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AUGUST 2014

Democracy is a good idea

On June 28th my eldest brother crossed the prime meridian of life and death and with it returned memories of an intellectual who taught me to question everything...never to accept an idea without dissecting its form and purpose.

Recently I watched a TV programme that discussed the issue of taking democracy to countries that were deemed to be 'undemocratic', whatever this means. Of course the list of the usual suspects was called out much to the delight of Muslim baiters in the audience. When the uncouth display by these zealots was firmly put down by the moderator, sanity returned. The discussion veered from the unnatural borders of countries (an ugly inheritance from the colonial days) to imposition of alien cultural values on a country in the form of democratic processes couched in the insistence that individual rights is paramount to being free... free being the operative word here. This word has been used threadbare and has now lost its meaning.

What is democracy? What does it represent? Does it represent a culture? Or, is it an utopian concept that is still being tried and tested? And can *one size fits all* work in a multicultural world where thousands of communities survive in hierarchical social setups that have stood the test of time; until of course when confronted by alien notions of right and wrong, which is usually promoted by one religion or another.

Did the aborigines need democracy before their land was occupied and their vibrant ethos dismantled by those seeking to civilise the 'natives', to set them free from the *bondage* of their culture?

Did the Native American Indians need democracy before settlers took over their lands and put them into reservation like animals?

One suspects that those who shout from the rooftops about democratic ideals are the ones who perpetrate a fraud on humanity. For they use this banner to infiltrate and destroy ancient societies. Democracy, as one sees it, cannot be 'imposed' because it threatens the core social values within close knit communities where each member of the group has a preordained function or job to serve the community as a whole, like bees that work in tandem to collect honey and build a hive.

"I believe Gandhi is the only person who knew about real democracy - not democracy as the right to go and buy what you want, but democracy as the responsibility to be accountable to everyone around you. Democracy begins with freedom from hunger; freedom from unemployment, freedom from fear, and freedom from hatred. To me, those are the real freedoms on the basis of which good human societies are based."

— Vandana Shiva

The lead characters that carry the banner of democracy can themselves be accused of using it as a sword to dismember nations, to bring down legally elected representatives of the people and to create confusion for narrow political objectives. Their brothers in arms are the burgeoning band of human rights activists, many of whom have agendas to deliberately spread misinformation about a people or country so as to internationally discredit either or both. This is followed by sanctions with the aim of bringing the targeted people or country under control for reasons that are both political and economic...and in some cases, religious.

Major human rights violations have been on the rise in the world's leading democracies. Such news is generally non news for the parochial news media. The Occupy Movement was criminally shutdown by democratic states because it represented democratic ideals...to protest against an elected government's actions and/or inactions. This defeats the very purpose of democracy.

Democracy is the consent by the majority of the populace of matters related to the social contract and it has to be *in sync* with the aspirations of all those concerned. Every member/citizen is a share holder in a democracy.

Such a situation does not exist.

However, democracy is a good idea...nothing more.

Here is a quote on democracy from Mahatma Gandhi that sums it up : "*What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or in the holy name of liberty or democracy?*"

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

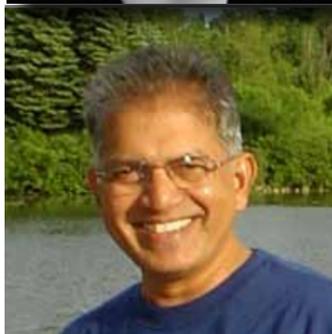
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Kiss with a Fist - Domestic Violence against Women in Thailand

Joana Stella Kompa

Kompa was born 1963 in Germany and has lived for the past 24 years in various cultures of Asia. She studied Journalism, New English Literature and Normative Ethics at Tübingen University as well as Philosophy of Mind and Theory of Knowledge at Oxford University. Joana has been working as a Senior Lecturer and Program Director for Media Design at Temasek Polytechnic (Singapore) and Raffles International College (Bangkok). Currently she is finishing her M(Sc) in Applied Psychology at Liverpool University. www.joanakompa.com



Humility and the Ego

Dr. Ivo Coelho

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Kay Wilson in an interview

Natalie Wood

Born in Birmingham, England, U.K., Natalie Wood began working in journalism a month prior to outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. She remained in regional Jewish journalism for over 20 years, leaving full-time writing to help run a family business and then completed a range of general office work. Wood and her husband, Brian Fink emigrated from Manchester to Israel in March 2010 and live in Karmiel, Galilee where she continues to work, concentrating on creative writing. She features in *Smith Magazine's new Six Word Memoirs On Jewish Life* and contributes to *Technorati*, *Blogcritics* and *Live Encounters magazine*. Her stories - [Website](#) and journalism - [Website](#)



Refugees and Transitional Justice: Reflections on fieldwork from Liberia

Jacqueline Parry

Jacqueline is a PhD candidate at the Centre for International Governance and Justice, Australian National University, working within Professor Hilary Charlesworth's ARC Laureate Fellowship Project. She began her career as a migration agent in Sydney, and in 2007 commenced work with UNHCR as a Protection consultant. She has since undertaken roles with UNHCR in Indonesia, Jordan, Malawi and Afghanistan. Her research interests include human rights, refugee law, transitional justice and state-building. Reprinted by special permission of [Regarding Rights](#)



The Holy City of Pushkar, Rajasthan, India

Joo Peter

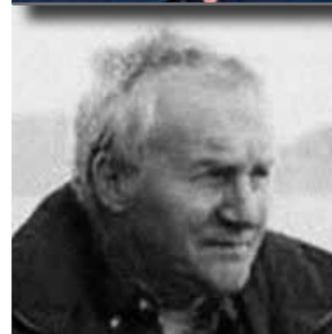
Aka Joachim Peter is a Visual artist and writer based in Southwest Germany, presently working on documentary & travel photography in Asia right. He loves to explore and combine all arts in his work. Joo has studied Arts; painting and graphics, worked for theatre (designing stage, costume and light) , did some work for television and film, went into teaching. He writes essays and a blog in his native tongue, German, for he feels his language combines philosophy and humour. www.joo-peter.photoshelter.com



China debates its future role in the Middle East

Dr. Stig Stenslie

Stenslie, head of the Asia Branch of the Norwegian Defence Staff, has held visiting fellowships at : the Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies in Oslo, National University Singapore, Columbia University New York. A doctorate in political science from the University of Oslo, he is author of several books on the contemporary Middle East and China, the most recent being, with *Marte Kjær Galtung, 49 Myths About China* (Rowman and Littlefield, forthcoming 2014), *Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia: The Challenge of Succession* (Routledge, 2011) and, with Kjetil Selvik, *Stability and Change in the Modern Middle East* (IB Tauris, 2011). Reprinted by special permission of [NOREF](#)



Homeland and Away

Terry McDonagh

Irish poet and dramatist, Terry McDonagh, taught creative writing at the University of Hamburg and was Drama Director at the Int. School Hamburg for 15 years. He now works freelance; has been writer in residence in Europe, Asia, Australia; published seven poetry collections, book of letters, prose and poetry for young people translated into Indonesian and German, distributed internationally by Syracuse Uni. Press; latest poetry collection *Ripple Effect* due for publication in May/June 2013, Arlen House; next children's story, *Michel the Merman*, illustrated by Marc Barnes (NZ) to be published in September 2013. He lives in Hamburg and Ireland. www.terry-mcdonagh.com



Where Literature & The Arts Make A Difference

Aryaa Naik

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What Women Want

Dr. Candess M Campbell

Candess M. Campbell, PhD is the #1 Best-selling author of *12 Weeks to Self-Healing: Transforming Pain through Energy Medicine*. She is in private practice in Washington State (US) as a licensed mental health and chemical dependency counselor. Internationally she is an Intuitive Consultant, Speaker, and Seminar Leader. www.12weekstoselfhealing.com



Indian Summer Drinks With A Twist

Perinaz Avari

Perinaz (Peri) Avari is a proud Parsi Zoroastrian, native of cosmopolitan Mumbai in India and hospitality professional who's been on many 'food adventures', especially during her 10 years working for the Taj Group of Hotels in India. Now living in America, Peri shares her hospitality wisdom and passion for Parsi and Indian food by creating simple recipes with a global appeal, through her informative articles and world travel adventures on - www.perisspiceladle.com



Activists smear lipstick under their eyes to represent bruising during a campaign to raise awareness about violence against women. Photo: Bangkok Post - [LINK www.thephuketnews.com](http://www.thephuketnews.com)



Kiss with a Fist - Domestic Violence against Women in Thailand

Joana Stella Kompa

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Domestic Violence: A Brief Description

Based on an international landmark study by the World-Health Organization (WHO, 2006; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006), domestic violence in Thailand ranks high in the categories of sexual violence and combined sexual and physical violence, with higher prevalence in rural areas (Garcia-Moreno et al., p. 1265). A survey by Mahidol University's National Institute for Child and Family Development in 2012 reported a sharp increase in domestic abuse encompassing 30.8 % of all Thai households. Divorce-rates in Thailand increased correspondingly from 10.8 percent in 2009 to 33 percent in 2012 (DW, 2013), indicating a serious problem in gender relations.

Best-fit Theories

Socio-cultural norms and upbringing appear to serve as priming factors predisposing to future domestic violence. Thai men are traditionally encouraged from adolescence to go out and 'have fun' (Thai: 'bai tiao'), which includes visitations of commercial sex workers and drinking with peers, maladaptive behavioral patterns supportive of poor self-control that usually continue into adulthood. Young women are obliged to stay at home and take care of the family. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1983, 2001) at first glance fits this process best. Men learn to socially disconnect from family responsibility while women are dehumanized to primarily facilitate men's sexual needs. Thai wives who follow such gender traditionalism and who are economically dependent on their husbands are at significantly greater risk of domestic violence (Xiaohe & Sirisunyaluck, 2011).

Frustration, aggression (Berkowitz, 1969) and subsequent anger develops when the lower socio-economic status of Thai men, combined with lower education, leads to stress or failure in fulfilling their role for family and marriage (Hoffman et. al, 1994; Gelles, 1974). The frustration is based on the cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) of dominant males experiencing self-esteem threat, low prestige, low status, inadequacy (Gelles & Straus, 1988) and relative deprivation (Myers & Twenge, 2013, p.360-362). Triggers and cues for violence are typically verbal confrontations by women voicing out their unhappiness and men demanding role compliance (Hoffman, p.141).

Facilitating factors are wide-spread alcoholism to unleash aggression (Assanangkornchai et al., 2010; Srisurapanont et al., 2011; Myers & Twenge, p.358), infidelity, gambling and financial debt (The Nation, 2013) as well as societal trends such as the reduction of three-generation families to nuclear families (Hoffman, p.143). Thai TV-shows frequently demonstrate the beating and slapping of women as socially acceptable behavior, desensitizing audiences (Myers & Twenge, p.377) fitting with script theory as a subset of social learning theory (Anderson & Bushman, 2002, p.31). Thai children exposed to domestic violence likewise internalize domestic conflict as available violent scripts (Kerley et al., 2002). Such internalized schemata tend to play out later in life such as, for example, in high school (Sherer & Sherer, 2014).

A Real-Life Scenario

The problem of domestic violence shall be illustrated with a real-life story to model a typical context before discussing theory. Journalists of the German 'Deutsche Welle' interviewed Jaded Chouwilai, director of the Thai human rights group 'Women and Men Progressive Movement Foundation', who recollects the following case: *'A woman named Suphaksorn turned to Jaded's Foundation for support after being abused by her former boyfriend. She told DW that her ex-boyfriend got married to another woman and when she wanted to end their relationship, the guy became aggressive. "He brought a gun to my office and threatened to kill me if I didn't behave normally," Suphaksorn said. "After that, things turn abusive - he would smack me and bang my head against the wall, against the bed. He also tried to stab me," she added.'* (DW, 2013)

Jaded Chouwilai, director of the Thai human rights group 'Women and Men Progressive Movement Foundation', recalls the following case: *'A woman named Suphaksorn turned to Jaded's Foundation for support after being abused by her former boyfriend. She told DW that her ex-boyfriend got married to another woman and when she wanted to end their relationship, the guy became aggressive. "He brought a gun to my office and threatened to kill me if I didn't behave normally," Suphaksorn said. "After that, things turn abusive - he would smack me and bang my head against the wall, against the bed. He also tried to stab me," she added.'* (DW, 2013)

A Real-Life Scenario Contd...

Thai men, as men in other cultures, are brought up with a cognitive belief, in form of a belief of entitlement, that they can have relationships with multiple women but women are supposed to stay faithful to the same man and under no circumstances can have relationships with other men. If such violation of the belief occurs, even hypothetically, extreme jealousy and rage is unleashed. Needless to say that such belief is bound to fail when meeting social reality.

In terms of Festinger's Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (1957) his version of the 'Belief Disconfirmation Paradigm' (Festinger, 1956) would be most adequate to frame the implications of such a belief, this is when people are confronted with external information opposing their most salient beliefs. The man's girlfriend protesting (questioning his belief) while he has already married another woman is such information creating non-congruence threatening belief disconfirmation.

In this case the threat of belief disconfirmation is justified by acts of violence, equally based on the belief of absolute entitlement (*'I am allowed to punish any women for their wrongdoing'*). In explicitly patriarchal cultures such as Islam social norms are identical with cultural norms and practice, e.g., Morse et al. (2012) report that 88% of Jordanian women believe in the justification of wife beating, in particular for insulting, disobeying and arguing with the husband (Morse, 2012, p. 27). The dominant role of the husband is not disputed, but internalized instead.

Man's frustration and subsequent anger of not being able to provide well for his wife and children, especially in impoverished rural areas, could be interpreted by frustration-aggression hypothesis (Berkowitz, 1969) as a variation of cognitive dissonance theory.

The self-belief of being a strong partner and husband is challenged by social reality, disrupting cognitive contingency (Festinger, 1957) and causing tension which is released by aggressive and violent behavior. According to Festinger, cognitive dissonance is most powerful when it involves self-image. The interpretation fits with findings of Schumacher et al. (2004), linking behavioral and attitude change from typical- to violent behavior when paired with verbal conflict and jealousy (Schumacher & Slep, 2004).

At age 11 the boy could not tie his shoelaces, but he had already learned how to enjoy controlling his sister by setting her up against his mother. The example highlights that self-image (the boy is going to be a proud man) is not identical with autonomy and that his sister's servitude deprives him of developing any competence to deal with real-life problems and relationships. Ill-conditioning appears to start early in life. Cognitive dissonance necessarily arises when learned and conditioned egocentricity and poor self-control meet justified social demands by others.

A more specific hypothesis has been suggested by Koolen and colleagues (2012). The authors write that *"Overall, the findings suggest that proactive aggression is predicted by egocentric and disagreeable tendencies, whereas reactive aggression is predicted by poor self-regulation and the misattribution of blame to others."* (Koolen et al., 2012, p. 786).

This means that proactive aggression appears primarily based on personality traits while reactive aggression is grounded on poor self-regulation. This differentiation helps to suggest different types of inter-ventions. For addressing poor self-control, interventions based on reality therapy, problem-solving and multi-modal frameworks, especially in community settings, have proven to be the most promising approaches (McGuire, 2008, p.2588).

The reduction of cognitive dissonance by women avoiding, trivializing and downplaying the seriousness of their partner's violent acts (Zaitman, 1999) to restore cognitive harmony would be a further example (*'No marriage is perfect', 'He did not mean this intentionally', 'We still can still make this work', 'Maybe it is my fault' etc.*).

On a social level the public justification of intimate partner violence could be interpreted in a similar light (Waltermaurer, 2012). It becomes obvious that the traditional upbringing of boys and young men combined with low parental demands are the root of the Thai malaise.

I like to close with a personal observation. In a Thai family close to a friend of mine with a younger, 11-year old son and his five years older foster sister, the younger boy was given all privileges while his sister acted de facto his designated servant. He would not have to enroll in any duties such as washing the dishes or cleaning the house and was never counseled when eating food that was reserved for his sister. His mother would praise him continuously while his sister, although diligent and well-mannered, was blamed for the smallest issues. At age 11 the boy could not tie his shoelaces, but he had already learned how to enjoy controlling his sister by setting her up against his mother. The example highlights that self-image (the boy is going to be a proud man) is not identical with autonomy and that his sister's servitude deprives him of developing any competence to deal with real-life problems and relationships. Ill-conditioning appears to start early in life. Cognitive dissonance necessarily arises when learned and conditioned egocentricity and poor self-control meet justified social demands by others.

Thailand has introduced since 2007 'The Protection of Domestic Violence Victims Act' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011) and the act's implementation is only as useful as the support that women can obtain locally. This entails, for example, the availability of skilled social workers and not policemen who themselves take a chauvinist perspective towards female victims or who are reluctant to help because they see domestic violence as a private matter, as Mo Ngyuen points out (ChiangmaiNews, 2013).

Critique

As demonstrated, not a single theory fully explains the interplay of multiple processes leading to aggression and domestic violence against women, supporting the general aggression model (GAM) proposed by Anderson and Bushman (2002). According to GAM, inputs are dominant social roles of men (the person variable) into a situation where traditional gender role expectations cannot be met. The employed routes in this conflicting process are affect and arousal due to poor-self control with little cognitive moderation. Outcomes are subsequently impulsive actions that serve as a template for future violent social encounters and habitual behavioral cycles (Anderson & Bushman, p.34). Liza Romanow points out other social consequences of promoting discriminative social norms for Thai women such as the low participation in parliament, the exploitation as factory workers and sad role in human sex trafficking (Romanow, 2012).

Thailand has introduced since 2007 'The Protection of Domestic Violence Victims Act' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011) and the act's implementation is only as useful as the support that women can obtain locally. This entails, for example, the availability of skilled social workers and not policemen who themselves take a chauvinist perspective towards female victims or who are reluctant to help because they see domestic violence as a private matter, as Mo Ngyuen points out (ChiangmaiNews, 2013). Domestic violence is too serious of an issue to be denied public discussion as a taboo. Besides, long-term social change is only possible by changing the traditional cultural norms and parenting styles that have created a dead-end street for so many young women and men.

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The Buddha and the Christ in their time, and Gandhi and Mandela in ours, are far from weak figures. They stand out magnificent in the serenity of their choices and the strength of their gentle compassion. Theirs is not a humility that is pusillanimity. They rejoice in their gifts while also acknowledging the precarity of the human condition.

Humility and the Ego

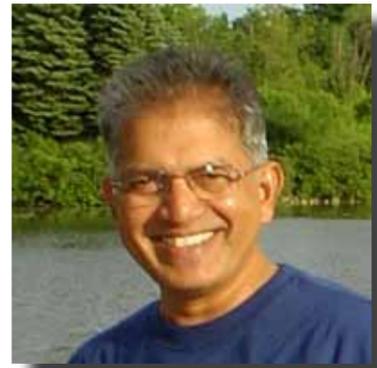
In the ancient Greek world, as represented by Plato and Plutarch, humility suggests the condition of someone held in low esteem by self and others. In the Old Testament, the humble are the little people, unfortunate sufferers, discreet, self-effacing, and reserved within their community. Against this background, therefore, it is interesting to find that Thomas Aquinas relates humility to magnanimity on one side and to pride on the other – which is of course, the Aristotelian technique of defining virtue by relating it to its extremes on one side and on the other.

Thus Aquinas is able to say that it is not against humility to aim at high actions worthy of praise, for magnanimity, ‘greatness of soul,’ is itself a virtue, one that implies a certain aspiration of the spirit to great things. Humility, then, does not mean running away from actions that might win praise and recognition. “People are praiseworthy when they despise recognition by refusing to act meanly to gain it, and when they do not esteem it too highly. But it would be deplorable if they despised recognition by not bothering to perform acts worthy of it. In this way magnanimity is concerned with recognition, in that it is eager to do actions worthy of it, but not so as to overvalue recognition by men.” (Summa Theologiae II-II 129, ad 3m) The truly humble person has also largeness of soul: she does not hesitate to undertake acts worthy of praise; the point is that she will not stoop to meanness in obtaining recognition, and will have a healthy moderation in her esteem for human praise.

The magnanimous person of course runs many risks: the risk of ambition, or the excessive search for fame and honour; presumption, or relying on oneself for something beyond one’s powers, not seeking God’s help; vainglory, or seeking personal glory or display of one’s virtues. But there is also the opposite of magnanimity, which is pusillanimity, or falling short of one’s capability, refusing to extend oneself to achieve an aim that is commensurate with one’s own powers.

True humility, then, is founded on truth: a realistic self-estimate, one that is true and realistic also in this sense, that it gives due recognition to the author and source of one’s capacities, God. Humility, then, is deeply allied to prayer.

In the Thomist tradition, however, humility remains a human, not a theological, virtue. It is first in the order of time, in that it clears obstacles to the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. It is these latter that are superior to humility in the order of perfection, because it is they that bring us directly into contact and communion with God.



Philosopher, Priest, Author
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It would be interesting to ask whether humility understood in this way is equivalent to the absence of ego, *anatta*, selflessness of the Oriental traditions.

A theistic tradition such as that represented in the Bhagavad Gita does distinguish *niskama karma*, disinterested action, from the love bestowed by God on the human being, and the human response to this love.

In a non-theistic tradition such as classical Buddhism, instead, it is *anatta* or selflessness that seems to be the superior and more extensive category: it is the selfless one, the Enlightened One, who is full of *karuna*, compassion. In nirvana, there is no place for self, selfishness, and ego. And this is, with all probability, the great point made by the Buddha: leave aside all metaphysical speculation, and concentrate on suffering, and on the way out of suffering. Marvellously, in his discovery of this way, he discovered also the great virtue, *karuna*. *Anatta* is deeply and wonderfully related to *karuna*. True selflessness leads to deep compassion for those who are still embroiled in the vicissitudes of *I* and *mine*.

In the light of this, what might we make of Nietzsche’s attacks on the weakness promoted by Christianity and other religions, on their exaltation of the humble and the defenceless as a sort of revenge of the weak on the strong, in an attempt to give the powerful a bad conscience? One has to make one’s choice, I guess. And perhaps Nietzsche was simply reacting against degenerate understandings of humility. The Buddha and the Christ in their time, and Gandhi and Mandela in ours, are far from weak figures. They stand out magnificent in the serenity of their choices and the strength of their gentle compassion. Theirs is not a humility that is pusillanimity. They rejoice in their gifts while also acknowledging the precarity of the human condition. Jesus spends nights in prayer and communion with his Father, from whom he receives all things, and is able to walk tall and free even at the moment of his trial and humiliation. The Buddha teaches us the secret of *vipassana*, and is able to smile serenely at the Brahmin who throws insults at him. Prayer, as Raimundo Panikkar has explained well, is related to our precariousness, our fragility, as becomes so evident in the Italian word for it, *preghiera*. Opposite to it is the inability to bow before the Throne, as reported by Carl Jung in one of his strange dreams. This is the ultimate choice, the ultimate root of true humility and *anatta*: to bow or not. It is a Luciferian choice.



Hate the Hatred: A Survivor's Guide To Beating Terror

Kay Wilson speaks to Natalie Wood about her horrific experience, living in Israel and coping with survival.



Kay Wilson became [international news](#) after surviving a brutal terror attack in Israel during which another woman died. It happened in December 2010 while Kay, a British-born Jew and **Kristine Luken**, her American Christian friend, were hiking in the Mata Forest outside Beit Shemesh, near Jerusalem.

Kay had first visited Israel in her teens, making *aliya* (formally emigrating) in 1991 just as SCUD missiles began falling on Tel Aviv during the First Gulf War. But the experience did not faze her and she remained in Israel, going on to work variously as an illustrator and cartoonist, then a jazz pianist before becoming a tour guide, speaking in both Hebrew and English and specialising in providing Christian tourists with a greater understanding of the Christian Bible within the context of Second Temple Judaism.

Kay and Kristine had met during a Holocaust study tour for Christians in Poland. As a guide Kay was interested to see how Christians relate to the Holocaust. Kristine wanted to learn more about Jewish history. They became close friends and kept in contact.

Since the attack in which she suffered 13 machete wounds and dozens of broken bones, Kay has become a [motivational speaker](#) and now discusses human rights and justice for the victims of terrorism on behalf of several Israel advocacy groups and Magen David Adom – Israel's national emergency service.

You're a cartoonist. Have you drawn as therapy since the attack? Indeed, have you drawn anything? If so, what have you produced?

I'm now working on a weekly syndicate for The Times of Israel. It's a cartoon series called Let My People Giggle, which follows the Torah portions each week. It will be launched in the middle of July.

You're also a jazz pianist. Who's your favourite Jewish jazz musician? Maybe you like to doodle on the keys? Not just Somewhere over the Rainbow? Do you play any other instruments? Perhaps compose a little?

I like Irving Berlin. He was born Israel Beilin and taught himself piano by playing on the black keys. He is America's most prolific composer. I admire that he did all that he did against all odds and from nothing. Technically, I play the violin but I don't play it because I don't have one any more so I only play the piano. I don't know if I actually compose or just sit and play what comes into my head in the hope to discover new sounds. When I like how something sounds, then I write it down. If that's composing then I suppose I do compose!

And the walking! I appreciate that as a former keen long-distance runner you may have recovered somewhat more ably than a previously sedentary person. Nonetheless it was quite an achievement for you to walk the 10 kilometres you managed during this year's Jerusalem Marathon on behalf of the One Family terror victims' support group. How much money did you raise?

I didn't raise any money. I walked/ran to encourage others to do it so they could raise the money.

It's now three-and-half-years since you and Kristine Luken were attacked and by the time this interview is published, it will be at least a couple of months since the kidnap and murder of the three Orthodox Jewish teenagers on the West Bank in Israel. Do you think the State of Israel should consider the death penalty for these crimes?

I decline to answer because my answer is complex and this interview does not warrant a yes or no answer without me stating why I advocate or don't advocate for the death penalty.

I hate their hatred. I am sick of their sickness. Justice to a certain degree has been done so I choose not to dwell on them or hate them, not for their sake but for my own.

Instead I fill my life with positive people and beautiful things.

We all have different reasons. What impelled you to make *aliya* (immigrate to Israel) and then stay in Israel?

I was bored in the UK. I wanted adventure. I thought I'd start off in Tel Aviv and work my way around the world. I'm still here. I was always a latent Zionist and it came into fruition after the event.

On 25 June you announced that you've 'started school at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem'. What course are you taking? Do you have new career plans?

Every day Facebook tells me "You just have to complete your education and then your profile is complete." I didn't know how to get them to stop bugging me, so I lied. I don't believe in a career I believe in taking my experience and becoming a better person in the hope that it will inspire others to choose life. In this sense I am beginning to do more public speaking, especially for Israel advocacy which is a subject dear to my heart.

In the years before the attack did you ever think you'd made a mistake and want to return to the U.K.? I know you've returned on behalf of the StandWithUs educational and advocacy group. Do you miss anything about the U.K.?

I never regretted coming to Israel. I never thought about moving back after the attack. It has been my home since the mid-eighties; I have lived longer here than I did there. All I miss is customer service and creamy beer!

I've read that your dog, Peanut was unharmed by your assailants. What sort of a dog is she? Did she run to the road and bark to try to raise an alarm like dogs sometimes do? Or was she also attacked?

She was a cross between a pincher and a dachshund. They stabbed her but she survived and dragged her way through the forest after me. Sadly, she got run over a year later.

The Star of David necklace you were wearing when you were attacked plays an important symbolic role in your story, both during the attack and after. Why have you decided to have it memorialised, rather than to wear it?

Because it is a reminder to me that I was nearly murdered for being Jewish. It is the only personal item that I wanted returned from the police. I don't want to lose it so I keep it at home.



Photograph courtesy <http://www.standwithus.co.il/>

During a powerful radio interview on Israel National News, you described the scene in court where your assailants' ordinary faces became demonic when you cried 'Am Yisroel chai – the People of Israel live'. But you insist that you hate only hatred and the fact that they've been taught to hate. How do you reconcile this with what has happened to you?

I hate their hatred. I am sick of their sickness. Justice to a certain degree has been done so I choose not to dwell on them or hate them, not for their sake but for my own. Instead I fill my life with positive people and beautiful things.

In the days before this interview we were treated to the 'Tale of the Two Zoabis': Hanin Zoabi – the Israeli woman Arab MK who insists that those who kidnapped the three teenagers are not terrorists and her distant relative, Mohammad Zoabi, an Israeli Arab student described as a 'proud Zionist patriot'. Have you ever met either of them? How, in the tight-knit Arab world, could members of the same extended clan hold such different views?

I have never met either of them and I don't understand how they have such different views.

As a quite extraordinary aside, you've also had to fight libellous accusations from a cyber-bully. Had you previously known this person? Why has he acted like this? Have you had any restitution?

It was the ex-husband of a good friend who could not stand up for herself because she was scared of him. When bullies are exposed, I find that they fight like cowards, and this is what he did. He went behind the scenes thinking he would never be caught. I am in the process of suing him because although he admitted what he did, he never made right by publicly apologising and covering my expenses for hiring a cyber detective. He should get his summons after the court resumes from summer recess.

But almost four years on, your terrible story appears to have no happy ending or any firm conclusion. Indeed, the next 'chapter' is due to begin some weeks after this interview on Thursday 10 July with your appearance at the Israel Supreme Court, Jerusalem. It is then that one of your assailants will appeal against his sentence as an accomplice to the murder of Kristine Luken. How will you cope with that?

Seeing them in court is a lot easier than meeting them in the forest. Though obviously the less I see of them the better. They belong in a place where all sons of evil belong.

Kay Wilson, thank you for talking to 'Live Encounters'.

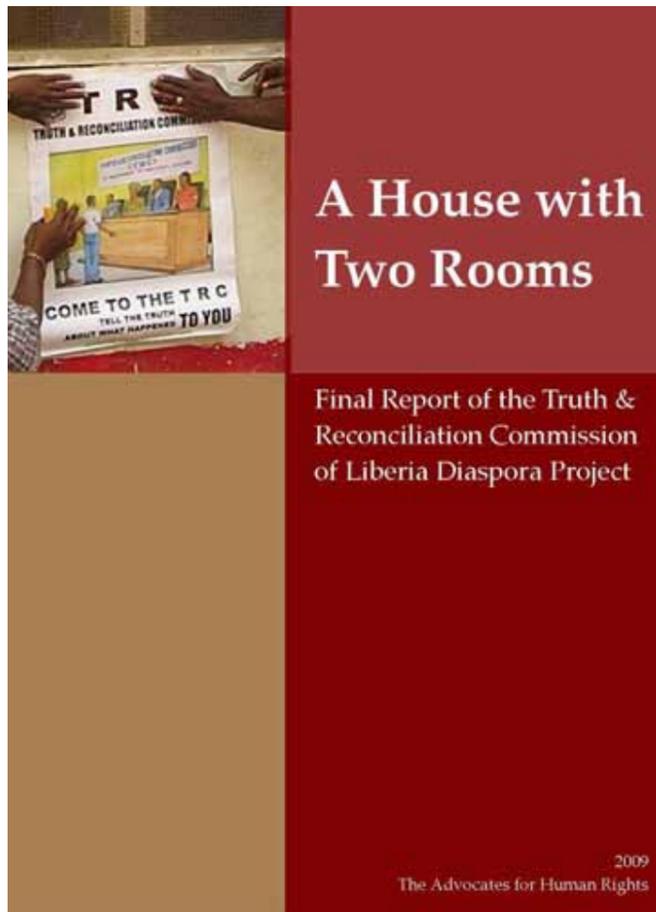


Jacqueline recently completed five months fieldwork in Liberia and Buduburam refugee camp, Ghana, in order to explore how refugees interacted with the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as well as issues of transitional justice more broadly. This blog post sets out some initial reflections from that period of fieldwork.

Refugees and Transitional Justice: Reflections on fieldwork from Liberia

Jacqueline Parry, Centre for International Governance and Justice

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Advocates for Human Rights Report on the work of the Liberian TRC with diasporic communities. Available at [Advocates for Human Rights Report on the work of the Liberian TRC with diasporic communities](#). Available at [LINK](#)

Both refugees and transitional justice have the ability to convey potent messages about state sovereignty. Sovereignty, the set of norms held by the international community concerning the legitimate organisation of political authority, has changed over time and according to context.[1] Since the Second World War the understanding of sovereignty has shifted from being a purely territorial matter to incorporating – in rhetoric if not in fact – a particular type of relationship between the state and its citizens.[2] Specifically, states must now justify their sovereignty by demonstrating that they accept and uphold the responsibility to protect the rights of their citizens and those within their territory.[3] This has an external and an internal dimension, speaking to both the international community and the domestic population.

Both refugees and transitional justice can come to symbolise the way a state does or does not protect its citizens. The very existence of a refugee embodies a state's inability or unwillingness to protect its own citizens, thus undermining its legitimate sovereignty. Transitional justice, on the other hand, can provide a way for the state to emphasise its legitimacy by indicating a break with the past, and, aided by human rights discourse, demonstrate its intention to protect the rights of its citizens going forward. Transitional justice—those mechanisms that are used after a conflict or change in regime in order to come to terms with a history of human rights abuse—can include criminal trials, truth and reconciliation commissions, reparations, restitution, and institutional reform.

It usually relies upon moral reasoning (including values such as reconciliation) and legal reasoning (predominantly that of human rights and international law) to justify its aims and modalities, which often means that its strategic political use is obscured. However, when these two issues (transitional justice and refugees) come into contact, this can offer insight into the way that legitimate sovereignty is actively constructed by the state through the mechanisms of transitional justice.

If refugees embody a state's inability or unwillingness to protect its own nationals, then it is not surprising that the return of refugees is often taken to symbolise a first step in re-asserting legitimate sovereignty.[4]

However, this can create a significant challenge when a state pursues transitional justice while a large refugee population remains unwilling to repatriate: how can refugees, whose very existence undermines legitimate sovereignty, participate in a process intended to legitimise the new state? Exploring this question demonstrates how the interests and goals of states and citizens often diverge and how, as Aplan describes, transitional justice is not simply about righting past wrongs, but is fundamentally about negotiating, legitimizing and shaping new forms of power.[5]

Transitional justice mechanisms are, by definition, state-led mechanisms. This means that regardless of the efforts made to create a mechanism grounded in local culture or citizen demands, it is the state who ultimately determines the mandate, technical function, and resourcing of a particular mechanism. Refugees are able to participate on the invitation of the state, and often require special types of assistance to be provided: in the case of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, for instance, Commissioners visited a number of refugee camps in order to enable refugees to provide testimony.

A second key point is that transitional justice does not automatically build legitimacy for the state, but must be deployed in a specific way in order to serve that end. This has very practical implications for refugees. It means that the state may circumscribe how refugees are able to participate in transitional justice mechanisms, as well as the types of remedies that are considered, and this can have a significant impact on the way in which refugees subsequently engage with their state.

Scholars provide the example of how this materialized in Bosnia, where the new Bosnian state (backed by the UN mission) stressed the right of refugees to return and reclaim their property, despite the fact that many refugees did not wish to exercise this right and that many would have preferred to return elsewhere (or not at all) in exercise of different rights, such as freedom of movement.[6]

Transitional justice mechanisms are, by definition, state-led mechanisms. This means that regardless of the efforts made to create a mechanism grounded in local culture or citizen demands, it is the state who ultimately determines the mandate, technical function, and resourcing of a particular mechanism. Refugees are able to participate on the invitation of the state, and often require special types of assistance to be provided: in the case of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, for instance, Commissioners visited a number of refugee camps in order to enable refugees to provide testimony.

In Liberia, transitional justice – and specifically, the TRC – took place within the context of a new government attempting to assert legitimacy in the wake of a long civil war. The state often used the TRC (and engagement with issues of transitional justice more generally) to evidence and push the view that it was now safe for refugees to return. Many refugees, on the other hand, attempted to use their participation in the TRC to justify their unwillingness to return to Liberia. The state was able to pursue its interests by limiting refugee testimony to violations that occurred in the remote past, even though these were often not the reasons why refugees remained hesitant to return.[7] As a result, it was difficult for refugees to challenge the notion that the state had successfully gone through a transition, and it also limited the reparative actions considered by the state to remedy past wrongs. The TRC made frequent reference to the “rights” of refugees: the right to return, the right to property restitution, and the right to participate in the TRC.

However, many refugees argued that pursuit of such rights actually disempowered them, as they disputed the claim that it was safe to return, did not want to reclaim their property, and contended that participation in the TRC was a public relations effort on the part of the state and UN, rather than a genuine attempt to rebuild state-citizen relations, create accountability, or show respect for individual rights. The rights which refugees most frequently attempted to claim were those related to social and economic power, but these remained unaddressed in any practical sense by transitional justice. Arguably, one difficulty in addressing social and economic rights is that to do so would have the effect of highlighting the high level of corruption, lack of social services, and poor relations which still exist between state and citizen, which would, in turn, undermine the new Government. The TRC was also grounded in very specific concepts of legalism, individualism, and accountability, which supported the state-building agenda but rendered transitional justice distant and irrelevant to many refugees.

As a finishing point, I do not wish to suggest that the whole picture is negative. In cases where refugee interests align with those of the state, and refugees do, for example, wish to testify about past violations, reclaim their property, or return home, then their participation in transitional justice mechanisms could be leveraged to quite positive ends. The complication arises, however, when refugees envisage rebuilding their relationship with the state in a way that potentially undermines the current understanding of legitimate sovereignty, as when refugees request reparations that support them to remain outside their country of origin.[8] It is essential to move beyond a celebratory, technical, or theoretical approach to refugee involvement in transitional justice in order to understand how this interaction is used – both by the state and by refugees themselves – towards the process of negotiating, legitimizing, and shaping new forms of power.

In cases where refugee interests align with those of the state, and refugees do, for example, wish to testify about past violations, reclaim their property, or return home, then their participation in transitional justice mechanisms could be leveraged to quite positive ends. The complication arises, however, when refugees envisage rebuilding their relationship with the state in a way that potentially undermines the current understanding of legitimate sovereignty, as when refugees request reparations that support them to remain outside their country of origin.

[1] Christian Reus-Smit, “Human rights and the social construction of sovereignty,” 27 *Review of International Studies* (2001) 519, 526.

[2] Reus-Smit, 528; W.M. Reisman, “Sovereignty and Human Rights in International Law,” 84(4) *American Journal of International Law* (1990) 866, 872.

[3] Anne Peters, “Humanity as the A and Ω of Sovereignty,” 20(3) *The European Journal of International Law* (2009) 513-544.

[4] For instance, see: Wallace and Quiroz, “Refugee and internally displaced: A challenge to nation-building,” 60(2) *Maine Law Review* (2008) 410-428.

[5] Kara Apland, “The Power and Politics of Transitional Justice,” in *Justice in Conflict*, available at: justiceinconflict.org/2012/01/16/the-power-and-politics-of-transitional-justice/

[6] For example, see: Stef Jansen, “The Privatisation of Home and Hope: Return, Reforms and the Foreign Intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” 30 *Dialectical Anthropology* (2007) 177-199.

[7] Instead, interviews conducted during fieldwork indicated that their hesitation in returning often related to ongoing fears of insecurity, or dire social and economic conditions that would be faced on return.

[8] For another example of this happening, see David Cantor’s work on Colombian refugees in Latin America: David Cantor, “Restitution, Compensation, Satisfaction: Transnational Reparations and Colombia’s Victims’ Law,” (Working Paper no. 215, *New Issues in Refugee Research, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit*, UNHCR, August 2011).

The Holy City of Pushkar, Rajasthan, India

The annual Camel Fair (October-November) in Pushkar is a magic time for a magic city, where different ethnics living in the Thar desert meet for trade, entertainment, and worshipping at the Brahma temple, proudly dressed up for the auspicious event.

Pilgrims and holymen throng the streets where there are around 500 temples.

It is said that when Lord Brahma's lotus flower fell in the Pushkar area water came from the ground. As Brahma threw the pushpa (flower) with his kar (hand), so the place received the name Pushkar.

A dip in the sacred lake is believed to cleanse sins and cure skin diseases.

While portraying the Rajasthanis through the lens of my camera I was stunned by their charisma and their vibrant ethos.



JOO PETER
www.joo-peter.photoshelter.com



Woman visiting camel fair in Pushkar.



Sadhu with a Trishul (Shiva fork) stuck in tongue in Pushkar. © www.liveencounters.net august 2014



Actor performing as Krishna in street procession takes a rest in Pushkar.



Boy made up as god Shiva in the streets of Pushkar.
© www.liveencounters.net august 2014



Woman visiting Camel fair in Pushkar.



Man selling camels in Pushkar, Multi-color turbans are worn on special occasions like the camel fair.



Villagers on a truck ready to leave camel market in Pushkar at the end of festival .

The Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF) is a resource centre integrating knowledge and experience to strengthen peacebuilding policy and practice. Established in 2008, it collaborates and promotes collaboration with a wide network of researchers, policymakers and practitioners in Norway and abroad.



Photo : <http://www.chinawhisper.com/china-cities-embrace-car-free-day-with-massive-traffic-jam/>

China debates its future role in the Middle East

Dr. Stig Stenslie

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Executive summary

China will be considerably more dependent on oil imports in the coming years because its growth in consumption far exceeds domestic production. As result of this growing energy demand the country will inevitably be more reliant on the Middle East. Despite the absence of an overall long-term strategy, there is no shortage of debate about China's future role in the Middle East, although the debate is more about the relationship with the U.S. than anything else.

Two opposite views appear: on the one hand, it is claimed that the U.S. position in the Middle East is weakening and that Beijing should adopt a more assertive approach to strengthen Chinese influence in the region. The alternative argument is that the Chinese government should maintain its current cautious approach, avoid contesting the U.S. hegemony, and let the U.S. war machine bleed to death in the troubled region. So far, China has benefitted from its low-key approach to the Middle East. Beijing will most likely try to maintain this policy; however, this might become increasingly difficult as its economic involvement in and dependence on the region becomes more complex.

China is seeking to diversify its oil imports among regions, with Russia, Africa and Latin America becoming key Chinese oil suppliers in the decades to come. Nonetheless, China will have to rely on the Middle East because of the simple fact that the region has the world's largest oil reserves. The country is already the Middle East's largest oil customer and the country imports more oil from this region than any other in the world.

Introduction

China will be considerably more dependent on oil imports in the coming years because its growth in consumption far exceeds domestic production. As result of this growing energy demand, the country will inevitably be more reliant on the Middle East. Meanwhile, the U.S. is moving in the opposite direction: increasing domestic production means that the U.S. is becoming less dependent on oil imports and Washington is signalling that it seeks to adopt a lower profile in the Middle East. The fact that the U.S. is moving towards energy independence while China is becoming increasingly dependent on imports could have significant geostrategic consequences. Against this backdrop, China is debating its future role in the Middle East.

Booming trade and investments

In 2009 China's dependency on foreign oil exceeded 50 % for the first time, marking that oil imports had replaced domestic oil output to meet the majority of China's oil consumption. In the same year China overtook the U.S. to become Saudi Arabia's top oil customer. The country's import dependency is growing rapidly: three years later, in 2012, the country was 58% reliant on foreign supplies, and in September 2013 China leap-frogged the U.S. to become the world's largest net oil importer.

China is expected to be even more dependent on oil imports in the future. The International Energy Agency predicts that the country's dependence on foreign oil will increase to 60-70% of its total consumption in 2015 and to as much as 75% in 2035.

China is seeking to diversify its oil imports among regions, with Russia, Africa and Latin America becoming key Chinese oil suppliers in the decades to come. Nonetheless, China will have to rely on the Middle East because of the simple fact that the region has the world's largest oil reserves. The country is already the Middle East's largest oil customer and the country imports more oil from this region than any other in the world.

Furthermore, the Middle East has witnessed a significant rise in inward foreign direct investments from China. Most of these investments are driven by state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

Under China's "Going Out" policy – which is a slogan adapted by Beijing to encourage investments and acquisitions abroad, particularly by large state-owned industrial groups – Chinese SOEs have two major missions: one is to become internationally competitive enterprises; the other is to secure supplies of the resources China needs domestically.

Chinese companies' involvement in countries such as Iran, Iraq and Libya shows these companies' opportunism and willingness to accept risk. With government backing, these companies are willing to accept contracts with lower earnings, partly because they have lower operating costs than other international companies and partly because their investments are based on national interests – to meet China's growing oil needs – rather than profit.

No grand strategy

Most observers agree that China's Middle East policy is not led by long-term geostrategic aims, but is rather dictated by immediate needs – above all energy supplies. To secure the undisrupted flow of energy, the country desires regional stability; however, so far China lacks the means to stabilise the Middle East.

China's approach to the Middle East – like its policy towards other regions peripheral to the Middle Kingdom – is pragmatic and opportunistic. Beijing seeks to keep its head low, stay out of trouble, and cultivate good relations with all the countries in the Middle East, prioritising Turkey, Israel, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia as partners. China has no formal alliances, which gives it flexibility in its dealing with the Middle East, in contrast to the highly cemented politics of the U.S. in the region. The Chinese government adheres to the principle of non-intervention in other states' affairs and takes care to hide behind Russia in matters of UN sanctions against countries like Iran and Syria.

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Notwithstanding the absence of a grand strategy, there is no shortage of debate about China's future role in the Middle East. It is widely believed that the debates within the party leadership in Beijing reflect the public debates that take place among Chinese think tanks and foreign policy observers. However, the Middle East debate is more about the relationship with the U.S. than anything else.

Two opposite views can be discerned: on the one hand, it is claimed that the U.S. position in the Middle East has been weakened and that Beijing should adopt a more assertive approach to strengthen Chinese influence in the region. On the other hand, it is argued that the Chinese government should maintain its current cautious approach, avoid contesting the U.S. hegemony and let the U.S. war machine eventually bleed to death in the troubled Middle East.

Voices advocating a more assertive approach

Wang Jisi, a professor at Peking University and one of China's leading experts on international relations, forcefully advocated a more assertive Chinese involvement in the Middle East after the Arab uprisings.

The core of Wang's idea is close to Mao Zedong's legendary military strategy: "The enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue." The Obama administration's "rebalancing" or "pivot" strategy directed towards the Asia-Pacific region – apparently at the expense of the Middle East – is interpreted by Beijing as an attempt by the U.S. to contain China. According to the "March West" strategy, Chinese authorities should more aggressively promote their interests in the region through increased diplomatic and economic presence.

Voices advocating a more assertive approach *contd...*

In October 2012 he presented his geopolitical strategy, "March West" in the Global Times. This strategy has the same connotations as previous concepts that Beijing has promoted, under names such as "Development of the West", "Opening to the West", "Building a New Silk Road" and the "Greater Periphery", but it has clearer geopolitical aims.

The core of Wang's idea is close to Mao Zedong's legendary military strategy: "The enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue." The Obama administration's "rebalancing" or "pivot" strategy directed towards the Asia-Pacific region – apparently at the expense of the Middle East – is interpreted by Beijing as an attempt by the U.S. to contain China.

The U.S. seeks to rebalance its foreign policy by, among other things, strengthening bilateral security alliances, interacting effectively with multilateral institutions, expanding U.S. trade and investment, and maintaining and projecting a broad-based military presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

Instead of seeking to challenge U.S. influence in the Asia Pacific, Wang believes that China should assume a greater role in the area west of the country. As a result of the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as signals of a foreign policy reorientation away from this region, the argument goes, China now has the opportunity to fill a void in Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East. Wang claims that this will give Beijing greater strategic leverage towards Washington because the Americans will need all the help they can get in trying to stabilise the Middle East.

According to the "March West" strategy, Chinese authorities should more aggressively promote their interests in the region through increased diplomatic and economic presence.

Voices advocating a cautious approach

Some Chinese strategic thinkers indicate that there might be some advantages in the U.S. being "strategically trapped" in the Middle East, because this might weaken the "rebalancing", or "pivot", to Asia. Qu Xing, president of the influential China Institute of International Studies, emphasises the Middle East's strategic importance for China because the problems in the region prevent Western countries from engaging strongly in the Asia-Pacific region. According to him, the unstable situation in the Middle East hampers the declared U.S. intention of a reorientation to the Asia Pacific – which serves Chinese interests.

Tang argues – as Qu Xing does – that China should not challenge U.S. dominance in the Middle East, because Chinese interests benefit from U.S. political, military and economic resources being strategically tied up in the Middle East, resources that otherwise could have been used to contain China in East Asia. In Tang's words, "the strategy of pivot to Asia would be greatly challenged by the increasing austere Middle East situation such as the Syria crisis and the Iranian nuclear issue, and President Obama would likely have to pay more concerns to this region".

Qu therefore argues that China is best served by maintaining the non-interference line towards the Middle East and should avoid challenging the U.S. position in the region – in line with Deng Xiaoping's renowned advice to "keep a low profile". Meanwhile, it is also important for China to work to prevent the West from provoking regime changes that could harm Chinese interests in the Middle East. Qu stresses in particular that China must avoid Western countries' use of UN Security Council resolutions as a tool for regime change.

Tang Zhichao, Middle East researcher at the think tank China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, which is under the Ministry of State Security, expresses scepticism about the U.S. role in the unrest that has characterised the Middle East since 2011. He believes that the U.S. government is using this turbulence to resume its geopolitical status in the region, maintain its hegemony and undermine its rivals. This is done by pushing oil prices up, which in turn prolongs the economic crisis in the European Union and delays the internationalisation of the Chinese currency.

Nonetheless, Tang argues – as Qu Xing does – that China should not challenge U.S. dominance in the Middle East, because Chinese interests benefit from U.S. political, military and economic resources being strategically tied up in the Middle East, resources that otherwise could have been used to contain China in East Asia. In Tang's words, "the strategy of pivot to Asia would be greatly challenged by the increasing austere Middle East situation such as the Syria crisis and the Iranian nuclear issue, and President Obama would likely have to pay more concerns to this region".

Future policy

Until now China has arguably benefitted from its low-key approach to the Middle East. The U.S. has borne the political, economic and military costs of stabilising the region, while China has benefitted from stable energy supplies. Today's "free-rider policy" might continue to serve Beijing – as long as the U.S. seems to have too many interests apart from oil to protect in the Middle East to scale down its presence substantially. Although China has few incentives to radically change its approach to the Middle East, it might turn out to be increasingly difficult for Beijing to stay out of the region's conflicts as its economic involvement there becomes more complex. Actors both within and outside the region will inevitably expect China – as a key stakeholder – to take a stand and sometimes choose sides.



Emigration has always been an aspect of my experience of growing up in Ireland. I wrote this poem many years ago after a friend of mine, who had been demolishing old houses, came upon a table still set for breakfast in a shell of a house that had been vacant for 30 years. The family has emigrated. It would appear as if they had eaten breakfast, stood up, took their few things and left forever.

Homeland and Away

God held the keys to my homeland in the west of Ireland.
As a child I would talk to myself, hang around
old trees and watch names grow back to bark.

Some – alone for years – were found in isolated farmhouses.
When there was no other way out, we went to confession.
To say we were unhappy is to say too much.

We had laughter on tap, could sing of sadness but livelihood
was elsewhere. There was no cold or hot season – shoes were
not a must and we could sleep or suffocate on fresh air.

The Atlantic was never far off. It insisted on it's quota of corpses,
but after the choir had sung and the few calves were sold,
families got up from the table, wrapped up as best they could

and vanished into church records. Others dropped a spade where
they stood, walked up the helpless road and never looked back.
I am old enough to leave my homeland a second time.



Gyaan Adab Centre - Where Literature And The Arts Make A Difference



Tom Alter and Uday Chandra perform 'Mishran' at Gyaan Adab Centre

Aryaa Naik

Head, Creatives, Gyaan Adab Centre

Nestled in a quiet bylane of Kalyani Nagar, Pune, Gyaan Adab Centre is a place where Tom Alter, Mir, Dylan Thomas, Bob Dylan and Uday Chandra, Randhir Khare share a stage, where Rabindranath Tagore's music comes alive under a starlit canopy of trees, where Mahesh Dattani and George Bernard Shaw are neighbors on a shelf, where new literary and artistic talent finds a voice and discussions are encouraged.

Gyaan Adab is a cultural Centre that believes in the power of literature and the creative experience to entertain, educate, sensitize, inspire and transform. Through book readings, discussions, talks, theatre, music and dance performances and a host of cross-genre events the aim is to promote new and emerging talent as well as established and respected voices, in the process exploring a wide range of themes. The medium is English, Urdu, Hindi and Marathi as well as other Indian languages, should an opportunity arise. A well-stocked library and comfortable reading room express the same intention. Art too has its place in this creative space featuring gifted artists and making an effort to promote their work through sensitive presentations. These efforts are bolstered by workshops and courses, designed for different age groups and needs.

And it all doesn't end there. There's a well-stocked library too, offering a warm and conducive reading space with a wide choice of books by established and contemporary writers in four languages.





Sushama Deshpande performs her play 'Tichya Aichi Goshta'

On an average four programmes are showcased every month, with an effort to blend cultures, languages and genres and in six months has attracted a wide range of people of all ages. Book readings, talks and expositions are presented in a stimulating manner with the aim to engage the audience in an interactive milieu, encouraging participants to explore diverse themes and ideas that emerge from the programme. Core themes form the creature Centre of these programmes, encouraging audiences to become part of a creative process.

Film viewing and appreciation is made more meaningful by encouraging film makers to present their own work. This provides viewers with the opportunity to enter the world of a film maker and discover the creative process and subliminal themes and ideas that are embedded in the work. This is perhaps why Gyaan Adab is very selective when hosting a film viewing and appreciation events.

Going beyond performance and display, the Centre hosts creative and recreational workshops. These are open to children, young people and adults. For children, there are unusual creative workshops that are aimed at enhancing self-expression, inventiveness, skills, the enjoyment of the literary experience through art, dance, music, theatre and numerous unconventional forms, emphasizing the process rather than the end product, thus giving children the opportunity to discover their own specialness. Ingrained in the activities are elements that assist in encouraging the values of tolerance, inclusiveness, appreciation of diverse cultures and ways of 'doing' and the empowering force of literature. For adults, there are recreational, creative and professional workshops and courses that are stimulating and self-enhancing. These include story-telling, creative writing, content writing, play writing, screen writing, journal writing, writing for the media and traditional forms of visual and written narratives.

The art shows aim at fostering new creative work while showcasing the old and established artistic traditions. An effort is made to provide a space where emerging artists can be assured a forum for their work, thus giving a platform to creative expression with an emphasis on powerful and innovative work. Because of its openness to the old and the new and the spirit of inventiveness that the Centre supports, Gyaan Adab has emerged as a dynamic new cultural presence.



A book discussion at Gyaan Adab Centre

So – why Gyaan Adab? What did the founders and trustees Farook Merchant and Nasima Merchant have in mind and why?

Simply put – they wanted to create a space where literature and the arts could fulfill their role as recreational and socially impactful mediums.

But it all doesn't end there. There's more to the story. Beyond the immediate agenda and the boundaries of the Centre, Gyaan Adab's ultimate goal is to promote Gyaan Ruchi, the initiative to reach out to women from economically weaker sections of society, on the periphery of educational opportunities, and help them to transform their lives through literature and the arts. There is a strong belief that the creative process will enable them to become more aware of their own potential as well as about the world of opportunities around them. Literature and the arts are dynamic tools that can help women to improve their social participation, and believe in their own capabilities.

A well-planned comprehensive programme is already underway which will help women to evolve an interest in reading and writing and engage in dialogue, thus building their confidence through self-expression and interaction. Activities such as book reading and discussion, interactive sessions and self-expression through writing and forms of art are already touching the lives of women in three library centres in the city.

In addition, GyaanRuchi's resource initiative at GyaanAdab Centre is collecting, documenting and cataloging valuable resource materials available and being developed as well as conducting training and orientation programmes led by experienced professionals.

To time to dream is over as literature and the arts mutate into power forces of change and Gyaan Adab leads the way.



Before Play What Women Want!

"It's a scientifically proven fact that, during this time, [in love] our brains produce drugs that would be illegal on the street or need a medical prescription." - [Feel Good Marriage - 7 Steps to a Rock Solid Marriage Without Counseling](#) - Marko Petkovic

Sarah is with friends at a piano bar in downtown Seattle. A tall, dark, handsome man (really) who is new to the group comes up and begins to converse. They make a great connection talking about similar interests and she is curious. She and her friends catch up sharing about their lives and the music starts. Luca (tall, dark, and handsome) comes up and asks her to dance. She begins to move her hips to the music, but he pulls her to him and twirls her around the dance floor. Her curiosity grows and she wonders, "Who is this man?" As the night goes on, he continues to woo her, dancing and whispering in her ear. She unmistakably tells him she is in a relationship, but this does not stop him from professing her beauty, murmuring he loves her eyes, and when she puts her cheek to his shoulder in a slow dance, chills run down her spine.

She notices her female friends are watching her. Later, they insist he is "a player." She laughs, knowing this of course, and enjoys his attention anyway. Being comfortable with herself, her sexuality and men, she goes along. The group moves to a nearby Karaoke bar and she and Luca sing "Falling Slowly" together as the dance floor fills with couples.

The night moves on and the group is leaving. She walks out with Mallory, her friend and ride home. Luca follows her out to the car and opens the door, all the while enticing her to let him take her home. She laughs, Mallory rolls up the window, and off they go.

The next day her boyfriend Jesse calls and wants to see her. She invites him over and within the first ten minutes he initiates sex by rubbing up against her with a look of anticipation in his eyes.

Whether her previous evening behavior was appropriate or not, having interviewed several women, this scenario with Jesse is not far from the truth for many women. What happened here? The difference between how she was treated by a stranger and the man who loves her was monumental. The sense of being desired, of feeling beautiful, of being prepared for lovemaking did not happen with Jesse.

In an interview survey regarding “Before Play” a woman who described herself as having a positive relationship, was asked, “who usually initiates sex and how is it done?” She said he usually initiates. She said “Sex starts early in the day with talk and holding one another. My husband's "love language" expresses itself with acts of service and physical touch that mean a lot to me.

As a therapist, too often I witness couples that become more like roommates than passionate partners in life. They leave intimacy behind and feel unfulfilled in their relationships or marriages. Sometimes they opt for an affair. Other times they may compromise and shut down their emotions to “go along to get along.” Neither of these choices support the early dreams they envisioned of being in love!

A friend of mine shared that the man she had been dating for several months “doesn’t have a clue” how to connect with her prior to their lovemaking. She said it has been really difficult to be sexual at his beck and call, and sadly, he doesn’t understand the difference between intimacy and sex. She loves him, and although they are sexually active, she is not satisfied.

Of course, not all men neglect the needs of their lovers. The intent of this article is to invite men to bring forward the “player within” and to love their wife or girlfriend as if they first met! Listening, attending to and understanding the desires of your partner can strengthen the fiber of your relationship. There is a powerful connection and bond that happens in relationships when intimacy and sexuality can be enjoyed in a loving, supportive and nurturing environment on a daily basis.

In an interview survey regarding “Before Play” a woman who described herself as having a positive relationship, was asked, “who usually initiates sex and how is it done?” She said he usually initiates. She said “Sex starts early in the day with talk and holding one another. My husband's "love language" expresses itself with acts of service and physical touch that mean a lot to me. We are both physical so touch is critical: kissing slow, fondling, and being playful with one another. In response to the question “does he prepare you prior to being sexual?” she replied “Yes, he will pick up something nice for dinner or a bottle of wine, etc. He often stays in touch sending texts or calls during the day.”

In the interview process, the theme was the same. The communication, intimacy, and connective feeling prior to intercourse had a substantial effect on their sexual life. It affected not only the quality of the sexual experience, but the frequency of sex as well. When women were fulfilled sexually, they said they were happier in their relationship overall.

So what happens? “How to satisfy a woman” is not a new topic and you can hardly even avoid being educated about the needs of women if you ever read cartoons, watched TV, or overheard conversations at the local pub.

So if you are a man who sees himself as potent, vital and ready for love, see your woman as one who deserves to be cherished. Woo her in the manner that she enjoys and begin the process (beforeplay) early in the day and slow it down creating some enticement. Strengthen and deepen your love and experience in the incredible, sacred sexual union. You’ll notice the difference in the quality of your life!

BeforePlay (rather than foreplay) begins hours if not days prior to making love. Women in love generally are in their hearts, and so they replay the connection, the texture, the smell, and the visions of their partner throughout the day. They long to hear they are loved, desired, noticed, and a priority to their lover. When this happens the connection between the man and the woman can be incredible.

What women want!

1. Communication – connect with her prior to lovemaking. A phone call or a sexy text to entice her during the day just may be the key.

2. Connection – knowing that she likes to be kissed and cuddled first or enjoys moving right into hot, passionate lovemaking can heighten the fun. Be present to her.

3. Set the stage – whether you bring wine or flowers, play music, or light candles, stimulate her senses for a intense experience.

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The Basic Mango Lassi

Serves 2

2 cups diced mango, fresh or frozen
1 ¼ cup yogurt, any fat level you desire
3 to 4 tablespoons sugar (based on sweetness of mango)
5-6 cubes of ice

Warm Spiced Mango Lassi

Add:
¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

Ginger Mango Lassi

Add:
1 teaspoon grated ginger

Mint and Mango Lassi

Add:
8-9 chopped mint leaves

Directions:

Blend the diced mango, yogurt, sugar and ice cubes together. This will give you the basic Mango Lassi. Now add the ingredients for the lassi version you desire. Blend well.

Served chilled topped with a sprig of mint or finely diced mango.

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Coconut Water Blueberry Margarita

Ingredients

8oz coconut water
¼ cup frozen or fresh blueberries
1-2 teaspoon simple sugar syrup (based on sweetness of water and blueberries)
1 tablespoon lime juice
¼ teaspoon salt

For a cocktail version:

Add 1 oz tequila

Directions

To make a simple sugar syrup: Melt ½ cup of sugar and ½ cup of water in a saucepan on the stovetop. Once the syrup comes to a boil, check if the sugar has dissolved and turn off the flame. Cool the simple syrup and use as required. Leftover simple syrup can be stored refrigerated in a glass container; it's perfect for sweetening cold beverages.

Blend blueberries, sugar syrup, lime juice, salt and coconut water in a blender. This mix can be made in advance and chilled.

In a margarita glass, pour tequila (if using) and the blended blueberry coconut water cooler. Add a lemon ring to the glass and serve chilled as a refreshing summer cooler .

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