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# Live encounters

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH  
JUNE 2018



Agent Orange victim Le Van Ot born without eyes. Photo by Vu Tuan Hung, May 2018.

**U.S. Chemical Warfare**  
**Ongoing Genocide in Vietnam**  
Mark Ulyseas





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Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Civil and human rights activists, animal rights activists, poets, writers, journalists, social workers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of the magazine.

We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. Please help spread the free distribution of knowledge with any amount that you feel you want to give for this just cause.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om  
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Cover: Agent orange victim Le Van Ot, 25 years old, was born without eyes.  
Photograph taken in the War Remnant Museum in Ho Chi Minh City by Vu Tuan Hung.



# CONTRIBUTORS

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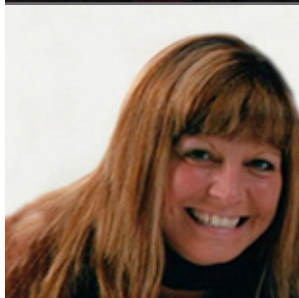
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2010 - 2017



## U.S. Chemical Warfare - Ongoing Genocide in Vietnam

Mark Ulyseas

Ulyseas has served time in advertising as copywriter and creative director selling people things they didn't need, a ghost writer for some years, columnist of a newspaper, a freelance journalist and photographer. In 2009 he created *Live Encounters Magazine*, in Bali, Indonesia. March 2016 saw the launch of its sister publication Live Encounters Poetry & Writing. He is the author of three books: *RAINY – My friend & Philosopher*, *Seductive Avatars of Maya – Anthology of Dystopian Lives* and *In Gethsemane: Transcripts of a Journey*. [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)



## Daughter of a Vietnam Veteran

Katie Matola-Costello *in an interview with Live Encounters*

Katie Costello is a Hubbard, Ohio, USA native. Her greatest love and career is working with animals and she has surrounded herself with all aspects of helping them. She is the owner of *The Canine Campus Training and Wellness Center* and has 2 non-profit organizations one co-founded with her father. When he father died of Agent Orange on July 8, 2015, Katie expanded her humanitarianism to helping victims of Agent Orange. Her first trip to Pleiku, Vietnam (where her father served), working with VAVA, occurred in April of 2017.



## Of Friendship, Tea and Dialogue

Dr Ivo Coelho

Father Ivo Coelho earned a PhD in philosophy at the Gregorian University, Rome, for his work on the hermeneutics of the philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan, SJ (1904-1984). After teaching philosophy in Divyadaan: Salesian Institute of Philosophy, Nashik and holding various offices in his religious congregation, in Nashik, Mumbai and Jerusalem, he is currently based in Rome, where he is in charge of the sector of training and formation for the Salesian society of Don Bosco. Besides his interest in Lonergan, he has also edited collections of the essays of the Indologist Richard De Smet, SJ (1916-1997).



## North Korea's Grand Strategy

Dr Namrata Goswami

Dr. Namrata Goswami is one of the foremost Indian thinkers on long-term global trends, emerging security challenges, and scenario building. She is currently an Independent Senior Analyst. Dr Goswami was formerly Research Fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi where she specialized on ethnic conflicts, insurgency, counter-insurgency and conflict resolution. She was a Jennings Randolph Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C., She is a recipient of the Fulbright-Nehru Senior Fellowship.



## The New Barbarism and How to Defeat It

David Morgan

David Morgan is a London based journalist with interests in politics, human rights, international relations, history and cultural issues. He has been working in journalism as an editor and writer for three decades after he studied literature and history at university. He has edited several titles from the Socialist History Society (SHS) of which he is the Secretary. He writes regularly for the SHS Newsletter, occasionally for the Morning Star newspaper and for a range of other online and printed publications.



## Narco Economy in Myanmar

Dr Bibhu Prasad Routray

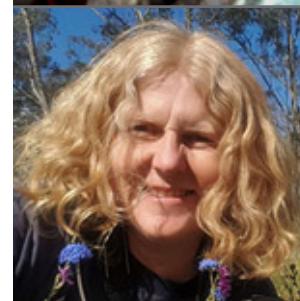
Dr. Routray served as a Deputy Director in the National Security Council Secretariat, Govt of India, Director of the Institute for Conflict Management (ICM)'s Database & Documentation Centre, Guwahati, Assam. He was a Visiting Research Fellow at the South Asia programme of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore between 2010 and 2012.



## Cruising The Old Delhi Food Bazaar

Jill Gocher

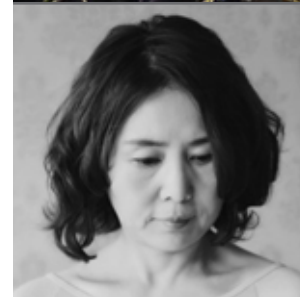
Bali based international photographer has spent her life exploring and enjoying Asian cultures. Her work has appeared in National Geographic, Time, International Herald Tribune, Asia Spa, Discovery, Silver Kris and many more. Her books - Asia's legendary Hotels, Periplus, Bali- Island of Light -Marshall Cavendish, Indonesia - Islands of the Imagination. Periplus, Australia - the land down under - Times Editions, Singapore, Indonesia - the last paradise - Times Editions. She has held exhibitions in Singapore, Kathmandu, and Bali.



## Seeing the Small Things!

Felicity Johnson

Felicity Johnson from Flissy Johnson Photography is a nature and rural photographer based in Goornong, northern Victoria, Australia. A career in recording data as a biodiversity officer with the Government has now evolved into recording photographic images of the natural and rural environment. She particularly enjoys recording the textures, patterns, light and shapes at the macro level. As a result she spends a fair bit of time lying on her stomach in the forest studying and photographing orchids, ants, lichen and more!



## Land of Shan

Mikyoung Cha

Mikyoung Cha is a graduate in Oriental Painting from Hyosung Women's University, Daegu, South Korea. She has participated in a number of group art exhibitions in South Korea and Japan. In 2016 she took up photography – the camera becoming her paint brush. This globe trotting photographer is a regular contributor to Live Encounters Magazine.



## The Gower Peninsular, Wales

Andrea Lamberti

Andrea Lamberti is a nature photographer and a vegan. As well as supporting his physical health, Andrea found veganism is naturally aligned to his philosophy of living simply and minimally, allowing less packaging, chemicals and processing, and avoiding the unnecessary commodification of animals. Andrea documents the geography and underwater plant and animal species of his local coastline, to explore his relationship with the natural world, and his belief that humans should inhabit the planet primarily as curators rather than as consumers.



## Nohutlu Sih-El Mahsi

Ozlem Warren

International cooking teacher and Turkish culinary expert Ozlem Warren is a native of Turkey, lived there and extensively travelled for 30 years. She has been teaching wholesome, delicious Turkish cookery in the US, Jordan, Istanbul and England. Her recipes have been published in the local media in England, Hurriyet and Sabah national daily newspapers in Turkey. Ozlem also took part at the "Turkish Chefs of the World", "Dünyanın Türk Seferi" TV program aired at TRT, National Turkish TV channel and in 37 countries.





Today 3,000,000+ Vietnamese suffer from the aftermath of Agent Orange sprayed indiscriminately across large tracks of South Vietnam by U.S. Armed Forces.

The devastating effect of Agent Orange has now reached the third generation of Vietnamese.

The Vietnam War ended in 1975.

They still await justice.



**Ulyseas** has served time in advertising as copywriter and creative director selling people things they didn't need, a ghost writer for some years, columnist of a newspaper, a freelance journalist and photographer. In 2009 he created *Live Encounters Magazine*, in Bali, Indonesia. It is a not for profit (adfree) free online magazine featuring leading academics, writers, poets, activists of all hues etc. from around the world. March 2016 saw the launch of its sister publication *Live Encounters Poetry*, which was relaunched as *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing* in March 2017. He has edited, designed and produced all of Live Encounters' 128 publications till date (June 2018). Mark's philosophy is that knowledge must be free and shared freely (without charge) to empower all towards enlightenment. He is the author of three books: *RAINY – My friend & Philosopher*, *Seductive Avatars of Maya – Anthology of Dystopian Lives* and *In Gethsemane: Transcripts of a Journey*. [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

Special thanks to *Nguyen Thuy Hoa (Ms)*, International Cooperation Department, The Voice of Vietnam, Hanoi.

## U.S. Chemical Warfare Ongoing Genocide in Vietnam

Mark Ulyseas

**“What they are doing amounts to a pretty important form of conservation in itself, the saving of American lives”**

- American reporter on the use of *Agent Orange* in Vietnam during the war.  
(*The Dark Shadow of Agent Orange* | *Retro Report* | *The New York Times* [link](#)).

This chemical warfare was authorised by President John F. Kennedy in 1961. Its code name was *Operation Ranch Hand*. The justification used by elements in the White House was that the British had used toxic herbicides and defoliants during the Malayan Emergency in the 1950s. [LINK](#)

The reasoning was that the U.S. was not setting a precedent but merely following in the footsteps of its former colonial masters – the means of committing a crime against humanity to justify the end... vanquishing of communist forces perceived to be enemies of the free world, whatever this means.

From 1961 to 1971 the U.S. Army conducted 19,905 missions spraying about 80 million litres of toxic chemicals, of which about 61% was Agent Orange, containing 366 kg of dioxin over nearly 26,000 villages, with an area of 3.06 million hectares – nearly a quarter of the total area of South Vietnam; in which 86% was sprayed more than 2 times and 11% sprayed more than 10 times.



U.S. propaganda about Agent Orange was so effective, it fooled American troops into thinking it was safe, too. It launched a public relations campaign that included educational programs showing civilians happily applying herbicides to their skin and passing through defoliated areas without concern. One prominent comic strip featured a character named *Brother Nam* who explained that *“The only effect of defoliant is to kill trees and force leaves to wither, and normally does not cause harm to people, livestock, land, or the drinking water of our compatriots.”*  
- [LINK](#)



Brother Nam assured readers that herbicides were safe. [LINK](#)

The intent of the U.S. Army was to deprive the Viet Cong of forest cover by indiscriminately spraying this highly toxic defoliant on an industrial scale. It resulted in the death and maiming of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese, massive poisoning of flora and fauna, water bodies and farmlands. The devastating effect of this crime against humanity can still be seen today in the approx. 3,000,000 Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange...the third generation of Vietnamese since the conflict, which the US refers to as ‘police action’. [LINK](#) But the poisoning of a huge proportion of the population of Vietnam by Agent Orange did not go without its drawbacks – the poisoning of its own soldiers who were not informed about the harmful effects of coming in contact with dioxin. [LINK](#)

U.S. Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr. who commanded naval forces in Vietnam from 1968-70, ordered the spraying of Agent Orange to ‘contain the enemy’. His son, Elmo R. Zumwalt 3d, who had served in the U.S. Army at the same time in Vietnam was exposed to dioxin and later died of cancer at the young age of 42. The unrepentant admiral and father on first coming to know about his son’s illness said, *“Knowing what I now know, I still would have ordered the defoliation to achieve the objectives it did, of reducing casualties. But that does not ease the sorrow I feel for Elmo, or the anguish his illness, and Russell’s disability, give me.”* [LINK](#) The genocidal mind-set is self-evident in the actions of the perpetrators even after the war ended.

The Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin (VAVA), Hanoi, has answered a number of questions posed by *Live Encounters Magazine* to help our readers comprehend the magnitude of this genocide.

**When was Agent Orange (AO) dropped on Vietnam, which years? How many tonnes were dropped?**

The United States conducted a chemical war in Vietnam between 1961 and 1971. For 10 years, the United States dropped 80 million litres of toxic chemicals to the South of Vietnam in which 61% were Agent Orange; others were Agent White, Agent Blue, and Agent Purple.

**Which areas were affected by AO?**

About a quarter of Southern Vietnam area was sprayed with Agent Orange. The heavy sprayed areas were provinces Quang Tri, Thua Thien-Hue, Quang Nam, Da Nang, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Dong Nai, Binh Phuoc, Tay Ninh. (Map overleaf)

**What was the immediate effect - how many people (men, women, and children) died, how many were injured? What were the kind of injuries suffered by civilians? How many livestock and wildlife were killed?**

The number of people exposed directly to dioxin is 4.8 million. There are no accurate figures for the number of dead, estimated to be hundreds of thousands. There is no data on the number of animals killed due to exposure to Agent Orange.

**How many square kilometres of forest area and cultivated fields were poisoned during the war? And how many square kilometres are still contaminated?**

About 3 million hectares of forest have been destroyed by Agent Orange. Presently no forest or farmland is contaminated. Today there are 28 hot spots which have a high dioxin level, mainly in former U.S. military bases (where toxic chemicals were stored, disposed or equipment/empty storage drums washed after spraying trips).





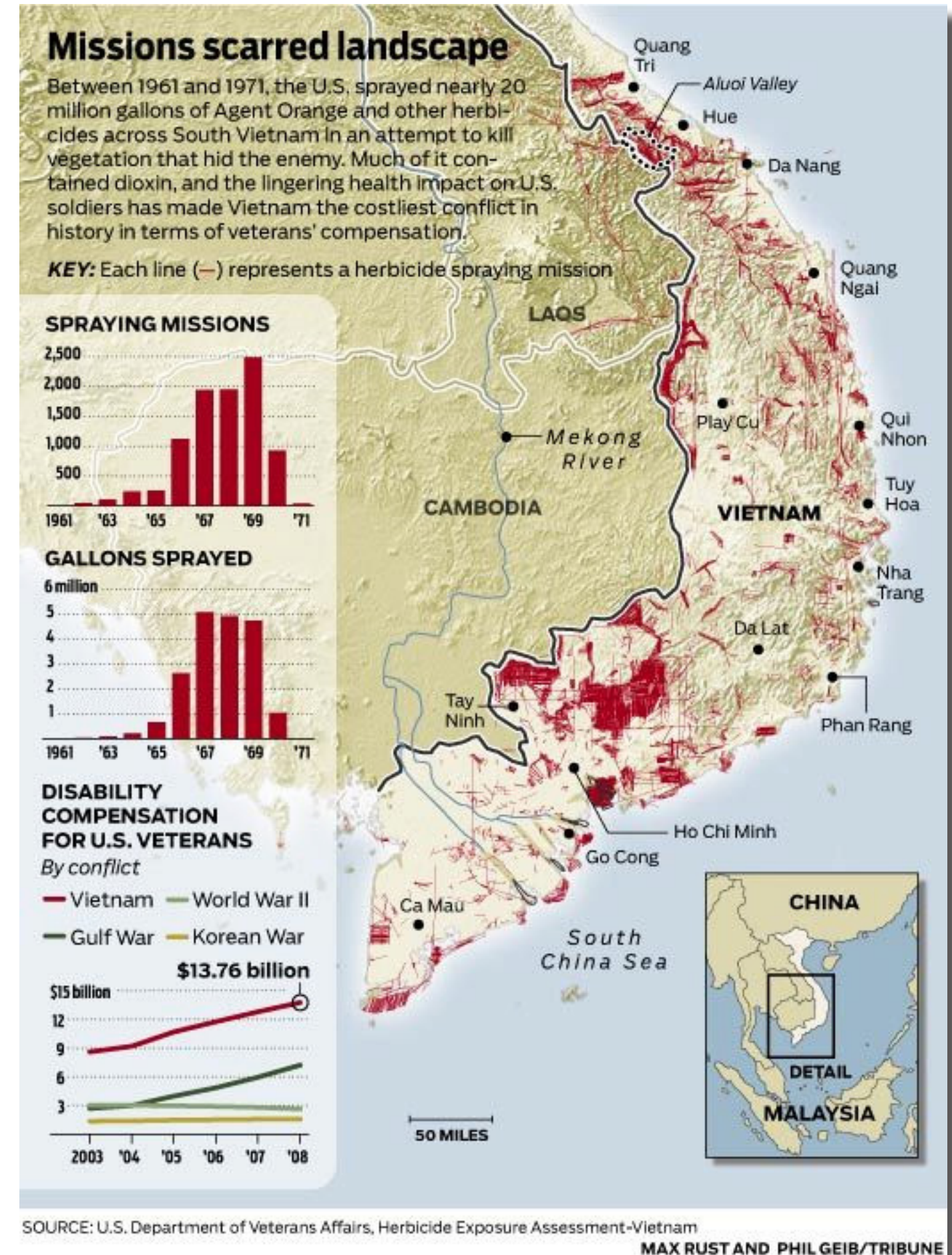
**Were waterways and underground water contaminated? And are they still affected?**

Ponds and other water sources had been contaminated. The contamination of the water resources is non-existent now.

**How many people are still affected by AO? What are the ailments?**

Approximately 3 million people are affected by Agent Orange. Up to now, the Vietnam Ministry of Health has identified 17 diseases in these people associated with the exposure of Agent Orange:

1. Soft tissue sarcoma.
2. Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
3. Hodgkin's disease
4. Lung and Bronchus cancer.
5. Trachea cancer.
6. Larynx cancer.
7. Prostate cancer.
8. Primary liver cancers.
9. Multiple sclerosis (Kahler's disease).
10. Acute, subacute peripheral neuropathy.
11. Acne caused by chlorine (Chloracne).
12. Type 2 Diabetes
13. Porphyria cutanea tarda.
14. Unusual birth: Infertility.
15. Mental disorders.
16. Deformities and malformations.
17. Spina bifida.





Agent Orange is still affecting the health and quality of life of the Vietnamese. The extent of the poisoning of our people and our environment is visible in our third generation – children being born with horrible deformities and painful afflictions. How many more generations will suffer this fate cannot be ascertained.

We need help now. We have waited for justice too long.



#### **Is livestock and wildlife still contaminated? What are the visible signs?**

The teratogenic effect is visible in livestock and wild animals. The most recognizable signs are animals that are born deformed and those that abort stillborn offspring.

#### **How many generations of people were/are/will be/ affected?**

At present, it is shown that the third generation of family is affected by Agent Orange. It cannot be confirmed that Agent Orange will affect to further generations.

#### **Has the US accepted responsibility for the chemical attacks and prosecuted those who ordered the chemical attacks?**

The US government has never officially acknowledged, and has even refused responsibility for the consequences of their use of Agent Orange in Vietnam. Therefore, they have never prosecuted those who ordered the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam.

#### **How has the US compensated Vietnam and its victims financially (amount) and through other means?**

The US government has never offered any form of compensation for victims of Agent Orange. However, they began to participate in environmental cleanup in areas with high levels of dioxin remained. Specifically, they participated in the decontamination in Da Nang and surveyed dioxin residue in Bien Hoa airport. They have also implemented a number of projects supporting people with disabilities in Vietnam, including victims of Agent Orange.

#### **Has Vietnam and its victims approached the *International Criminal Court* at *The Hague* for justice by filing a suit against the U.S. for crimes against humanity? And if so, what was the result?**

*Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange / Dioxin* (VAVA) has unsuccessfully conducted civil action law suit in a U.S court against 37 chemical companies that produced and supplied toxic chemicals that U.S. troops used in the war in Vietnam.

VAVA is also preparing another civil suit, but has not yet filed a lawsuit in the *International Criminal Court* at The Hague.

#### **Did Vietnam and its victims file law suits in US courts for justice - fixing liability and compensation? If so, what were the results?**

As mentioned above, in 2004 *Vietnam Association of Victims of Agent Orange / Dioxin* brought a lawsuit against 37 chemical companies of the U.S. in a federal court in Brooklyn, New York. After *Court of First Instance* and *Court of Appeals*, in 2009, the *U.S. Supreme Court* decided not to accept the suit of VAVA. Thus, the first lawsuit has ended. It has not achieved the desired results. However, the lawsuit has attracted the attention of many people worldwide and sparked off a movement of supporting the struggle for “justice for victims of Agent Orange”, demanding that the U.S. Government take responsibility for its criminal action.

#### **What had been done and is being done now to help the victims of the chemical attacks? And what more has to be done?**

During the war, we participated and organized many research activities exploring the effects of Agent Orange on the environment and human health. After the war, we immediately embarked on improving the environment, cleaning the areas which were affected by toxic chemicals during the war. Also, we focused on the treatment and improvement of living conditions for people who suffered from exposure of toxic chemicals. Up to now, more than 320,000 combatants in affected battlefields and their children receive subsidies, monthly. Over 300,000 civilians in affected areas recipients of a social welfare program. Victims of Agent Orange are the beneficiaries of the State's socio-economic programs.

#### **How many more years will the effect of AO prevail on the people of Vietnam, its flora and fauna?**

Agent Orange is still affecting the health and quality of life of the Vietnamese. The extent of the poisoning of our people and our environment is visible in our third generation – children being born with horrible deformities and painful afflictions. How many more generations will suffer this fate cannot be ascertained. We need help now. We have waited for justice too long.





Types of herbicides, known as the **Rainbow Herbicides**—their active ingredients, and years used by the U.S. Army in Vietnam. [LINK](#)

**Agent Green:** 100% n-butyl ester 2,4,5-T, used prior to 1966.

**Agent Pink:** 100% 2,4,5-T (60% n-butyl ester 2,4,5-T, and 40% iso-butyl ester of 2,4,5-T) used prior to 1966.

**Agent Purple:** 50% 2,4,5-T (30% n-butyl ester of 2,4,5-T, and 20% iso-butyl ester of 2,4,5-T) and 50% n-butyl ester of 2,4-D used 1961–65.

**Agent Blue** : (Phytar 560G): 65.6% organic Arsenical (cacodylic acid (Ansar 138) and its sodium salt sodium cacodylate) used from 1962–71 in powder and water solution.

**Agent White** (Tordon 101): 21.2% (acid weight basis) triisopropanolamine salts of 2,4-D and 5.7% picloram used 1966–71.

**Agent Orange** or **Herbicide Orange**, (HO): 50% n-butyl ester 2,4-D and 50% n-butyl ester 2,4,5-T used 1965–70.

**Agent Orange II:** 50% n-butyl ester 2,4-D and 50% isooctyl ester 2,4,5-T used after 1968.

**Agent Orange III:** 66.6% n-butyl 2,4-D and 33.3% n-butyl ester 2,4,5-T.

**Enhanced Agent Orange, Orange Plus, or Super Orange (SO), or DOW Herbicide M-3393:** standardized Agent Orange mixture of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T combined with an oil-based mixture of picloram, a proprietary DOW Chemical product called Tordon 101, an ingredient of Agent White.

Prosecuting U.S. citizens involved in this genocide as well as the U.S. Government and holding them liable for chemical warfare on civilians that has killed millions and affected three generation of Vietnamese in *The International Criminal Court* at *The Hague* is not feasible. This is so because the U.S. Government does not recognise the jurisdiction of the court. It only accepts judgements by its own courts. This is odd because it was the U.S. that pushed for the setting up of the ICC. It arm twisted many countries into joining but kept itself out. It has refused to ratify the **Rome Statute**. The U.S. was not inclined to give up its politicians or military personnel to face justice. Hence, the victims of Agent Orange of Vietnam had to approach the U.S. Courts for justice. As expected their case was thrown out by the Supreme Court of the U.S. The interpretation of law sided with the U.S. Government against the aliens.

The herbicides were procured by the U.S. military from Dow Chemical Company (all but Blue), Monsanto (Orange, Purple and Pink), Hercules Inc. (Orange and Purple), Thompson-Hayward Chemical Company (Orange and Pink), Diamond Alkali/Shamrock Company (Orange, Blue, Purple and Pink), United States Rubber Company (Orange), Thompson Chemicals Corporation (Orange and Pink), Agrisect Company (Orange and Purple), Hoffman-Taft Inc. (Orange), and the Ansul Chemical Company (Blue). In April 1967, the US's entire production of 2,4,5-T was confiscated by the military; foreign sources were also tapped into, including the Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI).

A declassified letter by V.K. Rowe at Dow's Biochemical Research Library to Bio products Manager Ross Milholland dated June 24, 1965 clearly states that the company knew the dioxin in their products, including Agent Orange, could hurt people. Chemical companies, U.S. authorities knew the dangers of Agent Orange. (See references)





The unfolding tragic events in the Middle East and elsewhere is symptomatic of a colonial mind-set that refuses to acknowledge that it does not have the perceived power, moral or otherwise, anymore to direct the course of events to its own choosing. That the past is catching up. That even its own citizens are becoming aware of the omissions and commissions of government. That citizens are becoming proactive in exercising their rights. One hopes that in this process the Vietnamese victims will get justice along with the U.S. soldiers who were used and abused by an insidious system that appears more pervasive today.



The trail of blood of five U.S. Presidents that ‘over saw’ the creation and bloody warfare, which included chemical attacks that killed over 2,000,000 Vietnamese, 1,100,000 Viet Cong soldiers, 58,000 US soldiers, Canadians 100, South Korea 4,000, Thailand 350, Australia 500 and New Zealand 36 (approximate figures). This does not includes over 4,000,000 Vietnamese and thousands of U.S. soldiers and their descendants poisoned by dioxin. And the U.S. Government still refuses to acknowledge the genocide committed and the resultant ongoing genocide in Vietnam where 3,000,000 civilians are affected by exposure to dioxin. Presently, it has reached the third generation of Vietnamese.

#### **Dwight Eisenhower** (1953 – 1961) *Republican*

After the Geneva Accords were signed between the French and Communist Viet Minh leading to a partition of Vietnam, Eisenhower decided to create the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) with the purpose of stopping communist influence in South East Asia. SEATO was used as a cover for Eisenhower to build a new nation in the South fighting against the Communists in the North. In 1955, the Republic of Vietnam was born with Ngo Dinh Diem as its President. (See references)

#### **John F. Kennedy** (1961-1963) *Democrat*

Kennedy pledged extra aid to Diem regime when he was in office in 1961. He ordered the commencement of *Operation Ranch Hand* – the spraying of herbicides. In fact, more advisers and machinery but not troops were sent to South Vietnam. However, in 1963 Kennedy tacitly approved a coup to overthrow Diem just 3 weeks before his assassination. (See references)

#### **Lyndon B. Johnson** (1963 – 1969) *Democrat*

In 1964, the Gulf of Tonkin incident occurred and its resolution gave Johnson more powers to wage the war in Vietnam. He was the President who ordered the bombing campaign called *Operation Rolling Thunder* and sent the first combat troops to South Vietnam in March 1965. The draft was instituted soon after that and caused many anti-war protests nationwide especially inside campuses. (See references)

#### **Richard Nixon** (1969 – 1974) *Republican*

Nixon started the so-called “Vietnamization” policy in 1969. During his years in office, he escalated the war into Laos and Cambodia in an attempt to destroy Communist food, weapons and manpower supply through the Ho Chi Minh Trail to South Vietnam. Nixon ordered the “Christmas Bombing” in 1972 to keep North Vietnam at the negotiating table as well as to convince South Vietnam to sign the peace treaty. It is alleged that Nixon contemplated using the ‘big one’, a reference to dropping a nuclear weapon on the North Vietnamese. (See references)

#### **Gerald Ford** (1974 – 1977) *Republican*

Aid funds for South Vietnam was significantly cut off during his years. Although it had been promised by the Nixon administration, Congress forbade further U.S. involvement in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. On April 23, 1975, Ford declared the Vietnam War ended “as far as America is concerned”. Seven days later, Saigon was captured and South Vietnam fell to the North Communists. (See references)

Prosecuting U.S. citizens involved in this genocide as well as the U.S. Government and holding them liable for chemical warfare on civilians that has killed millions and affected three generations of Vietnamese in *The International Criminal Court* at *The Hague* is not feasible. This is so because the U.S. Government does not recognise the jurisdiction of the court. It only accepts *rulings* by its own courts. This is odd because it was the U.S. that pushed for the setting up of the ICC. It arm twisted many countries into joining but kept itself out. It has refused to ratify the [Rome Statute](#) because ...

*Article 86 of the Rome Statute provides that parties to the treaty shall “cooperate fully with the Court in its investigation and prosecution of crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court,” and other articles in the treaty provide that the Court may formally request even non-parties to provide assistance to the Court and to surrender suspects to the Court.*

The U.S. was not inclined to give up its politicians or military personnel to face justice. Hence, the victims of Agent Orange of Vietnam had to approach the U.S. courts for justice. As expected their case was thrown out by the Supreme Court of the U.S. The interpretation of law sided with the U.S. Government against the aliens.



A westerner once remarked to me that the Vietnam War was a long time ago and therefore it should be consigned to history, forgotten and buried, because it was a war against communism. In effect he justified the genocide. I suppose we could also forget the Holocaust and other horrible events of the past 100 years. Further, we could put a moratorium on remembrances of genocide. Why is it that we acknowledge the Holocaust every year and not what was done to the Vietnamese, and the ongoing genocide they face today as a result? Is this an example of deluded elements in western 'civilisation' considering themselves above and beyond others? Or, are some people genetically deluded by an arrogant form of exceptionalism *that we are more equal than others*?

It would appear that the U.S. has reserved the right to commit genocide and continue to act like an extra judicial power without answering to the international community at large. Unfortunately, its cannon fodder has also been its own people.

A westerner once remarked to me that the Vietnam War was a long time ago and therefore it should be consigned to history, forgotten and buried, because it was a war against communism. In effect he justified the genocide. I suppose we could also forget the Holocaust and other horrible events of the past 100 years. Further, we could put a moratorium on remembrances of genocide.

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How does one fight for one's country (U.S.) by illegally invading Iraq, decimating its ancient societies, both Christian and Muslim, and being directly responsible for the killing of 1,000,000+ civilians. And, giving rise to the bloody Islamic State. The unfolding tragic events in the Middle East and elsewhere is symptomatic of a colonial mind-set that refuses to acknowledge that it does not have the *perceived* power, moral or otherwise, to direct the course of events to its own choosing. That the past is catching up. That even its own citizens are becoming aware of the omissions and commissions of government. That citizens are becoming proactive in exercising their rights. One hopes that in this process the Vietnamese victims will get justice along with the U.S. soldiers who were used and abused by an insidious system that appears more pervasive today.

In the meantime, let us thank all those individuals and organisations in Vietnam and across the world who have come forward in their own capacity to assist the victims of Agent Orange, both Vietnamese and US soldiers.

Regardless of nationality, *insaanyat*, humanity, is still alive. And this is, perhaps, our only saving grace.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

References are in the following pages



“This way of settling differences is not just.

This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into veins of people normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice and love.

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.”

— **Martin Luther King Jr.**

Assassinated on April 4, 1968, Memphis, Tennessee, U.S.A



Special thanks to:

- *The Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin* (VAVA) Hanoi
- Agent Orange victim *Le Van Ot*, 25 years old born without eyes
- *Vu Tuan Hung*, photographer, Ho Chi Minh City.



Photograph © Vu Tuan Hung

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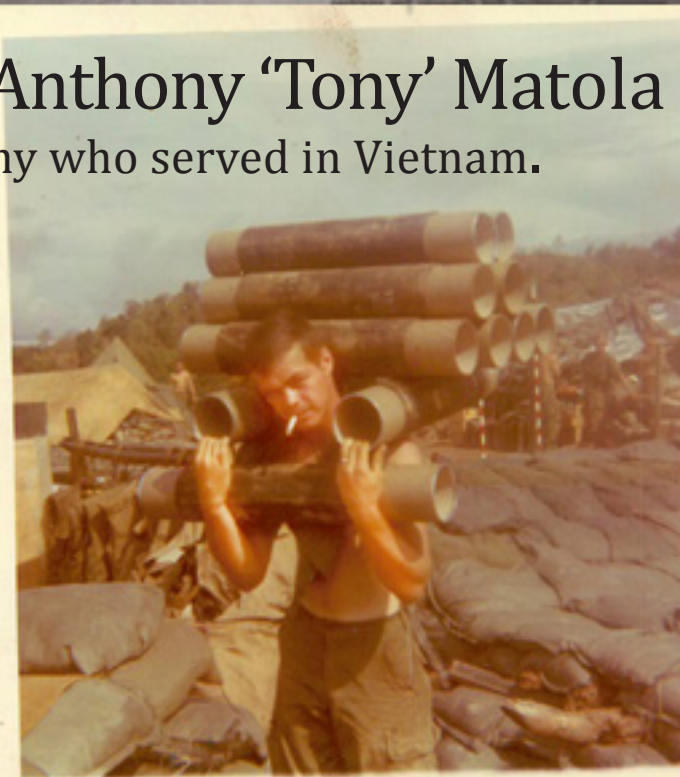
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My dad Anthony 'Tony' Matola  
SP4 U.S. Army who served in Vietnam.



Katie Costello is a Hubbard, Ohio, USA native. Her greatest love and career is working with animals and she has surrounded herself with all aspects of helping them. She is the owner of *The Canine Campus Training and Wellness Center* and has two non-profit organizations, one co-founded with her father. When he father died of Agent Orange on July 8, 2015, Katie expanded her humanitarianism to helping victims of Agent Orange. Her first trip to Pleiku, Vietnam (where her father served), working with VAVA, occurred in April of 2017. <http://thecaninecampustraining.com/about/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/caninecampustraining>

## Katie Matola-Costello

### Daughter of Vietnam veteran Anthony 'Tony' Matola SP4 U.S. Army

in a candid interview with Mark Ulyseas

**Could you give us an overview of your father's life prior to joining the US Army?**

My dad was in high school in 11th grade when he decided to join the US Army to beat the draft. He felt that if he joined he would have more training, and a better chance of survival. He married my mom, who was 16, upon completing boot camp, and they went to Germany together before dad was called to Vietnam. He and my mother were married up to the time of his death. Dad always enjoyed working on cars, and prior to joining the service he worked at a gas station/car repair shop to make enough money to keep his brothers and sisters clothed and fed. He was the oldest brother.

**Where was he posted and when did he join the war?**

When he joined the US Army he was sent for induction to Cleveland, Ohio, and for basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey. And then to Fort Benning, Georgia for advanced training and onto Fort Sill Oklahoma for artillery school. He was stationed at Firth, Germany (West Germany) for about 8 months before being sent to Pleiku, Vietnam, in 1969.

**When and where was he posted in Vietnam?**

1969, [Pleiku](#), Vietnam.



When dad returned home, he wouldn't have anything to do with the VA (Veterans Association) until many years later and ONLY to be checked for Agent Orange. However, once he did go to the VA and found out not only did he have exposure to Agent Orange (and previously undiagnosed skin problems where his hands would split open were explained) but he also had stage 4 lung cancer from it, he stuck with the VA and was very pleased with them.

He ended up having his scans and all his chemotherapy and immunotherapy at the Louis-Stokes VA Medical Center. His doctor was Dr. Manochakian and the compassion they showed, and the comradery of the other veterans, and the RESPECT was exactly what he needed. At a time when the VA was under scrutiny, dad and our family were most pleased with them. I truly believe that the respect shown at the VA is something that mainstream hospitals could learn so much from.

#### Which regiment and in what capacity?

This seems to be lost to time. He didn't speak about it. But he was in artillery on Bà Nà Hill. He spoke of the **Montagnards** and how they (U.S. troops) helped so much. At least his platoon would always feed them.

#### How long was he in the war and what happened to him and his friends? Was he wounded? What were the fate of his friends?

He didn't speak much about it, so I don't have a lot of answers. But he was injured by shrapnel. The only way I know this is because after he died I wrote to get his file, including medical.

His best friend in the service, Gene Polito from Cleveland, who joined the service at the same time and went through boot camp with dad, didn't come home. Dad told us the story of the two friends standing next to each other in boot camp. They lined them all up and then had them go back and forth saying a number "1, 2, 1, 2" etc. Gene Polito was next to him, so they ended up with different numbers. All 1's became Army and all 2's became Marines. Gene's platoon suffered heavy artillery and was killed. Dad had so many regrets over him dying and he (dad) living... and dad was ashamed that he never went to visit Gene's mother after he returned home.

#### On returning home did he go to a Vet hospital, what did he do, what job if any?

When dad returned home, he wouldn't have anything to do with the VA (Veterans Association) until many years later and ONLY to be checked for Agent Orange. However, once he did go to the VA and found out not only did he have exposure to Agent Orange (and previously undiagnosed skin problems where his hands would split open were explained) but he also had stage 4 lung cancer from it, he stuck with the VA and was very pleased with them. He ended up having his scans and all his chemotherapy and immunotherapy at the Louis-Stokes VA Medical Center. His doctor was Dr. Manochakian and the compassion they showed, and the comradery of the other veterans, and the RESPECT was exactly what he needed. At a time when the VA was under scrutiny, dad and our family were most pleased with them. I truly believe that the respect shown at the VA is something that mainstream hospitals could learn so much from.

Dad worked in a steel mill (we live near Youngstown, Ohio, once the steel capital of the world!) as a welder. He worked there until retirement on January 31, 2016.

#### When were you born? How many members are there in your family?

I was born in 1971, two years after dad returned home from Vietnam. I also had a sister who was born in 1972. She died at 3 months from undetermined causes that they called SID's. (Sudden Infant Death). I have 2 younger brothers. One born in 1976 and the other in 1981.

#### While growing up did your father share his wartime experiences with the family?

No, not really. In rare glimpses, I suppose he hinted. When a helicopter flew overhead he would flinch. He spoke of the **Montagnards** that helped American soldiers.

After his diagnosis he spoke to priests about how one couldn't go to Vietnam without killing someone, and yet how did one justify it when "thou shalt not kill" is in the bible. TRULY lifelong effects. My brothers have said that he spoke of the war to them, though they never shared anything with me.



Mom & Dad - photograph © Katie Matola-Costello



His health was good until his last 5 years of life, I would say. He had a skin condition on his hands - they would swell until they split open. Doctors and specialists couldn't give him an answer as to the cause. Antibiotics and steroids didn't help. And when the affliction disappeared, it was short lived - only to return. It caused him great pain. Everything my Dad did was with his hands - working with his hands. Then, he started having trouble breathing.



Dad - photograph © Katie Matola-Costello  
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#### **How was his health, according to you?**

His health was good until his last 5 years of life, I would say. He had a skin condition on his hands - they would swell until they split open. Doctors and specialists couldn't give him an answer as to the cause. Antibiotics and steroids didn't help. And when the affliction disappeared, it was short lived - only to return. It caused him great pain.

Everything my Dad did was with his hands - working with his hands.

Then, he started having trouble breathing.

#### **Was he affected by Agent Orange?**

Yes. And was given 100% disability immediately upon diagnosis of stage 4 lung cancer.

#### **And was this poisoning by dioxin diagnosed by the doctors?**

Yes.

#### **Did the State pay for his treatment?**

Yes. 100%. He struggled a little because he received 100% right away, and yet so many of his veteran brethren are still waiting.

In his later years he questioned everything. I think he felt as if death was too high a price to pay and he blamed himself for a decision that was made by those way higher than he. My Grandmother would tell the story of picking up my Dad from the airport when he came home and say *"I drove right past him. I didn't recognize him. His eyes told a story of being lost."*

#### **Apart from his physical health, how was his mental health? Did he hate the Vietcong?**

I would say he was haunted by them, and he certainly considered them the enemy BUT it always seemed to be past tense...as if the Vietnamese that were his enemy weren't the same as the Vietnamese that exist today. He wouldn't eat certain foods because of his experience there, such as chicken and rice. He feared snakes his entire life due to the many stories of the "two step" snakes. Ironically, when my husband and I went to Vietnam, even hiking through the mountainous jungle we never once saw a snake.

#### **Was there any 'guilt' that your father experienced with regard to what was done by the army in Vietnam?**

Yes. His later years he questioned everything. I think he felt as if death was too high a price to pay and he blamed himself for a decision that was made by those way higher than he. My Grandmother would tell the story of picking up my Dad from the airport when he came home and say *"I drove right past him. I didn't recognize him. His eyes told a story of being lost."*

#### **Did he return to Vietnam in peacetime and go to the places where he fought with his regiment and meet the people? And if so, how did the Vietnamese civilians react?**

No, he never returned to Vietnam. I think his PTSD wouldn't have allowed that. I should say the PTSD is my terminology...he certainly wasn't diagnosed with it because he would never seek out help. He would have never allowed himself to go though.

I can only speak to what I have seen when I was there...amazing people who are all embracing. They seem to realize that it was everyone's job and no real hard feelings are held. I admire them for that. And if I could just say a little more here....Hoa (Nguyen Thuy Hoa (Ms) from Hanoi) reached out to me based on a newspaper article someone had sent to her about a fundraiser we were having to benefit people in Pleiku. She contacted me from that article and we have become friends. We flew in to Hanoi so that the 2 of us could meet while we were there. We exchanged pictures of our fathers...and all at once I realized just simply 1 generation before, our fathers were fighting against each other. How far we have come.



I have said a number of times that I feel like dad left a piece of himself there... and I was going to bring it home. But the reality was that I ended up leaving a piece of myself there too. At one point, and I will share this picture with you... when I went to a Buddhist temple near the mountain that dad fought on I turned to see an open door and prayer flags, and the mountain he fought on behind it... and later wrote *"I turned to look at the mountain you fought on one more time before leaving Vietnam. I swear I heard you whisper my name. I will always love you daddy."*

**When did your father pass away? And what was the ailment/s that he had?**

July 8, 2015. He had stage 4 lung cancer. He was diagnosed on June 24, 2014.

**Have you returned to Vietnam after his death? And why?**

I was woke up the morning of July 8, 2015 at 7:00 AM by my husband telling me my mother had called and that the ambulance was at my mom's house that dad had collapsed and she thought he had died. I was hysterical and ran, pajamas and all to my car and drove 100 miles an hour the 5 miles I live from them. When I arrived they were still loading dad into the ambulance. As a matter of fact, I helped them to load him, talking to him the entire time. I then ran home to change into clothes and rushed to the hospital, where after several hours the decision was made to take him off of life support.

I was driving home, hysterical....and as I pulled into the town of Hubbard, Ohio that I live in there was a Vietnam era Huey helicopter that had landed in the field in front of the high school. The VFW (Veterans of Foreign War), building was directly across the street, had sponsored the visit. Veterans and people were everywhere.

I was crying, (and had honestly NEVER seen this happen before, especially in my little town) and was alarmed at the chances of that happening at this time. I sat at the red light, staring at the Huey and said aloud to myself *"I have to go to Vietnam."* I repeated that line several times over the next week, which truly was just a blur. I think it was all of the emotions I was feeling, an emptiness inside... that said I have to do this.

I have said a number of times that I feel like dad left a piece of himself there...and I was going to bring it home. But the reality was that I ended up leaving a piece of myself there too. At one point, ...when I went to a Buddhist temple near the mountain that dad fought on I turned to see an open door and prayer flags, and the mountain he fought on behind it...and later wrote... *"I turned to look at the mountain you fought on one more time before leaving Vietnam. I swear I heard you whisper my name. I will always love you daddy."*

It was truly an amazing and humbling experience. First, there was a meeting as to how to properly use the money that we had raised, and would continue to raise for this cause. They pulled out the red carpet, truly, and allowed us into the school room where the kids showed us pieces of their school work, a boy who wrote with his feet because his fingers were rendered useless. The will to thrive. The determination not to give up was truly amazing to me. I saw the parents of some of these children, the difficulty of their lives written all over their faces as they held their children that were severely affected by Agent Orange.



**How did you feel when you visited the victims of Agent Orange in Vietnam?**

It was truly an amazing and humbling experience. First, there was a meeting as to how to properly use the money that we had raised, and would continue to raise for this cause. They pulled out the red carpet, truly, and allowed us into the school room where the kids showed us pieces of their school work, a boy who wrote with his feet because his fingers were rendered useless. The will to thrive. The determination not to give up was truly amazing to me. I saw the parents of some of these children, the difficulty of their lives written all over their faces as they held their children that were severely affected by Agent Orange. When I thought about the American soldiers affected by Agent Orange, I began to realize at such a depth that our soldiers went home. Even bigger were the effects felt by the people left in Vietnam. The pictures, the lives touched, it was really profound and difficult. I will continue to help in whatever ways we possibly can to fund-raise to help. The adults there, no one looking on with judgement, and I very obviously don't look Vietnamese. Smiles, nods. They were so welcoming. The small kitchen and the women that cooked the meals - beautiful and so simple. Doing what they could with very little to work with. It certainly makes us think and feel differently about the world around us in America. It was emotional, and yet it was very healing. I certainly knew that this was a path that I needed to follow for probably the rest of my life.

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**Do you think the Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange will ever get justice? And will those soldiers like your father ever be acknowledged as victims of Agent Orange?**

I think in America it is getting better. Of course, only after countless have died. There are many people who are fighting for a long time for the rights of their deceased loved ones. I can only hope and pray that they get justice.

**Please give us a short overview of your life and works?**

I am a licensed veterinary technician and certified professional dog trainer. I own *The Canine Campus Training and Wellness Center* in Hubbard, Ohio. I will help any animal. We are a vegan family and have 7 pet dogs, 7 cats, 9 chickens and 3 pet farm pigs. I love to travel and write. Humanitarian efforts with animals and people exposed to Agent Orange are a passion of mine. I donate a service dog that I train to an American veteran every year. The dog is named Tony after my dad.





Father Ivo Coelho earned a PhD in philosophy at the Gregorian University, Rome, for his work on the hermeneutics of the philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan, SJ (1904-1984). After teaching philosophy in Divyadaan: Salesian Institute of Philosophy, Nashik and holding various offices in his religious congregation, in Nashik, Mumbai and Jerusalem, he is currently based in Rome, where he is in charge of the sector of training and formation for the Salesian society of Don Bosco. Besides his interest in Lonergan, he has also edited collections of the essays of the Indologist Richard De Smet, SJ (1916-1997).

Previously published in Live Encounters Magazine October 2013.



## Dr Ivo Coelho - Of friendship, Tea, and Dialogue

When I was younger, perhaps in the years when I was just beginning to read philosophy, I found myself extremely open to all religions, and inter-religious dialogue rather easy. We were introduced to Hinduism and in a lesser way to Buddhism by people of the calibre of Fr Richard De Smet, SJ and Sr Sara Grant, RSCJ, which is why it would not be entirely wrong to say that the first religion I really *reflected* on was Hinduism, at least in its Advaitic incarnation. As for the Buddha, I have, I think, always found him a fascinating figure: in many ways, the Buddha remains the dream of the intellectual type of person. Things became complicated when I began to get deeper into the religion into which I was born. That was another adventure in itself, and anything I write will probably be a simplification, but this much I can say: from Raimundo Panikkar I picked up the idea that the only way to get out of a religion is either to sink into its depths or rise to its heights. In other words, you cannot really judge a religion unless you have first experienced it, lived it profoundly. So I decided to allow myself to sink into the depths of Catholic Christianity. That kind of process, of course, is not one that has a clearly marked terminal point, so I guess it is still going on for me.

But I know that taking my own religion seriously made the understanding of other religions and interreligious dialogue that much more difficult.

### So where do I stand at this point?

I believe I have an enormous respect for the religions of the world, though I am not equally familiar with all of them. I believe also that dialogue cannot take place by first cutting away everything that bothers or seems like an obstacle.

I believe deeply, I hope, in Jesus called the Christ with the faith of the Catholic Church, and I know this puts me in difficulty in different ways with different religions.

For both my Jewish and my Muslim brothers and sisters, Jesus as professed in the Creed is quite impossible to accept. And my Hindu and Buddhist brothers and sisters will have problems from another angle, for are we not making too much of history and of the word, and should we not instead transcend the whole sphere of the *vyavaharika*, the everyday, in favour of that which is beyond, the ultimate, the absolute, the *paramarthika*? So there are difficulties, major ones. But my point is that dialogue cannot and does not proceed by first putting aside everything that seems to be an obstacle. If it were to do that, there would be precious little left to dialogue about.

### So how then might we proceed?

I am convinced, first of all, of the importance of friendship. Friendship, as Aristotle says, is the condition for doing philosophy. It is also the absolute condition for interreligious dialogue. Friendship is the lived recognition of our common humanity, beyond differences on the level of belief. Even if we never come to agreement, friendship will remain an absolute value and something to be treasured.

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**Stephanie Saldana, author of *The Bread of Angels* likes to speak in this context of the sheikha with whom she was privileged to study certain surahs of the Koran in Damascus. This sheikha, who ran a Koranic school for Muslim girls, believed that no religion has a monopoly on salvation: people of all faiths can go to paradise provided they do what is in their holy book. She was not an ultra-liberal sheikha by any means, Stephanie says, but here she was, a beautiful human being who could recognize and respect and love the humanity in another human being from another religion and another culture.**

**This is what Baba Devdas, a Salesian Catholic priest, does in the village where he runs a place for 'street kids.' He often gets groups from the neighbouring village barging into his house, and they are not always reasonable and sometimes potentially violent. What do you do, I asked him. I make them sit down first, he told me. Then I offer them water – you always offer water first in a hot country, it is the basic courtesy. And then tea. And they usually become quite reasonable by then. So I often think of tea as an important element in dialogue, including the interreligious variety.**

But friendship is a goal to be achieved. Perhaps we need to stress, even before that, the importance of simple contact. It is quite amazing how we can live our independent lives even in the midst of the most startling diversity. I have lived most of my life in cosmopolitan Mumbai, rubbing shoulders at home and at school with Hindus, Muslims and even the occasional Jew. Just now I am living in Jerusalem, surrounded by Jewish neighbours (October 2013). But it does not follow automatically that we know one another, or even that we have sufficient contact. Contact needs to be achieved. It is the most basic step in dialogue. I heard a friend saying recently that there is no dialogue in the abstract, and there is much truth in that.

Stephanie Saldana, author of *The Bread of Angels* likes to speak in this context of the sheikha with whom she was privileged to study certain *surahs* of the Koran in Damascus. This sheikha, who ran a Koranic school for Muslim girls, believed that no religion has a monopoly on salvation: people of all faiths can go to paradise provided they do what is in their holy book. She was not an ultra-liberal sheikha by any means, Stephanie says, but here she was, a beautiful human being who could recognize and respect and love the humanity in another human being from another religion and another culture. Interreligious dialogue has to have a human face. Dialogue between Islam and Christianity might not mean much, but dialogue with another human being, yes.

And then there was the 'settler' I met at a Taize prayer meeting in Ratisbonne, who spoke to me about his way of dialogue: giving a lift to any Palestinian he passed on the road. This man knew the importance of simple contact and interaction. Much of the time we tend to demonize the Other simply because we do not really know him or her. My friend told me how he had once taken a rather orthodox young man from his settlement to meet a Palestinian family in their house. It was the very first time this young man had ever come in proper contact an Arab family, and he came away a little changed by his encounter. "They seem to be quite nice, after all." Friendly contact has a way of breaking down the walls we have put up between ourselves.

Contact and friendship bring up the topic of leisure and language. If we are to be friends, we need to invest time, and we need to have a medium of communication. This became so wonderfully evident to me last year when we paid a visit to the Benedictine monastery of Abu Ghosh, not far from Jerusalem. Benedictine monks pray and work. They have no external ministry. This means they have time for people.

Brother Olivier, for example, meets many people from all walks of life and all religions. For his diaconate ordination last year he said he was surprised by the number of people who turned up: Christians of course, but also Muslims, men and women, Palestinians as well as Israelis, religious Jews as well as soldiers, and even twenty Israeli bikers with their Harley-Davidsons. I think the secret is that Olivier and many of the monks speak Hebrew, and they have time to waste with people. That is the wonderful thing about being a monk: no other ministry, and plenty of time for people.

"We show that we must live together, and that we can," said Olivier. "I can tell you that my political views are quite different, but I experience that people love me just the same." And he told us of an sms that he received from an Israeli soldier that made him cry and laugh: "I miss you. Take care of yourself. Don't go out into the sun."

Tea is another wonderful ingredient in interreligious dialogue, especially in a country like India. If someone invites you for tea in his house, it is usually a sign of esteem and friendship, and you would do well to accept it. And if a turbulent group confronts you, offer them some tea, and you will see how the temperature drops significantly. This is what Baba Devdas, a Salesian Catholic priest, does in the village where he runs a place for 'street kids.' He often gets groups from the neighbouring village barging into his house, and they are not always reasonable and sometimes potentially violent. What do you do, I asked him. I make them sit down first, he told me. Then I offer them water – you always offer water first in a hot country, it is the basic courtesy. And then tea. And they usually become quite reasonable by then. So I often think of tea as an important element in dialogue, including the interreligious variety.

Tea, after all, has ancient religious roots. As *cha* it comes from the Sanskrit word *dhyana*, meditation; from there it migrated to China, where it became *cha'n*, and eventually Japan, where it became the better known Zen. But in India it is a sign of friendship, especially when it is 'cut.' So when your host pours half the cup into the saucer and offers you the saucer, don't hesitate to drink from the saucer.

And then the importance of simple information. That became evident to me when a Hindu gentleman once approached me in Nashik. The Kargil conflict between India and Pakistan had just concluded, and Mr Patwardhan was writing a book on the new Kargils in the centre of India – by which he meant Christian missions all over the country. He felt these were the new and hidden centres of conflict.



When we want to deal with subjects as subjects, there has to be the effort not to co-opt the other into our schemes. We cannot pretend to understand the other in advance. Such understanding destroys dialogue, because it treats the other as an object, it fails to relate to her as subject. Which brings us to another important aspect of dialogue: the ability to hold things together in tension. We will often not be able to 'resolve' the inherent tensions in dialogue.

But surely all dialogue calls for a generous dose of a quality that Richard De Smet had in abundance: an inner strength, a centredness, the *hara* that enables one to stay calm, persist, persevere, even when the going is tough and one is challenged at one's deepest levels. Here then is the emotional dimension of interreligious dialogue, one that blends and merges imperceptibly into the religious or spiritual dimension, into that strength and gentleness and peace that comes from a Source that we somehow know is not of our doing.

But he wanted to be fair to the Christians, he said, and so he had decided to meet some and hear from them their side of the story. We had several sessions. Unfortunately he would turn up without warning, and I, as usual, always had a thousand things on my plate. I was not too patient, and he was not too open. What I realized in this short exchange was that not even the basic information about our religions could really be taken for granted. We cannot take for granted that we share the same data; and even when we do, it tends to be tremendously slanted in one way or another. Inter-religious dialogue will often involve working painstakingly through the little details which we take for granted, and once again, friendship and leisure are a tremendous help.

From here we can go on to more sophisticated reflections. Panikkar distinguishes dialectical dialogue from dialogical dialogue. Bernard Lonergan notes that, where dialectic treats subjects as objects, dialogue deals with subjects as subjects. I find Gadamer's remarks terribly enlightening in this regard: When we claim to understand the other person in advance, we actually succeed in keeping her claim at a distance. The dialectic of charitable or welfare work, Gadamer says, operates in this way, penetrating all relationships between people as a reflective form of the effort to dominate. And the educative relationship is also but an authoritative form of welfare work.

When we want to deal with subjects as subjects, there has to be the effort not to co-opt the other into our schemes. We cannot pretend to understand the other in advance. Such understanding destroys dialogue, because it treats the other as an object, it fails to relate to her as subject. Which brings us to another important aspect of dialogue: the ability to hold things together in tension. We will often not be able to 'resolve' the inherent tensions in dialogue.

Two examples come to mind here: Swami Abhishikatananda and Stephanie Saldana, once again. Swami Abhishikatananda, the Benedictine monk Henri Le Saux, underwent the acute experience of the tension between Christianity and *advaita*, between the *vyavaharika* and the *paramarthika*. He was never able to transcend these antinomies in any satisfactory way. His greatness lay instead in having lived within himself the symbiosis of two traditions, Hindu and Christian, in such a way that they both became part of himself. In the words of the theologian Jacques Dupuis, his stubborn fidelity to two faiths made of him a prophetic figure at a time when the marriage of East and West was being felt as an urgent need. He was able to live with the tension, leaving to others the task of constructing a synthesis.

Stephanie Saldana, who reads the Gospel of Luke with Muslim students at the Al Quds University in East Jerusalem, echoes the same thing in a different way. How, we asked her, do her students relate to a Jesus who is believed to be God, and who is at the same time feels afraid in the Garden of Gethsemane? Strangely, she said, her students are able to connect with Jesus' fear and weakness. How do you explain that?

Perhaps only by the fact that many of us actually do live with contradictions more often than we think. We might, for example, have strong prejudices about people from a certain community, and yet also have close friends among members of that community. The ability to hold things in tension is another very important aspect of interreligious dialogue. We need to resist the temptation to make everything the same. God is surely more complex than we think.

On the other hand, within the context of friendship, dialogue will probably demand also the courage to go beyond the bounds of political correctness and to call a spade a spade. Within friendship and in a spirit of charity, we should surely be able to speak also hard truths. Not all love is merely sweetness and light. Here the three stages of community that Scott Peck speaks about in *The Road Less Travelled* might be instructive: true community begins when we are able to go beyond initial politeness and dare to face the chaotic, and it is born when we are able to get beyond chaos to true understanding. Even the irenic Panikkar does not hesitate to say that true dialogue demands the lifting of all brackets. For if the other has reached his deepest level, and I, out of politeness, remain at what is for me only a penultimate level, I am not being really authentic. There is a point in the dialogue when dialogue itself give way and makes place for the witness, the testimony, the test is or the 'third' that speaks through us and breaks into another dimension.

But surely all dialogue calls for a generous dose of a quality that Richard De Smet had in abundance: an inner strength, a centredness, the *hara* that enables one to stay calm, persist, persevere, even when the going is tough and one is challenged at one's deepest levels. Here then is the emotional dimension of interreligious dialogue, one that blends and merges imperceptibly into the religious or spiritual dimension, into that strength and gentleness and peace that comes from a Source that we somehow know is not of our doing.



Dr. Namrata Goswami is an author, strategic analyst and consultant on counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism, alternate futures, and great power politics. After earning her Ph.D. in international relations, she served for nearly a decade at India's Ministry of Defense (MOD) sponsored think tank, the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi, working on ethnic conflicts in India's Northeast and China-India border conflict. She is the author of three books, "India's National Security and Counter-Insurgency", "Asia 2030" and "Asia 2030 The Unfolding Future." Her research and expertise generated opportunities for collaborations abroad, and she accepted visiting fellowships at the Peace Research Institute, Oslo, Norway; the La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia; and the University of Heidelberg, Germany. In 2012, she was selected to serve as a Jennings-Randolph Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Washington D.C. where she studied India-China border issues, and was awarded a Fulbright-Nehru Senior Fellowship that same year. Shortly after establishing her own strategy and policy consultancy, she won the prestigious MINERVA grant awarded by the Office of the U.S. Secretary of Defense (OSD) to study great power competition in the grey zone of outer space. She was also awarded a contract with Joint Special Operations University (JSOU), to work on a project on "ISIS in South and Southeast Asia".

With expertise in international relations, ethnic conflicts, counter insurgency, wargaming, scenario building, and conflict resolution, she has been asked to consult for audiences as diverse as Wikistrat, USPACOM, USSOCOM, the Indian Military and the Indian Government, academia and policy think tanks. She was the first representative from South Asia chosen to participate in the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies NATO Partnership for Peace Consortium (PfPC) 'Emerging Security Challenges Working Group.' She also received the Executive Leadership Certificate sponsored by the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, National Defense University (NDU), and the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS). Currently, she is working on two book projects, one on the topic of 'Ethnic Narratives', to be published by Oxford University Press, and the other on the topic of 'Great Power Ambitions' to be published by Lexington Press, an imprint of Rowman and Littlefield.



Views expressed in this article are solely that of the author.

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### SENIOR ANALYST AND AUTHOR

# NORTH KOREA'S GRAND STRATEGY



In one of the most significant departures from U.S. policy of dis-engagement with North Korea for decades, President Donald Trump accepted an invitation from Kim Jong-un to meet at a summit level. Scheduled to take place on June 12, 2018 in Singapore, Trump stated in a tweet about the upcoming summit that "We will both try to make it a very special moment for World Peace!"<sup>1</sup> However, differences have cropped up including remarks made by both U.S. National Security Advisor (NSA), John Bolton and Vice President Mike Pence that if North Korea does not give in to U.S. demands of verified de-nuclearization, then the country may suffer the same fate that befell Libya.<sup>2</sup> In response, North Korean Vice President, Choe Son Hui, threatened to abandon the summit calling out Pence's remarks as "unbridled and impudent remarks that North Korea might end like Libya, military option for North Korea never came off the table...as a person involved in the US affairs, I cannot suppress my surprise at such ignorant and stupid remarks gushing out from the mouth of the U.S. vice president."<sup>3</sup> The 'hard core' or so-called 'maximum pressure' bargaining strategy adopted by the U.S. before the scheduled summit that if North Korea did not make a deal, it might end up like Libya backfired and at the same time demonstrated that the U.S. could not keep matters quiet till the summit, which is usually how summits of such importance works. The contradictory stands of Trump, Bolton and Pence created enough confusion about what really the intent of the summit was. On one hand, both Pence and Bolton supported a Libyan model for North Korea. On the other hand, Trump stated that he was not in support of the Libyan model. This evoked a fierce counter from North Korea, and the dynamics of peace, which North and South Korea had engineered in their meeting in April, disappeared like an eagle into the distant horizon.



This now cancelled Trump-Kim summit was preceded by a historic South Korea-North Korea meeting in April this year, in which both leaders vowed to remove all nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula. The Korean meeting witnessed the first North Korean leader to step on South soil since the end of the 1953 Korean war.

While the U.S. Grand Strategy regarding the Korean peninsula is premised on three factors; denuclearization; containing Chinese influence; and maintaining U.S. primacy, what is North Korea's Grand Strategy vi-a-vis the U.S.? What changed in Kim Jong-un's strategic calculus that from conducting a 'verbal' fight with Trump, he went on to issue a summit invite. Trump changed his rhetoric as well, from calling Kim a 'little rocket man' and 'quite mad', to "has really been very open and I think very honorable based on what we are seeing."

At the heart of the issue is North Korean denuclearization and disarmament, especially the U.S. policy push for the North to give up its nuclear weapons fully and irreversibly. In response to the U.S. policy structure, Kim agreed to stop nuclear tests, and ballistic missile launches. In fact, just before Trump announced he was cancelling the summit, North Korea destroyed tunnels in its only nuclear test sites at Punggye-ri.<sup>4</sup> While not for the first time, Kim's gesture is significant given North Korea's escalatory missile tests causing much disquiet in the U.S. in 2017. For instance, on November 28, 2017, North Korea test fired its strongest Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM), the *Hwasong 15*, with boosted capabilities to reach anywhere in the continental U.S.<sup>5</sup> This had been preceded by a September 2017 missile test over Hokkaido islands, Japan, that flew 3,700 kms, and reached an altitude of 770 kms before landing in the Pacific. This test was intended not only at Japan but also at the U.S. territory of Guam.<sup>6</sup>

In response, Trump, in an address to the United Nations General Assembly on September 21, 2017 threatened to totally destroy North Korea.<sup>7</sup> U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis in a October 2017 visit to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that separates North and South Korea asserted that "North Korean provocations continue to threaten regional and world peace and despite unanimous condemnation by the United Nations' Security Council they still proceed".<sup>8</sup> Kim retorted by threatening the US, stating, "the U.S. should know that the button for nuclear weapons is on my table...The entire area of the U.S. mainland is within our nuclear strike range".<sup>9</sup> Considering this, it is rather remarkable that Trump accepted an invitation from Kim to meet face-to-face at the summit level.<sup>10</sup> This now cancelled Trump-Kim summit was preceded by a historic South Korea-North Korea meeting in April this year, in which both leaders vowed to remove all nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula. The Korean meeting witnessed the first North Korean leader to step on South soil since the end of the 1953 Korean war.

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When I analyze Kim Jong-un's signaling last year, in response to threats by the U.S. that all options [including the military option], were on the table, I diagnose four North Korean grand strategic rationales.

- 1) Re-unification of Korea
- 2) Reassure the U.S. to Put off Pressure
- 3) Create a 'Great Power' Bargaining Situation
- 4) Showcase North Korean Leverage





The South aspires to unification based on a model of liberal democracy and market economy. The use of force, to bring about unification, is ruled out by the South. The North, on the other hand, believes that it is outside forces that tore the two countries apart. Consequently, Kim Jong-un could be strategizing a U.S. exit from South Korea, whose presence, he views as an obstacle to Korean unification as well as a direct threat, more so with the deployment of Theatre High Altitude Air Defense (THAAD) and U.S. command of South Korean forces during war. North Korean leaders, from Kim Il-Sung onwards to Kim Jong-un views the greatest threat to Korea coming from imperialist forces, the biggest imperialist being the United States.

### 1) Re-unification of Korea

Most Koreans want and cherish re-unification, when their country will once again revert to the status of a powerful country in Northeast Asia. The views on re-unification may differ though between the South and North, with South Korea becoming a vibrant democracy. In the 1940s and 1950s, both countries were authoritarian, and both leaders, Kim Il Sung of the North and General Park Chung Hee of the South were military style dictators, and the conditions prevalent in both countries were based on state led economies, authoritarian politics, with great amount of cultural and social similarities.<sup>12</sup> However, South Korea leap- frogged, from a country poorer than Sudan in the 1960s, to one of the richest nations on earth today. The credit for the miracle goes to Park Chung Hee, who “inspired, bullied, beat, cajoled, and enticed the Koreans out of the paddy fields and to the forefront of the industrial world”.<sup>13</sup>

Koreans have a great love of learning and their revered ruler is Sejong The Great, depicted as reading a book in mythical lore. The North, on the other hand, has not seen such an economic miracle, has been isolated, and ruled by the Kim family. While the North can boast of advancing its nuclear and ICBM technology, it cannot claim the same for the lifestyle of its people.

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In the 1980s, North Korea argued that “there is no place on the earth that is not affected by the evil influence of the U.S. and there is no country that does not feel the menace of aggression [from the U.S.]”.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the North views South Korea as a colony of the U.S. The North has always aspired to unify the Korean peninsula under its political leadership. Given the aspirations towards

While it is assumed that during wartime, the U.S. will assume control of all South Korean forces, the South Korean president must agree to that effect. OPCON remains in force till 2020 despite insistence from South Korean President Moon that it should end. A peace treaty between North and South Korea would obviate the need for U.S. troop presence in the Korean peninsula.

Korean unification has 80 per cent support in the South, while views from the North are not clear; it is not too farfetched to highlight this unification rationale given the recent commitment between Kim and Moon to sign a peace treaty and bring to closure the Korean war.<sup>15</sup> This would imply two things; the rationale to deploy the THAAD, the Patriot Air Missile defense system, especially the PAC-2, the MN3A1 Reconnaissance Vehicle as protection against chemical agents in South Korea from the North, would become invalid.<sup>16</sup>

Second, the U.S. continues to enjoy Wartime Operational Control (OPCON) of South Korean forces. Consequently, the South Korean military coordinates closely with the United Nations Command led by U.S. General Vincent Brooks, who also heads the U.S. forces there.

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The development of the Musudan range, as well as the Pukguksong, submarine launched surface to surface missile has added to the Korean arsenal. Consequently, Kim Jong-Un has demonstrated missile capability by his rapid launch escalation last year, thereby, making it attractive for Trump to accept a summit with him. For one, it reassures Trump's base, concerned with the North Korean threat, that their leader is in control of the situation.

## 2) Reassure the U.S. to Put off Pressure

The North Korean ICBMs constitute a threat to the U.S. homeland. The latest missile, the Hwasong-14 has a range of 6, 700 km; North Korea boasts that it can hit anywhere in the U.S.<sup>18</sup> while U.S. experts believe it can hit Alaska. There are speculations that the North is developing nuclear war-heads capable of targeting the U.S. A Japanese government defense white paper warned that the North Korean nuclear capability has advanced considerably, and its ICBMs offer the North the capability to project power on the other side of the planet (Read U.S.).<sup>19</sup> ICBMs are multi-stage solid or liquid fueled rockets, and they carry their weapons payload out of the earth's atmosphere into space, with the weapon payload re-entering earth and detonating on its target.<sup>20</sup> At the least, while the North's capability to target the U.S. homeland is still suspect, its Nodong missiles can target both Japan and South Korea, U.S. allies in the region.<sup>21</sup> The development of the Musudan range, as well as the Pukguksong, submarine launched surface to surface missile has added to the Korean arsenal.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, Kim Jong-Un has demonstrated missile capability by his rapid launch escalation last year, thereby, making it attractive for Trump to accept a summit with him. For one, it reassures Trump's base, concerned with the North Korean threat, that their leader is in control of the situation.



In light of that, his willingness to meet Trump in a summit meeting blindsided China and improved Kim's leverage with President Xi Jinping. Not surprisingly, immediately after the announcement of the Kim-Trump summit, China suddenly found itself sitting on the sidelines. Scrambling to set matters right, an invitation to Kim Jong-un was perhaps issued for a visit to Beijing in April 2018 followed by a second visit soon after, visually captured giving the impression that somehow China was behind the idea of the summit. I suspect that Kim used the Trump summit to send a message to China, 'fine, you can ignore us, but we will surprise you by taking decisions whereby, you (China) are no longer the mediator'.

For another, it assuages Trump's own need to craft a foreign policy spectacularly his own, as he goes about undoing Obama's foreign policy legacy, including leaving the Trans Pacific Partnership, the Paris climate agreement and the Iran nuclear deal. Crafting a peace-summit with North Korea will cement his legacy as the U.S. President to have succeeded in ending the Korean war, and perhaps clinching that Nobel Peace Prize. The summit idea has been utilized by Kim to offer reassurances to Trump, his voter base, as well as commit to stop testing those pesky missiles, a U.S. goal. After all, 2020 is around the corner and a successful North Korea policy offers Trump enormous bragging rights, notwithstanding the fact that the summit has been postponed.

## 3) Create a 'Great Power' Bargaining Situation

Kim Jong-un's willingness to meet Donald Trump took China by surprise. While expressing disapproval about North Korea's nuclear adventures, China has worked behind the scenes to bring about dialogue with North Korea, via the Six party talks, as well as offering it financial aid and loans, at a time when other countries have imposed sanctions. China's role in the Korean war of 1950 was instrumental in turning the U.S. and South Korean forces, from North Korean territory, especially undermining their goal of Korean unification and maintaining the North Korean 'buffer' for China.<sup>23</sup> This rationale remains in place today especially given the THAAD and U.S. troop presence in South Korea. However, in recent years, China have been part of U.N. sanctions, vis-à-vis North Korea and have expressed dissatisfaction regarding its testing of nuclear bombs. In reaction to such a test in 2016, China's Foreign Ministry issued a statement that read, "China firmly opposes this...we urge North Korea to fulfil its promises of denuclearization and stop any actions that would worsen the situation".<sup>24</sup> Speculations abound that after Kim Jong-un took over power in 2011, North Korea's relations with China deteriorated. In light of that, his willingness to meet Trump in a summit meeting blindsided China and improved Kim's leverage with President Xi Jinping. Not surprisingly, immediately after the announcement of the Kim-Trump summit, China suddenly found itself sitting on the sidelines. Scrambling to set matters right, an invitation to Kim Jong-un was perhaps issued for a visit to Beijing in April 2018 followed by a second visit soon after, visually captured giving the impression that somehow China was behind the idea of the summit. I suspect that Kim used the Trump summit to send a message to China, 'fine, you can ignore us, but we will surprise you by taking decisions whereby, you (China) are no longer the mediator'.



President Trump's cancellation of the summit is due to North's insistence that it has no interest in nuclear disarmament, one of the key factors of U.S. grand strategy towards North Korea. Trump appeared to blame the Chinese President's meeting with Kim as perhaps a reason why Kim is suddenly belligerent on the U.S. with little understanding or realization that a joint U.S.-South Korea military exercises that includes drills of nuclear drops on North Korea and land invasion, so close to the summit, is perhaps the wrong signal to send, especially when both countries have committed to dialogue with the North.

That is great power bargaining at its best. It shows that Kim understood Trump's tactic of rhetorical escalation, as someone who would not hesitate to meet Kim, being an unconventional President, and he played right into China's insecurity of a thaw in U.S.-North Korea relation, and the loss of a buffer perhaps.

#### 4) Showcase North Korean Leverage

In recent weeks, North Korea has upped the ante, by expressing anger at joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises and going ahead and cancelling North-South Korean high-level talks. The North's official media went so far as to threaten cancelling the Trump-Kim summit in lieu of military exercises. North Korean press noticed Trump's boast that his hard-core diplomacy had brought about a change in North-South dynamic as well as North Korea agreeing to stop nuclear tests by declaring that "There are some arguments describing the improvement of the situation on the Korean Peninsula as 'result of hard-line diplomacy' of the U.S. and 'result of sustained pressure...it seriously chills the atmosphere of the DPRK-U.S. dialogue and is of no help to the development of the situation.'" <sup>25</sup> In fact, there were reports that the U.S. scaled down the military exercise on South Korea's request especially since the exercise involved the B-52 bombers capable of carrying nuclear weapons. In North's perspectives, all such exercises are a prelude to invade North Korea. The exercise ultimately was run in Japan's airspace, instead of the Korean airspace in a concession to North Korea. North Korea issued statements criticizing the U.S. demands for denuclearization. Kim Kye Gwan, Vice Foreign Minister for North Korea stated that "If the US is trying to drive us into a corner to force our unilateral nuclear abandonment, we will no longer be interested in such dialogue and cannot but reconsider our proceeding to the DPRK-US summit". <sup>26</sup>

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It remains to be seen whether the cancelled June 12 Trump-North Korea summit will be rescheduled sometime later. Within the Trump administration, while Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is in favor of negotiating with Kim, NSA John Bolton, wrote two pieces before becoming NSA that made a legal case for preemptive strikes against North Korea. In his piece for *The Wall Street Journal*, Bolton argued that the threat from North Korea is imminent and given the "gaps in U.S. intelligence about North Korea, we should not wait until the very last minute. That would risk striking after the North has deliverable nuclear weapons, a much more dangerous situation".

This is not the first time such mixed signals have led to failure of dialogue between the U.S. and North Korea. As South and North Korea signed a re-unification agreement in 2000 and the U.S. was working towards getting North Korea to agree to nuclear disarmament, President George W. Bush in his 2002 'State of the Union' address declared North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism and included it in his famous 'Axis of Evil'. Consequently, in 2002, North Korea demanded IAEA inspectors leave its territory, and resumed operations on its nuclear facilities. In January 2003, North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and restarted its nuclear reactor that was frozen under the 1994 Agreed Framework.

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The U.S. appears to lack a strategy regarding North Korea, or if I were to offer a more flattering perspective, perhaps Trump believes that like the world of business, mixed signals works rather well as 'pressure points' to coerce and/or persuade the other side to offer concessions. However, nation states do not behave like corporations, given their history, national pride, geographic location, layers of societal involvement, and strategic culture.

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On April 29, Bolton advertised the 2003-2004 Libyan model for North Korea (we all know Gaddafi's fate after Libya gave up its nuclear weapons) stating that it will include a verified denuclearization. Bolton specified that the U.S. was also looking at what North Korea had committed to in order to give up nuclear weapons in 1992.<sup>29</sup>

Bolton, a lawyer, by training, is well equipped to make a legal case as well as point out the limits of international law in dealing with a case such as this. Pompeo, on the other hand, is more careful when it comes to striking North Korea and may not like to disrupt the peace in Northeast Asia. He has been at the forefront on negotiations with North Korea including making two secret trips (early April as CIA Director, and May 2018 as U.S. Secretary of State) to the North to meet Kim. Pompeo may have ambitions to do a 'Kissinger and Mao' with Kim but mixed signaling from the Trump administration, overt military exercises just weeks before the summit, and Bolton and Pence's push for the Libya model has derailed the summit for now. North Korea has already pushed back on the Libya model with anger prompting Trump to contradict Bolton, stating that any deal with North Korea would include a promise of keeping Kim in power, "would be 'something where he'd be there, he'd be in his country, he'd be running his country, his country would be very rich.'"<sup>30</sup>

The U.S. appears to lack a strategy regarding North Korea, or if I were to offer a more flattering perspective, perhaps Trump believes that like the world of business, mixed signals works rather well as 'pressure points' to coerce and/or persuade the other side to offer concessions. However, nation states do not behave like corporations, given their history, national pride, geographic location, layers of societal involvement, and strategic culture.

The fact that the April 'Korea summit' was broadcasted live to the world shows the extent to which South Korea is invested in bringing about permanent settlement. We know for posterity that Kim Dae-jung, President of South Korea from 1998 to 2003 won a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to bring about North-South dialogue. The image of Kim stepping into the south side of the DMZ has deep emotional resonance in South Korea, as well as Moon stepping to the north of the DMZ. The desire for reunification is indeed embedded in Korean society and is part of popular culture including K-Pop.<sup>31</sup> Least understood in U.S. policy making circles is this aspect of South Korean societal involvement in the idea of unification.

Given North Korea's history, and its foreign policy behavior of committing to nuclear disarmament, and then backing off, it will be interesting to see how the Trump Administration addresses the most critical concern for the U.S; Korea's nuclear weapons capability. For Kim, improving relations with the U.S. means lifting of economic sanctions, a pressure point for bargaining vis-à-vis China, and ensuring that the proximity of U.S. presence in South Korea is addressed, especially given the fact that he has the South Korean President, Moon Jae-in fully sold to the idea of South-North dialogues. The fact that the April 'Korea summit' was broadcasted live to the world shows the extent to which South Korea is invested in bringing about permanent settlement. We know for posterity that Kim Dae-jung, President of South Korea from 1998 to 2003 won a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to bring about North-South dialogue. The image of Kim stepping into the south side of the DMZ has deep emotional resonance in South Korea, as well as Moon stepping to the north of the DMZ. The desire for reunification is indeed embedded in Korean society and is part of popular culture including K-Pop.<sup>31</sup> Least understood in U.S. policy making circles is this aspect of South Korean societal involvement in the idea of unification. Moreover, the aspect of China and its hold on North Korea cannot be wished away. For China, North Korea constitutes their strategic buffer vis-à-vis the U.S. Consequently, it will be Moon and Kim who must decide what the future will hold, and whether they have any independent agency at all given the presence of Great Powers [U.S. in South Korea and China in North Korea]. The world waits and watches the unfolding drama. In the meantime, Kim will hold on tightly to his survival weapons.





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DAVID MORGAN

# THE NEW BARBARISM AND HOW TO DEFEAT IT



It is now more than twenty years since historian Eric Hobsbawm delivered his lecture to Amnesty International in Oxford warning against what he diagnosed as the “barbarisation” of contemporary society. Titled “Barbarism: A User’s Guide”, the talk defined modern barbarism as the “adaptation of people to living in a society without the rules of civilisation”.

In a further elaboration of the theme, Hobsbawm described barbarism as “the disruption and breakdown of the systems of rules and moral behaviour by which all societies regulate the relations among their members”. This also encompasses the attitude taken towards other nations, to a state’s foreign policy and the conduct of war. In this respect, evidence of the descent into barbarism can be found in the erosion of any distinction between combatants and non-combatants by both the military and terrorists. “We have got used to killing”, Hobsbawm blandly observes.

Society has travelled a very long way since Hobsbawm issued his grim warning but his analysis still seems fresh and timely: the various related problems that he highlighted have simply accumulated and worsened. The alarm bells are still ringing but far more loudly; so loud it is almost deafening.

As one example, take the situation in London, incontestably one of the world’s great cities, which has of late been in the grip of an epidemic of street killings. Carnage on our streets, gutters running with blood, are features all too common in modern life. Almost everyday we read or hear a new report of a stabbing or a shooting, and they seem to be becoming more outrageously violent, brazen attacks often carried out in broad day light or on a busy high street at rush hour in full view of the public gaze; the assailants seem not to care about onlookers or bystanders who may get hit in the crossfire. The attackers, largely youth, and mostly part of criminal gangs, have started to use different methods of attack such as spraying acid from a moving car or bicycle. In one incident outside Manchester, a hand grenade was hurled at a house on a Salford street.



But at present we seem to be in the grip of a collective madness and have lost all sense of perspective. Society tends to focus on what divides us and this only further divides us by building up resentment when some are favoured above others. The remedies for addressing widespread social inequalities, the gender pay gap and ethnic discrimination, such as introducing quotas and selective short lists for employment actually only substitute one privilege for another.



Some of the weapons used are clearly part of a pattern of behaviour imported from outside, such as the widespread use of machetes.

When citizens elect to carry offensive weapons either for their own protection or to enforce their will on others, it is a sign that society is breaking down. The state demands a monopoly of law enforcement and the means of violence. When citizens are doing it for themselves it bodes ill for the rest of the community. It suggests that the once widely accepted values and common customs have started to be eroded. The cycle of violence that ensues risks getting out of control as has frequently occurred in times of conflict in far away countries which are dismissively defined as "failed states". The very idea that "it could never happen here" now sounds increasingly hollow; it is complacency or wilful blindness. So incongruous it is to think that "advanced" liberal democracies could be on the verge of joining that derogatory category.

But at present we seem to be in the grip of a collective madness and have lost all sense of perspective. Society tends to focus on what divides us and this only further divides us by building up resentment when some are favoured above others. The remedies for addressing widespread social inequalities, the gender pay gap and ethnic discrimination, such as introducing quotas and selective short lists for employment actually only substitute one privilege for another.

In the 1980s British politics became a little obsessed with prioritising sectional interests above the common interest. Distinct communities and their particular heritage were always to be respected and their foibles treated with kid gloves or ignored.

This approach, well meaning if flawed, led to the turning of a blind eye to abuses rife within communities as politicians sought the votes and this enabled the development of a fertile breeding ground where toxic attitudes and ideologies could thrive. We are reaping the whirlwind today. Society has become a powder keg just waiting for the next spark to ignite it. And we have been here before; witness the outbreak riots by alienated youths across the UK during August 2011. These riots, mainly but not confined to the inner cities, prompted much soul searching among political leaders, media pundits and faith leaders in a bid to find out what, apart from sport and the royal family, still binds people together as a nation. Finding a common enemy often does the trick, but that is a remedy chosen by the Machiavellian machinations of unscrupulous politicians.

Once again, Hobsbawm seems to have got it dead right when he observes that "democracies need demonised enemies", which explains the reason for the state-sponsored anti-Russian hysteria so dominant in the politics of the West today; it has become a big feature of British politics now that we are confronted with the dilemma of Brexit.

Domestic dilemmas were created decades ago by neglect of certain communities deemed post-industrial and by conscious policy towards education and consumer freedom. Politicians have allowed the free access to pornography and drugs virtually available on demand with no age restrictions on users.

Drugs go on sale in school playgrounds or outside the school gates. Porn is freely available on everyone's smart phone at the press of a button. While travelling on public transport commuters are frequently shocked by the conduct of young people, sharing porn on their phones. It's a monstrous situation and highly unhealthy giving rise to bad manners and offensive behaviour. Drugs and sex are notoriously addictive in adults. This free access is corrosive and led to a coarser sensibility. It is surely grossly irresponsible to enable these same addictions to thrive among youth and children. Any obsessive behaviour needs a cure, but the way society now operates facilitates these addictions. The political elite must long have calculated that this is the necessary social policy in order to keep people quiet and content; porn and drugs are modern society's equivalent of the "bread and circuses" of ancient Rome.

The root of all the problem is that commercial interests are dominant above all else.

Despite official celebrations of cultural diversity, modern society finds itself growing further apart than ever. The post-war social democratic consensus was running out of steam as the boom petered out and global economic crisis gathered pace.

The impetus was the oil crisis of the 1970s, well before the banking crisis early in the current century which only compounded the sense of decay and fragmentation. Rather than teach, academics and theoreticians liked to play word games with their students in the seminar room. Malcolm Bradbury's novel, "The History Man", captured this social type in a savage satire which hit home because it encompassed some unsettling truths.





There was little interest in supporting children or addressing their real needs. It was a new dogma whose advocates simply assumed that their remedies for the prevailing social ills were the right ones. Not for nothing did Thatcher gain the sobriquet, "She Who Must be Obeyed".

The "advanced capitalist world" had embraced the culture of narcissism where the individual ego is free to rove without any restraints. Individuals are seen as just consumers and consumption is always good.

In all the recent celebrations of the legacy of 1968, the darker side of unrestrained liberation has been forgotten. Sex as recreation must inevitably mean more failed relationships and a decline of the family unit which is one of the bedrocks of social stability and any functioning society.

We may have got smarter but we have also got much coarser. The dark side of humanity comes more and more to the fore with the ending of repression and restraint. The dangers and negative consequences are taken less and less seriously as the most bizarre peccadilloes are transformed into forms of entertainment in film and pulp fiction and transformed into products within the broader consumer economy.

Women are rightly rising up against the worst excesses of male power, but the new feminists who campaign so hard against male abuses are often ready to condone different abuses, for instance, in the advocacy of abortion on demand, free access to pornography and legalisation of prostitution (under the seemingly innocuous rebrand of "escorts").

Just as within the universities the concept of "disinterestedness" in the study of great literature has been dismantled by the radical theorists, the idea of "public service" in the field of public sector employment has been belittled by the politicians. Thus, the values of social responsibility, discernment and integrity have been undermined; to be replaced with a free for all and the ego unleashed. Greed and self-interest are not only encouraged; they are constantly celebrated and held up as ideals. An orgy of excess and self-indulgence inevitably follows. It all amounts to a progressive decline in individual and public sensibility.

Liberalism in abstract seems so fine but the liberal outlook is never able to join up the dots or make the necessary connections. Modern communications technology has provided us with endless possibilities putting the world of knowledge at everyone's finger tips; there are virtually no limits to what can be found on the Internet which is without borders apart from those imposed by the pay wall. The possibilities are only really limited by the profundity or shallowness of our individual imaginations.

That imagination however needs to be carefully nurtured, fed and watered like a delicate plant. The essential requirements for the growth of our thought and sensibility can only be found in good education and a caring upbringing by loved ones.

The old comprehensive school system was beginning to work but was under resourced. It has long been derided and substituted by a utilitarian approach that has come to dominate. In Britain, this assault on state education was a deliberate political project that started with the election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister in 1979 and was ruthlessly carried out by her Education Secretary, Sir Keith Joseph.

This was part of a wider plan to restructure both the economy and society in the belief that there was too much state control. They openly aimed to create a less equal society. In terms of education policy this political project was characterised by an attack on comprehensive schools and the values perceived as socialist such as equal opportunities. Protecting pupils from alleged "Marxist indoctrination" and getting tough on "lefty lecturers" became regular pastimes in the popular press. Ministers denounced topics such as sociology, media studies and the humanities as irrelevant to "the world of work". The true reason for picking on these subjects was to make it easier for them to impose severe budget cuts on state education. They lauded the old grammar schools and private education was encouraged as was private healthcare.

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The New Right were however an uneasy alliance of authoritarian and libertarian thinkers.

Getting the state off people's backs was a popular slogan. This could be inferred to mean cutting red tape for business, "setting the market free" or it could mean giving consumers the right to choose. This doctrine translated into the privatisation of state industries, including education, and the "right to buy" council houses; the latter was great news for sitting council tenants, but presaged a long term disaster for future generations seeking decent, affordable homes as the available housing stock dwindled.

One hears the sentimental language all the time of "people in a community coming together to support each other". It is meaningless and vacuous if it is detached from coordinated action led by the authorities who are entrusted with the powers to create the social conditions for fairness and justice to flourish.



Some members of the New Right advocated liberalisation of the laws relating to sex and drugs, such as lowering the age of consent and legalising "soft drugs" for recreational purposes as well as the supposed medical use.

Along with the free market came this new radical liberalism. The notion that people should be left as far as possible to fend for themselves, to make their own choices, to make a mess of their own lives, or to spend their own money as they like, are all connected ideas that are associated with this political revolution led by the Thatcherites.

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The example of those at the top and the language that they habitually employ sets the tone and guides the behaviour of the rest of society.

All modern heroes have become tarnished and not worthy of the adulation bestowed on them. The celebrities, pop stars, fashion models, sports people, are brands in the market place. As brands they need to stay fresh and new which obliges them to innovate constantly; hence the changing of hair styles, from brunette to blonde and back again. The extreme variant would be the transsexual phenomenon which is driven by commercialised medical technology offering damaged individuals the false hope of changing from male to female or vice versa; it is as if you can cast off your gender like a snake casts off its old skin.

These modern celebrity heroes are thus compelled to behave like chameleons. Their behaviour isn't a matter of choice but is dictated by a market that demands they stay ahead of the game.

Many of the problems that are now convulsing contemporary society have their origins in this New Right ideology and the ways of thinking that it fostered among the wider population. Of course, it was Thatcher who coined the notorious phrase, "there is no such thing as society".

In hindsight, she and her followers can be seen to be irresponsible and short sighted but they surely could not have foreseen some of the consequences of their revolution. If they did indeed do so, then that would make them utter villains. Whether they intended it or not, the cumulative effect of their reforms amounted to the systematic dismantling of the basic rules of our civilisation. "Greed is good for you" is not only fatuous; it is downright dangerous.

Eric Hobsbawm summed up our dilemmas far better than many others ever could. Although Hobsbawm was writing more than twenty years ago, the social trends that he identified as "barbarism" continue apace: the dilemmas we face have simply become far worse over the intervening two decades.

The origins of our present crisis rest in the attempts by the ruling elite to hold on to their power and privileges at any cost. Better to descend into anarchy and fascism than risk socialism or communism: at least fascism and anarchy will leave the privileges untouched.



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## NARCO ECONOMY IN MYANMAR: FROM OPIATES TO ATS



(Drug Seizure in Myanmar in October 2017, Source: Borneo Bulletin)

### Abstract

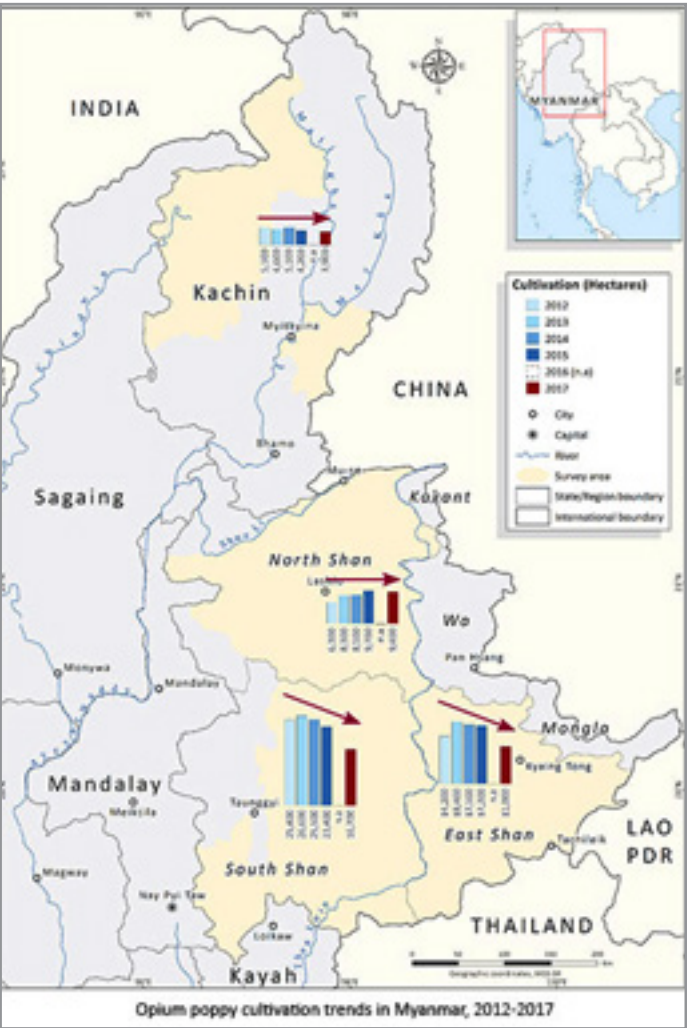
*Rising demand has transformed Myanmar into the prime producer of synthetic drugs. It's a US\$ 4 billion economy. Production of and trade in narcotics in Myanmar registers continuous growth in spite of a decrease in area of production of poppy and growing success by the police personnel in seizing the contraband. A new drug control policy notwithstanding, controlling the spiraling trade will be difficult unless a cooperative mechanism is established among the regional countries.*

The total area of opium poppy cultivation in Myanmar decreased in 2017 to 41,000 hectares, from the 55,500 recorded in 2015. This 25 percent decrease was most significant in eastern and southern Shan state (drops of 37 and 29 percent, respectively). Northern Shan and Kachin states, however, reported less reductions (3 and 7 percent, respectively). Nevertheless, reductions in cultivation have been somewhat offset by a greater yield per hectare. More significantly, the arrival of synthetic drugs makes production area a less viable metric. As a consequence, the Golden Triangle is set to retain its notoriety till a regional cooperative mechanism confronts the challenge.

### History

Credit for introducing opium to Burma indeed goes to the British, who in 1852 started bringing in large quantities from India. This imported opium was sold through a government-controlled opium monopoly, but over time, the northeast, especially the Shan state, started growing opium and smuggling it. This led to a significant increase in the number of Burmese opium addicts, so many that by 1878, the alarmed British made an ineffectual effort through the Opium Act to restrict the selling of opium to only registered Chinese and Indians. Burmese were strictly banned from smoking opium. By 1886, the British had acquired the Shan state, yet this had no impact on the thriving opium production and smuggling. The trend continued even after Burma achieved its independence in 1948.





(Source: UNODC)

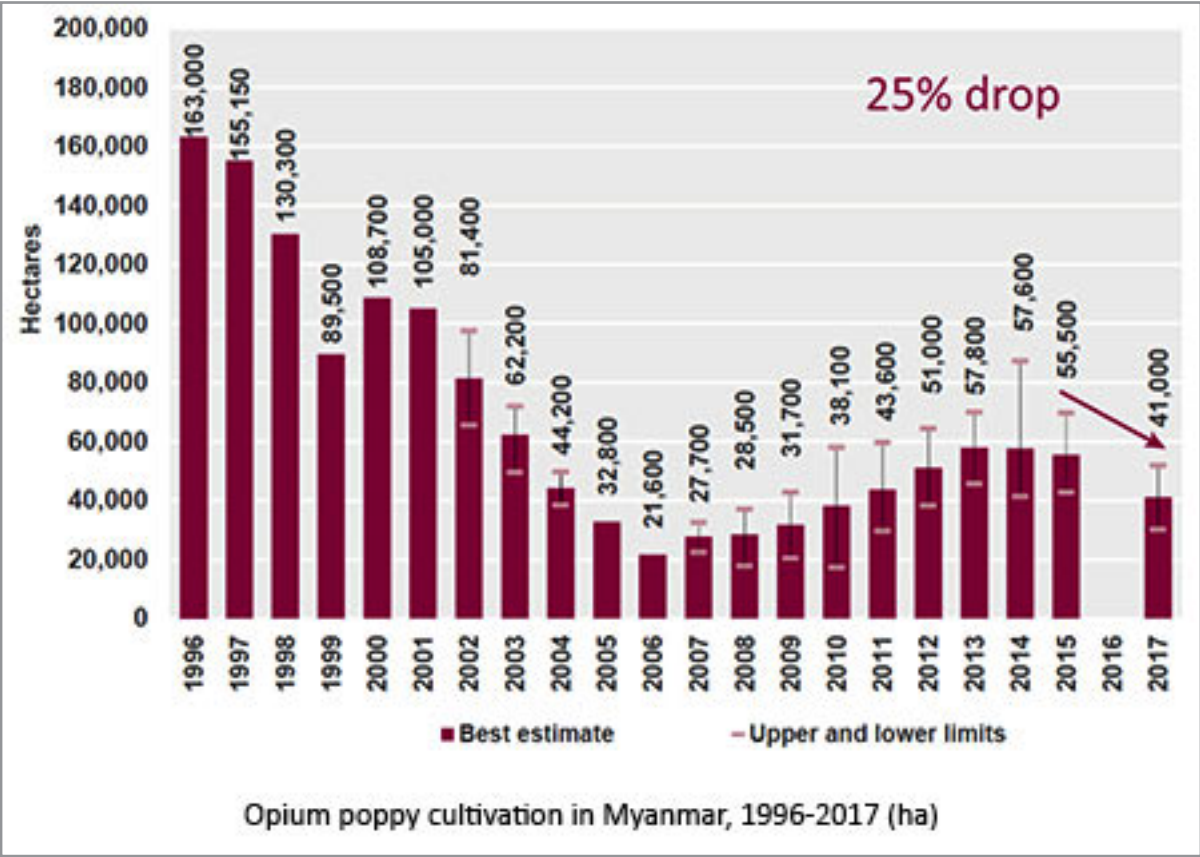
By that time, in addition to the Shan state, poppy was being grown (and continues) in the Shan, Kachin, Karenni, and Chin states. Even though the Ne Win government outlawed opium in 1962, impact on production was minimal. In fact, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), involved in Vietnam, was allegedly airlifting opium cargos for its various allies. In 1984, the US State Department concluded that its crop substitution programme, not just in Golden Triangle but in all other opium producing regions, was producing poor results and that opium needed to be fought through plant eradication and criminal enforcement. This led to supply of herbicides to Burma, but under the SLORC regime of the Burmese military (1988-1997), opium production continued to increase. By 1995, the Golden Triangle region was producing 2,500 tons of opium annually and smuggling them through trafficking routes from Burma through Laos, to southern China, Cambodia and Vietnam.

Changing Regional Drug Market and its scale

Fast forward to the present. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) data for 2017 indicating a decrease in Myanmar poppy growing areas in reality gives no reason to celebrate. The decline in opium cultivation has occurred, UNODC admits, against the backdrop of ‘a changing regional drug market’. While opium and heroin prices have fallen in recent years, most East and Southeast Asian countries report a shift to synthetic drugs and especially-Type

By 1886, the British had acquired the Shan state, yet this had no impact on the thriving opium production and smuggling. The trend continued even after Burma achieved its independence in 1948. By that time, in addition to the Shan state, poppy was being grown (and continues) in the Shan, Kachin, Karenni, and Chin states. Even though the Ne Win government outlawed opium in 1962, impact on production was minimal. In fact, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), involved in Vietnam, was allegedly airlifting opium cargos for its various allies.

Stimulants (ATS) in various forms. It appears much of the reduction in poppy growing areas has taken place not so much due to official policies and enforcement but due to the fact that poppy-based drugs are now less profitable than synthetic. In the Golden Triangle region, it is possible to clearly distinguish between what used to be an age of opiates and what currently is the time for ATS.



(Source: UNODC)



According to UNODC, since 2015, East and South-East Asia have become the leading sub-regions for methamphetamine seizures worldwide. How meth demand and corresponding production have increased can be inferred from the seizure data in Myanmar, although seizure also denotes strengthening of the country's law enforcing capacities. In 2016, Myanmar police confiscated 98 million meth pills, nearly doubling their achievement of 2015 in which 50 million pills had been recovered. In addition to the tablets, 759 kilograms of heroin, 945 kilograms of opium, and 2,464 kilograms of 'ice' were seized in 2016.

Synthetic drugs indeed are highly attractive to organized crime and aspiring criminal entrepreneurs. Compared to heroin, the category is more potent, has higher profit margins (manufactured for roughly US \$0.25 and selling for over US \$2 a pill). They are compact and hence have simpler logistics. Unlike opiates or cannabis, ATS can be manufactured anywhere and are not reliant on natural plant sources.

Low-purity amphetamine tablets, a combination of methamphetamine and caffeine, are sold in many ASEAN countries as 'Yaba', a Thai word which translates to 'crazy medicine'. The Yaba market is a low-profit, high-volume sale opportunity for criminal groups, which produce pills in the tens to hundreds of millions. The drug tourist destination that Southeast Asia has become needs an increasing supply of drugs and synthetic drugs to meet demand. In 2008, it was estimated that roughly half of the world's 15-16 million meth users were located in East and Southeast Asia. The pure and stronger variant of methamphetamine – known as crystal methamphetamine or 'ice' – is exported to countries such as Australia and China. Sales volumes in those markets are relatively low, but demand is on the rise.

Although a particular year is difficult to be identified, the shift coincided with the early 2000s rise of efforts by UNODC and state governments to counter drugs. The number of meth labs busted in East and Southeast Asia was nearly 10 times higher in 2009 than in 2005. Pill seizures in China, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand jumped from 32 million in 2008 to 133 million in 2010. In 2011, UNODC reported that the Mekong River, linking Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand, was swiftly becoming one of the key ATS trafficking points, disseminating the new product from the Golden Triangle. The shift has continued with each passing year, in many ways making the opium-based drugs a 'golden oldie' in the war on drugs.

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Corresponding drug prosecutions, consisting mostly of low-level smugglers, numbered 13,500 compared to some 8,800 in 2015. Still, such arrests and seizures have done little to stem the tide of production of synthetic drugs. In January 2018, Myanmar police seized 30 million meth pills along with more than two tonnes of "ice" and heroin from a house in Shan state's Kutkai township, arguably the biggest seizure in terms of value and quantity in the country's history. In addition to the meth pills, 502 kilograms of heroin and 1,750 kilograms of crystal methamphetamine or ice also were seized. The total seizure was worth US\$ 54 million, amounting to one-fifth of the total narcotics seized in the country in all of 2017.

At a conservative estimate of US\$2+ street price for each meth pill, the seizures alone were worth US\$ 200 million. With an optimistic calculation of one-fourth of the pills being seized by the police, the methamphetamine economy in Myanmar in 2016 was worth close to US\$ 800 million. If the expensive 'ice' pills and the opium-based drugs are added, the net narco-economy of Myanmar was worth US\$ 2 billion (2016). Calculating on the basis of a near-100 percent increase in the levels of all drugs, and a slight rise in the street price of the Meth pill in East and Southeast Asia, the narco-economy of Myanmar in 2017 can be conservatively estimated to be at least US\$ 4 billion. The amount is small compared to the Afghan opium trade, worth US\$ 60 billion, but in terms of impact on the lives and economies of the host state and the region, the impact could be devastating.

### The Players

During the age of the opiates, the Shan warlord, Khun Sa, exemplified the nexus between the state and the opium production and smuggling. A former Kuomintang Chinese Nationalist Army soldier, Khun Sa, at the height of his power in the 1980s, was believed to have controlled at least 70 percent of the heroin trade in the Golden Triangle region. In 1996, he surrendered to authorities and retired quietly to Yangon, amid suspicion that this agreement between the ruling Junta and Khun Sa included a deal allowing him to retain control of his opium trade but in exchange ending his 30-year-old revolutionary war against the government. By then, though, the northern region of the country was mushrooming with drug lords and their militias.

In February 2018, after nearly three years of consultations, the Myanmar government and UNODC announced a new **National Drug Control policy**. The document is the product of attempts to rebalance the approach to the challenges that drugs pose to the country, focusing on its unique needs. The policy, adopting the framework provided by the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS), signals a significant shift towards an evidence-based and more people- and health-focused approach, while advocating practical strategies to reduce the negative effects of drug production, trafficking, and use.



(Source: UNODC)

As the Junta was attempting to seek ceasefires with ethnic insurgencies in the 1990s, those drug lords who doubled as ethnic armed resistance leaders were allowed to begin to produce drugs on a grander commercial scale. In 2016, a member of Parliament of the Myanmar's upper house, Khun Than Pe, representing the Shan State, observed, 'It was in the 1990s that [the drug problem] spread across both urban and rural areas. It is fair to say that [the problem] was born with "peace".' Interestingly, agencies like the UNODC, has historically been reluctant to point at a nexus between rising narcotics' narcotics' production and the role of the government. The reluctance is understandable, for it would it would jeopardise its ability to work in the country. Therefore, much of the issues UNODC highlights pertains to direct linkages between conflict and opium in Myanmar. These are valid reasons, but don't provide a comprehensive picture of narco economy in Myanmar. Areas under domination of ethnic insurgencies do produce more opium than the areas which are insurgency-free. As a result, the Shan and Kachin states, where insurgencies have defied official attempts to secure participation in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), continue to cultivate and produce opium at levels similar to 2015. At another level, since these areas suffer from acute governance deficit and poverty, a link between poverty and drug production too is undeniable. The opium economy in Myanmar thus supports a large population.

In Shan State, for instance, where production is centred, approximately 600,000 people are directly supported by opium farming. Over time, the problem has spread to regions where opium is not cultivated. For instance, though Arakan state does not grow poppy, drugs are openly available there, even in the Beetle nut shops.

Synthetic drug production builds on the expertise of the cartels that dealt with the opiates. While the trade has disrupted the established farmer-traffickers-cartel links and taken the farmers off the scene, it has made the problem and its associated networks more complex by bringing in international as well as smaller local players. The US\$ 4 billion annual narco economy in the country generates enough stakeholders to keep the trade rolling. Organised crime groups in Laos and Myanmar have become significant players in the production of ATS.

## A New Approach

In the past, the Myanmar government has focused primarily on supply reduction, including reduction of opium poppy cultivation. The Home Minister admitted that this single focus did not achieve much. Though the government formed dedicated drug squads in the police force at the division and state level, they were understaffed and under-equipped to arrest take on the resources of the drug lords. Government officers repeatedly leaked information to the drug kingpins, resulting in raids that arrested only the users and small-time street dealers.

In February 2018, after nearly three years of consultations, the Myanmar government and UNODC announced a new **National Drug Control policy**. The document is the product of attempts to rebalance the approach to the challenges that drugs pose to the country, focusing on its unique needs. The policy, adopting the framework provided by the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS), signals a significant shift towards an evidence-based and more people- and health-focused approach, while advocating practical strategies to reduce the negative effects of drug production, trafficking, and use. A product of wide-scale consultation process, the new policy seeks to focus on five policy areas: supply reduction and alternative development; demand and harm reduction; international cooperation; research and analysis; and compliance with human rights. Significantly, it is the first time the government of Myanmar has formally adopted a harm reduction approach to drug use.



In the past, Myanmar has benefited from joint anti-drug operations with China and Thailand. Clearly, that has not been enough. Regional cooperation is needed to fight the problem.

### Conclusion

Nevertheless, a drug-free Myanmar cannot be achieved without success in the peace process. As long as significant parts of Shan and Kachin states remain unstable and basically autonomous from the rest of the country and region, the environment will remain a safe haven for those who run the drug trade. At the same time, endemic official corruption and drug syndicates' ability to bounce back from raids with ramped-up production will continue to boost the synthetic drugs market. Lastly, rising demand, the huge profit margin, and lack of a concerted and coordinated approach by regional countries will remain some of the critical challenges for problem to be addressed effectively. In the past, Myanmar has benefited from joint anti-drug operations with China and Thailand. Clearly, that has not been enough. Regional cooperation is needed to fight the problem.

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## CRUISING THE OLD DELHI FOOD BAZAAR

PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
JILL GOCHER

Come sunset as the sun drops below the iconic Mughal Jama Masjid, Old Delhi starts to come alive. As the lights come up, these old streets begin to hum with life as vendors, cooks and shoppers start to emerge. The narrow lanes become jammed with traffic – trishaws bajaj, cars all packed with people and then the foot traffic. From the sidewalks, the heady aromas of exotic food begin to infiltrate the air.

This part of Old Delhi, within the muezzin's call of the ancient mosque, is a melting pot of food and flavours that have traversed the roadways and trails of south and central Asia for centuries - transported along the silk trade routes and imported by traders from a dozen nations, all coming to roost in old Delhi.

It is a who's who of delicious food ranging from Middle Eastern delicacies to Indian specialties and everything in between. Even the names are exotic –mutton keema, korma, botis, kebabs, great cauldrons of hot oil frying sizzling jelebi, which emerge to be anointed with sugar syrup or honey. Vats of buffalo biryani, or the mandatory mutton, are all there waiting. The butter chicken, which uses unbelievable amounts of butter to increase its deliciousness is a must. A dozen kinds of flat breads lie in piles, standing by the spicy mixes that you can eat with them.

Spice shops do a roaring trade, selling all spices known under the Indian sun, while vendors prepare their food for the crowds that will last until late into the night.

Women clothed in black, their faces hidden by strategically placed shawals or even burkha, walk safely, knowing they will be respected. And the great common denominator is food.



Grilled chicken in all its shapes and forms.





Women can feel safe to wander unmolested as the guys serve up heaping plates of spicy deliciousness.





This famous butter chicken use HUGE amounts of butter.





He carefully shapes the seekh kebab onto the grill sticks.



The proud proprietor of many fried delicacies - all delicious.





This young boy with beautiful eyes helps work in a stall.





Traffic gets heavy as the lights come on and darkness descends.



Felicity Johnson from Flissy Johnson Photography is a nature and rural photographer based in Goornong, northern Victoria, Australia. A career in recording data as a biodiversity officer with the Government has now evolved into recording photographic images of the natural and rural environment. She particularly enjoys recording the textures, patterns, light and shapes at the macro level. As a result she spends a fair bit of time lying on her stomach in the forest studying and photographing orchids, ants, lichen and more!



## SEEING THE SMALL THINGS!

PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
FELICITY JOHNSON

My interest in the natural world and the diversity of our landscapes has led me on a journey of recording images that depict our amazing world. Photography is the art of seeing. With an eye for detail (macro) and an eye for the big-picture (landscape), I travel our land seeking images. I enjoy photographing the details that often get missed such as lichen on a branch, water droplets on a feather or rusty cracking paint on an old farm gate.

These images are from the forest that surround my home in rural Goornong, northern Victoria, Australia. The Wellsford State Forest spreads across 7,000 hectares of mainly dry Box-Ironbark forest and provides important habitat for many of our threatened flora and fauna including Swift Parrots and many rare orchids. For me, entering the forest leads me to a world of texture, light, detail and best of all...peace.



The Flying Duck orchid grows in small patches (or flocks!) amongst the forest.





Often the floor of the forest is blue when the Blue Pincushion blooms in Spring.





The Golden Wattle is a symbol of the Australian bush and when in flower the forest glows with a layer of gold amongst the black Ironbark trees.





The Swift or Ghost Moth is a huge moth that pupates and emerges out of the ground, often after a rain.





This is an adult Lacewing but they start their life as an Antlion living underground at the base of a funnel shaped pit that traps its prey.





Many of our native daisies have tuberous roots which were a form of bushtucker for the Aboriginal people who lived in our forests.





The beauty of a Yam Daisy seed head.



The second in a photo series by Andrea Lamberti as he explores his relationship with nature.



## DISCOVERING SHORELINE TREASURES FROM A RECEDING TIDE: THE GOWER PENINSULAR, WALES

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
ANDREA LAMBERTI

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On a receding tide on Rhossili beach in the Gower, Wales, I descend along a windy path, green rugged cliffs either side. My gaze is distracted at first by newborn lambs grazing on the slopes but is then transfixed at the three-mile flat sandy vista ahead. A vivid blue sky and calm seas instantly grab my attention and I soon find myself seduced, as if by mythic Sirens, and exploring unknown shorelines treasures.

I'm immediately arrested by the sight of the carcass of an old shipwreck which looked like it had been slammed into the beach hundreds of years ago. Upon closer inspection I find the old wooden and moss-covered rotting remains buried deep in the sand. Shallow pools of seawater surround the base, on which I find clinging starfish, old abandoned hermit crab shells and whelks. This really sparked my intrigue as to what else I may happen across, as I continued to saunter into the vast sandy expanse.

I quickly learn that all manner of creatures, seaweed, and shells have been washed up and discarded by the sea on old tide lines. With a keen eye I come across a small hairy and colourful object which looked like part of a small broken brush, but turned out to be a bristle worm. Just a bit further along, a small rockpool houses many whelks, small muscles and a little brown crab. Then another crab, the size of a small tomato, with what looked like some kind of tentacle protruding from the front of its shell, quite an amazing sight.

Andrea Lamberti is a nature photographer and a vegan. As well as supporting his physical health, Andrea found veganism is naturally aligned to his philosophy of living simply and minimally, allowing less packaging, chemicals and processing, and avoiding the unnecessary commodification of animals. Andrea documents the geography and underwater plant and animal species of his local coastline, to explore his relationship with the natural world, and his belief that humans should inhabit the planet primarily as curators rather than as consumers.



Crab with whelks and mussels.

Thousands of empty, discarded razor clam shells, were strewn across the beach as though a mass protect occurred and all had decided to vacate for more salubrious dwellings. I then notice a starfish laid in a lazy fashion on an open and empty clam shell alongside an inquisitive scallop searching for something. In a shallow pool of water, I see a dark object which resembles a big black beetle, but which I later found out it was a birth pod for dogfish.

The day just kept on giving many wonderful surprises, but sadly my exploration time was coming to an end. As I started to ascend away from the shore, I stopped and took one last and longing look. The Sirens have me in their grasp and I will be lured back.





Shipwreck





Hundreds of razor clam shells.





Bristle worm





Mermaid's purse, containing the eggs or young of the Lesser-spotted Dogfish.





Star fish on the shell of a razor clam, and scallop shell.





The masked crab, also known as helmet or sand crab, a burrowing crab.



Mikyoung Cha is a graduate in Oriental Painting from Hyosung Women's University, Daegu, South Korea. She has participated in a number of group art exhibitions in South Korea and Japan. In 2016 she took up photography – the camera becoming her paint brush. This globe trotting photographer is a regular contributor to Live Encounters Magazine.



## LAND OF SHAN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
MIKYOUNG CHA

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The distance between Bagan where the ancient majestic pagodas rise to greet the sky and the enchanting Inle Lake home to the Intha people, is a mere 350 kms.

These two exotic destinations tease the senses and capture the hearts of those seeking to lose themselves in the land of Shan, Myanmar.

The rustic beauty of Inle and the exquisiteness of the finely sculptured pagodas of Bagan make for a heady mix.

These photographs are fleeting glimpses of the wondrous land of Shan.



Shwezigon Paya (pagoda), Nyaung U, Bagan.





Shwezigon Paya (pagoda), Nyaung U, Bagan.





Traditional fishing at Inle lake.





Boat racing contest on Inle Lake.





Sunrise over Old Bagan.





Homeward bound, Old Bagan.

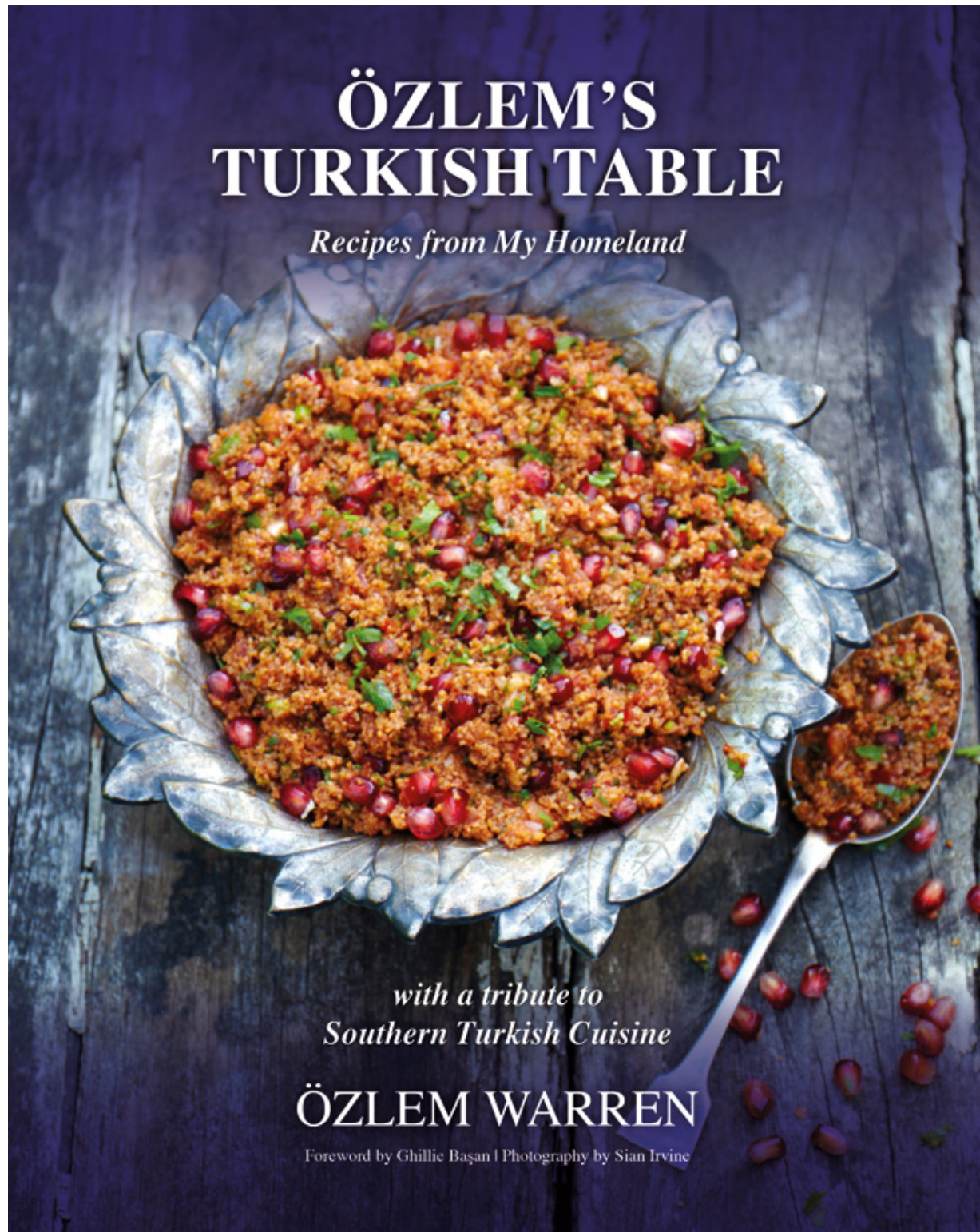




Praying at Shwedagon Paya (pagoda), Yangon



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## NOHUTLU SIH-EL MAHSI

Zucchini (courgettes) stuffed with ground meat and chickpeas

This is a wonderful dish from Antakya (Antioch), where my roots are from, and an exciting way to cook zucchini. Traditionally, the locals in Antakya would stuff the zucchini as a whole and they would lightly brown them before cooking with the sauce. I prefer cutting the zucchini in half and lengthways and baking them; healthy, delicious and pretty to have on the plate. You can prepare this dish ahead of time and the leftovers freeze beautifully. Please save the flesh of the zucchini that you scooped out. They are delicious cooked in bulgur pilaf with zucchini.

How wonderful to share the food with friends and family. Living abroad and changing locations often, cooking and sharing food have been my salvation and a wonderful way of meeting new folks, making new friends. I hope you enjoy the recipes with friends and family and give yourself and everyone the gift of good food

*Afiyet Olsun,*

*Ozlem*





Zucchini (courgettes) stuffed with ground meat, onions and chickpeas.



**Serves: 4 - 6**

**Preparation time : 20 minutes**

**Cooking time: 50-55 minutes**

### **Ingredients:**

3 chunky zucchini/courgette  
 250gr/9oz ground (minced) lean beef or lamb  
 1 onion, finely chopped  
 3-4 cloves of garlic, crushed and finely chopped  
 200gr/7oz (1/2 can of) chopped tomatoes  
 200gr/7oz (1/2 can of) cooked chickpeas, rinsed

30ml/2 tbsp. pomegranate molasses, nar eksisi  
 30ml/2tablespoons olive oil  
 120ml/4fl oz/ 1/2 cup water  
 15ml/1tablespoon tomato paste  
 5ml/1teaspoon dried mint  
 5ml/1 teaspoon red pepper flakes  
 Salt and ground black pepper to taste

To serve:

120ml/8fl oz plain yoghurt  
 1-2 garlic cloves, crushed with salt and finely chopped

### **Instructions**

Preheat the oven to 180F/350C/Gas 4

Cut the zucchini in half and then in lengthways. Using a dessert spoon, carefully scoop out some of the flesh to create a cavity that is large enough to stuff (Please save the flesh of the zucchini that you scooped out. They are delicious cooked in bulgur pilaf).

Mix 1 tbsp. water with the pomegranate molasses and wash the inside of the courgettes with this mixture. Add the leftover of this delicious juice to filling mixture.

Heat the oil in a heavy pan. Stir in the onions and garlic and cook until light golden. Add the ground (minced) meat and sauté for a few minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Stir in the chopped tomatoes, left over pomegranate molasses sauce and the cooked chickpeas, mix well. Add the red pepper flakes and the dried mint, combine well. The filling is ready.

Place the zucchini in a greased baking tray. Take a spoonful of the filling and stuff the zucchini quarters. Take care not to over fill them. Dilute the tomato paste with the water and pour on the tray. Cover and bake in the oven for about 30 minutes. After this, uncover and bake for a further 10-15 minutes for a lightly browned finish.

In a bowl, mix the plain yoghurt and the garlic. Serve the stuffed zucchini hot, with the garlic yoghurt by the side. You can make a wonderful bulgur pilaf with zucchini using the flesh of the zucchini we scooped out; it complements this zucchini dish very nicely.



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Agent Orange victim Le Van Ot born without eyes. Photo by Vu Tuan Hung, May 2018.