



MUSLIM INTERSCHOLASTIC  
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MIST BOWL V  
THE RISE OF THE FAR RIGHT

# Summary

## What is the far right?

The far right (or extreme right) is a political label used to identify parties and movements based on fascist, racist and/or extremely reactionary ideologies. Officially those on the far right embrace the concept of the "inequality of outcome", meaning that one group is naturally better than another. They also tend to embrace inequality of opportunity as well, favoring concepts such as segregation, or mass deportation of non-white people (or in general, people of other races), or sometimes even genocide - although they sometimes keep these abhorrent views hidden, except when trolling anonymously online. The label "far right" can apply to everything from absolute monarchies to Nazism, meaning that many far-rightists oppose others on the far-right who have a different idea of what the ruling class should be.

## The origins of the far right

The label of "far-right" is a reference to the French Revolution to refer to those who sat on the right-wing of the Assembly and were in favor of an essentially unrestrained aristocracy in terms of the power allocated to them, essentially wanting to either maintain or (later) restore the old order. They also tended to be opposed to the Enlightenment and secularism in favor of more conservative religious influence in government.

From the start of the 20th century onwards more "populist" reactionary political philosophies such as ultranationalism/fascism, racial supremacy (often to a degree that was considered extreme even by the standards of the time), and politically-oriented religious fundamentalism started to overtake the increasingly unpopular extreme pro-Aristocrat agenda that made up what could be considered the former far-right. To what degree there is much of a difference between them in practice is up for debate and usually changes from country to country.

During the Cold War, the political far-right was associated mainly with extreme and violent anti-communist governments and paramilitary death squads; far-right movements of this type (defined less by ideology than by their focus on violent destruction of the Left) were often supported by the United States through programs such as Operation Condor and Operation Gladio. Some still exist in places where there are active leftist insurgencies, such as Colombia. However in the 21st century the far-right in the Western world has increasingly drifted towards broadly authoritarian nativist thought, often influenced by former fascist movements.

The term "Alternative Right" was introduced by Richard Spencer in 2008, when he was managing editor at the paleocon and libertarian Taki's Magazine. At Taki's Magazine the phrase was used as a catch-all for a variety of right-wing voices at odds with the conservative establishment, including paleocons, libertarians, and White nationalists. Two years later Spencer left to found a new publication, [AlternativeRight.com](http://AlternativeRight.com), as "an online magazine of radical traditionalism." [AlternativeRight.com](http://AlternativeRight.com) quickly became a popular forum among dissident rightist intellectuals, especially younger ones. The magazine published works of old-school "scientific" racism along with articles from or about the European New Right, Italian far right philosopher Julius Evola, and figures from Germany's interwar Conservative Revolutionary movement.

Starting in 2015, a much wider array of writers and online activists embraced the Alt Right moniker. As Anti-Fascist News put it, "the 'alt right' now often means an internet focused string of commentators, blogs, Twitter accounts, podcasters, and Reddit trolls, all of which combine scientific

racism, romantic nationalism, and deconstructionist neo-fascist ideas to create a white nationalist movement that has almost no backwards connection with neo-Nazis and the KKK.” Some on-line centers of this larger, more amorphous Alt Right included the imageboard websites 4chan and 8chan, various Reddit sub-communities, and The Right Stuff blog and podcasts.

The Alt Right’s rapid growth partly reflected trends in internet culture, where anonymity and the lack of face-to-face contact have fostered widespread use of insults, bullying, and supremacist speech. More immediately, it reflected recent political developments, such as a backlash against the Black Lives Matter movement and, above all, Donald Trump’s presidential candidacy. A majority of Alt Rightists supported Trump’s campaign because of his anti-immigrant proposals; defamatory rhetoric against Mexicans, Muslims, women, and others; and his clashes with mainstream conservatives and the Republican Party establishment.

## The Global Rise

Cas Mudde, in *The Far Right Today*, mentions that the common thread between many of the popular far right nations is a combination of nativism, authoritarianism and populism.

There’s a reason the word “nativism” appears regularly in the U.S. media and not elsewhere: According to Mudde, a professor at the University of Georgia, nativism is an almost exclusively American concept that is rarely discussed in Western Europe. The term’s origins lie with mid-19th century political movements in the United States—most famously the Know Nothing party—that portrayed Catholic immigration from countries such as Germany and Ireland as a grave threat to native-born Protestant Americans. (Never mind that the Protestant “natives” were themselves migrants relative to another native population.) Nativism arose in a natural place: a nation constructed through waves of migration and backlashes to migration, where the meaning of “native” is always evolving. Nativism, Mudde says, is “xenophobic nationalism.” It is “an ideology that wants congruence of state and nation—the political and the cultural unit. It wants one state for every nation and one nation for every state. It perceives all non-natives ... as threatening. But the non-native is not only people. It can also be ideas.” Nativism is most appealing during periods when people feel the harmony between state and nation is disappearing.

Modern authoritarians rely on repression, intimidation, corruption and co-optation to consolidate their power. The dictator’s handbook mastered by Orban in Hungary, Erdogan in Turkey, Maduro in Venezuela, Zuma in South Africa, Duterte in the Philippines and Trump here provides the traditional tactics: attack journalists, blame dissent on foreigners and “paid protestors,” scapegoat minorities and vulnerable groups, weaken checks on power, reward loyalists, use paramilitaries, and generally try to reduce politics to a question of friends and enemies, us and them. Authoritarianism, she shows, is a moving target. It can take the form of strongman rulers, as in sub-Saharan Africa; autocratic regimes led by a party or the military, as in Latin America; or hereditary dictators, as in North Korea. Frantz is at her most insightful in her description of the ways in which authoritarian regimes have taken on “pseudo-democratic” characteristics in order to survive. Today, over 80 percent of dictatorships hold elections, for example. How authoritarianism arrives has changed, too. Military or elite coups are out of fashion, replaced by more gradual usurpations of power carried out through rigged elections and biased political rules. Turkey and the Philippines fit this model, with elected populists slowly dismantling the institutions of democracy. Authoritarians have new tools: the co-optation of institutions, the use of patronage networks, and the control of information. It is harder to fight back against this subtle democratic subversion, because a single moment of truth never occurs.

In political science, populism is the idea that society is separated into two groups at odds with one another - "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite", according to Cas Mudde, author of *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. The term is often used as a kind of shorthand political insult. Britain's Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, has been accused of populism over his party's slogan "for the many, not the few" - but that's not quite the same thing. The word "is generally misused, especially in a European context," according to Benjamin Moffitt, author of *The Global Rise of Populism*. The true populist leader claims to represent the unified "will of the people". He stands in opposition to an enemy, often embodied by the current system - aiming to "drain the swamp" or tackle the "liberal elite". Populist parties can be anywhere on the political spectrum. In Latin America, there was Venezuela's late President Chávez. In Spain, there is the Podemos party, and in Greece the label has also been applied to Syriza. All these are on the left. But "most successful populists today are on the right, particularly the radical right," Prof Mudde said.

## [Understanding the Global Rise of the Extreme Right](#)

### **United States**

#### [The Rise of Far-Right Extremism in the United States](#)

#### [The 'Far Right' in America: A Brief Taxonomy](#)

### **Asia**

Increasing support for conservative and anti-democratic political forces has been a growing global trend and Asia has been at the forefront of this shift. Conservative governments, or governments with significant conservative elements, have emerged victorious in several major Asia-Pacific countries like Japan, India, the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia in recent years. India, Japan and Australia have long and distinctive histories of representative democracy while South Korean and Indonesia have more recently transitioned to democratic regimes. The cases of Japan, India and South Korea and the respective elections of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Park Geun-hye illustrate the rise and fragility of authoritarian and populist politics in very different institutional settings. In Indonesia, President Joko Widodo has included several conservative politicians in his cabinet and is facing growing pressure from Islamic populist forces particularly after their 2017 electoral victory in the Jakarta governor's election. In Australia, the politics of the conservative coalition government headed by Malcolm Turnbull is increasingly shaped by its hard-line conservative members. Crucially, these shifts in the political wind have been accompanied by the increasing use of authoritarian practices and instruments that undermine and bypass democratic institutions.

In this packet, we will be focusing on India and the Philippines.

### **India**

The Indian parliamentary elections of 2019 ended with a huge victory for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). In 2014, the BJP won 282 seats with about 31% of the votes, and the NDA as a whole received 38.5% votes and 336 seats. In 2019, the BJP obtained 303 seats and the NDA as a whole 353. This involved the BJP getting 37.4% votes and the NDA as a whole claiming about 48% votes, which means practically one in two Indian voters supported the BJP and its allies.

The main opposition bloc, the former ruling bloc for a decade from 2004 to 2014, was the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), led by the Indian National Congress. In 2014 the UPA had sixty seats, while in 2019 it has ninety-one. But the Congress seats have gone up from its worst ever performance of forty-four seats to only fifty-two. In terms of vote share it has actually lost 0.8% compared to 2014. The main gain for the UPA has come from the Dravidian Progressive Conference (DMK) in Tamil Nadu. It had no seats in 2014, and has secured twenty-three this time, making it the third largest party in parliament.

Since the late nineteenth century, populism has played a vital role in different phases of Indian history, particularly in mobilizing emergent groups and bringing about different movements and civil society initiatives. Most significantly, they signal widespread distrust in conventional democratic institutions, increasing disconnection between citizens and elected representatives, and a growing dislike of —politics as usual. The term populism is generally used by the press in India to refer to the indiscriminate use of public resources to give goods away to voters. With these connotations of crowd-pleasing politics, populism has become a pejorative term. Populist politicians are criticized for giving away —freebies or —sops and pandering to the baser instincts of voters. It is assumed that populists govern in irrational and irresponsible ways. Populist leaders often come to power in sustained weak economic conditions where they channel the rage of the people and garner support brought about by wealth gaps.

According to Plagemann and Destradi, the Indian government under present Prime Minister Narendra Modi can be considered populist as it clearly entails both constitutive dimensions of populism: anti-elitism and anti-pluralism. The electoral victory of the BJP in 2014 came after a series of corruption scandals that tainted the image of the INC. The desire to replace corrupt elites and to put an end to India's dynastic politics was a core element in Modi's electoral success. Modi himself—the son of a teaseller—embodied such anti-elitism. For instance, mocking the INC candidate Rahul Gandhi, the scion of the Gandhi-Nehru family, as a —prince was a common feature during his campaign. After the BJP came to power, the notion of fighting corrupt, impure, and spiritually malformed elites in politics, economics, and society became a key component of the ascetic celibate's rhetoric. India is an example that proves economic liberalization can co-exist with populist politics and that populism can be used as an ideological framework within which the political contradictions that follow from economic change can be managed.

Any account of the BJP would be incomplete without mentioning the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), an Hindu nationalist volunteer organisation which is widely recognised as its ideological parent. The RSS is a hierarchical, cadre-based movement founded in 1925 and associated with the Sangh Parivar, an umbrella of Hindu outfits ranging from political associations to civil society organisations, all committed to the Hindutva (or Hindu nationalist) ideology. It was created as a response to the perceived increasing pan-Islamism spreading among the Muslim minority, during years which witnessed several outbreaks of violence addressed against Hindu communities. The main objective of the RSS was to re-affirm the grandiosity of the Hindu civilisation, and to constitute a new Hindu nation uniting all Hindus irrespectively of castes or regional divisions. This project excluded not only nonIndians, but also all those Indians professing a religion which did not see its birth in the territory of India - namely, all religions apart from Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism.

Even though the RSS has always declared itself as apolitical, almost all the senior leaders of the BJP have been members of the RSS, and the RSS selects all the top appointments within the party's leadership. The RSS's access to political power dates back to the early 1950s. After Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by a former RSS member and the organisation was banned, the RSS realised its isolation in the political system and decided to form a party, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh



(BJS). At the beginning, the BJS was more interested in reforming the society rather pursuing political ambitions, pushing for policies such as the protection of cows or the promotion of Ayurveda medicine. However, it gradually became more involved in coalition politics. In the late 1970s, the party merged with the Janata Party (JP) and started to gain higher shares of votes, arriving to form a government under the JP in 1977. In those years, the Hindutva agenda pushed by the RSS became broader, involving attacks towards religious minorities and the revision of history textbooks to give a better portrait of the Hindu civilisation; however, the new JP was the combination of several parties, of which many did not agree with such radical stances. These events were concomitant with an increased violence between Hindus and Muslims, which resulted in a split in the party. During the 1980 elections, the JP failed miserably, and former members from the BJS decided to create a new party, the BJP.

The early 1980s saw a revival of violence between Hindu and Muslim communities. This context constituted a unique opportunity for the BJP to mobilise voters by adopting even more hard-line Hindutva positions, of which the most significant example is the campaign for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. Over the next fifteen years the party's popularity increased considerably, and the BJP shifted from being a small political actor present in a few states to representing a major political force at the national level. The Congress Party (from now on, the Congress) was soon overshadowed in the elections of the late 90s, and for the first time in 1999 the BJP led a coalition government known as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The party came to power by rejecting secularism, adopting an harsh anti-Muslim rhetoric and advocating for Hindutva militancy (Heath, 1999); and between 1999 and 2004, it was able to partly implement its Hindutva agenda, for instance in the field of education, by conducting an "hinduisation" of school curricula and rewriting history textbooks (Lall, 2005). However, it failed to deliver its core pledges regarding the construction of a Ram temple and the abrogation of article 370 of the Indian constitution, which gives a special status to the state of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K);<sup>7</sup> and it was defeated by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) in the 2004 elections.

For two consecutive mandates the UPA ruled the country, but it was unable to address important structural problems related to inequality and unemployment; furthermore, it got involved in a series of corruption scandals, and the combination of these elements paved the way for BJP's outstanding electoral comeback in 2014. This victory represented a landmark in the history of Indian domestic politics, and was driven by several factors: the charismatic figure of Narendra Modi, and his success in delivering outstanding growth in Gujarat while he was the state's chief minister; the BJP's ability to attract the most unprivileged sections of the society; the back-up of the RSS's machine; and the party's ideological appeal, which won the support of almost one third of the whole Indian population (Jha, 2017).

## Demonetization

The issue of corruption has long been a feature of the BJP's electoral mobilization against the Congress. Seeking to capitalize on these perceptions, a key theme in the BJP's election manifesto was a populist narrative on corruption. Corruption was also —a manifestation of poor governance and reflects the bad intentions of those sitting in power. After being elected, the BJP-led government tried to live up to its promise of addressing the issue of corruption with demonetization to invalidate and replace 500 and 1,000 rupee notes (around 80 percent of the currency in circulation at the time). Invoking the neo-middle class politics of aspiration, the Prime Minister noted, "According to information with the government, there are only 2.4 million people in India who accept that their annual income is more than 10 lakh rupees. Can we digest this? Look at the big bungalows and big cars around you".

In his speeches on demonetization, Prime Minister Modi repeatedly emphasized the benefits of citizen sacrifice and short-term pain for long-term gain. The suffering caused by demonetization was depicted as a historic rite of purification and as an ongoing Yagna (Hindu ritual sacrifice) against corruption, terrorism, and black money. Both the BJP government and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), whose support base of small traders and farmers were among the worst affected by demonetization, sought to justify the policy by drawing on key Hindu nationalist tropes on separatism and Islamic terrorism. Bypassing Parliament, Prime Minister Modi announced the decision through a televised public address and refused opposition calls for a parliamentary vote and formal debate. Instead, legislation related to demonetization was introduced through ordinances that allow the government to avoid the need for parliamentary approval.

Ordinances are a legacy of colonial governance. In the post-independence period, however, the repeated re-promulgation of ordinances has been used by governments to circumvent parliamentary debate. While the RBI has often tussled with the executive when it comes to the central bank's independence, it has maintained high standards of competence and professionalism. On November 7, 2016, the government advised the RBI Central Board that it ought to consider withdrawing Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000 notes to mitigate the triple threat of counterfeiting, terror funding, and black money. The very next day, RBI accepted the advice and that same evening Modi went on national television to announce the move. According to Vaishnav, either the RBI was used by the government or it genuinely backed the half-baked measure. Either way, the institution's stature stood diminished—a position further supported by the foibles associated with the policy's sloppy implementation.

The original objectives of demonetization were to ensure economic justice and accountability by eliminating fake currency; inflict losses on those with black money; and disrupt terror and criminal activities. According to Rai, a study by the National Investigation Agency and the Indian Statistical Institute in 2016 estimated that fake Indian currency notes in circulation have a face value of Rs. 400 crore. More than 90 percent of shops accept only cash or very short-term credit. Large numbers of laborers and small value suppliers are paid in cash. The sudden ban led to disruptions in consumption and production. As reported by Business Today, barely six months after demonetization, India's GDP growth rate had slumped down to 6.1 percent in the January-March period, the lowest in more than two years.<sup>78</sup> The cost of demonetization was disproportionately borne by the poor. According to the IFMR LEAD study covering 2200 households across six states, this episode had a severe adverse impact on the economic and financial lives of the poor. Participants reported a 20 percent drop in their income immediately after demonetization and faced significant difficulty in finding employment. Many also reported delays in their wage payments due to the liquidity crunch caused by demonetization and heavy reliance on cash-based transactions in the informal sector.

## [Citizenship \(Amendment\) Act 2019: What is it and why is it seen as a problem](#)

### **Philippines**

Within weeks of his inauguration as president of the Philippines in June 2016, Rodrigo R. Duterte became the most internationally known Filipino leader since Ferdinand Marcos, the country's infamous dictator, and Corazon Aquino, the iconic housewife-turned-president who championed the restoration of democracy in 1986. A great deal of media attention has been paid to Duterte's murderous war on drugs as well as to his often crass and controversial statements. His embrace of China and his visceral disdain for the United States has garnered additional attention in foreign policy

circles, and he frequently is included in media reports and scholarly articles on the rise of populism globally. Although the attention to Duterte and his brutal drug war is warranted, much less attention has been paid to his administration's broader policy agenda, its approach to politics and governance, and its broader impact on democratic institutions and norms.

As a candidate, Duterte promised that he would produce real and rapid improvements in the lives of Filipinos, particularly by aggressively addressing crime and corruption. Two and a half years into his presidency, it is both warranted and possible to assess what has and has not changed under Duterte. The picture is a mixed one, with elements of change, continuity, and regression. The Duterte government's track record regarding human rights and democracy is undoubtedly disturbing. It has run roughshod over human rights, its political opponents, and the country's democratic institutions. The combination of the Philippines' powerful presidency and the malleability of most of its political institutions is resulting in significant democratic backsliding.

Today, by the World Bank's metrics the Philippines is a lower-middle-income country with a per capita income of \$3,600 and a consumption-driven economy that has been growing at about 6.5 percent per year for most of the past decade, fueled by remittances and a growing business process outsourcing sector.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the country's sizable, predominantly urban, middle class now comprises 15 to 20 percent of the population. In sum, over the past quarter century, the rich have become richer, the middle class has grown but remains insecure, and about one-quarter of the population remains poor. With a Gini coefficient of 0.43, the Philippines has long been one of the most unequal societies in Asia, with one of the highest levels of poverty incidence among Asia's developing economies. Even after more than a decade of relatively strong macroeconomic growth, the incidence of poverty decreased only a little, to 21.6 percent in 2015.

On May 10, 2016, Rodrigo Duterte, then seventy-one years old, was elected president, winning 39 percent of the vote in a five-way race. Charismatic, blunt, and frequently profane, Duterte combined a Dirty Harry persona with a track record as a successful mayor of Davao City, Mindanao's largest city. Although Duterte might appear to be unsophisticated and crude, he is politically savvy and attuned to the attitudes and concerns of average Filipinos. He ran on his reputation as an effective, no-nonsense mayor of Davao who prioritized law and order over legal protections for alleged criminals. The overarching theme of Duterte's campaign was that his strong leadership would produce rapid change.

During his campaign, he heaped criticism on the Manila-based elite, vowed to undertake a nationwide assault on illegal drugs and criminality, and promised to change the government to a federal system. His victory over Mar Roxas, who placed a distant second, signaled that the promise of change was more compelling than continuity. Even though Duterte had been popular in Mindanao before he ran for president, his victory showed that his appeal spanned regions and socioeconomic classes. The 16.6 million Filipinos who voted for him appeared to believe that he could deliver real change.

Upon assuming office on June 30, 2016, Duterte assembled an eclectic cabinet that included law school classmates, long-time associates from Davao, ex-military officers, business leaders, and representatives of the communist left. His diverse coalition came together through personal loyalty, regional affinity, and political opportunism. It included many political figures who had been sidelined during the Aquino administration, most notably former president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and members of the Marcos, Estrada, and Villar families.

Now seventy-three years old, Duterte's world view is heavily influenced by nationalist and



leftist thought dating from the 1960s and 1970s, as well as by his twenty-two years of experience as mayor of Davao City. The Duterte government's top priorities include combating illegal drugs and crime, promoting rapid infrastructure development, sustaining economic growth and making it more inclusive, enhancing peace and development in Mindanao, and reorienting the Philippines' foreign relations. To support these goals, the government has significantly increased spending on infrastructure, raised the salaries of government employees, expanded existing social development programs, revived the stalled peace process with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), entered into negotiations with the communist insurgents, and established a closer relationship with China.

### **Economic policies and performance**

As a candidate, Duterte showed little interest in economic policy issues. To reassure nervous domestic and foreign businesses, his campaign developed a ten-point economic agenda that largely continued the Aquino government's economic policies. Since taking office, Duterte's two principal economic priorities have been to accelerate economic growth and make it more inclusive, and to significantly increase spending on much-needed infrastructure. Key features of the government's approach to the economy include running a larger deficit, adopting a more statist approach to infrastructure development, and continuing increases in social spending.

In 2017, GDP growth was 6.7 percent, and it is projected to be about 6.5 percent in 2018. The government, under its "Build Build Build" program, has significantly increased spending on infrastructure and has ambitious plans to build new rail lines, a subway, highways, and bridges in the coming years.<sup>12</sup> To finance spending on infrastructure and social services, the government has embarked on a multiphase tax reform program. The first package of reforms was signed into law in December 2017; the second and more controversial package is with Congress. Inflation has been increasing, averaging 4.8 percent for January to August and reaching a nine-year high of 6.7 percent in September and October.<sup>13</sup> Higher oil and food prices, excise taxes associated with tax reform, and the weak peso have all fueled inflation.

### **Duterte and Mindanao**

Duterte is the first president from the southern island of Mindanao, and his election was a significant political milestone for the Philippines. Home to about 25 percent of the nation's population, Mindanao is a promising but vexing mix of economic opportunity and underdevelopment, ethnic and religious diversity, and multiple forms of armed conflict. Under Duterte, progress on the political and security front has been mixed. This is in large measure due to the May 2017 occupation of Marawi City, in Lanao del Sur province, by Islamist extremists affiliated with the self-proclaimed Islamic State. It took five months of combat operations for the Philippine military to regain control over the extensively damaged city. In response to the Marawi crisis Duterte imposed island-wide martial law, which remains in effect. The rehabilitation of the city is expected to cost more than \$1 billion.

But before Marawi exploded, the Duterte government had done little either to revive the stalled effort to pass legislation providing for greater Muslim autonomy or to adopt federalism, an approach that many in Mindanao consider important for the island's future. The government had entered into a series of on-again, off-again talks with the communist insurgency, which still has a significant armed presence in eastern Mindanao. Currently, the process has stalled and appears unlikely to produce a breakthrough.

The most significant accomplishment pertaining to Mindanao was the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in July 2018. The BOL translates into law many of the provisions includ-

ed in the 2014 peace agreement between the Aquino government and the MILF. Under the BOL, a new political entity, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, would replace the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. The BOL is an important step forward, but multiple challenges remain, including possible objections to its constitutionality, a forthcoming plebiscite scheduled for late January and early February 2019, and the actual establishment of the new autonomous entity.

## Duterte's War on Drugs

Duterte's principal priority has been a highly punitive approach to illegal drug use, which he sees as an existential threat to the country's social fabric. His nationwide war on drugs has applied the approach that he used in Davao City, giving the police free rein to deal with suspected drug users and pushers with little concern for legal niceties. It also has involved a lesser-noticed campaign against government officials allegedly complicit in the drug trade. This approach has resulted in the deaths of thousands of suspected drug users and pushers—mostly young males living in poor urban neighborhoods—at the hands of the police or unidentified assailants. The police claim that many of these deaths were the result of the suspects resisting arrest, but evidence from journalists and human rights groups shows that many were premeditated extra-judicial killings (EJKs). The number of EJKs is difficult to determine and disputed—in part because the government and Philippine National Police (PNP) intentionally obfuscate the data—but estimates range from 6,000 to 12,000 deaths.

This loss of life is the most horrific and immediate consequence of the drug war. But the drug war itself is a sign that the Philippine government has abdicated its responsibility to protect human rights and respect the rule of law. EJKs violate both the Philippine Constitution and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (to which the Philippines is a signatory), particularly the provisions concerning the presumption of innocence and adherence to due process.

Why is Duterte singularly focused on drugs and crime? It is not surprising that crime is a major problem in the Philippines, given its high level of poverty, underresourced and corruption-prone law enforcement agencies, and glacially slow judiciary. Criminal activities, in the form of smuggling, illegal gambling, drugs, trafficking in persons, and money laundering, are significant features of the Philippine political economy. Studies by International Alert suggest that the illicit economy in Mindanao plays an important role in sustaining the multiple conflicts across the island. Under Duterte, the official estimates of drug use have increased significantly—suggesting that they were either understated before or are being overstated now.

Since the early 2000s, there has been a growing awareness of the problem of narco-politics, mostly involving mayors and other local officials thought to be complicit in the drug trade. However, it would be an exaggeration to assert that the Philippines is becoming a narco-state, where state institutions have been penetrated by the power and wealth of drug lords and the economy depends heavily on the production or distribution of illegal drugs. Nevertheless, Duterte sees it differently. Although he was not the first presidential candidate to run against drugs and crime, he was the first to frame drugs as an existential threat and to be explicit about the brutal approach he would use to solve the problem.

Why has Duterte made illegal drugs his signature issue? In addition to viewing drugs as a cancer on society, there is an ugly political logic. Combating drugs and crime was central to his reputation as an effective mayor of Davao City. Moreover, public acceptance of the Davao Death Squad, a shadowy group that specifically targeted suspected drug dealers, petty criminals, and homeless youth, showed the low cost and high returns of mounting an extra-legal war on drugs and crime.<sup>24</sup> As president, Duterte's nationwide war on drugs continues to play well across most socioeconomic

segments of society, particularly as long as the principal victims are the urban poor. The drug war also offers a potent and useful political narrative in which Duterte alone possesses the moral authority to rescue the country from the dangers posed by drug pushers and other criminals. Other collateral damage. Duterte's war on drugs has had less dramatic but significant consequences for other aspects of governance in the Philippines, including the justice system, public health, and local governance.

The war on drugs has further stressed the Philippines' overburdened justice system. The volume of cases to be investigated, prosecuted, and tried, as well as the number of alleged offenders awaiting trial in detention facilities, has increased dramatically. A comprehensive picture of the impact on the justice system is beyond the scope of this working paper, but some of the available data point to these burdens. In 2016, there were 28,000 drug arrests—a 44 percent increase over 2015—and more than 47,300 drug-related cases were filed.<sup>35</sup> During the first 10 months of 2017, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency conducted 34,744 drug enforcement operations, with 66,672 arrests.<sup>36</sup> In 2017, about 70,700 drug-related cases were filed in court, and about 21,400 were reviewed.<sup>37</sup> According to the Supreme Court, as of 2017 more than 289,000 drug cases had been filed in the country's lower courts.

As a result, drug suspects and convicts are crammed into the Philippines' already packed jails and prisons. According to the Department of Justice's Bureau of Corrections, in 2017 the national prison system held 41,500 inmates, more than double its capacity. Data from the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, which oversees provincial and municipal jails, show an even more disturbing situation. As of May 2018, there were over 141,000 detainees—of which about 70 percent were drug-related cases—held in jails that were 582 percent overcapacity.

Ultimately, the legal dimensions of the war on drugs will test not only the capacity of the justice system, but also the jurisprudence, values, and autonomy of the Philippine judiciary. In November 2018, a Regional Trial Court issued the first legal judgment against the PNP, finding three policemen guilty of murdering Kian Delos Santos, a seventeen-year-old the policemen claimed was a drug runner who resisted arrest. Currently, there is one case before the Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of the PNP's official plan for eradicating illegal drugs.

The government's punitive approach to reducing drug use also has important consequences for public health. It has overwhelmed the country's paltry rehabilitation capacity and is having a negative effect on drug-linked diseases. As of mid-2017, the Philippines had only forty-eight drug rehabilitation facilities and only about fifty medical personnel trained in addiction medicine.<sup>40</sup> According to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, close to 990,000 “drug personalities” voluntarily surrendered in 2016, and by May 2017 that number had grown to 1.2 million people.

It has become highly problematic for local political elites to evade the president's injunction to participate in the anti-crime killing spree that is engulfing the Philippines. . . . The various reshuffles are placing more hard-line police officers in command positions. Furthermore, these officers are well aware that results measured in dead bodies are expected of them. In addition, police officers and politicians alike have been publicly denounced as supporting and profiting from drug crimes and thus threatened not only with being indicted, but also with becoming victims of extrajudicial executions themselves. Most officials then choose to fall in line with the president.

## Can it be stopped?

The left has engaged in a tremendous amount of transnational activism: within regions, translocally, on an issue-by-issue basis. But with a few exceptions, this effort is not making headlines. Moreover, it is on the defensive in the face of well-funded and vigorous efforts by the new right to roll back the gains made by social movements over the last century of patient organizing.

The new right has created a sense of momentum through a few critical wins: the Brexit referendum in the UK in 2016, Trump's election that year, Bolsonaro's victory in Brazil in 2018. A few big wins at the national level could do the same for the global left. "If Orbán or Erdoğan loses an election, that will have a domino effect," The same can be said about the importance of a few wins at the international level. Ethan Earle gives the example of the blanket ban in El Salvador on metal mining instituted in 2017, which was the result of a transnational effort.

What is necessary is some synthetic vision and its success somewhere." Fiona Dove also recalls when the left had a theoretical consensus around an understanding the world. "I find it difficult to think of how to move forward without a common framework within which you build a political identity," she concludes. "We have a crisis of alternatives," laments Luciana Ghiotto, coordinator of the Continental Platform Latin America Better without Free Trade Agreement. "The World Social Forum showed its limits: the limits of only getting together to talk about how much we hate neoliberalism. But we need to be moving forward with alternatives."

### Providing Services

In the late 1970s, reviving an older tradition from the nineteenth century, the Polish underground organized a "flying university" to provide anti-government activists with an education about Polish history, politics, and culture that could not be found in the official classrooms. The movement was, in other words, providing a concrete service. European Alternatives is doing something similar for the left of today by launching a nomadic School of Transnational Activism. Still in the pilot phase, the school has two functions. "One is more didactic," explains Lorenzo Marsili, "to work with young activists who might be part of NGOs or movements or even party politics to develop an awareness of the importance of the transnational scale of their action and area of concern. The second is more research-based, to bring together early career thinkers to reflect on the meaning of transnationalism, the current crisis of globalization, and to come up with new ideas."

This kind of learning exchange is a key part of transnational cooperation. The Land, Water, and Climate Justice team at the American Jewish World Service has sponsored delegations of Thai peasant and indigenous organizations to learn from their counterparts in India and brought activists and officials from El Salvador to share the success of the national campaign to ban metal mining in that country with mining-affected communities in Haiti. "People learn best from their peers," Nikhil Aziz concludes. "When they see the possibilities on the ground in terms of what people are able to do, there's a lot of optimism." A similar sharing has taken place around the integrated community-building structure of worker cooperatives in Cleveland that supply local institutions like hospitals and schools. A comparably depressed part of the UK—Preston in Lancashire—has copied the model to pull itself out of the economic doldrums. Both cities have drawn inspiration from the much



older Spanish cooperative model in Mondragon. “Idea transfer is usually underplayed but can be very significant,” Gar Alperovitz observes. “In the realm of idea shifts—and this is what the right wing has done so well and we don’t do well—we haven’t found a way yet to catalyze the notion that we are transforming and building a new system as distinct from doing important and useful projects and campaigns.”

## Storytelling

The transnational left is adept at producing manifestos, laundry lists of demands, and policy papers. Telling stories, connecting at an emotional level, and boiling down ideas to simple messages have not been as prominent in the communication strategies of progressives. “

Consider the story-sharing program called Invisible Giants sponsored by Africans Rising. “We started out locally in communities telling stories of women doing great things that no one knows about,” relates Coumba Touré. “At first it was to recognize what those women are doing individually, but it’s also a movement-building tool.” It is also becoming transnational, as the organizers introduce stories from the diaspora.

“We need to get to a much more visceral analysis,” Sanho Tree of IPS adds. “The right is tapping into primordial fears and hatreds.” People don’t have time to read long documents. “It takes more effort to craft counterintuitive messaging,” he continues, “but if you can communicate a paradigm shift in a sound bite you can get traction.” For Julia Ebner, it’s also a question of reaching younger audiences. “The far right has adopted the language of youth,” she notes. “Steve Bannon and Breitbart and the trolling armies have been very good at that, at adopting the language of young people and tapping into their grievances.” Reaching a younger audience, crafting more emotionally resonant stories, synthesizing pithier messages—all of this might mean inviting different people to the table, suggests Eric Ward, “bringing together transnationally the artists, the filmmakers, the TV writers, the musicians, the Madison Avenue commercial makers in every country, the musicians to have a discussion around narrative, about how we talk about these moments, and try to identify some key narrative centers that crisscross the countries in the room.” Getting our stories out there might also mean amplifying and financing independent media so that it operates on a more transnational basis. That could mean, as Fiona Dove says, “pooling independent media not just to put out a transnational internationalist agenda but also content that’s entertaining and fun and that can build a new counter culture.”

## Digital Upgrade

The far right has long organized transnationally in the digital realm. The left seems to be a few steps behind. “The playing field is not level,” says Julia Ebner of ISD. “They have a big advantage in terms of algorithms of social media favorable for spreading conspiracy theories and potentially harmful and inciting content.” “We’re in an age when there’s more instantaneous communication than at any point in human history,” points out Kumi Naidoo. “There’s a constant flow of information but very little coordination on a transnational level in a broad sense. There are lots of reasons: resources, language, access. But we have to figure that piece out: how and who to resource that. We have a five-year window to make some serious strides or we’re going to be in trouble.” Some activists are trying to up their digital game. Ethan Zuckerman, for instance, is involved in a project to create the tools for professional researchers to track how far right ideas and memes move through the Internet and social media. ISD has produced just such a report on the “great replacement.” Then there are the efforts to create new digital infrastructure.

The Online Progressive Engagement Network (OPEN) links up citizen advocacy groups like MoveOn throughout the world. In the last six years, it has brought together 19 such organizations



including Zazim in Israel, GetUp in Australia, and Skiftet in Sweden. The network can mobilize its members rapidly on key transnational issues such as corporate tax havens or the construction of a new coal mine by a TNC. Now, it's pushing to expand in the Global South. "Our members are mostly white and heavily European, so we have to figure out how to diversify," explains Giovanna Alvarez-Negretti of OPEN who is based in Barcelona. "In order to reach out to people in countries with a lot of poverty and inequality, mobilizing people will have to expand to mobile phones and accessible technology." One of the challenges of online organizing is also one of its greatest appeals: anonymity. "You don't know who's a real person, so it's hard to protect yourself from people who are disrupting, who are trolls, or who are just mentally unstable," observes Annabel Park. But if a person's ID can be verified, then she imagines a one-stop civics site, a kind of Amazon.com of democracy "where you can do a lot of things: contact your representatives, get vetted news, have discussions with people."

## Naming and Shaming

When Jair Bolsonaro received a Man of the Year award from the Brazilian-U.S. Chamber of Commerce in 2019, activists from both countries put up such a stink that New York venues declined to host the May ceremony. In the end, Bolsonaro had to go to Texas to accept his award (where he faced further protests). In a similar way, anti-Trump groups in England, with their threats of mass protests, prompted the U.S. president to cancel his trip to London in early 2018. When he made his first presidential visit to the UK later that year, the appearance of the Baby Trump balloon led the president to steer clear of London. "I guess when they put out blimps to make me feel unwelcome, no reason for me to go to London," Trump said. When the Hindu World Congress met in Chicago in September 2018, several activists from Chicago South Asians for Justice managed to gain access to a plenary session packed with 1,000 people and featuring the head of the far-right RSS, Mohan Bhagwat. "We stood up and chanted 'RSS turn around, we don't want you in our town,'" reports one of the protesters Mansi Kathuria. "The response was pretty terrifying. The folks attending the conference immediately turned on us, pushing and grabbing. We were standing on chairs to have better visibility, and they pulled the chairs from underneath us. A man was choking one of my friends who was part of the disruption. The crowd took our banner and pushed us out of the hotel altogether into the parking lot." But the protest attracted a lot of media coverage, including in India.

A more robust monitoring effort, coupled with stronger regulations on hate speech, could send extremists back to the digital margins. Naming and shaming of Trump is one thing. But as Patrick Bond points out, sanctions against the United States would go a lot further toward delegitimizing his administration. A Boycott, Divest, and Sanction the United States might not attract the support of organized labor in the United States, but it would certainly thrust Trump's anti-climate and anti-internationalist agenda into the spotlight. New Zealand has set a different kind of example with its exemplary response to the mass shooting in Christchurch. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern called the action "terrorism," donned a hijab and reached out to the Muslim community, refused to speak the name of the perpetrator, and introduced sweeping gun-control measures. And, instead of simply focusing on the domestic nature of the tragedy, the government made it an international issue. "They knew that they were unlikely to drive global change on social media as a country of 5 million people far away from the main political centers in the U.S. and Europe," notes Matthew Feldman of CARR. "But they could join up in France in May 2019 leading the social media roundtable through the UN. They put white nationalism very squarely on the UN General Assembly agenda for September of this year. They realized that this was something that needed multilateral action." In this way, New Zealand is naming the problem of right-wing extremism and helping to shame the international community into doing something about it.

## Coordination

Transnational organizing can rise organically from like-minded organizations meeting and designing common projects. But ultimately, any large-scale work across borders requires strategic coordination. On the right, Steve Bannon aspires to do just that. “Bannon is a global right-wing organizer,” points out Cindy Wiesner of GGJ. “We need many left-wing global organizers. There need to be processes and resources so that people can come together and strategize. We have to up our game in terms of that movement.” The progressive movement is not looking for a single coordinator. Rather, it is looking for collective coordination. Several multi-issue organizations have played that role at the global level, such as the Transnational Institute in Amsterdam, Focus on the Global South in Bangkok, and now OPEN in Barcelona. “We have supranational forums—G8, G20, UNSC—making a lot of decisions. Without coordination between transnational actors, you’re not getting the right messages to the right decisionmakers at the right time,” observes Phil Ireland. “On our issues, we need an alignment of purposes—because we’re pushing for change and change is hard in a system built on incumbency and conservatism.”

Coordination often involves convening, creating spaces where organizers can come together to strategize. It involves prioritizing, particularly in an environment of scarce resources. But at a more basic level, it can boil down to matchmaking. In their struggle against the transnational corporation BP, involved in a corruption scandal in the country, Senegalese activists “need the groups and movements in Senegal to be connected to groups and movement in England,” says of Coumba Touré of Africans Rising. “We need environmental movements there who have already fought BP. We need lawyers in Europe who have won battles against transnational corporations to be connected to local youth movements here that are saying they want to hear the whole story and how we can get back money for this country.” Coordination should not leave out young people. Salma Belhassine would put more funding into researching why youth in the Middle East and North Africa region and worldwide are not engaged. “Then I would invest more in elaborating their ideas,” she says, “and help them improve these ideas with the support of specialists such as political scientists, sociologists, and legal experts.” Birgit Sauer was involved in a similar program in Europe. “We had some projects in schools in Austria, Germany, Italy. I found it interesting how open pupils were when they had a chance to develop role-play games on hate speech or develop their own films on the Internet.” The World Social Forum served a convening function. Ultimately, many activists felt that it failed to produce strategic coordination, which involves the more political act of determining priorities and proposing collective action. However, one candidate for strategic coordination has presented itself: the Green New Deal. “The climate crisis and complete environmental breakdown is our window of opportunity,” argues Srećko Horvat. “This is the first time in human history that there is a single issue on which all of humanity can agree.”

The new right is unable to rise to this challenge. It has no effective response to the climate emergency other than to pretend that it doesn’t exist. “I think that the right will go into a profound crisis on these questions,” argues Tom Athanasiou of EcoEquity in Berkeley. “At this point, climate denialism, as a movement with any sort of legitimacy, is over. It’s just a zombie phenomenon with billionaire funders propping up the sock puppets.”

The Green New Deal, meanwhile, offers an inclusive response. The GND is not just about marshalling national (and eventually international resources) to combat climate change. It is intersectionality par excellence. The policy initiative, in the admittedly sketchy form introduced in the U.S. Congress, involves many of the infrastructure financing, job retraining, and targeted subsidies for green industries that the left has championed as a way to win back voters disillusioned by neoliberal-

alism. It can also serve as a power strip that other movements can plug into: immigrant rights, the women’s movement, anti-racism activists. The GND is not an American invention. The Green New Deal Group began in the UK in 2007. South Korea launched something similar in 2009. That same year, the UN proposed taking it global. So, it is no surprise that the Green New Deal has already established (or re-established) a transnational following.

Yanis Varoufakis, the former Greek finance minister who co-founded DiEM 25, calls the Green New Deal the “glue and cement” that can hold together a political alliance of greens, leftists, and liberals and serve as “both the inheritor of and a radical improvement on” the Juncker Plan of 2015, otherwise known as the European Fund for Strategic Investments. In Asia, a GND could push China’s Belt and Road Initiative toward greater sustainability. For Africa, a GND could provide an opportunity for countries to leapfrog over existing technologies and achieve parity with the Global North at far less cost to the environment. The Global Green New Deal cannot be solely an initiative of the rich. “If the wealthy countries were to come to a vision of the global GND that involved real public finance for the international burden-sharing mechanisms devised under the umbrella of the Paris agreement—and which have to be animated if we’re to have any hope of holding to the two-degree line, let alone 1.5C—that would certainly get the attention of people in the developing world,” argues Tom Athanasiou. But setting up GNDs in every country, coordinating among them, and establishing new international institutions to finance the effort will be an enormous challenge. “The challenge is comparable to the one after World War II, when a set of new multilateral institutions were spun out,” Athanasiou concludes.

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