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Think.

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THE FUTURE OF FOOD

JEFFREY SACHS WE CAN MOVE THE WORLD IF WE TRY /// GM FOOD COULD SAVE HUMANITY SAYS **NINA FEDOROFF** /// HOW THE GULF PLANS TO FEED ITSELF **BURHAN WAZIR** INVESTIGATES /// **ALAIN DUCASSE** TALKS CAMEL AND KETCHUP WITH SHOLTO BYRNES/// MOZAMBIQUE IS COMING OF AGE WRITES **LISA ST AUBIN DE TERAN** /// **JOHN BEW** REALPOLITIK ISN'T A KNEEJERK REACTION TO IDEALISM /// **ELIA SULEIMAN** PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS UNSPEAKING NARRATOR

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Professor Peter Mancall,
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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In the developed world, the ready availability of food has been taken for granted for so long that most of us spend little time pondering just how remarkable it is that our local stores should, as a matter of course, stock cheese from France, poultry from South America, lamb from New Zealand and grapes from South Africa. This good fortune is only possible because of a very complex web of political and economic agreements. But not only is it far more fragile than we would like to believe, it is also highly inefficient, both in terms of the resources used and in terms of distribution. A system that still leaves 870 million people around the world in absolute hunger cannot, after all, be called one that works.

Moreover, those who are fed well (often far too well, as the epidemics of obesity show), often have almost no idea what is going into their food, nor of the considerable scientific research that has gone into investigating new crops that might save hundreds of thousands of lives in poverty-stricken areas.

That is why in this issue of ***Think.***, the quarterly magazine devoted to analyzing global trends, international affairs and thought leadership, we have chosen to concentrate on a range of subjects related to human consumption. Our expert contributors hail from across the continents and offer a range of opinions, from the sternly admonitory to the informative and the humorous. We hope that the trends and discoveries revealed by our writers will offer depth on a matter about which no one can afford to remain ignorant; and also that some of the arguments may come as a surprise, and perhaps change a few minds.

Rashed Al Qurese
Acting Director of Communication, Qatar Foundation

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BULLETIN

RACHEL ASPDEN ON SCI-FI SNACKS

TABASSUM AHMAD ON AN EMERGING MARKET

SHOLTO BYRNES ON TURNING DOWN THE NOISE

A Pedi woman gathers mopane worms for the table in South Africa

COULD THESE TOASTED GRUBS PLAY A LARGE ROLE IN OUR DIETS IN THE FUTURE? WITH THE GLOBAL POPULATION BOOMING, AFFORDABLE SOURCES OF PROTEIN ARE IN SHORT SUPPLY

THE WORM TURNS

BY **RACHEL ASPDEN**

"Try one, they taste just like biltong, delicious!" urged the colorfully dressed lady selling snacks on the side of the dirt road to Victoria Falls. The basket she offered me was heaped with mysterious grey morsels: dried mopane worms. In Zimbabwe and across southern Africa, these caterpillars of the emperor moth are a local delicacy, harvested after the rains by pickers who squeeze out their green entrails, leaving behind the coveted yellow flesh. Reluctantly I accepted a choice worm, closed my eyes and chewed. Deep-fried and seasoned, it tasted less like dried meat than a salty potato chip, with an oddly crispy, resistant texture. It was definitely edible, but all the seller's charm couldn't persuade me to try another.

The squeamish may be hard to convince, but could these toasted grubs play a large role in our diets in the future? With the global population booming, affordable sources of protein are in short supply. By 2050, the world will have to find food for 9.2 billion people – as extreme weather patterns, water shortages, soaring food prices and a rising demand for meat in developing countries are projected to leave around a third of them struggling for adequate nutrition.

Edible insects, worms and caterpillars are one answer: around two billion people, mainly in East Asia and Africa, already include them as a regular part of their diet. They are plentiful – the estimated global ratio of insects to humans is 200 million to one – and economical – they need a quarter of the food intake of sheep, and half that of chickens, to produce the same amount of protein. A recent report from the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, urging the expansion of commercial insect farming, noted that red ants, grasshoppers and water beetles contain as much protein as lean ground beef.

For those who prefer their beef to taste like beef, however, scientists recently unveiled the "Google burger" – the world's first hamburger made from laboratory-grown meat. Funded by Google founder Sergey Brin, a team at Maastricht University extracted stem cells from two cows and grew 20,000 individual muscle fibres which were then pressed, colored and mixed with binding ingredients to create the synthetic burger. The project team claims it has enormous implications for animal welfare as well as the efficiency of meat production: depending on the method used, they say, artificial meat could reduce the need for land and water by 90 percent and cut overall energy use by 70 percent. Not everyone was won over: the food critic Hanni Ruetzler, who tasted the burger at its grand unveiling, described it as "not that juicy".

But lab-grown meat is only the latest product of our long fascination with futuristic foods. In 1893, the US suffragette Mary Elizabeth Lease suggested that 20th-century women

would be emancipated from the drudgery of food preparation by "a small phial" of condensed food which would "furnish men with substance for days". By the 1960s, food seemed on the verge of breaking not only with domestic labor but with nature. Sci-fi writers wholeheartedly embraced the idea of the food pill, which would provide a whole day's worth of calories in a single gulp. (*The Jetsons*, a future fantasy equivalent of *The Flintstones*, even featured a burned-toast variety.)

In the real world, Gemini and Apollo astronauts were sustained on gels, freeze-dried powders and "semi-liquids" created by Pillsbury technologists. For the ordinary consumer, food scientists were busy creating a cornucopia of synthetic and convenience foods fit for the space age: Cool Whip, Angel Delight, Tang, Twinkies, Pop Tarts and TV dinners. The ingredients of the moment were newly engineered additives: preservatives, dyes, colourings, flavor enhancers and sweeteners such as high-fructose corn syrup.

For a while, these futuristic ready foods were status symbols, but the backlash came in the 1970s as the counterculture labelled them symptoms of everything wrong with industrial civilization: soulless, corporate and destructive to both the environment and human health. The 1973 film *Soylent Green* summed up this spirit, outlining a dystopic future in which the wafer rations issued to the population were processed not from plankton, as the manufacturers claimed,

FOR THE ORDINARY CONSUMER, FOOD SCIENTISTS WERE BUSY CREATING A CORNUCOPIA OF SYNTHETIC AND CONVENIENCE FOODS FIT FOR THE SPACE AGE: COOL WHIP, ANGEL DELIGHT, TANG, TWINKIES, POP TARTS AND TV DINNERS

but from human remains. Whole grain foods, the rougher and the less purely refined white (in solidarity with the world's oppressed peoples), became the choice of enlightened consumers.

Though the political overtones of food choice may have softened since the 1970s, consumer demand for food described as organic, artisanal, heritage, locally produced or "slow" has continued to rise. UK shoppers, according to the industry experts Food Manufacture, "increasingly buy into the perceived healthiness of the additive-free or 'natural' proposition" – a trend based firmly on fashion rather than rigorous scientific evidence.

The global organic food market alone is now worth $63 billion per year, having grown at an average of 19 percent per year since 2002. The booming business is undented by studies such as a 2012 Stanford University report which concluded that although organic food may contain less pesticide residue than conventional food, there was no proof it had any more nutritional value. Food may be sustenance, but it is such a central part of our culture and way of life that our relationship to it is often driven by emotion rather than reason. At temples to molecular gastronomy such as El Bulli and The Fat Duck, wealthy diners embrace the scientific food-processing techniques that repel them in mass-market products.

The real future of the way we eat, however, is likely to be determined not by technicians in white coats – whether Heston Blumenthal-style celebrity chefs or industrial food scientists – but by a shortage of the most basic building block of all, water. If diets in the developing world continue to change towards the water- and resource-intensive Western model, the world will run out of food by the middle of this century. Scientists warn that although humans now derive about 20 percent of our protein from meat, we must switch to a 95 percent vegetarian diet by 2050. The alternative? Consumers currently fretting over hand-reared, prime pasture-fed wagyu steak must learn to love mopane worms.

Rachel Aspden is a Cairo-based journalist and a regular contributor to *Think*.

HUMAN SENSE, BUSINESS SENSE

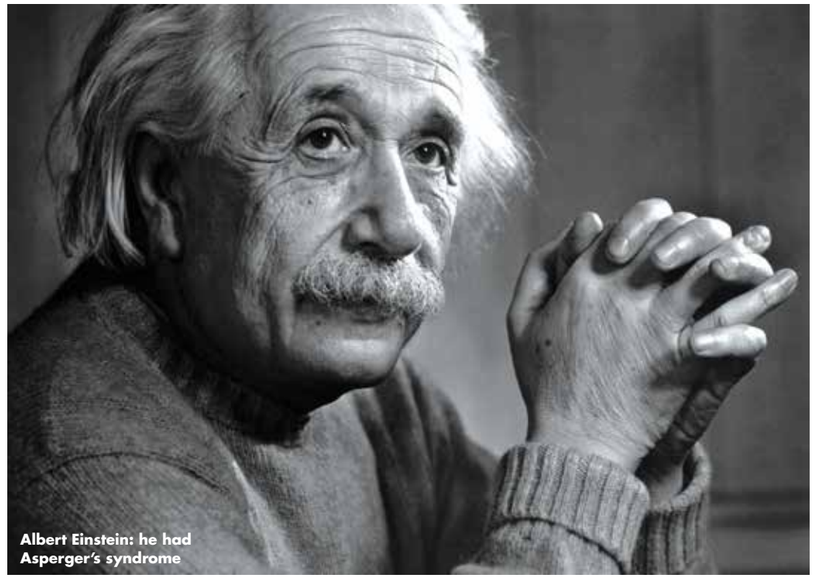
BY **TABASSUM AHMAD**

Halle Berry. Albert Einstein. Carly Simon. Florence Nightingale. Christopher Reeve. What unites the preceding list of individuals who, ranging from Hollywood stars to the founder of modern nursing and the 20th century's pre-eminent astrophysicist, may not appear to have much in common? They all, in one way or another, are or were affected by disabilities – Berry: diabetes; Einstein: Asperger's syndrome; Simon: speech impediment; Nightingale: bipolar disorder; and Reeve: paralysis.

Recent trends have shown that people with certain types of disabilities contribute in unique ways to the workplace. Perhaps the best known example is the tremendous input to the growth of Silicon Valley from those on the autistic spectrum and by those with obsessive-compulsive disorders. People with these and other conditions can and do play their parts in all sorts of other ways, yet their roles are often overlooked due to the common perception that most disabilities are both physical and visible – not helped by the fact that the symbol for facilities for disabled people is the wheelchair.

In fact, 70 percent of disabilities are hidden, among them dyslexia, dyspraxia and long-term health conditions such as diabetes, epilepsy and cancer. And only five percent of people with a disability use wheelchairs. Many of these

IN FACT, 70 PERCENT OF DISABILITIES ARE HIDDEN AND ONLY FIVE PERCENT OF PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY USE WHEELCHAIRS



Albert Einstein: he had Asperger's syndrome

impairments need not affect what an individual can do in the workplace. Disabled people comprise one of the largest untapped pools of talent and may have more "life experience" and practice at overcoming obstacles, leading to excellent problem solving skills. Countries with aging populations are likely to include more skilled residents who have acquired disabilities during their working lives; furthermore, many employers may not realize that the value a disabled person adds to a business usually far outweighs any necessary adjustment costs.

But it is not just a matter of what disabled people can do in the workforce – they also represent a huge opportunity for businesses. Comprising the fastest-growing minority consumer market in the world, they are currently worth $220 billion in the US alone. Rich Donovan is the CEO of ratings company and index provider Fifth Quadrant Analytics, which focuses on the disability market; he was formerly a trader and manager at Merrill Lynch. He views the disabled population as an emerging market, one that consists of "1.1 billion people – the size of China".

He points to two trends – a generation of recently educated people who have benefitted from anti-discriminatory disability laws and an aging baby boomer population experiencing a corresponding increase in disabilities, resulting in rising demand for products and services for these wealthy and consumerist generations. Currently, however, only a quarter of companies in the Standard & Poor's 500 Index aim their strategies at these markets, and just six percent are actively doing business with them. Donovan set up the Return on Disability Index to track the shares of the leading 100 firms engaging in the disabled space; its results show that, collectively, they have outperformed the broader stock market over the past five years.

So, what are these companies doing? Google started its journey into the disability arena in Europe, the Middle East and Africa three years ago, partnering with EmployAbility, the not-for-profit organization I founded that works with disabled graduates to ease the transition from education to employment and with companies wanting to become more disability inclusive. This partnership has resulted in the development of a European Disability Scholarship program. So far, hundreds of Google staff have been trained in disability awareness in China, India, the UK, Ireland, Australia, Japan, Taiwan, Switzerland and Singapore, leading to the creation of TechAbility Europe – a unique scheme designed to foster a stream of talented disabled computer scientists into Google. In addition, it actively targets promising disabled students at European universities, many of whom go on to obtain highly competitive internships and graduate roles with the company.

THE FASTEST-GROWING MINORITY CONSUMER MARKET IN THE WORLD, THEY ARE CURRENTLY WORTH $220 BILLION IN THE US ALONE

Google and many others that engage in such practices do so because if you want the best workers you choose from the widest pool. They want to recruit the most talented staff available and to ensure their workforces both reflect and understand their growing bases of disabled customers. Put simply, it's not just human sense to value diversity – it makes business sense.

Tabassum Ahmad is Managing Director of EmployAbility and was honored with an Asian Women of Achievement Award at the London Hilton this May.

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

BY **SHOLTO BYRNES**

"It was so quiet you could hear a pin drop." The cliché is familiar, yet seldom ever is it true. A fan whirrs. The dishwasher rumbles. A car screeches by outside. A nearby conversation intrudes, quite possibly from someone seemingly speaking to himself – and loudly, at that – but in fact to an unseen interlocutor through a hidden earpiece. And everywhere, everywhere, the constant aural wallpaper of Muzak or pop songs in malls, restaurants, hotels and supermarkets.

We have forgotten the value of silence. Instead, we prize garrulousness – it is generally not a compliment to say of someone: "she's very quiet" – in commentators versed in the art of sounding plausible while fluently saying little or nothing, in reality stars whose barely earned fame lasts not even the 15 minutes Andy Warhol might have allotted them, and in genuine celebrities (ie those whose renown rests on achievement rather than notoriety or self-display) to whom we take exception if they wisely decide to keep their own lives and opinions to themselves. Many may know of Wittgenstein's dictum, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one should be silent", but few take it to heart.

I had not experienced true silence until I first encountered the deserts of Arabia as a child. Amid the scrub and the sand, the complete absence of any sound was quite literally deafening – pounding, all-encompassing, a moment of awe and a reminder of human insignificance before the rocks and dunes that have outlasted generations of men and will stand long after many of our descendants have gone. It is no wonder that for thousands of years prophets and mystics have sought out the desert for contemplation and revelation, for religion has always acknowledged the power of peace. The Muslim is enjoined to silence when hearing the Holy Qur'an: "And when the Qur'an is recited, give ear to it and pay heed, that ye may obtain mercy."

And one of the best loved Anglican hymns, *Dear Lord and Father of Mankind*, ends with two verses that are an ode to hush that speak to believer and non-believer alike:

> Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
> Till all our strivings cease;
> Take from our souls the strain and stress, and let our ordered lives confess the beauty of Thy peace.

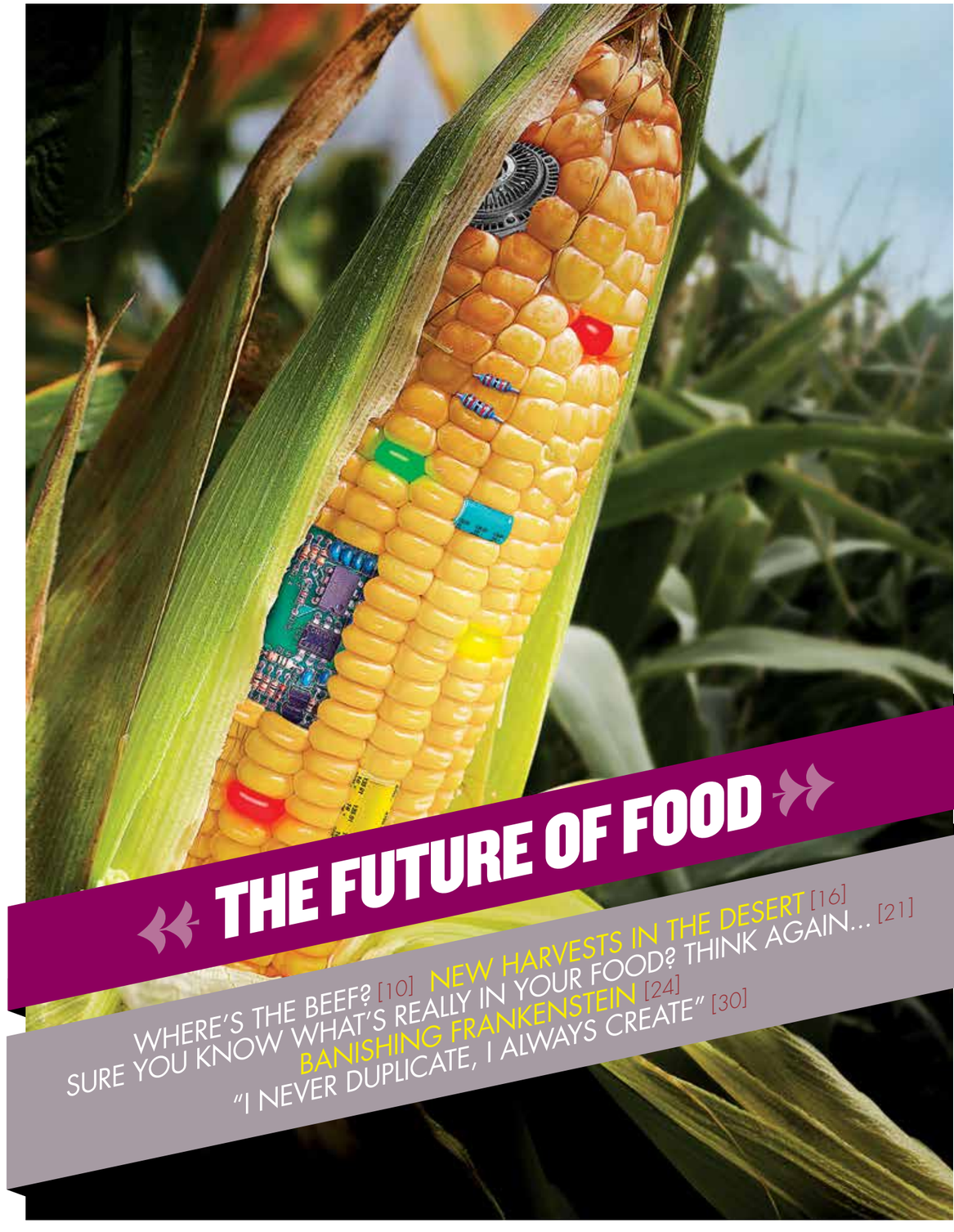
RELIGION HAS ALWAYS ACKNOWLEDGED THE POWER OF PEACE

> Breathe through the heats of our desire Thy coolness and Thy balm;
> Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
> Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
> O still, small voice of calm.

But don't just take religion's word for it. Recent studies have shown that pupils studying while listening to music wrote 60 words an hour fewer than those doing so in silence; that silence can improve cognition, self-control and listening skills; and that children living in higher decibel areas suffer increased heart rates, blood pressure and stress levels.

Proper silence and sound: the two complement each other and allow an appreciation of both. In my early months in Qatar in 2011, I stayed for a few nights in a hotel in a quiet southern area of the capital, Doha. At dawn the muezzin would wake me. The calls to prayer from the nearby mosques were ever so slightly non-synchronized but, rather than cacophonous, the effect was one of resonation and echo; it was magical, mesmerising, and recalled the centuries when there were no cities here, no highways, no "noise" as we know it today. There was just the call to prayer. And the rest, to paraphrase Hamlet's last line, was silence. We would do well to recall its power again today.

Sholto Byrnes is the Editor of *Think*.



THE FUTURE OF FOOD

WHERE'S THE BEEF?

WE PRODUCE ENOUGH FOOD TO PROVIDE EVERYONE ON THE PLANET WITH 4,500 CALORIES A DAY, YET HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS LIVE IN ABSOLUTE HUNGER. THE OLD WEALTHY NATIONS HAVE SHOWN A LACK OF EQUITY IN ITS DISTRIBUTION. WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN THE GLOBAL SOUTH AND EAST, WITH THEIR EXPONENTIALLY GROWING DEMAND FOR MEAT, TAKE OVER DECIDING WHO GETS TO EAT WHAT, WHERE AND WHEN?

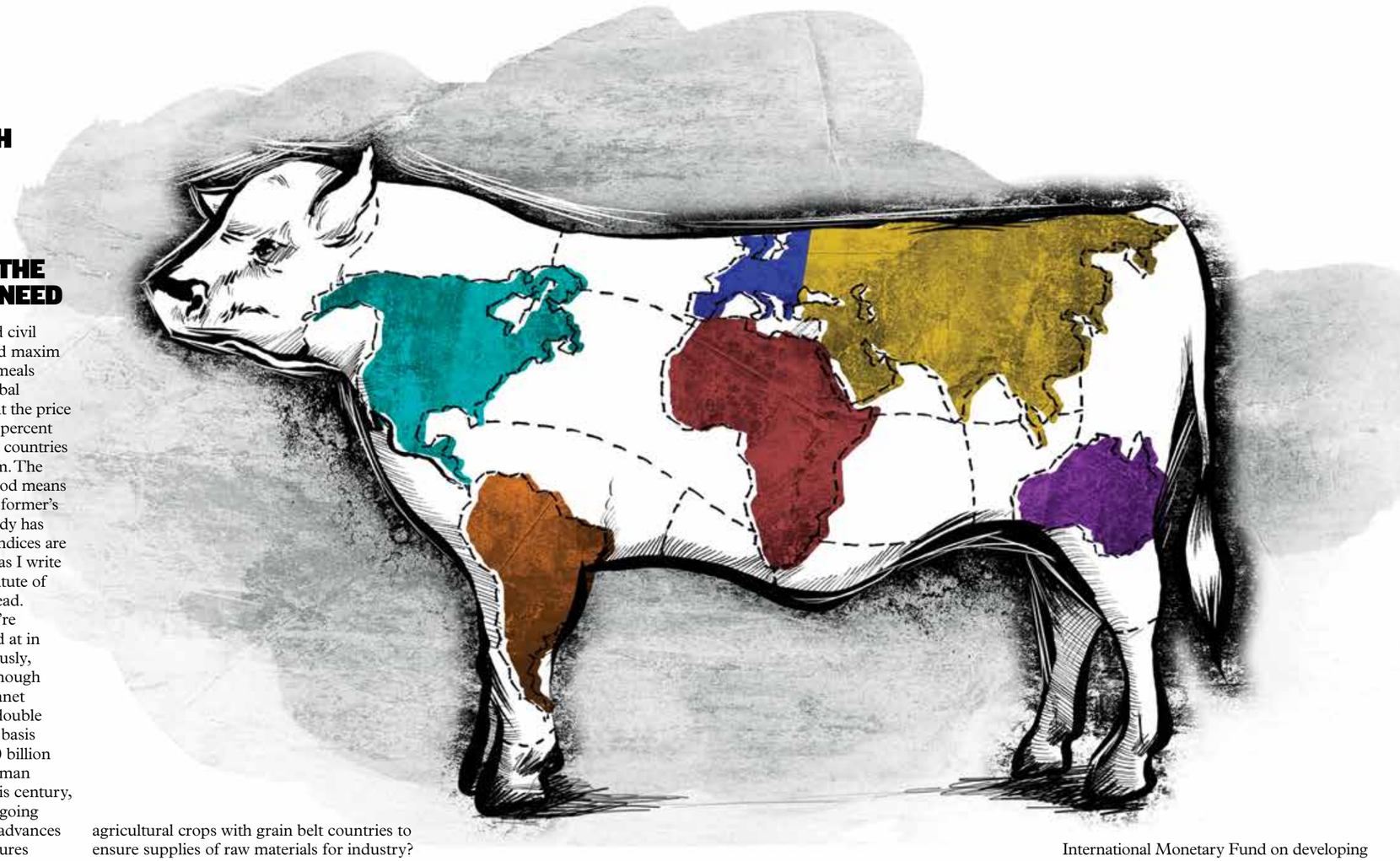
WRITTEN BY **ALEX RENTON**

The main event of dinner at a friend's house last week was a lamb tagine with couscous. Nothing spectacular – good food from ingredients gathered, as is the norm now, from all the corners of the planet. The lamb, shipped 14,000 kilometers from New Zealand, shrink-wrapped and semi-frozen, tasted as good as the day it was slaughtered. The saffron and the salted lemon from Morocco; the ginger from Jamaica; the wheat for the couscous grown in Brazil and milled in France; the avocados in the salad from Peru and the coriander from Spain. The drink was South African, and after the tagine we ate French cheese and Californian grapes.

Like most in the rich world, we gave little thought to the spider's web of deals, political and economic, that permitted this astonishing feast to lie before us. Or to the resources: the massive use of water – 150 liters to irrigate the wheat for the couscous – or the fossil fuels that powered every bit of the production, from the refrigerated ships from New Zealand and South America to the fertilizer for the vines of South Africa and California. We thought even less, I fear, of the failings of this amazing system: that it oversupplies one half of the world, leaving 1.2bn of us suffering obesity and its associated diseases, while in the other half the World Food Programme estimates that 870m are living in absolute hunger, a third of them children who will grow up stunted in mind and body.

But furthest from our minds as we enjoyed ourselves that evening was a sense of how fragile this system is. A failure of the supply chains to our local supermarket would bring

WE PRODUCE ENOUGH TO GIVE EVERYONE CURRENTLY ON THE PLANET 4,500 KILOCALORIES A DAY, MORE THAN DOUBLE THE ENERGY MOST OF US NEED



panic buying in a couple of days and civil unrest in not much longer. As the old maxim goes, "No man is further than nine meals away from anarchy." Blips in the global commodities trading system have sent the price of the wheat for that couscous up 30 percent twice since 2008, sparking riots in 30 countries and revolution in half a dozen of them. The interlinking of the prices of oil and food means the latter is now susceptible to all the former's volatility. A new field of academic study has emerged in which future food price indices are analyzed to predict political unrest – as I write the forecast from Massachusetts Institute of Technology is for stormy weather ahead.

All of this, despite the fact that we're not going to run out of food. Looked at in terms of calories, the world is fabulously, happily oversupplied. We produce enough to give everyone currently on the planet 4,500 kilocalories a day, more than double the energy most of us need. On that basis we could feed not just the nine or 10 billion expected on this planet when the human population peaks in the middle of this century, but a few billion more. Given the ongoing improvements in productivity from advances in technology and farming, those figures should get better and better. World agriculture produces 17 percent more calories per person today than it did 30 years ago – even though there are 70 percent more people. And while fossil fuel inputs to agriculture may eventually have to decline, we have hardly begun to harness solar power or the immense potential promised by biotechnology.

MARKET RULES

So why the gloom? Why are cash-rich but resource-poor states from the Gulf to South East Asia buying land in Africa? Why is China purchasing American agribusinesses and putting in place long-term deals on agricultural crops with grain belt countries to ensure supplies of raw materials for industry? And why do politicians across the world talk about "food security" as a key global issue that must be addressed?

There are many answers to these questions, but they all come down to one issue: distribution. Though food, like energy and water, is a core human need, we are very bad at sharing it fairly or even sensibly. In modern history, governments have avoided addressing food strategy. When they have, the results have usually been catastrophic, especially when driven by ideology, such as in Soviet Russia in the 1930s or Maoist China in the 1960s. The "structural adjustment" policies pushed in the late 20th century by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund on developing countries, forcing governments to remove state planning and safety nets for farmers, have resulted in more hunger in Africa, not less.

Food strategy has largely been left to the market. Capitalism and agriculture have, on the face of it, accomplished amazing things in the past century. Medicine and better nutrition combined have enabled most humans to thrive by all the basic indicators: longevity, height and infant mortality rates have all improved by more than at any time in all the previous millennia our existence. Most significant of all, our population increased sevenfold – although 870 million of us remain hungry, that figure has been stable for 20 years.

But it has become clear that the 20th century's successes are not a model for the 21st and, despite all the excess of supply and future increases in productivity, allowing the market to distribute those calories according to demand rather than need is no longer sustainable. This is due to the extraordinary rise in the levels of wastage as people become richer, chiefly through their change in diet from vegetarian to omnivore.

Currently nearly 40 percent of the planet's grain crop and 60 percent of agricultural land are devoted to producing one type of meat, beef, which in turn gives us only 2 percent of our calories. Overall, 6kg of plant protein delivers just 1kg of meat protein. The world's other favorite animals are of better value than beef but still painfully draining on resources. Chicken gives a return of 2:1 in terms of feed for flesh, but that feed is largely a crop that humans like to eat – corn. The meat habit has other costs – the resultant greenhouse gases, for one, are equivalent to all the emissions of the world's transport systems. In terms of land the deal is shockingly wasteful – according to the World Wildlife Fund, producing 1kg of beef requires 15 times as much hectarage as producing 1kg of cereals, and 70 times as much land as 1kg of vegetables.

This state of affairs is possible for now but it won't be as more of the poorer nations develop, unless world economic growth goes into permanent reverse. It's the Catch 22 of food security – take people out of poverty and they start to eat four or more times as much of the available food, largely because of the amount of meat they start opting for. US State Department figures show that China now represents a quarter of the world's meat consumption. In 1962 the Chinese ate just 3.6kg meat per head per year, a figure which had risen to 18kg by 1973 but up to a massive 58kg in 2009 – a curve directly related to the increase in the country's wealth.

CARNIVOROUS HABITS

In the United States, where people eat, at 120kg per head per annum, as much or more meat than anyone, these statistics are reported with a mix of horror and glee. It is pointed out that the Chinese already have to import animal feed and breeding stock from the US, and are buying some grand old American meat companies. The threat to resources and the contribution to climate change of growing

BEANS MEANS... TRAFFIC JAMS

In March 2013, the world's biggest ever traffic jam appeared off the coast of Brazil when 212 freight ships – some a third of a kilometer long – were waiting to load soy beans and soy meal. The country had experienced its greatest harvest on record and, on land, the line of lorries coming from the Amazonian Mato Grosso to deliver soy to the port of Santos stretched back 15 miles. When the boats finally loaded – and the delay caused hiccups in the world soy price – most were heading to the other side of the world. Their destination was China, where they would deliver their protein-rich cargo to feed animals and fish.

The traffic jam off the Brazil coast marked the biggest single transfer of grains to livestock in the history of the planet: by June, 56 million metric tons had been shipped. China's soy imports in 2012 were 63 million metric tons, more than half of all world soy trade. This was on top of a record Chinese harvest the previous year.

But it won't be enough for long. The US Department of Agriculture forecasts that, by 2022, China will import more soy than America or Brazil, the world's largest producers, currently grow at 102m metric tons.

The Chinese government is also doing huge deals with other land-rich countries to secure its long-term supply of other grains, including an agreement with Ukraine to supply 3 million metric tons of maize per annum.

meat habits in developing economies are one of the first things mentioned by people concerned about food supply and security – with good reason. But, as ever with issues of finite world resources, it seems to be those who consume the most who are shrillest about the prospect of others aping their greed.

At the moment there is less to worry about from the most populous countries in Asia than Western doom-mongers would have you believe. Indonesia's meat eating is probably already near its peak and the threat from India hardly exists. Indians consume a 30th of the meat that Australians or Americans do – about 4.4kg per person in 2009, up from 3.9kg 10 years earlier.

They lie at 177 in the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) world league of carnivores ordered by appetite and, largely because of cultural rather than economic vegetarianism, fewer than 30 percent of them consume meat regularly. No-one believes that, even in the most optimistic growth scenarios, Indian meat consumption will top 10kg per head per annum in the foreseeable future, although their dairy use is forecast to double, while China's will go up 60 percent. Africa's meat consumption rates are stagnant at about 20kg and are not expected to change until serious development starts to take place in the continent. Far more of a problem today is the fact that the 300 million people in the US eat a third of the world's meat supply – and they eat more beef, the most expensive type in resource terms, than most.

Until recently, the Chinese did not waste meat as countries where it is cheap do, not least because whereas in the US and the UK less than 10 percent of household income is spent on food, in China, a third is. Europeans eat about 50 percent, by weight, of a beef animal. In societies that prize offal and fat and pay more for their meat, as the continentals used to, 25 percent more of the animal is used for food. Here again lies hope for the hungry and fearful – as is often said, if we could use the 40 percent of edible food that gets thrown away there would be no crisis in food security. To that end, this year China launched its own public education campaign against food waste.

How much meat can the Chinese eat? Because of its size, the country already consumes just over twice as much in total as does the United States, the Chinese having overtaken the Americans in 1990. If China continues to develop as it has, and many experts are convinced it can, by 2020 all of its population "will have escaped poverty", as *The Economist* put it earlier this year. If these newly rich Chinese eat the same amount of meat per head as the average person in a developed country does – 80kg per person – then in just seven years' time these 1.4bn people will want 112 million metric tons of animal meat annually, more than a third of total world production today. That is on top of the fact that it already relies on imports.

"To make meat you need land, corn and water," says James Rice, the former country head of Tyson Foods, the world's second largest farmer and processor of chicken, beef and other animals. "China is short of all three."

INDIANS CONSUME A 30TH OF THE MEAT THAT AUSTRALIANS OR AMERICANS DO – ABOUT 4.4KG PER PERSON IN 2009, UP FROM 3.9KG 10 YEARS EARLIER

LOOK EAST

Of course there are many other developing economies – the FAO predicts that meat calorie demand will double across South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa by the mid-century. For this reason, it's become a given that, to meet the demands of the nine billion who are expected to populate the Earth in 2050, world food production must increase by 40-60 percent.

Meanwhile, the business of food production is moving east. In May 2013 it was announced that the American firm Smithfield, one of the largest farmers in the world, was being sold to Shuanghui, China's biggest meat packer. The $4.7bn deal will, if US regulators okay it, be the greatest sale ever of an American business to China. Together the two firms will slaughter more than 30 million animals a year. The deal means that, for the first time, the majority of global meat production is out of the control of the old rich nations. East Asia has been producing more chickens than any other region of the world for at least 10 years, and the global trade is dominated by a Thai company. Beef is near-monopolized by another company in the South – Brazil's JBS – and that country is now the world's leading exporter of beef and chicken. In aquaculture, which now produces 40 percent of the world's fish protein, 60 percent of the production is from China and most of the rest from South East Asia. Big grain trading houses are gearing up to serve China and India. Meat exporters such as New Zealand expect China soon to become the main destination of their lamb and beef, with whom it has just agreed a bilateral trade deal. Will there be any lamb left for Britain, which for a century was the first, and often the only, buyer of meat from Down Under?

In June 2013, when the G8 nations held a mini-summit on nutrition and food security in London, host David Cameron, the British Prime Minister, brought in heads of some of the world's biggest food companies to discuss future strategy. But these were old-world companies – the meeting was held in the headquarters of Unilever, and nowhere on the guest list were JBS or Shuanghui. Nor was any government representative of China, though Brazil's deputy Prime Minister was there. A deal for more aid money to nourish the world's poorest children was agreed, but both hunger campaigners and food security analysts agreed there was nothing strategic about that announcement, however headline grabbing.

THE DEAL MEANS THAT, FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE MAJORITY OF GLOBAL MEAT PRODUCTION IS OUT OF THE CONTROL OF THE OLD RICH NATIONS

The deals that truly address the world's future hunger crises must consider the vast areas of Russia that could become grain producing land, along with the woeful productivity of African farmers, who yield a 10th per farmed hectare that Americans do. They will be about restarting the multilateral World Trade Organization talks, before food supply is completely tied up in a host of bilateral deals between the rich nations and the farming ones.

Twenty-first century food is going to be a different thing – I wonder if my friends and I will have the means, or the right, to casually eat produce from across the continents for much longer. I don't think we will spend just 10 percent of our incomes on our food. And I'm sure we will eat less meat.

The way the planet is fed in the future and the shape of hunger will be decided in the Global South and East, in places which do not enjoy the resources the old rich nations had, and which do not necessarily share European and American ideas of democracy and justice. Let us hope they do a better job of sharing the food out fairly than their predecessors did. ●

THE AUTHOR

Alex Renton is a prize-winning journalist whose work has been honored by the Guild of Food Writers, Amnesty International and the British Press Awards, among others. His new book on food security, *Planet Carnivore*, has recently been published.

NEW HARVESTS IN THE DESERT

SCARCE WATER SUPPLIES AND A LACK OF USABLE AGRICULTURAL LAND MEAN THE STATES OF THE ARABIAN GULF HAVE LONG RELIED ON IMPORTS FOR THE MAJORITY OF THEIR FOOD. BUT WITH MASSIVELY GROWING POPULATIONS AND UNCERTAINTY OVER THE PRICE OF STAPLES, CAN THESE COUNTRIES ACHIEVE THE SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE – AND FEED THEMSELVES?

WRITTEN BY **BURHAN WAZIR**

In the tumultuous early part of 2008, as Merrill Lynch, American International Group, Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae floundered and Lehman Brothers began to slide into the ice-cold waters of bankruptcy, another crisis was taking shape. In countries across the world, the cost of food began to spike. The international price of wheat doubled from February 2007 to February 2008. The market value of rice reached its highest level for a decade. The cost of milk and meat rose twofold.

The soaring prices provided many governments with a dangerous reminder of how limited was their control over global food patterns and their accompanying consequences. The cost of food had already sharply risen over the previous two years. Between 2006 and 2008, the price of soy beans rose by 107 percent, corn by 125 percent, wheat by 136 percent and rice by 217 percent. Faced with the worrying prospect of more dramatic increases, food exporters introduced emergency measures to safeguard domestic supplies. Major rice producers such as China, Brazil, Indonesia, India, Egypt, Vietnam and Cambodia instituted export bans on crops. Several other nations, including Argentina, Russia and Serbia, either imposed high tariffs or blocked the export of wheat altogether, further increasing the cost to net importing countries.

The effects of these isolationist practices were disastrous. As millions were pushed into famine and poverty, riots and demonstrations erupted in Cameroon, Egypt, Haiti, Senegal and Somalia. In Argentina, tomatoes became more expensive than meat. In Panama, the government began bulk buying rice at peak market prices, reselling stocks to the public at a loss at newly opened food kiosks. Ten thousand workers rioted near Dhaka, Bangladesh, while in Burkina Faso unrest broke out in the country's second and third largest cities as food costs increased by 65 percent. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the crisis created an additional 75 million hungry people. Even the fabled food mountains of the European Union appeared to have vanished overnight as Italians took to the streets in Milan and Rome to protest against rising pasta prices.

For most of the 2000s, the world had been

THE COST OF FOOD HAD ALREADY SHARPLY RISEN OVER THE PREVIOUS TWO YEARS BETWEEN 2006 AND 2008

consuming more food than it was producing. Stockpiles had been exhausted – in 2007, surpluses fell to 61 days' worth of global consumption. Weather patterns were also interrupted; extended droughts in Australia, as well as Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, strangled the rice supply chain. Increased investment in ethanol production, a reaction to the $100-a-barrel price of oil, caused the price of grain to soar.

Many consumers discovered that food was susceptible to a similar speculative bubble to that which had punctured the US housing boom. The US Commodity Futures Trading Commission revealed that Wall Street funds controlled 20-50 percent of futures contracts on commodities such as corn, wheat and cattle. Volatility ensured large swings in prices, damaging a fragile ecosystem which had traditionally protected the mechanisms of farming.

DISRUPTION TO SUPPLY

In the oil producing economies of the Gulf, the food crises of 2007 and 2008 took on an immediacy not witnessed since the shortages around the time of the Suez Crisis in 1956. For months, shelves in large international chains such as Carrefour and Spinneys were intermittently empty as the supermarkets suffered from disruptions to imports of flour and rice. Prices of staple foodstuffs such as vegetable oil, bread and milk rose. Groceries ran short of bell peppers, tomatoes and cucumbers; neighborhood bakeries increased the price of rotis and other flatbreads. There were reports of Asian laborers returning from annual leave in Pakistan and India with sacks of basmati rice and kegs of vegetable oil. In Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, the average weekly shopping bill rose by 30-50 per cent.

A 2012 report by the International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington, DC, *Beyond the Arab Awakening*, concluded that food security is a "serious challenge to the region". An overwhelming dependency on food imports, a reliance on foreign financial exchanges, rising demand from increasing populations, limited agricultural potential and the scarcity of water meant that "food security has deteriorated in most countries in the region as a result of the global food crises in 2007-08 and 2010-11".

"Looking back, the food crises, for the first time, changed the attitudes of many Gulf leaders," says Benno Boer, the Ecological Sciences Advisor, Arab Region, for UNESCO. Boer, who has lived and worked in the Gulf for 25 years, says rice and grain shortages demonstrated the precariousness of the food cycle. "Until 2007, Gulf countries had relied on their oil wealth to feed their citizens. Suddenly, the dominant thought that food could always be purchased in an emergency was upended. In Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Doha and Riyadh, the idea of long-term food security became as paramount as national security."

Thirty years ago, achieving food security for the tribal populations of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates was as elementary as securing reliable stocks of dates and camel meat.

HOW QATAR IS PREPARING TO PROVIDE FOR ITSELF

Qatar National Food Security Programme advocates a number of key solutions to reverse the country's imports cycle:

- Building a solar park in southern Qatar to take advantage of the region's high irradiance levels (the amount of solar radiation reaching a given area)
- Harnessing wind power from offshore locations to drive electrical turbines
- Smart grids to more efficiently manage energy distribution
- Reusing waste from industry for seawater desalination
- Creating a new strategy to deal with the country's depleted freshwater supplies
- Treating waste water to supplement the supply – the processed water will additionally help grow fodder for animals
- Investigating ways to reduce the amount of water wastage through irrigation of Qatar's farms
- Finding ways to use new crop rotation technologies and controlled environment production
- Increasing the production of green fodder for livestock and dairy industries
- Utilizing hydroponics to alter Qatar's food security efficiency. Every possible form of this technology will be encouraged as a way to preserve water
- Overhauling existing livestock farms by instituting new domestic feed production techniques and developing modern feed lots
- Developing a national strategy to monitor fish stocks and examine how they are affected by climate change.
- Establishing new fish farming in areas such as the coastal town of Ras Matbakh
- Building an agro-industrial park for food processing and packaging to take advantage of the country's expanding transport infrastructure
- Expanding Qatar's storage facilities to ensure a constant supply of raw materials to the processing industry
- A well coordinated and integrated food safety management system

LOOKING BACK, THE FOOD CRISES, FOR THE FIRST TIME, CHANGED THE ATTITUDES OF MANY GULF LEADERS

***Zygophyllum qatarense* is an example of the halophytic plants that naturally occur in very salty soil which could be cultivated in Qatar**

The Gulf countries, however, have gained more than 13 million residents over the past eight years. Figures for 2011 put the total number of expatriates and locals in the region at 46.8 million, and that is expected to rise to 50 million by the end of 2013. The influx has placed a strain on both food imports and already meager water supplies. As these countries' urban populations have multiplied, driven by ambitious social and cultural expansion plans and by the influx of Western white-collar workers and South Asian labor, the fast, cheap and convenient availability of food has become of critical concern.

"When we talk about food security, what we really mean is 1,500 calories a day," explains David Roberts, Director of the Royal United Services Institute in Doha. "In the Gulf, those 1,500 calories have to cater to the tastes of a large number of nationalities: rice for South Asians, flour for people from the Middle East. And these Gulf countries have to hold onto the people who are building the cities. In the case of your Western expats, their diets are more specialized – I call it the 'cherry tomato test'. They're mobile. They will leave here if their diets are whittled down."

The food security matrix, however, doesn't exist in isolation. The Gulf's booming populations bring incredible opportunities and equivalent challenges – for retail food suppliers. Out of a combined consumer spend in the Gulf of $300 billion, food is the largest segment, totaling $83 billion in 2012 – an annual figure expected to rise to $106 billion in the next five years, according to a study published last March by global management consultancy AT Kearney. While large outlets such as Carrefour and Spinneys will likely continue to dominate the Gulf market, this demand, combined with upwardly evolving consumer behavior, has propelled a major expansion by smaller, regional retailers such as Panda and Lulu, which opened 100 stores between 2009 and 2012.

Two of the major obstacles to food security in the Gulf are scarce water supplies and a lack of usable agricultural land. Qatar, which imports 90 percent of its food, employs desalination to satisfy a daily demand of 1.2 million cubic meters of water. Fresh water supplies have been depleted by 85 percent. In an emergency, the country's current reserves, stored in man-made tanks, would last approximately 1.8 days at the current rate of consumption.

EFFORTS AT INNOVATION

The disappearance of freshwater sources is having an equally alarming effect on the Gulf's already stretched farming industry. In Abu Dhabi, farmers now face a curb on their use of groundwater as dwindling supplies reach a tipping point. Five decades ago, water supplies were easily accessible and usually discovered a meter below ground level. Because of overconsumption and waste, the same supplies are now replenished so slowly as to render them non-renewable. While agriculture accounts for the majority of Abu Dhabi's groundwater use, most of the emirate's potable water, produced at desalination plants, is being squandered by private users.

WITHIN 11 YEARS, QNFSP AIMS TO REDUCE CURRENT FOOD IMPORT LEVELS FROM 90 PERCENT TO 10 PERCENT

Government investigators at Abu Dhabi's Regulation & Supervision Bureau last year calculated that of the 650 million gallons produced daily in 2011, only 150 million gallons a day returned to the sewage treatment system. The remainder was thought to have gone on watering gardens, parks, filling swimming pools and washing cars and driveways.

"By far the biggest obstruction to food security is water scarcity," says Kenneth Britton Marcum of the Department of Aridland Agriculture at United Arab Emirates University.

"This limits the use of the soil, inhibits the growth of produce and restricts the livestock industry. In the Gulf region, there is an abundance of brackish water, which is heavy with salt. Freshwater, which is used for farming, is produced mainly in desalination plants, which require a huge amount of energy."

In Qatar, where the annual average rainfall recorded from 1972-2005 was roughly 80 millimeters, the latter months of 2012 provided yet another reminder of the country's complicated food matrix. Last October, Saudi Arabia banned the export of poultry and potatoes – of which it is a key supplier to neighboring Gulf countries – owing to poor stocks and a growing local population. Across supermarkets in Doha, fresh chicken was in short supply for the next three to four months.

Such pressing concerns demand innovative solutions. Qatar's National Food Security Programme (QNFSP) is tasked with upending the country's food import calculus. Within 11 years, QNFSP aims to reduce current food import levels from 90 percent to 10 percent. To achieve this, QNFSP has presented the GCC's most comprehensive plan to re-engineer a nation's food supply system. The 900-page blueprint, backed by a government grant of $25 billion, extols a fossil fuel-free future, new desalination plants and solar and greenhouse energy, as well as a focus on local produce.

"We have been working on a national plan since 2008," says Jonathan Smith, Head of Communications and Public Engagement. QNFSP is not an implementer: the strategy calls for strong links with the private sector.

"We're looking to see how we can help the private sector with innovation. At the core is international trade and investment, domestic production, marketplace and strategic storage, and reserves."

In recent years, several Gulf countries, mindful of food spikes, have begun investing in agricultural businesses in Africa, South Asia and Australia. In Qatar, the state-owned Qatar Investment Authority created a private company, Hassad Food, to orchestrate farm deals beyond its borders. Hassad Food has focused its attention on poorer nations such as Cambodia, Vietnam and Sudan, leasing farmland in exchange for upgrading infrastructure.

Another avenue currently being tested in the Gulf is the use of halophytes, naturally occurring plants or crops which can be raised in very salty water. In the case of Doha, halophytes could be grown near seas, mangrove swamps and marshes. The resulting plants could be fit for human consumption – and feed livestock. "Halophytes could form part of the solution to Qatar's food security issues," says Muhammad Ajmal Khan, Professor at the Department of International Affairs at Qatar University. "There is an increasing body of practical research which indicates halophytes are particularly nourishing. One exciting area also points to their evolution as possible sources of biofuels." Allocating $25 billion to secure a nation's food supply is a relatively modest undertaking for Qatar. One comparison is the cost to the country of sports infrastructure. Last year, it was poised to spend $150 billion on new stadiums, roads and hotels ahead of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. According to US consulting firm Deloitte, that figure has since doubled to over $300 billion.

Smith says countries such as Qatar could, in theory, become more self-sufficient with some basic local re-engineering of the food chain. "From the outset, we can produce 40 percent of our food with better local practices. Better use of water, better water efficiency and better crop selection would make a considerable difference. We should help the farmers get to the technology they need. Vocational and technical innovation comes out of that. Look at the next 100 years of food production – the world needs a state like Qatar to step up. If a dryland nation like Qatar can make significant changes, it could innovate food production around the rest of the world."

THE AUTHOR

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SURE YOU KNOW WHAT'S REALLY IN YOUR FOOD? THINK AGAIN...

FROM POTENTIALLY ALLERGENIC ENZYMES TO LISTS OF INGREDIENTS THAT PURPOSEFULLY MISLEAD, VERY FEW CONSUMERS HAVE A CLEAR IDEA OF WHAT MAY BE HIDING IN EVEN THE HEALTHIEST-SOUNDING PRODUCTS. A LEADING CULINARY EXPERT AND COLUMNIST OFFERS SOME SALUTARY POINTERS

WRITTEN BY **ROSE PRINCE**

Every now and then, as sure as lunch follows breakfast, a food scandal hits the front pages. In each instance consumers are left reeling, shocked at the possibility that the food industry could put people at risk from contamination or disease, or even subject them to plain and simple fraud. The latter was the case with Britain's recent horse burger disgrace, when it was found that vast quantities of beef products contained horse DNA.

The UK has been the subject of several embarrassments over the past two decades, with BSE (mad cow disease) the most shameful. When in 1996 a link was found between sick cattle and a human form of the illness in people who had eaten infected beef, the trust between those who produce food and the millions who eat it was blown apart.

But such instances are all too common worldwide. In 2008, more than 300,000 children in China were affected by contaminated formula milk, with six dying and more than 54,000

hospitalized. The ensuing prosecutions led to two people being executed. In the USA the greater food scandal is not so much to do with a particular incident or incidents but a culture of adult and childhood obesity, directly linked to the overconsumption of processed convenience food. People of "Fast Food Nations" – and to an extent these now include European countries – are known to nutritionists as the overfed and undernourished or, simply, the "walking wounded".

If it follows that something good can come from something bad, the outcome of any food scandal should be positive change – change that restores trust. And this does happen. Since BSE, "traceability" in the UK meat industry has become mandatory and, paradoxically, the episode triggered a revolution in artisanal food production and a revival in consumer curiosity about what lies behind the label.

That is not to say the food chain is now "clean". No one would accuse the food industry of intentionally putting consumers at risk, yet labels still do not reveal all. Those that produce our food are not averse to a little liberality with the truth about what is in the pack, even if for the most part (notwithstanding "Horsegate") they stay within the law. Indeed, the authorities and regulators, who ought to be aware of the shrewd and canny practices of some of the world's most powerful companies, are quite accepting, if not complicit, in their reluctance to deter such behavior.

So it is left to shoppers to educate themselves and sniff out the wiles and ways of producers, particularly those supplying convenience food. Next time you buy a ready-made meal – perhaps a pasta dish or casserole – check the ingredients on the pack. These are named in order of quantity and you may (or may not) be surprised in the case of, say, a beef curry, to learn how often water is listed above the meat. An interesting experiment can be to remove all pieces of meat from a ready meal and weigh it. In poor-quality products the content can be shockingly low. Bulking out food is not a health issue but it is most certainly a swindle.

Shelf life is the grail of the fresh food producer. Who needs that old fashioned bread that went hard and crusty in a day when you can have a loaf whose crumb stays just-baked soft for nearly a week? Food technologists have developed state-of-the-art additives called enzyme processing aids, which are added to the dough before baking.

A customer shops for a box of Mengniu pure milk at a supermarket in Shenyang, the capital of Liaoning Province in north east China, December 2011. The nation's biggest dairy firm had recently destroyed milk found to be contaminated with a cancer-causing substance, the latest food safety problem to hit the country

Because they are destroyed in the cooking process, however, they do not have to be listed on the label.

This should not necessarily be cause for concern – after all, enzymes are traditionally used in cheese production and have been for centuries. But some experts fear that some may be allergens. Andrew Whitley, author of *Bread Matters*, *The State of Modern Bread and a Definitive Guide to Baking Your Own*, writes that enzyme processing aids are "modern bread's big secret". He adds that the safety of bakery enzymes has been "radically challenged by the discovery that the enzyme transglutaminase, used to make dough stretchier… may turn part of the wheat protein toxic to people with severe gluten intolerance." Other enzymes added to bread include those that make loaves lighter, enhance crust flavor and increase volume. Some may be from animal sources, including pork (phospholipase) – a particular cause for concern for those following halal or kosher diets.

SEASONED PRACTICE

One additive many shoppers are aware they must watch for is salt, and they will find it listed on packs, helping them calculate their daily allowance. At least that is the idea. Salt level on labels can, however, be very misleading. Some producers, typically ready meal, sauce and bread manufacturers, list only the sodium level. One gram of sodium is equal to 2.5 grams of salt – half an adult's daily allowance – and, when put in those terms, there are many products shoppers might find less appealing.

Labels are very clear about additives, yet sometimes we worry about the wrong ones. Many mothers will insist they do not want to feed their children food containing "E numbers", but it is worth pointing out that (in the case of European produced food) E numbered additives have at least been passed as approved by the authorities. These include preservatives and colorings but not flavorings. The latter term sounds pleasant, but be in no doubt these are manufactured chemicals – the equivalent to the naturally occurring flavor molecules in food – and known in the industry as "nature identical".

Lovely word, "nature" – it doesn't sound connected to the laboratory at all – yet it is one of many used in the language of food labeling that is laughably euphemistic. Heat treated, deodorised cooking oil will often be sold as vegetable oil. To many, vegetables mean good, fresh things such as carrots or runner beans. But the produce in such oils are seeds. These oils, including rapeseed and palm, should correctly be classified as fruit oils. The main point to be aware of is that seed oils are highly processed and contain unhealthy transfats – a fact appetising labeling can easily mask.

Neutral terms are also applied to encourage a sense of comfort to shoppers – "farmhouse", "country fare", "cottage" and "barn" – but don't believe a word of it. The vast majority of what we eat is processed in state-of-the-art plants, not dear little thatched cottages.

A cynically raised eyebrow – or at the least shopping with a pair of reading glasses – can go a long way toward not being fooled by food firms, yet what happens when there is no information to hand? The retail sector is positively saintly compared to the catering industry. Menus are not labels, and unless the caterer (be it restaurant, hospital, school, office or event planner) voluntarily offers information about the source of the food they serve, we are none the wiser. This is the area now most in need of reform. The fast-food chains do list ingredients on their websites, but not on the tables. Ultimately consumers have to demand information, however difficult that may be. It is not the only solution, though, as more and more people are discovering. If you really want to know exactly what it is you are eating, there is only one thing to do. Cook. ●

NEUTRAL TERMS ARE ALSO APPLIED TO ENCOURAGE A SENSE OF COMFORT TO SHOPPERS – "FARMHOUSE", "COUNTRY FARE", "COTTAGE" AND "BARN" – BUT DON'T BELIEVE A WORD OF IT

THE AUTHOR

Rose Prince is a columnist for *The Daily Telegraph*, a broadcaster, cook and the author of the acclaimed *The New English Kitchen: Changing the way you Shop, Cook and Eat*. Her next book, *The Pocket Bakery*, is published in November.

TEN HIDDEN INGREDIENTS

- Enzyme processing aids – some derived from meat, used to extend the shelf life of bread and to thicken oil to make "spreads"
- Hair – an allowable quantity of (accidentally added) animal and/or human hair is permitted in food
- Pesticides – permitted residues of pest and weed killing spray are found on vegetable and grain crops
- Isinglass – a substance derived from the swim bladders of fish, used to clarify soft drinks
- Plaster – gypsum, used as a wall covering, is also used to thicken low-grade tofu
- Caustic soda – used to clear drains but also in the industrial peeling of soft fruit such as peaches
- Sawdust – or cellulose, used as an anti-clumping agent in packs of grated cheese
- Shellac – derived from insect secretions, used as a glaze in confectionery
- Meat gelatin – often used in chewy sweets and desserts
- GMOs – meat derived from animals fed genetically modified grain can be sold in places where GM crops are banned, such as in the European Union

BANISHING FRANKENSTEIN:

WHY WE SHOULD EAT UP OUR GENETICALLY MODIFIED GREENS

MYTHS ABOUT THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF BIOTECH "FRANKEN-FOODS" MULTIPLY FASTER THAN THE CROPS. IN FACT, INNUMERABLE STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THEY ARE NOT ONLY SAFE TO EAT BUT ALSO BETTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT. THE SCIENCE IS CLEAR. IT IS TIME FOR THE ILL-INFORMED HOSTILITY TO STOP

WRITTEN BY **NINA FEDOROFF**

The gulf between what the electronic gossips would have you believe about contemporary genetically modified (GM) foods and what's true is deep and wide. Scratch the blogosphere and you'll be horrified. GMOs (genetically modified organisms) produced by big agbiotech companies push farmers in India to suicide. Monsanto sues farmers whose fields were "contaminated" by a bit of GM pollen blown in by wind. US wheat farmers face bankruptcy because GM wheat was discovered growing in Oregon. Eating GM feed gives rats tumors. A YouTube GMO search returns these top hits: "Seeds of death: unveiling the lies of GMOs", "Horrific new studies in GMOs, you're eating this stuff!!" and "They are killing us – GMO foods".

That, however, doesn't square at all with what the not-for-profit International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications put out in its latest annual report, *Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/GM Crops: 2012*.

What comes across in this information-packed document is that GM crops have done a lot of good, both economic and environmental, for rich and poor farmers around the world. A few facts. In 2012, GM crops were grown in 28 countries on 170 million hectares. That represents a remarkable 100-fold increase over the 1.7 million hectares planted in the first year that biotech seeds became commercially available in 1996. More importantly, 90 percent of the more than 17 million farmers growing biotech crops are small-holder, resource-poor farmers. Half of that hectarage today is in developing countries and it produces roughly half of the GM crops grown worldwide. Between 1996 and 2010, the cumulative farm income gain accruing to developing countries was almost $40 billion.

More facts. Modern genetic methods of crop improvement are responsible for a significant

fraction of the recent yield increases in crops where they are used, primarily due to decreased losses to pests, so farmers who've adopted GM methods have benefitted the most. The simple reasons that farmers make the switch is that their yields increase 5-25 percent and their costs decrease, in some cases by as much as 50 percent. Farmer suicides in India because of biotech crops? I don't think so. The International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington DC did a careful analysis of the evidence. Yes, there are farmer suicides, but they haven't increased with the introduction of GM cotton (as has been claimed). The study concluded that GM cotton technology has been "very effective overall in India". Blaming suicides on GM crops doesn't fit with the facts, nor is it helpful in addressing the underlying problems.

UNCOMMON SENSE

Urban myths about the dire health and environmental effects of GM foods multiply faster than the crops. There's the widely believed Monsanto "terminator seeds" myth, for example. The very name stirs fear, but actually this was a good idea about how to minimize GM seed dispersal. In the end, it never got off paper because it got a bad label and a really bad press. Another is the GM-corn-pollen-kills-Monarch-butterflies story, which attracted front-page attention in 1999 and prompted a multi-state study in the US whose results were published in six back-to-back papers in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* in October of 2001. They received little attention, of course, in a world reeling from the 9/11 attacks. But their conclusion was that fewer than one in 2,000 monarch larvae might be affected by biotech pollen even in their worst-case scenario.

Sometimes it's a supposedly scientific study published in a scientific journal that sets off a new round of alarm stories. Take, for example, a 2012 study by the French academic Gilles-Eric Seralini, published in a journal called *Food and Chemical Toxicology*. The study was done with rats that develop tumors as they age. The rats were fed GM or non-GM feed until they were quite old. Not unexpectedly, most of them developed tumors regardless of what they were fed. But there wasn't much difference between the two groups, although the authors claimed there was. You can find all sides of the whole sad affair on Wikipedia.

So how can anyone figure out when to believe a study or not? You can find some sensible ways to tell a good study from a bad one on Bruce Chassy and David Tribe's excellent website *Academics Review*. But here's the bottom line. If one study shows a problem and the next one says there isn't a problem, you can't tell either way. But if 17 long-term studies (reviewed in the same year in the same journal that published Seralini's study) report that animals fed on GM feed are no different from animals fed non-GM feed, you can be reasonably sure that GM feed isn't in fact any different from non-GM feed. And the chances are pretty good that you can ignore the one study that shows GM-fed rats with huge tumors, especially if the rats used in the study develop tumors no matter what they're fed.

Let's be a bit uncommonly sensible for a moment and look at what we've done over the history of civilization, which arguably is built on our increasing skills in the genetic modification of both plants and animals. We humans have been genetically modifying plants to provide our food for more than 10,000 years. What plants need to survive in the wild and what we need to harvest their fruits and seeds are very different (the process of making wild plants useful for food is called domestication). To give just one example: long before science was invented, people converted a grass called teosinte, which has inedible, hard-as-rock seeds, to an early version of corn, with tiny, but recognizable ears and soft seeds. It wasn't until about a hundred years ago that we founded the science of genetics and made the discoveries that expanded the corn ear into its modern version, a foot-long nutrient package. Later last century, plant breeders began to use radiation and chemicals to produce genetic changes faster. This was a shotgun approach, producing lots of neutral and bad changes and a very, very occasional good one, like the Ruby Red grapefruit. But it sure speeded things up compared to waiting for cosmic rays to do the job of genetic modification, and most of today's food crops have radiation or chemical mutagenesis in their pedigrees. Curiously, nobody worried about or regulated the changes they couldn't see.

WE HUMANS HAVE BEEN GENETICALLY MODIFYING PLANTS TO PROVIDE OUR FOOD FOR MORE THAN 10,000 YEARS

And then, finally, in the last decades of the 20th century, scientists developed methods for making very specific and controlled modifications using the molecular techniques of cloning and sequencing to understand and then to move genes. It is now possible to make very precise improvements in our familiar crop plants by adding just a gene (or two, or a few) coding for a protein whose function is precisely known. These are the best and safest methods we've ever invented for making plants better nutritionally and protecting them from insects and diseases. But, amazingly, only plants modified using molecular techniques are called GM today. Almost everyone believes we've never fiddled with plant genes before – as if Ruby Red grapefruit, beefsteak tomatoes, and elephant garlic were "natural" and not our very own creations.

PIONEERING ADVANCES

These molecular advances in plant genetic modification have turned out to be so important that three of its pioneers just received the World Food Prize, which is essentially the Nobel prize for agriculture. The 2013 World Food Prize laureates are Dr Marc van Montagu, Dr Mary-Dell Chilton, and Dr Rob Fraley. All of them played seminal roles, together with the late Dr Jeff Schell, in developing modern plant molecular

modification techniques. Fraley is CTO of Monsanto. Chilton started her corporate career at Ciba-Geigy, a progenitor of Syngenta, where she is now a Distinguished Science Fellow. Van Montagu founded Plant Genetic Systems, now part of Bayer CropScience, and CropDesign, today owned by BASF.

So what have those big, bad biotech companies done for us? Insect-resistant GM crops have markedly reduced pesticide use. Roughly 443 million kilograms *less* pesticide (active ingredient) was applied to fields between 1996 and 2010 because insect-resistant crops were being grown. Less pesticide means more beneficial insects and birds and less contamination of water. Replacing toxic agricultural chemicals with biological solutions was the dream of Rachel Carson, the renowned conservationist whose 1962 book *Silent Spring* spurred the modern environmentalist movement. Herbicide-tolerant GM crops have made big strides in reducing topsoil loss and improving soil quality. Since herbicides control the weeds that would otherwise have to be eliminated by plowing and tilling, such "no-till" farming keeps the soil on the land and the organic matter and water in the soil. It also reduces the CO^2 emissions from disturbed soil and from tractors. In 2010 alone, this reduction was equivalent to taking nine million cars off the road.

And after 17 years of commercial cultivation on a cumulative GM crop hectarage of more than 1.5 billion, there is no evidence that GM food is bad for people or that GM feed is bad for animals. On the contrary, there is good evidence that GM corn has lower levels of highly toxic contaminating fungal toxins than either conventional or organic corn.

Contrary to popular beliefs, farmers don't have to buy Monsanto seed, nor is anyone preventing them from saving and replanting any seed they want – except for patented seed they've signed an agreement not to save and plant. Farmers buy seeds from Monsanto and other agbiotech companies because their costs decrease and their profits increase. If they didn't, farmers wouldn't buy them again.

FEAR AND THE FACTS

Why would any environmentalist or champion of sustainable farming oppose such progress? Why the anti-GM hysteria? I think the reasons are in our psyches: negative stories, both true and apocryphal, attract media attention, go viral and stick in our minds. Once formed, beliefs edged with fear are extremely hard to dispel with mere facts. Take the persistent myth that GM crops are untested (and, by implication, risky unknowns). The European Union alone has invested more than €300 million in GMO biosafety research. To quote from its recent report, *A Decade of EU-funded GMO Research*: "The main conclusion to be drawn from the efforts of more than 130 research projects, covering a period of more than 25 years of research and involving more than 500 independent research groups, is that biotechnology, and in particular GMOs, are not *per se* more risky than eg conventional plant breeding technologies." Every credible scientific body that has examined the evidence has come to the same conclusion. Moreover, in the US, each newly modified crop must be shown to be substantially equivalent to the original crop and the proteins encoded by the added genes must be independently tested for toxicity and allergenicity. So GM crops are the most extensively tested ever introduced into our food supply.

ONE SCARE STORY BASED ON A BOGUS STUDY SUGGESTING A BAD EFFECT OF EATING GMOS READILY TRUMPS MYRIAD STUDIES THAT SHOW THAT GM FOODS ARE JUST LIKE NON-GM FOODS

The tragedy is that the widespread public hostility to GM crops, effectively fueled by a growing number of advocacy organizations with many different agendas, has promoted the development of ever more complex regulations and, in many countries, completely blocked GM crop introduction. Today we have almost no GM crops other than cotton, corn, canola and soybeans. These are commodity crops, either non-food or primarily animal feed crops, and all of them were developed by big biotech companies because they're the only ones that can afford to bring GM crops to market. Even the long-awaited Golden Rice, engineered to alleviate the deficiency in Vitamin A that kills hundreds of thousands of young children every year, is not yet available to farmers, even though it has been ready to distribute for almost a decade. It continues to be trapped in regulatory purgatory. Achieving broader public acceptance of GMOs and relaxing the regulatory stranglehold are difficult problems, but they're social and political problems. The science is quite clear.

There's another difficulty with today's regulations. The cost and complexity of bringing GM crops to market remains prohibitive. US developers must often obtain the approval of three different agencies, the Environmental Protection Agency, the US Department of Agriculture, and the Food and Drug Administration, to introduce a new GM crop into the food supply. Complying with the regulatory requirements can cost as much as $35 million for just one modification of an existing crop. This is beyond what the more limited market value of most fruit and vegetable crops can support and well beyond the budgets of either academic scientists or small companies.

It is long past time to relieve the regulatory burden on GM crops: the scientific evidence is in. They should be regulated based on their characteristics, not on the method by which they were modified. This was the original intent of the US Office of Science and Technology Policy committee that generated the Coordinated Framework for the Regulation of Biotechnology in the 1980s, still the guiding framework for GM regulation in the US. The three regulatory agencies need to get together and develop a single set of requirements that focuses on the hazards presented by novel traits, not the method by which they were introduced. They need to staff up so that it takes months, not years, to get regulatory approval for a new crop modification. And, above all, they need to stop regulating modifications for which there is no scientifically credible evidence of harm.

Looking back, the anti-GM storm gathered in the mid-80s and swept around the world. It's not the first alarm about a new technology and will not be the last. But most new technology false alarms fade away as research and experience accumulate without turning up the predicted deleterious effects. This should be happening by now, since decades of research on GM biosafety have failed to surface credible evidence that modifying plants by molecular techniques is dangerous. Instead, the anti-GM storm has intensified, with GM crops taking the rap for an expanding array of human and environmental ills. Scientists have done their best, but they're rather staid folk for the most part, constitutionally addicted to facts and figures and not terribly good at crafting emotionally gripping narratives. This puts them at a serious disadvantage, especially when the real news about GM crops is so very bland. One scare story based on a bogus study suggesting a bad effect of eating GMOs readily trumps myriad studies that show that GM foods are just like non-GM foods.

But if the popular myths about farmer suicides, tumors and toxicity had an ounce of truth to them, the agbiotech companies selling GM seeds would long since have been driven out of business by lawsuits and vanishing sales. Instead, they're taking more market share every year. There's a real mismatch between mythology and reality. Maybe it's worth remembering that technology vilification is about as old as technology. What's new is electronic gossip and the proliferation of organizations that peddle such gossip for a living. ●

THE AUTHOR

Nina Fedoroff is Distinguished Professor of Biosciences, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, and Evan Pugh Professor, Penn State University. From 2007-2010 she was Science and Technology Advisor to the Secretary of State of the United States and in 2011-2012 served as President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. A US National Medal for Science laureate, she is the author of *Mendel in the Kitchen: A Scientist's View of Genetically Modified Foods.*

"I NEVER DUPLICATE, I ALWAYS CREATE"

ALAIN DUCASSE IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST CELEBRATED CHEFS. THE FIRST TO HAVE THREE TRIPLE MICHELIN-STARRED RESTAURANTS IN THREE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES, HE IS ALSO ONE OF ONLY TWO CHEFS TO HAVE ACQUIRED 21 MICHELIN STARS DURING HIS CAREER. HIS FIRST RESTAURANT IN THE MIDDLE EAST, IDAM, OPENED AT THE MUSEUM OF ISLAMIC ART IN DOHA IN NOVEMBER 2012. HERE, HE TALKS TO **THINK.** ABOUT EATING FRESH, LOCAL PRODUCE – AND CHICKEN MCNUGGETS

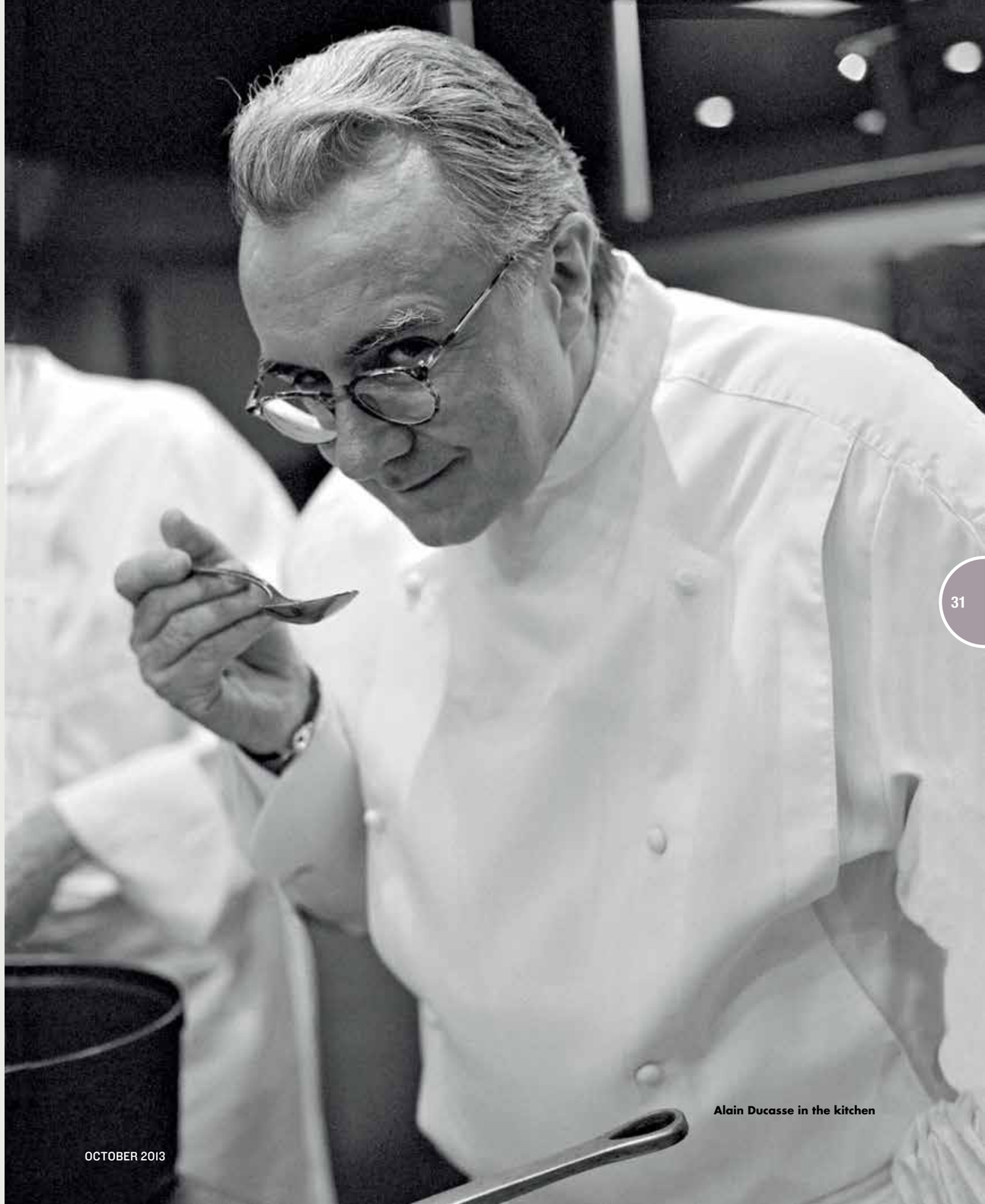
WRITTEN BY **SHOLTO BYRNES**

What were the challenges in creating the menu for IDAM, and to what extent did you draw on the culinary traditions of the Gulf?
Each and every one of my restaurants is a challenge for a simple reason – I never duplicate; I always create. And I always create a restaurant in tune with the city in which it is located. Long before opening, my chef Romain Meder spent time discovering the produce, location, the people living there, the pace of life, the atmosphere. This preliminary phase can last for months and months.

Will you put the slow braised camel with duck foie gras and soufflèd potatoes on the menu at some of your other restaurants? More broadly, do you think there is a role or responsibility for chefs to educate diners in new tastes and to overcome prejudices they may have about consuming unfamiliar dishes? Camel is one example, but the Anglo-Saxon disapproval of eating horsemeat is equally irrational.
Food choices and taboos are always irrational. The examples are numerous. That said, I don't believe my role is to address the issue. I don't try to change one's food repertoire – the list of products which are culturally considered as eatable. Yet I try to explore more extensively the existing local repertoire. Take the simple example of cereals. They are undoubtedly part of the Western repertoire; however, many varieties have slowly been abandoned, generally for the economic reason of poor yield. Spelt is a good example. We try to reintroduce these forgotten varieties. As for camel, I would not "export" it. I keep saying "Eat local".

At IDAM you have sourced 80 percent of the ingredients from the Gulf region. To what extent is this a matter of taste and flavor, and to what extent is this a "moral" issue in terms of the environmental effect?
Both. And the good news is that both objectives are leading to the same conclusion. The less the products travel, the better they are taste-wise, and the better it is for the planet. I would also add a third "better" – favoring local supplies also means a better life for local producers.

Naturally, everything served at IDAM is halal, and in Islamic countries both Muslims and non-Muslims eat halal food quite happily. Yet in France it has been the cause of immense controversy, with Nicolas Sarkozy declaring, in last year's presidential election campaign, that halal meat should be banned from state school canteens and that halal was "the issue which most preoccupies the French". The electorate appeared to disagree, but what are your feelings on the matter?
Two things. One is "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" – France counts many religious beliefs yet is religion-neutral. Two: the election periods are rarely favorable to elaborated statements.



Alain Ducasse in the kitchen

The founder of the Slow Food Movement, Carlo Petrini, has observed that the history of food has come to be thought of as involving the agricultural economy and satisfying hunger, whereas that of gastronomy is regarded as being that of pleasure and "the self-indulgence of the rich". "This division," he said, "is a profound mistake. The rich and the poor experience pleasure in exactly the same way. And eating is one element of pleasure." Do you agree with him? And if so, how do you change the perception that gastronomy is the preserve of the elite?

I do agree. I believe the challenge is about "eating well". This is always linked to context – the good meal you may have in 15 minutes during a working day is not the one you'll have with friends on a weekend, and the intimate dinner with your spouse is different from a celebratory meal with the family. Yet, in each instance, there is the right way of eating – satisfactorily, tastily, healthily. Therefore, my first aim is to offer a large number of food experiences to meet the array of customers' expectations.

To do so, among many other initiatives, I created the campaign *Tous au Restaurant* (Let's all go to restaurants). During one week in France, in all participating restaurants, two people can dine for the price of one at all sorts of venues, from the Michelin-starred to corner bistros. For the customers, it's a fabulous opportunity to discover places they might otherwise not dare to attend.

On a lighter note, you have admitted having a penchant for McDonald's McNuggets with curry sauce. Do you have any other guilty pleasures?

I do not particularly go to McDonald's but I'm a customer, like others. I eat according to my mood, according to my constraints and appetite. For example, I love ketchup so much that I included the recipe for a delicious homemade variety in my book *Nature*. At Rech, a brasserie specialising in fish in Paris, I served my own version of fish and chips during the Olympic Games in London last year. And I must confess I enjoy these pleasures without guilt.

Returning more seriously to the fast food chains that are to be found now all over the planet, wasn't your compatriot José Bové on the right track when he famously dismantled a McDonald's in Millau in 1999 – in spirit, if not in law (it resulted in his being sentenced to three months in jail)? Don't these chains degrade the palate, seducing people to over-develop a taste for fatty, fried food?

I'm more inclined to fight for something rather than against it. The Collège Culinaire de France I created and co-chair with Joël Robuchon launched the accreditation scheme "Restaurant de Qualité". The affiliation is granted to restaurants that deliver dishes prepared in kitchens from fresh, high-quality produce. Customers are really looking for this transparency. We chefs have to react together to come up with an enticing and convincing alternative to convenience food.

You have said that "a chef has to stay an artisan, not become a star." Why an "artisan" rather than an "artist"?

I'm very proud of being an artisan. I feel like being the heir of a long tradition that I have to constantly revisit without betraying. It conjures up the idea of honesty and seriousness, of fraternity with my colleagues.

Is French cuisine still the supreme culinary expression? If so, how would you defend such a proposition against someone who argued that Asian cuisine – from India or China, say – was just as varied and refined?

It is really a question of chefs' ability to deliver an extensive body of techniques which can be applied to an immense variety of products and culinary styles. That said, I love the variety and refinement of many cuisines internationally.

What would be your "last meal"?

The everlasting souvenir of terrestrial happiness.

▶ alain-ducasse.com/en/restaurant/idam

Slow braised camel with duck foie gras truffle and soufflé potatoes: haute cuisine made just for Qatar

THE AUTHOR

Sholto Byrnes is the Editor of *Think*. A former Chief Interviewer of the *Independent*, he is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and a Contributing Editor of the *New Statesman*.

CORRESPONDENCE

SISTERLY GESTURE

I greatly enjoyed Susan Faludi's survey of feminist movements around the world ("State of the Sisters"), and her appreciation of the strides being taken in developing countries was a welcome alternative to an often myopic Western perspective which imagines that progress always originates within its own countries. I would be interested to know, then, what she made of the article that followed hers ("Veil of Ignorance"), in which Shelina Janmohamed was refreshingly forthright in asserting that she was most certainly not "subjugated" – she chooses to cover her head of her own free choice. I wonder whether Ms Faludi would agree. I would hope so. But the fact that millions of women around the world freely opt for modesty in dress seems to be something that Europeans and Americans have great difficulty in accepting.

Wati Solo,
Jakarta, Indonesia

BLESSED ARE THE BALD

Rowan Williams ("Religion is the Source of all Rights")

was typically thoughtful and thought-provoking in his essay on rights, but I feel he was on less sure grounds when he wrote that "a credible, sustainable doctrine of human rights must" insist "on the dignity of every minority and their consequent claim to protection, to be allowed to make their contribution, to have their voice made audible." This all sounds very admirable in general, but who is going to define who these minorities are? Perhaps we can all agree on this applying to ethnic and religious minorities in principle, although even here we could be running into trouble; there is little legal protection for atheist or humanist minorities in most countries, for instance. But what of others? Should a doctrine of human rights insist that the voices of the "bald community" be heard, for instance? Perhaps, given his own luxuriant growth, Lord Williams had the "bearded community" in mind, a minority so frowned upon under Tony Blair's administration that just about every member of his cabinets who had previously worn beards or moustaches mysteriously shaved them off on entering the government.

Robert Wright,
London, UK

A CAPITAL ARTICLE

Miguel Syjuco's "Letter from Manila" was charming, and it was a pleasure to read about a city that tends to make the news either when there's a coup or when it has been devastated by flooding in a more rounded and optimistic way. Neither had I realized that Enrique Iglesias was half-Filipino. ***Think.*** truly is a never-ending source of enlightenment.

Jamila Hamad,
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

IN THE FAMILY

I note that Jacob Soll ("Why the World Should Learn to Love Good Accountants") urges us in almost apocalyptic terms to take a keen interest in accounting and its history. I note also that Dr Soll is Professor of History and Accounting at the University of Southern California. Are the two facts by any chance related?

J Dreher,
San Francisco, USA

WRITE TO US

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WRITTEN BY
JEFFREY D SACHS

LESSONS FROM JFK

IN THE YEAR BEFORE HIS DEATH IN 1963, US PRESIDENT JOHN F KENNEDY HELPED SAVE THE WORLD FROM NUCLEAR CATASTROPHE AND DELIVERED A REMARKABLE SERIES OF SPEECHES ON PEACE, SCIENCE AND PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF HUMAN POTENTIAL. FIFTY YEARS ON, WE SHOULD NOT ONLY RE-EXAMINE THE INSPIRATIONAL BLUEPRINT KENNEDY LEFT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS, BUT ALSO PUT INTO PRACTICE HIS SOARING IDEALS – WHICH STILL RESONATE TODAY

Convincing an adversary or a competitor that we share aims and interests isn't easy. Trust is typically low, and there are ample reasons to bluff. Trust is even lower when countries have been adversaries for years or decades. It would have been much easier if US President Kennedy had needed to make peace with Canada in 1963, but he needed to do it with the Soviet Union, the state that had threatened America's very survival just months earlier during the Cuban Missile Crisis. We have learned many lessons from Kennedy's experience and its aftermath. We learned that only those leaders with a holistic and empathetic view are able to achieve success in complex negotiations with an adversary. Otherwise, the pessimists, hard-liners, and fearmongers on each side can create self-fulfilling prophecies of failure. Kennedy therefore had to assert his leadership among his own colleagues just as much as with the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev.

Another basic lesson is this: The path to success lies in the nature of the process of negotiation and mutual accommodation itself. Kennedy and Khrushchev signed agreements including the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963 because by then they knew and trusted each other, in part because of the bluster, bluffs, and near disasters that had come before, when America and the Soviet Union had come to the brink of nuclear war. They had exchanged dozens of letters and suffered the consequences of many misunderstandings. By 1963 each had arrived at a realization he could not have had earlier: their situations were symmetrical. They each sought peace with the other despite a mood of militarism, the skepticism of the generals and hard-liners, the vested interests of the military-industrial complex on each side, and the interests and opportunism of their political competitors. In the academic sphere, where many battles are also surprisingly bitter ("because," as the saying goes, "the stakes are so low"), the great economist (and Kennedy adviser) Paul Samuelson offered his own wisdom on the art of persuasion. He said that to convince another academic of a point, "give him a half-finished theorem." That is, let the other person reach his or her own conclusions, not through bluster, but through independent inquiry, guided by a half-finished product.

I want to urge a similar approach in the practical work of sustainable development which, like Kennedy's peace initiative, may actually save lives in vast numbers and promote global prosperity, something that wars do not do. One of the reasons for the bitterness between Israelis and Palestinians, Indians and Pakistanis, Americans and Iranians, and other conflicting parties, is the almost complete lack of practical experience in solving problems together, working on "half-finished theorems". How easy it is to dehumanize one's adversaries when you peer at them through the lens of a drone, rather than work beside them in some common endeavor. And consider how many of our problems today are ones that cross national boundaries, and how easy it would be to share the burden and excitement of problem-solving as well. Israelis and Palestinians share a small sliver of land facing increasing drought and depletion of freshwater resources. So far, Israel has dealt with this challenge by commandeering a disproportionate share of the region's scarce water supply, but climate and demographic forecasts convince us that this is a losing battle for both sides. The dwindling freshwater resources will not sustain the combined populations of the two peoples. Many (including me) have discussed this issue at length with Israelis and with Palestinians. Yet they have rarely discussed it with each other.

ARE WE BUT THE FLOTSAM ON THE TURBULENT SEAS OF TECHNOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE, RISING AND SINKING IN WATERS BEYOND OUR CONTROL? OR, AS KENNEDY INSISTED, CAN MAN BE AS BIG AS HE WANTS?

THE VISION THING

President Obama was on to something important in Cairo in 2009 when he proposed the establishment of a set of scientific centers of excellence "in Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and the appointment of new Science Envoys to collaborate on programs that develop new sources of energy, create green jobs, digitize records, clean water, and grow new crops." This is the right approach. It echoes Kennedy's remarkable call for scientific collaboration in his speech to the UN General Assembly in 1963. Disappointingly, till now Obama's vision remains only that, a vision. It is high time to fulfill it, since surely it would mark a step toward peace. And as always with the trip wires of war, we may not have much time. The United States and Iran, for example, have long seemed to be on a relentless collision course, though the two countries could find much common ground if they tried. Iran is home to great culture, history, and know-how that could help to improve conditions not only in its own region, but in other parts of the world as well. Engagement, joint problem solving, and an honest negotiation over political differences would be vastly more fruitful and prudent than a military face-off and the possibility of outright conflict.

We owe our very lives to John Kennedy's grace under pressure in October 1962, when the Soviet installation of nuclear weapons in Cuba, just 90 miles from the US West coast, so nearly led to nuclear annihilation. We owe the eventual end of the Cold War in part to his ability to forge a measure of trust and respect between Americans and Russians in 1963, the final year of his life. Between then and now, though, we've squandered enormous opportunities. Millions have died needlessly in proxy wars with no real purpose; trillions of dollars, enough to end human poverty in all its forms, have instead been wasted on the Cold War arms races and outright conflicts. Historians have long debated the great theme of whether people and societies can truly help to steer their fate. Are we but the flotsam on the turbulent seas of technological and social change, rising and sinking in waters beyond our control? Or, as Kennedy insisted, can man be as big as he wants? Is Kennedy right that no problem of human destiny is beyond human beings? Not every moment of history is equally pregnant with the possibility of constructive choice. Some times are times of stasis that resist change. Others are periods of great flux, in which individual acts of leadership can make a profound difference for good or ill. Deep economic and geopolitical crises are such periods. At the height

of the Cold War and its potential for total destruction, Kennedy had the opportunity to exercise choice and he showed us how it could be done. The stakes were so high in 1963 in large part because of the new technological realities, the new face of war in the nuclear age. As Kennedy noted in his inaugural address, man now held "in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life." We have been struggling to save ourselves ever since, and that struggle continues until today.

AS KENNEDY NOTED IN HIS INAUGURAL ADDRESS, MAN NOW HELD "IN HIS MORTAL HANDS THE POWER TO ABOLISH ALL FORMS OF HUMAN POVERTY AND ALL FORMS OF HUMAN LIFE"

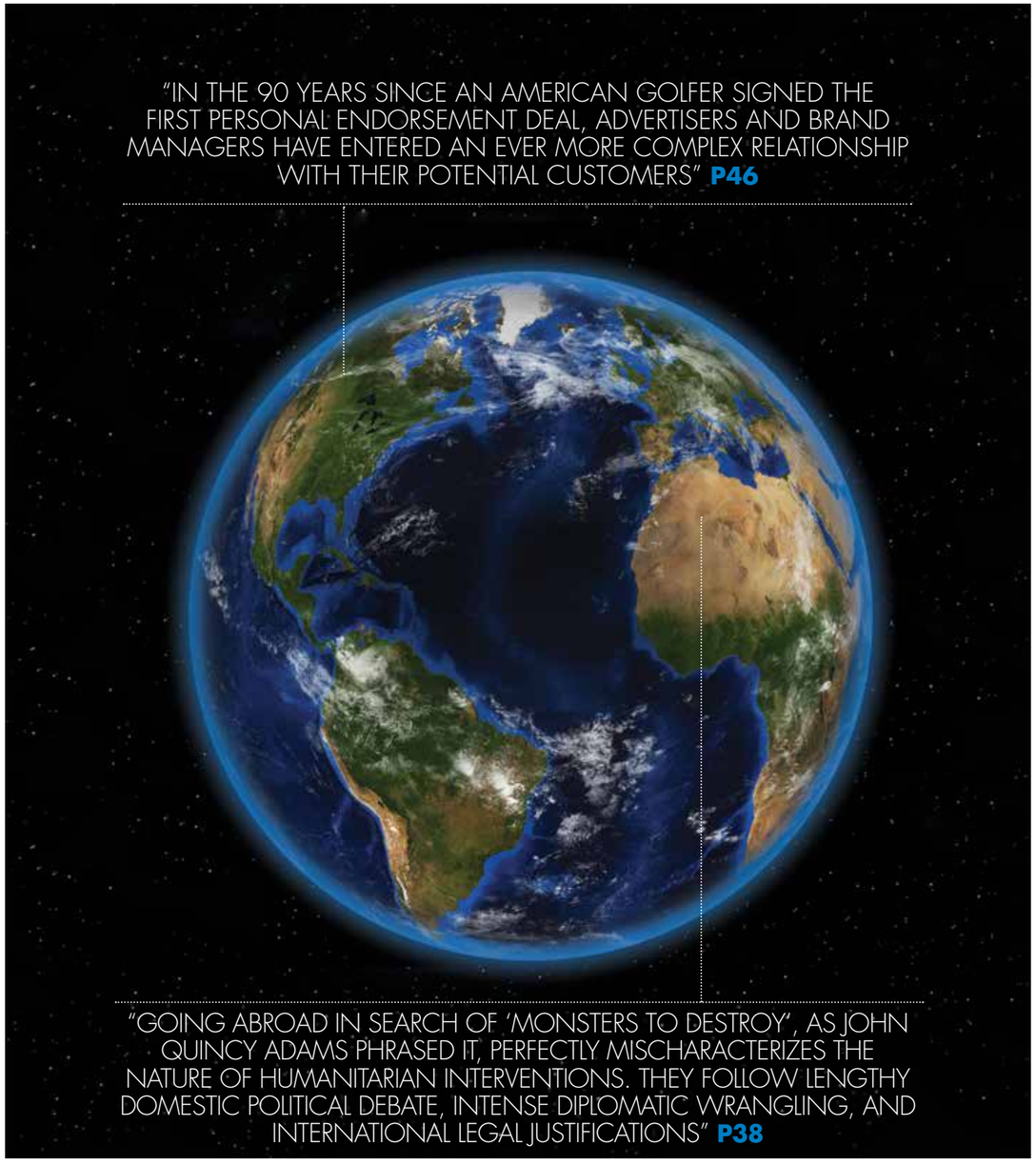
THE NUCLEAR GENIE

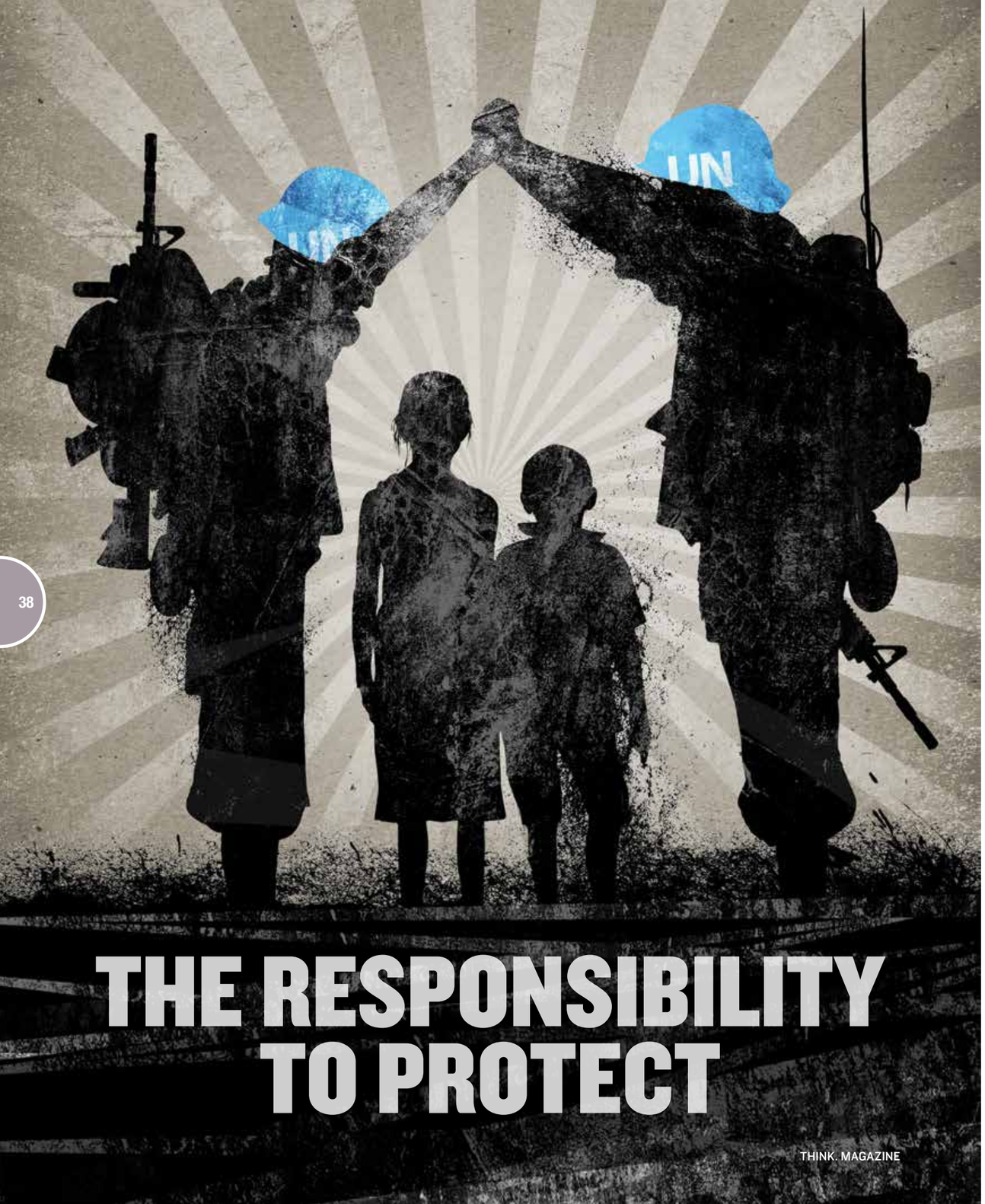
At such a hinge of history, individuals can make a vast difference, and Kennedy was fully aware of the high stakes. His struggle was with the genie of nuclear power, and the unknowns of coexistence with a communist superpower. "With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on Earth God's work must truly be our own."

Now it is our turn. We still confront the nuclear genie and the thousands of warheads that continue to threaten human survival. We are still challenged by the lack of trust within and between societies. We have developed and mastered remarkable new technologies but still flounder in the art of self-preservation. We still threaten ourselves with our own destruction, whether with our armaments or through the world's remarkable economic productivity coupled with a still-reckless disregard for the natural environment. We know that our tasks are large, but so too are the acts of past leadership that inspire us and encourage us on our way. We have been granted the lessons of John Kennedy's peace initiative, and the gift of his and his speechwriter Ted Sorensen's words for our age and beyond. We are not gripped by forces beyond our control. We too can be as big as we want. We too can take our stand and move the world.

Jeffrey D Sachs serves as the Director of The Earth Institute, Quetelet Professor of Sustainable Development, and Professor of Health Policy and Management at Columbia University. He is Special Advisor to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the Millennium Development Goals, and is Director of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network. He is co-founder and Chief Strategist of Millennium Promise Alliance, and is Director of the Millennium Villages Project. This essay is exclusively adapted for ***Think.*** *from his new book,* To Move the World: JFK's Quest for Peace.

BRIEFINGS





THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

IMPERIALISM BY ANY OTHER NAME

WHAT ARE THE GROUNDS FOR INTERVENING IN OTHER COUNTRIES' AFFAIRS? THERE ARE NONE FOR MILITARY ACTIONS BY EXTERNAL ACTORS, ARGUES ONE DISTINGUISHED COMMENTATOR AND EDITOR. LIBERAL INTERVENTIONISM IS REALLY ALL ABOUT WESTERN SELF-INTEREST. ON THE CONTRARY, ARGUES A LEADING PROPONENT OF INTERVENTION. THE APPLICATION OF NOBLE PRINCIPLES HAS A HISTORY THAT HAS CHANGED THE WORLD FOR THE BETTER

WRITTEN BY **PETER WILBY**

Suppose that, in 1916, an Arab "peacekeeping" force, horrified by the slaughter in the trenches, landed in Europe to put a stop to the First World War. Or that, in February 1945, outraged by the Allied bombing of Dresden, armed Africans had assumed a "responsibility to protect" German civilians.

Such scenarios may appear, to many Westerners, absurd. Even if such interventions had been feasible, it would have seemed then, and still seems now, an unthinkable infringement of sovereignty. All philosophies of intervention in foreign conflicts – liberal or otherwise – take it for granted that we are talking about the global "North" putting the less advanced "South" to rights. In his essay *A Few Words on Non-Intervention*, written in 1859, the philosopher John Stuart Mill, while arguing that it was as criminal to go to war for an idea as for territory or revenue, insisted that "barbarians", such as Algerians and Indians, "have no rights as a nation, except a right to such treatment as may ... fit them for becoming one".

That is the first aspect of liberal (or humanitarian) interventionism that should make us pause. Not only is it beyond the Western imagination that Europe or North America should ever be on the receiving end of intervention, it is hard to believe, as the Melbourne University law professor Anne Orford has observed, that the UN's much touted "responsibility to protect" doctrine would ever be invoked to authorize measures against established Western allies.

There was no question of the US offering to intervene militarily in Egypt against its long-standing ally Hosni Mubarak. Nor did it manage more than a squeak of protest at the killings of civilian protesters in Bahrain, where the US Navy's Fifth Fleet is based. Nor did it object when its ally Saudi Arabia intervened on the side of Bahrain's rulers. The government of Yemen, regarded as a frontline state in the battle against Al Qaeda and the recipient of substantial US military and financial aid, is also allowed to suppress protest with impunity.

But Syria, where President Assad is an ally of America's enemy Iran but also an antagonist of the Sunni Islamists behind Al Qaeda, is a subject for earnest debate. Iraq in 2003, on the other hand, was a no-brainer: Saddam Hussein, though once an ally and still no friend of Al Qaeda, had been an enemy for more than a decade. Moreover, Iraq has extensive oil deposits. So does Libya, where Muammar Gaddafi went in the opposite direction to Saddam, from Western enemy to friend. Here, the US hesitated long enough to decide that, since Gaddafi was probably doomed anyway, it had to assist the rebels. Needless to say, Israel, an honorary member of the global "North", can commit as many outrages as it wishes against the Palestinians.

In other words, the West's willingness to intervene in foreign conflicts, supposedly in defence of liberty and human rights, is nearly always in strict proportion to what it perceives

ONLY WHEN THE TYRANTS BEGAN BEHAVING BARBAROUSLY IN PUBLIC, EXPOSING THEIR TRUE NATURE TO WESTERN TV AUDIENCES, WAS INTERVENTION CONSIDERED

as its self-interest. This was as true in the Balkans as in the Middle East, where a Greater Serbia, allied with fellow Slavs in Russia, was thought a threat to European Union ambitions of economic dominance (or, as it is sometimes called, "leadership") in the east of the continent.

The West, however, is often mistaken in its perceptions of where its interests lie. It believes that, if other nations adopt the values of liberty and democracy, the world will be safer for Europe and America. If nations also embrace neoliberal economics, accept foreign investment and lower trade barriers, so much the better. Indeed, to most Western politicians of both right and left, democracy and free markets are more or less indivisible.

THE WRONG RESULTS

But democracy, taken literally as universal suffrage, does not always lead to what Western leaders think are desirable ends, as America should have learned in Latin America, where it repeatedly intervened to overthrow (or try to overthrow) democratically elected regimes that turned out too socialistic. In the Middle East, the dilemma is similar, except that Islamists, not socialists, often emerge strongest in free elections. When they talk of democracy, the US and Europe have in mind the urban middle classes who most eagerly embrace liberal, secular, democratic and entrepreneurial values. In developing countries, the rural poor form the majority and tend to see modernity as a threat, not an opportunity. Democracy frequently delivers the "wrong" result, elevating to power, at best, sceptics about the benefits of liberalised economies or, at worst, fundamentalist religious parties.

This takes us to the heart of what is wrong with liberal interventionism. Led by Western powers, it presumes to insert into other people's lives a political agenda and a set of values determined from elsewhere. British and American leaders believe their armed forces can act as neutral, disinterested agents, using a scalpel to remove a cancerous growth. In reality, such alien incursions are more comparable to ill-targeted chemotherapy than to surgery. It is impossible to prevent the invaders' own war aims – not least the national prestige at stake in being able to declare some kind of victory – from intruding. Intervention in the Balkans, for example, became a test of NATO's credibility.

Opponents of intervention are often accused of patronising Arabs or Africans by arguing they do not want or deserve liberty and democracy. But it is one thing to argue that these are universal values, another to decide how, when and in what form others should adopt them. It is patronising to argue that Iraqis or Syrians or Libyans are incapable of making their own political weather and determining their own best interests. Politicians and modish commentators in Western countries are poor judges of what the peoples of developing countries want, which is mostly peace, security, food and water. Yes, they want to keep out of torture chambers (which, post-intervention, did not disappear in either Libya or Iraq), but in countries ruled by tyrants, many people become skilled at keeping out of trouble. It is harder to dodge a cruise missile, or to avoid the consequences of anarchy or a ruined harvest.

It may be argued that Libyans and Syrians made their views evident. But the outcome of Western intervention in Libya remains unclear. Gaddafi fell, but nobody can say with certainty what regime will finally emerge in his place; since the rebels' victory, most of the country has been ruled by private militias. The uncertainties in Syria are similar. Intervention introduces new and complicating factors to countries in the throes of revolutionary change. It often prolongs what is in effect a civil war. The worst of the ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia followed intervention. Kosovo today, as well as being a center for money laundering and trafficking of drugs, prostitutes and human organs, is a tense and divided society in which a NATO force keeps an uneasy peace.

Moreover, there is hypocrisy in the claim that intervention is justified because dictators must be stopped from murdering their own citizens. Gaddafi killed and brutalized Libyans long before civil war began, as did Assad in Syria, without audible protest from the West. On the contrary, America, with its "extraordinary rendition" program, was sometimes willing to take advantage of such countries' facilities for torture. Only when the tyrants began behaving barbarously in public, exposing their true nature to Western TV audiences, was intervention considered. But the governments of the West had known the nature of these regimes for many years.

Eschewing intervention does not mean doing nothing. The West can start by banning the sale of weapons, except to trusted, stable and unimpeachably democratic allies. Some of the worst regimes are strong enough to oppress their peoples only because they are propped up by Western aid.

A parliamentary committee on arms export controls found this year that the British government had issued 3,000 export licenses for military and intelligence equipment worth £12.3bn ($18.9bn) to countries that were on its own official list for human rights concerns. The committee found 62 licenses for exports to Iran alone and the other countries included Egypt, Bahrain, China, Zimbabwe, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Russia and even Syria. Only two of the 27 states on the human rights list were not receiving arms.

Then there are the tyrannies of hunger and disease, created by a lack of clean water and sanitation, by malnutrition, by shortages of medicines. These torments take infinitely more lives and cause infinitely more suffering than the most inhumane dictator. Some are directly caused by Western actions: rigged trade markets that bankrupt developing-world farmers, for example, or the refusal of pharmaceutical companies to allow poor countries to import or manufacture cheaper copies of patented drugs.

"Humanitarian" military action – surely an oxymoron – would rarely need to be debated if Western countries more often put liberal and genuinely humanitarian considerations above economic and political interests. When the rhetoric is stripped away, liberal interventionism turns out to be little more than imperialism in a new guise. ●

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A NOBLE CAUSE, OPPOSED BY CONSERVATIVE REACTIONARIES

WRITTEN BY **MICHAEL WEISS**

It is a sad but inevitable fact that the international debate about the merits of humanitarian intervention must now take place in the long shadow of the Iraq war. This has led to a few ironies of history, not least of which has been the intellectual and moral agreement between those who believe that stopping genocide, ethnic cleansing or the use of weapons of mass destruction is an intrinsically "imperialist" project, and the very institutions usually blamed for advancing such projects: namely, the Pentagon and the White House. President Obama and his top generals do not fail to invoke the decade-long, disastrous occupation of Mesopotamia as an excuse to avoid ending the systematic slaughter of mostly Sunni Syrians by the regime of Bashar Al Assad, a campaign which, at the latest count, has cost more than 100,000 lives and caused the displacement of a third of the entire population. Iran, Russia and Hezbollah have all been "intervening" in Syria for quite some time, although the liberal democracies have so far decided against doing so themselves, at least to a comparable or greater degree. Rather, it falls to the ever increasing number of Syrian refugees and an admittedly grab-bag consortium of moderate rebels to advocate most plangently for a NATO-imposed no-fly zone, without which, they rightly maintain, they will continue to perish. Unless these Levantine Arabs have lately warmed to the tenets of neoconservatism, they attest to why humanitarian intervention, so far from being a dead or discredited doctrine in the first decade of the 21st century, remains a noble cause well worth defending. That it must first be defended *against* the natural proclivities of the liberal democracies, which are now experiencing one of their cyclical fits of isolationism, is yet another overlooked irony of history.

Going abroad in search of "monsters to destroy", as John Quincy Adams phrased it, perfectly mischaracterizes the nature of humanitarian interventions, which are by no means quixotic adventures; they follow lengthy domestic political debate, intense diplomatic wrangling or "coalition building", and international legal justifications. Certain criteria ought to be met. There must be an ongoing, escalating human catastrophe that diplomacy alone is unable to resolve and that therefore requires a military response. (An intervention properly understood is not an act of war; it is a measure designed to bring a devastating pre-existing war to a swifter close.) That response must have a reasonable chance of success without harming more people than it helps. It must have a clearly defined timeline of engagement, which includes an "exit strategy". If an intervening power should find that its national interest is being satisfied through this undertaking, then it must disclaim any commercial or political gain as a consequence of intervention. (Even in the dire instance of Iraq, $1 trillion later, a pro-Iranian government in Baghdad and the absence of a single American boot on the ground, this condition has largely been satisfied).

SINCERE COMMITMENT

It is worth considering what the world might look like today absent the persistent undertaking of powerful nations to intrude in large-scale human rights abuses, often, if not always, against their own "national interests". The American academics Robert Pape and Chaim Kaufman have demonstrated that Britain's sometimes armed disruptions of the African slave trade at the close of the Napoleonic Wars came at a high price indeed: they "brought the country into conflict with the other Atlantic maritime powers, and cost Britain more than five thousand lives as well as an average of nearly two percent of national income annually for sixty years." The Yale historian David Brion Davis has similarly concluded that the impetus here was not self-gain or the sinister expansion of empire but a sincere commitment to putting an end to bondage. That commitment coincided with the enlargement of democratic freedoms within Britain herself and was driven as much by the religious fervor of evangelical Christians such as William Wilberforce as it was by secular and cross-party abolitionists. "Britain's fixation on the slave trade," Davis writes, "often worked against British interests, damaging or straining relations with Muslim leaders in an era of Islamic insurgency and nationalistic discontent." Ending the international slave trade had the knock-on effect of speeding the end of slavery *tout court* in the 1860s, not just the African kind in the United States, but also the white vassal kind in Tsarist Russia. Interventions haven't always created "quagmires", in other words. Quite often their consequences are both intended and beneficial well beyond the borders of their proximate consideration.

Nor have they always been waged solely by Western powers, contrary to the purblind polemics typically written against them. India intervened to stop its neighbor Pakistan's devastation in Bangladesh. Tanzania got rid of Idi Amin and his junta in Uganda because of the "spillover" effect they were causing in eastern Africa. Communist Vietnam was the agent that ended the Khmer Rouge's genocide in Cambodia. Australia intervened in nearby East Timor, with the full authorization of the United Nations, to put an end to the brutalities of local militias who wished to bring the country back under Indonesian occupation, a 25-year period in which about 200,000 people were killed.

In the 19th century, when the impetus to intervene in "faraway" lands to halt dimly comprehended atrocities first gained political prominence, the most vocal critics of this new school of thinking were the old-school "realist" guarantors of European empire, principally Metternich, Castlereagh, Wellington and Disraeli. (Their latter-day heir is Henry Kissinger, a man who, some think, believes in using military force to suppress rather than enable nationalist revolutions and to aid rather than eliminate despotic regimes.) It was these statesmen, rather than their antagonists, who believed that protecting trade interests and safeguarding geopolitical alliances with the decaying Ottoman Empire trumped any number of corpses or refugees that Turkish dominion could furnish. And it could furnish quite a lot.

Indeed, one of the pleasures of reading

THERE MUST BE AN ONGOING, ESCALATING HUMAN CATASTROPHE THAT DIPLOMACY ALONE IS UNABLE TO RESOLVE AND THAT THEREFORE REQUIRES A MILITARY RESPONSE

Gary J Bass's *Freedom's Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention* is seeing just how badly today's "blood for oil" narrative is complicated by a not-so-remote past. Bass shows that the myopic characterization of interventions as strictly West-to-East phenomena is curious given that the first example of one was waged in, and on behalf of, a European territory: Greece.

The *philhellene* cause which gripped Romantic Britain in the 1820s – thanks in no small part to its leading light, Lord Byron – was itself ranged against three forms of imperial dealmaking all at once. The first was obviously the Ottoman yoke, which was suppressing Greek independence through the systematic murder of men, women and children in Constantinople, Smyrna, Scio, the Morea and Mesologgi, where Byron would ultimately meet an anticlimactic end. The second was against the Concert of Europe, a compact between and among the Houses of Hanover, Habsburg, Hohenzollern, Bourbon and Romanov, which disdained nationalist insurrections of all kinds and thought humanitarian considerations too "destabilizing" to their own self-preservation. The third form of imperial dealmaking was the Holy Alliance, which fused the reactionary ambitions of Russia, Prussia and Austria. (Austrian ships even ran the small Greek naval blockade to resupply their Ottoman war partner, very nearly skirmishing with the Royal Navy in the process.)

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

From Castlereagh to his fellow Tory successor as British Foreign Secretary, Canning, London never really desired war with its own ally, the Sublime Porte, and did everything it could diplomatically to foreclose on such a contingency. In the end, however, the matter was decided by a combination of reports of unremitting savagery in the Mediterranean filed by a newfangled species of writer – the foreign correspondent – and by the tireless advocacy of the London Greek Committee, in many ways a precursor to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Added to this was the Ottomans' own refusal to halt their anti-Greek pogroms after promising (repeatedly) to do so; and their unwillingness to dispel even exaggerated rumors that their agent Ibrahim Pasha was about to carry off the entire Greek population into Egyptian slavery. Twenty-five thousand Greeks had to be killed, and thousands more made into refugees or rendered into chattel, before the Battle of Navarino, one of Britain's finest naval campaigns, yielded Greek independence. Yet the *philhellenes'* moral and physical victory gravely undermined British strategic interests. Russia, exploiting a noble cause – not for the first or last time – went to war against the Ottoman Empire in order to weaken it and clear a path for the annexation of its territory, the top prize being Constantinople.

The tragedy of competing interventionisms – one humanitarian, the other reactionary – was not lost on Byron nor on his fellow *philhellene*, the philosopher Jeremy Bentham, both of whom married their championing of Greek self-determination with a scornful indictment of British, French and Spanish colonialism. They were radicals at a time when radicalism meant not making common cause with dictatorships abroad or ultraconservative standard-bearers of the old world order at home. They were also equally wary of forging alliances of convenience with cynical co-thinkers such as Tsar Alexander I, whose own defense of Greek independence was advanced on the pretext of Orthodox Christian solidarity

but masked an expansionist rather than an emancipatory impulse.

In this first instance of what would now be termed a humanitarian "war of choice" lay also an instructive lesson that has redounded to the modern era. Non-intervention by free countries often leads to the unintended consequence of encouraging non-free countries to do the intervening instead. Forty years after the Ottoman fleet was consigned to the bottom of Navarino Bay, it would be Russian rather than British forces who marched into Bulgaria (also a European country), ostensibly to end massacres by Ottoman irregulars against a peasant Christian population but actually to satisfy a revanchist, pan-Slavic ideology, of which Dostoevsky was the literary exemplar of his day and Count Nikolai Ignatiev the cunning diplomatic one. The Russian expedition would ultimately cost far more in blood and treasure, with some 80,000 Russian soldiers killed, atop the tens of thousands of already slain Bulgarians. It would also send the very shock to geopolitical harmony that the anti-interventionists had frantically sought to avoid. Disraeli, fighting a war for popular opinion against his arch-nemesis Gladstone, lost his government over the Bulgarian "Question", even though he had dispatched British warships to the Mediterranean to back the Ottoman ally and even though he himself came close to ordering a British invasion of Bulgaria simply to preclude the calamitous Russian counterpart that eventuated.

Here again it is worth considering what the humanitarians were willing to see sacrificed for the realization of a worthwhile cause. Gladstone, Hartington and the other Victorian Whigs (notably Darwin) esteemed Bulgarian human rights above their own great power's colonial holdings in India and above any realpolitik calculation of offsetting Russian hegemony in the Near East, both of which set Queen Victoria against them on the side of Disraeli. These men were not without their moral failings. To call Gladstone a Turkophobe would be euphemistic considering the anti-Ottoman chauvinism with which he wrote at the height of his campaign. And yet his interventionist fervor can neither be fairly consigned to the politics of the White Man's Burden. As Bass notes, Gladstone was also quite promiscuous in the other progressive causes he championed out of similar motives and to which later human rights movements would claim discipleship. These transcended the categories of race, religion and creed, as Gladstone put himself: "on the side not just of Bulgarians, but also of Zulus, Afghans, Aborigines, Indians, and even Irishmen."

Yet what was the tragic result of seeing Russia instead of Britain intervene in Bulgaria? A tenuous peace treaty with the Sublime Porte; the partitioning of Bulgaria into two "zones", and the awarding to Austria-Hungary of the protectorate of Bosnia, without which Archduke Franz Ferdinand would have had no cause to tour Sarajevo in July 1914.

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

The First World War, we mustn't forget, coincided with an event which led to the coinage of a new term to describe what had happened to more than one million Armenians living under expiring Ottoman rule. "Genocide" – a word which successive Turkish governments have refused to accept applies to the actions of their imperial predecessor; current Prime Minister Erdogan denies any "crimes" took place – has since been internationally outlawed and turned into a taboo such that its pitiless perpetrators claim not be engaged in it. This largely owes to the legal and humanitarian spadework conducted by the United States following the Second World War, spadework that led to the establishment of the United Nations, the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the most translated document in human history) and also the enshrinement of an important convention that purports to enforce the "prevention and punishment" of genocide wherever it occurs.

These initiatives were the fruit of a guilty conscience because not only did the United States do little to stop what happened to the Armenians, even as its principled ambassador in Constantinople Henry Morgenthau Sr called attention to it, but Woodrow Wilson's State Department initially covered up the evidence. Twenty years later, Morgenthau's son would serve in Roosevelt's cabinet during the Holocaust, which Washington was similarly, disgracefully, late in bringing to a decisive end despite possessing credible intelligence about Hitler's annihilation of European Jewry. Henry Morgenthau Jr recalled his own father's failed diplomatic intercessions to save the Armenians as he watched the near-extermination of an entire people take place on European soil. Then, as before, soft power was useless in the face of crimes against humanity.

THE FAILURES OF US FOREIGN POLICY ARE MARKED BY TOO FEW HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS RATHER THAN TOO MANY

This is a roundabout way of stating that America's own record in humanitarian interventions is a decidedly mixed affair, as its newly appointed Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power, is deservedly celebrated for pointing out. But, as the early and mid-20th century examples cited above demonstrate, the sins tormenting the national conscience tend to be ones of omission rather than commission. They are made more acute by two interrelated aspects of American exceptionalism. The first is that the world's only remaining superpower is itself the *beneficiary* – and indeed the result – of foreign interventions, namely by France and the Netherlands in the 18th century, and is thus more obliged to return the favor when it can. (Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams were only against a US role in the liberation of Greece because they thought America too young a nation and too susceptible to being destroyed by the great European powers to chance it; their sympathies were nevertheless philhellenic and democratic.) The second is that because the United States is a melting pot of various immigrant nationalities and ethnicities, there is seldom a part of the world debased by the presence of mass graves or concentration camps that will not, at some point, have a vocal and respected constituency within the American electorate. The enfranchisement of more and more minority groups within an advanced democracy is one of the main underwriters of the "Responsibility to Protect".

The failures of US foreign policy are marked by too few humanitarian interventions rather than too many. It would be hard to encounter a dispassionate observer who would argue today that, had Bill Clinton tried to stop the decimation of the Tutsis in Rwanda, the effect would have been worse than what the Hutus managed to achieve in the space of three months. Darfur similarly looms large as a painful "what if", particularly as Sudan's President Omar Al Bashir travels the globe with impunity, cutting oil deals with Chinese companies and plenty of Western multinational conglomerates, despite facing charges at the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

Northern and western Africa has fared slightly better in this respect, with a successful US intervention in Liberia to match a similarly successful and related British intervention in neighboring Sierra Leone. Liberia's former president, Charles Taylor, meanwhile, will spend the rest of his life in prison. As for Libya, it today at least enjoys the opportunity for political stability and democratic fulfillment, which it never would have done had an ostentatious psychopath and state sponsor of every form of global terrorist known to man been allowed to remain in power. Gaddafi never got the chance to go "house to house" executing opponents to his dictatorship.

In the case of Bosnia – surely the Rosetta stone of interventionist studies – one will still find those who believe that NATO played a more destructive role in the Balkans than Serbian *genocidaires*. Often they will point to uncured problems in postwar Bosnia such as tribalism, nationalist politics, lawlessness and economic backwardness as if these provided *ex post facto* justifications for letting Slobodan Milosevic maintain death camps unhindered. (Some more ideological opponents of intervention play a darker game still, that of denying that those death camps ever existed; this, too, has form throughout modern history.) Yet it was diplomacy, treaties and sanctions that failed Bosnian Muslims and military force that rescued them, however belatedly. Surely it is hard to disagree with the judgment of David Rohde, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his investigations of the Srebrenica massacre, when he writes that Bosnia now at least enjoys an "imperfect peace, though [one that] is better than the carnage that the people of Bosnia endured."

Given the conservative if not reactionary origins of the anti-interventionist argument which I've limned above, it is decidedly curious to hear its latter-day spokesmen transformed into airy utopians once the warplanes and marines have quit the scene. If nothing short of Sweden emerges from the ashes of recent genocide and national trauma, they argue, then the entire rescue operation must have been in vain. Yet Croatia has just joined the European Union, and Serbia is on its way to doing so. The architects of a new kind of pan-Slavic expansionism are a threat no more. Milosevic is dead and Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic are now facing war crimes tribunals at The Hague. This is not nothing; it is just as it should be. It is also the exact opposite of imperialism.

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WHEN SPORTS MEANS BUSINE$$

GLOBAL SPONSORSHIP SPENDING IS EXPECTED TO HIT OVER $50 BILLION THIS YEAR – AND SPORTS ACCOUNTS FOR 70 PERCENT OF THAT. IN THE 90 YEARS SINCE AN AMERICAN GOLFER SIGNED THE FIRST PERSONAL ENDORSEMENT DEAL, ADVERTISERS AND BRAND MANAGERS HAVE ENTERED AN EVER MORE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS (OR FANS, AS THEY ARE USUALLY KNOWN)

WRITTEN BY **ALEX DELMAR-MORGAN**

In 1973, in Germany, a watershed moment occurred in the relationship between business and sport. In the face of considerable opposition from the Bundesliga, Germany's professional football league, the drinks company Jägermeister struck a shirt sponsorship deal with a club called Eintracht Braunschweig. The move was unprecedented in European football. Other clubs quickly followed suit, and Jägermeister would go on to endorse the club for another 25 years.

From its beginnings in Roman times, with gladiatorial contests backed by wealthy members of society, to the patronage of the arts in the Renaissance, sponsorship in its purest form – funding something or someone in return for commercial benefits or prestige – is nothing new. These days sports sponsorship is a multi-billion-dollar business, a highly effective (and risky) tool of marketing, capable of advertising a brand to billions around the globe. Get it right and sponsorship can seal a brand's success for years in the public's eyes, with the sport becoming almost synonymous with the sponsor. Get it wrong and it can backfire badly.

Backing an individual star carries the most risk, as the recent case of the South African sprinter Oscar Pistorius shows. After shooting his girlfriend dead in February this year (accidentally, he said), Nike swiftly distanced itself from him, saying it would not use the Paralympic star in future campaigns, while its unfortunately worded adverts with the strapline "I am the bullet in the chamber" were pulled from his website in the days following his arrest. Other big names such as Tiger Woods and the US cyclist Lance Armstrong have also given sponsors a headache after become engulfed in scandal.

But these instances have had little overall impact on global sponsorship spending, which is expected to hit $53.3 billion in 2013, up 4.2 percent on last year – and of that, sports accounts for about 70 percent. According to the US consultancy IEG, in 2012 sports sponsorship spend was $36.8 billion, up from $35 billion the year before, and the worldwide total has grown at about 5 percent every year since 2010 as the

popularity of sport soars, TV rights increase, audiences grow, stars get richer, and prize money balloons.

FIERCE RESISTANCE

Sport was first commercialized in the US. America has never had a ministry of sport – unlike Britain, China, Russia and Australia, for instance – and, as a result, sports funding has always been left to the free market, not the government.

As far back as 1923, golfer Gene Sarazen signed the first ever individual sponsorship deal with Wilson Sporting Goods; it became the longest running endorsement in sports history, as it continued until his death in 1999. When it came to marketing sport, the US was 50 years ahead of Europe, and North America still has the biggest sponsorship market today. Companies in the continent are

THE POPULAR REACTION AMONG PEOPLE, PLAYERS AND EVEN AMONG CLUBS WAS THAT THIS WAS SELLING OUT TO BIG BUSINESS AND IT SHOULDN'T BE HAPPENING

forecast to spend $19.9 billion this year alone on sponsorship, with the European market predicted to be worth $14.5 billion in 2013 and Asia Pacific $12.6 billion. By contrast, Central and South America are expected to spend just $4 billion this year.

It might have been well established in the US, but when, some 53 years later, sports sponsorship first came to English football, it was met with fierce resistance. Kettering Town became the first football club in the UK to carry a sponsor's logo on its kit. Within days the UK's Football Association (FA) ordered its removal and threatened a £1,000 fine.

"Suddenly what you had here was business starting to take a sharp interest in football," says Simon Chadwick, Professor of Sport Business Strategy and Marketing at Coventry University and a member of the Advisory Board of Doha GOALS, a platform to create global initiatives through sport.

"The popular reaction among people, players and even among clubs was that this was selling out to big business and it shouldn't be happening." It wasn't until a year later, in 1977, that the FA backed down and allowed shirt sponsorship.

In the UK in the 1970s and early 1980s sports sponsorship was largely based on a so-called "chairman's whim" where a company's board or boss would make an endorsement based on personal preference for a team or player. Then came a period where a transaction would take place with a company buying advertising space on a football shirt or a stadium billboard. Interaction, though, between the sponsor and the team or club was minimal. Nowadays sports sponsorship goes beyond just advertising. Those in the industry like to talk about emotionally engaging with fans, whereby the sponsored sport or individual reflects what the brand stands for.

"People buy products but they follow brands," points out Andy Sutherden, Global Head of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship at the communications agency Hill+Knowlton Strategies.

CASE STUDY: FORMULA 1

Formula 1 has long been seen as the undisputed king of big-money sports marketing. The global financial crisis of 2008 led to a downturn in sponsorship across the sports industry that left no one untouched – not even the F1 juggernaut. But even in times of austerity, with corporate purse strings being cautiously protected, F1 is showing that it can still deliver unprecedented business benefits.

Its sponsorship model has evolved over the years just as significantly as the cars themselves. Gone are the days of lavish spending at the whim of a corporate chief executive; in its place has emerged an increasingly relevant business model that puts brand equity at the heart of the sponsorship proposition.

"Sponsorship as a genre has become a lot more evidence based," explains the Deputy Team Principal and Commercial Director of the Williams F1 Team, Claire Williams.

"F1 sponsorship has also changed over the past 10 years because of the tobacco ban. We are seeing more high-tech, global brands becoming involved, some of which were put off in the days of tobacco sponsorship, but which recognize the value and technological aspect of the sport."

Figures supplied by IFM Sports Marketing Surveys (SMS) show that Formula 1 has maintained a cumulative global audience of close to 2 billion over the past five years. Following a slight dip in the grand total during the 2009 season, viewers totaled 1.75bn in 2012. In comparison, the English Premier League has 700m viewers and Wimbledon 187m. An already truly international racing series was bolstered last year by the return of the US Grand Prix, and plans for two races on US soil in 2014 will further help brands keen to enter the all-important US market.

A new wave of companies has already flocked to the sport for the 2013 season. Rolex struck a global partnership deal brokered by the sports rights holder Bernie Ecclestone, and Emirates has signed a five-year global partner deal worth an estimated $200m. Leading brands have also entered the sport this year by partnering with teams. Smartphone manufacturer BlackBerry signed a partnership deal with Mercedes, logistics company UPS has joined forces with Ferrari, Coca-Cola's Burn brand is now sponsoring Lotus, and Williams unveiled a new FTSE 100 partner in Experian.

"There are about 200 companies involved in F1 across the sport. If you add up their combined turnover, it amounts to trillions of dollars. If F1 were a country, it would have the fourth largest GDP in the world, greater than Germany, so it is a significant business opportunity," explains Williams.

Three key things make F1 more attractive to sponsors when compared to standalone events. First is the quality of the audience, with a high proportion of educated and high-net-worth individuals. Second is the reach, with about 100m F1 viewers per race. And third is frequency; every two weeks there is a global sporting event in the shape of an F1 race – 19 times a year between March and November over a protracted season. Events such as the Super Bowl, the Tour de France, Wimbledon, and the Olympics produce spikes in interest, but ones that then rapidly disappear.

Today's sponsorship landscape is the most complex it has ever been. It is less about brand awareness than it is about engagement with target audiences. Effective sponsorship activation is about far more than putting a sticker on a car or a logo on a set of driver overalls. IFM SMS also reveals that 85 percent of sponsorship decision makers believe that sports events should be more inventive in engaging their fans. Eighty-three percent also believe that accountability for sponsorship accounts is greater than ever.

It is this focus on business that sets F1 apart from other high-profile sports such as football. While the latter is aimed at the mass market and attracts consumer brands keen to sell products, F1 combines this mass audience appeal with a tried and tested B2B environment that sees senior executives from 200 global corporations come together every two weeks in a melting pot of B2B networking.

Valtteri Bottas competing for Williams at the Spanish Grand Prix in Barcelona, 12 May, 2013

In addition to all the attributes that mark out F1 as a sport – being premium and high-tech, the glamour, speed and the international appeal – the corporate social responsibility demonstrated by some of the teams also reflects well on their sponsors. "We take this very seriously," says Sir Frank Williams, founder of the Williams F1 Team and the longest-serving Team Principal in the sport. He points to Williams Advanced Engineering, established in 2008, which takes F1 technologies and adapts them for a range of commercial applications that have a societal benefit. It has also expanded abroad, establishing a Technology Center in Qatar Science & Technology Park in 2009 whose sole mission is to develop technologies in the fields of energy efficiency and road safety.

This new company has enjoyed much success in its short life, developing an F1 based flywheel hybrid system that is currently being trialed in a number of London buses in conjunction with Go-Ahead Group. It is also working with the global manufacturer Alstom to introduce hybrid technologies into its tram network.

"An F1 team like Williams can be seen as a global leader in the green technology field," adds Claire Williams.

"A product that was first designed for an F1 car has now been installed on a London bus in less than four years and is reducing emissions by as much as 30 percent. It doesn't get much more relevant than that."

Final round of the BMX freestyle during the X-Games at Montjuic, Spain, on 18 May, 2013

BULL IN A STADIUM

In any discussion of sports marketing over the past decade, it is hard not to mention Red Bull. If the famous energy drink loaded with the stimulants caffeine and taurine stands for speed, buzz and adrenaline, then it is extreme sports such as BMX riding, surfing, and snowboarding that Red Bull has, unsurprisingly, opted to endorse. Chadwick at Doha GOALS argues that the firm's success lies in how it has effectively acquired whole sporting franchises.

In the US, a major league soccer team, the New York/New Jersey MetroStars, was renamed the New York Red Bulls in 2006 and its stadium has become the Red Bull Arena. SV Austria Salzburg, an Austrian football club founded in 1933, was reformed in 2005. It is now known as FC Red Bull Salzburg and its stadium has been renamed in the same way. But Red Bull, as Chadwick says, has also been clever in the way it has created its own sports such as X-Games (BMX riding) and Red Bull X-Fighters (freestyle motocross). "Effectively the sponsor is the sport and the sport is the sponsor – that's where they've been particularly clever," he says.

So what is the secret behind a successful sports sponsorship campaign? Dr Philipp Klaus, Professor of Customer Experience and Marketing Strategy at ESCEM School of Business and Management, France, argues that longevity is key – those companies that back a sport, an individual, or an event for a long period of time often succeed in using that sport to build their brand.

"Most sponsors come and go because they don't look at the long-term impact," he says. "They invest, they sponsor for two or three years, and then say 'it's not giving us the returns, sales are not increasing, let's get out of there.' What they do not realize is that most of the people who are engaged with sports are not consumers, they are fans. So the relationship with sports is an emotional one." ●

EFFECTIVELY THE SPONSOR IS THE SPORT AND THE SPORT IS THE SPONSOR – THAT'S WHERE THEY'VE BEEN PARTICULARLY CLEVER

THE AUTHOR

Alex Delmar-Morgan set up and ran the first Qatar bureau for *Dow Jones* and *The Wall Street Journal* and has reported for newspapers in Britain and the Gulf.

Elia Suleiman: Of fixed frames and fictive biography

The most lauded Arab filmmaker of his generation has been compared to Buster Keaton and Jacques Tati, even though his work is concerned with occupation and dispossession. Now Artistic Advisor to Doha Film Institute, he meditates here on self-evaluation, memory and the "metamorphosis into the aesthetic"

WRITTEN BY **JIM QUILTY**

A man has come to Havana for an interview with revolutionary president Fidel Castro. While a functionary at the Palestinian embassy confirms the details by phone, the man stands, his back to the official's desk. He sips Turkish coffee and gazes at the portrait of a *fida'i* (Palestinian freedom fighter) on the wall.

"Elia Suleiman," the functionary says into the phone, then spells out the interviewer's name. "Egypt. Libya. Israel. America."

Startled, the man turns to glance at the camera, which stands in for the functionary's perspective. The official commences to spell his family name and the man's eyes return to the wall art.

"South Africa. Uganda – 'u', like 'USSR'. Liberty. Espania. Israel – 'i', like 'independence'…"

When the "i" in his family name is associated with "Israel", then "independence", the man turns around fully, eyebrows high above the rims of his spectacles.

The most lauded Arab filmmaker of his generation, Elia Suleiman was born in 1960, one of five children in a 48 Palestinian family – shorthand for those who did not leave during the *Nakba*, or "catastrophe", as Palestinians term the creation of Israel.

A native of Nazareth, Suleiman has not lived there for many years, residing in New York from 1981 to 1993, moving the following year to Jerusalem, where he was invited to set up the audiovisual department of Birzeit University, and nowadays based in Paris.

Despite his success, Suleiman routinely remarks that he has no formal film training, and says the extent of his university film studies was a few sessions in an NYU continuing education class.

"When I started to have an interest in filmmaking," he recalls, "everyone told me: 'You have to study.' But how? I couldn't get into university. I didn't have the money. I tried to sit in on some university classes a couple of times but no one would allow you to sit for free.

"A friend of mine used to sneak me into screenings for New York University's film studies class after the lights went down, from the fire escape.

"I was giving a masterclass there a few years back," he laughs, "and one of the students asked me: 'You never studied. Now you're here in an academic environment. Why should we be studying?'

"At that moment a revelation came over me. I looked up at the auditorium's fire exit and I realised that it was exactly the place that I used to be smuggled through.

"I was quiet for a few moments, not knowing what to say. Then I looked at the students and said: 'I have to tell you something.' I told them about the fire escape."

Suleiman laughs again.

"Basically, it comes down to your will to remain sincere, to self-educate, to always be in a process of self-evaluation as to what it is you're looking for, and whether it's strong enough for you to want to express it."

***The Time That Remains,* 2009**

***Divine Intervention,* 2002**

Earlier this year, Elia Suleiman was appointed Artistic Advisor to Doha Film Institute (DFI), the non-profit organization that channels Qatar's film funding, filmmaking and exhibition endeavors. This follows a long-standing relationship with DFI, dating back to when he was invited to attend the inaugural edition of Doha Tribeca Film Festival (DTFF) in 2009.

Suleiman describes his new role at DFI as conceptual. "It's about giving ideas," he says, connected to what Doha's film festival might become. At the same time, DFI announced it would retool its festival profile, dissolving DTFF and replacing it with the Ajyal Film Festival for the Young, scheduled for late November, and the Qumra Film Festival, set to launch in March 2014.

The latter will be an international competitive platform for first and second-time filmmakers, following the tradition of such progressive international film festivals as that at Rotterdam and the Semaine de la Critique, which screens in parallel to Cannes' main competition.

"Becoming an international film festival rather than an Arab film festival is definitely the big change," Suleiman says. "The idea of making the festival for first and second-time filmmakers opens the door to everyone. It will definitely be interesting for the Arab filmmakers because it will become more competitive, more dialogue oriented, so they'll be exposed to what's happening in the world in their own region, which is exciting.

"Arab filmmakers will be given the privilege of a quota system, just as Cannes is obliged to put a certain number of French films in its competition. It could present some new notions, rather than the ghettoization of Arabs just meeting themselves."

Qumra's function, he continues, is "to bring all these people to meet each other, to listen

to interesting international filmmakers and to become somehow connected, then go home to further build some of their ideas."

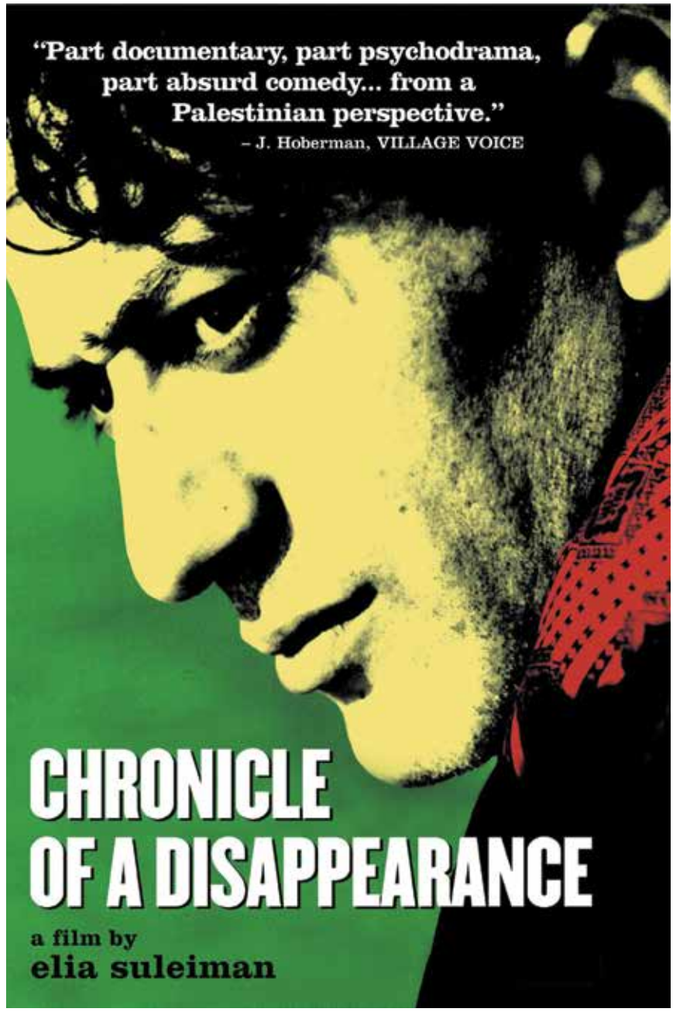
Suleiman has made nine films, and is generally recognised in critical circles for three distinguished features. His debut, *Chronicle of a Disappearance* (1996), won the Venice Film Festival's Luigi De Laurentiis Award for best first work. *Divine Intervention* (2002) took a fistful of awards, most notably the Jury Prize and the FIPRESCI (International Film Critics) Prize at Cannes that year, where it was also nominated for the Palme d'Or. His third feature, *The Time That Remains* (2009), was also nominated for the Palme and picked up several international festival awards, among them the top prize at Abu Dhabi Film Festival.

The three features are unified by the figure of ES – played by Suleiman – who stands against the landscape of all his principal works. Less a character than a sort of unspeaking narrator, ES interacts with other characters, but his main function is to witness, a stylistic prism through which experience (here a Palestinian one) can be perceived and refracted.

They are also united by being festooned with vignettes, delivered with such a deadpan sense of humor that Suleiman's silent onscreen persona has been compared to that of Buster Keaton and Jacques Tati. Rather than the elaborate simulacra of French modernism that Tati constructed for his 1967 *Play Time*, however, Suleiman's is a stylised version of occupation.

At one point in *Chronicle*, for instance, ES looks on as a paddy wagon roars to a stop and disgorges half a dozen Israeli policemen. They leap from the back of the vehicle and charge past him in as if to foil a bank robbery. Then they stop, undo their trousers and relieve themselves against a wall. Finishing in unison, they rush back to the van and tear off again.

Much of *Divine* is set alongside Hajis Al Ram, the Israeli army checkpoint on the road between Ramallah and Jerusalem. One evening ES sits, alone, gazing at a megalomaniacal, megaphone toting soldier who demands that all the Palestinian drivers in the queue hold their papers up in the air. Then he forces individuals from their cars, ordering them to climb into the vehicles of total strangers. Only then are they allowed to drive off.



***Chronicle of a Disappearance* movie poster, 1996**

His films are strikingly bereft of conventional plotting. Unlike some of his younger colleagues in the region, who have experimented with genre, the writer-director has pursued other narrative strategies.

When he commenced the *Chronicle* shoot, Suleiman was still without a plot. He tells the story of how he had his cameraman shoot the policemen sequence repeatedly, despite the fact that he'd captured the scene on the first take. At the end of one such take – the last – the actor-director looked down and found one of his actors had dropped his police walkie-talkie. Standing in frame, ES bends over and picks it up. The police radio then became the narrative leitmotif holding *Chronicle* together. ES uses the radio to monitor security service banter – including a raid on his house that unfolds while he listens in.

The closest *Divine* comes to a narrative motif is the Israeli checkpoint where ES and his lover (Manal Khader) – who apparently live on opposite sides of the impassable barrier – meet for silent rendezvous. During one meeting, ES fills a red balloon with helium, revealing it to be emblazoned with the face of late PLO chairman Yasser Arafat, and releases it through a car sunroof. The soldiers are so distracted by Arafat's face as it blows past that the couple manage to get through the checkpoint together.

The first half of *Remains* is an adaptation of the memoir the filmmaker asked his father, Fuad Suleiman, to compose about his involvement in the Palestinian resistance in 1948 and his life in the decades of occupation that followed, thus veering closer to conventional plotting than any of Suleiman's other films. More consistent in his work are tableaux, beautifully framed by fixed-camera cinematography. Increasingly, he has restaged particular tableaux in succession, emphasizing the absurdity and heartbreak of gestures repeated long after they have been emptied of meaning.

The filmmaker has never depicted his work as autobiographical, yet the ubiquitous presence of ES, and the singular lack of conventional narrative arcs, does make it tempting to assume as much. "I'll start from the most extreme," Suleiman says. "I try to think I can make something other than this kind of film ... Desire comes into it, not only the question of what makes sense but what has essence. Where can I expose myself the most when I tell the story. Because when you fake it, it's obvious. So an artist naturally has to search for that place where he isn't faking, unless faking is done – and quite a lot of artists do that – for the sake of commerce.

"So yes, there are tons of biographical details in my work. But I think memory is ultimately a fiction. It's just the way we interpret that moment, the way we imagine it now. It's not exact documentation. Again, it has its own metamorphosis into the aesthetic."

There are points in these films in which the needs of fiction take precedence, such as the story of young ES's deportation in *Remains*. "I did at one point escape the country but not because of burning the Israeli flag," as is discussed in the film. "I was accused of burning the flag when I was young and was expelled, then brought back. But I don't remember that I did. I wasn't a militant."

Ultimately, he remains uninterested in inventing suspense or love stories. "There was a period where I thought I might be interested in doing something in another way," he says, "but when I start to write, what draws me is stuff that I have either witnessed or closely overheard."

The name-spelling scene that commences this essay is not taken from one of Suleiman's three features but his most recent finished work, *Diary of a Beginner*. One of seven shorts that comprise the omnibus feature *7 Days in Havana*, which premiered at Cannes last year, the 17-minute film is also his least autobiographical. Again, *Diary* is without much of a narrative. The Palestinian embassy functionary tells ES his interview with Castro is scheduled to follow a televised speech Fidel is giving that day. El Comandante is renowned for addressing the public for hours on end, so ES takes a proscribed stroll around Havana as he waits for Fidel to finish. The camera awaits ES as he arrives at various locations, observing him as he observes the city and its inhabitants. There is considerable wry humor here, hinging on ES's out-of-placedness.

Suleiman has no personal connection to Cuba, but *Diary* is of a piece with his *oeuvre*. If the idea of "Cuba" does have some affinity with that of "Palestine", it may reside in their shared post-revolutionary stasis. What remains of that revolutionary confidence in a brighter future are ES's mute encounters with a few tokens of past promise – larger-than-life statues of Yasser Arafat and Ernest Hemingway, incongruous in an unfamiliar landscape. This may be the source of the unspoken melancholy that pervades *Diary* in the spaces between the moments of straight-faced burlesque. Here, ES's solitude against a landscape can better be seen for what it is, less a political gesture than an existential one. The same can be said of Suleiman's cinematic decisions generally – apparently political, certainly aesthetic, but ultimately existential. ●

THE AUTHOR

Jim Quilty is the Arts and Culture Editor of *The Daily Star* newspaper in Beirut. Since 2000, he has written about cultural and political production in a range of publications, including *Variety*, *ArtReview*, *Bidoun*, *Middle East Report* and *Middle East International*.

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FROM THE MARGINS TO THE MILLIONS

WHILE OFFICIALLY HONORED AND CELEBRATED, THE POETIC TRADITION IS EFFECTIVELY THE PRESERVE OF A SHRINKING ELITE IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD. WHAT LESSONS CAN BE LEARNED FROM THE MIDDLE EAST, WHERE VERSE IS SO CHERISHED THAT POETS CAN DRAW ENORMOUS TELEVISION AUDIENCES – AND EVEN HAVE THEIR WORK FEATURED ON BEST-SELLING RINGTONES?

WRITTEN BY **RACHEL ASPDEN**

"If more politicians knew poetry, and more poets knew politics, I am convinced the world would be a little better place in which to live," then Senator John F Kennedy told the Harvard Alumni Association in 1956. By these standards, poetry in the English-speaking world of 2013 is very much alive. It recently made UK headlines after a spat between the Education Secretary Michael Gove, a committed champion of verse, and the billionaire inventor Sir James Dyson.

"The casual dismissal of poetry as though it were a useless luxury and its study a self-indulgence is a display of prejudice," snapped Gove after Dyson attacked it as a waste of time compared to "important" subjects that prepared students for work in the aircraft and nuclear power industries.

The value of poetry is not just the subject of political debate, but is also enshrined in institutions. In Britain, the post of Poet Laureate has survived from the time of Ben Jonson in the 17th century, the position traditionally rewarded by a small pension and a "butt of sack", to the 2012 London Olympics, which current laureate Carol Ann Duffy immortalized as: "A summer of rain, then a gap in the clouds." In the US, meanwhile, six poets have been invited to participate in presidential inauguration ceremonies since Robert Frost recited his poem *The Gift Outright* for Kennedy in 1961. (Frost claimed the "sun in his eyes" prevented him from reading the generally less highly regarded prologue, *Dedication*, he actually wrote for the event.)

The US and Canada celebrate National Poetry Month each April, while in the UK October 3 is National Poetry Day, marked by events across the country from primary school recitals to poems written on fireworks and shot into the sky. This year, borrowing from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the theme is "Water, water, every where".

"We challenge participants to smuggle poetry into the most unlikely places," say the organizers, the Forward Arts Foundation. "Not just in libraries and classrooms, but on fishing boats and ferries, via postcards, mobile phones and announcements on station platforms." The foundation's Executive Director, Susannah Herbert, is optimistic that new developments will ensure poetry's relevance for younger generations.

"Poetry is valuable because voices from the margins are constantly reshaping the center," she says. "For instance, women used to be marginalized – anthologies in the UK were entirely by white, university educated men – and that is changing and needs to go on changing."

Khalil Ebrahim Al Shabrami from Qatar, winner of the second season of *Million's Poet*, performing live on the show in 2008

But statistics paint a gloomier picture. The problems start at pre-school level, where traditional nursery rhymes, the beginners' poetry of *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star and Humpty Dumpty*, are now only taught to children by 36 percent of British parents. The outlook for traditionally published adults' poetry is even bleaker. The total value of UK poetry sales fell from £8.4m in 2009 to £6.7m in 2012. As poets are laid off by publishing houses struggling to stay afloat, any collection that sells over 200 copies is considered a best-seller. From the numbers alone, English-language poetry may appear to be no more than the preserve of a shrinking elite.

Elsewhere, however, and especially in the Arabic-speaking world, the story is different. Even before the coming of Islam to the Arabian peninsula, its people were famous for their poetry. Today, Arab schoolchildren still study the seven ancient *mu'allaqat*, or "hanging poems", rumored once to have been suspended inside the Ka'ba as the supreme examples of pre-Islamic verse. In the largely illiterate tribal communities of the desert, poems handed down through the generations by professional *rowah*, storytellers, were the sole means of preserving the knowledge, history and art of the people. In the centuries that followed, poetry continued to flourish alongside the religious sciences, and a long line of Arab scholars and poets were famed for their prodigious feats of memory. The ninth century theologian Ahmed Ibn Hanbal was said to have memorised a million *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet), while 100 years later, a fellow Iraqi, the poet Abu Al Tayyeb Al Mutanabbi, was revered for his ability to memorize the contents of a 30-folio book in a single reading.

LAWFUL MAGIC

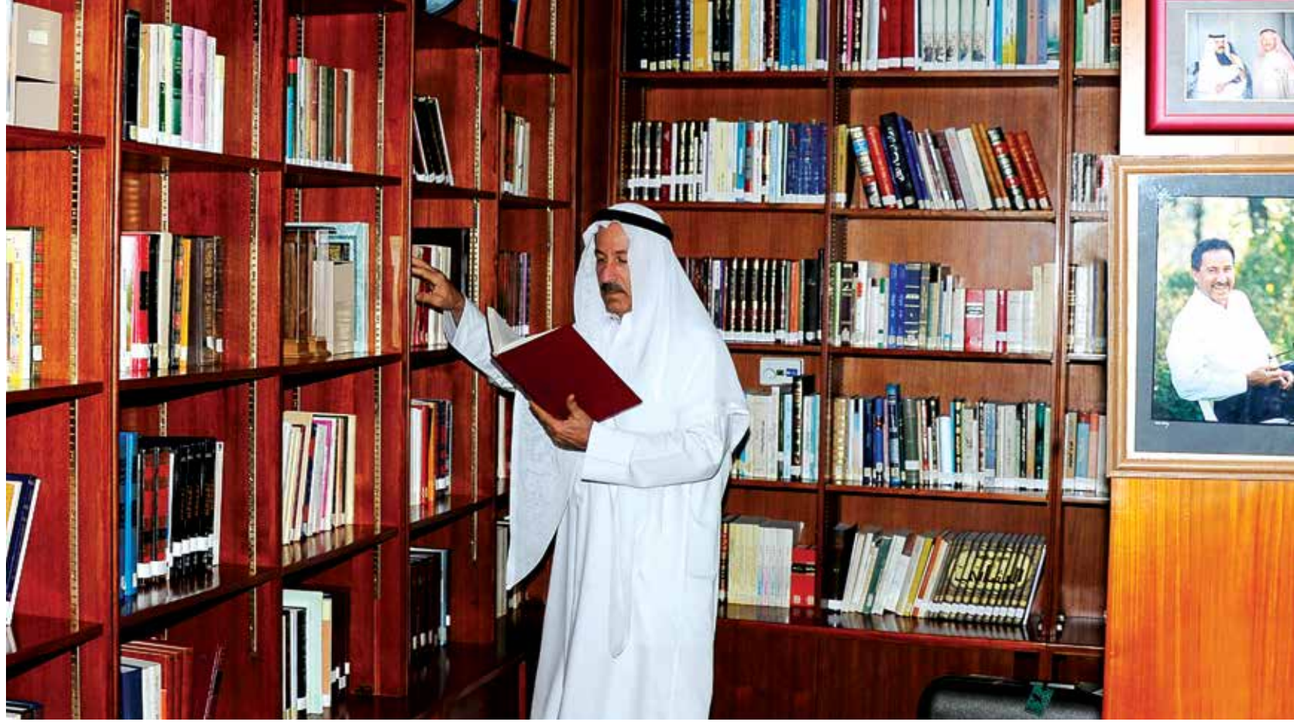
Poetry's central place in the hearts – and memories – of Arab societies endured well into the 20th century. "No people in the world manifest such enthusiastic admiration for literary expression and are so moved by the word, spoken or written, as the Arabs… The rhythm, the rhyme, the music, produce on them the effect of what they call 'lawful magic' (*sihr halal*)," wrote the Lebanese scholar Philip Hitti in his 1937 classic work *History of the Arabs*. But since that time, much has changed. In the technology obsessed 21st century, is poetry in danger of becoming as marginal an art form in the Arab world as it is in the West?

POETRY IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS OF ENSURING CONTINUITY BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS AND PRESERVING A CULTURE THAT MIGHT OTHERWISE BE SWEPT AWAY BY THE FORCES OF GLOBALIZATION

There are few places in the Arabic-speaking world where life has changed more rapidly than Qatar. The country's astonishing economic development since the first major shipments of oil in the 1940s has been accompanied by equally sweeping social change: literacy rates are now the highest in the Arab world. The eminent cardiologist and poet His Excellency Dr Hajar Ahmed Hajar Albinali, Qatar's former Minister of Public Health, is one of those who remembers the traditions and customs of old Qatar. Though he now works at the cutting edge of modern medicine, as a boy he joined the children of his beachside community in spear fishing for squid to make ink for their school studies. ("It was good black ink," he remembers.) In Dr Hajar's view, poetry is one of the best ways of ensuring continuity between the generations and preserving a culture that might otherwise be swept away by the forces of globalization.

"One of the first *diwans* [poetry collections] I wrote was about my childhood memories, about the life around me and the customs of the people," he says. "My aim was to capture these things in poetry for the young people of Qatar who have no idea how things were when we were children. Our children's generation doesn't know how we celebrated Eid or Ramadan, or what we experienced when we went to school. In these poems I also talk about my mother and what she was doing in the house when I was a child, milking the cow and working the whole day."

In those days, Dr Hajar remembers that the ladies of his community, most of whom couldn't read or write, would gather in the evening to recite poetry and tell stories. "At that time, poetry occupied a big place in everyone's life," he says. "My father loved poetry and wrote his own poems, and he used to teach his students concepts through memorising poems, because it's easier. Even the complex grammar of the Arabic language was transmitted in this way – if there are 1,000 verses to memorise, then you will learn every point of grammar."



HE Dr Hajar Ahmed Hajar Albinali, cardiologist, Qatar's former Minister of Public Health and renowned poet, in his library at home

But poetry's role was more than purely educational and practical. "In the old times, medicine was magic, not a real science. A magician, not a doctor as we understand the word, would treat people," says Dr Hajar. "Poetry started just like that – it's a magical word, a magical concept. In our traditional culture there was the idea that good poetry came through djinns [spirits]. The djinn gave the poet the poem and taught him how to recite it – so the poem is actually performed by the djinn and the person is merely a conduit. There is a very close link between poetry, emotion and magic."

It is not only beliefs about its mysterious powers that have changed in the modern era, but convictions about what Arabic poetry can and should be. To some extent the debate reflects the division between standard Arabic – the formal written language that is shared by the Arabic-speaking world – and the multiplicity of dialects, often mutually incomprehensible, that are spoken across the region. The classical poetic tradition that stretches back to the time of the *mu'allaqat* is still alive, following the centuries-old rules that dictate its 16 possible "seas" or meters, its structure, themes and even rhyme scheme – most often the monorhyme that Arabic vowels allow to be sustained over a long poem.

PRINCE OF POETS

Since the late 19th century, however, Arab poets have increasingly chosen to play with these long-established norms. The use of colloquial Arabic – once considered impossible or improper to write down – has also increased. From the mid-20th century onwards, the most progressive poets have chosen to work in either free verse, which fractures the rhythms of the classical tradition, or prose poetry, which abandons them altogether. (The Arab poets whose work is best known in the West, such as Adonis and Mahmoud Darwish, have largely worked in the free verse tradition, the development of which went hand-in-hand with the search for new forms of political and social structures.) But where the experimental fringes of poetry might be the preserve of intellectuals, there is still a thriving popular poetic tradition that even has its own prime-time TV shows.

This year the hit program *Prince of Poets*, filmed in Abu Dhabi, returned for its fifth season. Based on the familiar *Pop Idol* format, the talent contest pits Arab poets against each other for a cash prize of one million UAE dirhams, and regularly attracts 20 million-plus viewers. Though it focuses on classical, rather than colloquial, poetry, the glitzy show has proven popular with the Facebook generation. In its first season in 2007, it hit the headlines when the young Palestinian poet Tamim Al Barghouti, the son of the Egyptian novelist Radwa Ashour and the Palestinian poet and memoirist Mourid Barghouti, won audiences'

hearts across the region with his poem *In Jerusalem*. The poem was so successful it even became a popular ringtone – despite Al Barghouti not being chosen as the eventual winner. *Prince of Poets*' sister show, *Million's Poet* – which has a similar format but promotes *nabati* poetry composed in a dialect specific to the Gulf – is regularly cited as one of the most popular TV programs in the region, with eager audiences tuning in from Sana'a to Rabat.

While TV and ringtones are helping bring poetry to young people in the Arab world, a new generation in the West is discovering it through the internet. More than 20,000 teenagers currently write poetry on the US-based social reading website Wattpad, with more than 100,000 reading its poems online. On the young adult community writing site Movellas, the most popular poems are read up to 15,000 times. And according to the Southbank Centre Poetry Library in London, "hundreds of thousands" of dedicated English-language poetry websites have emerged, some of which are specially designed for younger readers.

Young people in the Arab world have also adopted poetry as a means of expression in a time of change and upheaval. The Egyptian revolution of early 2011 unleashed a flowering of spontaneous verse and lyrics, capturing revolutionary slogans and changing sentiments in the turbulent months that followed. But while these poems might be beloved of the people, established poets have responded to the outpouring with trepidation. The Egyptian poet, author and journalist Youssef Rakha emphasizes the importance of not confusing "post-folk" oral verse with a more literary tradition.

"Recently we've seen a lot of vernacular poetry that's very traditionally minded, that has a great overlap with music lyrics, and this has a relatively large place in Egyptian culture," he says. "On the other hand, it is rare to find 'serious' poetry that is any good. This kind of poetry is not popular – it's the preserve of a particular kind of educated person. That might be unfortunate, but there's no point in pretending that it's otherwise."

Rakha's own vision of poetry is far from both these street ballads and the more classically based tradition popularized by *Prince of Poets*.

"In English, traditional poetic meters are a lot more flexible and subtle," he says. "In Arabic, they are like drum rhythms. So since the 1950s there have been people who decided to use different rhythms or lengths of rhythms – and this was free verse. Then there were people who said: 'you know, we're not interested in rhythm' – the prose poets. And they are infinitely more interesting to me."

LITERARY LANGUAGE IS ABSOLUTELY AFFECTED BY PEOPLE'S EVERYDAY CONVERSATION. WRITERS CANNOT KEEP AWAY FROM THE WAYS IN WHICH LANGUAGE IS CHANGING

He mentions the "Nineties generation" of Egyptian poets, including Ahmad Yamani and Yasser Abdel Latif, as producing standout examples of work conceived in reaction to both 1960s political engagement and the Adonis-influenced obscurantism of the 1970s.

Part of the interest of these writers' work lies in their play with registers of language. In recent years, for example, the Arabic slang developed for use in chat forums, text messages and social media has had a strong influence on progressive poets' work.

"Literary language is absolutely affected by people's everyday conversation. Writers cannot keep away from the ways in which language is changing," says the young Egyptian poet Aya Nabih. "I find it amusing as a writer and a reader to use some colloquial Egyptian words in a classical Arabic text. When it is done with discretion, this creates a familiarity between the reader and the text."

Writing in colloquial Arabic, which has no formally defined grammar or orthography, also allows poets to escape the weight of tradition carried by standard Arabic.

While new generations in the West share poetry online and Arab teens compose revolutionary lyrics, poets agree the art form has retained its power and mystery even in the age of technology.

"Poetry is a very difficult thing to define," says Rakha. "It's not a straightforward narrative, it's not an essay, not a short story – it's what everything else is not." Dr Hajar concurs. "It is impossible to write a poem by saying: 'OK, today I will sit and write a poem,'" he says. "It is magic – it is all emotion." ●

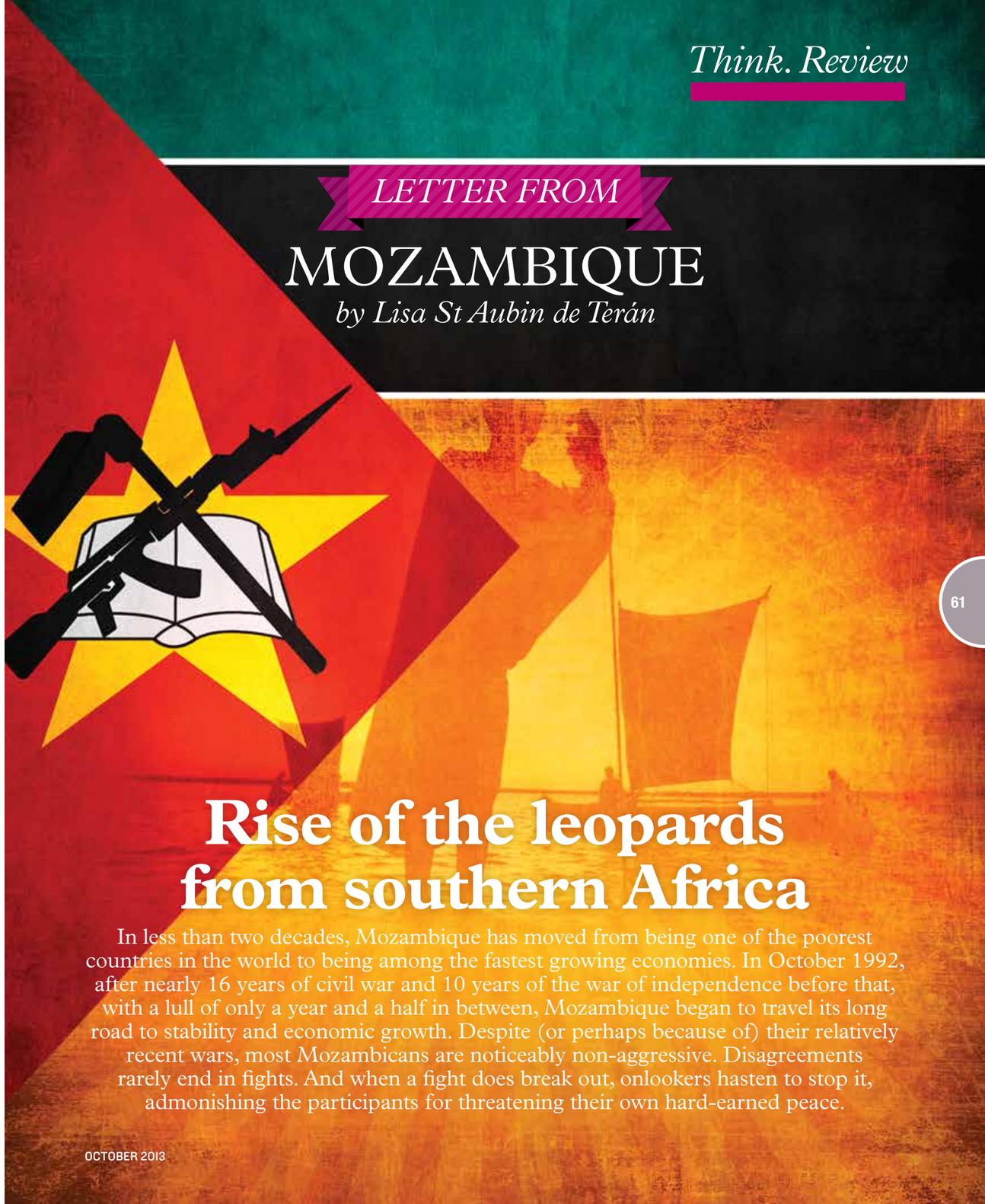
THE AUTHOR

Rachel Aspden is a former Literary Editor of the *New Statesman* and Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Travelling Fellow. She is currently writing a book about the youth of the Arab uprisings.

LETTER FROM

MOZAMBIQUE

by Lisa St Aubin de Terán



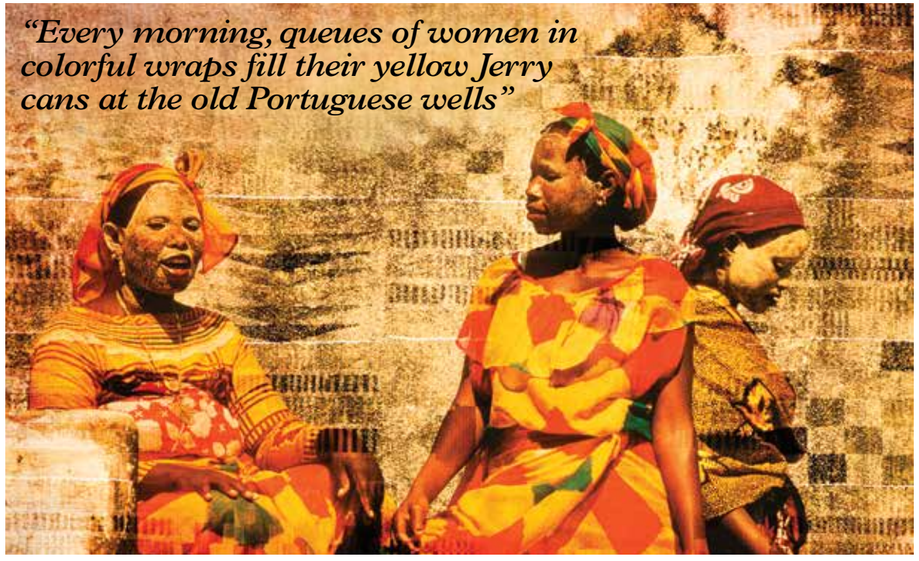
Rise of the leopards from southern Africa

In less than two decades, Mozambique has moved from being one of the poorest countries in the world to being among the fastest growing economies. In October 1992, after nearly 16 years of civil war and 10 years of the war of independence before that, with a lull of only a year and a half in between, Mozambique began to travel its long road to stability and economic growth. Despite (or perhaps because of) their relatively recent wars, most Mozambicans are noticeably non-aggressive. Disagreements rarely end in fights. And when a fight does break out, onlookers hasten to stop it, admonishing the participants for threatening their own hard-earned peace.

Friends and strangers alike greet in the street, and the former battle cry "Estamos juntos!" (We are in this together) has become a friendly token of solidarity in the new battle against poverty.

During the so-called Civil War, in which Mozambique was actually invaded by the white-minority ruled Rhodesia, one million Mozambicans died, the land was sown with a deadly crop of landmines and much of the infrastructure was destroyed, including thousands of schools and health posts.

Despite its legacy of devastation, the war is pretty much a taboo subject. Many young Mozambicans (and most Mozambicans are young) don't know what the conflict was about, nor that it was fomented, paid for and orchestrated from abroad. Just as the country's ruling party and liberation movement, Frelimo, sought peace and reconciliation after the current president, Armando Guebuza, signed the Peace Agreement of Sant'Egidio in 1992, so did the traumatized population. The result has been 20 years of political stability and domestic harmony. But the result has also been to hide many unpalatable truths about the war of destabilization and the ruthless methods used against Frelimo and the newly liberated people of Mozambique.



I have been living in the heartland of the Macua "nation" in the northern Province of Nampula for the past 10 years. It is an ideal place for a novelist. The seemingly endless stretches of beach are wide and empty, and wild vegetation trails down to the sea. Surprising ruins nestle in the bush: the remains of 16th and 17th century Portuguese villas and keeps. Home is a sleepy seaside village called Mossuril. Every morning, the imam calls the faithful to prayer. Every morning, queues of women in colorful wraps fill their yellow Jerry cans at the old Portuguese wells. And every evening, after the sun has dropped back into the ocean, bush babies wail and protest in the mango trees.

For the hundreds of years that Mozambique Island was the capital city, this scatter of houses, churches, mosques – which is all that is left of Mossuril – was a place of importance. Ironwood (much prized for making masts), gold, ivory and the "black gold" of slaves were all transported via its port. And long before Vasco da Gama landed on its shores in 1498, the Macua inhabitants had been mixing and trading with Chinese, then Indian and then Arab merchants.

I moved to Mossuril in 2003 because my partner was developing luxury tourism in the area. One of my first reactions was: "What about me? What will I do all day?" But after one brief visit I saw that it was so poor there would be plenty to do, and I started a foundation to do some of it. Ten years later, there are still not enough hours in the day or dollars in the kitty to do half as much as I'd like but, despite that, things are moving forward. My community project, Terán Foundation, has worked with hundreds of local residents to improve their lives. Meanwhile, my partner is developing a golf course and school. And slowly but surely, the government is getting things done.

Back in 2003, despite being the administrative capital of Mossuril District, Mossuril "town" had no high school, no doctor, no garage or petrol pump, no bar or restaurant, no tourist accommodation, no internet and only a couple of very basic shops. To buy a nail or a saw meant traveling 180km to Nampula City.

Malaria was rife, mosquito nets were rare and treatment hard to come by. Ten years ago, unemployment was well over 80 percent and sub-nutrition was practically endemic. Infant and child mortality was high; many of the deaths were unrecorded other than in the hearts of grieving parents. Babies were born without birth certificates and they died without death certificates, and were buried in the backyards of their families' mud huts. In life, as in death, the people of Mossuril lived steeped in poverty and tradition, wrapped in the twin shawls of Islam and ancestor worship.

One thousand years earlier, in the great exodus of the Bantu from West Africa, the Macua people had settled along the coast. Apart from the arrival of Islam and Arab culture, and then later, and to a far lesser extent, that of Catholicism and Portuguese culture, nothing much changed from one century to the next. Fishermen fished in traditional *dhows*, witch doctors cured the sick and chased out demons, *malimos* (witches and wizards) cast spells, and the *regulos*, the village chiefs, ruled via parliaments of local men and women. Isolated from the rest of the country by abysmal roads, without landlines or electricity, the internet, TV, newspapers or post, the outlying villages of Mossuril seemed locked in a time warp when I lived in such a one until 2007.

Much of that has now changed. But it has changed in a laid back way because life is simply relaxed here, despite some daily hardships. *Vakani vakani* (slowly slowly, or take it easy) could be the Macua motto. But, for all that, the remarkable changes that have unfolded in Mossuril on a minor scale reflect the far bigger developments that have and will change life forever in Mozambique. Mossuril now has a high school working three shifts per day. Dozens of new teachers are trained each year. Much needed extra primary schools are also dotted across the district. The local hospital has been restored and hosts two doctors, a new maternity wing, an X-ray machine, consulting rooms and an administrative wing. Practically every adult in the district is on the electoral register and biometric ID equipment has enabled thousands of villagers to get identity cards. There is a big Saturday market, a dozen new shops, a petrol station, four bars and two restaurants, three guesthouses and minibus transport of sorts up and down the (still abysmal) dirt road. Agriculture is gradually improving but so *vakani vakani* that the level of sub-nutrition continues to be a significant problem. The district's only industry is sea salt and its producers need help. There are still no financial services of any kind in the entire district of 200,000 souls but there are rumors that a bank is coming. Inch Allah!

"Infant and child mortality was high; many of the deaths were unrecorded other than in the hearts of grieving parents. Babies were born without birth certificates and they died without death certificates, and were buried in the backyards of their families' mud huts"

I can vouch for all this, having seen it grow under my eyes. And I can vouch for the mushroom-like growth of Nampula, Mozambique's second biggest city and capital of the north.

Between 2011 and 2012, 18 new banks opened. There were factories, warehouses, a major brewery. Nampula's development is remarkable. Even more so is that of the neighboring provinces, where important new harbors, the exploitation of coal, natural gas and oilfields and the building of container ports mean the country is booming. After decades of being the Cinderella of East Africa, Mozambique has been given a beautiful gown, a glittering tiara, and a splendid carriage in which to go to the ball.

In 2012, 700 new classrooms were built and another 1,000 are scheduled for 2013, reports AIM, the national news agency. But according to the Minister of Education, Augusto Jone, there are still 70,000 classrooms in a poor state of repair. Also, although the plan was to clear all landmines by 2009, there is still the equivalent of 900 football pitches that need to be demined.

The opposition party, Renamo, has been displaying its armed guards and threatening to disrupt the country again. Meanwhile, given a degree of provocation which I believe would not be so tolerated anywhere in the West, the government has reacted calmly and seems not to be unduly alarmed by Renamo's demands. By remaining calm and acting justly despite being threatened, Frelimo appears to have passed a litmus test for democracy.

The threat to Mozambique's future seems to come less from arms than from the rape of its natural resources by foreign companies. As skilled Chinese workers stream through the international airports of Maputo, Pemba and Nampula, there is a parallel stampede of would-be and actual investors from the West. The latter express sour grapes at the scope of China's investments while giving the Chinese zero credit for their foresight in buying in long before anyone else saw the merit in it. The West assumed that Mozambique was worthless and thus did not bother with it. For 16 years, while it was invaded and tortured, no country in the world thought to step in to save or help.

Post-1992, the country was showered with foreign aid while one mineral after another emerged from under its leached red soil. So much emerged, in fact, that there is a get-rich-quick mentality growing. Between 2007 and 2012, 40,000 Portuguese emigrated to Mozambique to make their fortunes. The United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recently highlighted Mozambique as an example of an African country that is actually in line to meet the Millennium Development Goals on time.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said: "When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said: 'Let us pray.' We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land."

Now, it is not so much the land itself as the minerals underneath that are at risk. Since postcolonial Africa is a far cry from its 19th century counterpart, let us pray that this time around all African eyes stay open when the deals go down. ●

Lisa St Aubin de Terán is an acclaimed novelist who has won both the Somerset Maugham Award and the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize. Her next novel, *Kafka Lodge*, will be published later this year.

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WRITTEN BY
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"Realpolitik is back in fashion in the Western world. The idealism and sense of triumph that crept into Western political culture following the end of the Cold War and which peaked with the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad's Firdos Square 10 years ago has been replaced by the "return of history". Niccolò Machiavelli is undergoing yet another renaissance – celebrated in recent books by Jonathan Powell (Tony Blair's former chief of staff) and Philip Bobbitt, America's pre-eminent public intellectual – and the most liberal president ever to inhabit the White House has been also perhaps the most "realist" in the conduct of foreign affairs, with a zero-sum security policy in which "interests" are paramount.

Realpolitik, as we understand it today, is shorthand for self-interested and non-ideological statecraft; inherent within it is a suspicion of grandstanding and moralizing on the international stage. Realpolitik has sometimes had pejorative connotations, and sits uneasily alongside notions of "enlightenment", "morality" and "virtue". Equally, however, it has also had its defenders who regard it as the best tool for the successful wielding of political power and the preservation of national interests. Its exponents argue that political idealism can lead to worse moral outcomes than the cool, circumspect approach to statecraft that characterizes their creed.

The term was first given life by the German writer August Ludwig von Rochau in his 1853 treatise *Grundsätze der Realpolitik* (The Principles of Realpolitik). Von Rochau was what might be called a "liberal mugged by reality" who had taken part in the revolution of 1848 only to see the constitutional idealism of the revolutionaries be swatted down by coercive governments or overtaken by more powerful social forces such as class and religion.

"Realpolitik does not move in a foggy future, but in the present's field of vision," he wrote. "It does not consider its task to consist in the realization of ideals, but in the attainment of concrete ends." In essence, it was a hard-nosed approach to the realities of political life which was adopted by conservatives such as Otto von Bismarck, the Prussian Chancellor from 1862 to 1890, and became a central force in the unification of Germany.

From its German origins, realpolitik seeped into the English language in two ways. The first was in the run-up to the First World War, when Britain first became wary of Germany's foreign policy aims. For Britons, realpolitik was taken to imply cynical and uncivilized conduct on the international stage – a lack of respect for the treaties and laws which provided some semblance of order in global affairs. The other way it became so embedded in Western political consciousness was through the German emigrant intellectuals who arrived in America before and after the Second World War such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans Morgenthau, Fritz Kraemer and Henry Kissinger.

Going back to von Rochau's original definition, much of what now masquerades as modern realpolitik has strayed quite far from the original essence of the term. He would have been unimpressed with the way 21st century realism has become something of a creed – a posture, or a knee-jerk reaction which responds to idealism with a roll of the eyes, and retreats to its own set of rigid doctrines (the most common of which is a fixed adherence to the principle of non-intervention in the affairs of other states). First, he warned, realpolitik does "not entail the renunciation of individual judgement and it requires least of all an uncritical kind of submission." It was more "appropriate to think of it as a mere measuring and weighing and calculating of facts that need to be processed politically." Above all, it was not a strategy itself, but a way of thinking: "an enemy of... self-delusion" which should never follow a preconceived script.

Second, and this is a lesson sometimes lost on modern realists, von Rochau never forgot the power of ideas. "Realpolitik would contradict itself if it were to deny the rights of the intellect, of ideas, of religion or any other of the moral forces to which the human soul renders homage… In this sense even the craziest chimaera may become a very serious realpolitical matter." Ultimately, however – and this is where von Rochau recognized the limits of the Enlightenment in which he had been schooled – the importance of ideas was not measured by their nobility but by their political force. It was common that "the most beautiful ideal that enthuses noble souls is a political nullity". When it came to "phantasms" such as "eternal peace", international fraternity and equality, with "no will and no force" behind them, "Realpolitik passes by shrugging its shoulders." ●


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