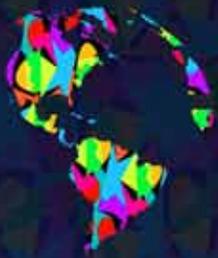


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BY SAMANTHA KOSS

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“ARE ALL IMMIGRANTS CREATED EQUAL?”

SUMMARY AND REFLECTION ON THE TALK WITH PROF. PETER SKERRY

BY MARCELLA PO

After first hearing about this event, I figured it would be controversial due to the current political disagreements about immigration, and even more so because of what I heard about Prof. Skerry’s conservative views on immigration. I also thought it would be very factual and economically framed, as people usually talk about immigration with an emphasis on jobs. He began his talk by discussing the formal quotas for immigrants: seven percent of the total admitted immigrant population for that year is allotted per country, usually, the total is about 1 million green cards issued per year, etc. In addition, for countries such as Mexico and the Philippines, which have higher demands, most will not receive their green cards and have to wait another year (or more).

He then brings up the issue of the inequality of the actual number of immigrants. For example, about thirteen percent of all green card holders are Mexican. This occurs because US citizens’ direct family members (parents, and siblings and children under 21) are given preference to receive green cards. Furthermore, there is no quota for immediate relatives. Also, most are Mexican because of the country’s proximity to the US, and history of discrimination among other ethnicities such as Asians; it was easier for Mexicans to gain US citizenship. Today, the next major immigrant groups are Chinese (7%), Indian (6%), Filipino (6%), Cuban (4%), and Dominican (4%). Other family members such as siblings older than 21 or grandparents can be petitioned, but there is a quota for that. Upon looking up the wait times to receive these petitioned green cards, it is about 2 years for most, but because of demand, for Filipinos it is 11 years, and for Mexicans, 5 years.

Thus, there is the problem of undocumented workers who reside in the country illegally, forever running from immigration agencies. Eighty percent of undocumented workers are Latin American, particularly Mexican. In the Philippines, we call undocumented Filipinos in the US “TNT’s” or *tago ng tago*, literally meaning “to hide and hide.” At this point, the discussion took a surprising turn and became more of an ethical discussion. The reason most people (or at least politicians) oppose immigration is not because of racism or some other irrational reason. Instead, politicians argue that it is because they put demand on US systems, such as schools and hospitals, but do not pay taxes. Thus they wish for undocumented workers to be deported and immigration quotas lowered.

This reminded me of the chapter in *The Working Poor* that discusses immigrants who move from farm to farm in search of jobs with fake Social Security cards. The people live forever in fear, avoid seeking healthcare, remain uneducated in low paying jobs that

they do not dare contest, and some do actually pay taxes. Still, they do not receive any benefits: is this not unfair to the immigrant instead of to the country? They came, after all, in search of a better life. Furthermore, Shipler poses the question to society of whether these people would choose to live this way if they could: they actually do not have freedom because they cannot choose, and this is not the way people should live; living day to day in fear is taking away humanity.

Surprisingly, Prof. Skerry's solution to the immigration policies' dehumanizing nature, especially for undocumented workers, is to provide all eleven million currently undocumented workers green card status. Despite the fact that present society is too biased to even consider this rationally, he argues that this policy would not jeopardize anything for the rest of American society and would give back human dignity to those who have none.

I was able to relate very closely to Nolan's *Jesus Before Christianity*. The author talks about the idea of sinners as the outcasts of society. Those who are poor, blind, sick, etc., are considered as lower ranking than everyone else. In today's society, too, we see this notion that if something bad has happened to you, it is because you did something to deserve it; individuals are blamed. But on a deeper level, it is usually structural and societal issues, much like in Jesus' time, where it was because of ancestry or inherited debts. Jesus wanted to make everyone equal and human despite the lack of opportunity or historical baggage. This is true Christianity as Addams has echoed as well. More than financial issues or capacities, it is giving back the "human-ness" of each individual despite circumstances or what is fair and not fair. What remains is the fact that "people are people" (Nolan).

At my PULSE Placement, I see the inequalities from immigration and poverty that have imposed themselves onto my kids' lives. Sometimes, children are merely collateral damage and parents try to make the most with what they can. One girl I met has never met her father, and her mother died of HIV. Another boy's family moved here hoping for a better life, but they have been stuck in Roxbury for over 30 years. I have never heard any of the children talking about their dads. Many kids express that they want to go to boarding schools because they do not want to stay at home. I can only imagine what circumstances have brought them to where they are today, and many times I wonder about how their parents see and

treat their children; I hope very much that they are not viewed as burdens, but as human beings who need to be nurtured. It is not about survival, but the dignity they deserve as humans or as creations of God.

Thus it seems that the overarching argument for this talk is: are all immigrants created equal? No. Does the government have the capacity to correct this? Yes, in the sense that humans deserve equality because we are all made alike. It is not a financial equality that we must strive for, and not class equality. It is a regard towards humans' need to feel human, to be dignified, respected, and honored.

international club of boston college

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK

BOSTON COLLEGE

amnesty international

Are All Immigrants Created EQUAL?

Thursday
November 17
7 pm
Gasson 300

Prof. Peter Skerry

Professor of Political Science
and Nonresident Senior
Fellow at the
Brookings Institution

*Free Pizza and beverages
will be provided!*

The International Club of Boston College hosted the “Are All Immigrants Created Equal?” with Professor Peter Skerry on November 17th, 2011, during International Education Week.

CHINESE CULTURE IN A JAR OF RICE WINE

FOUR DISTINCT FLAVORS OF CHINA

BY ALICE ZHANG

In the memories from my childhood, every time when winter seemed to come, I started to anxiously wait for Chinese New Year by counting the days. It was indeed a day I anticipated. Every member of my family would put on new colorful outfits and enjoy a big dinner. Afterwards we played with fireworks that shot flaming balls into the sky, suddenly bursting into giant glaring flower blossoms, so bright and beautiful that all the blazing stars seemed to have lost their shine. But none of these were the real reason why I loved the Chinese New Year so much. What I was really waiting for was the chance when I could quietly sneak into the kitchen when no adult paid attention to me, swiftly open a jar of rice wine made by my grandma, carefully dip the tip of a chopstick into it and taste its heavenly flavor with my eyes closed. It was a moment of excitement, as if I found my priceless grail on the coolest adventure; it was also a moment when I accepted rice wine as part of my bare identity without consciously knowing it. As I grew up, I started to realize there was something more in the rice wine, something beyond its taste and smell, something that when I looked into it, I saw a reflection of my home and myself.

I remember I used to bug my grandma by asking her how she learned to make rice wine. She answered “from your great grandma.” Then I asked her how my great grandma learned that, she answered, “from your great-great grandma.” Then I knew that this question could go on forever because the history of the rice wine was so long that no one could trace definitively the earliest creation of it. Only through many old Chinese legends could the origin of rice wine be explained, which created a mysterious aura around it. It was said that, YiDi, the wife of the first dynasty’s king Yu, invented the brewing method (Hui). Yu was the king and hero who fought the Great Flood in Xia Dynasty. One time, YiDi was delivering a jar of rice to her husband who had been working laboriously at the floodplain. Getting lost, YiDi preserved the jar of rice in a tree hole for three days, and when she finally found her husband and opened the jar, she was shocked to see that there was only yellowish, semi-transparent liquid left in the jar.

However, to appreciate his wife, Yu tasted a sip and magically, he immediately felt a power infused in his exhausted body. With the power of rice wine, Yu finally defeated the Great Flood after nine years, and thus saved the earliest Chinese civilization. At the same time, YiDi dedicated herself to fermenting rice and eventually created the brewing method (“Yu’s Ancestor”). This legend proves that rice wine was once considered by Chinese ancestors to have a divine power that can defeat evil, while nowadays, although the supernatural power of rice wine is no longer believed true, its luck and blessing quality still remain.

To get a sense of how rice wine is really made in current times, I officially interviewed my grandmother, an expert of making rice wine, who affirmed that the process of making rice wine is extremely simple: firstly, combine rice and yeast together; secondly, store the mixture in a container; thirdly, store the mixture in the container for longer (Hu). “What matters is not the ingredients added, but the time for fermenting,” my grandma emphasized at the end of the conversation. Thinking about this simple process deeper, I realized that the modern rice wine making process isn’t too different from the one described in the legend—‘when raw grain mingles with time, miracles happen.’ This process somewhat symbolizes Chinese culture itself: Chinese civilization began simply with some primitive seeds of grain and the YangZi river that ran through sediment for over 5000 years, turning this land into a nation with great profundity and diversity (“Farming and Sericulture”).

The taste of rice wine reflects the “art of flavor” in Chinese culture. When I take a sip of rice wine, I feel that my gustatory sense is immediately lighted up by its slightly fiery taste. After the burning taste follows a pleasantly faint bitterness, and just as the bitter taste starts to fade away, a mixture of sweetness and sourness takes over. In Han Dynasty, there was a notion that “five flavors” which stated that the mixture of bitter, sour, acrid, salty, and sweet achieves “harmony” (Chang 19). Very uniquely, rice wine itself includes four of the five flavors at the same time—bitterness, acridness, sourness, and sweetness, while any other food or drink hardly owns more than one flavor. Because of this special characteristic, rice wine is destined to be meaningful in Chinese culture. Each of the five flavors also associates and resonates in the model of a very traditional Chinese theory called the Five Phases Theory, which presumes that all phenomena of the universe and of nature can be broken down into five elemental qualities—wood, fire, earth, metal, and water (David), and only when the five phases are complete can the harmonious passage of time and season be ensured (Sterckx 25). Thus, in ancient China, people view rice wine as a sacred drink that can guarantee them a smooth and lucky year of life. When it comes to judge the grade of rice wine’s taste, “thickness” is the rating standard: the more condensed the wine, the better its quality. This fact also reflects that in the eyes of Chinese people, the “condensity” of a person weighs more than anything else, which, in other words, means that a person can be respected only if he or she is enriched by knowledge, experience, and “fermenting” of time.

Rice wine was seen to have the special power to bless a person’s spirit and purify his soul. In 1968, several jars of rice wine were found in the two Man-cheng tombs of earlier Han date, which proved there was some special meaning between rice wine and spirituality. In ancient Chinese mythology, when a person dies, he or she would go through

nine spheres of hell, and in the ninth one, the person's soul was ready to leave the recycling centre and head for the reincarnation door. The person would meet Lady Meng Po at the gate, who would offer him or her Soup of Forgiveness, making the person to forget the previous life or the time in hell. In this process, the existence of rice wine was considered critical because people believed it had the power to help a soul be reborn noble and wealthy. For the living spirits, rice wine was like a filter, cleansing the corruption and sins away and leaving the bare essence that belongs to a pure soul. The great poet in Dong Jin Dynasty, Tao Yuan Ming is such an example, who used rice wine to purify his spirit. Disappointed by the corruption and chaos in the monastic government, Tao quit politics and retreated to the country, indulging in farming, poetries, and homemade rice wine (Anderson 49). In one of his poems, "Oh, Such a Shame," he wrote, "Only by wine one's heart is lit, only a poem calms a soul that's torn," to indicate that only wine and poetry brought him peace.

Living in Boston means living 6000 miles away from home, away from the little kitchen I used to sneak into and stealthily look for the jar of rice wine, away from the culture in which I have grown up for sixteen years; however, whenever and wherever I take a sip of the rice wine, I realize that I am tasting the same savor created and enjoyed by Chinese ancestors living 5000 years ago. Rice wine is a piece of evidence that has been passed on from generation to generation, symbolizing the origin of our Chinese culture and witnessing all the changes throughout Chinese history. It brings me through a gateway, which connects to the other side of the world, the world that has shaped my mind and formed my identity.

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BHUTAN

A PHOTODIARY BY NOELE ILLIEN

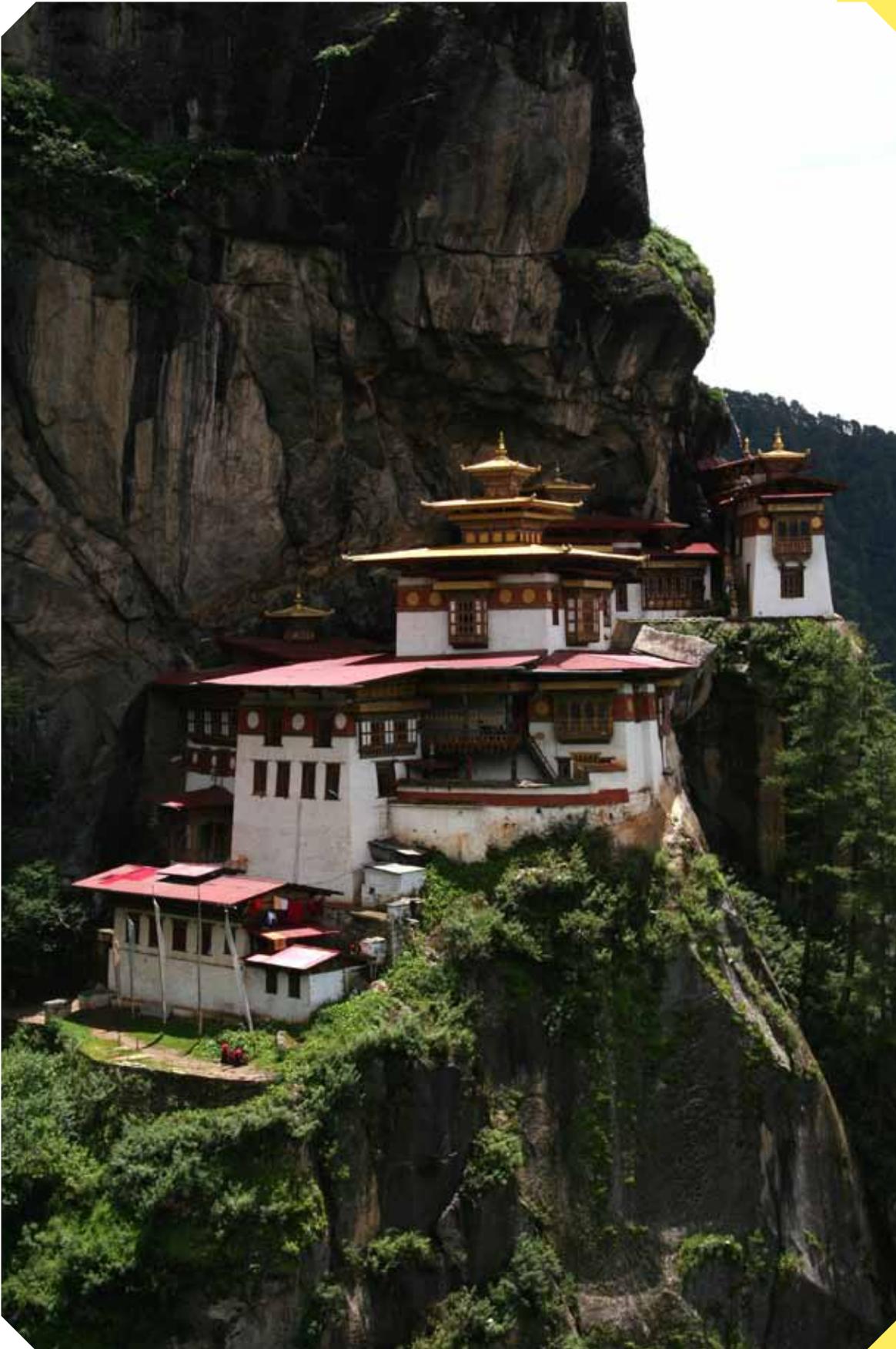
The petite Kingdom of Bhutan, also known as the Land of the Thunder Dragon, is one of the few countries that has managed to keep out Western influences. Whether visiting the Tiger's nest monastery which legend dictates has been attached to the cliff with angel hair, watching the Prince of Bhutan engage in the national sport of archery, or discovering more about the concept of Gross National Happiness, Bhutan is an enchanting adventure.



Above:
Young boy
turning
prayer
bells
at a monastery
in Bhutan.



Left:
Bhutanese
men, dressed
in traditional
clothing,
engaging in a
dance passed
down from
generations.



The Tiger's Nest Monastery. It is a significant spiritual site to which many undertake pilgrimages.

THE EU VS. IRELAND

LEGAL CLASHES
OVER HABITAT LOSS

BY ANDREW IRELAND

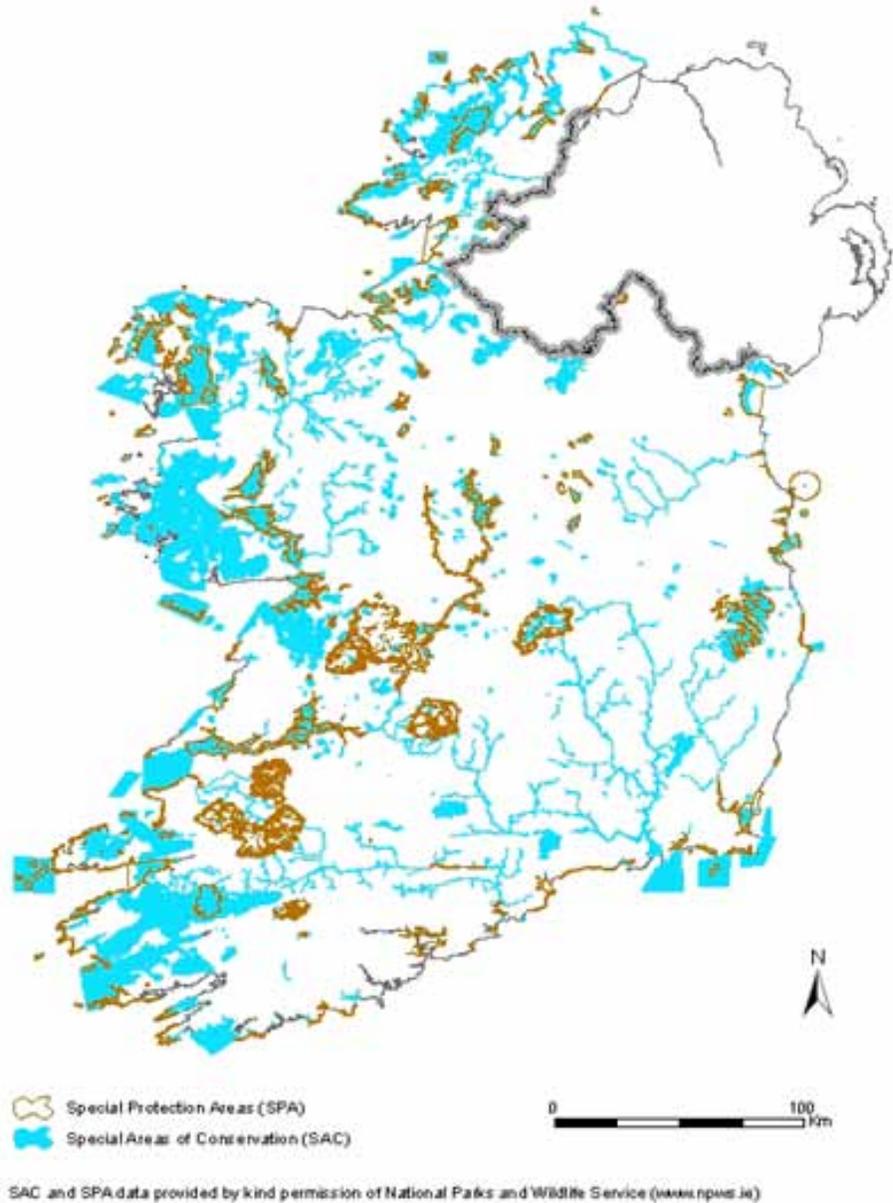


Fig. 1: Nat. Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)

Ireland, like all countries of the world, is in the throes of an extinction crisis. Many indigenous species are declining in number, and due to Ireland's separation from the mainland, any loss in biodiversity will result in the disappearance of essential niches that cannot be refilled quickly by comparative species from the mainland. There are myriad reasons for the widespread decline of Ireland's biodiversity, but one of the most significant is habitat loss, caused primarily by development and climate change. The current situations of several vulnerable Irish species – the natterjack toad (*Epidalia calamita*), the corncrake (*Crex crex*), and the trailing azalea (*Loiseleuria procumbens*) – exemplify how drastically habitat loss is contributing to Ireland's biodiversity loss.

Ireland is part of the European Union, an international organization that has passed many environmental regulations meant to preserve biodiversity. Therefore, Ireland is obliged to comply with many international agreements meant to halt the loss of biodiversity hotspots and other unique habitats. Ireland's actions on the world stage regarding both habitat loss and biodiversity loss in average, and its ability to follow through on its pledges will help shed light on how serious it is about saving its threatened species and how much farther it needs to go to achieve that goal.

Ireland's stunning pace of economic growth has had a profound impact on its biodiversity. Increased development and agriculture have contributed to the degradation of unique habitat such as raised bogs and lowland hay meadows. Known as the Celtic Tiger, Ireland's economic growth started in earnest in 1990, after Intel decided to build a plant in Ireland. Soon many foreign companies were choosing Ireland for factories and other aspects of their businesses, and with the help of the European Union and the new Euro, Ireland's economy became one of the best in Europe. This influx of money from 1990 until 2007 spurred a housing boom that resulted in the loss of habitat important to many species. The Irish Environmental Protection Agency states, "In the ten years between 1996 and 2007 an average of 60,000 homes were constructed per year, peaking with 93,000 in 2006" (EPA, "Land").

This surge in development implies that habitat throughout Ireland was degraded and depleted. In 2007, when Ireland's economy crashed and the Celtic Tiger came to an end, a National Parks and Wildlife Service study found that only 7% of Ireland's habitats were considered in good condition, while 47% were in bad condition and 46% were inadequately protected (NPWS, 2008). The growth, while good for Ireland's people and economy, had clearly done serious damage to Ireland's natural resources. With economic growth came more affluence and, with it, more pressure on resources such as fuel from peat bogs, fish from local waters, and lumber from forests. Though development has slowed now due to the global economic recession, the degradation of habitat during the boom years mentioned above has already significantly harmed multiple environments.

The natterjack toad is one particular species whose numbers have suffered due to habitat destruction. Limited in range to several areas around the coast of County Kerry, the natterjack toad lives and breeds in shallow ponds and lakes in sandy regions such as dunes. As these ponds have been drained and the land converted for development or agriculture, natterjack populations have declined. Some local

populations have become extinct, and the remaining ones suffer from isolation. As a result, members of different populations cannot breed with one another, which leads to inbreeding. Inbreeding effects, as Emeline Bécart explains in her study on the conservation status of the toad in Ireland, “can manifest as low fecundity, reduced juvenile survival and growth rates, and reduced individual survival to environmental stressors” (Bécart et al., 2007). With only about 12,000 individuals left in Ireland, the natterjack toad has been the focus of conservation efforts to create ponds and reduce cattle grazing on toad habitat, but such efforts have not had a significant impact on toad numbers so far. Decades of pond draining and land conversion has already taken its toll on the Irish natterjack toad population, causing reduced genetic variability and population decline, and it is possible that the toad may disappear from the island. The EPA has rated its overall chances of survival as “Bad” (NPWS, 2008).



Photograph: Andrew Ireland

As a member of the European Union, Ireland must obey by the organization’s many regulations. The EU Habitat Directive, passed in 1992, is intended to protect Europe’s threatened habitats as well as endangered flora and fauna. Annex IV of the Directive lists “Animal and Plant Species of Community Interest in Need of Strict Protection,” and member states must take special care to protect any species included in this section. This includes “prohibiting all forms of deliberate capture or killing of specimens of these species in the wild; deliberate disturbance of these species, particularly during the period of breeding, rearing, hibernation and migration; deliberate destruction or taking of eggs from the wild; [and] deterioration or destruction of breeding sites or resting places” (Council of the European Communities, 1992). On paper, Ireland has complied well with this directive. The legislation also requires EU members to maintain or restore natural habitats considered in danger of disappearance or a particularly exemplary instance of that habitat type through the creation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), and Ireland has done so. The directive was transposed into Irish law through ministerial regulations in 1997, and many SACs have been created in accordance with these laws. As of 1998, there were 400 SACs with a total area of about 650,000 hectares (see Fig. 1).

However, when it comes to specific species, including the natterjack toad, Ireland has not been so vigilant. In 2004, the European Commission referred Ireland to the European Court of Justice for failing to adequately safeguard several species protected by the Directive. The Commission explains that “Irish legislation gives wide exemptions for damage and disturbance caused by farming and other activities” and that “the safeguards of the directive are not applied in a meaningful way,” stating that the species affected most by this negligence “include the Lesser Horseshoe bat, *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, [and] the Natterjack toad”

(European Commission, 2004).

The case was settled in September 2006, with the court finding that Ireland had not fully followed the Directive's laws regarding conservation and must pay the costs for its negligence. The author of the opinion of the court, Advocate General Léger, specifically commented on the prosecution's statement regarding Ireland's treatment of the natterjack toad saying, "the competent authorities 'have many other duties and are responsible for large areas, and... have insufficient time to monitor natterjack populations systematically'" (Léger, 2006). Advocate General Léger found in favor of the Commission's argument that this was not sufficient to protect natterjack populations. Therefore, though Ireland has taken steps to comply with the European Union's Habitats Directive, its national legislation implementing those regulations is insufficient to effectively protect species threatened by agriculture and development, like the natterjack toad.

Another species being driven to local extinction by habitat loss is the corncrake. The corncrake is a type of bird and a member of the coot family. It breeds from April through August in open habitats, especially meadows with tall grass and few trees. It is also frequently found in hay fields, and in Ireland these fields are its primary habitat (IUCN, 2010). However, as land use in Ireland changes and hay meadows disappear, the corncrake's numbers continue to decrease. In a study looking at corncrake populations in Ireland, RE Green and TJ Stowe found that generally, the number of corncrakes in a specific area declined as the amount of hay-meadow in that area decreased, or if the amount of grassland increased. They studied five areas of Ireland for three years, and documented "the decrease in the area of hay-meadow and the increases in grassland... short dry pasture, [and] silage" in four of these areas (Green and Stowe, 1993). The conversion of fields from hay-making to silage-making is particularly troublesome for corncrakes, as the production of silage – green fermented hay used for animal feed – requires earlier harvesting than does the production of traditional hay. This removal of cover causes mortality in corncrake chicks, as the birds rely on this cover to protect against predators. The rising prominence of silage-making, combined with a general decrease in hay-meadows and increase in short grassland and pasture, caused the corncrake population in Ireland to fall by 31% in the study's sample areas between 1988 and 1991 (Green and Stowe, 1993).

Fortunately, the EU Birds Directive, passed in 1979, fully protects the corncrake. This directive instructs all member states to "take the requisite measures to maintain the population of [European bird] species at a level which corresponds in particular to ecological,

scientific and cultural requirements,” a mission which includes establishing Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for endangered and migratory species (Directive 2009/147/EC, 2010). As with the Habitats Directive, Ireland seems to have complied satisfactorily with the requirements on the surface. The Birds Directive was put into Irish law in 1985 and as of 1998, there were 109 SPAs covering a total area of 230,000 hectares (See Fig. 1). However, the European Commission has taken Ireland to court for its failure to fully implement the Directive. In 2004, the European Commission referred Ireland to the European Court of Justice for Ireland’s failure to create 42 of the 160 SPAs that the IBA 2000 – a document created by Birdlife International identifying Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Europe – recommended be created. Therefore, the Commission maintained that Ireland’s failure to establish 42 areas identified as IBAs as SPAs constituted a violation of the Birds Directive.

In its argument, the Commission pointed out that Ireland’s SPA coverage, in terms of total territory, is the second smallest of the 15 EU member states, not counting the states that joined the EU in 2004. It also argued that Ireland has consistently limited the extent of SPAs to areas of public ownership, and have not classified any areas that economic interests have resisted. This violates the Birds Directive provision that states that SPA boundaries should be defined solely by ornithological considerations such as the IBA 2000. Accordingly, in 2007 the Court of Justice ruled in favor of the Commission, saying that all 42 IBA sites need to be made into SPAs (Court of Justice, 2007).

The case focused on the corncrake in particular. The corncrake is listed as an Annex I species in the Directive, meaning the birds are “the subject of special conservation measures concerning their habitat in order to ensure their survival and reproduction in their area of distribution” (Directive 2009/147/EC, 2010). Accordingly, the European Commission is strict about the birds’ protection. It took Ireland to task for failing to establish SPAs in four areas that corncrakes are known to reside, stating that “between 1999 and 2001, an average of 39% of the corncrake population present on Irish territory was outside SPAs and that, between 2002 and 2004, that figure was closer to 50%.” The Court ruled in favor of the Commission in regards to this as well, stating that Ireland must establish SPAs for the corncrake in Malin Head, the Fanad Head Peninsula, Falcarragh, and Min an Chladaigh (Court of Justice, 2007). Clearly, though Ireland has obeyed the Birds Directive in a broad sense, it has a long way to go in protecting individual bird species such as the corncrake, especially when such protection is seemingly at odds with economic interests.

Another pressure on Ireland’s biodiversity is climate change. As the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere retain heat and cause temperatures to rise, habitats and food sources will change drastically, and many species will not be able to adapt quickly enough to survive these changes. Ireland has been found to be especially sensitive to increasing temperatures; a study conducted by E. Carroll, T. Sparks, A. Donnelly, and T. Cooney found that the average date for first leafing and first flowering of plants, along with insect-related events, moved up about 8 days for every 1°C increase in spring temperature. In contrast, in Europe as a whole, “events were shown to occur an average of 2.5 days earlier for every 1°C temperature increase” (Carroll, 2009). Studies in phenology have found that carefully timed processes species have evolved

to depend on are being altered, leaving these species vulnerable. For example, as mentioned before, insects in Ireland hatch and breed 8 days earlier than normal for every 1°C increase in temperature. However, the same study found that “bird-related variables had lower mean response rates to temperature: the four bird event types ranged from 0.7 days earlier to 5.5 days later with a 1°C increase in temperature” (Carroll, 2009). These event types include the laying and hatching of eggs, as well as the arrival of migratory species.

Many species of birds have synchronized their migratory patterns so their breeding period overlaps with the peak of the insect breeding period in the same area. That way, there is enough food to feed all of the newly-hatched chicks. However, as the data shows, the amount of days by which the dates of these events move up in the calendar are not the same for the insects and the birds. As a result, the birds are not arriving in time to catch the insects at their peak; they come at the tail end of their breeding season. This ongoing change in the schedule of carefully timed natural processes could have dire consequences on many of the migratory bird species that come to Ireland to breed.

Additionally, many alpine species that can only tolerate a certain temperature range are finding their habitat shrinking as climate change raises temperatures on mountain slopes. Prime Minister Berry’s report on climate changes effect on species and habitats in the UK and Ireland found that “Arctic–Alpine/montane heath communities showed the greatest sensitivity to climate change. All the modelled Arctic–Alpine/montane heath species were projected to lose suitable climate space” (Berry, 2003). One such alpine species is the trailing azalea (*Loiseleuria procumbens*), which grows on moors and mountain slopes above 400m (Stace). As a mountainous species, the trailing azalea can only tolerate a certain temperature range. The



View from Ireland’s Eye, in Dublin Bay, looking back at Howth, Ireland.
Photograph: Andrew Ireland

plant will die if the temperature escalates too far. Global climate change is already causing the trailing azalea's range to contract as the lower mountain slopes become unsuitable for it. As a result, its total range in Ireland is projected to decrease substantially, as Figure 2 illustrates.

Berry's report classifies the trailing azalea as a "species losing suitable climate space." As the world warms, the plant will be pushed out of much of its original range. On the far left of Figure 2 is the current distribution of the trailing azalea. In the middle is the simulated distribution in 2050

under the "Low" scenario – the best possible response to predicted climate change. The far right image depicts the simulated depiction of its range in 2050 under the "High" scenario, or the worst response to climate change.

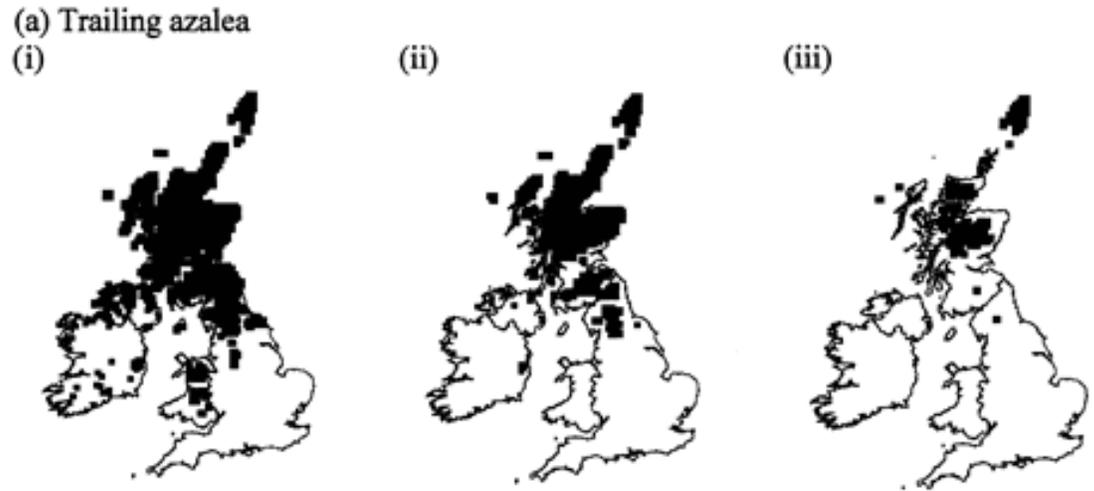


Figure 2: (Berry, 2002)

In either scenario, the trailing azalea's range will decline substantially, and may eventually disappear from Ireland entirely.

The main international convention governing Ireland's response to climate change is the Kyoto Protocol. Ireland signed the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 and ratified it in May 2002 along with the rest of the EU (SEAI). Under the protocol, Ireland is allowed to raise its emissions 13% above 1990 levels by 2010. In order to control its emissions, Ireland has identified many potential actions in a variety of areas. For example, Micheal Young of the Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government focuses on increasing fuel efficiency standards, increasing use of biofuels, promoting public transport (such as the relatively new LUAS rail service in Dublin), enforcing a 10% reduction in methane from the national herd and a 10% reduction of nitrogen fertilizers, and engaging in reforestation ("Ireland"). Unlike with the Habitats and Birds Directives, the European Union is content with Ireland's progress under the Kyoto Protocol. According to the European Environment Agency report titled "Tracking Progress Towards Kyoto and 2020 Targets in Europe," Ireland will meet its target for 2010 "taking into account the intended use of flexible mechanisms and emission reductions... over the full commitment period" (Graichen, et al., 2010). In terms of climate change, Ireland is working hard to obey the regulations that the Kyoto Protocol and the European Union have implemented, and has succeeded so far. However, it is doubtful that Ireland's adherence to the Protocol alone will be enough to save species such as the trailing azalea, as climate change is a global problem and solving it will require similar commitments and follow-through from all other industrialized or industrializing countries, an outcome that as of now seems increasingly unlikely.

Ireland's environmental problems are not insurmountable. The Celtic Tiger period is over, which means that development has naturally slowed and habitat loss has slowed in kind. With sustained focus and funding, the government can combat any further habitat loss due to development as well as climate change. Though Ireland is making progress in complying with EU environmental regulations, the European Commission challenges its actions many times a year; the court cases mentioned above are only a few examples. Ireland's debt will inevitably cause the government to cut spending on many initiatives, but it is imperative that it continues funding and expanding its environmental programs, starting with completing national conservation assessments for 100% of its biodiversity and continuing to work to comply fully with both EU directives and international climate agreements. The natterjack toad, corncrake, and trailing azalea are all counting on it.

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POP THE BUBBLE

AN EXCHANGE STUDENT AT BOSTON COLLEGE: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

BY CELINE SCHOEN

In July 2010, an official and cordial e-mail assured me that I was accepted as a student in a political school in my country, France. The deal was clear: two years of studies there, followed by one year abroad, and finally two more years in France.

On paper it seemed simple enough. The meaning of “being an exchange student” was, at that time, still an abstraction. We all knew that we would have to leave Strasbourg for one year, but the time of departure still seemed far away. Today, abstraction has turned into reality, and that time when we pondered over the meaning of “studying abroad” now seems long past.

Boston, or “*Bahstun*” when I try to get rid of my French accent, was my destination. My first contact with the city was Logan airport. After a cab trip to Newton, I met a retired couple who managed a charming B&B and were waiting for me (and my four suitcases). Jetlag. Sleep. I dedicated my first days here to vital necessities: Bank of America, T-Mobile, Starbucks, housing. I visited the apartment I had chosen on the Internet, while I was still in France, to make sure that the pictures I was shown were not photomontages of a place full of bugs. I luckily had no nasty surprises and was ready to enjoy Boston as a pure tourist.

Strolling around the streets of the Hub, walking the Freedom Trail, taking a ferry to Charlestown, all were great occasions to get to know the city. Boston is such a charming, historic, cultural and pleasant town, which really requires that time be spent in its streets, gardens, museums, and shopping centers. I learned that: the Museum of Fine Arts is free every Wednesday after 4pm. The best hot chocolate of the United States is offered at Harvard Square. Yummy Dunkin Donuts gives you a donut each time you buy a medium drink. In West Street, a fantastic bookstore sells great novels for only 1 or 2 dollars. In Norman B. Leventhal Park, pillows and books are available to relax with on the grass.

I have also spent a lot of time in the various Bostonian museums, trying to understand what Isabella Steward Gardner’s aim was when she bought so much artwork (unless it was simply to show how wealthy she was). I thought about what the tea, which dates from the Bostonian Tea Party and is currently kept in the Old State House, would taste like if someone drank it today. I spent time looking for a painting by the talented Andy Warhol all around the city without being able to find one, and losing my wallet in Paul Revere’s house in the North End. It also took me a long time before I discovered that the word I had heard on a guided tour of the USS Constitution was actually “cannon ball” not “cannibal.”

One day, I thought I had found Hogwarts. I was wondering where Harry and his friends were when I suddenly realized it was Boston College. My French school, which was composed

of only one building (no restaurants, green lawns, or amazing stadium), suddenly seemed to be a gloomy doll's house where people only go to class. In France, I could not eat, relax, exercise, or hang out on campus, or in other words do all the pleasant things that are feasible at BC. The sole experience of being a student on an American campus, like one of those we have seen in movies for years, is an extraordinary privilege. It's the chance of a lifetime to discover other cultures, and an undeniable way of getting out of the everyday routine.

Time for orientation finally came: three intense days of discoveries and meetings were about to begin. Everything was new: friends, teachers, school, and language. Very soon I realized that education in the United States was really different than in France. I would have never even thought of calling one of my teachers by his or her first name! The American system seems more informal, and as a result less strict. A simple but revealing example is that eating is allowed in class, whereas in France even the most relaxed teacher will not allow you to enter the classroom with a cup of coffee in your hand.

But all of those impressions were before really getting to know Boston College. Before distressingly going up the Million Dollar Stairs every morning. Before having experienced Hillside, Lower, the Rat, and Mac. Before having heard of Baldwin, Beanpot, or X-Fit. Before spending nights in the Mods or on Coro. In other words, before being part of the BC bubble and forgetting that Boston is greater than the Cleveland Circle area. There are dozens of things to do at BC, but just pop the bubble and you'll find tons more in Boston.



NATO: WORLDWIDE ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY

THE FUTURE OF NATO LIES IN FUNDAMENTAL EXPANSION

BY SAMANTHA KOSS

The primary problem that NATO faces two decades after the fall of the Soviet Union is a lack of clear and pertinent purpose. With the increasingly popular, shared belief that true democracies do not fight each other and with no apparent reason to doubt the enduring stability of this “liberal zone of peace,” NATO must redefine its purpose as the protector of “individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law,” as outlined in NATO’s New Strategic Concept, by admitting its closest partners from around the world as full members of the organization. These values will better be protected and NATO’s purpose better received by the public if NATO shows a true commitment to democracy in general by expanding beyond the transatlantic alliance to incorporate our longtime partner democracies, including Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand.

I understand that the purpose of NATO was originally to embody the transatlantic alliance in a militarily influential manner and to strengthen the bond between the United States and Europe so as to promote the security of both. However, in a time when our values of democracy and human rights have the potential to expand beyond their traditional Western sphere of influence and establish roots in the Middle East and the Far East, a concrete alliance that includes democracies worldwide who are committed to the same objectives as the current NATO members is exactly what we need to promote a lasting peace and to create a solid alliance that goes beyond continental bounds. The fact that the foundation of NATO is rooted in democratic values must be proven by NATO’s openness to the inclusion of members whose governments have consistently reflected the same values, regardless of their geographic location. At the point at which all nations fighting for a common cause come together as equal members and the identification between the nations becomes the common cause, as opposed to the outdated purpose for the foundation of the organization, NATO will prove its commitment to democratic ideals.

Such expansion of the alliance would not only create a greater pooling of resources and stronger support for NATO in otherwise “out-of-area” regions, but it would also transform the solely European sentiment, take the focus off of the fact that the organization began as a means for American presence in Europe, and modernize the mission and identity of NATO. If NATO is to serve any purpose in the world today, if its enormous potential is to be realized, then divisions between member countries (or continents, rather) must be dissolved and support for the objective of protecting and promoting democracy and human rights emphasized so as to create unity and garner public approval. NATO has the capability to create stability in

otherwise very destructive conflicts, and expanding its membership will only enhance its ability to do so—partially because having NATO presence in all areas of the world is advantageous, but primarily because to include other democracies and create continental diversity will convey a new message to the public of relevant unity and thus mobilize their support behind NATO’s mission.

Wherein lies the future of NATO? It seems quite obvious based on the current trend of the inclusion of countries in Eastern Europe, the worldwide spread of democracy and liberalism, and the trends of globalization: NATO’s natural course is one of expansion. The organization’s literal and symbolic acceptance of democracies beyond the borders of Europe and the United States will enter the alliance into the new age in which democracies across the world unite to promote our cause, strengthen our mutual security, heighten our global awareness and enhance our ability to respond to crises and threats.

NATO’S EASTWARD EXPANSION

The U.S.-backed membership bids of Ukraine and Georgia irk Russia and divide Europe.

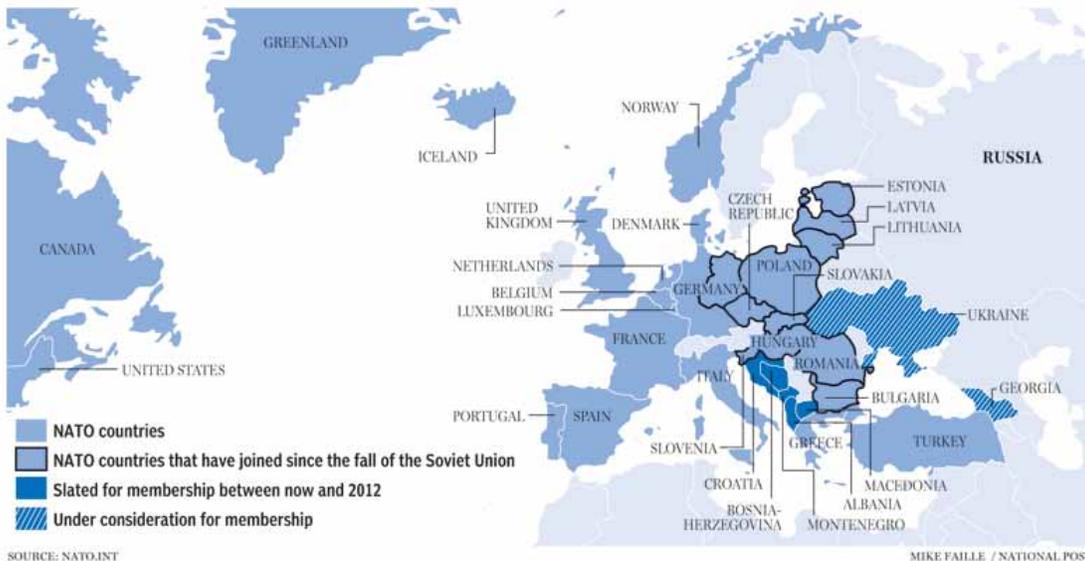


Figure 2: (Berry, 2002)

PERU

A PHOTODIARY BY FELICITY BLANCE



Above: Llamas near Machu Picchu

Right: Peruvian soldiers in the capital, Lima





Machu Picchu

FROM AFGHANISTAN TO LIBYA

AN ASSESSMENT OF US-EUROPEAN MILITARY COOPERATION

BY NARINTOHN LUANGRATH



Photo courtesy of the Telegraph (telegraph.co.uk)

The United States' and Europe's readiness to use military force in support of US-European foreign policy objectives has considerably shifted in the past 20 years. Shared values like free market principles and liberal democracy remain largely unchanged and intelligence cooperation in counterterrorism has increased. However, the US and Europe have historically diverged on issues concerning defining terrorism, engaging politically with "terrorist groups", and encouraging liberal democratic systems. Thus, this article argues that despite similar ideological values, the United States' and Europe's differing military histories, experiences with terrorism and approach to nation-building influence both sides' willingness to use military force in achieving shared foreign policy objectives. Successful military interventions in the First Gulf War and in Kosovo, the growing prominence of the neo-conservative movement in the 1990s, and the sense of shock and injustice in the aftermath of 9/11 heightened American readiness to use military force. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are clear examples of this, as well as American inexperience with nation building. On the contrary, Europe's difficult experiences with nation building in their former colonies, combined with their starkly different view of terrorism, have decreased European readiness to use military force. European military leadership during the Arab Spring, however, is a noteworthy exception, and reflected Europe's

key interests in North Africa.

To better understand the shift in military involvement when comparing the Bush and Obama administrations, this article examines earlier American military victories in the First Gulf War and the Kosovo conflict, and assesses their implications on America's perception of its military capacity.

Although the First Gulf War was considered a foreign policy victory, a growing neo-conservative movement in the late 1990s criticized President George H.W. Bush for not taking Saddam Hussein out of power. Years later, despite the United States' critical involvement in Kosovo, neo-conservatives categorized President Clinton's foreign policy as "social work", and believed his military campaigns were motivated by human rights concerns rather than strategic interests. After George W. Bush assumed the presidency in 2001, the United States was the prominent global military power, arguably still savoring the affirmation of its military might from victories in the First Gulf War and Kosovo. Justin Vaïsse noted in "Why Neo-Conservatism Still Matters" that most people started paying attention to the influence of neo-conservatives after the US pushed for the invasion of Iraq in 2002-2003.

However, neo-conservatives like Robert Kagan and William Kristol voiced desire for the removal of Hussein since the late 1990s. In 1997, Kagan and Kristol founded a think tank called Project for a New American Century (PNAC), whose members argued Hussein was a tyrant, a threat to his own people, and a threat to US allies like Israel. Notable members, including Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and Robert Zoellick, even drafted an open letter to President Clinton arguing that Hussein's removal be a policy priority. Although PNAC was fixated on Iraq, it broadened its set of goals during the post-Cold War period, arguing for an increase in US defense spending, ties with fellow democracies, promotion of liberal democracy abroad, and acceptance by the political leadership of the unique role that the US played in preserving the international order. Giles Adréani argued in his article, "The War on Terror: Good Cause, Wrong Concept", that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were seen as possible "national energizers" which could give the US, still reeling from the 9/11 attacks, a sense of unified direction and purpose. Psychologically, America found itself at war after suffering an unprovoked and unjustifiable attack. A sense of vulnerability, grief and anger, combined with patriotic outrage, led many Americans to demand an immediate military response.

Although this article does not argue that PNAC members who later joined the Bush administration took advantage of public sentiment to justify the Iraq War, it does argue that long-held desire to take Hussein out of power combined with the shock of 9/11 and public outrage over the attacks likely “clouded the vision” of administration leaders; they did not foresee all of the potential problems that could be encountered in an invasion of Iraq. In a larger sense, all of these factors may have contributed to the United States’ heightened readiness to use military force.

The US received initial support from European allies after the September 11, 2001 attacks. The Afghan War aimed to topple the Taliban, seen as “proven perpetrators”. Afghanistan was justified as a “defensive war” by Europeans, in reaction to an attack on US soil, as countries like Germany, France and Italy (among others) contributed military forces from the start. However, numerous European allies decried the unilateral invasion of Iraq in 2003, largely due to scant evidence of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in the country. Given some European countries’ colonial histories and failures with nation-building, there were also reservations about Vice President Dick Cheney’s proclamation that the US would be “treated as liberators”. For example, the complexity and guerrilla nature of the Algerian War (1954-1962) taught France that establishing and maintaining a colonial holding was difficult, particularly in countries with different cultures. Thus, France and other European countries likely deemed that the US was making the same “mistakes” as European colonial powers did decades ago.

Europe’s threat perception and consequently, inclination towards military force, differed and continues to differ from its American allies. The 2003 Transatlantic Trends poll stated that 70 percent of Americans and Europeans viewed international terrorism as an “extremely important threat”. However, it went on to show that only 64% of Europeans saw terrorism as a “critical threat” compared to 91% of Americans. According to the poll, Europeans were also more likely to distinguish among terrorist groups seeking clear political objectives while Americans were more likely to homogeneously group all terrorists together to “eliminate” by force. For years, European governments viewed Palestinian terrorist groups like Hamas in a political context, which explained their initial reluctance to place the political wing of Hamas on the EU terrorist list. Moreover, European governments were less likely to view terrorist attacks (e.g. the London and Madrid train bombings) as “acts of war” that necessitated military retaliation. The Middle East is considered less pertinent to European security interests when compared to North Africa, which fed US frustration with the lack of sustained and abundant military assistance from European powers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Thus, although both European and American macro views of terrorism are generally on par, European caution in “categorizing” terrorist groups as well as their differing evaluation of threat levels makes them less inclined to resort to military force in supporting anti-terrorism objectives shared with the US, particularly during the Bush administration.

The European Union was also maturing as an institution during the Bush era. The Euro officially entered into circulation in 2002, and the process of “uniting” Europe, which started in 1992 with the Maastricht Treaty, was close to completion. EU countries grew increasingly

wealthy, while stability and peace seemed long-term. Given social and economic conditions in the EU, Europeans found pursuing military operations to achieve transatlantic foreign policy objectives undesirable, likely believing they had finally escaped the “great power politics” which they had engaged in just a few decades ago. For example, despite initially pledging “unlimited solidarity” with the US, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder refused to involve Germany in the Iraq War. Schroeder and other European leaders questioned whether Iraq had WMDs. Schroeder was also facing an election, and German military involvement in the war would be politically unpopular. Eventually, France and Germany formed the heart of European opposition to the United States’ involvement in Iraq.

On January 30, 2002, however, the Wall Street Journal released the so-called “Letter of Eight”, signed by Great Britain, Spain, Italy, Poland, Hungary, Denmark, Portugal and the Czech Republic. The signatories expressed solidarity with the US in its invasion of Iraq, breaking with the Franco-German bloc. Despite this solidarity, few of those countries actually contributed troops to the military effort, or did so disproportionately; Great Britain ended up suffering the heaviest casualties, particularly in Basra. Perhaps some newer EU members, whose economies were less-developed and less well-connected, expressed solidarity on Iraq to establish stronger relations with the US and gain advantages that could come with a display of “loyalty”. More generally, European countries found indirect ways to cooperate with American anti-terrorism measures by supporting American extraordinary renditions in their countries or maintaining surveillance on suspected “radicals” rather than contributing a substantial military force.

Despite assisting the US with counterterrorism efforts at that time, European countries were more focused on curbing domestic terrorism. Rather than viewing national security through a “military lens”, Germany viewed security in broader political and economic terms, using multilateral police forces to combat terrorism. Moreover, virtually all of the terrorism they dealt with for decades was homegrown, including attacks from the Red Army Faction (RAF) and the Revolutionary Cells (RZ). Although the largely Turkish and Kurdish membership of the Grey Tigers and the PKK of the 1980s and 1990s engaged in conflicts which killed bystanders, the German government saw these deaths as “unfortunate collateral damage” rather than innocents specifically targeted by foreign terrorism, a

stark contrast to the United States' interpretation of the 9/11 attacks.

Despite promising greater cooperation on foreign policy objectives, President Obama has pursued his fair share of unilateral military operations. The Abbottabad raid, which killed Osama Bin Laden, embarrassed the Pakistani military and was seen by some allies as a violation of the country's sovereignty. Although rising tensions mainly affected America's relationship with Pakistan, Thomas Donnelly notes in "Transforming America's Alliances", that Obama's actions were reminiscent of the mantra "multilateral when we can, unilateral when we must". The Abbottabad raid was illustrative of Obama's readiness to use unilateral force if necessary, in spite of campaign rhetoric suggesting greater collaboration with allies, both European and non-European. Despite the controversy of the raid however, American intelligence officials believed that active or retired Pakistani military officials likely provided some measure of cover for Bin Laden, given that he remained undetected just one mile from an elite military academy.

Notwithstanding instances of unilateralism by the US, US-European cooperation during the Obama administration was likely at its highest point in a decade, and perhaps most prominently illustrated, during the Arab Spring. Unlike the preceding decade, Europe showed its military leadership in an effort spearheaded by British Prime Minister David Cameron and French President Nicolas Sarkozy. Obama took a noticeable step back from the conflicts in North Africa. Ruth Santini argued that for Europe, the importance of North Africa is comparable to the importance of the Middle East to the US. North Africa is Europe's "backyard" and promoting prosperity and security in the region has been a foreign policy priority for decades, particularly in response to increased illegal immigration and terrorism. During the Arab Spring, America worked through international organizations like NATO and the European Union. However, Obama was initially reluctant to contribute militarily, prompting criticism from Sarkozy and other European allies. Ryan Lizza argues in "The Consequentialist: How the Arab Spring Remade Obama's Foreign Policy" that one reaction among Democrats to the Bush era was a shift from "idealism" towards "realism". The unpopular nature of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan made the US act more cautiously and according to national interests (rather than moral imperatives) in global conflicts. Even as early as his 2009 speech in Cairo, Obama gave a hesitant endorsement of democracy in the region. Obama's decreased use of pro-democracy rhetoric likely reflects the sentiment that such rhetoric was tainted by Bush's so-called "freedom agenda" in the Middle East.

However, both Europeans and Americans saw the outbreak of protests in North Africa as a possible "democratic opening" for countries like Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, all of which had been governed by despots for decades. Although both Americans and Europeans were unsure of how the Arab Spring would unfold, limitations of Western liberal democracy's appeal were acknowledged, most evidently when President Obama downplayed the importance of democratic reform during his Cairo speech. Although liberal democratic principles are often argued by the West to be "inherently good", the perception that a democracy is being "set up" or worse, coerced, by outside powers undermines the establishment of that system. Both the US and Europe hold similar views about liberal democracy and free market principles and

likely both preferred that these revolutions ended in the establishment of those systems and an acceptance of those values. However, American and European approaches to supporting the emergence of liberal institutions have historically differed. Europe's long colonial history taught it tough lessons on nation-building and consequently, Europe tends to focus on establishing the institutions needed to support democracy; "symbolic" acts of democracy (e.g. voting) do not equate to a fully functioning, mature democracy and should not be treated as an end in itself. Conversely, America tends to view democracy as organically conceivable after the toppling of a despot, and tends to put more symbolic weight on the act of voting. The Bush administration's handling of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are an especially clear example of this, as there were few well-developed plans to handle nation-building.

The United States' and Europe's readiness to use military force to pursue common foreign policy objectives have largely depended on the security, economic or historical significance of a region, which differs greatly between the two allies. The US took the lead in the "global war on terror" in the Middle East, while Europeans took the lead in military intervention during the Arab Spring in North Africa.

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ISRAEL

A PHOTODIARY BY IULIA PADEANU

Israel, in one word, is colorful. From its vegetation, to its people, to its history and its current issues, nothing about Israel is black and white. The beauty of this land that is so coveted, so desired, and so longed for, is rich in vivid color, full of nuanced issues, and alive with intriguing people. To appreciate Israel, and to grasp its appeal, one must explore every shade of color it encompasses.



Above: The Western Wall and the Dome of the Rock

Top Right: Haredim men at Yad Vashem

Bottom Right: Jerusalem at sunset from the Hebrew University campus



IRAN: CONFRONTATION OR DIPLOMACY

US-IRAN STANDOFF

BY OMEED ALERASOOL

Ever since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the relationship between the United States and Iran has been a complicated one. The two sides have been engaged in an intense rhetorical and political warfare for decades; and for the last few months, we have witnessed an escalation of rhetoric, threats of embargoes, sanctions, and even military strikes. This tense and dangerous crisis stems not only from the



Photograph: Omeed Alerasool

current political climate, but it has its roots deep in a complicated history between the two nations. Unfortunately the major news media in the United States fail to provide the proper historical context. Many of our media sources have become hyperbolic when it comes to reporting on Iran, failing to keep the public informed (a necessity in a democracy) of several key facts of the US-Iran standoff. In post-9/11, 21st century American foreign policy Iran has become a token issue. The oppressive policies of the Iranian regime, blatant hostility towards Israel, and developments in its nuclear program have become hard to ignore. However, these concerns have been arguably misrepresented by the media, thus mainstreaming the notion of military strikes and intervention; the truth is that genuine diplomatic solutions have not been exhausted and a close look at both nations shows that diplomacy continues to be the only hope for a lasting peace.

TROUBLED REPUBLIC

In 1953, the Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh was overthrown by a CIA coup-d'état once he nationalized Iran's oil industry (which the British had monopolized). The young Mohammad Reza Shah returned from his brief exile to rule with an iron fist. Throughout the Shah's reign, he maintained a brutal secret police, SAVAK, trained by the CIA and Mossad,

which crushed any opposition to the unrestricted power of the Peacock Throne. It was in this light that the Iranian public staged the revolution of 1979. And it was in this light that the Iranian public of the time saw American power.

Shortly after the revolution, a handful of Iranian students stormed the American Embassy and took 52 Americans hostage. At first Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the face of the revolution, condemned the actions of the students, until a senior cleric convinced him of the political value of such an ordeal. The hostage crisis continued for 444 days. It resulted in the complete severing of US-Iran relations. Spewing anti-West rhetoric, Khomeini secured his hold on power, removed the more moderate revolutionaries and imposed himself as Supreme Leader of the new Islamic Republic of Iran. When Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, Khomeini used the foreign threat to consolidate power and established strict new laws that drastically limited individual freedoms and severely punished “anti-revolutionary” thought or dissent. The Islamic Republic, as we know it, came into existence.

Not until the late 1990s, under the reformist President Mohammad Khatami, did the domestic laws began to transform and loosen. Yet when his term expired and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became President, the status quo returned. In 1999, a group of university students rose up in protest against the government, but it was crushed. One decade later, after the disputed reelection of Ahmadinejad in 2009, the supporters of reformist Mir-Hossein Mousavi took to the streets in protest. Clothed in green, the color of Islam as well as the Mousavi campaign, the protesters sparked the Green Uprising. The government responded with brutal crackdown. Riot police, tear gas, and troops in every city arrested hundreds. The leaders and supporters of the Green Movement were arrested and stripped of influence and power. The progressive theologian and public blogger Mohammad-Ali Abtahi, for example, was imprisoned and stripped of his clerical status. After being held for months, the once plump and cheery cleric was put on military trial frail and thin, showing signs of torture.

Despite being brutally repressed, the Green Uprising, for the first time since the revolution, brought the legitimacy of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei under scrutiny after he ordered the Revolutionary Guards, defenders of revolution and the largest paramilitary force in the world, to crush the protesters. Having eliminated the reformists

from the political scene, new conflicts within the conservatives are now surfacing and have led to a power struggle between the Supreme Leader and his supporters (the Principlists) on the one side and the government of Ahmadinejad on the other. Recently, supporters of Ahmadinejad face criticism from the Supreme Leader, most prominently over Presidential Cabinet appointments. Among the Principlists, there has been unofficial talk of removing Ahmadinejad, prior to the 2013 elections, or even removing the post of President and reinstating a Prime Minister. Having emerged as the clear winner of the recent parliamentary election in the Iranian Parliament, the Principlists have intensified the pressure on Ahmadinejad's camp and are well-positioned to enable the Supreme Leader to eliminate the presidency. Evidently, Iranian politics is undergoing a transformational period where a foreign conflict would be as expedient in consolidating power as it was in 1980.

NUCLEAR PROGRAM

Iran did once have a nuclear weapons program, much of the technology was provided to the Shah by the United States. However, according to international and American intelligence reports, the military component of the program was abandoned in 2003, around the time of the invasion of Iraq. The reality is that today intelligence agencies cannot conclude that the nuclear program has made a turnaround and now aims at developing weapons. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the leading voice on nuclear technology and us, has followed the issue and published several reports in the last few years. The most recent (February 24th, 2012) outlines the developments in nuclear technology at certain sites across Iran, commenting and evaluating based on its own ability to investigate. In regards to a nuclear program, the most recent report stated that their "information indicates that: prior to 2003 [nuclear weapons-related] activities took place under a structured programme; that some continued after 2003; and that some may still be ongoing." This is far from the definite cry that Iran has nuclear bombs or is actively pursuing them.

One perspective seldom discussed publicly in the United States involves asking: Why Iran might want a nuclear bomb if it is pursuing a weapons program? It should be noted that the world's nine nuclear powers pursued nuclear weapons for deterrent purposes to guarantee their survival in times of major security threats. From an Iranian perspective, Iran has had much reason to worry: Israel to the West, Pakistan to the East, and Russia a quick sail North, each with confirmed (or in the case of Israel, highly suspected) nuclear weapons. Iran has also maintained a terrible relationship with the world's only superpower. There are dozens of American military bases surrounding Iran, in Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, Iraq, Central Asian states, and Afghanistan. And since 2003 especially, there have been many calls by prominent US politicians for military action against Iran or even forced regime change. Additionally, Iran has its own terrorist problems, state-sponsored or not; from 1998 when the Taliban destroyed an Iranian embassy and the Islamic Republic almost invaded Afghanistan, to attacks by

Jundallah earlier this decade and the more recent assassinations of civilian scientists and engineers. Not to mention, that there have been severe sanctions against Iran since the Revolution that continue to be intensified unilaterally and through the UN Security Council.

Why might Iran actually abstain from having a nuclear arsenal? First off, Iran has signed and ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (although India, Israel, and Pakistan have not). Secondly, regardless of President Ahmadinejad's rhetoric, the Supreme Leader has ultimate say on all matters in the Islamic Republic, as the President only influences domestic policy and Ahmadinejad has come under severe criticism from the clerical establishment. The Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has proclaimed, more than once, that nuclear weapons are contrary to Islam. Although the Supreme Leader's words have at times contradicted Iranian actions in the past, his statement regarding Iran's nuclear ambitions should not be totally dismissed. If he is lying about opposing nuclear weapons, he is taking a huge risk to his legitimacy, post-2009 Green Uprising, since the regime is built upon Islamic principles with consistency being one of its cornerstones. At the same time, Iran is a leading power of the Gulf region and the Middle East. If Iran obtains a nuclear weapon Saudi Arabia may very well be next, and the two are rivals politically, militarily, historically, and religiously.

It is very possible that Iran does not desire nuclear weapons, although it is nearly impossible to be sure. One might ask why doesn't Iran simply stop enrichment immediately or open up completely to the IAEA instead of sending mixed signals. However, in a country with enormous domestic uranium reserves, facing a growing population, limited electricity and refined fuels, development of its own nuclear technology can be viewed as a matter of national security and sovereignty. The subject has become the one issue that the most Iranians agree on. From the Iranian people's point of view, nuclear technology is a right and when the US or Europe demand Iran stop its research and development, it is perceived as denying rights that many other nations have been allowed to pursue. From the government's point of view, why agree and give up their nuclear program if they cannot gain something in return, removal of sanctions for example? Thus, for now at least, it seems that Iran will neither back down from its nuclear program nor completely cooperate with the international

community, leaving the US and its allies in an unfortunately difficult position.

HOSTILITY TO ISRAEL

When Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in 1980, Iranians rallied to the defense of their nation, resurgent, revolutionary, and united by a common enemy. Deeply offended by the hostage crisis, the Reagan administration sent military aid to Iraq, including ammunition, helicopters, and the latest military technology. Iraq also produced and used chemical weapons that directly killed tens of thousands of Kurds and Iranians. Cognizant of American support of Saddam, Iran decided to make its own proxy offensives against the United States. During the war, Iran directly supported the creation of Hezbollah which fought Israel, an American proxy in the eyes of the Islamic Republic. With a Machiavellian mentality, the Iranian government leveraged its influence wherever it could. Iran pressed Hezbollah to release American hostages taken in Lebanon in exchange for weapons from the USA to utilize against Iraq. The same funds that were later channeled to the Contras, a rebel group in Nicaragua, hence the Iran-Contra Scandal.

In recent times, a major concern from the American perspective has been the hostility and perceived hatred of Israel by Iran. It is true that Iran was essentially the architect of Hezbollah and has supported Hamas against Israel. Hezbollah was created in the 1980s to counter US support of Iraq through hostility to Israel,

an American proxy in the Islamic Republic's eyes. More recently though, continued support of Hezbollah and support of Hamas has been used to garner public support for Iran in the Arab world historically hostile to Persian power.

President Ahmadinejad notably made a speech in which he proclaimed that Israel should "not exist on the world map" that was mistranslated into "Israel should be wiped off the map". Despite the unintentional mistranslation, the uproar inspired Ahmadinejad to embrace his new reputation and infamy by making similar statements and even hosting an International Holocaust Conference. Although this was a purely political move; the Supreme Leader has acknowledged the Holocaust before and during World War II the Iranian military helped receive Jewish exiles from Eastern Europe until they could safely return to their homes.



Israelis protest against a strike on Iran, Tel Aviv, March 24th, 2012.

Photo courtesy of the AP via news.yahoo.com

Israel, not surprisingly, has taken offence to Iran's rhetoric and support of Hezbollah and Hamas. The Israeli government today is the most likely to launch a military offensive as it perceives a threat to its national existence. However, as Prime Minister Netanyahu's conservative government pursues a more confronting policy, many Israeli parliamentarians and citizens have called for a peaceful solution.

"ALL OPTIONS ARE ON THE TABLE"

Although the rhetoric of war is getting louder on all sides, particularly among the conservative factions, the effectiveness of military action in removing Iran's nuclear capabilities is often exaggerated while the consequences of such an action for Iran and the region are underestimated. Part of the issue is the exaggeration of both Iran and Israel's military capabilities. For example Iran recently threatened to block the Strait of Hormuz in response to threats from Israel, sparking fear and outrage throughout world financial markets. In reality, however, Iran's military does not have the capacity to block the strait for any extended time. When it comes to Israel and possible strikes against nuclear facilities, the capabilities of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have been exaggerated and it has been portrayed as a hyper-aggressive military. The IDF does not have aircraft to carry a bomb large enough to destroy deep underground facilities such as the newly-built Fordow facility. In addition, there is significant opposition to military action and Netanyahu's rhetoric in the Israeli Knesset.

Another important aspect to consider is the effect of any military strike on Iran as a nation. Any attack on Iran would be regarded as an attack on the people. As was seen when Saddam Hussein invaded in 1980, the Iranian population rushed to defend its nation, despite the dynamics of the revolutionary regime. In today's Iran, more than 70% of Iranians were born after the revolution. Many of the young people have lost faith in their government and even Islam. An attack on Iran is exactly what the regime needs to and to re-establish its authority in a time of political dissent and transformation. Any strike on nuclear facilities would also appear as an attempt to halt the scientific progress of Iran, a right most of the Iranian public agrees on regardless of political allegiances. Not to mention that countless civilians that would face dangerous nuclear fallout, as most facilities

are near large cities. Thus the significantly pro-American sentiment would rapidly diminish. If the goal of a military strike is to stump nuclear progress or destabilize the regime, then any military action would fail absolutely in its objective. The regime would be strengthened and a sudden increase in domestic pressure may even expedite nuclear research. US-Iran tensions would be aggravated and the conflict would only escalate. From a US national security standpoint: the military option is not viable.

“UNCLENCH YOUR FISTS”

Time and again one side or another has failed to acknowledge the other’s capacity for diplomacy. Ever since 1979, diplomacy has been essentially non-existent; although peaceful efforts are not unprecedented. When the reformist President Khatami was in power in Iran, he called for “A Dialogue of Civilizations”. His administration was the most progressive the Islamic Republic has ever seen. In 2003, soon after the US invaded Iraq and deposed Saddam Hussein, the Khatami administration composed a “Grand Bargain” in the hopes of finally achieving peace and security. The proposal arrived, through the Swiss, only days after President Bush declared “Mission Accomplished”. Iran offered to open its nuclear program to full inspections, halt support for Hamas in the Palestinian territories, help disband militant Hezbollah in Lebanon, and move toward recognizing the state of Israel. The United States would end all economic sanctions. The very fact that the offer had been cleared by the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, gave the proposal legitimacy and significance. Unfortunately, the Bush administration never replied. The administration may have doubted the sincerity of the deal, or they may have thought regime change in Iraq would be quick and Iran would be next. Regardless, the rare opportunity for a diplomatic solution was lost.

In 2010, there was another set of deals on the table. This time, however, Ahmadinejad was President in Iran and Barack Obama sat in the Oval Office. The deal was a complex international agreement that would have involved Iran sending nuclear material to Russia to be further enriched for solely medical, energy, and research isotopes and then returned to Iran. However, this time the Iranian administration rejected the deal, citing a concern with France playing a minor role in the series of transfers. Thus at this point, the Obama administration reached out to Russia and China in hopes of placing new sanctions on Iran through the UN Security Council. At the same time, Turkey and Brazil attempted to convince the Iranians one last time into agreeing with the deal. Surprisingly, the Turkish and Brazilian envoys succeeded and Iran agreed. Having two options on the table, the Obama administration implemented the more ‘secure’ choice of sanctions; thus, another rare diplomatic solution slipped away.

Despite the lost opportunities and the mistrust that it has generated on both sides, it is not too late for diplomatic engagement. Politics consists of diplomacy and compromise, whether between two officials or two countries. During the Cold War, the USSR and USA were able to find common ground despite decades of hostility. The Cold War was far more contentious than the modern US-Iran tensions, and yet diplomatic progress was ultimately the solution,

not military action. Although it is difficult for politicians on all sides to fight the temptation to replace harsh rhetoric with thoughtful political courage, particularly during election seasons in the USA, Israel, and Iran, one can only hope that rational and peace seeking voices will ultimately prevail. As can be seen in the “Israel loves Iran” internet campaign, the people can look past political rhetoric; now it’s the governments’ turn. Glimpses of diplomacy have been seen in the last 10 years. If each nation eases on the rhetoric and steps up genuine efforts towards a diplomatic solution, who is to say that a peaceful solution cannot result?

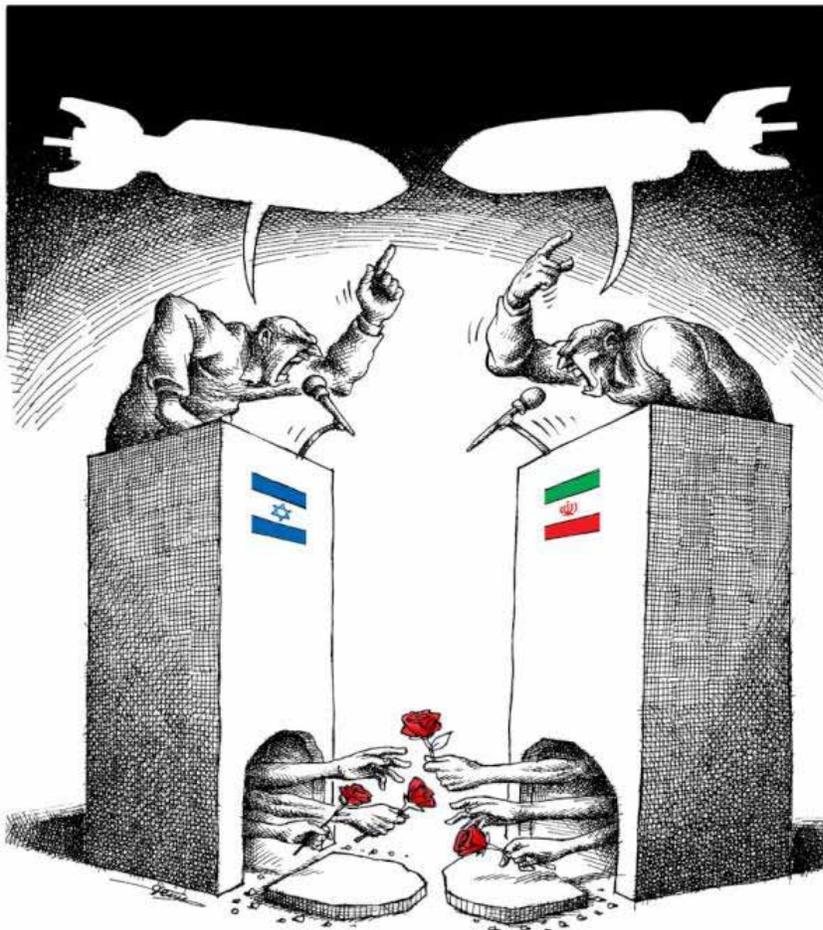


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