

DIVISION, DISORDER, AND THE DECAY OF THE LIBERAL AGE

SEPTEMBER 2022

A Hoot About The World



The Return Of
Conquest?

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Sofia Cordovez



A Hoot About The World

September 2022 - Volume 2

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WRITERS

Paulina Spiegel is a dedicated and strong-minded young woman. She is the president of the Somos Voces student club at AIP. Somos Voces is a non-governmental organization that helps teenage mothers from low-income communities by providing them with education and opportunities. By participating in both Somos Voces and the Panama Debate Team she is leaving her footprint in this world. As the lead editor, she is a crucial part of our team. In her article, "Great Power Conflict Begins," Spiegel discusses the global conflict between Ukraine and Russia. She specifically addresses the growing seed of territorial conquest, making this a must-read for all interested in understanding Russia's imposing threats to Ukraine.



Sofia Cordovez is an avid reader and determined student. She has admirable organizational skills that allow her to balance her academic responsibilities with her community work at Ni Uno Mas, an anti-bullying NGO, and her politic responsibilities as secretary of the student council. She has recently become passionate about computer engineering, a field in which she has thrived through her compromise and determination. This summer she completed a program in UCLA specializing in computer and data science. As the head of design of A Hoot About the World she has been a vital element of our team by bringing in her creativity and hard work. In her book review of *The Looming Tower: al Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* she gives an overview of a book she considers to be a must-read for everyone. As she argues, this book teaches people about the impacts of geopolitical instability in the Middle East.



Completely passionate towards books, young Isabella Duarte's dream was to become a published author. When not writing, Duarte spends her time reading, trying new things, and spending time with her loved ones. She is dedicated to her various extra-curricular activities, ranging from AIP's Debate Club to co-leading both Obsequio de Vida AIP and ECOAIP, Duarte puts her 100% into everything she does. Her continuous interest in global politics has translated into her aspirations to become a diplomat and work at the United Nations someday. In her book review of *The Lemon Tree* Duarte dives into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and argues how there is still hope for coexistence. Readers get the chance to dive into the human qualities, such as single perspectives, preconceived notions, and voluntary opposition to compromise with the other party, that have become characteristic to this conflict.



Ana Isabel de la Guardia is a passionate and well-rounded student who advocates for the good she wants to see in the world. As an active member of organizations such as Operation Smile and Balanced Minds, Ana aspires to positively impact the lives of everyone she encounters. Because of her welcoming personality, she has made lifelong connections with people around the world who keep her in touch with current geopolitical affairs. Moreover, Ana has a growing passion for both writing and design. She designed the cover page and wrote her article, "Why Liberties Matter," in which Ana contrasts Syria and Finland's democratic system by exploring the use of violence, freedom, and the electoral process.



WRITERS



Eugenia Albert is an aspiring doctor with a passion for knowing about the world and helping it. She is a board member of Make A Wish AIP, an organization whose purpose is to fulfill the biggest wish of children with critical diseases. She is a student with a very bright mind and high hopes for her future as she hopes to make a change in society. In her article, “China’s Hidden Agenda,” Albert explores the dangers of the Chinese Communist Party and its attempts to undermine democracy.



Alberto Arias is a 12th-grade student with a deep love for chemistry and art. In his years at AIP, he has studied and practiced all forms of art, from cooking to acting, and painting; if you can imagine it, he has done it. His talent has gotten him very noble rewards like “the best storyteller” reward and he even created a short novel when he was younger. Besides being a passionate student, friend, reader, and debater, he has great ideas. In his article, “Evaluating Democratic Backsliding,” he evaluates democracy’s imperfections while seeking solutions for democratic backsliding.



Fernando Marquez, the assistant director of AIP Theater, is an amazing friend and determined student. As president of the student council, Fernando shows his interest in finding the common good for his peers. Being part of the International Relations Club has allowed him to expand his views in political issues and share his opinions. In his article titled, “Rejecting Putin’s Ideology,” Marquez evaluates Putin’s views on the Russia-Ukraine war, and states a call to action to help Ukraine.



Francisco de La Espriella is a hard-working and cultured individual. He has a great passion for many topics like technology, history, and philosophy, being well rounded in all of these. Francisco is also a very dedicated American football player, embracing Plato’s philosophy of training both mind and body to achieve man’s maximum potential. De La Espriella is a firm believer that through reason and practical thinking a nation can be better built and ensure the best for its citizens. In his article “Russia’s Vision And Its Roots,” he discusses the background of the Russian invasion on Ukraine and their motives.



Andrea Naranjo is a seemingly quiet person, yet once she begins speaking it is impossible to remain unimpressed. She is an exemplary student, an incredible dancer, a trustworthy friend, and overall, a person to look up to. You will often see her helping her friends understand classwork, at ballet class, hanging out with her family, volunteering, or organizing an activity. No matter who it is, Andrea is always there to succor. Through multiple mechanisms, she contributes to a better tomorrow. In her article, “Conflict in the South China Sea,” she addresses the territorial conflict in the area, and how it could transform into a worldwide issue.

Editor's Letter

Paulina Spiegel

For the last decade, the world has been in increasing upheaval due to a rise in pressing global issues such as geopolitical instability and democratic backsliding, economic stagnation, all while grappling with the global health crisis and so much more. The post-Cold War world was expected to be the triumph of the liberal order, one in which democracies cooperated and intrastate conflict seemingly ended. Sadly, those expectations have been upended. In this edition of *A Hoot About the World*, our writers analyze the increase in uncertainty and the decay of the liberal age.

In my article, “Great Power Conflict Begins” I provide an analysis of the current situation regarding the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and how its development could represent a threat to the sovereignty of other countries and a threat to disrupting the world order. It also details the possible solutions that could be implemented to help resolve the conflict and prevent it from spreading to other parts of the world.

Fernando Marquez's article, “Rejecting Putin's Ideology” is a provocative piece that interacts with both sides of the Russia vs. Ukraine conflict. It describes the history of Ukraine from the moment it became a country to the present day while discussing the geographical context that linked both countries for some time and presenting a call to action for the global community to provide help to Ukrainian citizens during hard times of conflict with their controversial neighbor.

To understand the political trend of democratic backsliding, Alberto Arias provides a thorough analysis of democracy through time and how internal and external factors have affected its popularity resulting in the percentage of democratic states decreasing every year from a global perspective. It also relates to Ana Isabel de la Guardia's piece on how democratic countries can be graded to be held accountable for the efficiency of their system.

Eugenia Albert and Andrea Naranjo's articles evaluate the current situation faced by the global community regarding China's aggressive attitude towards international affairs as they attempt to conquer their surroundings while imposing their regime on areas like the South China Sea.

Francisco de la Espriella's “Russia's Vision and its Roots” describes in detail the historic context that drives the Russian nationalist sentiment and their need to establish domain among other countries. This article is a deep reflection on Russia's origin, and it provides an explanation for their most current actions regarding their ongoing conflict with Ukraine.

The issue concludes with two extremely relevant book reviews that provide useful information to understand the issues explained in the articles published. Sofia Cordovez analyses *The Looming Tower*, which reflects on the issue of geopolitical instability. While Isabella Duarte shares a piece on *The Lemon Tree*, a profound book that dwells on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

While the current issues that our world faces seem complex and beyond resolution, these thought-provoking articles seek to provide some insight into the conflicts and situations that burden our global community to educate readers on the different perspectives of these issues and create awareness to send help to those in need during these difficult times.



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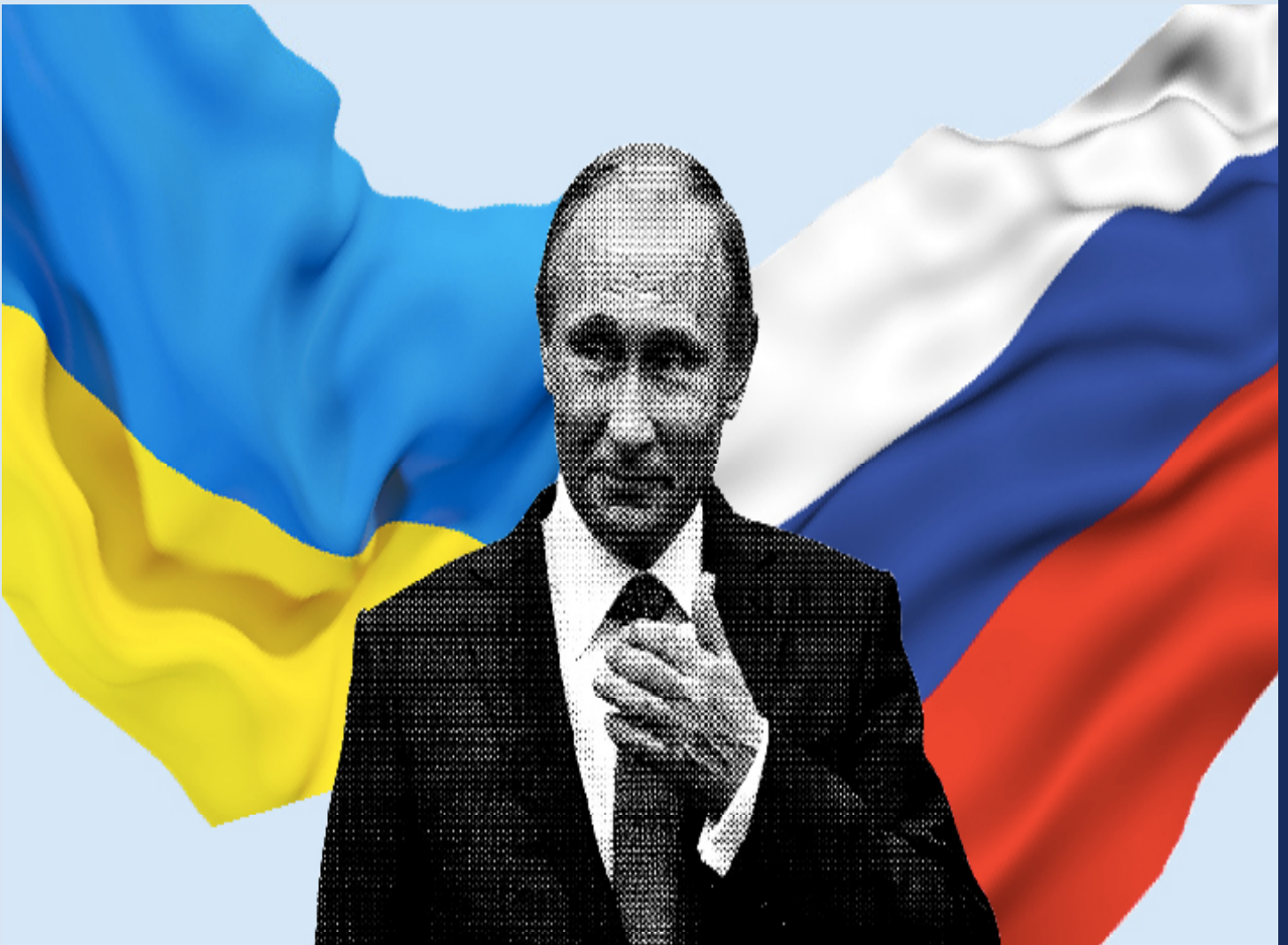


#ECOAIIP

Great Power

Paulina Spiegel

On the verge of Russian occupation, Ukraine struggles to maintain its sovereignty and the territory of its borders while the world wonders what it will mean to them if it fails to do so.



The Russian invasion of Ukraine has brought to question the efficiency of the norm against territorial conquest, which prevents countries from attempting to conquer another country's territory and redraw their borders. This is the issue that concerns the global community because if the norm is openly violated and there are no major repercussions, the norm against territorial conquest will be officially violated by a world power, making other world powers consider territorial conquest as a possibility for growing their nation and consequentially making smaller states a target for territorial conquest. This principle also applies to other international norms, if one is broken who is to say that the others will not fall behind? And these are only the general issues that are faced by the global community regarding the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Conflict Begins

The global community holds no major interest in Russia's invasion of Ukraine as long as their countries do not feel threatened by the boldness of Putin's character towards the current situation, which shows that he has no interest in taking a more liberal or democratic approach to governance or safeguarding human rights. This said, it is important to remember that NATO does hold responsibility for aiding Ukraine because according to their charter "an attack on one is an attack on all." Therefore, they have a commitment that they must be held responsible for. If Ukraine were to be dominated by a puppet regime installed by Russia the Ukrainian people would probably receive no impactful support from other countries. But if the country comes to be under direct Russian control and the norms that protect a country's sovereignty are threatened in a public display that would represent a threat important enough for the global community to act. Because it would be the most obvious sign that order has broken down, and once drastic actions like the ones taken by Russia pass unnoticed by global law enforcement organizations, who is to say other countries would not be able to get away with the same?

The problem with Russia's invasion of Ukraine is not necessarily that they are trying to occupy the country, from a global perspective, but instead, how imposing and bold they are at doing it. Throughout history, many countries have partially violated the norm against territorial conquest without interfering with the country's borders, like for example when Vietnam invaded Cambodia in 1978.



Preparation for a possible Russian offensive. Odesa, Ukraine, March 24, 2022. (AP Photo, Petros Giannakouris.)

The issue with Ukraine is that Putin is openly communicating that he is trying to conquer Ukrainian territory and redraw the borders on the maps. From the strategic and self-interested global perspective of other countries, one can get away with acquiring power and even territory over another country so long as “the maps, by and large, stay the same.” But Ukraine represents a special case since it is the first time in “30 years since one country had tried to conquer another internationally outright.” This is shocking to the global community because knowing that a country can get away with a lot through subtle and discrete ways, Putin’s bluntness and use of violence seem unnecessary. But it makes his intentions rather clear, he is trying not only to conquer Ukrainian territory but to send a message along the way. Throughout history, we have seen that one of the main reasons why wars break out is because of fear. Fear of the possibility of what is happening in Ukraine extending to other countries might just be enough to convince the global community that what is happening with Ukraine also represents a threat to their countries. Not only because they might be invaded but because public displays of global instability open the doors to terrorism, refugee crisis, infectious diseases, etc.

Whatever the outcome of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine the seed of possibility has already been planted on a global scale, the possibility to get away with territorial conquest and disrupting world order. The only way to stop this seed from growing is to impose sanctions on Russia, no matter how minor their violations of Ukraine’s sovereignty turn out to be while preventing the conflict to escalate. While Ukrainian sovereignty is probably not worth a third world war, the domino effect it could have on the lingering sovereignty of other countries probably is. So that is why the world needs to take the matter seriously and impose the sanctions necessary on Russia to crush any possibility of a revolution based on the principle of disrupting world order and global governance.

MAKE ART NOT WAR



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Rejecting Putin's Ideology

Fernando Marquez

Putin's view on the Russian-Ukraine war is that Ukraine is and will always be part of Russia. His overly obsessive, deep belief that Ukraine is Russian blinds him from the current perspective of the modern world.

The idea that Putin portrays is in some sense factual. Modern Ukraine was founded in the Soviet Union, and they have a lot of similarities with their overly attached neighbor. As Putin himself clears out, "Both Russia and Ukraine, it asserted, have not only common roots in language and faith but also a shared historic destiny." He takes this so far as to say that Ukraine really doesn't exist.

Clearly, Putin, as well as other Russian representatives underestimate the value and formation of Ukraine, and this is the reason why this conflict started. Ukraine was described as "the soft tissue between two bones". Fortunately, Putin was wrong to assume that the Ukrainian population would give up their power. The citizens of Ukraine have put a strong fight and a huge part of the world is on their side. Along with Putin's ideologist idea of the USSR, the Ukraine conflict is just another play in his plan to disrupt global peace.

Another concerning issue that the world must face is that Putin's dream is to rebuild the empire that the Soviet Union once was. The idea of losing Ukraine to NATO is like giving up his dream of ever getting it back. This was a critical hit to Putin's vision because, as stated in the article, "Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire."



It is interesting to see the studies of Ukraine's history; because the data that Russians evade is the fact that Ukraine wasn't always Russian. Ukraine has a very diverse background, from Mongolian to even western backgrounds. Conflicts arose, between many of the predecessors and it ended up being annexed by Moscow in 1793. In the long history of Ukraine, the country was a state of Russia for 200 years. An amount that is relatively short compared to the entire history of Ukraine's existence.

Sadly, a peaceful country like Ukraine has a very controversial neighbor, and the idea that the two countries could coexist was never a possibility. Almost immediately as Putin was caught trying to rig the elections of Ukraine the dream of unity slowly shattered.

Yanukovich, the president whom Putin imposed in Ukraine, was elected, and Ukraine was once again under Russian control. Ukraine's goal of outliving its communist past and westernizing were all destroyed by the corrupt Yanukovich.



This act of disrespectfulness against a country shouldn't be tolerated, and Ukraine responded accordingly. Putin was committing crimes against human rights, taking away the liberty of choice from Ukrainian citizens, and therefore threatening their democratic state. This gave Ukraine the necessary push to move on and change its path in the world. Their success in separating from Russia started to bring them prosperity and independence... until Russia threatened Ukraine's integrity again.

Ukraine's situation has been a complicated one since the beginning of its existence and with the current events, it seems like it will only get worse. A call must be made to all nations of the world, all the people reading this, and everyone willing to help, to support Ukraine in this fight against the world power that Russia is. We all should find the empathy to put ourselves in the shoes of the Ukrainian people and provide support for their country so that it can become a symbol of world peace and evolution, instead of one of defeat and lack of sovereignty.

China's Hidden Agenda

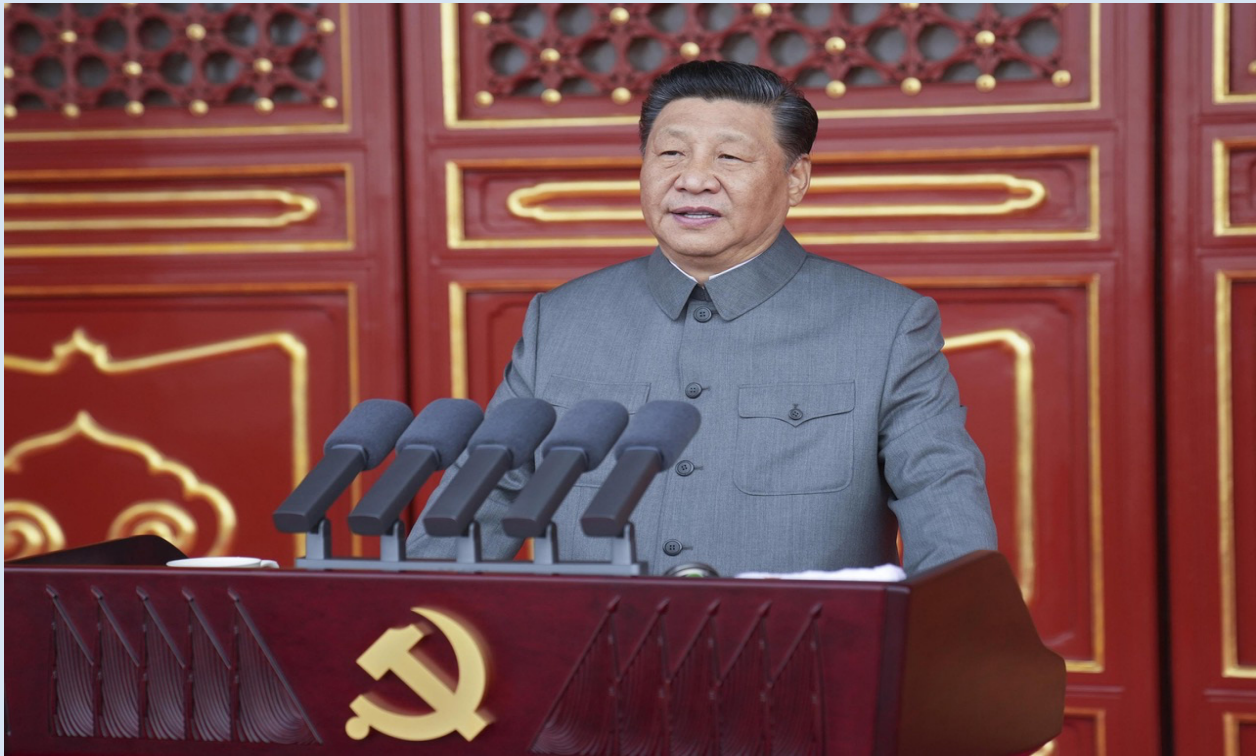
Eugenia Albert

Imagine living under the total rule of an authoritarian government, with zero political freedoms, human rights, or social justice. Growing up in a democratic society, the thought of such a life might seem unrealistic to most of you, but this might be the world we will soon be heading towards. Democracy has thrived during the last century, with the establishment of the liberal elements in most political systems around the globe. The rise and stability of democratic nations, however, are starting to decline, as the geopolitical trends begin to shift in another direction. Such transition is the doings of no other than China. With the increasing attempts to completely undermine democracy, the Chinese Communist Party has made it clear that the main goal of its political agenda is to promote a global system based on its ideology: no political freedoms, human rights, or social justice.

Attempts to weaken democracies have not just been China's efforts, as authoritarian states continue to expand throughout governments worldwide. From Bolsonaro's presidency in Brazil to the Law and Justice rule in Poland, the rise of illiberal trends disguised as "democracies" has given way to a new wave of authoritarian tendencies among leaders, China being the most concerning of them all. With a sophisticated agenda president Xi Jinping is not afraid of implementing, the future of democracy is not looking so good.




Since Mao Zedong's rule, the Chinese Communist Party has had dominion over power, which not only stretches over their citizens but now over the entire global system. As first-hand witnesses of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the CCP has learned from their neighbor's mistakes and developed methods to avoid such political failure themselves. They made the party's ideology very clear: have socialism with Chinese characteristics under the total rule of the CCP. With this set into place, China has prospered economically over the past few years, making it even more crucial for Xi Jinping to consolidate the CCP's ideology internationally. His mission is to make China the leading power by 2049, understanding that the key to his success is the political aspect of the game rather than the economic one.



Thus, the flourishing of democracies, and therefore liberal elements, threatens the global authority of the Chinese Communist Party. Because of this, the party has found it crucial to interfere with such activities and develop an environment where the pro-CCP sentiment is shared. The only way to do so, however, is by weakening democracy from the inside to expand its influence over the world. To accomplish this goal, the CCP has targeted developing countries with illiberal governments in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe as these systems are most vulnerable.

By working through international institutions, the CCP has been able to internally weaken the pillars of democracy. Through the use of students and business executives masked as “political agents,” the CCP has been able to gain control over the operations of these countries and thus get internal access to promote their political and economic model. With tactics such as debt diplomacy, the CCP has invested billions of dollars into infrastructure projects and financial aid programs that create an economic dependency on China, making it easier to spread their ideologies and further weaken democracies.



Technology has also played a major role in the undermining of democracy throughout the world, as the CCP continues to influence the information people receive. The development of censorship, propaganda and surveillance tools has amplified the CCP's power and control, selling these tools and training governments on how to use them. The influence over democracies, especially the weaker ones, has been achieved by manipulating liberal principles to meet their political needs. Through the weakening of human rights, especially those sections where regulations are still being put in order, such as the internet, the CCP has been able to silently alter the foundation of freedom of speech and therefore democracy.

However improbable this might seem to you, we could soon be living under the power of the CCP. To avoid such future, it is indispensable for countries to educate their citizens about the control the CCP is grasping over the global spectrum and its liberal elements. It is time you educate yourself on the matter. Prevent the avoidable before it is inescapable...

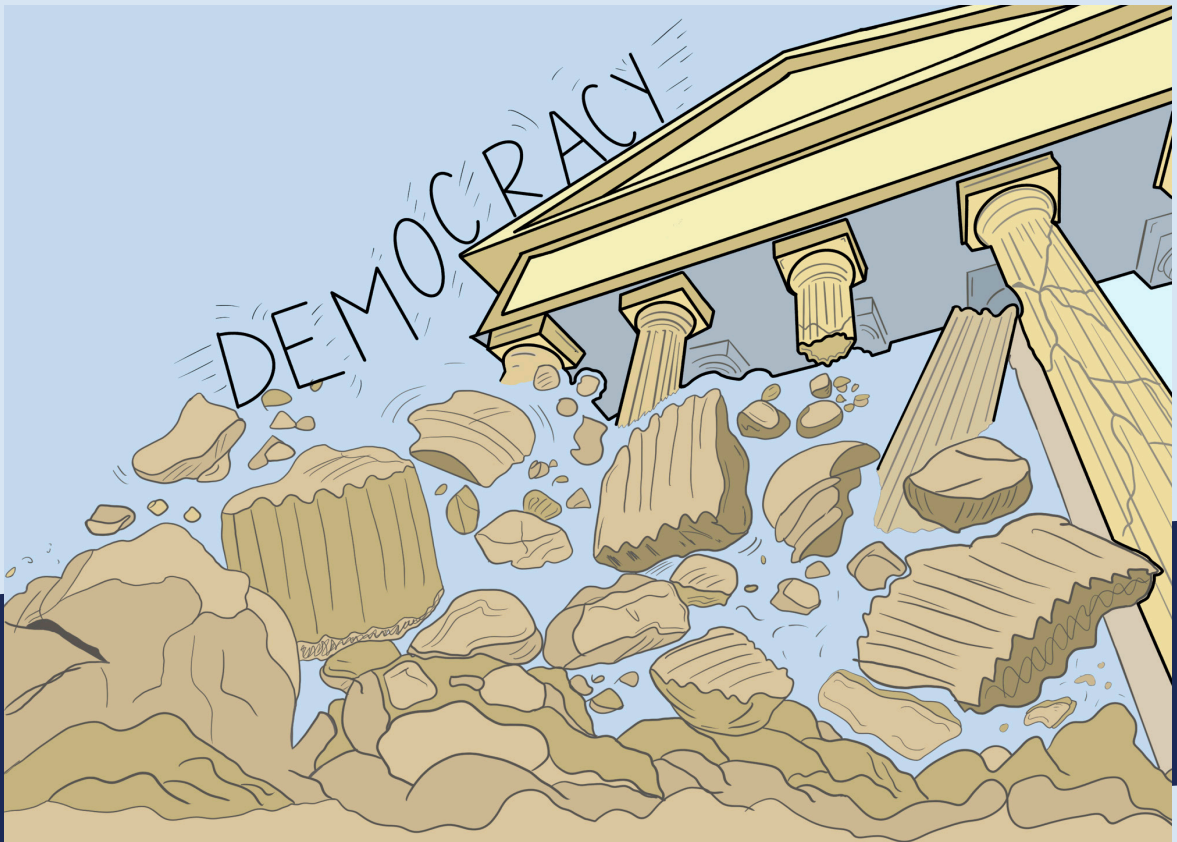
Evaluating Democratic Backsliding

Alberto Arias

Trends exist all over the world in the deep realms: fashion, business, art... But do trends also translate into politics? Evidence establishes that there is in fact a correlation between generational morals and governmental styles. As Newton said, *what goes up must come down*; rising nondemocratic governments will be met with the same downfall that democracy is going through right now.

Ever since the 70s, the number of states that use democracy as a form of government has decreased drastically. The global share of democracies has lowered from 54% to 49% in the last decade. In those same years, the population in autocratic countries has risen from 6% to 34%. These numbers are concerning because they show a clear trend in abandoning democracy as the most viable form of governmental style and opting for alternate solutions that throughout history have proven catastrophic results for the well-being of citizens and nations.

Although this is alarming, it is technically not new. Even in ancient Greece, often thought of as the purest and original form of democracy, it was often not the preferred form of government. Some of the old world's brightest minds thought that giving the citizens the power was not the best idea, because they lacked the education and general awareness to be involved in important decisions. Even Plato and Aristotle, often regarded as the most influential philosophers believed in an Aristocracy where only a



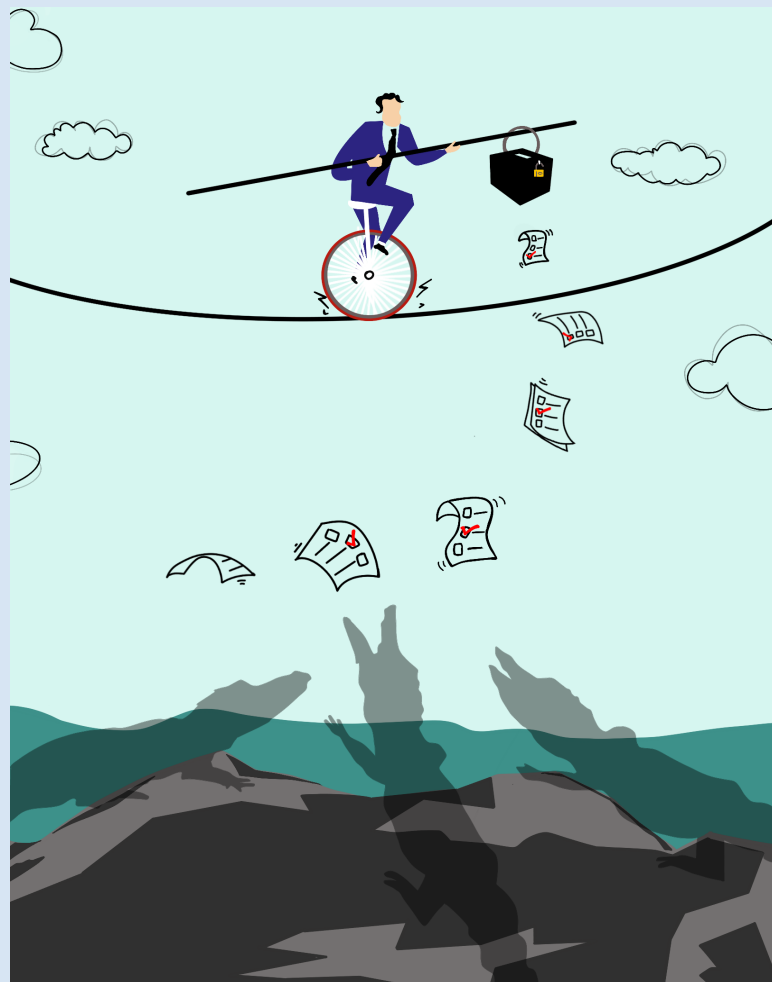
select few get to decide what happens in the city-state, fearing mob rule and mass hysteria.

Democracy is a trend that rises and falls for periods of time. The world has seen democratic backsliding hundreds of times before. Usually, periods of challenge to governments of states coincide with times of social turmoil. The Russian Revolution, for example, created the political upheaval that was needed to cause the questioning of authority.

In more recent years, the consequences of democratic backsliding have bubbled up to the surface and shown themselves through the societies of our world. The Chavismo movement had its ripples felt throughout the entire Latin American continent, and Rodrigo Duterte's messages strongly resonate with thousands of people around the world. With the addition of economic inequality, social discontent, and, more recently, COVID-19, the younger educated population has grown to be more leftist as time progresses. This is also a product of increasing polarization of the governments, setting up the stage for further authority questioning.

By knowing these signs of an approaching mistrust against democratic authority, you could be at least partially prepared for worst-case scenarios. After all, humanitarian crises are way more common in autocratic regimes. Staying well-informed by multiple non-subjective sources is essential to keep up with global trends.

But is this all a hindrance to humankind? Not at all. This is prime time for new government types to be tested. Democracy is not perfect (and no government style will ever be), but by discarding other forms of government that have proven to be worse for society, we can be closer to solving global issues, by coming up with new systems or improving our democratic systems through trial and error. Nothing can ever be improved without trying out potential new solutions for present problems. And if all else fails, it is just a matter of time before trends flip and democracy comes back again.





**FIND
YOUR
GREATNESS**




Why Liberties Matter


Ana Isabel de la Guardia

4,955.3 km separate the 100 and the 1 in the Freedom House scores for best democratic country. Freedom House describes itself as an organization “founded on the core conviction that freedom flourishes in democratic nations where governments are accountable to their people.” Countries are given scores based on how good, or bad, their democratic systems are. Finland has a perfect score of 100 while Syria is the only official country with a score of 1. You might be asking yourself, how can this organization put a score on a country? There is a vast range of criteria on which a country can be evaluated on, but the basis of democracy comes with the participation of the people, especially the population.

Syria has a score of 1 because it makes it purposefully hard for the population to vote and actively participate in democracy. Even if the only requirements are to be over 18, the government decides who truly qualifies as an “eligible” voter based on their criteria. Current president Bashar al-Assad has been in office for 21 years. This year he won again with a whopping 95.19% of votes cast only in government-controlled areas. Of course, these elections have been deemed illegitimate by many democratic countries since Syria is subject to a regime. Aside from the 250-seat council, the one true power is the president who chooses his prime minister to rule by his side.

Country	Total Score and Status	Political Rights	Civil Liberties
Syria	1  Not Free	-3	4

Finland on the other hand maintains a score of 100 because it allows the population to vote for everything. The president is chosen by the people and the prime minister is chosen by the parliament. The members of the 200-seat parliament are also chosen by the population. Everyone gets the same opportunities and rights to vote. It is a transparent government that allows people to know what is going on with the leaders of their country. This transparency brings a sense of peace into the country which Syria lacks.

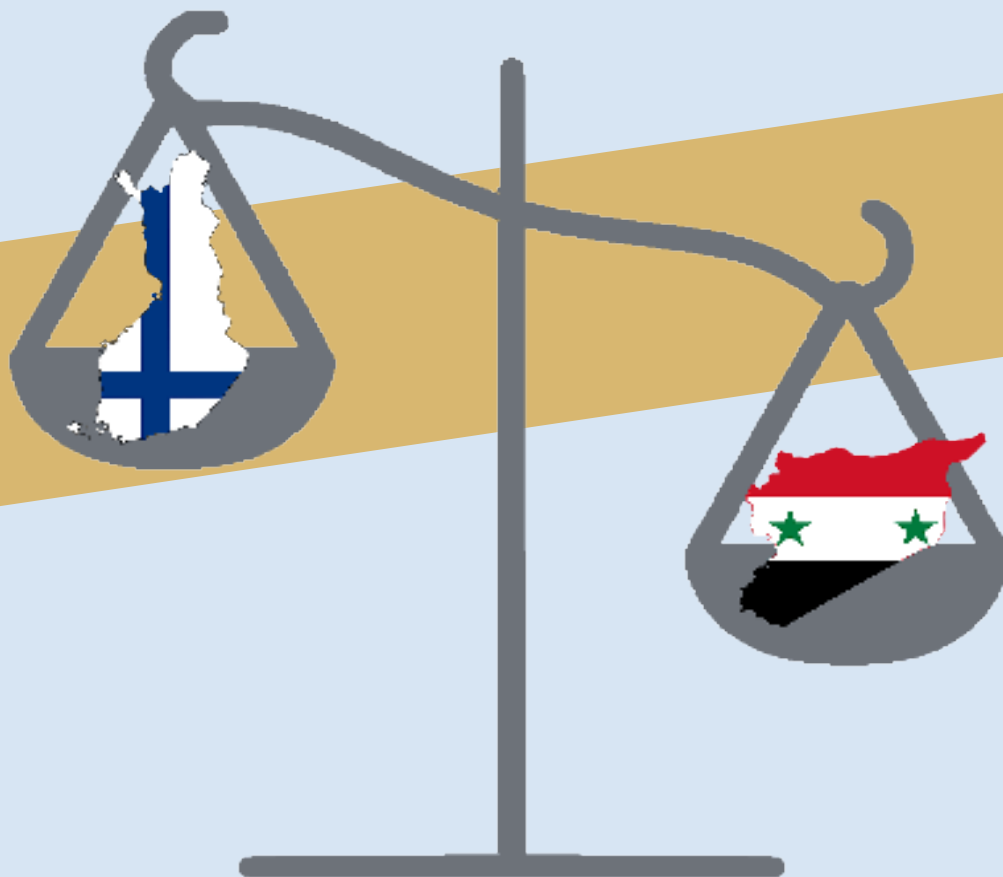
Country	Total Score and Status	Political Rights	Civil Liberties
Finland	100  Free	40	60

The Electoral Process can directly affect Civil Liberties in any of the two countries. Suppressing people of their rights, especially the one to vote, does not bring peace. If Syria keeps blocking out everything with its secretive government violence will only increase. Finland does not need to rule with an offensive military because they allow people to have their freedom as citizens in that country. If Syria keeps retaliating against the masses with force, they will only retaliate themselves.

with that comes oppression from a violent military and regime causing revolts in society. Those who try to speak up and fight back are immediately suppressed, some are even taken to prison or murdered. The judiciary is not independent therefore if the president says so, he alone can send a person to his or her death. Anti-regime revolts have been made by the public, but all have been unsuccessful due to the power the citizens lack.

If in Syria a journalist were to say something against the government, he could be sent to death by a judge who would be influenced by the president to make the decision. But 4,955.3 km away there is a completely independent judiciary, free from ties with the government. A journalist in Finland can voice his or her opinion; the only thing they must worry about is if they wrote a good article enough to print. The government in Finland rests inside a Ziploc; it is completely transparent and easily accessible. In Syria however, it is not only the government but the whole country that resides in a vault with no visibility on the inside.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, *returning violence for violence multiplies violence*. If the government in Syria keeps implementing violence against its people, they will be violent back. The way to help this country is not by going to fight for the people, it is by talking. Free countries, like Finland, can help speak up for those lacking democratic rights, show the world how a country should not be governed, and spread the word so a diplomatic and political approach can be taken, not a violent one. Finland has a perfect 100 A+ score for transparency and freedom with its citizens. The only way Syria can go from 1 to 100 is by taking it out of that vault and putting it in a Ziploc for the world to see. After all, Freedom House's purpose is to hold the government accountable for its people. How much better it would be if the world could also hold them accountable.



Conflict in the South China Sea

Andrea Naranjo

Imagine you are a country that is surrounded by sea, and you depend on it and its resources. By law, part of it belongs to you. But then, another country decides to claim it as theirs and starts using and taking what is yours. Sounds mean, right? This is exactly what China is doing in the South China Sea. This may sound like a simple argument between countries, so why should you worry? Well, what if you were told this territorial dispute could possibly become a military conflict and global issue?

The South China Sea is a very important region for trade and the economy, having one-third of the global maritime shipping and 12% of all the fish caught in the world. This area is also rich in natural resources, like oil and natural gas. It borders China, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

The UN Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), mentions how much sea each country in the world owns. 12nm (nautical miles) from the coast is the territorial zone, an extra 12nm is a zone with limited control, and a total of 200nm is the exclusive economic zone. All of these rules apply to the countries around the South China Sea. But if they have these set rules, why are they arguing over them?

For several years now, China has been claiming an area called the “nine-dash line”, which takes up 80% of the South China Sea, as theirs. But just because its name has “China” in it, doesn’t mean it is theirs. These claims go over other countries’ maritime borders. They are taking over those countries’ seas and not letting them use their own resources, which is illegal. Not only are they claiming it, but they are building and expanding islands in it. And on these islands, they are placing a bunch of military equipment such as missiles, radars, and airstrips, which makes the whole situation much worse. China’s actions on the South China Seas are illegal, dangerous for the whole world, and they show how much control and influence they aspire to have.

Having a military conflict between two global superpowers doesn’t sound nice, especially in an area as important to the world as the South China Sea. And with the militarization of it, the possibility is very high. China is not the only one with military activity in the region. The United States, which supports Southeast Asian countries, also has its navy there. The South China Sea connects the United States with the Indian Ocean, so it’s pretty important for them (trade and money). They do operations where they navigate through those seas, to show China that they are still free to do so. But China says that is not allowed and that they are being provoked. This causes the tensions to rise, and military conflict to be a much bigger probability, something the world can’t afford.

Not only are they risking military conflict, but China is really showing the control they are looking to have. China’s actions have been called a “campaign of bullying to control” and them trying to create a “maritime empire.” Of course, China would want to have control over something as important as the South China Sea. And they are demonstrating that they don’t care what must be done to get it. Sharing is caring, but China does not care. They had promised to not militarize the region. But they broke that promise and did it anyway. There was also a case placed against them, but China refuses to recognize it, saying it’s illegal. Whenever they get called out by other countries for their actions, they say facts and laws are getting twisted and that they are

exaggerating. They are doing everything possible for it to seem like they are doing nothing wrong and claim their control when it goes against international law.

At first, this territorial dispute may have sounded like something that could have been solved by diplomatic terms, right? But in a country like China, whose goals and ambitions are a priority, it seems not possible. And what started as an argument over some islands and sea, is now becoming a global conflict and a big worry for everyone.



Russia's Vision And Its Roots

Francisco de la Espriella

The Kievan-Rus is the state that all Eastern Slavs come from (Byelorussians, Ukrainians, and Russians) this state endured through most of the Middle Ages until the Mongol invasion. The Mongol invasion is where Russian authoritarianism, paranoia, and alienation from the rest of Europe comes from; the Mongols raped, sacked, and subjugated everything they saw on their path, and they did this to Kievan-Rus. After centuries of subjugation by their Mongol masters, the Russian Principalities won a decisive victory against the Golden Horde (European Mongol Empire successor state) at Kulikovo, dragging the Mongols out of the Russian land. But the damage was done, most of Russia was traumatized after years of subjugation except for one Merchant Republic in the north. The Novgorod Republic was not invaded by the Mongols and thus manage to thrive from the Baltic trade and have a proto-capitalist merchant economy compared to the other principalities and duchies like Ryazan or Muscovy.

In the second half of the XV century two Russian powers stood: The Novgorod Republic and the Grand Duchy of Muscovy. The Grand Duchy of Muscovy attacked the Novgorod Republic and won the battle of Shelon, forcing Novgorod troops to unconditionally surrender. This doomed Russia to centuries of feudalism and absolutism as Novgorod ruled itself like the Italian merchant republics and this brought riches beyond imagination to their nations (examples: Venetia or Genoa). Muscovy eventually would become the Russian Tsardom a state marked by their cultural alienation from the rest of Europe and their aggressive push east conquering every state on their path. The Tsardom was marked by their "serf system" and feudalism with a small portion of nobles controlling massive regions as their personal properties. All this was made by Ivan the Terrible who wanted to centralize control to promote efficiency in his new Tsardom which he saw as the last bastion of Orthodox Christianity and to have all his subjects in check.

In late XVI and early XVII, Russia's greatest leader took power, Peter the Great. Peter managed to Europeanize Russia making it culturally like the rest of the continent. He also defeated the Swedish Empire dethroning them from their great power status while also gaining a Baltic Port where he founded St. Petersburg. Under Peter the Great the Russian people saw progress like never before, enjoying more liberties (at the XVII century standard); this would continue for the XVII century with Catherine the Great gaining most of the Polis-Lithuanian Commonwealth eastern lands and promoting processes like inoculation to the population. After the Napoleonic Wars Russia's progress would stagnate as this victory was extremely expensive for the nation stopping a century of non-stop progress. What would mark and begin the Russian Empire's decline would be the Crimean War. A coalition composed of France, Britain, Sardinia-Piedmont, and the Ottomans fought Russia to evade them getting near total control of the Black Sea and Balkans. When the coalition forces fought Russia, they did not fight with the efficient and fearsome nation that Napoleon encountered but with an inept giant. The war culminated with the Russian Black Sea fleet getting destroyed, the Russian Empire lost its chance of subjugating the Ottomans and the whole nation was humiliated. This defeat made other European powers see Russia no longer as the unstoppable giant it once was.

Tzar Alexander the II wanted to end the decline and stagnation the Empire was suffering. He managed to gain the Russian Far-East from the Qing Empire and found the city of Vladivostok gaining Russia's most important Pacific Port. He also got most of Southern Central Asia in the Great Game against the British Empire. But his most important achievements were his reforms to modernize Russia from a backward state to a modern industrialized state. He wanted to liberalize the Russians and begin to mimic the Western European's political reforms but in a moderate fashion to not trigger reactionary discontent. A moderate move that looked like the safest option that would put Russia once again on the path of progress, but the moderate options triggered radicals. On March 13, 1881, Russia's fate was completely changed as liberal radicals assassinated the Tzar making Russia fall into even more stagnation as Alexander the III took the throne. Alexander the III undid most of his father's reforms and alienated his son Nicolas the II from the political situation. Alexander wanted a conservative Russia and a true Russian Empire, meaning he wanted an empire that had one language and religion. He wanted all the empire's subjects (Poles, Finns, etc..) to speak Russian and be orthodox. This created more tension in the now backward Russian Empire that still had radical liberals causing trouble to the Imperial Court. Things only got worse when Wilhelm the II began to employ a Weltpolitik strategy ending Bismarck's German-Russo alliance: making Russia seek closer ties with France beginning the domino effect that culminated in the Great War and the collapse of the empire.



Before the Great War Russia was experiencing gradual industrialization but this stopped mattering as The Great War showed the world and the Russian people that Russia was incompetent, technologically backward, and a shadow of its former self: add to this an inexperienced monarch who just parties and has terrible advisors. This stopped any advances Russia could had have in the first decades of the 20th century. Nicolas II's ineptitude put the final nail in the empire's coffin because he was seen as weak by most of the nobility, did not listen to any of the Duma's suggestions or complaints, and tried to repress his population's protest with pure violence and persecution. The Great War augmented all of Russia's problems, making collapse almost unavoidable. In 1917, the Russian Empire came to an end with Nicolas the II abdicating and a new provisional government emerging, which at least put a stop to Nicolas's actions, but it was too late. Eventually that same year Communist Radicals led by Vladimir Lenin would revolt in the "October Revolution" that would begin the Russian Civil War.

It is important to understand the historic context of the Russian nation to analyze its behavior and attitude towards other countries. A lot of their recent actions have a lot to do with their current mandate. But it is crucial to see where Russia's tendency to authoritarianism comes from. And why the nation felt the need to distance themselves from the rest of Europe, and more importantly from the world. If there is any hope of resolving the current conflict surrounding Russia and Ukraine, the first step is to step back and look at the history surrounding both countries, to understand their necessities, traumas, and tendencies better to be able to propose viable solutions.



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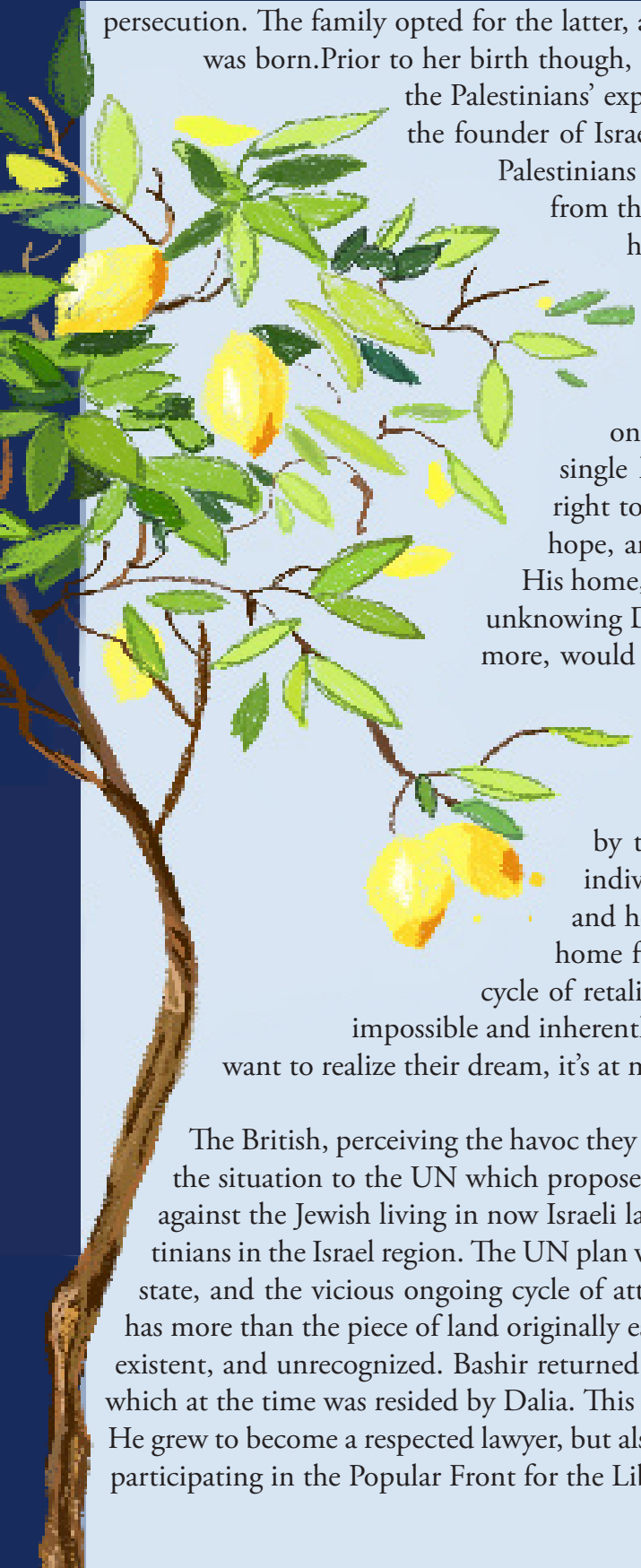
Isabella Duarte

To the South of Lebanon, the west of Jordan, there is a single Eastern Mediterranean land that has disclosed the incessant necessity for two people to coexist, but is it possible following eighty years of an ongoing brutal war, tinged by its unwillingness to “see the other side”? Sandy Tolan wrote *The Lemon Tree* in his quest to find an “elusive story” that portrayed the “human side of the story, the common ground between enemies, and genuine hopes for coexistence,” after years of reading, reporting, and searching for the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a journalist, professor, lecturer, and recognized writer. He finally discovered the real friendship between Palestinian Bashir Khairi and Jewish Dalia Eshkenazi connected through their home by a lemon tree that had existed for generations, for the house was constructed by Bashir’s father, then expelled by Israeli forces, and then resided by Jewish immigrants, Dalia’s parents, unknowing of its sullen past. The book encompasses the importance of open-mindedness to multiple perspectives and seeing “the other side” through a humane lens, not only through our preconceived notions or personal ideologies. This mutual and voluntary comprehension of both parties is the only way toward compromise or coexistence in the ongoing conflict, and lack of is why it is ongoing. Tolan approaches it in the most objective and personal style possible by weaving together a riveting story of a real friendship and detailed historical context, demonstrating through the core of their perspectives and friendship, the humane instigators of the conflict. One can read the book without any knowledge of the subject and leave with personal opinions and passion for a solution because of its descriptive and rich historical context, and in-depth dual perspectives.



To understand the complex and real relationship between Bashir and Dalia, often marred by the political instability of their homeland, one must first divulge the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The year was 1945, and the Jewish survivors of the brutal persecution and Holocaust carried throughout their homelands in Europe needed stability. Palestinians were growing more uncomfortable with the rapid Jewish immigration to British-occupied Palestine and the selling of land to increasing Jewish immigrants. They requested from the British stronger borders to preserve their sovereignty, yet the British had promised through the 1917 Balfour Declaration Palestinian land to the Jewish, so the Palestinian’s request was denied. Zionism, the belief consisting of the Jew’s need to have and return to the Holy Land to avoid further oppression was spreading again. After the Great War, waves of Jewish immigration had transferred thousands into Palestine, then millions more after the Second World War. One of these ships carried Dalia Eshkenazi’s parents, survivors of Bulgaria’s anti-Semitic deportation plan, then conflicted by the choice to stay in Soviet-occupied and devastated Bulgaria or move into Ramla, as they were promised stability in the ancient land after years of

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persecution. The family opted for the latter, and Dalia, a girl that “carried with her an extraordinary legacy” was born. Prior to her birth though, Palestine had been transformed into Israel. The initial steps for the Palestinians’ expulsion from their land were led by people such as Ben-Gurion, the founder of Israel, who claimed to support compulsory transfer and dismissed Palestinians living in the land. Palestinians were then inhumanely expelled from their homes, leaving everything behind, and submitted to endure heat, famine, thirst, and poverty while missing their old lives and memories of the land, their home. Houses belonging to Palestinians were now resided by Jewish people, who unknowingly so believed the Palestinians had willingly abandoned their homes before their arrival. Six-year-old Bashir Khairi lived in one of those houses, and his whole childhood was marked by this single historical event, which would create in him a fervency to the right to return to Palestine, “We were exiled but we left our souls, our hope, and our childhood in Palestine. We left our joys and sorrow...” His home, built by his father for generations to come, was then resided by unknowing Dalia, and she was born. The house of the lemon tree, and many more, would become instigators of the decades-long tragedy. The region of Palestine was remodeled and renamed into Israel, street names vanished and rewritten, and whole histories and ancestries were obliterated. Violent Palestinian attempts to salvage Palestinian independence were spurting throughout but retaliated by the Jewish militia. Tolan accentuates the meaning of home to individuals, how a house is more than a house, land more than land, and how humane aspects such as an embedded need for stability and home for people, have also provoked the conflict to become a vicious cycle of retaliation; and propagated the belief that mutual understanding is impossible and inherently exclusive, “...That my life here is at their expense, and if they want to realize their dream, it’s at my expense.”

The British, perceiving the havoc they had been culprits of, for ignoring Palestinian’s concerns, handed the situation to the UN which proposed the separation of Israel and Palestine to culminate the attacks against the Jewish living in now Israeli land, without considering the disproportionate number of Palestinians in the Israel region. The UN plan was rejected by Palestinians who insisted on a single independent state, and the vicious ongoing cycle of attack, retaliation, and terrorism, is still ongoing. Israel currently has more than the piece of land originally established for them by the UN, and Palestine is practically non-existent, and unrecognized. Bashir returned to his childhood home nearly two decades after the expulsion, which at the time was resided by Dalia. This was the initial seed for the turbulent relationship that followed. He grew to become a respected lawyer, but also a passionate protester and was accused of being a terrorist and participating in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, four times arrested. Dalia had virtually no

knowledge of the origins of her home, nor the suffering endured in Israel before its creation. A single encounter of listening to the enemy side, facing the perspective, and understanding the voice of the other, led to Dalia's changed perspective in the conflict—one of coexistence within Israel—whilst Bashir remained static in his belief for a complete return of Palestinians to the land, "It would avenge the Palestinian defeat; it would restore his family's dignity; it would repair the loss his father, mother and siblings had suffered. It would wash away the shame of dispossession," which would consequently lead to millions of Jewish refugees.

In Tolan's objectives in writing *The Lemon Tree*, the importance of open-mindedness, multiple perspectives, and seeing "the other side" through a humane lens, were some of the most prominent throughout the whole story. By writing the book from dual perspectives, at the core of the book, the reader receives the conflict through the perspective of Jewish Dalia's lineage, and Palestinian Bashir's lineage, and then the research for objectivity poured thoroughly into portions of historical context to accompany the reading. By blending these perspectives, the reader becomes capable of forming a subjective opinion on the matter and continuing further research if inspired. The humane and multiple-perspective raw storytelling of a real friendship is what distinguishes the book, for it encompasses the real suffering of both sides, hope for sympathizing, and finding understanding during the midst of a war. In her early childhood, Dalia remembered listening to the bombings and violence perpetrated by the Palestinians in Israel and despising their actions. A single moment in which she angrily tore off a star and crescent symbol in the lemon tree house stayed with her till mature age. She, like other children her age, had never known the opposite side's perspective, and solely knew the patriotic perspective of Israel. Once her friendship with Bashir formed, she gained a completely new and unbiased dual perspective, "I had to acknowledge that this is my childhood home, my parents lived here until they died, my memories are all here, but that this house was built by another family, and their memories are here." Dalia's connection through childhood and memories of the lemon tree house did not let her derail from her priority, finding peace. She opted for the compromise of the land and transformed her childhood lemon tree home into an "Open House," a kindergarten to connect Palestinian and Jewish children. Meanwhile, children were being indoctrinated to believe the "other side" was the enemy at school, creating in them hatred materialized in games of "fake killing the Jews or Arabs." Indoctrination at such a young age causes an early ignorance and rejection of multiple perspectives, which also become sources for the conflict to be so persistent and endless. Even Bashir, whose childhood had been marked by the expulsion, managed to listen to Dalia's perspective and sympathize with her after understanding her perspective, though his emotional connection to the land far outweighed hope for peace or reason, "I would rather sleep under a lamppost in Ramla than in a palace in Ramallah." Books such as *The Lemon Tree* are capable of changing peoples' perspectives and apply this fundamental value—the multiple perspectives and unbiased approach to conflicts—to their own lives by providing a more humane and objective way of viewing the world. Disregarding human life, by rejecting opposite perspectives, has led the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to become endless. Palestinian terrorists lack understanding of the opposite side, that beyond their ideologies of return, they must consider those innocent Jewish people that already live there, and how most moved unknowingly of how they acquired those homes in the first place. Therefore they proceed to bomb school buses and airplanes, believing they were martyrs till their very end battling "the reign of terror," random innocent civilians. Early Israeli governors did not consider the opposite side's perspective, by expropriating lands and houses which would create an unstoppable battle with the advocates for the right of return. Famine, poverty, the shame of dispossession, and war would be inflicted as a consequence of this. Understanding the suffering of both sides—listening to both voices—who have struggled and suffered because of this historical tragedy is only the initial step to the end. Separate from the wars, and their conflicting ideologies—Bashir's advocating for the right of return, Dalia's loyalty to Zionism—a friendship was born, a sense of coexistence. Tolan believes that at the basis of coexistence and compromise, lies the listening to the opposite side, for this is how Dalia and Bashir's perspectives were altered and friendship blossomed into fruition.

Compromise from both parties is how Tolan believes there will be hope for lasting coexistence. Dalia listened to Bashir while he explained his ancestry, and his belonging to the lemon tree house was her first step towards compromise, radically changing her perspective despite years of seeing violence perpetrated by Palestinians against the Jewish, for she finally saw why they did it. It did not justify, but rather a sense of mutual understanding prompted the solution. By the end of the book, she believed that “we share a common destiny here. I truly believe that we are so deeply and closely related—culturally, historically, religiously, and psychologically. And it’s so clear to me that you (Bashir) and your people are holding the key to our true freedom. And I think we could also say, Bashir, that we hold the key to your freedom. It’s a deep interdependence. How can we free the heart for our healing? Is this possible?” Only through coexistence will they live. These values can be applied in resolving anything within our personal lives or more complex issues like analyzing the core of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Unwillingness to compromise and opting for violence, terrorism, and repression will never end conflicts. The Jewish militia resorted to abusing peaceful protesters in prison instead of listening to their pleas, increasing the terrorism perpetrated against Jewish innocent civilians. Palestinian terrorist organizations advocating for a complete right of return ignored the Jewish people that have already established families in those homes. The expulsion of Jewish civilians would only increase refugees. To Dalia, both Palestinian and Israeli shared the desire to return or find home and recognized neither of the “sides” would be satisfied without the fulfillment it would provide. Perpetual bloodshed and loss would follow if neither of the people agreed on ceding the land to the ‘other,’ thus the only viable solution would be compromising, “make sacrifices if both of us are to live here,” so neither side will get their way completely, rather they both must cede something to accomplish a just solution. Bashir dedicated his life towards return, multiple times persecuted and arrested, while Dalia understood that above dignity or personal convictions, ideologies, and beliefs, peace should be prioritized, and she advocated for an equal compromise for Israel and Palestine. Neither a complete Palestinian takeover nor complete Israeli occupation would resolve the conflict. The only path to peace was coexistence.

The Lemon Tree accomplishes its objectives of allowing the reader the most unbiased and personal storytelling in a complex and often biased conflict. Tolan achieved the almost impossible by making a non-fiction book heartbreaking and recounting its history without leniency to one side or solution, even if it has not been resolved. He found the perfect engrossing story to portray the humane side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, through multiple perspectives and storytelling that appears to be almost fictional. Even if the conflict is ongoing, the book holds onto the semblance of hope through the simple values of facing “the other side,” leaving all prejudices aside. *The Lemon Tree* continues to inspire thousands who were raised listening to a single perspective, to actively seek the opposite perspective; despite the brutality of the ongoing war, there is still ground for the possibility of coexistence in the Eastern Mediterranean land.

Book Understanding Fundam

Sofia Cordovez

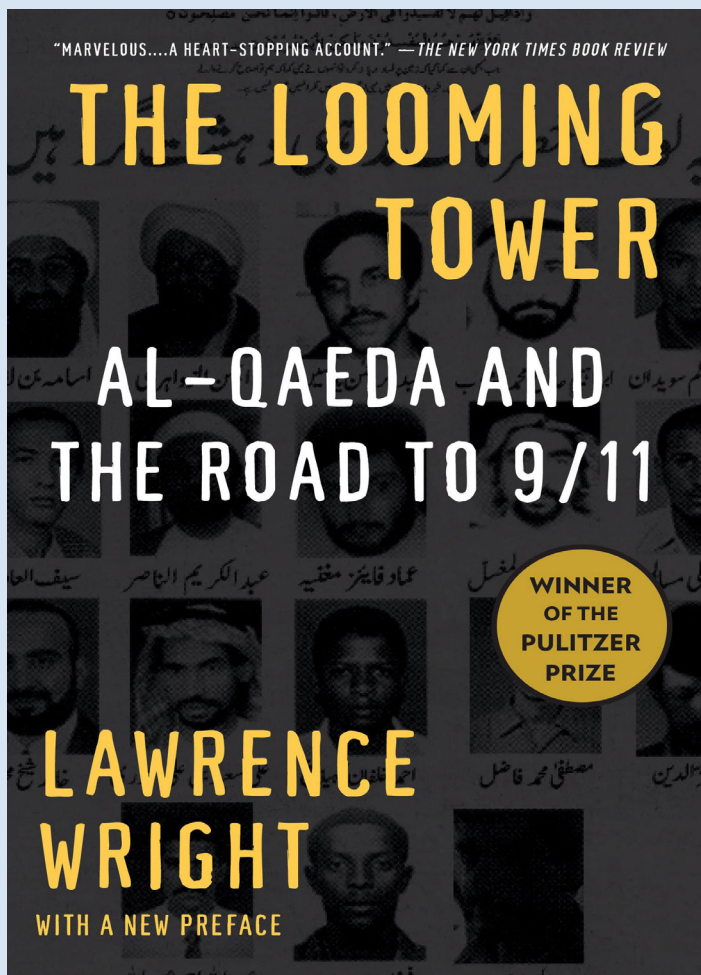
During the past two years, geopolitical instability has been a popular topic due to the Coronavirus pandemic and its repercussions. Most people are unaware of the consequences geopolitical instability can have not only on a global scale but also on normal people's lives. It has proven to open the doors to geopolitical influence, leading to radicalized ideas being accepted. Since 2001, 9/11 has been the biggest terrorist attack in the United States' history, but people lack knowledge of the story behind it. It is common knowledge that Osama bin Laden was the mastermind behind 9/11, but few people know where he got the idea. When Lawrence Wright published *The Looming Tower: al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*, it created awareness about the consequences of geopolitical instability, while giving readers an uncomplicated source in which they could easily absorb 50 years of information. This readable, eye-opening narrative nonfiction makes 9/11 and al-Qaeda history something much deeper than just facts. This book has perfectly shown the impact of war and has unveiled the ugly truth of geopolitical instability: the radicalized ideas that grow from it. *The Looming Tower* thoroughly describes the events leading to 9/11. Lawrence Wright is an author, screenwriter, and playwright who has published various articles and nonfiction books. Wright graduated from both Tulane University and American University in Cairo. He began his career as a writer in 1971, as a The Race Relations reporter in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1992, he started working for The New Yorker, in which he has published most of his prize-winning articles. During his time working for The New Yorker, he has won three National Magazine Awards. As an author, Wright has been publishing books since 1979. He has published around thirteen nonfiction books, his most recent one being: *The Plague Year: America in the Time of COVID*. On this occasion, Wright writes *The Looming Tower* to provide information about the background of 9/11 and for people to understand how geopolitical instability in the Middle East led to one of the most widely known tragedies in the United States' history. *The Looming Tower* raises awareness for the worldwide impact of instability.

The Looming Tower is divided into 20 chapters and includes a 2021 Preface and an Afterword to The Vintage Books Edition, which takes place in 2011. The first chapter starts with Sayyid Qutb, an Islamic fundamentalist with deep disapproval of America's modernization. While in jail, he wrote his manifesto called *Milestones*, in which he poured out his beliefs in letters directed to other Islamist activists. His influence propelled the creation of al-Qaeda after his death. In the 1960s, Osama bin Laden is introduced to *Milestones*. He was a normal child until he had a religious awakening. He started disapproving of the west, using violence, and strictly following the Quran. He was consumed with the idea of Islamism being the only right way of life. When he discovered *Milestones*, he turned his life into what he thought was the path to Paradise, where good Muslims go after death. Osama bin Laden became lost in his religion and believed he had the power to decide who was Muslim enough. Those who were not "muslim enough" would be killed with fatwa, which justifies crimes under the rules of Islamic priests.

Then, Osama bin Laden created al-Qaeda. He started spreading his ideas and luring followers by offering them money and decent life opportunities. In poor living conditions, al-Qaeda seemed like the only chance to make a change, even though it was not primarily their purpose. Through the years, al-Qaeda started

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committing crimes, which Osama bin Laden excused with religion. Since al-Qaeda was so wealthy and powerful, other terrorist organizations like Al-Jihad, founded by Zawahiri to achieve an Islamic revolution in Egypt, joined al-Qaeda to survive. Other terrorist organizations followed Osama bin Laden's example and started acting against the US and anything that represented it. During the late 1990s, several small attacks took place, but they did not raise red flags for the United States, which led bin Laden to plot bigger and deadlier ones, and the plan of 9/11 was born.



Aside from terrorist bombings, a lot more was going on. For example, children, woman, and innocent people were abused and killed. This created fear, which gave people another reason to join al-Qaeda. In 1999, the United States finally started keeping an eye out for Osama bin Laden. When the FBI and CIA started hunting down bin Laden, they did not share any information because of protocols. Both had a crucial insight that could have stopped 9/11, but it was wasted. Osama bin Laden decided to target the twin towers because “they were a symbol of human rights and liberty,” along with success. He thought that bringing down important American landmarks would deeply hurt America, giving Osama bin Laden the opening to impose Islamism. After al-Qaeda members had received their pilot training in the U.S., on September 11, 2001, three planes crashed into both the twin towers and the pentagon. There was a fourth plane, directed to Washington, DC., which was intended to crash into the U.S. capitol, but it did not make it. Finally, after the biggest terrorist attack in the U.S. and 3,000 deaths, the U.S. was determined to get Osama bin Laden.

When Wright introduces the setting of *The Looming Tower*, the Middle East, he also points out the conditions people live in. He specifically indulges in the absence of control and opportunities, both political factors that contribute to geopolitical instability. Although this book takes place in various countries of the Middle East, like Afghanistan, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia, all of them have the common trait of instability. When a country does not have many opportunities for its citizens or little global importance, radicalized ideas tend to rise. *The Looming Tower* gives readers the perfect example of how geopolitical instability in a country led to radicalized ideas rising, which impacted the whole world.

If Middle Eastern countries were given an alias name, they would be called the forgotten countries. Although they have gained recognition and power throughout the years, they have always been countries that are only heard or talked about when they create chaos. These factors have led to geopolitical instability in the Middle East. Wright describes people in the Middle East as feeling “angry but powerless in their own countries.” Often, people who live in these countries, feel as if they cannot do anything to change their destiny. Therefore, when Osama bin Laden started to gather recruits for al-Qaeda, it gave people hope. In a moment of instability, this opportunity came to the surface. Not only did people have the chance to be a part of something, but they were also getting paid, and felt welcomed. Osama bin Laden did a very good job in how he portrayed al-Qaeda, making it seem like the newly introduced golden prize. Although it starts as a religious cult, it gets out of hand. Wright described the change in their lives by saying, “Killing, looting, and violence had become the norm. Nobody had ever imagined that the situation could get this bad. Nobody thought it could be improved, either.” At this point in the book, it is clear how instability nourishes radicalized ideas. It perfectly describes how something that felt like a safe place for some people amid chaos, turned into something huge. They had all reached a point where it was al-Qaeda or the highway. Wright uses this book to bring awareness to geopolitical instability and the radical ideas that feed from it, incentivizing readers to keep an eye out for such ideas.

The previously mentioned Middle Eastern countries have never been especially recognized by Americans. From the United States’ point of view, al-Qaeda was a harmless random group of people. Because they came from the Middle East, the U.S. did not think they had the resources to harm them. Even though al-Qaeda stroke the United States various times before 9/11, they still ignored them. This example shows how people need to be aware of what is happening outside their bubble, how radical ideas are growing, and how they may affect other countries. Wright puts a lot of attention on how the United States reacted to al-Qaeda to show how forgotten Middle Eastern countries were. As of now, it keeps happening. People were not truly aware of the Ukraine and Russia war until it started getting out of hand and affecting outside countries. Our world has had this problem for as long as history can tell. *The Looming Tower* is a step toward solving this problem. During unstable times, people need to be able to recognize which ideas feed from instability and how to stop them. Reading about these terrifying experiences makes the readers open their eyes and become aware of the outside world.

Although most people are aware that 9/11 was caused by Osama bin Laden, there is a lot of misinformation going around. Aside from wanting to bring awareness to the impact of geopolitical instability, Wright also informs his readers. There are lots of theories about how 9/11 was planned by the U.S. government. *The Looming Tower* clears the air and debunks the misinformation going around, giving readers a clear understanding of what happened and where did the idea come from.

Overall, *The Looming Tower* is a great way to educate yourself and others. Although this is a book objectively focused on al-Qaeda and the road to 9/11, it has various helpful lessons that one can learn from. Wright’s approach has reached millions of readers, giving them easy access to a life-changing history. Not only is this book a must-read because of its history of al-Qaeda, but it is also a book that brings awareness to how geopolitical instability in other countries can have consequences that may impact a much larger audience.



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