McCrory could only sign this law in the first place because of the



Supreme Court's 2013 gutting of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA). The 2016 presidential election was the first election in fifty years without the full protection of the VRA, which subjected states with a history of racial discrimination in voting, like North Carolina, to federal scrutiny before implementing new voting laws. It is still too early to know exactly how the voting laws that were passed after the Supreme Court's 2013 decision impacted the outcome of the 2016 elections. Looking at the story of North Carolina, though, it seems clear voter ID laws have done nothing to improve confidence in elections, and that accusations of voter fraud, real or imagined, will continue to be used as political weapons.

The recent history of voter ID laws begins after the contentious 2000 election of George W. Bush. Although the issues in Florida were caused in large part due to faulty voting machines, voting fraud became a concern for many. In 2002, Congress passed the Help America Vote Act in response to the potential catastrophe of the 2000 presidential election. This law contained a reasonable provision about presenting some form of ID for any voter who registers by mail and who has never voted in a federal election. Also, one requirement of the Help American Vote Act of 2002 was a report by a commission led by former president Jimmy Carter and former secretary of state James A. Baker III. The report recommended photo IDs for all voters, but the IDs would have to be readily attainable.<sup>12</sup> Congress did not act on these recommendations.

Indiana moved first, requiring all voters to present a photo ID at the polls in 2005. The Department of Justice, under President Bush, approved the law.<sup>13</sup> It was challenged up to the Supreme Court, which upheld it in 2008. The Court stated that although there was no evidence of the kind of voter impersonation fraud Indiana was trying to prevent, there was also no concrete evidence that there was a burden imposed on voters who lacked photo identification.<sup>14</sup> Georgia then passed a strict

photo ID law in 2005, with Missouri following in 2006. Kansas, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin all passed strict photo ID laws in 2011. Mississippi and Pennsylvania followed in 2012.<sup>15</sup>

On 25 June 2013, the Supreme Court struck down one of the main protections under the VRA: the so-called preclearance formula. Section Four determined which states and jurisdictions, based on a history of discrimination, were likely to implement discriminatory voting procedures. Section Five required these states to obtain preclearance from the federal government before implementing new voting procedures to ensure any new laws did not have a discriminatory purpose or effect.<sup>16</sup> The Supreme Court decision reversed this requirement.

In his opinion for the majority, Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. wrote that

... largely because of the Voting Rights Act, voting tests were abolished, disparities in voter registration and turnout due to race were erased, and African-Americans attained political office in record numbers. ... Our country has changed, and while any racial discrimination in voting is too much, Congress must ensure that the legislation it passes to remedy that problem speaks to current conditions.<sup>17</sup>

Chief Justice Roberts's sweeping generalizations ignored the impact the VRA has had. In her dissent, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg stated that the Department of Justice blocked over seven hundred voting changes between 1982 and 2006 because they were determined to be discriminatory. "Throwing out preclearance when it has worked and is continuing to work to stop discriminatory changes is like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet," said Ginsberg.<sup>18</sup>

Since this decision, fourteen states put new voting restrictions into place, including Texas, which adopted a voter



ID law the *same day*. These new voting restrictions include limits on mail-in ballot collection and reduced early voting, among others, but the most common restriction is requiring a photo ID to vote. Without federal preclearance in the way, the total number of states with ID restrictions in place by the 2016 election eventually rose to twenty.<sup>19</sup>

\*\*

One of the major issues around voter fraud is its definition and appropriate use. Politicians often use the term incorrectly, describing technological problems like in the 2000 election or misinformation campaigns as fraudulent. Voter fraud occurs when individuals cast ballots despite knowing that they are ineligible to vote, in an attempt to defraud the election system, accord-

voter impersonation between 2012 and 2016.<sup>23</sup>

If this kind of voter fraud is so rare, why is so much outsized effort put into stopping it?

One reason cited by elected officials is that it is damaging for voter confidence in the electoral system. Therefore, they argue, laws that restore confidence—like voter ID laws—are necessary. But a study by Stephen Ansolabehere, at the time from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Nathaniel Persily, at the time from Columbia Law School, reports that “perceptions of fraud have no relationship to an individual’s likelihood of turning out to vote.” They also found that “voters who were subject to stricter identification requirements believe

---

## “THE MOST RESTRICTIVE VOTING LAW NORTH CAROLINA HAS SEEN SINCE THE ERA OF JIM CROW” - US 4TH CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS

---

ing to the Brennan Center for Justice. Voter ID laws are trying to combat in-person voter impersonation, which is a specific kind of voter fraud.<sup>20</sup>

Impersonation fraud does happen, but it is extremely rare. A study by the *Washington Post* found only thirty-one credible claims of impersonation fraud out of more than one billion ballots cast from 2000 to 2014.<sup>21</sup> A study by Arizona State University (ASU) found in-person voter impersonation fraud from 2000 to 2012 to be “virtually non-existent.”<sup>22</sup> Another study by ASU found that in Arizona, Ohio, Georgia, Texas, or Kansas—five states where politicians have declared voter ID laws are necessary because fraud is rampant—not a single case of voter fraud involved

fraud is just as widespread as do voters subject to less restrictive identification requirement.”<sup>24</sup>

Another argument is that because having a photo ID is necessary for many common activities, it is not unreasonable to expect voters to present one at the polls. But a study by the Brennan Center for Justice found as many as 11 percent of eligible voters do not have a government-issued photo ID, like a passport or a driver’s license, and the percentage is even higher for seniors, people of color, people with disabilities, low-income voters, and students. Many of the people in these groups do not drive or travel regularly to need a driver’s license or a passport. The study also found that more than ten million eligible voters live more than ten miles away from their nearest state ID-issuing



office open more than two days a week, including 1.2 million eligible black voters.<sup>25</sup>

Obtaining a government-issued ID also presents a financial burden. In Texas, obtaining an acceptable photo ID could cost an applicant \$2 to \$79 depending on the type. This also means tracking down materials like birth certificates and other official documentation that many people do not have on hand, which adds to the costs. Texas's voter ID law was challenged in court, and the United States District Court Southern Division of Texas struck down the law, stating that the voter ID law constituted a modern-day poll tax. For comparison, the civil rights era poll tax that was outlawed by the Voting Rights Act would cost \$11.39 today.<sup>26</sup>

Despite all of this information, or perhaps because of it, many voter ID laws are still in place. Unfortunately, the actual impact of these laws is hard to measure. The studies seem to vary in their conclusions on the matter, with many stating that voter ID laws have no impact on turnout. Photo ID laws from the 2000s appear to decrease turnout by around 2 percent, which is significant, according to an analysis by Nate Silver of FiveThirtyEight in 2012. Because the laws prevent people from voting, it seems very unlikely they have no impact on turnout. "Although the effects seem to be small, and although their precise magnitude is uncertain, the position that they don't have any effect at all is hard to defend," states Silver. While it is impossible to say what exactly a 2 percent change in turnout would have in US elections, Silver argues Democrats would likely get a boost.<sup>27</sup> Also, the United States ranks thirty-one out of thirty-five in voter turnout among developed democracies, and laws that

make it more challenging to vote—like voter ID laws—are not helping.<sup>28</sup>

Removed from their political racial contexts, which proponents try to do, voter ID laws represent a tradeoff: how many votes is it acceptable to deter to prevent one fraudulent vote? How many millions of people is it acceptable to prevent from voting to stop the one

**[V]OTING SHOULD BE  
MADE EASIER FOR  
DISENFRANCHISED  
GROUPS, NOT HARDER.**

in-person impersonation? Voter ID laws could actually make elections more fraudulent by decreasing the number of legitimate votes so much that fraudulent votes have a greater impact, argued Michael D. Gilbert from the University of Virginia School of Law.<sup>29</sup>

\*\*

Some proponents of voter ID laws state that if other countries are doing it, we should, too. But there are significant differences between the voter ID laws passed in the United States and those around the world. Namely, other countries allow more types of identification, make it easier to obtain, have provisions for those without identification, and allow exceptions.<sup>30</sup> It is intentionally misleading to assert voter ID laws in the United States are the same as those elsewhere.

Considering the discriminatory history of voting in the United States, voting should be made *easier* for disenfranchised groups, not harder. But allowing more people to vote poses a threat to Republicans, who generally benefit from low turnout among minority groups. Silver's research states voter ID laws result in approximately a percentage point increase in votes to Republicans,



which is significant in close elections.<sup>31</sup> Republicans know this, which is why they fight to pass these restrictive laws. In a democratic society, Republicans should have to compete for these votes. Keeping more people out of the voting process is simply immoral.

Two policies could make it substantially easier to vote. First, free, uniform voter photo identification should be provided to all eligible citizens. This policy would require a major distribution effort by the states but could be beneficial outside the polling booth—providing, for example, enhanced security. If all citizens have photo IDs, voter ID laws would be much less controversial. Second, automatic voter registration should be adopted by all states. Oregon, California, West Virginia, Vermont, Connecticut, Alaska, and the District of Columbia have all passed automatic voter registration laws. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, automatic voter registration works by automatically registering eligible citizens who interact with government agencies to vote unless they decline. Agencies then transfer this information to election officials. Not only does this policy increase registration rates, it lowers the costs for states and simplifies the process of cleaning up the rolls. Automatic voter registration would also make in-person voter fraud much more challenging. So far in 2017, twenty-two more states are considering bills to implement automatic voter registration.<sup>32</sup>

While some states are making it easier to vote, there could be a monumental shift in election laws at the federal level. President Trump has stated he will be launching a major investigation into the false claim that three to five million people voted illegally in this election.<sup>33</sup> Not only is an assertion of this magnitude from the newly elected president unprecedented and incredibly harmful to our democracy, it also dangerously paves the way for new voter suppression laws. McCrory's story should serve as a warning to President Trump: voter fraud is extremely rare and hard to find, even when you are

searching for it. His accusations of voter fraud could be used to implement new voting restrictions, perhaps even more stringent than those in place now. These laws, especially voter ID laws, should be seen as what they are: blatant attempts to prevent minorities from voting. Finding ways to both increase public confidence in elections while also making sure they remain free and open is critical, but as long as voter ID laws continue to be used as political weapons against minorities, they cannot be used as a solution.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# Bipartisanship in the 115th Congress

by Andreas Westgaard

*Andreas Westgaard is a master in public policy student at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and a managing editor for the Kennedy School Review. He previously worked at the Federal Reserve Board and the Pew Charitable Trusts in Washington, D.C., where he focused on issues including state and federal fiscal health, financial inclusion, and data-driven elections policy.*

---

AS THE 115TH CONGRESS continues to battle on issues like the Affordable Care Act, judicial nominations, and cabinet appointments, the media and partisans alike will hype the pervasive politics-as-blood-sport narrative. Diverging from that narrative, this piece focuses instead on what Republicans and Democrats could actually work on together. While bipartisan proposals will undoubtedly face obstacles and roadblocks, the country desperately needs Congress to collaborate on three key policy areas: infrastructure spending, the tax code, and Social Security reform.

## AN INFRASTRUCTURE BILL FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Infrastructure encompasses a broad range of investments, including roads, railways, bridges, and airports. The next infrastructure bill should prioritize fixing the most structurally deficient infrastructure and investments with the

highest economic return. Flashy new projects will not necessarily serve the country best. For example, the United States already faces an \$808 billion backlog in infrastructure investment in highways and bridges alone, of which over half, \$479 billion, requires critical repair work.<sup>1</sup>

While infrastructure spending is an expensive endeavor that previous Congresses have been happy to delay, there are tangible, long-term economic benefits to this investment. Targeted investments in highways would reduce congestion and fuel costs. A report by the American Society of Civil Engineers found that 42 percent of urban highways faced congestion, resulting in \$101 billion of lost time and fuel costs on a yearly basis.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the Federal Aviation Administration estimated that the cost of congestion and delays in airports totaled \$22 billion in 2012 alone.<sup>3</sup> Highway repairs and airport updates need significant funding in any future bill.



Funding sources will no doubt dominate much of the debate around infrastructure—such as whether direct federal spending or tax credits should be the primary vehicle for funding new projects. Regardless, interest rates remain near historic lows; therefore, the time is ripe for investment since the cost of government borrowing remains cheap.

In order to avoid a budgetary boondoggle, any comprehensive infrastructure package should meticulously assess projected costs and benefits. It should also reality-test estimated impacts on employment, for example, that each \$1 billion spent leads to thirteen thousand jobs. If a primary focus of a bill is to create well-paying jobs, it should reality-test whether infrastructure jobs do in fact provide low-income workers 30 percent higher wages, on average, than other jobs.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, Congress should strengthen the long-term sustainability of the federal Highway Trust Fund, which is chronically underfunded.<sup>5</sup>

A comprehensive infrastructure bill should not just provide short-term stimulus that allows for ribbon-cutting opportunities—admittedly, a crucial way to gain congressional support—it also needs to think about longer-term solutions for funding infrastructure investment. As a part of this effort, the federal government cannot

go it alone—it will need to partner with state and municipal governments, as they often bear the majority of costs and are responsible for levying gas taxes that serve as the foundation for infrastructure revenue. Getting the Highway Trust Fund's fiscal house in order would be a good first step in that direction.

## TAX REFORM FOR A FAIRER GROWTH-FOCUSED ECONOMY

Federal tax reform is long overdue. The last comprehensive tax reform legislation was enacted over thirty years ago with the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (TRA). When it was passed, the TRA had three main objectives: simplify the tax code, broaden the tax base, and eliminate certain tax shelters. While initially successful, new provisions and complexity have crept back into the tax code over time. Even though the same underlying principles behind the TRA, in theory, can gain bipartisan support in 2017, these efforts will require leadership from the Joint Committee on Taxation, Speaker Paul Ryan, Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, and a host of other congressional actors.

What's wrong with the current tax system? For starters, it's overly complex. The tax code is riddled with so-called tax expenditures—exclusions, exemp-

tions, and deductions to individuals and corporations—that reduce federal revenues.<sup>6</sup> As of 2016, the tax code contained 169 different federal tax expenditures. This included everything from the well-known mortgage interest deduction to more obscure provisions, like the small life insurance company deduction. On aggregate, these tax expenditures cost

the federal government over \$1 trillion in foregone revenue.<sup>7</sup>

If Congress decided to eliminate all, or even a significant portion, of these tax expenditures, it would both simplify the tax code and allow for a reduction of tax rates without adding to the deficit. While Democrats may want to use the opportunity to raise revenues and Republicans may want to

---

**FLASHY NEW PROJECTS WILL NOT NECESSARILY SERVE THE COUNTRY BEST.**

---



slash taxes significantly, a compromise solution could target a policy that's revenue neutral. Moreover, if President Donald Trump wants to make good on his campaign promise of bringing back

projected to increase to 77 million. By 2039, this number is expected to grow to over 103 million.<sup>9</sup> As a result of an aging population and fewer workers paying into the system, the nonpartisan

**[A]BSENT ANY ACTION, SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS WOULD NEED TO BE CUT BY 29 PERCENT FOR ALL RECIPIENTS IN 2030 FOR THE FUND TO REMAIN SOLVENT.**

a portion of the more than \$2 trillion in corporate profits stashed abroad, closing existing loopholes through tax reform could go a long way.<sup>8</sup>

Tax reform is no doubt a thorny issue—countless groups have lobbied to include exemptions and loopholes that advantage them and their constituents. It will not be an easy task to change the status quo. But even incremental reforms, such as building on the failed 2015 income reparation legislation that enjoyed bipartisan support, would be a step in the right direction. It would allow the nation to prioritize economic growth over parochial interests and restore a sense of fairness that is desperately lacking.

### SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM: A TOUGH PILL TO SWALLOW

Of the three policies discussed, this perhaps will be the toughest pill to swallow: Social Security, our single largest spending program, needs to be reformed. There are two options available: continue to kick the can down the road and implement harsh cuts or higher taxes in the future, or implement incremental reforms now to help shore up the program that benefits millions of Americans.

In the next decade, the current 61 million Social Security recipients are

Congressional Budget Office projects that Social Security trust funds will be depleted by 2029.<sup>10</sup> To avoid insolvency, the Social Security trust fund could pursue a range of four distinct policy options: raise additional revenues, cut recipient benefits, increase the retirement age, or reduce cost-of-living adjustments.

None of the options for reform will be easy. But absent any action, Social Security benefits would need to be cut by 29 percent for all recipients in 2030 for the fund to remain solvent.<sup>11</sup> Instead, Congress should consider shorter-term policy options to increase the payroll tax rate by 2 percent over the next ten years, implement price indexing of benefits, and gradually increase the federal retirement age from sixty-seven to sixty-eight for those born after 1966.<sup>12</sup> While this would require additional reforms in later years, it would be a step in the right direction and one way to blunt draconian cuts in the future.

### CONCLUSION

Achieving even one, let alone three, of these policy proposals will pose a real challenge. Each will face fierce opposition from political forces at both ends of the spectrum and a powerful array of interest groups. However, if



these reforms were successful, they would allow the country to achieve a more solid footing for its fiscal and economic future. More importantly, the 115th Congress could begin to restore the American public's faith that consensus-driven governance and compromise are possible. Perhaps that would be the greatest benefit of all.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# It's Time to Pop the Liberal Bubble at Public Policy Schools

by Neil Thomas

*Neil Thomas is a graduate student at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He previously worked as a researcher at the East Asian Bureau of Economic Research and the Centre on China in the World, both at the Australian National University.*

DONALD TRUMP ACHIEVED what many considered unthinkable. He is president of the United States, having won 304 Electoral College votes in the 2016 election. In addition, the Republican Party won majorities in the Senate and the House of Representatives.

"Why did the electorate do what they did tonight?" Corey Lewandowski, Trump's former campaign manager, posed this question on CNN early in the morning of 9 November 2016, the day after the election.<sup>1</sup>

Experts didn't have the answers. Pre-election polls—except the USC Dornsife/*Los Angeles Times* Daybreak poll—erred in predicting victory for Hillary Clinton.<sup>2</sup> Clinton's well-credentialed team of advisers and consultants were confident that she would beat an opponent who repeatedly violated political convention and decorum.

But plenty of Americans were unperturbed, and millions voted for Trump—a candidate they perhaps believed would better represent their values and interests. Post-election, many analysts judged a major factor in Trump's victory to be the Hillary campaign being out of touch with the desire for change of working-class citizens in key battleground states.<sup>3</sup>

Election results represent the outcome of numerous interweaving factors. If American policy makers, analysts, and advocates are to better understand these factors going forward, I believe that the relatively high concentration of liberals in the graduate schools that train the political and policy elite should be considered.

Take the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University (HKS), where

I am a student. Based on my interactions with friends and colleagues, the school appears very liberal. The overwhelming majority of people seem to support the Black Lives Matter movement, believe that we need more gun control and immigration, and hold that abortion and gay marriage are sacrosanct. I fit right in, and I anticipate that I'd fit right in at almost any policy school.

Surveys by the Pew Research Center show that only 24 percent of American adults with postgraduate experience have political values that are "mostly conservative" (14 percent) or "consistently conservative" (10 percent) while 54 percent express values that are "consistently liberal" (31 percent) or "mostly liberal" (23 percent).<sup>4</sup>

Despite its laudable focus on diversity, HKS can feel like a hostile environment for right-wingers. I have heard many students and staff unabashedly repudiate conservative views. Last year, the small HKS Republican Caucus petitioned the school to "rectify [the] imbalance in ideology among the faculty and student body" because conservatives "feel pressure not to express their opinions in class."<sup>5</sup>

A conservative-leaning friend at HKS recently expressed frustration at what he felt was an environment that offered "no space for meaningful debate" because "there is no effective voice for conservative values or policies." In his perception, "98 percent of the school believes the same thing" in holding anti-conservative views.

For example, in fall 2016, my ethics class discussed the divisive decision in 2010 by pro-



life congressman Bart Stupak (D-MI) to soften his anti-abortion amendment in order to rescue President Obama's broader healthcare reforms.<sup>6</sup> This case is a powerful study in the moral complexity of political compromise, but the class discussion focused on criticizing anti-abortion activism. This intellectual atmosphere can seem stifling.

Policy schools need more conservatives, and more platforms for conservative viewpoints. Studying with people who think the same limits students' opportunities to engage with intelligent counterarguments to their opinions and experience meaningful ideological debates regarding diverse political viewpoints. Prestigious programs promise to teach students the conceptual frameworks and practical skills they need to become successful public leaders. But if graduates do not have the opportunity to engage substantively with how those who oppose them see the world, they will struggle to make policy that works for all Americans.

Policy makers must be able to think like their rivals. This means spending a great deal of time talking to, working with, and living beside people with different political perspectives, not just analyzing data. It means learning to respect others even if you do not like their views. As Jeffrey Lord, a pro-Trump CNN commentator, said on the night of the election: "Politics is about people, human beings."<sup>7</sup>

The problem of liberal isolation is part of a broader social phenomenon that journalist Bill Bishop calls "the Big Sort"—the self-selection of Americans into increasingly homogenous like-minded communities. Bishop shows that people living in these echo chambers become more certain and more extreme in their views, exacerbating cultural misunderstanding between economic, geographic, and political demographics.<sup>8</sup>

Policy schools would better prepare students to understand the major policy debates facing America if they sought to build programs with a diverse spectrum of political ideologies. Why do so many white working-class voters connect with President Donald Trump? Why is globalization and trade eliciting opposition in middle-class America? Why are abortion and gun rights such divisive issues?

The more liberal a policy school seems, the more conservative policy elites will self-select out and instead pursue other degrees, attend other universities, or skip policy school and

continue with their careers. Research by Neil Gross suggests such self-selection occurs across academia.<sup>9</sup>

Since the election, HKS has taken promising strides toward integrating bipartisan viewpoints. Dean Doug Elmendorf told the school community they "should reach out a welcoming hand" to people with different views, specifically highlighting the need for deeper understandings of "traditional conservative positions" in order to stimulate discussion and better serve the community.<sup>10</sup> HKS professor Leah Wright Rigueur began teaching a well-attended class called "Conservatives and Liberals in America" in the spring of 2017. A recent HKS event featured speakers both for and against increased immigration. These developments represent encouraging signs of institutional progress toward more diverse ideological discussions.

Top policy schools should strive to better unite American communities. They rightly devote significant resources to encouraging diversity across domains like gender, race, and sexuality; these efforts should be extended to encourage ideological diversity in recruitment, teaching, and careers.

Moreover, the circumstantial evidence for this argument warrants rigorous interrogation by data. Policy schools should allocate funding to research the scope of ideological diversity of students, the effect this distribution has on school outcomes, and any practical interventions that could improve the situation.

If the next generation of liberal and conservative politicians, public servants, and non-profit leaders are not sharing formative experiences, such as graduate school, there is less hope for bipartisan cooperation and public-interest policy making in the future. It is also less likely that these institutions will be able to predict and prepare for changing political climates, such as those experienced during the recent presidential election.

If America is to be "made great again," then American students should see themselves as being stronger together.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# The War on Drugs:

## One Approach to Reduce Overdose Deaths in New York City

by Steven Sarao

*Steven Sarao is a lieutenant for the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and the lead analyst in the NYPD's development of an opioid overdose prevention program, policies, and piloting of naloxone. Sarao is also a graduate of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. The views here are his own and do not represent the NYPD and/or the City of New York.*

### INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that over one thousand New Yorkers died of unintentional drug overdoses in 2016, more than three times the homicide rate in the city that same year.<sup>1,2</sup> While a breakdown of the 2016 overdose data is not yet available, based on 2015 data we can expect the vast majority of these deaths were linked to the abuse of opioids—a broad category of drugs including prescription pills like OxyContin and illicit drugs like heroin.<sup>3</sup> As the use and abuse of opioids has increased, it has spread throughout the city, crossing race and class lines. No longer limited to stereotypical drug users of the 1970s and 1980s—generally men of color—the problem is starting to receive the attention it has long deserved from the media, the American public, and professionals in the field.

The response from law enforcement and health officials has been largely based on the belief that the “prescription pill to heroin pipeline” is the cause of the heroin epidemic. Yet this notion

is a knee-jerk response based upon a simplification of the problem, largely ignoring the complex data and facts concerning widespread opioid addiction as a crisis in its own right. Recent studies help to provide a better understanding of the relationship between heroin and opioid use that can help us formulate a more comprehensive response.

### THE RISE IN OVERDOSE DEATHS IN NEW YORK CITY

In 2015, there were 937 unintentional overdose deaths in New York City, 16 percent of which involved fentanyl—a synthetic and short-acting opioid fifty to one hundred times more powerful than morphine.<sup>4</sup> This percentage appears to be rising: preliminary data from 2016 indicates this number may have reached over 40 percent in 2016.<sup>5</sup> Between 2013 and 2015, state and local laboratories experienced a 954 percent increase in fentanyl cases in forty-five of New York State's sixty-two counties.<sup>6</sup> Making the problem more



complicated—for health officials and law enforcement alike—is that of these fentanyl-involved overdose deaths in 2015, 70 percent also involved heroin.<sup>7</sup> And the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) hints that such a percentage could be even higher since “heroin metabolizes into morphine very quickly in the body, making it difficult to determine the presence of heroin” after death.<sup>8</sup>

High-poverty neighborhoods and White New Yorkers experienced the highest rate of unintentional overdose deaths involving heroin in 2015.<sup>9</sup> The steepest increases were driven largely by younger New Yorkers: among New

by 2015, opioid overdose deaths rates were highest among residents of Staten Island, New York’s borough with the highest median household income and a majority White population.<sup>15,16</sup>

These climbing rates prompted the development of a naloxone pilot project on Staten Island in 2014. Naloxone is an opioid antagonist, a drug to treat incidents of overdose, now more widely used across New York City and nationwide. While using naloxone saves lives, this is only the tip of the iceberg: a fully functioning opioid response extends far beyond law enforcement offering naloxone, which does nothing to bridge the gap between an overdose incident

## [A]MONG NEW YORKERS AGES FIFTEEN TO THIRTY-FOUR, THE RATE OF HEROIN-INVOLVED OVERDOSE DEATHS MORE THAN TRIPLED BETWEEN 2010 AND 2015

Yorkers ages fifteen to thirty-four, the rate of heroin-involved overdose deaths more than tripled between 2010 and 2015, to 7.3 per 100,000.<sup>10</sup> There are likely multiple reasons for this sharp increase, including less stigmatization, an increase in purity and decrease in price of heroin, and the possibility of receiving drugs laced with fentanyl.

Neighborhoods in Brooklyn, Flushing, Washington Heights, and the Bronx experienced sharp rises in overdose deaths even as many have gentrified.<sup>11,12</sup> Neighborhoods in Brooklyn alone saw a 170 percent increase in overdose deaths from 2014 to 2015.<sup>13</sup> Opioid painkillers like fentanyl and hydrocodone—which are costlier than street drugs like heroin—contributed to more overdose deaths in the city’s wealthier neighborhoods than in poorer neighborhoods.<sup>14</sup> During 2013 and again

and long-term treatment. Nevertheless, this pilot project is one public health response from local government. The Bronx—poorer and less White than Staten Island—had the highest rate of deaths by heroin in 2015 at 146 total, but did not receive the same kind of attention.<sup>17,18</sup>

These data indicate the rise in overdose deaths cannot be attributed solely to traditional socioeconomic demographics and that changing racial and class makeups are finally bringing attention to the issue. The reported rise in overdose deaths across race and class has received extra attention due to the scale of the problem and its effects on a broader—namely, White and wealthy—segment of the American population.<sup>19</sup> The United States is now beginning to define this problem as a public health epidemic, in contrast to the criminal



activity of the 1980s and 1990s. While our laws need to be enforced, those in the field are coalescing around the notion that response needs to come at this problem from every angle, rather than simply arresting our way out of it.

## STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE DRUG MARKET HAVE LED US TO THIS POINT

The relationship between nonmedical prescription-opioid use and heroin use is often misunderstood, and hasty conclusions are not always supported by empirical evidence. Despite the difficulty in proving statistical causation, industry experts agree decreases in the price of pure heroin in the United States are associated with increased heroin overdose-related hospital admissions. Heroin is significantly cheaper today than it was in the 1980s: the price per gram of pure heroin in 1981 averaged \$3,260 (in 2012 US dollars), but by 1999, had decreased to \$622 per gram.<sup>20</sup> Prices have remained low since 1999, and purity levels have only increased;<sup>21</sup> as heroin has become purer, it has become more useable by snorting. As heroin has become both cheaper and purer, we have seen an increase in hospital admissions, demonstrating that these increased hospital admissions are associated with structural changes in the heroin market.<sup>22</sup> In addition to price and purity, another driver for the increase in heroin abuse is recent chemical alterations to prescription opioids to make them more difficult to snort or inject, driving drug users to heroin in place of prescription drugs like OxyContin.<sup>23</sup>

It's important to recognize the transition rate from opioid use to heroin use is actually small but, due to the large pool of opioid users, impacts a large number of people. According to a recent study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (NEJM), the transition from oral use of prescription opioids to instead crushing and snorting the drug can, in fact, lead to heroin use.<sup>24</sup> However, the NEJM affirms a widely

held opinion<sup>25</sup> that "heroin use among people who use prescription opioids for nonmedical reasons is rare, and the transition to heroin use appears to occur at a low rate."<sup>26</sup>

The predictors of future heroin use—pharmaceutical opioid dependence, early age of use, pharmaceutical opioid use to get high, and non-oral drug use—are corroborated in multiple studies,<sup>27</sup> but hard associations are not as easy to prove statistically. It is critical to shift the conversation towards an empirically supported understanding of the complexity of drug abuse and successful options for victims requiring treatment.

Public policy must adapt to market changes that can affect drug concentration and price. Furthermore, understanding the nuances of this issue and the relationship between heroin and opioids is critical to formulating a response to what has become known as a public health crisis. Causation aside, the bottom line is that significant opioid dependence crosses racial and class lines. To address the opioid epidemic, it is critical to recognize the signs of addiction, support effective and quick treatment, and adjust legislation and enforcement to meet the needs of today's opioid epidemic.

## A CHANGE IN APPROACH TO RESPONSE HAS LED TO A DECLINE IN OPIOID USE

Efforts to combat this epidemic have typically been conducted in silos. But solving this problem is far beyond the reach of any one government agency. So far, responsibility has yet to be determined, follow-up is lacking, and efforts beyond criminal sanctions have not been sufficiently developed.

Efforts to "crack down" on the overprescription of opioids in 2011 and 2012 by both law enforcement and the medical industry offer an example of what can happen when we work together. In 2000, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) reported 2.78 million people in the United



States admitted to misusing prescription painkillers, and by 2012, that number had almost doubled to 4.82 million users.<sup>28</sup> However, by 2014, following efforts by law enforcement to prosecute doctors for inappropriate prescriptions and increased professional development for doctors, numbers declined by roughly 500,000.<sup>29</sup> At the time, the director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Substance Abuse Treatment and Research attributed this decline to “some stabilization or even a decrease in prescription opioid misuse.”<sup>30</sup> In 2015, survey data reported another decline, down to 3.8 million current misusers of pain relievers ages twelve and older.<sup>31</sup>

While this decline could be attributed to individuals choosing not to report, such an overall decline may also be an indication that improvements within the medical industry are beginning to decrease, or stabilize, addiction trends. The medical industry has improved professional training standards to look for early warning indicators of painkiller abuse in an effort to curb overprescribing. Although only a small number (about 4 percent) of controlled prescription drug (CPD) abusers initiate heroin use, this represents a significant number of heroin users because the size of the CPD-abuser population is significantly larger than the heroin population.<sup>32</sup> In the law enforcement community, there is a belief that since painkiller use has declined, drug users are replacing their prescription opioids with heroin. Policy makers should be reminded of the low transition rate between prescription opioid use and heroin, and that correlation between the two does not suggest a firm causal linkage.

While opioid use on the whole has declined, we cannot misinterpret these results simply as a win against the epidemic. Too many people are still dying of overdoses. This example demonstrates the need for policy makers, health officials, law enforcement, and court systems to take a more critical look at the data. In particular, they should take care to:

1. Analyze trends and connections between overdose incidents
2. Eliminate gaps between agency responsibilities
3. Ensure aggressive follow-up that provides evidence-based treatment to victims
4. Develop a broader knowledge base among partners by viewing incidents side by side and combining multiple data sets from law enforcement agencies, health departments, hospitals, and treatment facilities

This gives stakeholders an improved view of this complex issue and a better understanding of how to solve a problem with this level of complexity. Data must guide policy discussions, and field activities and pilot programs should use empirical research as a foundation for positive change to address the opioid epidemic. It is the beginning of a new chapter in the war on drugs.

## NEW RESEARCH SHOWS THE NEED FOR BETTER TREATMENT OPTIONS

Until recently there has been no empirical research studying illicit prescription opioid users and their use of heroin. A 2010 Ohio study of eighteen to twenty-three year olds by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) concluded the strongest predictors of heroin use were non-oral use of prescription opioids—namely, crushing, sniffing, and snorting.<sup>33</sup> This kind of research allows stakeholders to design alternative approaches to reduce overdose incidents. Similarly, an unclassified DEA Intelligence Report includes recommendations for standardizing reporting for drug-related deaths in the United States. It gives suggestions for how to collect and report data and stresses the need for treatment and admission to publicly funded facilities.<sup>34</sup>

Government leadership must recognize there is a critical need to improve drug abuse treatment programs using empirical data. One successful example



of an improved treatment regimen is Addiction Treatment Services (ATS), an innovative, personalized treatment program at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center.<sup>35</sup> This therapy is successful because it is modified for each patient. The program is able to pivot from one level of addiction treatment to another, depending on the patient's needs.<sup>36</sup> Failures within the program are not viewed as individual failures but rather the failure of the program to adapt to the individual needs of the patient. ATS is one of only a handful of programs that offer a combination of methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone maintenance therapy, in addition to a full complement of mandatory addiction counseling and group classes. Such treatment is only available at select centers across the United States.

The success of ATS points toward an even more glaring issue: the low number of effective multiple-treatment type centers, inconsistent insurance coverage for treatment in general, and, most importantly, the ineffectiveness of current programs universally covered by insurance. Many programs are short and ineffective, with less than sixty days of treatment covered by insurance. With short spans of treatment, victims leave without the skills needed to avoid future relapse. Adding to the problem, when an individual undergoes treatment, their body's tolerance for the drug lowers significantly. When they relapse, they often inappropriately estimate how much of the drug they need to get high, which can lead to overdose and, ultimately, death.<sup>37</sup> Current government programs are insufficient and do not follow up with victims of serious addiction who require longer treatment.

### LAW ENFORCEMENT CANNOT SHOULDER THE RESPONSIBILITY ALONE

Which agency should shoulder the responsibility for follow-up on drug overdose incidents? Some suggest it is a health problem while others argue that the burden falls to police departments,

which have the most daily contact with the public. Laws must be enforced; at the same time, all stakeholders carry a responsibility to help those who need treatment. The complexity of the opioid epidemic requires increased coordination between prosecutors, investigators, and the criminal justice system. This does not require agencies to take on new responsibilities but only to broaden their view of how to approach the issue.

For police, this response would cultivate a dual role: first, on enforcement and investigation, and second, on follow-up for delivery of treatment and social services for the victim of drug abuse. We already see these approaches within the framework of domestic violence reporting, investigation, and follow-up. Domestic violence incidents require reporting by doctors, teachers, and other mandated reporters. Consequently, domestic violence incidents receive careful attention from the criminal justice system, including relentless follow-up to ensure appropriate intervention and tracking. With this as a model, an improved response to drug abuse incidents can ensure accountability from many actors. Mandated reporting and persistent follow-up can lead victims towards successful treatment. In this approach, law enforcement agencies will continue to have multiple roles, most of which involve enforcing drug trafficking, sales, and distribution violations. But police departments should define success as an overall reduction of overdose or drug incidents within a household, as they do in domestic violence, rather than single police-involved incidents.

Yet law enforcement cannot be the only guardians of this problem. Policy makers must hold key stakeholders in health care and criminal justice accountable. Doctors, emergency medical technicians, judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and others all have an important role to play in managing the response to this crisis. Systemic collaboration can help reduce drug-involved fatalities and can get victims of drug abuse the treatment they need.



Stakeholders should have an understanding of how to guide drug abusers toward treatment while prosecuting criminal violations appropriately. Policy makers must introduce legislation to close legal loopholes regarding altered synthetic opioids. Currently, it is difficult for states to prosecute drug dealers who have synthetically altered the chemical properties of opioids, which can essentially free them on a legal technicality if the drug has not been defined within the state's penal law. State penal law must mirror federal criminal law so that synthetic opioids, regardless of chemical composition, are adequately defined in the state's code. States should be able to prosecute any illicit drug, chemically altered or not, to ensure dealers can be successfully prosecuted if their drugs lead to a person's overdose and death.

#### THE PATH FORWARD

In recent years, experts have championed opioid antagonists that, when administered, neutralize the pharmacological effects of an opioid in the body during an overdose. Currently, many police departments, including the NYPD, provide antagonists like naloxone through programs alongside the state Department of Health and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. While these efforts do save lives, this is only an initial step, does not contribute to prevention, and does not bridge the gap between treatment and criminal sanctions. To lower the number of overdose deaths, stakeholders must create systemic partnerships to forge new problem-solving approaches.

To begin addressing this issue, state attorney general (AG) offices should adopt a Drug Monitoring Initiative, as used successfully by the New Jersey State Police (NJSP). This methodology uses technology to collect and share huge amounts of data across agencies, analyzing the relationships between overdoses. Furthermore, ownership by AG offices allows this agency to own legislative problems surrounding this

issue. The AG is the most appropriate owner, as it liaises with all relative agencies and partners in their reporting stream, including law enforcement and health departments. By combining this model with the effective use of real-time data, stakeholders have a better understanding of the problem and can immediately implement strategic solutions across multiple agencies.

Proper use of data remains the best way to address the problem, but with the exception of the NJSP, most agencies are in infantile stages in their approach to overdose incidents. Ownership of this program by the AG office, instead of by one agency like the Health Department or law enforcement, allows a state to take full ownership and apply resources appropriately, engaging other agencies as needed. This keeps stakeholders accountable, and ensures laws and regulations are crafted and executed uniformly towards one end goal. This approach addresses both health treatment and appropriate use of law enforcement.

Agencies must pool resources to reach the collective goal of reducing overdose incidents. Shoulder to shoulder, standing together, agencies must form an unbreakable wall for those who need assistance in the fight against the horrors of drug abuse, addiction, and the unnecessary loss of life.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# The Cry of the Climate and the Cry of the Poor:

Pope Francis's Urgent Appeal for Climate Justice

by Tomás Insua

*Tomás Insua is the executive director of the Global Catholic Climate Movement, a network of four hundred Catholic organizations that mobilized nearly one million Catholics for climate justice ahead of the COP21 summit. He also is a research fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, a school from which he graduated with a master's degree in public administration and where he is an activist with Divest Harvard. Before that, Tomás served in the United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, worked for Google in Latin America and Southeast Asia, and co-founded a faith-based organization doing social justice work in the slums of Buenos Aires.*

*"I commend His Holiness [Pope Francis] and all faith leaders here, for raising awareness of the urgent need to promote sustainable development and address climate . . . Your influence is enormous. You speak to the heart of humanity's deepest hopes and needs."*

Ban Ki-moon, former UN secretary general, addressing an interfaith climate summit at the Vatican.<sup>1</sup>

**WHAT WOULD CATCH** your attention?

A scientist explaining that "key components of the Earth's climate system could pass their tipping point this century,"<sup>2</sup> or Pope Francis stating that "we are at the limit! We are on the verge of suicide"<sup>3</sup> with regard to climate change? What strikes you as a plea for justice?

A scientist explaining that "climate-related hazards exacerbate other stressors, often with negative outcomes for livelihoods, especially for people living in poverty"<sup>4</sup> or Pope Francis warning that "it is the poorest of the poor who suffer the consequences with the most difficulty!"<sup>5</sup>

Even though those statements describe the same phenomena, you probably found the pope's message communicating the urgency and injustice of the climate crisis to be more compelling. As an unexpected messenger who makes bold statements in down-to-earth language, Pope Francis is an enthralling climate communicator. The pope also has exceptionally high media visibility and moral authority as an advocate for the poor, making him a powerful icon in the fight for climate justice.

Pope Francis's climate advocacy reached its pinnacle in June 2015 with the release of his groundbreaking encyclical letter *Laudato Si': On Care for our*



*Common Home*. An encyclical is the most authoritative teaching document a pope can issue, and *Laudato Si'* was addressed not only to the world's 1.2 billion Catholics but "to all people of good will."<sup>\*</sup> The timing was significant as it was an intentional call for action to governments convening five months later for the Paris Climate Summit—the result of twenty-one years of stalled UN negotiations to sign a climate agreement.<sup>†</sup>

While scientists and policy makers usually dominate the debates on climate

mobilize global action.<sup>6</sup> The complexity of climate change and the politics surrounding it relegate the issue to a low priority for most citizens and policy makers, even if they are aware of the catastrophic implications.

When appealing to people's minds proves ineffective, speaking to their hearts can provide an alternative means for action. Considering that 84 percent of people globally have a religious affiliation, faith leaders have the potential to become influential allies to the scientific community and make a decisive con-

## POPE FRANCIS'S LEADERSHIP INDICATES THAT WORLD RELIGIONS COULD HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE JOURNEY AHEAD TO TACKLE THE CLIMATE CRISIS.

change, the pope's advocacy helped frame the issue in moral terms relatable to a lay audience. Pope Francis's leadership indicates that world religions could have an important role in the journey ahead to tackle the climate crisis.

### AN UNLIKELY PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

While the scientific community has compiled unequivocal evidence on how human activities disrupt the climate system, this has not been enough to

contribute in motivating humanity to change course.<sup>7</sup> Multiple conferences and publications on the intersection of science, religion, and ecology are testaments to the increased collaboration between the scientific and faith communities in the face of the environmental challenge.<sup>‡</sup>

Moreover, a commonality of religion and climate science is that they recognize no national boundaries and stress that interconnectedness is at the core of the climate crisis. Science unequivocally emphasizes that the causes and consequences of climate change

---

\* This encyclical was particularly newsworthy because it was the first time in two thousand years that a pope devoted an encyclical exclusively to ecology. It is important to note that *Laudato Si'* is a comprehensive document that examines other socio-ecological issues beyond climate change and develops a holistic moral framework that covers other principles beyond justice toward the poor.

† As Francis explained, "The important thing is that there be a bit of time between the issuing of the encyclical and the meeting in Paris, so that it can make a contribution . . . Let's hope that in Paris the delegates will be courageous." See: <http://bit.ly/2iu7sWp>.

‡ For instance, the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale is a twenty-year-old international network that has convened interdisciplinary conferences, published books, and collected relevant statements. See [fore.yale.edu](http://fore.yale.edu)



are blind to country borders. One ton of CO<sub>2</sub> has the same warming effect on the global climate regardless of its country of origin, affecting all countries to a certain degree. Meanwhile, the world's major religions share a concern for the deep ties binding peoples, as illustrated by the writings of Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim.<sup>8</sup> "Our planet is a homeland and . . . humanity is one people living in a common home," said Pope Francis.<sup>9</sup>

Both perspectives are critical and must be given consideration, as national boundaries are at the heart of the thorny nature of the UN negotiations. Distrust between geopolitical competitors is a recurrent problem that impedes the cooperation needed to address climate change. Pope Francis has made a decisive contribution in stressing both the urgency and the injustice of the climate crisis.

## THE URGENCY: THE CRY OF THE CLIMATE

Pope Francis acknowledges the scientific facts of climate change early on in *Laudato Si'* and stresses the severe urgency of the crisis, which many in the scientific community in turn acknowledged. He begins by stating that "it is [his] hope that this Encyclical Letter . . . can help us to acknowledge the appeal, immensity and urgency of the challenge we face."<sup>10</sup> This urgent tone permeates the whole document. Pope Francis uses accessible vocabulary to bring attention to the planetary state of emergency that continues to worsen, with key climate metrics breaking records year after year:<sup>11</sup> "our common home is falling into serious disrepair . . . we can see signs that things are now reaching a breaking point."<sup>12</sup>

The pope's emphasis on the urgency contrasts with the business-as-usual operating mode of many politicians. Despite significant progress in scaling up the deployment of renewable energy,

most countries continue to subsidize and build new fossil fuel infrastructure, guaranteeing new and sizable carbon emissions for the next few decades.<sup>13</sup> This is in stark contradiction with the extremely ambitious goal of the Paris Agreement to

"pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels," which requires countries to transition from fossil fuels to clean energy sources in a very short timeframe.<sup>14</sup>

All 197 countries agreed to the 1.5 degrees Celsius target because it is the threshold beyond which climate change will likely become catastrophic for many vulnerable communities while exacerbating the risk of crossing planetary "tipping points" that would unleash run-away climate disruption.<sup>15</sup> According to the conservative estimate by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), on a business-as-usual trajectory we would have a 50 percent probability of exceeding the "carbon budget" in just eight years, increasing global temperatures beyond the 1.5-degree threshold.<sup>16</sup> Changing course in time to avoid crossing this red line is a massive and urgent undertaking that cannot wait for new technological miracles to arrive in a few decades. The urgency, as Francis reminds us, could not be greater.

The head-in-the-sand attitude of many political and economic leaders becomes even more worrisome when we consider the scale of fossil fuel extraction operations. Mainstream data from the fossil fuel industry reveals that mines and wells currently in operation have 2.35 times more carbon than the

---

# CLIMATE CHANGE IS ULTIMATELY A MORAL CRISIS

---



“carbon budget” to keep temperature increase below the 1.5-degree threshold.<sup>17</sup> In other words, the data suggests that the Paris temperature goal requires the shutdown of 58 percent of the current extraction operations in the fossil fuel industry. The magnitudes are even larger if the wider unexploited reserves are considered—to stay below the 1.5-degree limit, 85 percent of fossil fuel reserves must remain untouched.<sup>18</sup>

Given the conflicting priorities and incentives that limit policy makers’ ability to act, religious leaders have an important role to call for bold action in line with the ambitious aspirations of the Paris Agreement. Pope Francis calls us to embrace “the radical change which present circumstances require” and argues that “the effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now.”<sup>19</sup>

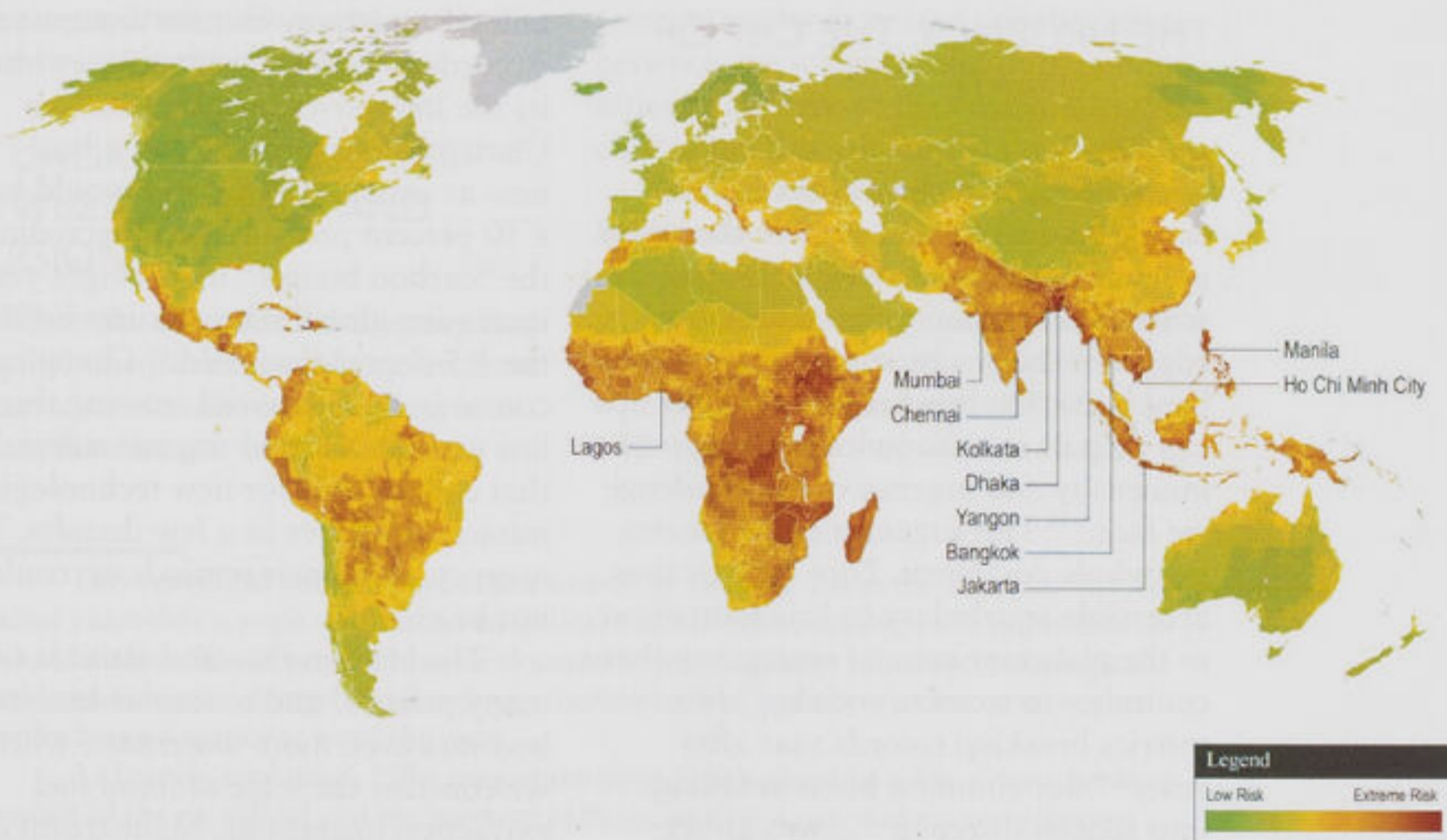
## THE INJUSTICE: THE CRY OF THE POOR

Pope Francis’s moral authority as an advocate for the poor is an im-

portant asset in addressing the social injustice of climate change. The first pope from the developing world, and an Argentine, Pope Francis has put the poor at the core of his agenda. His critique of social injustices and inequitable economic order has gained significant media coverage. As the former archbishop of Buenos Aires, he visited the city’s slums to minister marginalized communities.<sup>20</sup>

In his encyclical, Pope Francis depicts the ecological crisis as an injustice toward the poor in his widely cited call to “hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”<sup>21</sup> He went on to explain how social justice and the well-being of the planet are two sides of the same coin: “We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental.”<sup>22</sup>

Pope Francis has drawn attention to the “double injustice of climate change.”<sup>23</sup> The first injustice is that climate change has the largest impact on the poor, who suffer the most from



Climate Change Vulnerability Index mapping the most vulnerable regions and cities. Source: Maplecroft, 2013.<sup>24</sup>





Cumulative CO2 emissions (1850–2011), shaded by CO2 per capita (2013). Source: CarbonMap.org<sup>26</sup>

extreme weather events like floods and hurricanes, increasing water scarcity, reductions in crop yields, and rising sea levels that impact coastal cities. Tropical countries share the commonality of being among the world’s poorest while also being the most vulnerable to climate change, as illustrated in the map below.

The second injustice is that the poor are the least responsible for global greenhouse gas emissions that disrupt the climate system. The logic is straightforward: the fewer goods and services one consumes, the less greenhouse gas emissions one produces. As seen in the chart below, it is industrialized nations like the United States and Australia that have the highest contributions to the climate crisis. This is what Pope Francis calls the “ecological debt . . . between the global north and south.”<sup>25</sup>

## THE CONTRIBUTION TO THE PARIS AGREEMENT

Statements from Pope Francis and other religious groups—like the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences—sought to galvanize the faith community.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, sizable faith contingents participated in the global climate march of November 2015 and delivered nearly two million

petition signatures to COP21 political authorities.<sup>28</sup> “The Pope’s encyclical, along with mobilization by many other faith groups across the globe, provided a clear moral imperative for taking climate action, supporting the Paris Climate Change Agreement,” explained Christiana Figueres, the former United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) executive secretary.<sup>29</sup>

The Paris Agreement highlighted the “1.5°C victory,” through which the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), the negotiating block of the forty-three most vulnerable countries, managed to enshrine an ambitious temperature goal. The Catholic Church played an important role in supporting this advocacy effort, through both the Holy See’s diplomatic channels at COP21 and through the mobilization of nearly one million Catholics who signed the 1.5-degree-Celsius petition of the Global Catholic Climate Movement.<sup>30</sup> James Fletcher, Saint Lucia’s former minister for sustainable development and a key CVF leader said, “Our cause was helped tremendously in June 2015, when Pope Francis released his *Laudato Si* encyclical . . . climate vulnerable countries now had a champion who cut across geographic, political and social divides.”<sup>31</sup>



## THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE JOURNEY AHEAD

As political momentum from COP21 may decline in upcoming rounds of the UN climate negotiations, world religions have an important role to play to demand more courageous action from governments and corporations. Given the exasperating business-as-usual attitude that continues to pervade the response of many governments—exacerbated by the rise of populist politicians like Donald Trump—the faith community must continue its urgent call for climate justice. Faith groups have already been coordinating their joint advocacy at the UN, for example with the 2016 Interfaith Climate Statements. The challenge that remains is coordinating the faith community at national and subnational levels to advocate for local climate action.<sup>32</sup>

Most importantly, faith communities must focus on their core strengths: values. Climate change is ultimately a moral crisis requiring realignment of our values, and world religions have the potential to inspire billions of followers through their spiritual practices and their massive networks of houses of worship and educational institutions. Faith leaders can advance the values of simplicity, community, and the appreciation of nature. As scientists Veerabhadran Ramanathan and Partha Dasgupta argue, “The transformational step may well be a massive mobilization of public opinion by the Vatican and other religions. . . . Over and above institutional reforms and policy changes that are required, there is a need to reorient our attitude toward nature.”<sup>33</sup>

Beyond the inner transformation of humankind, in *Laudato Si'* we are called to question two paradigms that dominate public debate and constrain our collective ability to respond to the climate crisis. On one hand, it challenges the capitalist paradigm that champions a “deified market” and the “modern myth of unlimited material progress” that tramples the environment.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, it disputes the technocratic

paradigm that trumpets an “irrational confidence in progress,” which makes us hope that illusory technical solutions will fix ecological imbalances.<sup>35</sup> The pope’s appeal is drastic: “Halfway measures simply delay the inevitable disaster. Put simply, [we ought to] redefin[e] our notion of progress.”<sup>36</sup>

Ultimately, the faith community needs to remind us about our inherent goodness and our capacity to collaborate as one human family to tackle the common climate challenge. As Pope Francis put it, “Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. . . . Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good and making a new start.”<sup>37</sup> In the end, world religions must be tasked with keeping climate hope alive.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# It Takes the Planet:

## Why Collective Action on Climate Change Is More Important Than Ever

by Liz Hanson

*Liz Hanson is a first-year master in public policy student at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Having developed climate change mitigation and adaptation policies at the state and local level, she is committed to working across sectors to improve the sustainability and livability of communities and ensure the realization of global climate commitments.*

WITH EACH PASSING YEAR, the fight against climate change becomes more critical to our success in maintaining livable communities around the world. In December 2015, 195 nations recognized the urgency to take action and joined together to adopt the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).<sup>1</sup> The global accord represented decades of work to bring developed and developing nations onto the same page. By all accounts it was an extraordinary success of international diplomacy.

But agreeing to the accord is not enough. The truly challenging work started after Paris. Now each country must implement its nationally determined contribution and uphold its commitment to the international community. This challenge is one the United States is poised to meet and must if we are to remain a global leader on climate change, both morally and economically.

The United States committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 28 percent, from a 2005 baseline, by 2025.<sup>2</sup> The United States outlined that it would use existing authority under the Clean Air Act, the Energy Policy Act, and the Energy Independence and Security Act to achieve these reductions. The Obama administration's 2015 Clean Power Plan regulating carbon pollution from the power sector is the

driving force behind meeting our reduction target.<sup>3</sup>

The US contribution accounts for an impressive 15 percent of global emissions.<sup>4</sup> While it is still the new president's early days, most signs—including the appointment of Secretary Scott Pruitt, a fierce opponent of the Clean Power Plan,<sup>5</sup> to lead the Environmental Protection Agency—indicate that the Trump administration will seek to reverse course on the Obama administration's climate policies. Undoing the Clean Power Plan would require an extensive regulatory process or legal challenge. If that process goes underway, cities, states, businesses, and the international community would be left to question what the United States will do to adhere to its commitment in Paris. Despite uncertainty at the federal level, waiting to act is not an option.

We are already confronting the impacts of climate change. Communities in America are starting to lose their homes, and the federal government is bearing the cost to relocate them.<sup>6</sup> Human-caused climate change increased the likelihood of a recent extreme flooding event in Louisiana by 40 percent.<sup>7</sup> That mid-August 2016 storm in the state killed thirteen people and caused \$8.7 billion in damages.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile in California, human-caused climate change



substantially increased the likelihood of extreme drought between 2012 and 2014.<sup>9</sup>

By the time of the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) Paris talks in 2015, the world had already warmed 0.85 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels.<sup>10</sup> The UNFCCC included language on keeping warming under two degrees because that's "the highest rise we can afford if we want a 50 percent chance of

civic leaders. Their contributions were included in the final agreement.<sup>13</sup>

Leading up to COP21, 154 United States companies signed on to the "American Business Act on Climate Pledge."<sup>14</sup> In doing so, each company committed to its own goals, including significant emissions reductions and renewable energy purchases. These companies, which represent operations in all fifty states and total

---

## IT IS NOT ONLY THE RIGHT THING TO DO FOR THE PLANET, BUT ALSO THE RIGHT THING TO DO FOR BUSINESS.

---

avoiding the worst effects of climate change."<sup>11</sup> If temperatures rise any higher, we enter into a territory with uncharted risks of extreme precipitation, drought, sea-level rise, and heat. Current nationally determined contributions put us on a trajectory to 3.4 degrees of warming.<sup>12</sup> The next round of negotiations will need to be even more ambitious. Delaying now will make each subsequent commitment harder.

### ACTION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: REASON FOR HOPE

Local leaders have long been acting to deal with the types of situations that climate change will exacerbate. They knew they could not wait for national or global consensus to protect their constituents. Instead, they started doing their part to prevent the increasingly perilous impacts of climate change in their communities and around the world. With carbon emissions and commitments mounting, their continued action is more vital than ever. There is reason to be optimistic that progress will continue.

The United States' success in Paris did not belong to the State Department Office of the Special Envoy for Climate Change alone. In addition to federal commitments, the COP21 saw an unprecedented level of engagement from subnational actors, including business, local, and

\$4.2 trillion in annual revenue, include corporate giants like Amazon, Google, Starbucks, and Verizon. Mayors from 117 US cities signed the Compact of Mayors, committing their cities to developing a greenhouse gas inventory, setting a reduction target, and developing a plan to meet it.<sup>15</sup>

Since the election, major companies and city mayors have reiterated their support. During the 22nd Conference of the Parties talks in Marrakesh, Morocco in November 2016, over 360 companies signed on to a "Low-Carbon USA" letter to President Trump and other officials.<sup>16</sup> The letter noted that business leaders wanted the United States to remain in the Paris Agreement, to meet or exceed our commitments, and to do so in a way that indicated to global markets that low-carbon investments are the best path forward. US mayors also took action in November, when fifty-one mayors from red and blue states alike issued a letter urging President Trump to take action on climate.<sup>17</sup> They pledged that they would forge ahead even in the absence of federal support but stressed the importance of united action.

As these business leaders and mayors have demonstrated, much can be accomplished—with or without federal support.

### COMBATting CLIMATE CHANGE IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS

In October 2013, former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, former Treasury Secretary



Henry Paulson, and environmental businessman Tom Steyer, teamed up to create the Risky Business Project. The project produces reports quantifying the economic impact of climate change in the United States to elevate the conversation of these risks to the country. They described the results of inaction as "unacceptable," tallying losses into the billions for multiple sectors, including real estate, agriculture, infrastructure, and energy.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board, an independent non-profit that assists public corporations, found that seventy-two of the seventy-nine industries in the economy are already affected by climate risk.<sup>19</sup>

Risky Business's latest analysis offers hope. It reports that achieving the reductions necessary to seriously address climate change is "technically and economically achievable using commercial or near-commercial technology . . . [and] does not require an energy miracle or unprecedented spending."<sup>20</sup> It recognizes that a national energy policy is essential, but that the lack of one is not a reason for businesses to delay action. It stresses that decisions made today will affect our ability to meet reduction commitments tomorrow. To assist, it recommends several actions that companies can undertake now.

- \* Conducting analysis of business risks from climate change, including to operations, facilities, supply chains, and markets

- \* Building internal capacity to address climate change

- \* Developing and implementing concrete action plans, including putting an internal price on carbon

- \* Creating, publicizing, and implementing reduction plans

- \* Providing investor-facing information on climate risks and opportunities

- \* Pushing governments at all levels to provide necessary policy frameworks

Companies can and should begin to accomplish these tasks today. It is not only the right thing to do for the planet, but also the right thing to do for business. When Google announced that 100 percent of its operations would run on renewable energy beginning in 2017, its Senior Vice President of Technical

Infrastructure, Urs Hölzle, said, "We began purchasing renewable energy to reduce our carbon footprint and address climate change—but it also makes business sense."<sup>21</sup> As Mr. Hölzle noted in this announcement, having a long-term stable supply of renewable energy enables Google to manage one of the largest components of its operating budget more effectively. Others, including many that signed the American Business Act on Climate Pledge, have made energy efficiency commitments that can reduce operating costs overall. Many are tracking and disclosing their progress. Those that have not should follow suit.

A range of organizations can help businesses take these steps and respond to climate change. CDP is a global disclosure system that helps companies manage their environmental impacts and helps investors to assess those impacts in making financial decisions. "The choice facing companies and investors has never been clearer: seize the opportunities of a carbon constrained world and lead the way in shaping our transition to a sustainable economy; or continue business as usual and face serious risks—from regulation, shifts in technology, changing consumer expectations and climate change itself," CDP's CEO Paul Simpson recently said.<sup>22</sup> Even if the federal government cedes responsibility in regulating emissions—which may prove challenging, given the 2007 Supreme Court decision that authorized the EPA to regulate greenhouse gas emissions as pollutants<sup>23</sup>—businesses will continue to face risks from climate change. Implementation of Risky Business's recommendations protects companies and shareholders in the long run. It also contributes to meeting US global obligations.

## STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS LEAD THE WAY

Cities and states across the country have sufficient autonomy to set and implement climate policies. Much of the infrastructure that directly impacts emissions is controlled at the state and local levels. Local zoning governs how communities are developed. State building codes determine how energy efficient buildings must be. Transit authorities are under city or state jurisdiction. States control energy siting and can require environmental review of major projects. Waste is collected or disposed of at the local level. State and local operating and capital



budgets offer opportunities to invest responsibly. As subnational governments develop to meet the needs of residents throughout the 21st century, they have both the capability and responsibility to do so in a way that effectively addresses climate change.

Subnational leaders, including mayors, governors, attorneys general, and state legislators, must focus their own efforts on mitigating climate change. A recent report by the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group shows that the decisions made in cities during the Trump administration may be a deciding factor for whether or not we stay under 1.5 degrees' of warming.<sup>24</sup> "If the 758 U.S. cities with populations over 50,000 were to halt progress towards decarbonization, their business-as-usual trajectory would result in 475 gigatons of equivalent carbon dioxide of additional emission between now and 2100. That level of emissions would single-handedly use up the global budget for a 1.5 degrees Celsius limit scenario," according to their analysis. Waiting four years to begin bending the curve makes future actions more challenging and more burdensome.

Organizations like C40, the Compact of Mayors, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, and the Urban Sustainability Directors Network are poised to help cities with this work. Like businesses, they must track their emissions, evaluate risks, publicly disclose those risks, create a plan to address them, and do so transparently so stakeholders and voters can hold their leaders accountable. Cities that are already members of these organizations are leading the way in finding solutions to decrease emissions, create jobs, and improve the lives of residents.

In December 2016, C40 honored Portland, Oregon, for sustaining long-term climate change action momentum in its most recent plan to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions while growing its economy.<sup>25</sup> The city is planning to reduce emissions 26 percent by 2020, 40 percent by 2030, and 80 percent by 2050. The reductions are in line with the two degrees Celsius limit. The plan also calls for adaptation actions and incorporates Portland's anticipated growth in population and associated jobs. It seeks to ensure that all residents of the city benefit from climate

action. In announcing the plan, Mayor Charlie Hales said, "Cities are a key part of the solution to climate change. Equity is a key factor. As we reduce carbon, it is imperative that we ensure that the benefits and opportunities that come along are shared with every part of Portland."<sup>26</sup> If all cities with populations over fifty thousand adopted initiatives similar to the ones C40 cities are pursuing, they alone could deliver 36 percent of the United States' total 2025 emissions target.<sup>27</sup> Cities and states should partner to achieve these emissions reductions and expand such practices to smaller communities.

## FEDERAL LEADERSHIP IS NOT IN VAIN

While climate received little attention during the 2016 presidential election, recent polls show that 36 percent of Americans are "deeply concerned" about climate change and "personally care a great deal about [it]."<sup>28</sup> Another 38 percent acknowledge caring some about the issue. Additionally, there is strong bipartisan support for expanding clean-energy generation. Federal leaders in Congress should not treat this election as a referendum on climate change and should instead find ways to advance the commitments the United States made in Paris.

Leaders in both parties are beginning to take the lead in addressing this issue. Democratic Minority Leader Chuck Schumer's infrastructure plan includes \$100 billion in new funding for energy infrastructure and grid modernization as well as reforms to tax incentives for renewable energy and energy efficiency.<sup>29</sup> The plan envisions a more resilient and efficient energy grid and plans to provide the largest incentives to the cleanest and most energy-efficient technologies.<sup>30</sup> Former Republican leaders met with the Trump administration in February to propose implementing a carbon tax in place of the Clean Power Plan.<sup>31</sup> The group represented the Climate Leadership Council, a research and advocacy organization promoting carbon dividends as a solution to climate change, and included James A. Baker, Henry Paulson, George P. Shultz, Marty Feldstein, and Greg Mankiw. While the infrastructure tax incentives and the carbon tax differ significantly in terms of

---

\* Two degrees was used as the benchmark in the Paris Agreement, but a more ambitious target of keeping the temperature increase under 1.5 degrees was recognized. This target is used by the C40.



approach, both proposals take climate change seriously.

The Republican proposal may herald a shift in the party's recent stance on addressing climate risks. While it may not persuade entrenched deniers, such as the House's Committee on Science, Space and Technology chairman Lamar S. Smith,<sup>32</sup> to take the risks seriously, the opportunity for real dialogue on how to develop policies that address climate change seems more in reach than in previous years. If President Trump wants to make good deals for America, his team should engage in brokering bipartisan solutions on climate change. Reversing course on US commitments would not only diminish the standing of the United States with other world leaders but would also put us at a competitive disadvantage in the transition to a clean-energy economy.

In January 2017, China announced that it would spend more than \$360 billion by 2020 on renewable energy sources.<sup>33</sup> China anticipates that this investment will create more than thirteen million jobs in addition to curbing pollution and supporting its climate commitments. China is already a dominant player in the renewable energy market. By reversing course on clean-energy investments, the United States, the world's second-largest emitter of carbon dioxide, could help solidify China's future dominance in this field.

## THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW

Ultimately, the United States needs a strong national policy to address climate change. Without it, action at the subnational level will remain *ad hoc* and uneven across communities. A lack of coordination will impede progress and may prevent further action. However, America cannot wait for Washington to act. The Paris Agreement was a step forward, but it remains tenuous. All Americans can and must play a part to ensure that those who seek to deny climate

change and unnecessarily stall action do not undo the progress that is essential to the long-term sustainability of our planet.

We can debate the best strategies to address climate change, but we can no longer wait for "better" science, for "stronger" national leaders, or for some greater power to hold us accountable. Businesses must act in the interest of their shareholders and in the interest of future generations. Subnational governments must use their power to build sustainable communities that can thrive into the next century. And federal leaders must do the difficult work of negotiating bipartisan solutions that both build a strong American economy and decrease emissions.

Citizens must do their part and be vocal about how they believe climate

change should be incorporated into business and government policies. This should translate into local action and careful consideration of whom they vote for in the next midterm and presidential elections. It should also influence the companies from which they purchase goods and services.

Implementation of the Paris Agreement is critical to keeping global warming to a level that averts its most disastrous impacts, protecting communities around the world. Fortunately, the 21st century has seen real action to prevent these risks. Since 2007, American carbon emissions have been in decline.<sup>34</sup> In 2014 and 2015, global GDP grew without global emissions growing, while all prior plateaus or decreases in emissions had been associated with economic downturns.<sup>35</sup> These are promising signs that a global transformation to prevent climate change is underway. We've come too far to turn back now.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>

**"CITIES ARE A  
KEY PART OF  
THE SOLUTION  
TO CLIMATE  
CHANGE."  
- MAYOR  
CHARLIE HALES,  
PORTLAND,  
OREGON**





Adam Giorgi

Adam Giorgi is a proud Minnesotan seeking the intersection of government service and comic book superheroes. He is a master in public policy student at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and he swears he doesn't draw cartoons during lectures (most of the time).



# Gross National Happiness:

## An Idea Whose Time Has Come?

by Kinga Tshering

*Kinga Tshering is a former Member of Parliament in Bhutan from the Peace and Prosperity Party (DPT). His experience in public service spans more than twenty years as a development engineer, banker, corporate executive, and politician. Kinga is currently a mid-career student pursuing a master in public administration at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University as a Ford Foundation Fellow with the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation.*

*“Gross National Happiness measures the quality of a country in more holistic way and believes that the beneficial development of human society takes place when material and spiritual development occurs side by side to complement and reinforce each other.”*

His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, Fifth King of Bhutan (2006–)

IS A CAR CRASH a good thing? How about an oil spill? Most of us would likely agree these are harrowing and unpleasant experiences that should be avoided. From the traditional economic perspective reflected in GDP, however, incidents like these are net positive, as they increase a country's total production of goods and services when the cars are repaired and workers clean up the oil.

After the Second World War, GDP—the value of all goods and services produced within a country in a given year—became the main tool for evaluating a country's economy and is today often taken as a proxy indicator for a nation's success. Yet a growing chorus of experts and citizens believe

this metric is too narrow to properly assess the progress and growth of a nation. These critics have turned to the country of Bhutan for an alternative. In the late 1970s, Bhutan's king, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, shared his vision for a novel way to measure the wellbeing of his country: Gross National Happiness (GNH).<sup>1</sup>

King Wangchuck believed that looking only at GDP was a dehumanizing approach to the process of development. Instead, he wanted to figure out a way to quantifiably assess the happiness level of his citizens. The Centre for Bhutan Studies (CBS) came up with four pillars, thirty-three domains, and over 148 variables to generate Bhutan's GNH.<sup>2</sup> The center sends out an annual



survey that looks at various indices of social and emotional health—including education, access to healthcare, and sleeping patterns—as well as more country-specific questions. Respondents, for example, report their proficiency in traditional Bhutanese handicraft skills and how often they pray or meditate.<sup>3</sup>

The popularity of GNH has expanded beyond Bhutan's borders, and is now a commonly accepted term amongst economists including Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz and Jeffrey Sachs. Happiness metrics have been incorporated into the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development's Better Life Initiative, and GNH is referenced in the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals and the annual World Happiness Report.<sup>4</sup> Both the United Kingdom and France have now commissioned their own happiness studies similar to Bhutan's.<sup>5</sup>

The pursuit of happiness is enshrined as an inalienable right in the US Declaration of Independence; yet, the government has traditionally not measured happiness at all. At the institutional level, though, studies and resources on happiness are active and abundant. In 1938, the Harvard *Study of Adult Development* initiated a project on happiness with 268 Harvard sophomores and 456 boys from the Boston inner city. The project still runs today.<sup>6</sup> More recently, in April 2016, the university established the Lee Kum Sheung Center for Health and Happiness to identify and develop a positive psychological well-being index, or "happiness index,"<sup>7</sup> as an instrument to augment the measurement of GNH. These and other research initiatives and their findings have begun to attract the attention of nearby elected officials. The mayor of Somerville, Massachusetts, in 2011 initiated a quantitative happiness survey that was the first in the country to assess residents' happiness and publish the results in a report.<sup>8</sup>

If understanding and reporting the metrics of happiness on a national level would be helpful, the question is how to generate an effective measurement

of well-being. It could be as simple as asking whether someone is happy or whether he or she feels proud to be a resident of the area—questions the Somerville survey poses. Alternatively, there are deeper queries we can make: How much time is a person spending on social media compared with traditional face-to-face socializing? Is he or she able to enjoy the simpler things in life that don't involve buying or paying for something? It is up to American policy makers and citizens to decide how to measure their GNH most effectively, but devising and reporting these alternative measures alongside GDP could provide a more comprehensive picture of the country's true success.

Despite being the richest nation in world, the United States is grappling with issues of social inequality, racial tension, and personal life satisfaction. If policy makers can devise a way of empirically assessing social and emotional well-being, like Bhutan has done with its GNH variables, they could craft policies to address some of these deep-rooted societal problems.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# How Human-Centered Design Contributes to Better Policy

by Angel Quicksey

*Angel Quicksey is a master of public policy student at John F. Kennedy School at Harvard University and a master of urban planning student at Harvard's School of Design. She was a summer fellow in the Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics.*

*Explore. Experiment. Evaluate.  
Be delightful!*

THESE WORDS, BESIDE a dry-erase drawing of a double-sided funnel, are scrawled across one of many whiteboard-coated walls in an office full of sticky notes, markers, and a quiet buzz of activity. The office sits on the fifth floor of Boston city hall and hosts a small group of designers, researchers, and technologists. This group is charged with experimenting on the public's behalf under the banner of the Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics (MONUM).

Since 2010, MONUM has piloted and scaled projects across Boston in education, housing, public works, and more. The team is small, but their outsized impact demonstrates the power of design at work. Whether at the local, state, or federal level, government teams can look to MONUM for inspiration on applying a human-centered design framework to policy challenges large and small.

MONUM's work demonstrates that design is more than a visual discipline. In the last decade, it has emerged as a set of problem-solving tools driven by specific mindsets.

While MONUM's approach is rare in government, design thinking or human-centered design is becoming more common in the private sector. With roots in the world of industrial

design, companies like the design-consulting firms IDEO and frog initially popularized and spread these methods.<sup>1</sup> They helped other firms create tangible products through an iterative process, using empathy to understand user needs and prototypes to test their assumptions. As the discipline matured, many companies began using similar approaches to design strategies and experiences beyond physical products.

In the policy world, design offers a framework for improving service delivery at various levels of government. As one of the most sophisticated public sector design teams, the New Urban Mechanics's approach offers lessons for policy makers at all levels in the mindsets and methods of design.

## EXPLORE: ENGAGING WITH RESIDENTS

In early 2016, MONUM was tasked with finding creative options for affordable middle-income housing in Boston. The Housing Innovation Lab team members—MONUM divides its work between several thematic “labs”—quickly found themselves swimming in data. To begin tackling housing affordability, the lab partnered with the Department of Neighborhood Development (DND), which had crunched the demographic and financial numbers, search-









SOURCE: Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics

process for a marriage certificate, journey maps or storyboards<sup>8</sup> are often developed, and even role-playing is used. Using visual elements helps make otherwise intangible ideas tangible. In every instance, the purpose of the prototype is to evaluate how proposed solutions might fair in the real world. In this way, small-scale prototypes made of low-cost materials allow the team to test their assumptions before committing to larger programs and make it easier to rebound from failure.

Sometimes these prototypes lead directly to policy interventions. In a 2013 pilot project, the New Urban Mechanics partnered with the Public Works Department to tackle cyclist safety in Boston.

Since 2011, seven cyclists have died as the result of a collision with a large truck.<sup>9</sup> New Urban Mechanics team member Jaclyn Youngblood explained, "There's a gap between the wheel wells on the trucks, and people would slide under that and get run over. So [we asked]

how do we make that a safer interaction between the driver and the cyclist?"<sup>10</sup> Inspired by an effort in the United Kingdom, the team hypothesized that they could reduce the likelihood of cyclist fatalities by blocking the undercarriage of large trucks.<sup>11</sup> Over the next year, the team tested three different side guards on sixteen large vehicles. Initially made of PVC pipe, newer versions of the side guards became progressively more sophisticated. When a cyclist collided with a truck in 2014, they were injured but survived the crash.<sup>12</sup> "The prototype helped us determine how to best serve the biker while also considering the ease of use for the department," elaborated MONUM Chief of Staff Susan Nguyen.<sup>13</sup> Based on research conducted by the MONUM team, Boston City Council passed a Truck Side Guard Ordinance in 2014 requiring large city-contracted vehicles be equipped with side guards.<sup>14</sup> The department continues to advocate for changes across the state.<sup>15</sup>



Within the MONUM Housing Innovation Lab, prototypes can bring abstract concepts to life. In summer 2016, the lab explored the desirability of micro-units—apartments of 385 square feet compared to the average 818 square feet across the east coast<sup>16</sup>—in Boston. As housing prices rise in the city, MONUM hypothesized that smaller units that cost less to build and lease could ease the housing crunch for middle-income residents. Yet it can be hard to imagine what living in 385 square feet feels like. For Housing Lab teammate Max Stearns “that’s how the Urban Housing Unit (uhü) came about. You can’t just say a square footage or talk about unit distribution. That doesn’t click. You have to show people.”<sup>17</sup> To give people the opportunity to experience an apartment on that scale, the Boston Society of Architects created the uhü as a full-scale prototype of a micro-apartment. MONUM took the uhü on tour across seven neighborhoods in the city, from Mattapan to East Boston. In July, Stearns, who studied law before joining the New Urban Mechanics, guided the large uhü trailer slowly onto the

plaza outside city hall. Visitors mingled in the living room and explored the compact kitchen. “We discovered that the uhü had to be flexible; it had to accommodate different uses. But we also learned that people felt at home there,” Stearns explained of the unit.<sup>18</sup> As a result of the positive response, the city has recently called for teams of architects and developers to submit micro-unit apartment development proposals for a city-owned parcel of land in Roxbury, a central Boston neighborhood.<sup>19</sup>

While side guards and miniature apartments are relatively sophisticated prototypes, many other prototypes are realized in paper or foam core. Cheap and easily modified materials allow designers or policy makers to quickly iterate on their ideas. In this way, an idea that fails can be tossed out, the materials recycled, and the lessons from it applied in a new direction. Prototypes are a low-risk way to innovate.

Iteration doesn’t stop with a product launch. The New Urban Mechanics earliest project, BOS: 311, has gone through several iterations.<sup>20</sup> Initially created in 2009 as an app



SOURCE: Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics



called Citizens Connect, MONUM used the program to collect reports of problems from Boston residents—from graffiti to potholes.<sup>21</sup> Though these kinds of apps are common now, in 2009 the idea was novel. After discovering that the majority of reports were coming from a city hall employee, the team created a spin-off for internal staff.<sup>22</sup> Now rebranded and redesigned, the app has been embedded in the Department of Innovation and Technology with a dedicated team.<sup>23</sup> They continue to add new features like images of resolved issues to improve the functionality and user experience. Through projects like Citizens Connect, the MONUM team members live up to their reputation as municipal tinkerers and demonstrate a capacity for embedding their iterative design approach throughout the city.

MONUM operates under the assumption that policy, like design, is never complete. Susan Nguyen, the unit's Chief of Staff, suggested that "people often try to craft the perfect policy to prevent things from happening. We try to ask how we might promote the right things and assume that policy is always a working document."<sup>24</sup> She uses the iPhone as an example, pointing out that the phone is updated every other year to adjust to consumer needs. Particularly with the kinds of civic problems the city faces, like housing a changing population, addressing poverty, or adapting to climate change, the environment is always adapting and policy makers must do the same. As the environment changes, policy and program interventions must adapt as well.

## CREATING SOLUTIONS ACROSS SYSTEMS

The New Urban Mechanics staff likes to point out that design and policy are not at odds. Gathered in city hall, one member, Steve Walter, said: "We're tired of people creating a dichotomy between design and policy. Any time you build a human system, you're designing. We're just lucky because [our office] has this perch that allows us to see the whole picture. One of our main value adds is perspective."<sup>25</sup>

Similar efforts in other cities cast design teams as conveners. In Mexico City, the Laboratorio para la Ciudad has taken on citizen engagement using similar principles.<sup>26</sup> Copenhagen's MindLab has addressed taxation and education reform by solving problems jointly across



SOURCE: Google Play Store

agencies.<sup>27</sup> Each group is able to take a wider picture of the system and use their research to discover the touch points for each user.

These practices don't require a radical shift in process, but they do ask for a new mindset: that of a learner over a planner, a willingness to embrace ambiguity and learn from failure, and of course, empathy and optimism. These mindsets are more important than the methods themselves, according to Hila Mehr, who works in IBM's market insights group.

Deep empathy through observing, listening, and engaging directly with people, a willingness to create and test through prototypes, and a commitment to revisiting solutions are crucial



elements of a design approach to policy. Designing for policy puts real people at the heart of its practice in order to serve user needs, and it avoids large-scale failures by scaling up incrementally and testing solutions along the way. It helps to make seemingly intangible processes appear concrete because though design can apply to gadgets and digital tools, it can go beyond technology to serve diverse needs for real people. Employing a design mindset, policy makers and civil servants can draw on these methods to develop creative solutions to deeply embedded challenges.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# One Size Does Not Fit All:

## The Rise of Tailor-Made Economic Policies

by Hubert Wu

*Hubert Wu is a first year master in public policy student at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He previously worked at the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) as an economist and managed the trade and economics arm of the not-for-profit Global Voices.*

**MANY MAJOR SHORTCOMINGS** of economic policy making can be attributed to an over-reliance on “one-size-fits-all” policies that ignore differences in countries, industries, and individuals.

Until the early 21st century, the accepted means to increase the wealth of developing countries centered on a set of largely standardized policy prescriptions. At the industry level, the high systemic risk of the financial sector relative to some other industries was seldom recognized in regulation before the Great Recession in 2007. For individuals, policies related to taxation, health, and education were often based on economic analyses that did not account for differences in personal circumstances.

This is beginning to change. At the national, firm, and individual levels, economic policy is heading down a path of increased customization. For policy makers, this creates opportunities for novel solutions to problems both new and old. Yet there also exist trade-offs from increased complexity and the risk

of discrimination, based on factors like gender or race.

### DIFFERENTIATION IN ECONOMIC POLICY

Examples related to economic development, financial regulation, and social policy are useful to characterize the “differentiated” approach to economic policy making.

#### *Economic Development*

A shift to a differentiated approach to economic policy making is evident from changes to international development practices from the late 20th to the early 21st centuries.

John Williamson encapsulated the accepted view about economic practice in his 1990 article “What Washington Means by Policy Reform.” Williamson outlined a set of policy prescriptions in ten areas—coined the “Washington Consensus”—on which “the political Washington of Congress and senior members of the Administration . . . and the international financial institutions [were in broad agreement and] urge[d]



on the rest of the world” to achieve successful economic reform.<sup>1</sup> Characterized by the principles of trade liberalization, deregulation, and privatization, policy makers often presumed the efficacy of these policies to be universal across countries.

But in the first decade of the 21st century a new paradigm emerged constituting a significant departure from policies that applied equally across countries. Jeffrey Sachs in 2005 drew an analogy to medicine and invoked the

they face. Under this paradigm, due to disparities in symptoms, development policies that are effective in one country may not work for others.

### *Financial Regulation*

A second case illustrating differentiated economic policy is the evolution of financial regulation since the global financial crisis of 2007–08.

The crisis began as a subprime mortgage crisis in the United States and evolved in depth and scope to eventually precipitate the worst global recession since World War II.<sup>4</sup> Although much has been written about the various causes, consequences, and lessons from the crisis and the Great Recession that followed, a striking outcome was the marked change in the financial regulatory landscape.

In the United States, the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (Dodd-Frank) was signed into law in July 2010.

Dodd-Frank went beyond

the past precedent of regulating the whole financial industry and sectors of the industry, such as investment banking, to target specific firms. Specifically, it introduced rules tailored to firms that are designated systemically important financial institutions (SIFIs) by the Financial Stability Board. Voluntary global regulatory reform occurred at around the same time through the Third Basel Accord (Basel III), which also introduced specific guidelines for global systemically important banks (GSIBs), similar to the SIFI designation in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

Dodd-Frank and Basel III are examples of differentiated economic policy on an industry level because they sought to tailor regulation to a specific class of firms within the financial industry. In his initial speech announcing the rationale for regulatory provisions that would

**AT THE NATIONAL, FIRM, AND INDIVIDUAL LEVELS, ECONOMIC POLICY IS HEADING DOWN A PATH OF INCREASED CUSTOMIZATION.**

term “clinical economics” to advocate an approach to development practice more nuanced, reality grounded, ethical, and differentiated than the existing orthodoxy.<sup>2</sup> As part of this doctrine, Sachs proposed that development practitioners should undertake “differential diagnoses,” recognizing the varying causes for countries’ economic challenges and tailoring policy remedies accordingly.

In the same year, a trio of development economists (Ricardo Hausmann, Dani Rodrik, and Andrés Velasco) invented the concept of growth diagnostics as a new framework to identify the varying root causes of underdevelopment across countries.<sup>3</sup> The logic of this idea is simple: that the causes restricting growth can be due to a host of causes and are likely to differ across countries given the problems and opportunities



eventually become Dodd-Frank, President Barack Obama noted that “a regulatory regime . . . crafted in the wake of a 20th-century economic crisis—the Great Depression—was overwhelmed by the speed, scope, and sophistication of a 21st-century global economy.” In contrast to the prevailing status quo, the new regulations would “pinpoint the structural weaknesses that allowed for the [global financial crisis].”<sup>6</sup>

### Social Policy

Moving past countries and sectors, the rise of differentiation in economic policy making can also be seen in various areas of social policy.

Consider the diverse topics of kidney transplants, students’ public school preferences, and even online dating. A common feature is that each involves matching parties to each other based on individual characteristics or stated preferences: the respective parties being matched are recipients to donors, children to schools, and prospective partners.

In 2012, Lloyd Shapley and Alvin Roth received the Nobel Prize in Economics for work that directly improves “matching markets.” One famous result of their work is a set of simple mathematical rules known as the “Gale-Shapley deferred acceptance algorithm.”<sup>7</sup> The algorithm ensures in certain circumstances that when the rules are followed, no two matched parties—say,

a school and student—would be better off if matched with others.

The matching algorithm possesses very real benefits. For example, the redesign of the New York City public school’s admissions system in 2003 by Roth and his team resulted in a 90 percent reduction of students assigned to schools for which they indicated no preference.<sup>8</sup> Differentiation is at the core of this innovation: rather than faceless cogs in a wheel of chance, individuals, and their preferences, matter.

The personalization of economic policy making and its benefits are arguably most visible in the field of behavioral economics. The practice of incorporating psychological insights into public policy is well known and continues to diffuse around the world. The impressive breadth and effects of this are evident in the work of bodies like the Behavioral Insights Team (BIT) of the UK government and analogs in many other countries. Findings from trials run by these bodies affected government outcomes in areas including taxation, retirement saving, charitable giving, and health spending.<sup>9</sup> Behavioral insights led the US Food and Drug Administration’s replacement of a nutritional “food pyramid” to a simplified “food plate”, her Majesty’s Courts and Tribunal Service in the UK to issue find payment reminders via text to boost payment rates, and even the banning of pre-ticked boxes in online sales in the European Union.<sup>10</sup> Differentiation here

TABLE 1: EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENTIATED VS. UNDIFFERENTIATED ECONOMIC POLICY

Case	Undifferentiated approach	Differentiated approach
Country-level: economic development	Washington Consensus policies	Growth diagnostics and ‘clinical economics’
Industry/firm-level: financial regulation	Failure to recognize unique impact of financial industry in existing rules	New firm-level regulations (e.g., SIFIs in Dodd-Frank and GSIBs in Basel III)
Individual level: social policy	Ad hoc rules that treated individuals impersonally	Application of market design and behavioral insights



presents itself through recognition of the rich complexities of human behavior.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

Like the very problem it often seeks to address, differentiation is not a cure for all ills and may be associated with its own risks.

This applies to each of the examples discussed above (and summarized below in Table (1)). For the case of economic development, critics of the growth diagnostics framework note that focusing on only one underlying cause of underdevelopment at a time may omit problems that potentially interact with each other. Similarly, critics of Dodd-Frank often identify the complexity and financial burden associated with the reforms as onerous. Finally, applications of behavioral economics in public policy can often elicit accusations of paternalism through the manipulation of individuals' choices.

With the above caveats in mind, relevant insights for policy makers include:

1. *Tailored economic policies can bring benefits when applied prudently.* As discussed above, advantages of differentiation include identifying beneficial but uncommon solutions when a country's circumstances are unique (for example, clinical economics and growth diagnostics) and achieving a higher level of specificity than the alternative (such as financial regulation after the global financial crisis).
2. *Differentiated policies involve trade-offs.* Consider for example the US federal tax code, which totals nearly seventy-five thousand pages in length. A February 2015 Pew Research Center poll found that 72 percent of the American public was "bothered" about the complexity of the tax system;<sup>11</sup> compliance costs associated with

the code have been estimated in the billions of lost productivity hours.<sup>12</sup> This illustrates that differentiated policies are not without their own costs.

3. *Non-differentiated policies can have their own intrinsic value.* Generality can sometimes be valuable in its own right. An example of this is when differentiation would otherwise equate to discrimination. While it is easy to see the benefits of agencies such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, its hypothetically differentiated counterpart is harder to envision and justify.

## CONCLUSION

In the future, the differentiation of economic policy could take many forms. Some of these are likely to be tied to the adoption of new methods and technologies such as the increasing prevalence of randomized controlled trials in policy evaluation, the development of methods to analyze large datasets (e.g., machine learning techniques), and the physiological advances in fields like neuroscience.

In his book *Economic Rules: The Rights and Wrongs of the Dismal Science*, Dani Rodrik introduces ten "commandments for economists."<sup>13</sup> The first is that "economics is a collection of models; cherish their diversity."<sup>14</sup> If this trend of the development of new methods, models, and technologies continues, policy making might see a corresponding continued increase in diversity. However, the outcomes of this trend will not be universal nor smooth. After all, one size does not fit all.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# Rich Country or Poor Country, Invest in Infrastructure

by Gonzalo Huertas

*Gonzalo Huertas is currently pursuing his master's in public administration in international development at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and is the chair of the Harvard Kennedy School Argentine Society. Before coming to Harvard he worked as an international economics advisor at the National Cabinet of Ministers of Argentina.*

## INTRODUCTION

If you were in a bar in Bangladesh, speaking with your colleagues about the tough state of the global economy, there's a high possibility that the lights would go out at some point during the conversation. If this debate occurred during a taxi drive in Brazil, you might overhear the driver sighing as he hit another pothole. Were the same conversation happening over the phone in India, you wouldn't be too surprised if you suddenly lost your network connection.

Despite rapid GDP growth in recent years, these countries suffer from major infrastructure deficits. For the larger set of countries that have long struggled to achieve rapid economic growth, poor infrastructure is even more problematic. While leading emerging markets may suffer from an eroded highway, many smaller economies may not have a highway at all. The problem feeds on itself: the lack of infrastructure impedes economic growth, and the lack of economic growth slows infrastructure development.

One of the grave concerns left by the financial crisis of the 2000s has been

the sustained lower level of potential output for many nations across the world.<sup>1</sup> This issue has raised serious doubts regarding perspectives for economic development in the future.<sup>2</sup> The question remains: how can we pursue faster, more resilient growth when economies are weighed down by structural deficiencies across the board? While infrastructure investment may not be the most revolutionary solution, it is an absolutely essential one.

## THE CHALLENGES SO FAR

What do we know about the deficiencies of global growth? Recent literature has drawn attention to two worrying phenomena.

One is the so-called productivity paradox. In short, the rate of productivity growth has been decelerating over the past decades in advanced economies. Productivity is the major driver of long-term economic prosperity, and developed nations generally set the benchmark for the rest of the world's technological frontier.<sup>3</sup> Ninety-four percent of economists in the *Wall Street Journal's* May 2015 survey agreed that



weak capital spending had either a “large” or “modest” impact on the disappointing level of productivity performance following the financial crisis.<sup>4</sup>

A second challenge to global growth is secular stagnation, a world in which large amounts of money are being saved and becoming available as loanable funds, but little of it is actually getting invested. The lack of investment subsequently weighs down on demand, and shows up in sluggish growth figures.<sup>5</sup>

The productivity paradox and secular stagnation highlight two urgent needs. First, we need to put our resources to work by promoting forms of investment that boost economic activity in the long run. Second, we must develop policies that raise the efficiency associated with combining labor, capital, and productivity. The resources to invest are available, but we are missing

by the absence of paved roads and public transportation.<sup>6</sup>

However, Savannakhet would soon find itself amidst an infrastructure revolution. Assisted by the Asian Development Bank, Laos and its neighboring countries embarked on a 1,400 km land route project that directly connected the ports of Mawlamyine, Myanmar to the Danang deep-sea port in Vietnam (passing through Laos and Thailand) by constructing and improving roads, bridges, tunnels, and electricity grids.<sup>7</sup>

The corridor became fully operational in 2006 and had astounding implications for the families of Savannakhet. Provincial GDP grew at a rate of over 10 percent from 2006 to 2011. The number of people living in poverty fell by over a third in the same period, declining at a rate almost twice that of the rest of the country. As cross-border trade doubled, modern housing, mar-

---

## WHILE LEADING EMERGING MARKETS MAY SUFFER FROM AN ERODED HIGHWAY, MANY SMALLER ECONOMIES MAY NOT HAVE A HIGHWAY AT ALL.

---

the political will and technical expertise to invest in the right projects.

### INFRASTRUCTURE AS A GROWTH KICKSTARTER

For the people of the agrarian province of Savannakhet, Laos’s most populous district, daily circumstances in the early 2000s were extraordinarily hard. Families lived in subsistence conditions in remote, isolated areas. One in every five households was living under the poverty line, and access to health care and other social services were hampered

kets, guesthouses, and shops emerged all along the corridor.<sup>8</sup>

Infrastructure investment can generate short-term benefits by boosting aggregate demand, but its most significant impact lies in its long-term effects.<sup>9</sup> Businesses have access to larger markets; rural citizens have expanded access to public goods and services like schools and hospitals.

Investing in physical infrastructure—electricity, gas, telecommunications, transportation, water supply, and sewerage—makes economic sense.<sup>10</sup> Yet



it's an area where national governments have underperformed time and again.

## A SOCIAL DEBT THAT'S LONG OVERDUE

It's difficult to feel moved by concepts like public capital or infrastructure investment because there's no clear emotional component to steel

# ONE IN THREE CHILDREN BORN IN RURAL MONGOLIA TODAY WILL HAVE NO ACCESS TO IMPROVED WATER SOURCES

bridges and copper wires. However, the infrastructure shortfalls faced by most countries today represent a serious constraint on economic and social development.

One in three children born in rural Mongolia today will have no access to improved water sources such as a household connection, public standpipe, or protected well on the premises of their homes.<sup>11</sup> Fifteen percent of Turkey's entire electricity production is lost due to faults in transmission and distribution.<sup>12</sup> Brazil's ports rank far behind the rest of those in Latin America and close to the "extremely underdeveloped" category.<sup>13</sup> Finally, contrary to popular belief, even Germany has covered only half of its local rail system's needs (€260 million) over the past decade.<sup>14</sup>

From a global perspective, these deficiencies shouldn't be surprising. Public investment in the past thirty years has declined steadily in advanced, emerging, and developing economies alike<sup>15</sup> and has only recently begun to pick up emerging and developing countries.<sup>16</sup> But if infrastructure leads to such clear

social and economic benefits, why have nations across the globe consistently underinvested in it?

The reason is a mix of political and financial constraints. Infrastructure projects are a long-term enterprise, but policy makers face incentives to prioritize programs that generate immediately visible benefits. This is especially problematic for maintenance spending, which holds no glory for politicians wishing to show off big projects to their constituents. Infrastructure investments also require significant cash investments at the outset. Cash-strapped governments and firms with limited access to capital face difficulty in financing the large initial costs of infrastructure projects. For the public sector, raising the necessary resources usually implies either raising taxes or taking out debt, both of which may be unpopular and link the financial constraints to the political ones.

## HOW TO LEAD AN INFRASTRUCTURE PUSH

Infrastructure deficiencies are a social debt that's long overdue. Overcoming these deficits will require a long-term commitment from national and local authorities to coordinate an infrastructure push that sets the investment process in motion.

South Australia's Strategic Infrastructure Plan sets a good example for government coordination. Aware of the challenges posed by urban population growth and a diversifying economy, local officials joined forces with the national government and the private sector to identify physical capital priorities and lay out clear, long-term investment objectives. One of the plan's flagship projects, the \$564 million Northern Expressway, which was designed and constructed through joint ventures and funded by a dual effort between national authorities and the local government, was opened three months ahead of



schedule. It went on to become a best practice case study for the Australian government.<sup>17</sup>

Another positive example for successful coordination, especially for financially constrained developing countries, is Argentina's recent Vaca Muerta agreement, signed in January 2017. Faced with the world's second-largest non-conventional gas reserves, much of which have gone untapped, national authorities devised a multi-stakeholder accord. Firms committed to a long-term investment plan, local governments agreed not to increase applicable taxes, worker unions included productivity clauses in their collective bargaining agreements, and the federal government provided the investment in highways and railroads necessary to run the entire operation. The Argentine government is currently moving forward with site operations as it aims to reduce its dependence on foreign energy imports.<sup>18</sup>

Regional infrastructure projects can sometimes be more cost effective and efficient than national efforts. By pooling resources with neighbors, countries can better exploit economies of scale. In Latin America, the Itaipú-Asunción-Yacyreta Transmission Line Project, which was developed jointly between the governments of Paraguay and Brazil, addresses the region's electricity transmission losses. The project also attracted funding from the Mercosur Structural Convergence Fund, a financial support mechanism that seeks to reduce structural asymmetries between its partners.<sup>19</sup>

National and regional efforts comprise the core of any serious infrastructure push, but multilateral approaches are also effective. International financial institutions, while traditionally supportive of new projects, have been less

willing to provide assistance for public capital maintenance. However, avoiding capital deterioration can be more cost-effective than starting new projects from scratch.<sup>20</sup> Multilateral development banks also have an important role to play in assisting developing countries with early-stage risk assessment and project development support.

## GETTING SPECIFIC: THE RIGHT KIND OF INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING FOR THE RIGHT KIND OF COUNTRY

Not all infrastructure investment is created equal.

We must carefully consider the differences between infrastructure investments in developing and developed countries. In the former, pushing for investment in new projects that expand capacity makes sense precisely because developing nations suffer from undersupply. For industrialized nations, however, a considerable amount of public and private capital may already exist (for example, extensive interstate highway systems, modern international

**RARELY HAVE  
CONDITIONS BEEN MORE  
OPTIMAL FOR A BIG PUSH  
IN INFRASTRUCTURE  
SPENDING.**

airports, and extensive electric grids). Developed countries may therefore find it more cost effective to focus on maintenance spending. Consider, as a case in point, the erosion of paved highways in the United States: research from Michigan State University suggests that for every dollar spent on preventive pavement maintenance, taxpayers save four



to ten dollars on rehabilitation costs down the line.<sup>21</sup>

A second important distinction is differences across countries' fiscal space. Nations with high public debt-to-GDP ratios (a mixed bag that includes Japan, Italy, and Portugal, but also Greece, Lebanon, and Jamaica) may be hesitant to go on a spending spree which could worsen their existing debt levels. They may also be unable to access cheap capital to fund such projects.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) sought to address this concern in the October 2014 edition of their World Economic Outlook. Given economic slack and monetary accommodation, the positive effects of spending on aggregate demand could reduce public debt-to-GDP levels, the report finds.<sup>22</sup> In all fairness, that same report also advises caution for those cases where returns are uncertain and the efficiency of investment is particularly low. Still, additional contributions to the literature have sought to ease debt concerns by pointing to the current global scenario of persistently low real interest rates. For countries with large current account surpluses—such as Germany—domestic infrastructure might be a profitable alternative to investing in foreign assets.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, there are some important regional differences regarding infrastructure priorities through 2020. The International Development Finance Club has compiled a list of estimated funding needs, which showcases important geographic differences in priorities. In Asia, requirements are highest in the energy sector and would consume almost half of the total necessary infrastructure funding—about 3.4 percent of annual regional GDP. In Latin America, priority lies in telecommunications with over 40 percent of total infrastructure spending needs. In Europe and Central Asia, low highway quality makes road transportation the key subsector for future development focus.<sup>24,25</sup>

## CONCLUSION: THE TIME IS NOW

Rarely have conditions been more optimal for a big push in infrastructure spending. Borrowing costs are low, economic activity is weak, and developing nations are lacking many kinds of basic social and productive services.

In its 2014 World Economic Outlook, the IMF devoted an entire chapter to the importance of public spending in infrastructure, emphasizing that its successful implementation raises economic activity in both the short and long term. Among its concluding remarks, the report called for an increase in infrastructure investment by those countries with clearly identified needs and the capacity to efficiently mobilize the necessary resources.<sup>26</sup>

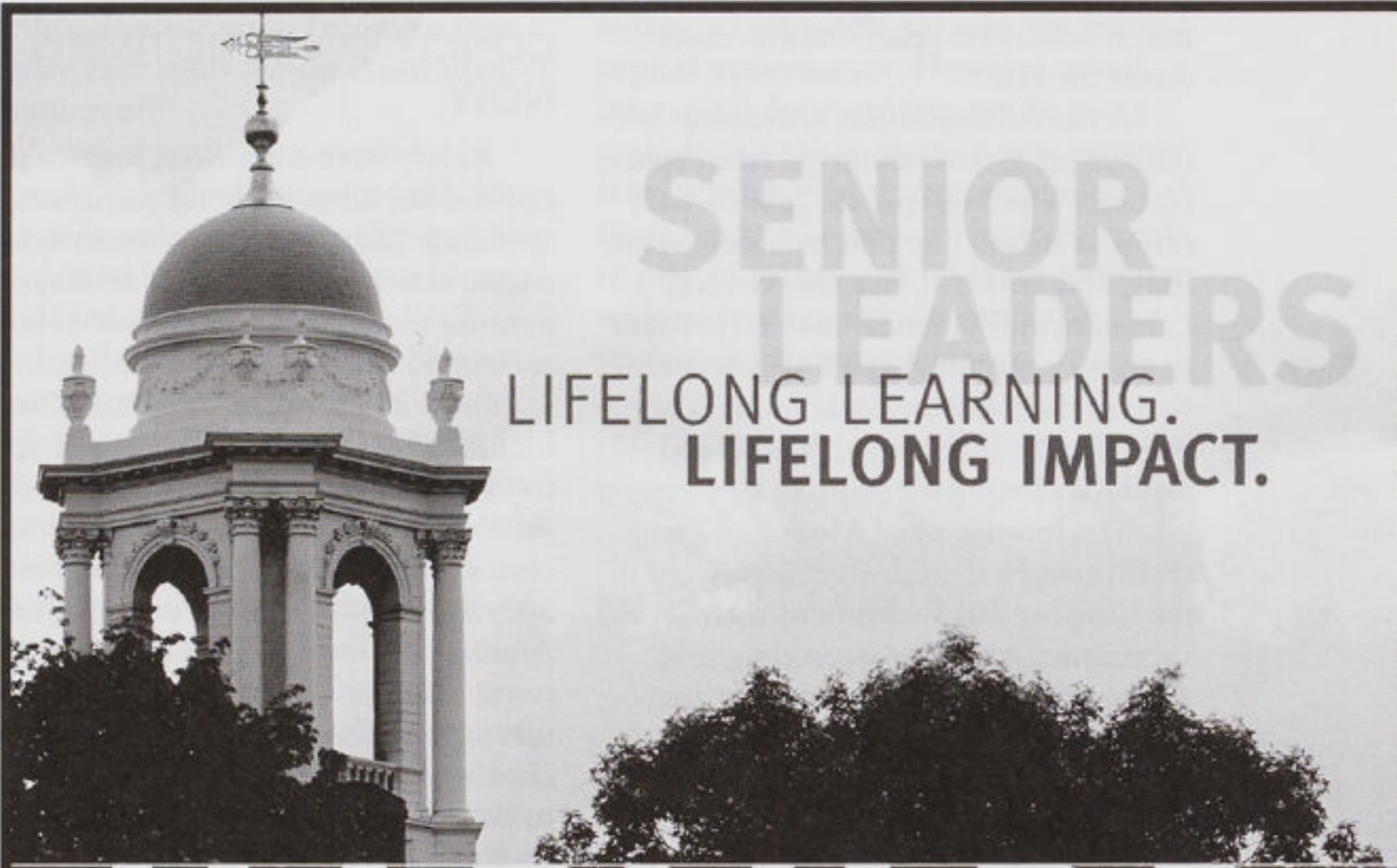
It is easy to see that mistakes have been made in the search for prosperity. It is also easy to surrender to disappointment or frustration in the pursuit of greater economic returns. But now is not the time to stop trying. When 18th-century economists shrugged at the idea of further economic growth, citing the fixed amount of arable land as an insurmountable limitation, they failed to foresee that human willpower and innovation would overcome it. Three centuries later the debate is back, and we already know what the next step should be.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am thankful to Professor Henry Lee for his helpful suggestions while writing this article. I would also like to acknowledge Cecilia Garibotti and Rodrigo García Ayala, who provided critical feedback.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>





# SENIOR LEADERS

LIFELONG LEARNING.  
LIFELONG IMPACT.

# HARVARD

**Continuous learning is no longer an option – it's a necessity.**

Effective leaders know the importance of building new skills, networking, and keeping up with innovative ideas to face the challenges of uncertain times.

**Harvard Kennedy School's Executive Education** programs focus on areas such as leadership, strategy, negotiation, governance, and finance. Participants gain the skills and analytical understanding necessary to manage and lead results-driven agencies and organizations.

For more information on Executive Education programs offered by Harvard Kennedy School, visit [www.hks.harvard.edu/ee/journal](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/ee/journal) or call 617-496-0484.



**HARVARD Kennedy School**

*Executive Education*



# Four Steps toward Fostering a High-Performing Culture in Government

by Colin Murphy

*Colin Murphy is a second-year student at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, in the master in public policy program. Before attending the Kennedy School, he worked at the Bridgespan Group, providing strategic consulting to mission-driven organizations. Colin is passionate about government performance, helping government organizations to better meet the needs of the people they represent.*

IN THE UNITED STATES, twenty-two million people work in government.<sup>1</sup> These people sweep our streets, educate our children, and protect our borders. So much of our quality of life depends on how well these employees and their teams are working. Government performance—the ability of the people and organizations within government to deliver services effectively and efficiently—matters because it affects us all. Improving government performance, however, is a tough nut to crack. For one, there is no simple bottom line measure of success for government agencies as there is in business. And even if there were, few people would make the case that our government agencies are sufficiently high performing. Given these realities, what can we do to improve government performance?

Citizens dissatisfied with government performance can vote out elected officials, but this is rarely a satisfying

driver for improved performance. There are also newer, more focused efforts under development, such as “pay for success” models. In these models, governments deliver services in a structure that incentivizes improved outcomes.<sup>2</sup> Such efforts, whether leadership or policy changes, eventually run up against an important and often intractable element of organizational performance: culture.

Consider a state-level child welfare department. Thousands of children in vulnerable circumstances depend on the work of this department. While a new leader or new policies may offer hope for improved performance—providing better care for children—success will depend on the ingrained habits and practices of front-line workers and their supervisors as well as their openness to change. If the culture of the department is not high performing—that is to say, the culture does not facilitate the ongoing adaptation necessary for sustainable



growth in results—new initiatives will fall short of their potential. For example, a staff member may not propose new ways to use data to match children to the most appropriate care situation if he or she fears a hostile reception from others due to a change-resistant culture.

Culture, in the context of organizational performance, is the combination of social norms, shared values, and habits expressed by a group of people. It is typically applied to understand how well a group is carrying out its work. You know a practice is part of the culture when it becomes “the way we do things around here,” according to John Kotter, a professor emeritus at Harvard Business School who writes about

## IN PURSUIT OF HIGH PERFORMANCE IN GOVERNMENT, CULTURE DEMANDS OUR ATTENTION.

culture.<sup>3</sup> An organization’s culture is a complex phenomenon. It is hard to describe or measure, and it has varied causes and manifestations.

Influencing culture in government settings presents a unique set of challenges. Compared to the business world, government organizations tend to offer fewer talent development opportunities and present greater bureaucratic constraints. These two features often inhibit how individuals and teams are able to improve their work performance. Yet opportunities exist to overcome these challenges. In pursuit of high performance in government, culture demands our attention.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE AND PERFORMANCE

This article explores how the culture of an organization affects its ability to deliver results—in a word, performance. Admittedly, understanding an organization’s culture is far from simple. For any one organization or company, many cultures and subcultures will exist. In addition to being itself diverse, culture also influences how an organization works in myriad ways. Culture can have both negative and positive manifestations. For example, a prominent *New York Times* article described a “bruising workplace” at Amazon.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Pixar, the film company, is well-known for its spirit of collaboration and creativity.<sup>5</sup>

Even a high-performance culture takes many shapes. For some organizations, this may mean striving to be customer focused or data driven. High-performance cultures foster a willingness to ask tough questions and to experiment with small failures. High-performing organizations exhibit a mix of accountability and learning for teams, combined with motivation and engagement for employees.

Culture influences an organization’s ability to achieve results. The business world offers many lessons on the importance of culture to performance. Professor James Heskett of Harvard Business School shows a company’s culture can account for up to 50 percent of the difference in performance between similar companies or teams.<sup>6</sup> This notion that even a smart strategy can run up against a mismatched culture is reflected in the common refrain, “culture eats strategy for breakfast.” Gallup found that organizations scoring in the top quartile on measures of engagement, one aspect of culture, averaged 18 percent higher productivity and 12



percent higher profitability compared to the bottom quartile.<sup>7</sup>

It is clear culture matters when it comes to improving performance. Yet effecting change in government is not the same as effecting change in business. What can government leaders and managers do to foster a high-performing culture on their teams? This article offers four practical steps, focusing on what is unique about influencing culture in a government context. The first is about defining the culture a leader wants his or her organization to exhibit. The second and third are action-oriented—one focused on empowering front-line workers with training and the other on small management changes. The fourth suggests measuring culture, allowing for learning and continuous improvement. This is not an exhaustive list but instead provides examples of what government managers can do to understand and influence culture.

### *1. Set a Clear Culture Vision, Building on the Public Service Purpose*

Government leaders who want to change an organization's culture should first define the culture they want to establish. One particular opportunity in a government setting is to build on the motivation that draws many employees into public service in the first place. They are all, one way or another, working to serve the public. In government, a shared commitment to public service represents an important opportunity for influencing culture among employees. The idea of assisting citizens or serving their community may help employees find common purpose in their work.

One specific way to do this is by connecting employees to residents and constituents. Elizabeth Linos of the Behavioral Insights Team, a public sector consulting firm, writes about how

behavioral science ideas might apply to government employees. She cites one study indicating that frequent contact with beneficiaries can improve motivation.<sup>8</sup> Feeling a connection to residents

## THE IDEA OF ASSISTING CITIZENS OR SERVING THEIR COMMUNITY MAY HELP EMPLOYEES FIND COMMON PURPOSE IN THEIR WORK.

and constituents may serve as an asset in efforts to influence culture change in government.

A vision should be broader than just connecting to constituents; it should also spell out other expectations for teams and employees. Mollie West, an organizational designer at IDEO, writes that organizations can define a "culture manifesto" to encapsulate that vision.<sup>9</sup> Governments or departments might write a culture manifesto that embraces customer service, supports experimenting with new ways of working, and encourages data-driven questions. Regardless of what is included, a vision is an essential starting point before taking further action to change culture or measure success.

### *2. Empower Employees to Generate Results on Their Own*

People in leadership positions may feel culture is out of their reach, since so much of the work of an organization happens away from a leader's immediate control. By empowering employees to make changes on their own, leaders can create an environment that fosters a high-performing culture.

One of the most lauded efforts in the United States to foster high per-



formance in city government in recent years comes from the city of Denver, Colorado. Beginning in 2012, the city launched a series of workshops called Peak Academy, which sought to “train frontline employees and mid-level managers how to eliminate waste and deliver better value to the customer.”<sup>10</sup> One early success story involved reducing wait times for customers who were obtaining resident parking permits. An employee proposed a simple change: adding labels to shelves to make it easier to pass out the forms quickly, which ultimately allowed his team to better serve residents.<sup>11</sup>

Peak Academy offers a range of training for city employees at all levels: four-hour introductory process im-

thousand “innovations” submitted by employees.<sup>12</sup>

Brian Elms, the director of Peak Academy, recognizes the role of culture in innovation, although he deliberately does not attempt to influence it directly. “Forget trying to force culture change,” he writes. “Focus on results.”<sup>13</sup> Elms and Peak Academy leadership see training staff and generating results as a means of changing the culture and insist culture change itself is not the goal. Despite this framing, the change in Denver is illustrative for those who want to make a difference in the way their employees work. A culture changes not simply through top-down efforts from city leadership but also bottom up. Notably, this type of empower-

## [A] VISION IS AN ESSENTIAL STARTING POINT BEFORE TAKING FURTHER ACTION TO CHANGE CULTURE OR MEASURE SUCCESS.

provement trainings; a five-day training that goes deeper, teaching tools such as process mapping and brainstorming tactics; and a day-long executive training on how to nurture process improvers on their teams. Peak Academy also offers a mentoring program to support employees as they seek to break out of the status quo. As of 2016, almost five thousand Denver employees had gone through some form of the Peak Academy training. After participating, individual employees then can become champions with their colleagues for the Peak culture, empowering others to generate innovations. Peak Academy expresses part of its cultural DNA in its motto, “Innovate. Elevate. Repeat.” As of April 2016, Peak Academy reported \$15 million saved for the City of Denver over four years and more than two

ment requires leaders to give up some control in the process. Employees are empowered and offered the opportunity to build new skills, and thus they also develop new behaviors and mindsets. This flows through to a broader culture of performance.

### *3. Start Small, Even in the Face of Bureaucracy*

Government leaders pursuing any kind of change are often hamstrung by limited resources and teams that work in silos. In contrast, leaders in business are often freer to embark on massive change efforts. At General Motors, CEO Mary Barra is attempting to transform the “famously stagnant bureaucracy” by focusing on culture. Some initiatives underway include cross-functional problem-solving “co-labs,” a



yearlong “transformational leadership” course for top executives, and a quarterly two-day offsite retreat with her sixteen closest reports focused on their interactions.<sup>14</sup> With rare exceptions, the financial and bureaucratic constraints facing governments prohibit these types of massive transformations.

However, not all culture change efforts need to involve complete restructuring—they can start small. One example of a small change a leader can make toward redefining a culture is the design of “rituals.” According to organizational design consultants Mollie West and Kate McCoubrey Judson, a ritual is “a meaningful recurring practice that connects employees to an organization’s core beliefs.”<sup>15</sup> One example they cite is Facebook, where anyone can request posters printed with a quote or picture connected to company values of openness and creativity. West and McCoubrey Judson believe that rituals are powerful drivers of culture. They note organizations engage in rituals all the time, and that new rituals need to feel authentic.<sup>16</sup> In government, a new ritual that points toward high performance might involve beginning meetings by questioning whether all the right data has been surfaced. Rituals aren’t the only small changes leaders can make—leaders can adjust everything from their email communication practices to the physical workplace environment. By being intentional about how practices connect to core values, an organization can reshape its culture.

#### *4. Measure the Culture, Following the Private Sector*

The business world is undergoing a shift toward quantifying aspects of talent management, also known as people analytics, and this shift represents an opportunity for government too. Culture Amp, a company based in Australia and the United States, offers a product that helps organizations collect and analyze data about employee engagement and feedback. The product is specifically pitched as a tool for culture change.

While differences between sectors are important, government should also be able to quantify culture, following in the footsteps of many Culture Amp business clients. “Our philosophy still applies in the public sector. In order to improve culture, you need to understand it, and in order to understand it, you need to measure it,” says David Ostberg, Director of Insights at Culture Amp.<sup>17</sup>

Culture Amp’s products are used by companies such as Airbnb and Warby Parker and also by nonprofits such as Médecins Sans Frontières and Save the Children. Culture Amp calls its product a “people analytics platform.”<sup>18</sup> They offer a survey that asks questions about employee engagement, such as how much employees feel recognized by senior leadership. Based on the results of regular surveying, leaders can identify problem areas facing their teams or subunits that merit extra attention. Taking action is an essential step, and leaders would be misguided to conduct only the surveys. Instead, they should make changes with the same frequency that surveys are offered, demonstrating to employees that the information collected is actually being used. Otherwise, these surveys risk becoming black boxes for employee frustration that can create further disengagement.<sup>19</sup>

These products are part of a broader trend of optimism around the ability to influence culture directly, applying some of the Silicon Valley ethos that everything can be quantified and conducted digitally. Culture Amp has competitors that offer similar survey products, such as 15Five and Officevibe.<sup>20</sup> A similar tool, VoloMetrix, was purchased by Microsoft in 2015.<sup>21</sup> Leaders and managers in government can adopt these survey tools or even create their own. The tools offer an empirical assessment of culture, clarifying variations between teams or over time. From there leaders can pinpoint opportunities for new interventions and assess their effectiveness. Crucially, these tools represent an opportunity for leaders to



assess their progress toward whatever vision they set for culture change.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Drawing on lessons from the business community and cutting-edge efforts across other states and localities, we can foster a high-performance culture in government. By defining a clear culture vision and tapping into a sense of purpose, governments can help employees find intrinsic motivation. By empowering employees to make changes themselves, leaders can promote a bottom-up approach to change. Leaders can play their part by making small changes, such as new rituals, specifically targeted at improving the culture. And finally, through measurement, governments can continuously improve, building on what is working and what is not. Given the importance of the work of those twenty-two million government employees, and the millions more around the world, we must ensure a culture of high performance.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# Mandatory Digital Privacy Labels:

One Way to Protect Consumer Data

by Katherine Mansted

*Katherine Mansted is a master in public policy candidate at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and an Australian General Sir John Monash Harvard Scholar.*

NINETY-ONE PERCENT of Internet users feel they have “lost control” of their personal information, Pew Research Center found in a 2016 poll.<sup>1</sup> The exponential increase in the capacity of firms to collect, store, and analyze data raises significant privacy concerns. But the most significant challenge for policy makers is not the risk that personal data will be misused. Instead, it is the fact that there is no common understanding between consumers, firms, or regulators about the extent or the nature of this risk.

Consumers feel that they have lost control because they do not clearly understand how and when firms collect and use their personal information. For their part, firms and regulators do not have a clear appreciation of digital consumers’ privacy preferences. This situation damages both consumer and commercial interests. Consumers risk unwittingly exposing themselves to privacy violations, while firms face regulatory uncertainty and struggle to win consumer trust.

For these reasons, we need privacy laws and policies fit for the digital age. A necessary first step in privacy reform is to improve privacy disclosure. Specifically, the government should mandate digital “Privacy Labels.” Privacy labeling laws will give consumers more control over their personal data and, by enabling consumers to make informed decisions, help firms and regulators to better understand consumer privacy preferences. Consequently, such laws will also set the conditions for more informed debate and evidence-based privacy regulation.

## TECHNOLOGICAL CAPACITY

More personal data is being generated and collected than ever before. Three technological forces drive the growth: (1) increased data processing power, (2) the economic value of bigger networks, and (3) the cost effectiveness of storing information in “the cloud.” Moore’s law—which suggests that the processing power of computers doubles every two years—incentivizes firms to



collect vast amounts of data and provides the power to analyze and monetize them. At the same time, Metcalfe's law—which shows the exponential value to a network of each additional user and device—ensures that digital connectivity continues to expand across

pendent.<sup>5</sup> Consumers can also trade or otherwise relinquish their privacy rights. Indeed, respect for autonomy—said to be the root of privacy—entails not only the freedom to keep personal data private but also the freedom to disclose it. While we know that privacy preferences

---

## BETWEEN 2003 AND 2010, THE WORLD'S NUMBER OF CONNECTED DEVICES GREW FROM 500 MILLION TO 12.5 BILLION

---

traditional and new platforms, such as the Internet of Things. Between 2003 and 2010, the world's number of connected devices grew from 500 million to 12.5 billion and is predicted to reach 50 billion in 2020.<sup>2</sup> Axiomatically, the more people and devices (from cars to fridges) that connect to the Internet, the more data there are to collect. Finally, the emergence of cloud computing—hailed by Microsoft and others as the “Fourth Industrial Revolution”—permits storage of an unprecedented amount of data, which are often technologically unfeasible or cost prohibitive to delete.<sup>3</sup>

### PRIVACY REGULATION

Despite the obvious privacy risks of mass data collection and storage, policy makers seem uncertain how to proceed. This uncertainty stems in part from the amorphous nature of privacy itself. As defined by Alan Westin, a privacy law pioneer, privacy is the ability of individuals “to choose freely under what circumstances and to what extent they will expose themselves, their attitude, and their behavior to others.”<sup>4</sup> Thus by definition, privacy is subjective. Individuals value their privacy differently, and the extent to which they choose to expose personal details is highly context de-

vary depending on the individual and the context, there is insufficient evidence to assess the scope of these preferences.<sup>6</sup> Regulators, therefore, do not yet have a clear understanding of what privacy choices they should be protecting.

### SYSTEMIC INFORMATION ASYMMETRY

The current privacy regulatory regime complicates assessment of consumer privacy expectations since it incentivizes information asymmetry between firms and consumers. The United States does not have a central privacy protection authority or comprehensive privacy law. Instead, firms' privacy obligations depend on the sector and state they operate in and on the type of information they collect. The main way organizations have responded to privacy concerns is by posting privacy policies (PPs) to their websites, which purport to notify users about the website's data collection, use, disclosure, and security practices. Most firms are not legally obliged to post a PP.<sup>7</sup> However, virtually all now do (compared to only 2 percent in 1998).<sup>8</sup> While this development might appear to be an admirable example of industry self-regulation, it is best characterized as self-protection. US privacy regulation focuses on ensuring



that users receive notice of and consent to uses of their personal data. Consequently, firms typically produce PPs that are verbose, jargon-cluttered, and even internally inconsistent.<sup>9</sup> This type of drafting maximizes a firm's ability to argue that it notified consumers of objectionable data practices. While the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) can charge organizations that violate their own PPs, the more complex and ambiguous the PP, the less likely an FTC action will succeed.<sup>10</sup>

The use of PPs as the predominant vehicle for informing consumers about privacy issues means that consumers often lack the ability to make informed choices about how and when to share their personal information. Unsurprisingly, most digital consumers do not even attempt to read PPs.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, even the most diligent consumer could not read every PP she came across. Researchers Lorrie Cranor and Aleecia McDonald estimate that this task would take around seventy-six days every year.<sup>12</sup> Further, for consumers who attempt to read a PP, its ambiguity might nudge them toward complacency. As legal scholar Cass Sunstein has detailed, a complex or vague disclosure document can cause recipients to be indifferent to the risks it informs them about.<sup>13</sup> This behavioral effect further muddies analysis of consumer preferences and what they would consent to if fully informed.

Information asymmetry also harms commercial interests. Microsoft has lamented that firms that do not have transparent data practices are undermining industry trust.<sup>14</sup> Consumer distrust leads to suboptimal economic outcomes. A World Economic Forum report warned that more transparent privacy disclosure is needed to unlock the economic potential of big data.<sup>15</sup> Given the unprecedented economic and

scientific possibilities of big data,<sup>16</sup> both industry and governments share an interest in privacy regulation that (re) builds consumer trust.

## REFORM OPTIONS

The failings of the voluntary PP regime have prompted a number of reform proposals. These can be broadly categorized into two groups: those that advocate limiting data "collection", and those that focus on restricting its "use." Consumer advocates have historically argued that personal information should be collected and stored only for specific, identified purposes, a concept codified in the FTC's Fair Information Practice Principles of 1973.<sup>17</sup> However,

limiting data collection is not necessarily practical in the age of big data. The value of large datasets comes from using them in unexpected and innovative ways to find previously unanticipated patterns.<sup>18</sup>

A second group of reform proposals, led by the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST), attempts to balance innovation and privacy by instead focusing on regulating data use.<sup>19</sup> However, policies that shift the focus from collection to use disempower consumers, leaving decisions as to what constitutes acceptable uses of their data to bureaucrats or firms. By diminishing consumers' rights to control which information is collected in the first place, policies that focus on use also deprive consumers of autonomy—the very essence of privacy.

## INTRODUCE PRIVACY LABELS TO THE DIGITAL ARENA

Rather than shifting the focus of privacy regulation from data collection to use, the focus should be on improving disclosure at the stage of data col-

# [B]Y DEFINITION, PRIVACY IS SUBJECTIVE

---



lection. Specifically, legislation should require privacy labels to be conspicuously displayed on digital products and services operated by US organizations or sold in the United States. A privacy label can be thought of as a summary of the most salient, privacy-related information about the relevant product or service—be it a website, app, or Internet-enabled device.

Governments have mandated information labels in other domains—for example to show the health risks of smoking, nutritional content of packaged food, and energy efficiency of household appliances. Introducing privacy labels to the digital arena could empower consumers to strike bargains with firms that are consistent with their privacy preferences. Recognizing that people value privacy differently, privacy labels permit consumers to exercise informed consent on a case-by-case basis. They also avoid the need for heavy-handed government intervention that might fetter innovation, for example by blocking *a priori* transactions where data is collected for unspecified or unlimited purposes.

### Legal Framework

Privacy label legislation should empower a government agency such as the FTC to prescribe requirements for the form and content of labels and to enforce these requirements. The same agency should also be given legislative responsibility for researching and designing effective labels, sensitive to technological restraints and industry and consumer needs. In effect, the responsible agency should create a mandatory template that would specify minimum form and content requirements for labels while leaving certain details up to individual firms. There is precedent for this type of legislative disclosure regime. For example, the Dodd–Frank Act authorizes the Consumer Financial Pro-

tection Bureau to issue rules to ensure financial consumers are “provided with timely and understandable information to make responsible decisions about financial transactions.”<sup>20</sup>

### Guiding Principles

The mandatory privacy label template should be informed by principles of effective disclosure and regulatory best practice. As is demonstrated by the confusion PPs currently cause for consumers, the mere fact of disclosure does not guarantee that it will be effective. Instead, the empirical research demon-

**THERE IS PRECEDENT  
FOR THIS TYPE  
OF LEGISLATIVE  
DISCLOSURE REGIME.**

strates that effective disclosure policies need to be based on an understanding of how real people process information. Disclosure documents must be “concrete, straightforward, simple, meaningful, timely, and salient,” as Cass Sunstein has explained.<sup>21</sup> There should also be conspicuous disclosure of both the risks and benefits of a product or service. These principles have been incorporated into other agencies’ disclosure regimes—for example, the US Treasury Department has made clear that, in relation to consumer financial disclosure statements, technical compliance with the law is insufficient; statements must be “reasonable,” in the sense that they are understandable and non-deceptive to the average consumer.<sup>22</sup>

Another important element of disclosure regimes is that they must facilitate comparison and market competition, so that consumers can shop for the product or service that best meets their privacy expectations. Accordingly, while different templates will likely be



needed for different platform types—for example apps, sites, and physical devices—the appearance and content of privacy labels should be as consistent as possible. The label should also be displayed at a time that makes sense as part of the user experience so that consumers have fair opportunity to digest the information. To test whether a proposed template is consistent with these principles, it is recommended that the FTC conduct empirical tests including randomized experiments.

### *Content Requirements*

Labeling laws should require firms to disclose the most important privacy-related information to consumers. The Appendix imagines what this might look like. Most importantly, the label should include information about the types of data that will be collected and the way the organization will use these data, including how they will be stored and analyzed and who they might be shared with. A distinction should be drawn between personally identifiable and non-personally identifiable data, as it is likely that consumer sensitivity to privacy will differ between these categories. Further, the privacy label should display the benefits of data collection—for both consumers and the organization itself—together with key risks (such as fraud and theft) and the strategies for mitigating them. To make the information contained in the privacy label more salient to users, it would be helpful for the responsible agency to develop a ratings system so that consumers can see a graphic display of how much data a site or product collects in comparison to others. The label might also summarize any rights of the consumer to access, alter, or delete their information. Finally, the label could hyperlink to additional information, such as the full PP or definitions of more technical words.

### *Display*

Privacy labels should be graphically displayed to consumers. This is different

to proposals that use privacy-enabling technology to make the information contained in PPs more transparent to consumers, such as the Platform for Privacy Preferences Protocol (P3P).<sup>23</sup> P3P allows users to input data collection and use preferences, and it alerts them or takes actions like blocking cookies if they encounter a site that does not conform to these preferences.<sup>24</sup> However, as critics of P3P have observed, “the existence of P3P technology does not ensure its use.”<sup>25</sup> Without a legislative obligation, widespread adoption of privacy-enabling technology is unlikely.

Moreover, by minimizing human decision making, there is a risk that P3P and similar proposals will result in a “set and forget” mentality. Behavioral science tells us that “vivid, salient, and novel presentations may trigger attention in ways that abstract or familiar ones cannot.”<sup>26</sup> Having a machine negotiate privacy rights behind the scenes is anything but vivid to the end user. By contrast, a conspicuously displayed privacy label explicitly confronts users with the privacy implications of the products and services they are using. Privacy labels will be most effective if they empower end users, rather than machines, to make informed decisions about their privacy.

### *Political Feasibility*

A privacy disclosure regime can be framed as beneficial not just to consumers but to commercial interests. Privacy labels could reduce regulatory uncertainty and consumer distrust, which, as discussed above, have real economic consequences for firms. They could also open a new avenue for digital firms to compete on, namely their privacy offerings. Further, research suggests that consumers are less concerned about their privacy (at least vis-à-vis corporations, if not the government) than advocates believe.<sup>27</sup> As consumers’ lives become more digitized, it is plausible that they will be more willing to trade personal information for customized services.<sup>28</sup> If, after labeling laws are implemented, consumers give informed consent to



significant information disclosures, this could be used as evidence to dissuade further government intervention. Privacy labels could therefore be a win-win reform for consumers and industry.

## CONCLUSION

Admittedly, significant work is required to take the idea of privacy labels from concept to implementation. This article has not considered the costs—to government or to firms—of such a policy. Nor does it provide a detailed catalog of which products, services, and firms labeling laws should apply to. Despite these challenges, the opportunity to introduce mandatory privacy labels should not be missed. The United States is arguably approaching a tipping point on privacy reform, created by rapid technological change, declining consumer trust, and growing pressure on the US government to respond to both. There is simply not enough information—about what privacy preferences consumers

have and about how organizations use consumers' data—upon which to base good reform. The way that the market and the law have dealt with privacy concerns to date, via PPs, has only exacerbated this uncertainty. Mandatory privacy labels could help solve this problem by empowering consumers to make informed decisions based on information that is understandable, meaningful, and comparable across platforms.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>

## APPENDIX: SAMPLE PRIVACY LABEL<sup>29</sup>

# PRIVACY LABEL

We collect info about your...	Personally-identifiable information	Non-identifiable information
personal identity (eg. name, age, gender, SSN)	x	
family	x	
health or medical situation		
financial data or history	x	x
contact details (other than email)	x	
political preferences		x
user behavior (eg. browsing history)	x	

We can do these things with your info...	
use it for general analysis or marketing	x
use it for analysis of or marketing targeted at you	x
sell it to third parties	
share it with our related entities for general analysis or marketing	x
share it with our related entities for analysis of or marketing targeted at you	x
share it on public forums	
use it to contact you with advertising	x

**Who are we?**  
This site is operated by *leGoog, inc.* which is a member of the Betaalph group of companies.

**How can you access and control your data?**  
You can ask for a record of personally identifiable info we hold about you up to 3 times each year and we will respond to this request within 3 months. We usually (but don't have to) comply with a request to delete specific info about you.

**How do we protect your data?**  
We encrypt your personally identifiable info and use a method known as *k-anonymity* to de-identify information before we provide it to third parties.

**How long do we store your data?**  
We will delete any personally identifiable info we hold about you up to 6 years after your last interaction with us, but can hold all other information indefinitely.

**Benefits to you**  
*We use your information to show you products and services we think you'll like.*

**Benefits to us**  
*Knowing more about our consumers helps us to improve our product.*

*We receive payment from third parties in exchange for your de-identified data.*

**Risks to you**  
*Whenever data about you, your history or activities is collected, this can pose a risk to you. Risks include:*

- a security breach of our servers
- theft of your information
- non-identifiable info may be re-identified and attributed to you.

**PRIVACY RATING: How do we compare to other sites?**

7

Least data collection & use Most data collection & use

**Click here to find out more**



# A Blueprint for Businesses Engaging with the Indian Government

by Malini Bose

*Malini Bose is a student in the masters in public policy program at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She was previously a consultant in the India practice of the Albright Stonebridge Group, where she helped multinational corporations and non-governmental organizations across sectors like health care, agribusiness, sanitation, and logistics identify opportunities for investment and expansion, collaborate with the government, and advocate for reform. She holds a postgraduate diploma in liberal arts from the Young India Fellowship and an undergraduate degree in economics from the University of Delhi.*

---

*"Amazon seeks government nod to set up e-tail venture in India with investment of \$500 million"<sup>1</sup>*

*"Alibaba to lead \$200 million investment into Paytm's online market"<sup>2</sup>*

*"Apple bites Make in India carrot, to set up manufacturing unit in Bengaluru"<sup>3</sup>*

AS THESE HEADLINES from 03 February 2017, illustrate, the Indian and international media are abuzz with announcements of foreign investments. Despite setbacks to its projected growth rate, the country is expected to wrest back the title of fastest-growing large economy from China by 2018.<sup>4</sup> With one billion mobile network subscribers,<sup>5</sup> a workforce of 900 million by 2020,<sup>6</sup> and an annual foreign direct investment

rate of US\$75 billion,<sup>7</sup> India is hungry for growth.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been promoting this India to multinational companies through high-profile campaigns such as "Make in India"<sup>8</sup> and "Digital India."<sup>9</sup> International businesses, for their part, cannot ignore India's high growth and massive market, coupled with the government's unprecedentedly pro-business attitude.

Businesses have also realized that engaging with the government is critical for success because India's powerful bureaucracy and legislatures are involved in multiple stages of a business's life cycle. While there is no aggregate data about the size and growth of the government affairs teams at domestic and foreign companies in India, it is anecdotally clear that many are beginning



to invest more resources into working with the government to “un-bottleneck” new opportunities, expand existing operations, and preemptively address complications. For instance, Amazon,<sup>10</sup> Apple,<sup>11</sup> and Uber<sup>12</sup> have all created new India-specific public policy roles in the past two years.

Despite these positive trends, doing business in India presents numerous hurdles, as Uber discovered through its protracted legal battles with state governments.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Nestle lost millions of dollars when its popular instant noodles brand was deemed unsafe by the Indian food regulator.<sup>14</sup>

For international businesses, engaging with the Indian government is highly context-specific, and there is no silver bullet. While this piece does not have all the answers, it begins to lay out the broad principles of government engagement that international businesses should think about if they want to start, scale up, or pivot their India operations.

## REACH OUT TO THE GOVERNMENT

In 2012, Wal-Mart was accused of lobbying in India because of activities that are considered legitimate in the United States.<sup>15</sup> Situations like this and the lack of definition of lobbying in Indian law cause some foreign companies to be hesitant about engaging the Indian government. But while “lobbying” is undefined in Indian law and may appear semantically distasteful, its euphemistic sibling “advocacy” is an integral part of the Indian business ecosystem.<sup>16</sup>

Domestic and foreign companies and non-profits—particularly in the pharmaceuticals, energy, and infrastructure sectors—have government relations or public affairs divisions to manage their interactions with the government. Industry associations, non-government organizations, and public relations firms all engage in advocacy in the interest of clients and constituents. A composite law to clearly regulate lobbying is yet to be passed (one was introduced to the Parliament in 2013),<sup>17</sup> but for

now these interactions are regulated by federal laws<sup>18</sup> that ban bribery, control the flow of funds, and monitor foreign funding of non-governmental organizations in India.

## CREATE OPPORTUNITIES INSTEAD OF MANAGING CRISES

In 2015, Facebook launched Free Basics in India—a model in which it would provide some free Internet services and charge more for others.<sup>19</sup> When the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) argued that this kind of discriminatory pricing would violate net neutrality by cordoning off some services from the poor, Facebook launched an aggressive advertising campaign instead of responding to the concerns of Indian policymakers. This led the TRAI to ban all forms of discriminatory pricing and ended Facebook’s Free Basics program.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, that same year General Motors (GM) CEO Mary Barra announced that GM was shutting down its manufacturing facility in the state of Gujarat.<sup>21</sup> The secretary of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion acknowledged that GM had a case for exit but came down hard on the company for prematurely making the announcement without adequate government consultation.<sup>22</sup>

Both cases illustrate that positive collaboration with the government is a more effective strategy than reactive crisis management. If Facebook and GM had reached out to bureaucrats to seek input on regulatory questions, outcomes may have been different. The slow and deliberate process of policy making in India can sometimes be frustrating. However, it provides plenty of opportunities for private entities to shape reforms, not only for case-specific regulations but also for legislation through formal in-person representations and online comment.<sup>23</sup>



## ADOPT A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

India's political and bureaucratic machinery can be daunting to navigate for any company expecting linear processes. While the degree of complexity varies by industry, companies across industries should invest in a multi-stakeholder approach and embrace the persistence and flexibility required to unlock business value.

Take for example India's latent autonomous vehicle industry, which will need a comprehensive regulatory strategy in the future. Foreign players like Daimler, which has expressed both enthusiasm for and apprehension about the Indian market,<sup>24</sup> will have to deal with a multitude of ministries—the Ministry of Commerce and Industries to invest, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to ensure cyber security, the Ministry of Labor and Employment to address local concerns about job loss, and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to combat poor road quality.

The federal structure of India's government adds another layer of complexity and opportunity. India has twenty-nine states, which vary widely in political climate, regulatory regime, infrastructure, socioeconomic development, and commercial policy. When businesses select locations, acquire land for greenfield investments, and demand changes to operating licenses, they must assess which states work for their business. In the spirit of "competitive federalism,"<sup>25</sup> states are trying to outdo each other to attract private investment into large-scale programs like smart cities.<sup>26</sup> This gives technology companies like Microsoft or United Technologies the leverage to shop for the right regime and influence the priorities of that state.

## WRITE THE GOVERNMENT'S VICTORY SPEECH

Businesses would do well to focus not just on what the government can do for their bottom lines but also on what their proposals and requests can do for the government.

For example, Amazon has invested USD\$500 million in a food e-tail venture in India. It has capitalized on the eagerness of the Minister of Food Processing to announce concrete investments by reiterating this in public. "We

**INTERNATIONAL  
BUSINESSES...  
CANNOT IGNORE  
INDIA'S HIGH  
GROWTH AND  
MASSIVE MARKET**

are excited by the government's continued efforts to encourage FDI in India for a stronger food supply chain," the company said in a press release.<sup>27</sup>

The insurance industry's successful advocacy along similar lines shaped Parliament's passage of a federal insurance law.<sup>28</sup> Until 2015, the stake that foreign insurers could hold in Indian companies was capped at 26 percent, and the joint ventures they entered with resource-constrained Indian partners were starved for capital. Foreign<sup>29</sup> and domestic<sup>30</sup> insurers came together to create—through open letters—an effective narrative from the government's perspective around the need for a raised FDI cap of 49 percent in order to rescue the underinsured population, the capital-starved industry, and insurance-dependent infrastructure projects.



## APPRECIATE INDIA'S CONTRADICTIONS

As Cambridge economist Joan Robinson said, "Whatever you can say rightly about India, the opposite is also true."<sup>31</sup> Even as companies clamor to capture the opportunity for growth in India, they must acknowledge a parallel India of scarcity, in which 600 million people defecate in the open<sup>32</sup> and 300 million people live without electricity.<sup>33</sup> No matter how pro-investment the government is, the pressures that it faces from its citizens, a majority of whom are poor, can be strongly against globalization.

As a compelling counterfactual, over the last few years multinational pharmaceutical companies<sup>34</sup> have been railing against India's intellectual property rights regime after losing patent protection on some drugs. Mr. Modi's response was similar to that of the previous government: "I understand that you want to be compensated for your investments in R&D. At the same time, India needs medicines that are affordable for its population."<sup>35</sup>

The solution to this seemingly intractable problem could take the form of partnerships between Big Pharma companies and Indian generic manufacturers, akin to the innovative licensing agreements that Gilead has forged to provide HIV treatment.<sup>36</sup>

Tempting as it is to blame government for anti-investor policies, businesses must push themselves to answer the question: "How can I ensure that my proposal takes the poor into account?" For companies that want high-level change, coalitions with local actors can be crucial in demonstrating that their cause transcends their own interests. Meaningful partnerships with non-profits can improve businesses' legitimacy. The India Sanitation Coalition,<sup>37</sup> which was established in 2015 as a unifying platform for corporates, NGOs, foundations, and trusts, has given its varied constituents a voice in constructing mutually beneficial sanitation policies. The long-term partnership between

PepsiCo and Water.org is another effective collaboration, where the PepsiCo Foundation helped the NGO finance household-level water and sanitation loans and demonstrated to the government that it is not an indiscriminate water user and polluter.<sup>38</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The size and diversity of the Indian market, high future growth, lack of large entrenched competitors, and a center-right government that is committed to private investment-led growth are coming together to make investing in India a more attractive proposition. But the decision of how and when to engage with the Indian government can make or break a foreign company's growth plans. Across the world, firms wrestle with questions about the notoriously over-regulated Indian economy and doubt their ability to constructively work with the government. A well-crafted government engagement strategy is the right place to start. While the specifics of the strategy would depend on a host of factors, general principles apply to any company—a strategy that ensures active advocacy, creates opportunities instead of simply responding to crises, involves multiple stakeholders, makes the government look good, and acknowledges the needs and interests of the less-privileged.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many of the insights and arguments in this paper are informed by the work I did with the Albright Stonebridge Group's India practice, particularly under the tutelage of Anuradha Das Mathur and Pramath Sinha.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# Turkey in the Age of Trump:

## A Path forward for US-Turkey Relations

by Tyler Rodgers

*Tyler Rodgers is a first-year master in public policy candidate at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University concentrating in international and global affairs.*

SHORTLY AFTER MIDNIGHT on New Year's Day, a lone ISIS-inspired gunman launched an attack at a popular Istanbul nightclub that killed thirty-nine and injured sixty-five more. The rampage signaled an inauspicious start to 2017 in Turkey and offered evidence that the tumultuous events of the previous year—including an attempted military coup and the assassination of the Russian ambassador—showed no signs of abating. These episodes reflect not only domestic unrest within Turkey but also a strain in the relationship between Washington and Ankara. Government officials and pro-government media outlets within Turkey falsely placed at least some blame for all three events squarely at the feet of the United States, their longtime NATO ally.<sup>1</sup>

As the Trump administration settles into office, Turkey's strategic partnership with the United States is at a crossroads, strained by, among other differences, conflicting priorities in the Syrian civil war and Washington's response to Turkey's politics at home. Not long ago, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was heralded as a leader who "could solve the perennial riddle of Islam and Democracy."<sup>2</sup> But while the ruling Justice and Development Party was initially known for its pragmatism and a search for consensus, Erdoğan, since 2014, has forged an increasingly authoritarian path. This development is troubling to the West—not least because it has only accelerated in the wake of last summer's coup attempt.<sup>3</sup> After a state of emergency was declared, opposition politicians, journalists,

teachers, civil servants, and members of the military were purged from their positions or, worse, imprisoned. Despite not having a proven link to the coup, Erdoğan has extended this purge to the country's Kurdish minority in the south.<sup>4</sup> As the West frets over Turkey's commitment to democracy, ties have warmed between Erdoğan and Vladimir Putin, with some Turkish government officials even calling to abandon the NATO alliance and pursue a further rapprochement with Russia.<sup>5</sup>

With US-Turkey relations trending downward, President Trump must use his administration's clean slate to prioritize increased cooperation and reverse this negative trajectory. Turkey's geography ensures its importance to the United States, and both countries have an immediate shared interest in returning stability to the Middle East by defeating the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and bringing an end to the Syrian civil war.

### A PARTNERSHIP WITH STRONG ROOTS: THE ORIGINS OF US-TURKEY RELATIONS

The strategic relationship between Washington and Ankara began at the dawn of the Cold War, as the United States assumed the role of global hegemon and sought to counter the rise of the Soviet Union. While the rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union was a recent development at the time, Turkey had long looked West to seek protection from a surging Russia. Competition between the two countries



dated back hundreds of years to the time when Russia was the “ancient enemy” of the Ottoman Empire. Following the loss of Crimea to Russian forces in 1783, the Ottoman Empire sought alliances with the major European powers at the time to check further Russian expansion, a move that was replicated during World War I and again during the Cold War.<sup>6</sup>

As the Cold War began, there was consensus across both political parties within Turkey that to strengthen the economy and modernize society, investment from outside would be required.<sup>7</sup> The expansion of the Soviet sphere of influence in the region turned Washington into a willing partner, as Turkey’s geographic location suddenly became of vital importance to US foreign policy.<sup>8</sup>

President Truman approved funds to modernize Turkey’s military in 1948, while Turkish president İsmet İnönü sought to cement a relationship that went beyond financial aid. İnönü wrote directly to Truman, seeking a commitment from the United States that it would not abandon Ankara in the event of a Soviet attack on Turkish soil. While the United States did not believe Turkey to be facing an imminent Soviet threat, Turkey deftly threatened Cold War neutrality to achieve its aims. Concerned that non-aligned states could ultimately enter the Soviet orbit in the developing bipolar world, the Americans were forced to respond. In 1952, the United States sponsored Turkey’s successful accession to NATO, further formalizing attempts to bring Turkey into the post-war Western orbit.<sup>9</sup>

Although the United States was aligned against Turkey’s centuries-old foe, the US-Turkish relationship was not completely without tension. Throughout the Cold War, Turkey’s leaders used the threat of Soviet influence to extract a deeper commitment from the United States. Turkish prime minister Adnan Menderes sought to use the Russians as leverage over US economic aid in the late 1950s.<sup>10</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, further tensions between Washington and Moscow raised the potential for Turkey to swing to the Soviets.<sup>11</sup> Simply put, there have been consistent advocates for Turkey to move its foreign policy away from NATO and the West. But Turkish leadership has always stopped short of looking East to Moscow. “So long as the Soviet Union represented the overwhelming threat to Turkish security there was only so far any Turkish leader was willing to go to win over

its eastern neighbor,”<sup>12</sup> according to the scholars Nick Danforth and Chris Miller.

## AFTER THE FALL: THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IN A UNIPOLAR WORLD

After the Cold War ended, policy makers in Ankara and Washington were left to question the value of the strategic relationship in the absence of a common threat. The ambiguity was resolved soon after, in the wake of Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait. Turkey’s strategic value to the United States was reaffirmed when it joined the US coalition against Saddam and was strengthened further as Turkey participated in US efforts to contain the Iraqi leader and promote stability in the region.<sup>13</sup> The two nations’ interests also converged during the 1990s around the establishment of pro-Western regimes in the post-Soviet bloc, which were independent from Russia and integrated into the global economy.<sup>14</sup>

Yet Washington’s policies following Iraq’s eviction from Kuwait also provided new opportunities for discord. One pillar of Washington’s strategy of containment following the Gulf War—strengthening the autonomy of northern Iraq’s Kurdish population as a counterbalance to the Iraqi dictator—raised suspicions about US motives with respect to Turkish territorial integrity among policy makers in Ankara.<sup>15</sup> Fears of the Iraqi Kurds’ quest for independence, viewed as an existential threat among Turkish policy makers, were exacerbated by the United States’ 2003 invasion of Iraq.<sup>16</sup> The subsequent failure of the Bush administration to partner with Turkey to prevent terrorist operations launched against Turkey from Iraq by the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) severely damaged US-Turkey relations.<sup>17</sup>

Once in office, the Obama administration quickly took steps to repair US-Turkey relations. Following stops for multilateral summits in Europe, President Obama concluded his first official visit overseas in Turkey to acknowledge the strategic partnership’s importance to the United States.<sup>18</sup> In a speech to the Turkish parliament, Obama remarked that his trip was intended to send a message to the world. “Turkey is a critical ally,” he told the assembled lawmakers. “Turkey is an important part of Europe. And Turkey and the United States must stand together—and work together—to overcome the challenges of



our time.”<sup>19</sup> By the end of the Obama administration, however, it was clear that US-Turkey relations had fallen a long way.

The recent tensions between the United States and Turkey have created space for a rapprochement between Ankara and Moscow that Vladimir Putin has exploited. Following the attempted coup in July, Putin was quick to offer his support for Turkey’s elected government, phoning President Erdoğan one day after the coup (and three days prior to a call from President Obama).<sup>20</sup> Shortly afterwards, Erdoğan joined Putin in Moscow to announce normalized relations between their two countries.<sup>21</sup>

But while Western observers have been troubled by the rapprochement between Turkey and Russia, these fears are likely overblown. Turkey has a long history of mistrust toward Russia, as previously described. Further, there are limits to how far this cooperation can extend, with the “three Cs” of Cyprus, Crimea, and the Caucasus representing thorny issues for both sides.<sup>22</sup> Lastly, Turkey’s warmer relations with Russia are consistent with a broader change in Turkish policy in the region, as Erdoğan has returned to the policy of “zero problems with neighbors.” With Erdoğan hoping to quell domestic upheaval as he presses for constitutional changes, Ankara has taken a step back from the assertive foreign policy it has pushed in recent years.<sup>23</sup>

While fears of a rapprochement between Turkey and Russia are wrongfully inflated, concern over ties between the Trump administration and Russia are valid. President Trump has flummoxed the foreign policy community by heaping praise upon Vladimir Putin while saving his more pointed criticisms for our closest allies. Such behavior has been particularly disturbing in light of the consensus among the CIA, FBI, and NSA that Putin himself ordered a campaign focused on the US presidential election with a goal to “undermine public faith in the US democratic process.”<sup>24</sup> On the day the Obama administration announced sanctions in light of these revelations, Trump’s former head of the National Security Council, Michael Flynn, phoned

Russia’s ambassador to the United States, signaling the Trump White House could revisit the decision once in office.<sup>25</sup> As this article went to press, revelations about the call had prompted General Flynn’s resignation, but questions remained about whether Flynn was acting at

the behest of then President-elect Trump.<sup>26</sup> Within the administration, meanwhile, prominent dissenting voices have warned about the dangers of a recalcitrant Russia. During his confirmation hearing, Secretary of Defense James Mattis declared Russia the greatest threat to the United States and argued for an embrace of our existing security partnerships.<sup>27</sup> It remains to be seen how these competing visions of US foreign policy will

shape President Trump’s decision-making moving forward.

As the Trump administration progresses, the strategic implications of this debate will play out on the battlefields of the Syrian civil war, where Turkey and the United States have been aligned in their opposition to the regime of Bashar al-Assad. While Trump and his advisers have spoken of joining forces with Russia to defeat ISIS, the policy is misguided for multiple reasons. First, while Russia has used counterterrorism as the justification for its military operations in Syria, the overwhelming majority of airstrikes have targeted Assad’s moderate opposition.<sup>28</sup> Further, the United States should be wary of associating itself with the brutal tactics Russia and Assad have employed in the conflict, including the purposeful targeting of Syrian citizens.<sup>29</sup> Finally, the idea promulgated by the administration of trading counterterrorism cooperation for the easing of sanctions related to Russian activity in Ukraine would exacerbate instability in the region and invite future aggression from Putin.<sup>30</sup>

## TURKEY’S GEOGRAPHY ENSURES ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE UNITED STATES

### THE PATH FORWARD: A ROADMAP FOR US-TURKEY RELATIONS UNDER TRUMP

As President Trump’s foreign policy team defines its policy priorities, it must take con-



crete steps to recommit to its longtime ally and improve bilateral relations with Ankara. In the early stages of the administration, officials in Washington and Ankara have taken promising steps to affirm the importance of the strategic

favor with the White House, Erdoğan publicly criticized Trump's anti-Muslim rhetoric during the US presidential campaign.<sup>37</sup> As of mid-February, the White House was also considering whether to designate the Muslim Brotherhood

## [T]HE UNTAPPED ECONOMIC POTENTIAL BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND TURKEY DESERVES EXPLORATION.

relationship: Turkish foreign minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu attended President Trump's inauguration and met with high level US officials,<sup>31</sup> while CIA director Mike Pompeo recently met with President Erdoğan in Turkey.<sup>32</sup> Erdoğan and Trump even spoke by phone, committing to joint anti-ISIS operations.<sup>33</sup> But as the work of governing begins, further steps will be needed to improve ties.

First, President Trump must prioritize developing his policy to defeat ISIS. In the waning days of the previous administration, after months of deliberation, the Obama national security team decided that arming Kurdish fighters presented the best option for an assault on Raqqa, the capital city of the territory held by ISIS. After devising the plan, the Obama team left it to the incoming Trump administration to determine whether to authorize it, which the Trump team declined to do.<sup>34</sup> As this article went to print, the Pentagon was conducting a review of the military options to defeat ISIS, a decision that will have enormous implications for the future of US-Turkey relations.<sup>35</sup> US military support for the Syrian Kurds has been a strain on the strategic partnership dating back to 2014, and any further support will be an early diplomatic test for the young Trump team.<sup>36</sup>

Further, the administration urgently needs to be mindful of committing unforced errors. President Trump's past rhetoric and policy proposals targeted at the three million Muslims within the United States and over a billion Muslims worldwide have the potential to exacerbate ties with our allies in Muslim nations. While Erdoğan has not commented on the president's executive order banning entry into the United States for people from seven predominantly Muslim countries, apparently in a bid to curry

as a terrorist organization, another move with potentially deleterious effects for US-Turkey relations.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, a renewed focus on economic partnership is one way for the new administration to strengthen ties with Ankara while it determines its geo-strategic priorities. Although the goal of a "model partnership" was developed during the Obama administration, trade between both nations increased from \$14.8 billion in 2008 to just \$17.5 billion by 2015.<sup>39</sup> While President Trump looks set to return to the days of a protectionist trade policy, the untapped economic potential between the United States and Turkey deserves exploration.

Viewing the strategic partnership between the United States and Turkey through a historical lens reveals a complex relationship with long eras of peaks and valleys. If Washington is able to align key security priorities with Ankara, and as long as Turkey possesses the ability to shape events in the region, a strong working partnership should remain a priority for the United States. To this end, President Trump must define how his campaign goal of defeating ISIS will look in practice and engage in the diplomacy with Ankara his strategy will require. He must reevaluate his damaging policies towards Muslims. Finally, he must deepen the relationship by exploring further economic ties.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



*Editor's Note: This article was originally published on 10 November 2016, in the Kennedy School Review digital edition. It is reprinted here with its original content, except in cases where updated statistics or other material information have become available since the original publishing date.*

# The Trump Triumph:

## Looking Back and Moving Forward Together

*by* Bobbie Ragsdale

*Bobbie Ragsdale is an active duty US Army officer and cavalryman by trade. Hailing from New Orleans, Louisiana, he studied political science and systems engineering at West Point. He graduated in 2016 from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University master in public administration program, during which he served as the Kennedy School Student Government Vice President of Academic Affairs.*

THOROUGHLY UNEXPECTED BY nearly all on both sides of the aisle, Donald Trump defied the polls Tuesday and proved the existence of a silent majority, so often referenced, but whose existence is so often denied. They voted for a multitude of reasons, most of which had little to do with what the left would like to describe as moral failure. The American left would be wise not only to listen but also engage them without condemnation.

Like many Americans, I spent the day after the election reflecting on the causes, the reactions, and the path going forward. What I know for certain is that the country cannot heal while one half vilifies and condescends to the other. Both sides must extend a compassionate ear, find common values, and build on them, as Americans, recognizing that differences of opinion do not necessitate differences of character. And so I offer the following as my humble

contribution to the marketplace of ideas for our future.

### THE VOTES

From 2008 to 2016, Republicans slowly improved their total vote count from around 60 to 63 million. During the same timeframe, however, Democrats fell from their historic rally of about 70 million votes for President Obama in 2008, to about 66 million each in 2012 and 2016.<sup>1,2</sup> While Hillary Clinton did win the popular vote, she did so with 4 million fewer votes than the last time the party elected a new president.<sup>3,4</sup>

The Democrats largely remain the party of minority groups in the United States, but Clinton's lead with these groups eroded considerably compared with President Obama's in 2012. *USA Today* explains in the says-it-all headline, "Predictions that blacks, women and Millennials would not vote Trump



proved largely untrue.”<sup>5</sup> She lost five percentage points with Black voters, six with Latinos, and six with voters under 30 relative to President Obama in 2012.<sup>6</sup> For all the talk of glass ceilings and pantsuit nations, Clinton also lost one percentage point with women voters.<sup>7</sup>

## THE CANDIDATES

Americans tend to vote with their wallets, their hearts, or both. President Bill Clinton famously captured fears about financial uncertainty with James Carville’s famous dictate, “It’s the economy, Stupid.”<sup>8</sup> President Ronald Reagan, conversely, seized on Americans’ deep desire for a more optimistic future with “Morning in America.”<sup>9</sup> Despite the insistences of the country’s elites, however, policy details rarely sway elections, and policy-savvy politicians are unlikely to succeed on these bona fides alone. Look no further than the failed candidacies of senators Al Gore and John Kerry for evidence of the effectiveness of the twelve-point policy plan.

Hillary Clinton was considered by many to be the most qualified candidate to ever seek the office, but résumé and expertise are simply not enough to motivate the electorate, and she was unable to relate with enough Americans on an emotional or financial level.

Donald Trump, however, was able to achieve both. “Make America Great Again” will undoubtedly go down as one of the greatest political slogans in American history. By harkening back to a “simpler” time, at least in the minds of most Americans, it plays on our sense of nostalgia, which tends to be rose-tinted for all of us. We remember safer streets, better jobs, and more civility, whether or not those things were actually true. Trump was the candidate who spoke to more Americans about the things they

cared about—both financial and emotional. And so he won.

## THE ISSUES

There are a number of Americans for whom their way of life is dying: the so-called losers of globalization. These Americans grew up in a world when their parents and grandparents worked hard, had steady jobs, and owned their own houses. As plants close and factories outsource labor, they are left wondering what happened. If moving

**[T]HE COUNTRY  
CANNOT HEAL WHILE  
ONE HALF VILIFIES  
AND CONDESCENDS  
TO THE OTHER.**

an auto plant to Mexico makes cars \$1,000 cheaper for every American, that is little solace to someone who just lost a \$50,000 job and can’t get another one. Trump represents a new breed of protectionism in opposition to free trade and globalization. While the stance is likely to alienate economists, it speaks directly to the threatened class who makes up a much larger portion of the electorate, and who, unlike more traditional conservatives, still wants the government to help ensure for them a prosperous future.<sup>10</sup> Couple this with rising Obamacare premiums of up to 116 percent and it is easy to see how many Americans find a better economic future with Trump’s GOP, even if it means destroying the entire political system on the way.<sup>11</sup>

Among Trump’s earliest ideological victories was a declaration of war on political correctness. A friend I greatly respect once told me that political correctness is simply a big word for not be-



ing a jerk. But if that was the case, then why is there so much opposition? Is the world really just full of jerks? Hardly.

It has become increasingly in vogue to dispatch ideas we disagree with as racist, homophobic, misogynistic, or otherwise “privileged.” Such labels can conveniently allow us to dispense with addressing the actual nuanced implications of the ideas and dismiss them on moral grounds alone. Sometimes these accusations are even true. Real racism and hatred do exist. And we must be honest: some racist groups are more likely to have voted for Trump.<sup>12</sup> In fact, Trump’s election has already had a tragically emboldening effect on a number of hateful people who now feel a newfound freedom to operate, spreading their toxicity apparently without shame in “Trump’s America.”<sup>13</sup> But often, and long before this week, social-justice activists assign malice where none exists. The day after the election, a group of conservatives celebrating the victory with American and Gadsden flags were accused on Twitter of literally being the KKK. The tweet was shared tens of thousands of times in less than a day despite being demonstrably false.<sup>14</sup>

same corner that attacked Mitt Romney over “binders full of women,”<sup>18</sup> don’t expect less partisan voters to fully respect the criticism.<sup>19</sup>

Second, and more importantly, if you insult a person’s character, expect them to become defensive—and it’s no secret that the best defense is a good offense. A person cannot be hateful without hate. Even if a person is ignorant,<sup>20</sup> uses an antiquated term,<sup>21</sup> or demonstrates an implicit bias,<sup>22</sup> it does not make them hateful. If they support a policy that you suspect will result in systemic racism, it does not make them a racist. In the eyes of most Americans today, especially those who do not regularly inhabit universities and have no exposure to institutional safe spaces, the word racist—like the word sexist, and other “-ists”—requires a true belief of racial superiority and hatred. For those who lived through the Civil Rights Era and the decades immediately following, a racist is maybe the worst thing a person can be called. To these Americans, to be called racist is to be called evil.

We cannot be surprised that these Americans, who mean well, are activated to reject a system that regularly

## THE TWEET WAS SHARED TENS OF THOUSANDS OF TIMES IN LESS THAN A DAY DESPITE BEING DEMONSTRABLY FALSE

The results of this sort of overzealous call-out culture are two-fold.<sup>15</sup>

First, an overabundance of Type I errors results in a system that cannot be trusted. When everyone is a racist or a sexist, then the terms lose meaning. It is the real-world example of the boy who cried wolf. Trump made a number of truly sexist<sup>16</sup> and misogynist<sup>17</sup> remarks over the course of his campaign, but when the accusations come from the

denigrates them as immoral. The irony is not lost on me that many of the groups pointing fingers are, themselves, historically marginalized and oppressed by a system that has yet to fully evolve beyond the injustices of the past. The dynamic has created victims of victims. But the issues are separate. Whether or not the GOP has the answer to these injustices is a debatable point, but less debatable is whether or not the party is



deliberately making them worse or governing through hatred. (They aren't.) The rejection of politically correct culture is a rejection of perceived condemnation; Trump won because he made people feel comfortable with what they consider reasonable beliefs again.

## THE WAY FORWARD

If there is one lesson for the left, it is this: learn to separate Trump the man from Trump the movement. Calling his supporters hateful (or stupid, or racist, etc.) is not only wrong, it is counterproductive. It will only reinforce the reasons they voted for him in the first place. They are *actively rejecting* the idea that they are hateful. If you keep insisting, they will just reject you even louder. It is a battle that can only be won through engagement: Listen. Speak. But do not judge. Judgment and isolation are what got us here.

Consider also that many voted for Trump for reasons having nothing to do with any of the above. Many conservatives—true conservatives—recognized that voting for the presidency is about more than just one person; it is about an entire administration. It is about the Supreme Court. It is about pushing back against judicial activism, ensuring strict constructionist justices are nominated. It is about securing gun rights and protecting the unborn. Even if one believes that Trump is truly an unabashed racist, if that person also believes that abortion is the literal murder of children and Trump provides the greatest shot at a remedy, can you really blame them for prioritizing the latter with a clean conscience?

Phrases like “Hate won” or “Democracy has failed” undermine the process, the country, and the need for reconciliation. We must move forward as one. We must extend to one another love and understanding. We must support the president and his administration, for we want him to have the best team possible.

Lastly, let us remember that the true value of democracy is not in always

making the best decisions. Sometimes we get it right; sometimes we don't. No, the true value is in the choosing. It is about legitimacy. It is about governance through the consent of the governed. It is about the right to self-determination. You may or may not be happy with the results, but in that respect, it succeeded spectacularly. Honor it.

*The thoughts and opinions presented herein are the author's alone and are offered as nonpartisan analysis only. The content does not reflect the official views or policies of the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army, or the United States Government.*

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# Nastiness toward Leave Voters Isn't Going to Reverse Brexit

by Nyasha Weinberg

*Nyasha Weinberg is an MPP student and Kennedy Scholar at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She previously studied human sciences at Oxford University and on graduation worked as a Civil Service Faststreamer and in education policy.*

AT 3 A.M. ON 24 JUNE 2016, I lay awake stunned. Results came pouring in confirming that the debunked polls of the previous week were right, and the markets were wrong. The UK was leaving the EU. Alienated voters had let out a collective “roar of rage,” turning their back on Europe and causing Prime Minister David Cameron to resign.<sup>1</sup>

I was not the only person awake. My feed on Facebook contained a collective outpouring of grief; a mutual agonizing over the consequences of the now democratically mandated Brexit. Scrolling through the torrent of liberal rage felt cathartic. I too felt wronged by Cameron’s gambling the nation’s fate for personal political gain, by the profound intergenerational injustice revealed by the demographic makeup of leave voters,<sup>2</sup> by the prevailing anti-intellectualism of “Britain has had enough of experts,”<sup>3</sup> by the racist anti-migrant poster used by UKIP.<sup>4</sup>

But as I looked closer, I noticed something else on my feed, something more pernicious than expressions of disappointment: blatant contempt, disregard, and misunderstanding of the motivations of Brexit voters. At its worst, it was direct abuse: “Middle England f\*\*ked us again, . . . morons.”<sup>5</sup> Others expressed bemuse-

ment as to how Brexiteers could have been so stupid as to self-propel the nation toward catastrophe.<sup>6</sup> I was amazed by the diversity of people who shared the impulse to damn and ridicule the opposition, and suggest inexplicable “moronic” behavior on the part of 52 percent of the population. Psychologists call such behavior “othering.”<sup>7</sup> It is characterized by actions with which we clearly delineate that other individuals or groups are “not one of us.”

As I thought about what I would write (or if I should write at all) to American friends and colleagues following the date when the “British lose right to claim that Americans are Dumber,”<sup>8</sup> it seemed that a plea to avoid the tendency to other would be most appropriate. The commentariat, often as clear winners of globalization, need to stop directing their ire toward demographics like the Leave supporters, those at the hard end of a system that generates and perpetuates inequality.

Many parts of Britain, Europe, and America have suffered horribly as a consequence of the financial crisis and globalization. Enduring inequality;<sup>9</sup> threats to manufacturing exemplified by the recent near-closure of the UK’s biggest steel producer at Port Talbot in Wales,<sup>10</sup> which



voted to leave;<sup>11</sup> a widening attainment gap preventing intergenerational mobility;<sup>12</sup> and around £13 billion of cuts to benefits<sup>13</sup> resulting from years of austerity have taken their toll.

The majority of those who chose to leave the EU were low income, rural, and non-university educated.<sup>14</sup> Voters who faced zero-hour contracts, stagnant or falling real wages, and serious cuts to services expressed their discontent with their feet. It is critical that my demographic resist the reflex temptation to mock or condemn those who so emphatically rejected the status quo. Or we risk using the same dehumanizing tactics of racists, but directed at a different audience. During the campaign, Remain was accused of treating voters like children,<sup>15</sup> and some of the most prominent advocates of Remain, like statistician Ben Goldacre made statements like “Brexit use language that is targeted at losers.”<sup>16</sup>

Goldacre is an impressive public intellectual of our generation, but this example illustrates how widespread the tendency is to use patronizing language. The language we use determines whether those have been left behind feel alienated and othered or listened to and included.

There are critically important reasons to be deeply concerned about the reasons that people voted for Brexit, particularly given the dire implications that it will likely have for the future of the UK. The vote showed a complete lack of trust in evidence coming from establishment figures. Warnings from the technocrats at the Bank of England,<sup>17</sup> the Treasury,<sup>18</sup> and FTSE 100 bosses<sup>19</sup> were labeled scaremongering, and then ignored. The publication of immigration statistics transformed the UK debate,<sup>20</sup> and was accompanied by an unsubstantiated panic about the arrival of a million of refugees following the possibility of Turkey joining the EU.<sup>21</sup> Finally, the false statistics about budgetary contributions<sup>22</sup> were never fully debunked.

Many of the sentiments that characterized the debate were ugly, and some were racist and xenophobic. I do not want to be an apologist for Nigel Farage, the leader of the UK Independent Party. But not every Brit that worries about job displacement or distrusts politicians should be labeled an idiot.<sup>23</sup> Populism understands that people want to feel part of something larger, that they want to be included in a nationalist project. We need to stop labeling the angry and disenfranchised and start listening to their concerns.

For political leaders trying to speak across traditional divides, it is critical to find common ground and counteract the belief that elites are disconnected and self-interested. Most often this is done through action—the incredible work of Jo Cox<sup>24</sup> briefly reminded the people of the UK that some politicians are down to earth and do enter parliament to serve. Another way is through social organizing—getting out on the street to talk to the opponent is an obvious way to deconstruct prejudice.

We must also resist the temptation to attack the unrefined and uneducated because they sound racist. We must instead believe in the best intent of other people and ask questions to get beyond our assumptions. Those of us with the privilege of education must focus on revealing the mendacity of the people who wield their power to perpetuate injustice: campaign managers, columnists stoking hatred and fear,<sup>25</sup> politicians who pretend that leaving Europe will lead to £350 million extra a week for the NHS.<sup>26</sup> Finally, we are all responsible for practicing a politics that resists elite capture and works to find alternative routes to prosperity for those negatively affected by globalization.

Liberal and social democrats across Europe (and the United States) need to change. Unless we begin to address the legitimate sense of grievance of people outside the corridors of power, unless we stop labeling people as racists, idiots, and criticizing their lack of political correctness before we have listened to their concerns, and unless we stop isolating ourselves in liberal enclaves, things will get much, much worse.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# Restoring Economic Opportunity to Working-Class America

by John Scianimanico

*John Scianimanico is a second-year master in public policy student at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, where he studies economic inequality and social policy. This past year he taught macroeconomics and microeconomics to Harvard undergraduates. Before Harvard, John was a Teach For America teacher in Huntsville, Alabama.*

DAVID RICARDO, THE FATHER of modern-day trade theory, must be rolling in his grave. Ricardo's doctrine of comparative advantage helps explain how the rise of international trade has benefited countries around the world. Global GDP per capita has exploded, life expectancy has increased, and billions have been lifted out of poverty. In 2013, an estimated 11.3 million Americans worked in export-related industries.<sup>1</sup> American consumers profit from global markets through access to better goods for better prices on the world market. Because firms like Apple can operate supply chains spanning six continents and over thirty countries, the companies can produce and sell higher-quality products for less.

Despite these advantages, 2016 brought a flurry of attacks on Ricardian trade theory. Both Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump and Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders placed US trade policy at the center of their political messages, promising to halt and reverse the supposedly pernicious trends associated with trade, such as rampant inequality, an

erosion of the industrial base, and unsustainable trade deficits.

Many perceive the wave of economic populism that pervaded the recent election cycle as a backlash against globalization. Over two-thirds of Trump voters believed that trade deals "have been a bad thing for the United States."<sup>2</sup> It is not hard to understand why such ideas gained traction. The United States has lost more than 4.5 million manufacturing jobs since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was enacted in 1994.<sup>3</sup> Near the end of World War II, the share of employment in manufacturing was roughly 39 percent; today, this number is at an all-time low of 8.5 percent.<sup>4</sup> Critics of free trade policies blame import competition, especially from China, for undercutting American manufacturing, an industry that propelled American growth in the 20th century and formed the bedrock of working life for millions of working-class Americans.

While it may seem obvious to link manufacturing layoffs to concomitant trade deals, such perspectives often conflate trade with other



systemic forces—namely, technology and automation—that have also disrupted traditional manufacturing industries. Indeed, in his farewell address in January 2017, President Obama noted, “The next wave of economic dislocation won’t come from overseas. It will come from the relentless pace of automation that makes a lot of good, middle-class jobs obsolete.”<sup>5</sup>

However, separating the effects of trade from technology can be difficult, as both phenomena have similar impacts. They boost productivity, enhance national welfare, and generate high wages for individuals with specialized training. But they also produce adverse outcomes for the “losers”—less-skilled workers vulnerable to foreign competition. Trade and technology are also blamed for increasing levels of economic inequality and anxiety. Despite their similarities, however, the forces of technological

in which they possess a “comparative advantage”—that is, products that allow them to use their labor force, natural resources, and capital more efficiently relative to other products. Some producers benefit, while others lose from trade, but trade theory justifies these distributional consequences on the basis that, overall, it makes each country better off.

The stories of losers from trade dominated the narrative of this past election, with a focus on declining American manufacturing industries like textiles and auto machinery. Throughout his campaign, President Trump blamed trade agreements such as NAFTA, a free trade treaty between Canada, the United States, and Mexico, for the woes of Americans whose jobs have moved overseas. He promised a 45 percent tariff on imports from China and a 35 percent tariff for Mexico.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, he has withdrawn the

United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal negotiated by President Obama and has pledged to renegotiate NAFTA.<sup>7</sup>

Yet the decline of manufacturing jobs in the United States predates many of the country’s most significant trade deals, including NAFTA. In the late 1970s, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) forecasted that the manufacturing sector’s share of employment would decline from roughly 20 percent to just under 9 percent by 2010. The actual trend has been remarkably consistent with this prediction, though the decline has since leveled off. Moreover, similar declines in manufacturing have

occurred in other advanced industrial countries, including those with manufacturing trade surpluses like Japan and Germany.<sup>8</sup>

The United States has free trade agreements with twenty other countries, which together provide one-third of US goods imports<sup>9</sup> and receive almost half of US goods exports.<sup>10</sup> Imposing tariffs on China, the United States’ largest trading partner, or any other country, would likely result in retaliatory tariffs on US exports and even a trade war. According to the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE), such tit-for-tat would cost 4.8 million private sector jobs by 2019.<sup>11</sup> This is because

## NEAR THE END OF WORLD WAR II, THE SHARE OF EMPLOYMENT IN MANUFACTURING WAS ROUGHLY 39 PERCENT; TODAY, THIS NUMBER IS AT AN ALL-TIME LOW OF 8.5 PERCENT.

advancement are causing far more disruption and despair in the US labor force than any free trade policy. To restore economic opportunities for blue-collar Americans, it is crucial to understand the real problems they face and determine what public policy can do for them.

### GOOD POLITICS, BAD ECONOMICS

Mainstream economists believe that trade enhances a country’s welfare by increasing overall economic output. When two countries trade, they each theoretically choose to specialize in the production of goods and services



nearly two-thirds of imports to the United States are intermediate goods—those used by workers in US factories to produce final goods. Imposing tariffs on intermediate goods not only inflates the cost of final goods for consumers but leads to greater unemployment as rising input costs

personal wealth of the top one percent has increased from approximately 23 percent to over 37 percent of total wealth in 2014.<sup>15</sup> Part of this is explained by a declining supply of high-skilled labor. Even as college attendance has increased, college completion plateaued in the 1980s,<sup>16</sup> in-

---

## SIMPLY PUT, AS LONG AS SKILL-BIASED TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS OUTPACES THE SUPPLY OF COLLEGE-EDUCATED WORKERS, THERE IS LITTLE THAT PROTECTIONIST TRADE POLICY CAN DO TO ALLEVIATE INEQUALITY.

---

force firms to cut back production. Furthermore, higher import prices disproportionately affect the purchasing power and the livelihoods of the poor, who spend a greater proportion of their incomes on goods than the rich.<sup>12</sup>

For an example of how protection hurts Americans, we need look no further back than the Obama administration. In 2009, President Obama placed tariffs on tires imported from China, in response to lobbying by the American tire industry. The PIIÉ estimates that this tariff saved a maximum of 1,200 American jobs over the following two years. However, American consumers paid over \$1.1 billion more for tires than they would have without the tariff.<sup>13</sup> Each job saved cost taxpayers over \$833,000, which does not compare favorably with the median salary of a tire technician, which was \$24,220 in May 2015.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps the most striking finding from the PIIÉ is that reduced spending on retail goods—due to greater spending on tires—resulted in a net loss of 2,500 retail jobs. Rather than save American jobs, as Obama intended, trade protection actually *increased* American unemployment and *decreased* overall consumer welfare.

Moreover, trade barriers are unlikely to reduce inequality. Harvard economists Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz argue that advancements in technology, combined with a slowdown in college completion rates, are the most important factors explaining why a greater share of wealth is going to the top one percent of workers. Since the early 1980s, the net

creasing the wage premium for college graduates over workers with only a high school degree and increasing the wage gap between high- and low-skilled workers. Simply put, as long as skill-biased technological progress outpaces the supply of college-educated workers, there is little that protectionist trade policy can do to alleviate inequality.

### CREATIVE DESTRUCTIONISM

Increasingly, evidence is pointing to technology and automation as the main drivers of the decline in manufacturing jobs in the United States. Of the 5.6 million manufacturing jobs lost between 2000 and 2010, a Ball State University study found that 85 percent are attributable to automation and only 13 percent to trade.<sup>17</sup> David Autor of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology believes that even if a low-skilled profession had escaped the effects of globalization, sooner or later, technology would have likely ended up eliminating it.<sup>18</sup>

Advanced robotics, artificial intelligence, and machine learning are accelerating the automation of traditionally labor-intensive tasks, reducing the need for human labor.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, even as manufacturing employment has declined, productivity as measured by real output has climbed to pre-2008 levels.<sup>20</sup> For example, Allan Collard-Wexler, associate professor of economics at Duke University, and Jan De Loecker, professor of economics and international affairs at Princeton University, find



that between 1962 and 2005, the American steel industry increased its productivity five-fold, even though it shed 75 percent of its workforce, or 400,000 jobs. Collard-Wexler and De Loeker attribute these job losses to a new technology called the minimill, which displaced older technology and sparked rapid productivity growth in the steel industry. The effect of the minimill remained strong, they found, even after controlling for job losses in the Midwest, unionization rates, and international trade.<sup>21</sup>

This trend toward more advanced manufacturing and greater automation of low-skilled work will continue even as companies begin to 're-shore' to the United States.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, Wal-Mart and General Electric have already brought some production back, partly due to rising wages in China. However, their factories are heavily automated. Gone are the days when all a worker needed to work in a factory were his two hands, common sense, and perhaps a high school degree. Now, factory employers expect workers to read, write, and know how to use a computer. A recent *New York Times* article quoted a retired chief executive of Siemens Energy, an engineering company, "People on the plan floor need to be much more skilled than they were in the past. There are no jobs for high school graduates at

standard belief of economists was that workers displaced by trade can simply relocate or transition into a new industry. However, new research is finding that the effects of trade are more pronounced than originally imagined—between 2000 and 2007, import competition from China cost a staggering 2.4 million American jobs.<sup>24</sup>

The growth of emerging economies like China is pushing economists to reconsider long-held beliefs concerning the effects of trade on manufacturing jobs. What remains uncertain is whether China's future growth will have as severe a consequence on the American labor market as automation.

## BUILDING HUMAN CAPITAL

President Trump has an obligation to restore economic prosperity to communities across the United States that have been left behind by the forces of technology and globalization. But fighting globalization is like fighting to prevent the winter weather in Boston: unproductive, costly, and unlikely to succeed. The same is true regarding technological progress. In order to build an economy that works for all, the country should focus on enabling Americans to work with technology if they are to avoid being

**[F]IGHTING GLOBALIZATION IS LIKE FIGHTING TO PREVENT THE WINTER WEATHER IN BOSTON: UNPRODUCTIVE, COSTLY, AND UNLIKELY TO SUCCEED.**

Siemens today."<sup>23</sup> That is why policy makers are skeptical of President Trump's efforts to prevent American companies from offshoring. Even if companies do stay, there is no guarantee they will retain workers if robots can do the same work at a lower cost than humans.

Notwithstanding these enormous technological changes in the workforce, it would be incorrect to argue that increased trade, particularly with emerging economies, has had no impact on the US labor force. Economists openly acknowledge that trade displaces jobs and lowers wages, with the caveat that these consequences are generally small and easy to fix. For years, the

replaced by it. There are a number of long-term and short-term policies that can buffer the growing pains of trade while preparing future generations to thrive in a global, technological economy: supporting vocational training programs, closing skills gaps through P-12 education, and expanding fiscal policy.

Investing in vocational training programs for young adults is one essential policy for shifting to a more technology-driven economy. As labor-intensive jobs are displaced by technology, firms are creating new jobs that require technical qualifications. According to a 2015 survey by the consulting firm Deloitte,



82 percent of manufacturing executives believe there are not enough qualified workers to fill skilled jobs in programming, electrical engineering, and robotics.<sup>25</sup> High school students should have opportunities to learn these skills through apprenticeship programs run by companies, community colleges, and government agencies. Americans tend to be suspicious of apprenticeships, which they view as inferior to a college degree. However, according to the Department of Labor, over a thousand careers in blue- and white-collar professions train young people as apprentices.<sup>26</sup> The former secretary of labor, Tom Perez, and others in Washington have been strong advocates, pointing to the high median salaries and the low levels of debt incurred from apprenticeships.<sup>27</sup> In fact, Anthony Carnevale of Georgetown University found that 40 percent of middle-skill jobs—jobs that tend to emerge from vocational training programs—pay more than \$55,000 a year, more than the median salary for a college graduate.<sup>28</sup> One example in New York is the Per Scholas program, which offers free computer-technician training to low-income residents. Research shows that the program delivers both more consistent employment and a wage boost of up to 18 percent.<sup>29</sup>

The United States lags far behind many other advanced countries with respect to its vocational training programs, with only 0.2 percent of American workers training as apprentices.<sup>30</sup> In Germany, nearly 60 percent of high school students enroll in technical schools that couple traditional education with workplace training in vocations such as advanced manufacturing, banking, IT, and hospitality.<sup>31</sup> After graduation, students can expect jobs—often from the firms that trained them—with a median salary anywhere from \$55,000 to \$80,000.<sup>32</sup> In large part due to such apprenticeship programs, youth unemployment in Germany stands at less than 7 percent, the lowest in the industrialized world. The United States could achieve similar results, but this would require a different approach to labor market policies.

A second policy proposal involves strengthening P-12 education. Too many students are entering the workforce or going to college without the necessary skills to succeed. Half of

all undergraduate students will take a remedial course before enrolling in a college-level course, costing nearly \$7 billion dollars a year, according to one study.<sup>33</sup> As mentioned, even as college enrollment has reached new highs, college completion has risen at a much slower rate.<sup>34</sup> This is problematic not only for students wishing to earn a college degree, but also for students looking to enter the middle-class by means of

## IN LARGE PART DUE TO SUCH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS, YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN GERMANY STANDS AT LESS THAN 7 PERCENT

apprenticeships. If eighteen-year-olds cannot pass a tenth-grade basic skills assessment, how can we expect them to operate a robot or correct computer programming errors?

There are large differences in student achievement across the United States, partly explained by racial and socioeconomic differences but also partly explained by state policy decisions. While President Trump has limited control over the education policies of the states, he can steer them toward policies that close these skills gaps. Such policies include investing in early childhood education, building capacity for data-driven decision-making in schools, and exposing and training more students in the science, math, engineering, and technology (STEM) fields.

Finally, Congress should consider fiscal policies that mitigate the short-term effects of trade- and technology-related job displacement. In many cases, displaced workers have difficulty finding a new job that pays a salary equal to what they earned before, usually because they lack the skills or training required to do in-demand, high-skill jobs. Consequently, laid-off workers starting a new job can expect to suffer some decline in wages. However, a federal wage insurance program could address this concern. A wage insurance program, similar to the one proposed by Robert Lawrence, Albert L. Williams Professor of International Trade and



Investment at the Harvard Kennedy School, and Robert Litan, former senior fellow in the Economic Studies Program at Brookings, would offset these lost wages, replacing (for example) up to 50 percent of the difference between the old and new salary.<sup>35</sup> This insurance program could incentivize workers to seek out new jobs rather than continue to collect benefits or drop out of the labor force altogether. Even if a new wage combined with the insurance benefit was less than a worker's previous wage, this could be only a temporary reality if the firm offered the worker training or educational opportunities that increased their productivity.

Another fiscal policy tool would be expanding the earned income tax credit (EITC), which is a federal wage subsidy for low-income Americans. The EITC encourages individuals to work by making low-wage jobs more financially rewarding. However, the program helps individuals in different ways, based on a range of factors. For example, the program currently offers up to \$5,500 a year to working mothers with two children, up to a household income of about \$18,000. For a working male without dependents however, the program only offers \$500 a year up to an income of \$8,200.<sup>36</sup> Considering the declining rate of labor force participation among working-age males, particularly those who are less educated, expanding the EITC for these individuals could be the difference between their re-entering the labor force and giving up altogether.

## CONCLUSION

Thanks to technological progress, the American economy presents new employment opportunities for high-skilled workers. However, technology also threatens the livelihoods of less-skilled Americans, many of whom have already endured wage cuts or given up on finding a new job. The US government has work to do to restore economic opportunity, but blaming trade and embracing protectionism will hurt the economy and harm the economic prospects of hard-working Americans. Instead, the Trump administration should turn its attention to policies that help Americans not only adapt to a technology-driven economy but thrive in it as well.

Endnotes can be found online at <http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com/>



# MALCOLM WIENER CENTER FOR SOCIAL POLICY

The Malcolm Wiener Center is a vibrant intellectual community of faculty, masters and PhD students, researchers, and administrative staff striving to improve public policy and practice in the areas of health care, human services, criminal justice, inequality, education, and labor.

The work of the center draws on the worlds of scholarship, policy, and practice to address pressing questions by:

- carrying out research on important policy issues affecting the lives of those most vulnerable and needy
- providing professional education for those in the world of practice
- educating the next generation of academics and policy scholars
- ensuring that research and education are closely tied to and draw from politics and practice in the field
- developing working partnerships with the broader policy community

For more than two decades the Malcolm Wiener Center has been an influential voice in domestic policy through faculty work on community policing, welfare reform, youth violence, education, urban poverty, youth and the low-wage labor market, American Indian economic and social development, and medical error rates.

Our research portfolio is both broad and deep, spanning many academic disciplines, encompassing traditional research as well as executive sessions, case-based research and action research, and employing a variety of research methodologies. It is inspired by our focus on bettering the lives of our fellow citizens, particularly those who are most vulnerable and needy.

WEB SITE: [www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/wiener](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/wiener)



HARVARD Kennedy School

**MALCOLM WIENER CENTER**  
for Social Policy



### Digital Edition, Submissions, and Subscriptions

The Kennedy School Review continues the conversation year-round at:  
<http://harvardkennedyschoolreview.com>

---

Pitches are accepted and articles are published on an on-going basis for our digital edition and once a year for our print edition. Submission instructions for both can be found on our site.

---

Additionally, this publication is only possible with the support of readers. If you appreciated and enjoyed this publication, please go to the website to subscribe and to purchase copies to give to friends and colleagues.