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LATIN AMERICA

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"Across the region, criminal organizations collude with the state, maintain local political order, and help nominate and elect politicians."

How Criminals Govern in Latin America and the Caribbean

ENRIQUE DESMOND ARIAS

Since the 1970s and the development of the modern cocaine trade, organized crime in Latin America and the Caribbean has expanded and become deeply involved in politics and governance. Across the region, criminal organizations collude with the state, maintain local political order, and help nominate and elect politicians. Criminal leaders sometimes even take political office themselves. These often clandestine and occasionally open arrangements have marked effects on the lives of many of the region's half a billion inhabitants. The poor and the working class bear the heaviest burden of these illicit governance dynamics, as a result of their limited incorporation into political life and the tendency of police forces to see them more as threats to public order than as citizens deserving of their protection.

Ways of Governing

Fifth in a series

Criminal networks build popular support by providing social services and keeping order in the areas where they operate, often working with state officials even while they engage in corruption, intimidation, and violence. Social and political leaders sometimes operate in partnership with criminal organizations. Such informal governance strategies are deeply entangled with formally legitimate governing practices. In many countries, different types of hybrid governance have emerged, driven by particular local dynamics that are associated with key stress factors in each context.

In Brazil, the driving stresses include urbanization, inequality, and an abusive state that uses police and prisons in a failed attempt to address social challenges. In Colombia, the relevant stresses are the long-running armed conflict and the country's central role in the global cocaine trade. In Jamaica, the stresses of historical patterns of violent conflict between the country's two major political parties create opportunities for criminal governance. In Venezuela, government-backed armed groups have seized control of districts as the nation has descended into economic collapse and political violence. Comparing these cases from around the region sheds light on the governance roles that criminals play in Latin America, and how such relations vary in specific circumstances.

BRAZIL'S POLICE MILITIAS

In March 2018, a gunman opened fire on a car in Rio de Janeiro, murdering Marielle Franco, a progressive Afro-Brazilian city council member who was active on a range of social justice issues, as well as her driver, Anderson Gomes. In early 2019, two police officers affiliated with the Escritório do Crime militia ("militia" is a term used in Brazil for police-linked extortion rackets) were arrested in connection with the murders. The media reported on extensive links between this group and the family of President Jair Bolsonaro, who had recently taken office.

Connections to militias are critical to electoral strategy in Rio, where these groups control many neighborhoods. Bolsonaro's son Flávio, for example, served in the Rio state assembly for years before winning a seat in the Brazilian Senate in 2018. For a decade, he employed both the mother and the

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wife of Adriano da Nóbrega, a police officer who is the leader of the Escritório do Crime, and he twice led successful efforts to bestow Rio's highest commendation for public service on Nóbrega. In 2008, Flávio Bolsonaro was one of only two members of the state legislature to vote against forming a special commission to investigate militias. Recently, Flávio has been implicated with Nóbrega in a corruption scandal.

There are many reasons why politicians like the Bolsonaros might maintain close ties to militias. These groups profit from their ability to control the economies and politics of marginalized neighborhoods in Rio. While researching my 2017 book *Criminal Enterprises and Governance in Latin America and the Caribbean*, I spent a great deal of time in Rio das Pedras, a shantytown in the Jacarepagua section of Rio, which is now under the control of the Escritório do Crime. During that time, Josinaldo Francisco da Cruz (known as Nadinho), a long-time resident of the favela and member of the local militia, held a seat on the Rio city council. He had won election after establishing a strong relationship with Cesar Maia, the long-serving center-right mayor, who brought Nadinho into his political party.

Criminal networks build popular support by providing social services and maintaining order.

During his time in office, Nadinho secured various programs and services for the community, some of which were managed by the militia-controlled residents' association. But after a split developed in the militia, its locally based members supported another candidate for his seat—a police officer. Nadinho lost his reelection bid. Less than a year later, he was murdered in his apartment building.

Over the years, Rio's militias have had a great deal of success in politics and government. Several members have won city council and state assembly seats, and their allies have been elected to both houses of the federal legislature. Such political activities give militias a voice in setting government policies, especially those that affect the neighborhoods they control. Political contacts also enable militia members to run charities, manage government contracts for their own profit, and control state lottery and notary offices, which allows them to take a cut of utility payments and real estate transactions.

Militias also regulate the businesses that operate in the areas they control. Usually this involves demanding protection payments, but they also oversee whole areas of commerce, such as the distribution of cooking gas canisters, unlicensed minibuses, and illicit cable television services. One inhabitant of a militia-controlled neighborhood in Rio told me that the local militia objected to her sharing Internet access over Wi-Fi—because it had sold a different neighbor the right to provide Internet service illegally on her street.

The militias enforce order through selective killings of individuals who are accused of "antisocial behaviors" such as drug consumption, or who threaten their monopolies. Even these extreme measures receive support from powerful politicians. Jair Bolsonaro, while serving as a congressman, gave speeches in favor of militias murdering alleged criminals.

Militias are not the only criminal organizations that engage in governance activities in Rio de Janeiro. Drug gangs, which operate in many shantytowns across the city, impose a markedly different type of governance that focuses principally on maintaining order and silence in the community—conditions conducive to selling drugs. The gangs seek to repress other types of criminal activity that could draw police attention. They also pay off the police for protection. Another organizational priority for Rio's drug gangs is the prison system, where they form competing factions affiliated with the branches operating in neighborhoods.

Some drug gangs try to gain public support by providing minimal social services to residents. When they engage in politics, they generally do so at a further remove than militias. No drug gang leader has been elected to political office. Gang leaders often seek a veto over who can run for office in the communities where they operate, but politicians try to maintain greater distance from this type of criminal. Certainly, they do not give speeches in favor of drug gangs, as Bolsonaro and other right-wing politicians have done in praise of militias.

São Paulo, Brazil's largest city, offers an important counterpoint to Rio. For some time, it has had a relatively low murder rate, which scholars have tied to the consolidation of illicit power in the hands of a single prison gang, the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC). The PCC dominates most criminal activity in the city, thanks to its complex

and at times contentious form of collusion with the police.

After a 1992 police massacre of 111 inmates following a riot in the Carandiru prison, the PCC came to dominate São Paulo's large prison system by organizing inmates to protect them from violence by the authorities and other prisoners. The PCC's power is based on its control of the prisons and its ability to provide paid protection to jailed criminals. The PCC seeks to maintain order both in the prisons and in the neighborhoods that its allies control. Its collusion with the state has contributed to a decline in homicide rates in the city. Recently, the PCC and the Comando Vermelho, a powerful Rio prison-based drug gang faction, have sought to extend their influence to other states.

In Rio, criminal involvement in politics and governance emerges from both inequality and the particular ways that the poor are housed and treated by city and state governments. Many live in irregular settlements such as favelas or in substandard housing projects that often lack regular public services. In some cases, relationships between criminal organizations and politicians are quite deep and public, as with militias, and in others they are more obscure, as with drug gangs. These groups take over state functions in the communities where they operate, with the support of different types of state actors.

Conflict and Crime in Colombia

As a global leader in the cocaine trade, Colombia has a long history of criminal involvement in politics. The notorious drug cartel chief Pablo Escobar won an alternate seat in Congress in 1982. In the 1990s, the Proceso 8000 investigation revealed that Cali-based drug traffickers had contributed to Ernesto Samper's successful 1994 presidential campaign. Colombia's long-running civil war provided criminals with extensive opportunities to intervene in politics.

The line between Colombia's armed conflict and criminal activity is ambiguous. Both leftist guerrilla movements and right-wing paramilitary groups have been involved in criminal enterprises, with guerrillas focusing mostly on controlling coca growing and the paramilitaries on refining and transporting cocaine. Both types of groups have involved themselves in politics.

One guerrilla commander I spoke with in northern Colombia explained how his unit of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)—the country's largest rebel movement—gained political influence. The unit, which had a small coca-growing operation, would provide electoral support to politicians, and once they were in office it pressured them to pursue policies advocated by the FARC. For example, the guerrillas sought more investment in social services in areas of the municipality that were sympathetic to its cause. I heard similar stories in southern Colombia from a variety of sources who cited extensive negotiations between FARC commanders and politicians in that region.

Since the FARC and the government signed a peace agreement in 2016, the group has been engaged in a disarmament process that has led to the demobilization of most of its units. Although many members of the FARC remain committed to the peace process, some never demobilized, and others have taken up arms again. Some of those active factions continue to look to the drug trade for income and engage in a variety of extortion-related activities to support their campaign against the government.

Paramilitary groups have also been extensively involved in politics. During a paramilitary demobilization process in the 2000s, they made a deal with some politicians to transform the Colombian political system. There is extensive evidence that paramilitaries used their control of territory to manipulate elections and came to hold sway over many municipal administrations and congressional seats. About half the members of the lower house of the Colombian Congress were implicated in the resulting scandal.

In the years since the demobilization, many former paramilitary groups (some never demobilized) have reorganized as purely criminal organizations that dominate large areas of the country, sometimes in collusion with the guerrilla forces they are ostensibly fighting. One of the most prominent groups is the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC), also known as the Urabeños or the Clan del Golfo. This group operates in areas of northern Colombia centered on the region of Urabá, a spit of valuable agricultural land between the Gulf of Urabá and the Serranía de Abibe mountains. There are extensive reports of direct involvement by the AGC in this region's politics, including funding campaigns in exchange for postelection kickbacks. The AGC is also involved in maintaining order in the areas where it operates, resolving disputes among inhabitants and engaging in what residents call "social cleansing" operations against low-level gang members accused of transgressions such as drug addiction and homosexuality. The

AGC, like Rio's militias, engages extensively in extortion as well.

Criminal organizations in Colombia's major cities are also involved in political activities, extortion, and maintaining order. They seek to control local civic organizations and nonprofits, and meddle in elections as well. Their influence is strongly dependent on their overall level of organization in a city. Where criminal structures are well organized—in Medellín and its suburbs, for example—they have been driving forces in politics, contributing to prominent campaigns and helping elect allies. When criminal groups are disorganized, they have had a more limited role in politics, usually restricted to selling blocs of votes to candidates for the city council or the regional or national legislatures.

There is a great deal of variation in the role of crime in politics and governance in Colombia. The political roles of criminals and other non-state armed actors are determined by the ways in which illicit economies operate in their parts of the country. These illicit economies are driven at least in part by the country's 55-year-old civil conflict. Criminal violence in rural areas generally is defined by the nature of the conflict and coca production, and these rural dynamics in turn define the nature of urban violence.

The line between Colombia's armed conflict and criminal activity is ambiguous.

Unlike in Rio de Janeiro, violence in Medellín is connected with armed conflict and drug production in other parts of the country. The government sometimes expands its footprint in certain places—as when it invested significantly in upgrading the city's infrastructure in the 2000s—constraining some illicit activities but opening up space for others. Medellín used to have broad and deep criminal involvement in politics, but as the state extended its presence in different neighborhoods, openings for criminal governance and other enterprises shifted.

JAMAICA'S POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Whereas criminal influence in politics is driven by urban dynamics in Brazil and by civil conflict and drug production in Colombia, violence and criminal governance in Jamaica historically have been propelled by the nature of the country's politics. The two leading parties are the center-right Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the center-left People's National Party. From the 1950s through the 1990s, these parties armed their supporters. Early on, this led to disruptions of elections and other political events. In the 1960s and 1970s, the violence became more acute as armed political activists expelled opponents from neighborhoods in order to better control electoral districts.

After independence in 1962, both parties built housing for their supporters, creating politically homogeneous neighborhoods known as "garrison communities" in large parts of Kingston, the capital city. During the 1970s, this process deepened political conflict, culminating with the 1980 election campaign. More than 800 people were killed, largely as a result of fighting between neighborhood-based political gangs operating out of shantytowns and housing projects around Kingston and nearby Spanish Town.

The intensity of the conflict in 1980 caused both political parties to take a step back from confrontation and, to some extent, to distance themselves from the political gangs they had created. By this time, though, the gangs were well established. Their power was further enhanced by the economic stress caused by the JLP government's austerity policies, which contributed to the migration of gang members to the United States and Britain after the violence surrounding the 1980 election. Jamaica's gangs took advantage of this growing diaspora to make the country a leading transshipment point for cocaine trafficking between Colombia, North America, and Europe. Although the intensity of political conflict eased, the gangs now had ample resources of their own.

Since the 1990s, Jamaican governments have undertaken reforms intended to reduce the political influence of gangs, but gangs still control voting in some neighborhoods, and politicians still turn to them to help turn out voters. In return for these services, gangs often earn a percentage of the government contracts implemented in the areas where they operate. Meanwhile, as US maritime interdiction operations reduced Jamaica's participation in drug transshipment, gangs turned to extortion and other rackets to make money.

Over time, geographical distinctions have emerged. Gangs' territorial control has spread in the southern region of Jamaica, where criminal structures orbit politics, and government resources are sometimes deployed to support gangs. The story is different in northwestern Jamaica around

Montego Bay, the country's second-largest city. Here there are also territorial gangs, such as the Stone Crushers. As policy analyst Kayyonne Marston has pointed out, however, the main criminal groups have at times been led by well-off, politically connected businesspeople who organize drug exports. In such cases, there is less of a gang structure and these merchants, who often have other businesses, may make contributions to political parties.

Thus, crime in Jamaica was initially shaped by the political environment, and later came to reflect the nature of party competition in different parts of the country. In Kingston and Spanish Town, competition for votes among an impoverished population contributed to a partisan housing policy that was closely linked to the emergence of gangs, which in many cases grew into powerful criminal enterprises. In Montego Bay, a smaller city, politics was not so bound up with housing. Gangs emerged later as the city grew, but by that time political parties were no longer invested in relations with gangs. The production of cannabis in the western interior of Jamaica contributed to the development of criminal organizations that had a more entrepreneurial structure and were closely tied to other business interests in the region.

Exploiting Crisis in Venezuela

Over the course of the past four decades in Venezuela, as Andres Antillano, Veronica Zubillaga, and I found in a study for the Development Bank of Latin America, gangs evolved as economic opportunities shifted in a cyclical, oil-dependent economy. Until recently, most of them had not developed structures as coherent as those in Brazil, Colombia, and Jamaica, and there is less evidence that they exercised extensive forms of governance over neighborhoods or had become deeply involved in politics.

This has changed somewhat with Venezuela's all-consuming economic and political crisis of the past few years. Amid the collapse of the economy under heavy debt, low oil prices, corruption, and intensifying political conflict, elements of the state have worked with members of armed *colectivos*, a type of organized crime group, both to repress protests and to take advantage of illicit economies. Exploiting chronic shortages of basic necessities, the *colectivos* control access to food in some parts of Caracas as well as trade in other regulated goods. The *colectivos* also seek to monopolize government contracts in the neighborhoods where they operate and to extort protection money from both legal and illegal businesses.

Here, crime and its relationship with the state are driven by the economic dynamics of a society in collapse. As those conditions shift, so, too, do the structures and activities of gangs. By exploiting a historic crisis, state-connected gangs have become critical players in black markets that sustain the livelihoods of corrupt state officials.

Varieties of Criminal Clout

Across Latin America, criminal involvement in politics and governance varies from country to country in accordance with the underlying political, social, and economic dynamics. In each country, these dynamics affect the nature of relationships between the criminal and political worlds: how public they are, and whether they supplant or complement official governance.

Criminal governance in Brazil is driven by social tensions and the abuses of state power that take place in different municipalities and in specific neighborhoods. Shantytowns with large drug markets are often run by criminal groups. These groups have largely clandestine relations with politicians and share local governance with state officials. Areas lacking such drug markets are often taken over by police-connected militias that extort protection money from inhabitants. These militias, which claim to repress drug dealers and other undesirable elements, have more public relationships with state officials, and their members sometimes even seek political office.

In Colombia, illicit governance structures are driven by persistent armed conflict and large-scale drug-trafficking markets. Armed actors—both guerrillas and paramilitaries—have made significant interventions in politics, and their allies have been elected to public office, at times with little effort to disguise these relations. Armed groups play important roles in governing different regions of the country—especially farther from the centers of state power, in the jungles and on the frontier. Those governance arrangements depend on the nature of the conflict in each area and the structure of local illicit economies.

In Jamaica, partisan politics fueled the creation of gangs that turn out votes and govern neighborhoods. Although electoral violence has declined, the gangs remain locally powerful and continue to play their political roles. Politicians still attend meetings with gang leaders, though these relation-

ships, formerly public, have become more clandestine over time. But there is no history of gang leaders actually winning political office in Jamaica, as they have in Brazil.

In Venezuela, criminal governance is now driven by the country's economic collapse. The depth of the present economic crisis has prompted the security forces to seek control of illicit markets through alliances with *colectivos*. In general, though, the links between *colectivos* and the government are clandestine—these groups currently have little involvement in electoral politics.

Crime is pervasive in social, economic, and political life in Latin America. The common experience of high levels of crime in the region, especially related to the drug trade, creates an underlying dynamic that promotes the interests of organized crime and encourages relationships between criminal groups and the state.

These broad trends favor the emergence of criminal involvement in governance and politics. The forms of criminal governance in particular places, however, are shaped by local historical factors. These may be bound up with traditions of informal and private governance in a given city or country, as well as with the ways in which governments have tried or failed to include the poor and working class in the political system.

Latin America and the Caribbean have long suffered from highly unequal and exclusionary social, political, and economic systems. The stresses created by these inequalities have contributed greatly to the scope and intensity of crime in the region, and to the entanglement of state and criminal interests. Addressing these inequalities would be a key step toward setting the region on a path to reducing violence and the involvement of criminal groups in governance. ■

"[I]n a context of few job opportunities and skyrocketing prices, the poor believed that dwindling state support indicated that the government had ceased to protect them."

Unprotected: Why Argentina's Poor Turn to Peronism

JAVIER AUYERO

Argentines living below the official poverty line have once again supported a Peronist candidate for the country's highest office—and, some would say, propelled him to victory. What happened during the four years of Mauricio Macri's presidency that caused many of the urban poor who once hesitantly supported the center-right incumbent to return to Peronism and vote for his challenger, Alberto Fernández, in the October 2019 election?

No single factor can explain the voting decisions of such a large swath of Argentine society. Poor people's lives, just like everyone else's, are complex and diverse. And so is their electoral behavior. Attempting to reduce the heterogeneity and intricacy of poor people's political action to one single element (be it deprivation, violence, protest, or clientelism—to name just a few of the tropes that are regularly used by the Argentine mainstream press) is bound to produce misrepresentations.

Macri, a prominent former businessman and mayor of Buenos Aires, won the presidency in 2015, beating Daniel Scioli, who was then the Peronist governor of the province of Buenos Aires and was backed, if lukewarmly, by the outgoing president, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. A majority of voters saw Kirchner's Peronist government as responsible for the deterioration of living standards. Although her administration was notorious for not making official figures available, poverty rates and inflation were clearly on the upswing by 2013. Voters also took note of the various corruption scandals that plagued her term in office.

Cristina had succeeded her husband Nestor as president upon his death in 2007. He had successfully steered the country out of its 2001 economic meltdown, after Argentina defaulted on its massive foreign debt, the peso collapsed, and the poverty rate reached a record high of 54 percent of the population. By all accounts, Nestor Kirchner's welfare policies (from cash transfers to subsidized services) worked well to improve the daily lives of the urban poor during his tenure.

When Macri took office in December 2015, he promised zero inflation and zero poverty. He failed on both counts. During his presidency, the poverty rate rose from 29 percent to 34 percent, and inflation doubled to an annual rate of 54 percent. Foreign debt also more than doubled. In September 2018, Macri negotiated a $57 billion rescue package from the International Monetary Fund, which made the loans conditional on reductions in the fiscal deficit. This resulted in the implementation of austerity policies—mainly cutting subsidies to public services. Combined with recession and inflation, this proved disastrous for low- and middle-income groups. Overall, far from shrinking Argentina's disparities between the poor and the rich—gaps that have been widening over the last four decades—Macri's policies enlarged them even further.

For more than two decades, first on my own and more recently in collaboration with residents of the impoverished neighborhoods I study, I have been scrutinizing poor people's lives and politics. During the past nine months, together with anthropology student Sofía Servián, I have held dozens of informal conversations and formal interviews with residents of La Matera, a squatter settlement in the southeast of the *conurbano bonaerense*—the metropolitan area that borders the capital city of Buenos

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Aires and is home to some 16 million people, including 37 percent of the country's voters.

Since the return of democracy to Argentina in 1983, after seven years of dictatorship, every political contest in the *conurbano* has been regarded as the "mother of all electoral battles." What our interlocutors told us provides a few clues about the recent election results, the Macri debacle, and the enduring appeal of Peronism. Since its origins in the populist leadership of President Juan Peron in the mid-twentieth century, Peronism has been at the center of Argentina's political life, sometimes in a neoliberal variant (notably during the presidency of Carlos Menem from 1989 to 1999), and at other times associated with strong state intervention. Its standard-bearer, the Justicialist Party, is now the largest political party in the country.

Two tightly linked elements appear to take center stage in poor people's evaluations of what has happened in the four years since Macri became president, and in their judgments about what needs to happen next. With respect to Macri's tenure, although many of our interviewees acknowledge that some improvements were made to infrastructure (a paved street here, a bridge there), most stress that their basic needs remained unmet. They still lack enough food and money to pay for transportation and utilities. They complain of government inaction in the face of threats to their material survival.

What do they hope will happen now? Most of our interviewees perceive Alberto Fernández, the new Peronist president, as the man who will turn back the clock and return daily life to a time when although economic hardship was present, basic needs were generally met—a time when they felt that they were, more or less, protected by the state.

Poor people do not vote with their bellies. Their understandings of what constitutes an acceptable level of deprivation, and what governments should or should not do in the face of generalized suffering, must be considered in any analysis of their political behavior. These understandings do not emerge out of thin air, but are embedded in a complex web of relationships that has constituted poor people's politics in Argentina, as well as elsewhere in Latin America, for some time.

PUNTEROS AND PIQUETEROS

In working-class neighborhoods, shantytowns, and squatter settlements, many of Argentina's poor and unemployed address the pressing problems of everyday life—access to welfare benefits, food, and medicine—through patronage networks that rely on brokers locally known as *punteros*. They also participate in grassroots organizations of unemployed workers, who are called *piqueteros* (roadblockers) in reference to the barricades they frequently set up on important avenues and highways in order to make their collective claims heard. Often, poor residents turn to both types of problem-solving network to help them make ends meet.

Patronage and collective action networks—*punteros* and *piqueteros*—not only provide access to food on an individual basis or in communal soup kitchens, but also organize state-funded cooperatives that engage the needy in "productive projects": building schools, constructing sidewalks, setting up community gardens and bakeries, and so forth. Both *punteros* and *piqueteros* depend on the (not always legal or overt) support of local, provincial, and national administrations. Although they demand different things from their participants, both kinds of networks function as webs that distribute resources and provide protection against the risks of everyday life.

Although political brokers tend to be linked to Peronism, there are also some who work for Macri's party, Cambiemos (Let's Change). In fact, many of these highly strategic actors work for one party at the local or municipal level, and for the other at the state or federal level.

During electoral campaigns, *punteros* canvass door to door, paint candidates' names on walls, put up posters, and mobilize supporters to attend rallies. On election day, they "buy" turnout by distributing goods and services to individual voters. But working for campaigns and handing out resources to obtain votes or other forms of political support are not the only actions in which *punteros* (and their patrons) engage.

Brokers provide access to welfare programs, medicine, clothes, food, bricks for building or repairing homes, zinc sheets for roofing, and sometimes cash. Some, especially when the time comes to mobilize their younger followers, distribute alcohol, marijuana, and other illegal drugs. They do all this year-round, not exclusively during the weeks or months before an election.

Both *punteros* and *piquetero* organizations provide public goods and services—street lighting, garbage collection trucks, bus shelters, and more—for their neighborhoods. They run community soup kitchens, health care clinics, and sports centers. They coordinate the delivery of state welfare benefits. The dealings of *punteros*

and *piqueteros* with political parties are variable and negotiated affairs—never set in stone, always contested—making poor people's political lives a vibrant patchwork of oftentimes competing actors and networks.

Enduring Immiseration

A persistent economic recession, chronic unemployment, widespread trends toward more informal and precarious work, low wages, and increasing inflation were the driving forces behind the increase of poverty under Macri. How is this general immiseration experienced at the bottom of the social structure? To find out, for the past nine months Sofía and I have been listening to poor people's descriptions of their daily predicaments.

Many of them are involved in one or more of the problem-solving networks described above. They detail drastic changes they have been forced to make to their diets because of skyrocketing prices for basic food items. "You can't afford meat any more . . . forget about it," said one person with whom we spoke, echoing similar laments from many others.

Our interlocutors also note the decreasing amounts (and worsening quality) of food on offer in the communal soup kitchens where they eat during the week, the rising utility prices that make it impossible for them to pay their bills, and the increased cost of transportation to go to work and to take their children to after-school activities. The welfare benefits they receive "each day cover less and less" of their basic needs. The problem-solving networks are strained, with fewer resources but more needs to cover. Over and over again, the poor describe urgent threats to their basic material subsistence.

They complain of government inaction in the face of threats to their material survival.

The people we have been talking to grew up in neighborhoods with few paved streets, low-quality services, and high levels of violence. Most have always worked in the informal sector of the economy—as day laborers in construction, waiters, or domestic workers. If and when they had access to formal jobs, they never made enough income to move above the official poverty line.

In the many conversations we have had, they express a somewhat resigned tolerance, a sort of acceptance, of the material deprivation that has characterized their lives and those of their parents. Hopes of upward social mobility (hopes that were indeed common among the poor for most of the twentieth century in Argentina) have pretty much vanished. "I might end up seeing the suffering of my grandchildren," one of them told us, encapsulating this widespread pessimism.

Although they say they are "used to" poverty, these same people express anger over the breakdown of what was once a widely held assumption that they could rely on state welfare provision: the government, they now believe, has stopped caring for them. The government (by which they meant Macri's presidency) was allowing or "not doing anything about" price hikes for basic foodstuffs. Government inaction or incompetence, they believe, is behind the devaluation (due to soaring inflation) of the welfare subsidies that had been helping them make ends meet for the past two decades or so. The government, they insist, is responsible for the disappearance of work and the general decline in their already poor quality of life.

Living with Violence

But the people we have talked with are not only preoccupied by threats to their material well-being. They also talk about worries for their physical safety. They feel endangered by the presence of young and often violent drug dealers in their neighborhoods.

"You cannot go to work without thinking you are going to get mugged," says a woman about her commute to work from Ingeniero Budge, a poor neighborhood in the southern *conurbano*, where murder rates have quadrupled since 2007 (an increase, it is worth mentioning, that is even more noticeable in a context of rather stable homicide rates in the country as a whole and relatively low levels of violence compared with most Latin American countries). "There are kids who steal so that they can get money to buy drugs. I'm always watching my back. You cannot walk on the streets. Anywhere you go, you have to take a car service. We can't live like that."

Besides these menacing street youths, residents are also worried about gun violence, which often erupts in street disputes between rival drug dealers. The following is an excerpt from the field diary of one research assistant with whom I worked back in 2016:

> Daira (10) lives with her mom and three sisters. Her father has been in prison for homicide since 2010. Daira, her mother, and two of her siblings were shopping on one of the neighborhood's bus-

> iest streets at noon when they heard gunshots. "I grabbed the kids," Daira's mom told me, "and tried to hide somewhere. I then saw that Daira was touching her head, and there was blood on it. . . . I was desperate . . . we ran to the local hospital with the help of a neighbor." Fortunately, the bullet only grazed Daira's head. At the school, we organized a fundraiser to pay for her antibiotics and creams. Her classmates now tease Daira, calling her "leaky head."

Alejandra, a 35-year-old woman, was not as lucky as Daira. On January 8, 2017, in the adjacent Barrio Obrero (a few blocks beyond the limits of Ingeniero Budge), she was killed when a stray bullet hit her in the head as she was walking down the street with her four-year-old son. According to preliminary police investigations, she was caught in the middle of a dispute involving two drug-trafficking gangs.

Far from feeling protected by law enforcement, residents of poor *barrios* believe that the police are, in fact, responsible for the increasing levels of violence. As we heard repeatedly from different neighbors, "The cops don't do anything. The cops are all dealers [*La policía es toda transa*]. They catch a dealer on this street and they let him out on the next corner."

Poor people's political lives are a vibrant patchwork of competing actors and networks.

No longer in the business, 47-year-old Mario recalled his days as a street dealer in Ingeniero Budge and provided a straightforward account of police–trafficker collusion:

> When we first started drug dealing, we had an arrangement with the police. Every weekend they would come to "pick up the envelope" [collect their bribe]. The cops knew we were selling drugs, but they didn't bother us. They would turn the area over to us. Now, if you don't pay them every weekend, you are in trouble. You'll end up in jail. Then we moved to another neighborhood. We were selling cocaine there, lots of it. But there, the National Guard protected us. The cops worked with a dealer from a different neighborhood. We were with the National Guard. See . . . it's all about [different] territories, some for the cops, others for the National Guard.

Over the past three decades, the illegal drug trade has expanded substantially in Argentina. In addition to its growing domestic market, the country has become an important point of departure for shipments of cocaine to Europe. Cocaine hydrochloride for domestic and European markets arrives from neighboring Bolivia and Peru, and marijuana is increasingly imported from Paraguay in response to local demand. A recent government report on drug consumption in Argentina found both more users (a 130 percent increase in use of illicit drugs between 2010 and 2017) and a rising perception that drugs are becoming more widely available and cheaper.

Drug-dealing organizations in Argentina are relatively small groups, in many cases composed of extended families based in extremely poor and marginalized neighborhoods in metropolitan areas, like Ingeniero Budge or La Matera. They often count on police protection. The involvement of members of Argentine state security forces in the drug business is well documented. Major daily newspapers regularly report on the arrest and indictment of federal and state police agents for participation in illicit drug distribution. For the past two decades, widespread police corruption in Argentina has persisted despite recurrent and mostly ineffective attempts at police reform.

Hoping for relief

When residents of poor neighborhoods speak about feeling unprotected, as they often do, they are usually referring to both material deprivation and a lack of physical safety. Their poverty is an insecure condition. They perceive those in charge of protecting them as either incompetent (elected state officials) or complicit with criminals (the police).

In the many conversations we had before the last election, we tried to leave the issue of politics, and more specifically, our interlocutors' voting intentions, to the very end. We did not always succeed—this was an election year, after all. Poor residents had very strong opinions about the Macri presidency, and they grabbed the opportunity offered by the interviews to voice their opinions and vent their frustrations.

When it comes to politics, residents of poor neighborhoods change their tune from the generalized hopelessness described above to a cautious anticipation. There is a sense of urgency in their voices. They do not believe that a new Peronist government will bring radical changes in their material conditions, much less in their physical safety. (They know full well that drug-related violence and police–trafficker collusion existed long before

Macri's presidency.) But they believe, or they want to believe, that a new administration will put a stop to their downward slide.

They hope—they want to have hope (*quiero tener esperanza* is a phrase we repeatedly heard)—that they will be able to make ends meet, to "eat meat more often," to go to the supermarket and fill their carts; that maybe they will be able to eat at home again rather than relying on the communal soup kitchens. They told us that they would vote to put an end to their current predicament because, as one of them put it, "I don't know how long we can keep going like this."

Noticeably, the issues of drug violence and police collusion with drug dealers take a back seat in their electoral judgments. They do not believe that much would change with a new administration. Faced with *narcopolicías* (as cops who collaborate with drug dealers are known), they think that there is not much either they or the politicians can do—and they suspect (rightly, I believe) that elected officials are also entangled in the market for illicit drugs.

The generalized feeling among the poor people we talked to was that since Macri took office, their daily lives—the money they bring home, the food they eat—had gotten worse. And in a context of few job opportunities and skyrocketing prices, the poor believed that dwindling state support indicated that the government had ceased to protect them. They were ready to make these feelings heard at the ballot box.

If we take poor people's shared understandings of their living conditions seriously, we should not be surprised by the overwhelming support for the Peronist candidate among the most dispossessed. On December 20, 2019, Argentina's House of Representatives approved President Fernández's emergency economic bill of tax hikes to fund increased social spending. This will likely bring some much-needed short-term relief to poor people's lives. But given that it inherited a highly indebted state and a contracting economy, what difference the new Peronist administration will make in their daily predicament beyond such immediate alleviation is anybody's guess. ■

"[M]ember states have not always been enthusiastic about implementing their obligations to further economic integration."

The Challenging Path to Caribbean Integration

PATSY LEWIS

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is one of the world's oldest and most ambitious regional integration schemes. Established more than four decades ago, it brings together 20 states and territories, most of them former or current British possessions, in an arrangement that covers trade and other forms of cooperation across a wide range of areas. Despite its ambitions—most notably, creating a Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME)—the bloc's progress has been stymied by the economic woes of its members, including the aftershocks of the 2008 global financial crisis.

Facing high levels of debt, poverty, and unemployment, as well as chronic fiscal deficits, CARICOM member states have not always been enthusiastic about implementing their obligations to further economic integration. Nor do they have the resources to fully support the bloc's wide-ranging agenda for functional cooperation on health, education, and climate change, among other areas. Various underlying tensions have led to a slowing down of the integration process, particularly in setting up the CSME.

CARICOM emerged in the wake of failed efforts to unite most of the British colonies in the Caribbean as a precursor to independence. The West Indies Federation, launched in 1958, had disintegrated by 1961—first Jamaica, then Trinidad, left to pursue independence separately. The federation was formally disbanded in 1962.

Relations among the independent and dependent Caribbean states subsequently shifted in a direction that put an emphasis on trade. The first joint arrangement to result from this shift was the Caribbean Free Trade Area, founded in 1965, which gave way to CARICOM in 1973. The central aim of CARICOM was to set up a regional market by liberalizing trade among its members, but it also provided for cooperation in foreign affairs, and later, security. Other areas of functional cooperation, which began with institutions developed both before and soon after independence, such as the University of the West Indies, the Caribbean Development Bank, and common shipping services, grew exponentially to cover primary and secondary education, vocational qualifications, health, tourism, meteorology, disaster management, risk insurance, and climate change, just to name a few.

In 2002, the 1973 Treaty of Chaguaramas, which launched CARICOM, was revised to create the CSME. The revised treaty called for removing the remaining barriers to trade, as well as lifting restrictions on providing services, establishing businesses, and allowing the free movement of capital. It also required the phased removal of barriers to the free movement of Caribbean nationals within the Community. The Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) was set up to settle disputes stemming from the CSME and to replace the British-based Judicial Committee of the Privy Council as the final court of appeals for member states, though only four countries have recognized the latter authority.

Today, most of the full members of CARICOM—Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts/Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago—engage in both economic integration processes and functional cooperation. The Bahamas and Montserrat, and the associate members—all of which are British overseas territories (Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands)—participate only in its functional arrangements. Haiti is still not integrated into CARICOM's economic system; its membership was temporarily suspended after

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a coup in 2004, and then a 2010 earthquake decimated its economy.

Wider and deeper

Even before the CSME was created, CARICOM had removed most barriers to intraregional trade, though the members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)—Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts/Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines—maintained their own common external tariffs. The CSME was meant to push the integration process into a higher gear after years of slow progress. It represented a shift from the more protectionist ethos of the original treaty to an embrace of neoliberalism, emphasizing efficiency and productivity as the keys to economic growth.

CARICOM leaders were motivated to take this step by external developments that they feared would reduce their countries' access to their main export markets: the negotiations leading to the North American Free Trade Agreement, the European Union, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). One might argue that CARICOM governments were reluctant free traders, convinced less by the benefits of liberalization than by a feeling of inevitability—a sense that they had no choice.

There is a long history of tension over the movement of people within the region.

In 1989, CARICOM heads of government met in Grenada to discuss these looming developments, and established the West Indian Commission to advise them on a way forward. The commission made two key recommendations that set the organization on its current course: to "widen" its relations with other countries in the region, and to "deepen" integration among the current members.

In order to widen CARICOM, Haiti and Suriname were accepted as new members, and the Association of Caribbean States was formed, bringing together the 35 countries and territories that share the Caribbean Sea. The goal of deepening CARICOM led to the CSME, with its ambitions for greater harmonization of policy and measures designed to cultivate more competitive firms that would stand a better chance of survival in a liberalized trading environment. This meant making it easier to establish businesses and provide services in other member states, move currencies across the region, and hire skilled workers.

After nearly five decades, CARICOM has addressed some of the challenges that led to its formation. It has helped shape common policy in education, health, meteorology, aviation, telecommunications, and agriculture. It has provided services such as monitoring compliance with international obligations, and developing model legislation for member states, covering a wide a range of issues. It has helped lead (or provided advice on) trade negotiations with the WTO and the EU, and on the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

But CARICOM has also faced discontent in some quarters, especially with respect to trade, the movement of nationals within the Community, and persistent concerns over the potential drawbacks of the integration process for the bloc's smallest states and least diversified economies. This has slowed implementation of the CSME, adding to long-held skepticism of Caribbean governments' commitment to regional integration.

Nonetheless, CARICOM has given the region a stronger voice to address common threats. Among these are the EU's blacklisting of member states that have developed offshore financial industries and the United States' inclusion of some of them on its money-laundering blacklist, designations that threaten their access to international banking services. CARICOM's ability to back up individual member countries in such matters tends to be lost in the noisy debates over the CSME, but it has been effective in raising concerns about the challenges faced by small middle-income countries, particularly with the international financial institutions.

Aggravating imbalances

Despite the wide range of activities in which CARICOM countries cooperate, trade—the issue that has proved most contentious—tends to be the yardstick by which the bloc's success is measured. Two notable features of trade within the region are its steady decline since the start of the recession in 2008 and the stark imbalances among countries. Intraregional imports declined by more than half between 2011 and 2016 (from $3.4 billion to $1.5 billion), and exports by nearly as much. The share of intraregional trade also declined against trade with countries outside of CARICOM.

At the time of the 2016 British referendum vote to leave the EU, key voices in Jamaica's private sector urged the government to follow suit by leaving CARICOM, claiming that it put the country's manu-

facturers at a disadvantage. They cited Jamaica's large trade deficit with Trinidad—though Trinidad's petroleum economy has resulted in similar imbalances with all other countries in the region. Between 2011 and 2016, Trinidad was the region's leading intraregional exporter, accounting for 67.9 percent of exports and just 5.8 percent of imports.

Jamaica established a committee chaired by former Prime Minister Bruce Golding to review its participation in CARICOM. In its report, the committee proposed setting a wide range of conditions and recommended that if they were not met within five years, Jamaica should withdraw from the CSME while continuing to participate in CARICOM's functional agreements. The Golding report raised specific concerns over Trinidad's alleged fuel subsidy for domestic manufacturers, arguing that the petroleum should be available to other CARICOM members at the same price. It also criticized a continued distinction in the bloc's revised treaty between less and more developed countries, which gave the former special access to a compensation fund. Ultimately, while pushing CARICOM to implement decisions faster, the Jamaican government stopped short of vowing to withdraw if its demands were not met.

Unfree movement

The regime for the movement of people within the region has been another subject of dispute among the bloc's members. Although the CSME nods to the goal of eventually allowing all Caribbean citizens to move freely to live and work anywhere within the Community, its specific provisions are far more limited. They focus on business operators' rights to provide services and establish operations; the right of certain categories of workers to seek employment; and the right of other citizens, with limited exceptions, to automatic entry for a stay of up to six months in member states, but without permission to work. Difficulties in implementing these provisions have led to tensions among member states.

Coming to an agreement on rights for family members of workers in eligible categories and the portability of benefits, such as pensions and insurance, has proved difficult. But the most contentious issue is how to administer the right to unrestricted entry for Caribbeans who are not seeking to work. Jamaica and Guyana have accused Trinidad and Barbados of discriminating against their citizens. This led to a groundbreaking CCJ ruling in a case brought by the Jamaican government on behalf of one of its citizens, Shanique Myrie, denied entry to Barbados. The CCJ's 2013 verdict in favor of Myrie reaffirmed the rights of citizens to move without restriction and to seek legal redress when their rights under the CSME have been violated.

There is a long history of tension over the movement of people within the region; it was one of the causes of the West Indies Federation's collapse. During the Federation period, anxieties around immigration were felt most keenly in Trinidad, whose leaders worried that free movement would result in an unmanageable influx of people from the smaller and less developed Eastern Caribbean states. Those concerns prompted a decision to delay the implementation of free movement for five years.

The incremental approach to implementing the CSME suggests that such anxieties persist today. While the revised treaty envisages eventually allowing free movement within the CSME, governments have set no time frame—in contrast with the schedules for removing restrictions to free trade and other priorities.

In 1996, CARICOM announced five categories of persons allowed to move without restriction to seek employment within member states: university graduates, musicians, artists, athletes, and media professionals. In 2009, five other categories were added: teachers, nurses, artisans holding vocational certificates, holders of associate degrees, and trained household helpers. Four more categories were added in 2019: agricultural workers, beauty service practitioners, barbers, and security guards.

In 2018, CARICOM governments adopted the Contingent Rights Protocol, which grants spouses and dependents of skilled workers the same access to social services as nationals. In a 2019 declaration, they announced that a skills certificate issued by one country must be recognized by all, ending the current practice of allowing each state to issue its own certificate. The declaration also acknowledged that member states willing to proceed toward "full free movement" within the next three years had the right to do so.

Whether CARICOM citizens should have the ability to move freely throughout the region without being subject to immigration and customs checks at each stop is a long-standing question. Member states temporarily created a space for free movement within the Community to facilitate the 2007 Cricket World Cup, which different islands cohosted. But that initiative was mainly for the

benefit of the foreign tourists attending the matches, and it was abandoned as soon as the World Cup was over, fueling the perception that the rights of Caribbean citizens were a low priority. The 2019 declaration merely expresses a commitment to "examine" the possibility of reinstituting such arrangements.

More troubling is the suggestion that governments view travel and migration not as inherent rights, but as security concerns. The preoccupation with security is likely to intensify once Haiti, with its relatively large population and high levels of unemployment and poverty, becomes fully integrated into the CSME, which is expected to happen in 2020. CARICOM's tentative approach reflects its need to balance the attractiveness of unimpeded movement, and its potential contribution to fostering a sense of belonging to the region, against insecurities over perceived risks such as job losses.

One of the key impediments to movement in the region is expensive airfares. CARICOM members have agreed to remove restrictions on regional carriers in the airspace of member states, and governments are considering reducing taxes that increase travel costs. But, as with the bloc's other agreements, these changes may be a long time coming.

CARICOM has an important role to play in setting common Caribbean policy for the use of natural resources.

Even as Caribbean countries maintain a restrictive approach to movement, the region is hemorrhaging skilled workers, particularly in health and education, to North America and Europe. CARICOM's privileging of skilled workers, as with its more recent inclusion of nurses and teachers on the list of professions granted special rights of movement, is a response to this challenge. But most action has taken place at the national level, with some governments adopting a market-based approach focused on training more teachers and nurses for both domestic and external positions.

The international financial institutions have encouraged Caribbean states to woo their diasporas as sources of remittances and financing—money sent home by overseas populations constitutes the largest foreign exchange inflows in some national economies—and to promote return migration and brain circulation (to counter the effects of brain drain). But CARICOM has yet to develop a regional framework for responding to the underlying conditions that have given rise to migration of highly skilled workers, or for facilitating the return of Caribbean migrants to any country in the bloc, regardless of their place of origin. This would be particularly important for migrants who do not feel comfortable returning to their home countries. But given the current restrictive migration regime, it is difficult to see how governments could justify extending this right to diasporas when it is denied to those living in the region.

DEVELOPMENTAL DIFFERENCES

One of CARICOM's enduring divides is the distinction between the countries historically categorized as "less developed" and "more developed," which was written into the Caribbean Free Trade Area and carried into CARICOM and the CSME. Its origins lie in the experiences of the smaller Eastern Caribbean territories in the West Indies Federation, when they were a cause of anxiety over the possibility of their people migrating to larger neighbors such as Jamaica and Trinidad. They were also considered a drain on the resources of these larger territories. Such differences were concretized when Jamaica, Trinidad, Guyana, and Barbados became independent by the mid-1960s, while the smaller territories were forced to remain in dependent relationships with Britain until eventually gaining independence a decade or two later.

The formal categorization of these countries as "less developed" was based on their lack of mineral resources, the dominance of their agriculture sectors, and their limited ability to industrialize or to compete in the regional market. This led to a number of special privileges that allowed them to protect fledgling industries from competition from the more developed countries in the region, such as by retaining higher tariffs on goods from those neighbors.

The CSME includes provisions for addressing the negative effects of economic integration, notably a development fund. But these measures, for the first time, are also available to sectors within all member countries that are negatively affected by integration, eroding the sharp distinction between the two groups of countries.

To counter the threat of being marginalized by regional integration, the less developed countries

(except for Belize) formed their own subregional scheme in 1981, the OECS, which was revised in 2010 to create an economic union. The revised OECS treaty provides for the free movement of goods, capital, and people. It also calls for harmonized fiscal and monetary policy, facilitated by a common central bank and currency, the Eastern Caribbean Dollar (inherited from the West Indies Federation). This bloc also seeks to coordinate policy on trade, health, education, and the environment. The OECS thus has a more ambitious framework for integration than CARICOM itself.

DIVERGING INTERESTS

Most criticism of the slow pace of Caribbean integration faults CARICOM for agreeing to an ever-growing body of policy and regulations that member countries either fail to implement or adopt haltingly, causing frustration and loss of confidence in the process. Much of the blame for this is assigned to an absence of political will on the part of governments and weaknesses in CARICOM's implementation mechanisms. Yet even the critics usually acknowledge that the bloc's actions and ambitions are constrained by external factors outside of its control.

The bloc has given the region a stronger voice to address common threats.

Among these factors were the global oil and debt crises that occurred in 1979–80 shortly after CARICOM was formed, which led to disruptions in trade as larger Caribbean countries imposed restrictions on imports from within the region, and the 1983 collapse of the bloc's multilateral clearing mechanism, which had allowed countries to trade without the need for US dollars. Meetings of Caribbean heads of government were suspended from 1976 to 1982. Cohesion was further undermined by members' different ideological leanings, exacerbated by the Cold War. These tensions came to a head in 1983 when Jamaica, Barbados, and a number of OECS countries invited the United States to invade Grenada, effectively sidelining CARICOM.

The impetus to create a common market came from the global turn toward greater trade liberalization, which threatened to upend CARICOM's trade agreements with Europe and North America. But shortly after the CSME was launched, the 2008 global financial crisis and ensuing recession slowed the pace of implementation and heightened fears over migration in the face of growing unemployment.

Although members' concerns over trade and competitiveness remain acute, important aspects of the economy fall outside of CARICOM's purview. Most importantly, the CSME does not cover the ownership and use of natural resources. Its prime focus is on trade and, increasingly, the regulatory environment for investment and the need to foster competitive firms that can compete internationally.

The Golding report's explicit attack on the persistent categorization of more and less developed nations, and the special consideration accorded to the latter in access to the CARICOM development fund, underscored an abiding tension. The report's rejection of the legitimacy of any such claims to special treatment cited the higher gross domestic product per capita that the smaller Caribbean countries tend to have compared with larger peers such as Jamaica and Guyana.

St. Vincent's prime minister, Ralph Gonsalves, writing on behalf of the OECS, responded by pointing to the difficulties of achieving economies of scale, which constrains the productivity and competitiveness of the smaller countries' firms, as well as their underdeveloped manufacturing and financial sectors, their lack of oil and mineral resources, and the paucity of "vital skill sets" in their workforces. Gonsalves also noted that although most Caribbean countries are vulnerable to hurricanes, their effects are far greater on smaller states.

Underlying these disputes are broader questions that are hardly ever confronted directly. To what extent is CARICOM's goal of securing equitable benefits from integration viable under neoliberal economic policies that inevitably create winners and losers, despite claims that free trade allows all boats to rise? How reasonable is it to blame Trinidad for the significant trade surplus it enjoys against every member of the Community? Will the CSME deepen economic polarization within the region, especially in the context of further liberalization of trade with the EU under an Economic Partnership Agreement in effect since 2008, and similar arrangements set to be negotiated with Canada and the United States?

With few exceptions, Caribbean countries have been grappling with mounting debt, making the region one of the most indebted in the world. Many also struggle with high unemployment and persistently high levels of poverty. Such conditions

inevitably exacerbate tensions over regional integration and reduce appetites for immigration and free trade, as Brexit and the rise of anti-EU parties in Europe suggest.

One of the pressing needs of Caribbean countries that CARICOM cannot address is for massive injections of funds to underwrite expensive infrastructure projects and to offset chronic fiscal imbalances. OECS states turned to Venezuela and Cuba for such assistance, which only further undermined regional cohesion, especially in foreign policy. As a means of earning foreign exchange, some have also launched programs that offer citizenship to individuals who invest a specified sum in the country—a practice that has put at risk their visa-free access to North America and Europe.

These problems are not solely, or even primarily, owing to CARICOM's slow implementation of measures to create the single market. The question is whether countries believe that they would be better off if the CSME were to be fully implemented. Their reluctant progress suggests a lack of conviction.

CARICOM's greatest value to the region might prove to be in its provision of services in the functional realm and its potential for organizing common responses to increasingly complex problems. These challenges include disaster response and ocean management (areas in which CARICOM is already active) as well as developing a joint position on the exploitation of natural resources, especially in the context of climate change and the region's vulnerability to its effects.

The matter is particularly urgent in light of Guyana's extensive recent oil discoveries and Jamaica's ongoing exploration of the deep seabed. Governments have been slow to adopt a regional approach, preferring to treat resources as an issue purely within the domestic domain. Guyana has signed contracts with Exxon Mobil for the exploitation of its newfound oil fields; even the International Monetary Fund has balked at the generosity of the deal's terms for Exxon. Jamaica has already given rights to develop its deep-sea resources to a Danish-owned company. By focusing on facilitating trade and economic integration, CARICOM could overlook potential avenues for managing and exploiting resources collectively to address poverty, unemployment, and inequality, while also taking account of the region's vulnerability to climate change.

EMOTIONAL INVESTMENT

There is little question of CARICOM's overall value to its member states. Both CARICOM and the OECS have also proved attractive to Europe's remaining dependencies in the region. The territories' interests in regional schemes go beyond economic and functional concerns, to issues of cultural belonging and the strengthening of a regional Caribbean identity vis-à-vis Europe. These more emotional aspects of regional cooperation may be taken for granted by some members, but remain a strong attraction for others.

To ensure that CARICOM survives and has a positive effect on the lives of their citizens, Caribbean governments should consider deemphasizing elements of the CSME that might be unworkable in favor of those that can reinforce the region's heavily compromised sovereignty and control over its resources. They also must overcome the traditional insular suspicion of other Caribbean nationals, reflected in their halting approach to free movement, in order to create a space of belonging, of shared history and culture, which would allow people to feel a greater emotional investment in the common project.

Few would discount the valuable role CARICOM plays in education—for instance, in creating more suitable regionwide school curricula and exams to replace British-based testing—or in making it easier to sell goods and move around the region. It may well be, however, that globalization and trade liberalization have increased the bloc's impotence when it comes to transforming regional economies and encouraging a deeper integration of production. But CARICOM still has an important role to play in setting common Caribbean policy for the use of natural resources—particularly in tourism, minerals, and exploitation of the deep-sea bed—in a direction that minimizes negative impacts on the environment and enhances its members' sovereignty over these resources. A move in this direction could expand economic opportunities and create the conditions to make the region more attractive to its people both at home and in the diaspora. ■

"The policies and collaborations between governments and civil society that kept forests standing in many parts of Amazonia have come to an end, at least for now."

Why the Brazilian Amazon Burns

SUSANNA HECHT

The Amazon was in flames in August 2019. How much forest had to burn to shroud the Western Hemisphere's largest megacity, São Paulo, in enough smoke to completely darken its skies, about 2,500 kilometres from the Amazon? The area that burned across the Brazilian Amazon in all of 2019 amounted to over 6 million hectares (about 60,000 square kilometers), and another 2 million hectares were on fire in Bolivia, according to the World Wildlife Fund. The number of fires was up almost 80 percent from the same period in 2018, based on remote-sensor data from Brazil's Institute for Spatial Studies—whose director, physicist Ricardo Galvão, was fired for reporting this fact to right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro.

Other major South American cities, from Santa Cruz, Bolivia, to the soybean entrepôt of Porto Velho in the upper Amazon River basin in northwest Brazil, were also wheezing through unbreathable air and darkness at noon. There was an explosion in hospital visits, including many newly asthmatic and choking children.

It was hard to imagine that smoke could travel so far and blanket such huge areas. But the subsequent conflagrations at the end of the year in Australia are schooling everyone in the relentless realities of fire. Smoke from those bushfires produced a plume that traveled more than 9,000 miles and now drapes Chile and southern Brazil in yet more soot-saturated air. The Australian fires, however, were triggered by natural processes intensified by climate change—including temperatures among the highest ever recorded in Australia (120 degrees Fahrenheit), strong winds, and lightning. The Amazonian fires, in contrast, were purposefully set to clear land for speculation and agricultural use, in an unprecedented outbreak of planetary arson. Although Amazon forest is often burned to prevent regrowth on pasture, new deforestations of some two million hectares accounted for a third of the clearing.

The shocking images of the Amazon fires were a grim illustration of the hottest summer ever recorded, in the second-hottest year. Paris vied with Death Valley for the hottest spot on the planet for a few days (111 degrees Fahrenheit), while Fairbanks, Alaska, basked in 90-degree heat. Siberian fires blazed in the Arctic, and glaciers dissolved at unprecedented rates. The catastrophe was captured by satellites; the fires were dramatically visible from space, from drones, and from ground photos that made the heat feel palpable.

The DNA of the most complex ecosystems on the planet became mere ashes, combining with forest fire smoke to form a new kind of urban pollution and add more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. Plants and animals were reduced to their constituent chemicals, leaving behind the charred remains of immolated environments, perhaps now gone forever. Scientists estimated that a billion animals died in the Australian infernos. Social media was awash with poignant photos of iconic koalas, wombats, and kangaroos framed against the flaming backdrops of their former forest habitats.

In Brazil, scholars and zoologists from the National Institute for Amazonian Research (INPA), the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio, the agency that manages Brazil's national parks), and the World Wildlife Fund were assessing the fires' impacts on one of the earth's most diverse regions. The Brazilian Amazon hosts an unknown number of species (at least 30,000) and highly varied habitats rife with endemic species—local organisms adapted to specific localities. No one could yet estimate a total death toll—perhaps they lacked the heart for it—but there were indications that 265 species were threatened

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with extinction, potentially making this fire season a definitive biotic annihilation event.

Bolivian scientists estimated that the destruction of their far less analyzed Amazon forests had immolated some two million animals. Yet President Evo Morales—soon to be driven from office over his attempt to stay on for a fourth term—presided in August over the first shipment of Bolivian Amazon beef to China at an event held not far from the unique Chiquitanía forests, large swaths of which were being burned to cinders at that moment.

However many species perished in the firestorms, countless more will die from lack of food and from wounds and predation as they roam the scorched ruins of their ecosystems. We might usefully set the number of human lives lost—a few hundred—against the multiple billions of other organisms that expired, or will soon, because of the conflagrations.

More ecocide is likely on the way. In 2018, scientists Carlos Nobre and Tom Lovejoy warned of a tipping point looming close on the horizon, when Amazonia, instead of absorbing carbon, will begin to release its 100 billion tons of stored CO_2, becoming a source rather than a sink of greenhouse gases, less able to regulate the regional as well as the global climate: the forest ecosystem will transform into a more arid kind of landscape, as vegetation change and atmospheric heating act on each other in a noxious feedback loop. Ecosystem modelers from Brazil and the United States warn that climate change and tree clearing are increasing the vulnerability of southern Amazonia's forests to more fires, of greater intensity and extent.

The new government set the stage for the Amazon apocalypse.

Bolsonaro's blame game

The ghastly images of the Amazon in flames triggered a global outcry. Yet Brazil's environment minister, Ricardo Salles, views climate change as a "secondary issue." Bolsonaro is a climate change skeptic. His foreign minister, Ernesto Araujo, dismisses climate change as a figment of what he calls "cultural Marxist" propaganda. In a September speech at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative US think tank, he denied that the Amazon was burning at all.

What is the meaning or value of environmental stewardship if you believe in the end times, as do leading members of Brazil's ascendant Evangelical Christian movement, not least Bolsonaro and his coterie? The slogan of his political supporters, "bibles, beef, and bullets," more or less sums up the components of his coalition: fundamentalist Christians, the agricultural industry, and the military. Brazil's agro-elites were perfectly willing to burn up more than 40,000 species of plants to make a habitat for just one—soy—and to immolate an ecosystem of more than 150,000 different kinds of animals (surely an underestimate) to make space for a single species, the cow.

Such destructive behavior could usher us out of the Anthropocene—this geological epoch dominated by human activity—into what the biologist E.O. Wilson has called the Eremocene, the age of loneliness, as we preside over mass extinctions not unlike those triggered by the asteroid impact that ended the days of the dinosaurs. But if you have a providential worldview, you might believe that the world was made for the use of man, and for his profit.

Nonetheless, Brazil's defiant leaders suddenly found themselves on the defensive. At the August 2019 G7 summit in Biarritz, France, the burning Amazon and climate change leaped onto the agenda. Given that a global climate summit in New York was to take place in September, the Vatican would host an Amazon Synod in October, and the annual United Nations climate meeting was set for December (Brazil was originally to host it, but Bolsanaro canceled shortly after taking office), the Brazilians faced the prospect of having to discuss the Amazon all fall.

Bolsonaro vaulted into action with typically rebarbative rhetoric and blame shifting. First, he refused the 22 million euros in emergency funds offered by the European Union because he felt that French President Emmanuel Macron had insulted him in a colonial manner by calling for a discussion of the Amazon fires at the G7 summit. Amazonian states at this time were scrambling for assistance to help pay for firefighters and fuel for planes that were making symbolic water drops; the scale of the fires precluded any meaningful efforts to control them.

A hasty September summit of the leaders of Amazon countries (Bolsonaro did not attend) was organized in Leticia, Colombia, to discuss deforestation, but yielded only a banal document seemingly designed to mollify the international community

and donors. It offered platitudes about mutual help, green innovation, information sharing, and securing the inclusion and consent of indigenous people for development initiatives. In reality, no Amazon country follows the International Labor Organization's indigenous consent law (ILO Convention 169), which took force in 2016. Meanwhile, also in September, Araujo and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced a $100 million deal to "protect biodiversity" and create business opportunities in the most remote and inaccessible areas of Amazonia—for which read plundering in protected areas and indigenous reserves by mining and timber interests.

The Bolsonaro team organized its blame-shifting campaign by deploying a well-rehearsed playbook. First, Bolsonaro accused the international media of biased reporting intended to damage Brazil's global standing by misrepresenting deforestation as wanton destruction rather than as a necessary part of the process of Brazilian development. He also invoked global conspiracies, alleging that subversive international nongovernmental organizations were setting the fires and then spreading videos of them to make his government look bad.

The Amazonian fires were an unprecedented outbreak of planetary arson.

NGOs were doing this, Bolsonaro alleged, because Germany and Norway had frozen 87 million euros in contributions to the Amazon Fund, which finances projects to reduce deforestation: more monitoring of clearing, help with titling, eco-certification, agroforestry experiments, payment for land demarcation, and related projects, many of which are directed by NGOs and social movements. This funding could be understood as a broadly defined payment for environmental services. It supports development programs that are not based on deforestation. Germany and Norway, which provide most of the Fund's money, suspended their contributions because of the lack of progress in controlling deforestation and increasing attacks on environmental institutions in Brazil.

Bolsonaro's government has threatened environmental NGOs, especially Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund, that they could be banned from Brazil as subversive antigovernment organizations. In his theater of the absurd, Bolsonaro blamed the actor Leonardo DiCaprio and his foundation for fomenting sedition through environmental fundraising. Even local NGOs of volunteer firefighters in Alter do Chão were accused of setting fires and then filming them, though the charges were dropped for lack of evidence. Government funding for Brazil's own NGOs, many of which work with indigenous and traditional peoples, had already been cut off, and those that receive international funds are now also subjected to detailed auditing, under an order issued by Salles in January 2019. Even the conservative pro-Bolsanaro TV network Globo called this move a "war against NGOs."

Bolsonaro and his allies claimed that efforts to inhibit Amazonian deforestation masked more sinister geopolitical strategies, including a European plot to limit imports of cheap Brazilian agricultural goods by backing out of the EU's free trade agreement with Mercosur, the South American economic bloc, on specious environmental grounds. In a more ominous register revived from the era of dictatorship in Brazil, they claimed that inhibiting deforestation was meant to forever condemn the nation to underdevelopment by thwarting its agro-industrial ranchers and soy farmers from taking their rightful position as Amazonian territorial masters and suppliers to overseas markets, mainly China. Another popular trope was a warning that locking up the Amazon's resources in parks and protected areas would provide a pretext for foreign invasion when other countries ran out of resources. As the controversy wore on, these issues of territoriality and sovereignty became pivotal.

"Amazonia is ours," Bolsonaro often reiterates, articulating a view popular in military circles that environmentalists use indigenous people as stooges to threaten Brazilian sovereignty and the Christian way of life by asserting claims to self-rule. (Indigenous autonomy is inscribed in the 1988 constitution.) The fear is that these native "nations" could become platforms for an invasion from within, a sort of "eco-foco," to update the revolutionary terminology of Che Guevara. "They do not have lobbyists and do not even speak Portuguese. How is it that indigenous people have ended up with so much of our land?" asked Bolsonaro at a 2015 meeting in the soy entrepôt of Campo Grande.

Bolsonaro's son Eduardo argued in the Brazilian Congress that the United States and Europe had both developed by plundering their natural resources, so who were they to tell Brazil what to do? In fact, imperialism, innovation, and industri-

alization have had more to do with US and European development than domestic forest exploitation. Both have more forest now than they did in the early nineteenth century—more than 90 percent of it is native woodland. The Bolsonaros and their entourage, evidently uninformed about this, urged the G7 leaders to take their cash and use it to reforest their own countries.

One reason for the existence of these American and European temperate-zone forests is the historical development of regulatory and protective legal apparatuses, careful forest management, and the structural shift away from a liquidation economy like that which currently prevails in Amazonia. Since the end of the military regime, building on the 1988 constitution and revamped legal system, Brazil had put in place a relatively robust system of institutions that was responsible for developing and enforcing national environmental laws as well as meeting international obligations. These efforts, along with citizen activism and novel initiatives including supply-chain monitoring and using real-time clearing data to penalize environmental crimes, reduced deforestation by more than 70 percent in the decade from 2004 to 2014. There were real hopes for reaching *desmatamento zero*—zero clearing in all of Brazil's biomes—by intensifying production on underused, already cleared land. This was the trend before the 2018 election brought Bolsonaro to power.

GUTTING INSTITUTIONS

At an ideological level, and at a further institutional and legal level, Bolsonaro's government set the stage for the Amazon apocalypse. The president has aggressively sought to undermine environmental and public health institutions and legislation, overriding reviews of the environmental impacts of projects and legalizing mining and infrastructure development on protected indigenous and traditional people's lands. His scorched-earth approach resembles the current US model under Trump. Indeed, Salles was invited to speak at the headquarters of the US Environmental Protection Agency at the behest of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, an outfit headed up by Myron Ebell, the éminence grise who served as the architect for the Trump administration's demolition of environmental safeguards.

Salles hardly needed tutoring in how to ruin an environmental agency. Shortly after taking the reins of his ministry, he began dismantling its own Brazilian Institute for the Environment (IBAMA). He summarily dismissed 27 of the 29 regional agency heads, replacing them with military men, slashed the budget by more than 24 percent (on top of previous cuts), fired many of the field officers, and prohibited them from disabling deforestation equipment (such as tractors), which is a necessary step for stopping forest clearing. IBAMA was also prevented from prosecuting offenders who had been fined for illegal clearing. Operations on the ground were reduced by some 60 percent. ICMBio, the agency that is supposed to manage protected areas, handed out virtually no citations for illegal clearing in 2019, even though the vast extent of the damage was clearly visible in remote-sensing images.

In 2019, a public letter from IBAMA employees in the Amazon described how they faced a rising pattern of terror, with arson attacks on their offices, their trucks destroyed, and the local police force, which used to protect them on their missions, now declining to help. The budget has been cut so deeply that there is barely any gas for the remaining trucks, and the staff is depleted by a high rate of attrition and widespread demoralization. They lamented that they could no longer act as protectors of forests, but instead had become impotent observers of the destruction of their life's work by the uncontrolled fires. This impotence was most apparent on August 10, dubbed the "day of burning," when ranchers, loggers, and other land grabbers set fire to the highly contested forests along the BR-163 highway, in open defiance of environmental law and IBAMA.

All of Brazil's previous environmental ministers have roundly denounced Salles's approach and policies, but to little avail. Gutting the government's environmental management institutions was not enough, however. The science that underpinned their programs is also on the line. In an expression of his disdain, Bolsonaro has defunded the Brazilian equivalent of the National Science Foundation, putting the nation's distinguished university system, scientists, and students in a precarious situation. The universities are facing cuts of more than 30 percent to their operating budgets.

Scientifically informed development policy for Amazonia had been the norm for the past several decades. The institutions that provided this expertise were supported and expanded even under the military regime from 1964 to 1985. But under Bolsonaro, academic analysts have found themselves largely shut out of decisions. The few meetings they attended were crammed with obedient

military men. Student training and research has languished, with fellowships cut off and classes canceled.

Meanwhile, the military advisers that replaced the climate negotiations staff had to be informed that Brazil was supposed to host the annual international meeting. The government canceled it, but the episode was emblematic of the cluelessness that characterized these inheritors of what had been one of the jewels in the crown of Brazilian diplomacy, as well as a mark of the country's respected scientific institutions and its stature on the world stage.

FIRE STARTERS

What has been triggering deforestation in Brazil? China's growth has driven international demand for commodities, heightened by the tariffs that Beijing placed on US soy and corn exports in retaliation for the Trump administration's tariffs on Chinese goods. This created more incentives for forest clearing, concurrently with the political rise of an agro-industrial bloc that seized the initiative with Bolsonaro as its point man. (Agricultural exports are Brazil's main source of foreign exchange.)

During Bolsonaro's 2018 presidential campaign, he advocated amnesty for deforesters and timber thieves, and pledged that he would recognize their claims to cleared land, rewarding illegal destruction. He planned to shut down the environment ministry, relax enforcement, reduce or eliminate environmental licensing for projects in the national interest, and withdraw from the Paris climate accord.

Bolsonaro also vowed to open up indigenous and traditional forest people's lands to mining, even though their land rights are inscribed in the constitution. He promised that Funai, the indigenous agency, would cease to be autonomous and would come under the aegis of the land ministry. "Not one inch of protected areas, indigenous lands, or kilombos [communities for slave descendants] will be demarcated on my watch," he boasted to an approving crowd of agro-industrialists. The candidate marshaled the usual racist tropes: Blacks were feckless, and indigenous people backward, so why should they hold so much land?

Bolsonaro has not fulfilled all of these promises since taking office. His brazenness gave pause even to some members of the Brazilian agro-industrial elite. Blairo Maggi, who owns the world's largest soy producer, fretted in an interview with the business newspaper *Valor* that withdrawing from the Paris Agreement could backfire and imperil market share in more environmentally concerned places like the EU, where deforestation-free commodity chains are increasingly important.

But Bolsonaro has succeeded in decriminalizing land grabbing, and that accounts for a great deal of what is going on now. The tried and true method is through clearing as a means of claiming land with fraud and force, throwing a few cattle on it to show that the land is "in use." There are enormous speculative gains to be made by selling land obtained in this way. The cattle system is famously unproductive (one animal per hectare) and serves mainly as a means of placeholding—in other words, creating an asset by privatizing public resources. It takes a few years before pasture land is ready to be worked for mechanized soy production, but it can be sold at enormous profit in the expanding frontier, especially in anticipation of the massive infrastructure plans for Amazonia that are part of the broader Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America.

The most complex ecosystems on the planet became mere ashes.

The government has reduced enforcement and even reviews of environmental and clearing licenses by more than 60 percent from previous years. Officials have stated that cattle lands created from protected areas no longer have conservation status and thus should be duly transferred to the clearer, essentially decriminalizing deforestation. Combined with encouraging presidential rhetoric, this kind of amnesty provides strong incentives for clearing lands.

Illegal deforestation has also occurred within reserves on landowners' property. The forest code indicates what proportion of property the owner must keep in natural vegetation, including riverbanks, slopes, and other types of forest areas. These protections are going unenforced as well.

Even if IBAMA knew about such violations, it would be powerless to act, as the August "day of burning" on protected areas near the BR-163 demonstrated. Here, Bolsonaro's left-wing predecessor as president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and his environment minister Marina da Silva had declared protected areas and reserves in order to buffer what had been basically a fire corridor for land speculators. In August, those who had formerly been responsible for protecting these

forests looked on helplessly, like the rest of us. Deforestation is now infused with a new sense of impunity.

The clearing process is attended by a great deal of violence, because the forests are not empty. People live in them and use them. Human Rights Watch has noted the degree to which Amazonian deforestation has been outsourced to "forest mafias," a new innovation in the agro-industrial complex. These mafias operate in a manner similar to farm management services. Landowners can hire them them to carry out a "social cleansing" (*limpieza social*): they run local farmers and natives off the land, haul out the timber, and cut and burn what remains. Further out on the frontier, militias and gunmen drive people off their land, or kill them at a rate of about one per week, according to Global Witness. In just the first weeks of January 2020, five forest guardians were killed in Amazonas and Maranhão states (three were indigenous and two were peasants).

Apologists justify this violent process ideologically as a necessary, noble incarnation of the "march to the West," Brazil's version of manifest destiny. But the US notion of manifest destiny had within it the idea of a future. Bolsonaro's Brazil simply declares: The Amazon is ours—with or without a future.

There are alternatives, and they have worked: intensifying production on cleared land, promoting agroforestry systems like açaí and cacao, developing deforestation-free supply chains, supporting indigenous holdings and other forest guardians instead of assassinating their leaders, and recognizing that the fires next time will be worse. And they certainly will be worse, because the other Amazon countries—Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela—are in states of dysfunction, internal conflict, or collapse, and barely able to govern their capitals due to political unrest. Even if there are decent laws and policies, there is little political will or capacity to enforce them.

The default option today is clearing for claiming, as living forests are turned into ashes and assets everywhere. This is how the Amazon card is played to compensate for the failed development practices, political and economic corruption, and extreme inequality that characterize all these states. The policies and collaborations between governments and civil society that kept forests standing in many parts of Amazonia have come to an end, at least for now. What remains, as the great Brazilian writer Euclides da Cunha said about the Amazon in the midst of an earlier, rubber-driven commodity boom, are "men schooled in cataclysm, and builders of ruins." ■

"Walking the city reveals the intimate urban tissues that keep megalopolises alive and functioning."

History on Foot: Walking Mexico City

MAURICIO TENORIO-TRILLO

Over the course of the twentieth century, Mexico City became a world enigma. It is seen as a monster that never should have existed, yet it exists, and it prospers as one of the world's most important and dynamic megalopolises. For a long time, it was an island of relative peace, compared with the wave of violence that had spread over rest of the country. Lately it has become a magnet for hipsters from around the globe. But it seems it cannot shed its reputation as a place of danger, an inferno of violence and lawlessness. It could hardly be otherwise for a city of more than twenty million people living in the midst of great wealth and profound inequality.

Somehow I take solace in loving and hating, in inhabiting and escaping, and in walking my city, in which, as the writer Carlos Monsiváis said, "*lo peor ya pasó*" (the worst has already occurred). But this worst is not the absolute worst. Walking the city reveals the intimate urban tissues that keep megalopolises alive and functioning.

Before facing the monster city on foot, this much has to be clear: First, megalopolises are neither a history of failure nor history's failure; they are a history of success through unintended consequences. Second, Mexico City is indeed frightening, especially because of its physical and cultural violence. Yet, although crime rates are rising, one still experiences a sense of relative peace. For, I am convinced, fear is to city walking as sin is to pleasure.

RETRACING STEPS

I no longer walk my Mexico City; I re-walk, retracing my steps on the streets I wandered as a child, as a teenager, as a middle-aged man. I leave my familiar neighborhood of Colonia Irrigación, crossing old and wannabe Polanco—the old working-class district of Colonia Pensil now is nearly part of Polanco, the closest thing that the city has had to a Jewish neighborhood. Carlos Slim, Mexico's wealthiest man, acquired the land and development rights to what was an industrial zone in the north of the city. The new US embassy will soon open its doors there, enclosed by Slim city, *très comme il faut*. I feel like shouting the defiant cry of the Spanish Civil War: *¡No pasarán!* (They will not pass).

I head for Paseo de la Reforma, Chapultepec, and Centro Histórico. My feet, with their animal habits, almost legislate their own course. Retracing my steps, their gentle touch on the sidewalk reminds me of the city's way of entering me, triggering the impulse to write—without knowing what about. I suppose this was and is the awakening of the instinctual feel for words that cities arouse, just as they awaken some to sex and others to idleness. I carry the city deep within; every step I take echoes footsteps I have taken before. To be sure, I no longer avoid cracks in the pavement, as I used to do as a child. But I carry in my mind the memory of jumping over them. What I am ruminating on as I go blends yesterday, today, and tomorrow, an amalgam already sketched out on the sidewalk. When my foot reunites with the pavement, I hear it calling: walk, write.

My feet carry me from the dense urban decay of Avenida Legaria to the elegant streets of Polanco. I cross fancy Campos Elíseos to the back of the Museum of Anthropology, then cross Paseo de la Reforma and walk into Chapultepec Park. I find a few old fallen trees, as if they were new victims of the many battles fought on and around this hill. These were the haunts of Emperor Maximilian and Empress Carlota, who failed in their dream of reviving Mexico City as an imperial capital in the nineteenth century. I walk the forest, with a

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castle looming over me—it has served as a military school, imperial residence, and presidential palace. It is early and Chapultepec is still empty, taciturn. Decades ago, a Neo-Mexican, the poet Jay Wright, wrote of experiencing this same aloofness here:

> These gardens circle up
> and lose you.
> You can hear the call
> of forbidden hunting
> going on under you.

I leave the forest. I traverse bridges, taxi stands, and minibus stops; people, food, shit. I dodge cars, fences, garbage . . . while my mind grazes in pastures of urban miasma. I walk with the stench of gasoline and excrement, in streets without sidewalks, among beggars and in the mud, but in my mind I am elsewhere, far from the surroundings of the Chapultepec Metro station. Mentally, I am in search of an archive, an old prison, over toward San Lázaro, in the streets of Colonia Albañiles. I conjure myself up there as a budding scholar, full of excitement at the prospect of taking notes among old papers—thrilled just to earn the right to sit at a table, with a disgusting coffee, among the cells and wards of the Archivo General de la Nación, which took over the Lecumberri prison built in the early twentieth century.

Something about my miserable city has seduced millions.

Those old wanderings guide me as my feet walk La Condesa, the axis of the new hipsters. When I step into Calle Mazatlán in La Condesa, with its beautiful Art Nouveau houses, yesterday's feet step across a sluice of sewage, and then I see that former version of myself, knowing what I will write in letters to a woman from another country. I will weave my way to the "I love you," and then I will walk from San Lázaro, crossing Colonia Albañiles, among the crowds in the shops and stalls, until I reach the Zócalo, the core of all Mexicos: Tenochtitlán (the ancient Aztec capital), the imperial center of New Spain, and today's Mexico. In my mind, I keep going, toward the beautiful Neo-Plateresque main Post Office, to mail the letters. I remember the streets, my path, the archive, but I no longer know what the letters said. Loving has not lasted as long as walking. But La Condesa imposes its presence. Should I take Reforma—still the immense city's main axis—or make my way through the old, proletarian, "dangerous" neighborhoods of Colonia Buenos Aires and Bucareli?

When one treads on the solid ground of the present, the past slips away on all sides. That is why walking is a more living present. In a few years, when I wander these streets again, I will feel that I have a firmer footing in this hipster Condesa, which I can only catch glimpses of now. In the meantime, in Calle Tamaulipas, I think of the laughter of my daughter as a child; I conjure her up with her ice-cream cone, here, in La Condesa.

When I reach Colonia Buenos Aires, the city no longer reminds me of my little girl or lost loves, but rather of the sum of present anguish, a world adrift, violent and proud. By the time I reach the old Bucareli Clock, a gift from the Chinese community to Mexico during the 1910 Centennial celebration, everything—myself, my reminiscences of my daughter, the clock—has become a monument to defeat, to melancholy. I walk. Now I am in the historic center of the city, after hours and hours, steps and more steps, and I have escaped nothing. I bear the weight of my city as much as that of my own obsessions.

Calle El Salvador is a Silicon Valley *à la mexicaine*, a monument to the informal economy, where all the world's technology is bought and sold, where any sort of encryption or password can be cracked. It is ugly, but it is life, and survival—a kind of repulsiveness so intimate that it is experienced neither as ugliness nor as beauty. There is nothing to be done but to keep on walking. One can ask no more of life.

I take a pause at the old Café La Habana, the hub of Mexican journalism in the twentieth century, at the corner of Bucareli and Morelos. It is an old cafe with high ceilings. In its huge mirrors I glimpse an unfamiliar scene: a skinny old man is writing at the bar. If the image were a postcard picture, it would show me and my relief. As the Italian poet Vicenzo Cardarelli wrote, there are "*Luoghi per me divenuti un sepolcro / A cui faccio la guardia*" (Places that have become a tomb to me / where I am on guard duty).

UNDERSIDES

There are days when the pain is such that the body asks to wander in ugliness, as a shock treatment. So I head for Circuito Interior, a freeway built during the 1970s to alleviate traffic in the growing megalopolis. I make my way to Circuito along Sotelo, at the edge of what was once the es-

tate of the Ávila Camacho family, powerful revolutionaries of the early twentieth century. The area was urbanized in the 1940s, built up with housing for the growing middle class of professionals and bureaucrats.

For a stretch it smells like shit, then like tire repair shops and fried food. There's almost no sidewalk to walk on and I fight for space with their majesties: cars, minibuses, and trucks. At the crossing with Avenida Legaria, I head for Tacuba, passing through the shadow of an overpass. My companions on the road are the city's street vendors. One hears so much fancy talk about the "arcades," the Parisian shopping passageways of the nineteenth century, but why does no one mention their modern version, the undersides of thousands of highway bridges in our contemporary cities? They are mysterious urban gatehouses. In Chicago, I have witnessed the undersides of the bridges fenced off, as in Guantánamo, so that no one camps there. Under a rail bridge in Hyde Park, a man has his living room, dining room, and kitchen; in the fall and spring, he greets passersby sympathetically. What does he do during the long winter?

Under this bridge at Avenida Legaria, fruit carts are stored; kids who live here huff their *monas* (rags soaked with paint thinner or glue). There is no aesthetic or moral way to make oneself the philosopher of these "arcades," their Walter Benjamin. To walk and keep silence is the watchword; any bourgeois suffering is of very little account before the megalopolis and its miseries.

I am captivated by the horror of Legaria. It begins at Sotelo with an old aristocratic cemetery, the Panteón Francés, and a little public park. Then comes a series of buildings, shops, stalls, and *taquerías*, each uglier than the last, as one approaches "*Tacubita la bella*," an indescribable Mexican Baghdad. I used to find *pulquerías* in Legaria, but the old taverns have been closing their doors—now there are hipster *pulquerías* in La Roma and La Condesa. The "short-stay hotels" are still here, as well as the roundabout with its little hill made of the rubble from the excavation of Metro stations. I pass by the IMSS (Mexican Institute of Social Insurance) clinic, where I went for my vaccinations as a child, and recall the stench of alcohol, syringes, and Pinol—the scent of the vanished Mexican welfare state, personified by soullessly efficient nurses, the holy matrons of *mestizaje*, the national myth of equality through racial mixture (a myth that is often disparaged for denying the existence of racism in Mexico, yet is nevertheless based in fact and maybe not so bad as far as such myths go). I suck in the smell out of *saudade*, and also to escape from the odors of gasoline, fried food, and cilantro.

The people on the street move without looking up at anything. The street is crowded with food: a bicycle with a basket full of tacos, a man selling cucumbers, and another offering *chicharrones*. I go on, fulfilling the unconscious command: "To escape yourself by absorbing ugliness, keep going this way, the worst is yet to come." Young soldiers from the nearby military base move among the street vendors and shops. Around the Cuatro Caminos Metro station, some of them cruise for fun or to make a little extra money, buying and selling sex. Suddenly, the cheap short-stay hotels abound: Tacuba is near.

Out of nowhere, a city of canvas rears up, a challenge for the walker. One has to get into the median strips in the middle of the road, dodging minibuses and cars, and cross under a malodorous bridge to leave Legaria behind and reach Avenida México-Tacuba. I have entered the city of canvas, the city of cardboard. Everything is sold here: tortas, shakes, tacos, CDs, DVDs, cell phones, stereos. An enormous speaker playing cumbias shakes the *nenepil* (cheeks, in Nahuatl) on the head of a roast pig. The canvas roofs vibrate. There is no discernible geometry, one's brain is lost in a labyrinth of medieval passages roofed in canvas, but it is clear that there are corridors. This is not a traditional market, or the bazaar of old Jerusalem. It is chaos; nonetheless, it guides you. Onward, let us cross the Baghdad of canvas.

Remnants of the Past

Suddenly there is a clearing, an exit from the labyrinth. I stop there, as though before history, at a huge and ancient stone wall. The canvas is tied to the wall; cables tap electricity from it. It is the wall surrounding the old parish church of San Gabriel Arcángel and its Franciscan convent, built in the sixteenth century, renovated in the seventeenth and eighteenth. I pass through a gate and make my way into an old garden. There is peace here—the canvas city respects the church.

Inside, I find a variety of altars: to Saint Francis, to the angel Gabriel of the Annunciation, to Jesus of Nazareth, to the Virgin of Guadalupe. It is cold and dark. The feeling is of another time, but it is alive, there are flowers, candles burning on the altars, people praying. I walk a few meters in that other time, in that other city; I echo other feet that

have fallen on these stones and marked them with their rhythm. I step outside, sit in the forecourt and smoke. I do not dare to read. I am afraid of losing awareness of my surroundings. I am overcome by a wave of my old baroque nature, and I do not want to leave. Behind me is the wall and the Baghdad of canvas; before me, the humanity created by the Conquest, God, and his architecture, which is the closest thing to my cerebral wiring, as much as the smell of tuberoses. But something drives me on, for everyone must escape from themselves. To live in oneself is not possible. I return to Avenida México-Tacuba.

The sidewalks on either side of the avenue are one long market. One either walks on them with great difficulty, bumping against stalls, canvas, posts, and cables, or takes to the street to dodge cars, trucks, and minibuses. It is odd: the first few times that I walked this way, as a teenager, I was afraid of the stray dogs, but now there aren't any left. Not in these streets. The dogs went into exile—they could not survive here.

As a teenager, I would stop to look at the colonial and turn-of-the-twentieth-century buildings. I remember enormous, moldering, and forgotten houses, mansions of Mexico's fin de siècle nouveaux riches. I used to know when Avenida México-Tacuba gave way to Ribera de San Cosme because of the gradual appearance of beautiful colonial structures in the old indigenous neighborhood of Santa María, which became a semi-fashionable area during the late nineteenth century. Now it is impossible to see those buildings. There is no end to the stalls. Even San Cosme has been taken over by sidewalk vendors. But the horrible buildings that mark each Metro station from Tacuba to Revolución stand out clearly—they look like functionalist schools designed by Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer in Brazil.

Fear is to city walking as sin is to pleasure.

When you allow your feet to legislate their own course, you gape at everything new that appears: from Tacuba to San Cosme there are now endless pharmacies, pawnshops, and payday lenders. Of course, every Mexican village is replete with pharmacies, as the national hypochondria demands—we are all seeking an injection to save us from rheumatism, fainting spells, and so-called *aires colados* (unhealthy winds). But there is something different about these pharmacies I am passing; they are not mom-and-pop shops, but major chains, and they have replaced the welfare state. They all boast of quick appointments at reasonable prices. The state has also given up its old monopoly on pawn loans, and now, as in the poor neighborhoods of Chicago, there are pawnshops everywhere, handing out fast loans at high interest rates.

Sometimes I wonder if I know these streets better from my readings than from my own steps. My memories of adolescence are now inseparable from histories of the streets and structures of a city that is not my own, but that I now carry in my feet, even when I don't mean to. I think of the great futures that I once imagined, while my memories bury me in melancholy. Still, as in Tacuba or San Cosme, things could be worse. I have no illusions: the best future would be to return to walk these streets or others, to put to rest the wretched pain that the future will bring. To be able to take another long walk, to experience it, is all one can ask for.

I reach Popotla, where *el árbol de la noche triste* stands, a trunk sadder than any night, however horrible it might have been. That old *ahuehuete* is the symbol the city has retained of Hernán Cortés's defeat on his first attempt, in 1520, to capture Tenochtitlán. According to legend, he cried there one night, *la noche triste*.

Avenida México-Tacuba improves just before you reach the place where the grand old movie theater Cine Cosmos stood; its surroundings have become a vibrant new Chinatown. San Cosme has preserved its lineage, which was never pretty, but it is somehow special to me: there is the local traditional market of my youth, and the Normal Superior building, a school for teachers built in the 1930s, which is in poor condition but still a good example of the best architecture of the Mexican welfare state. And then the beautiful Casa de los Mascarones, a building of the eighteenth century that originally belonged to the family of the Conde de Orizaba, and later became part of the Universidad Nacional. The façade is decorated to a fault, standing out as if it were an agonized hand that the old imperial city were raising to the surface, asking for help. Walking on, I pass another eighteenth-century building, the neoclassical Academia de San Carlos, which was an art school and is now a museum (when I pass it at mid-morning, prostitutes are standing around), and the little park nearby, now inhabited by homeless people who share huffing rags and forties of beer. By the time one gets close to La Alameda and

the Church of San Hipólito, head and feet have learned their lessons: self-seriousness is a bad habit, one's own concerns are worth nothing.

The horror of the city is as closely associated with clarity of thought as it is with hopelessness. Throughout the walk, before I sit in an Arab coffee shop in Calle Donceles, I have ached because of memories of friends, family, lost women. For years, Avenida México-Tacuba-San Cosme has been soiled by my memories, but it never stops for them, it pushes me to keep going. Its hopeless ugliness serves well as a home for nostalgia, for solace. Preoccupations gain perspective, painless profundity, because they have been mixed with the surprises of the road, with its ugliness and misery, and also with its beauty and redemption. Life goes on.

Hipster ghosts

My feet go their own way, returning as if by inertia to the center of Coyoacán, once a nearby town, long since absorbed by the megalopolis. *¡Ay!* The patchouli is all gone, gone to La Condesa. The center still has the flavor of that era when the old Coyoacán of Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, and Leon Trotsky became the Greenwich Village of late twentieth-century Mexico City. Now, a bit like Detroit, nature has eaten the ruins of what Coyoacán once was. The old bookstore El Parnaso, the hub for the pretentious intellectuals of the time, has closed; what's left of it recalls the ruins of Teotihuacán.

Now there is no place to see and be seen, to ply the trade of the Coyoacán intellectual. For decades, Coyoacán synthesized an intellectual argot that was projected to the country as the voice of Mexico. That voice has been replaced with the brutal slang of the street vendors who sell trendy bracelets, pirated DVDs, and loose cigarettes. The hipsters are gone. There are a few confused souls who still have not heard that the patchouli has migrated to La Condesa. They sit at cafe tables with their anachronistic, affected beards, drinking fancy mezcal. There are also the two or three gringos who bought their dated guidebooks at secondhand bookstores in Berkeley. But no one told them: the patchouli has gone to La Condesa.

Still, Coyoacán is not Detroit, after all: it is being eaten by nature, but the nature of Mexico City, *la naturaleza chilanga,* which is to say all-encompassing *naquiza* (plebeian vulgarity, tackiness). Coyoacán, *mon amour,* you are going the way of Tacuba. It is nothing to cry over, but certainly one must keep score: the patchouli has gone to La Condesa. *Naquiza* knows no bounds, the megalopolis belongs to it, and it eats everything up—no hipster neighborhood can last. And yet, it is *naquiza* that makes hipsterism possible. It also makes the city livable. Let hipsters keep founding and refounding their Jerusalem Delivered; let the monster megalopolis be our home.

Earthquake generations

To be empowered means to gain something that is not necessarily desirable. In Mexico City, after the earthquakes of 1985 and 2017, it was not power that my city and its inhabitants were lacking. We yearned for *macicez* (solidity), to be assured of escaping from destruction once again. One had to *amacizarse*—to reinforce oneself, to make oneself solid. *Macicez* in streets, bridges, structures; faith in what was static, irremovable. It would be enough for us if walls and ceilings never came crashing down again. In the days after the tremors, everything had to be reinforced, solidified, including our feeble belief in the solidity of our immense monster. Skill at reinforcing things, and at mistrusting—those were the gifts won by the earthquake generations.

As a member of the generation of 1985, I hold that our species is incapable of empathy in the abstract. Shamefully, it only responds to shared hatred, terror, tragedy, and pain. Nor is our species very trustworthy when it comes to the challenge of living together peaceably. But we are excellent at dying as equals. For more than three decades, I have felt a tremor within when I read of tsunamis in Indonesia or Japan, of earthquakes in Oaxaca, Chiapas, or Chile, of hurricanes in Puerto Rico or Houston. For those who felt Mexico City in free fall, every movement of the earth echoes the one that we carry within us. Reinforced, solidified, but never the same—that is how I was left on September 19, 1985, and again on the same day in 2017.

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No sooner does the giant crush them than armies of Lilliputians rise up to treat her wounds. *¡Amacícense!* "Reinforce yourselves, solidify yourselves," their looks shout to each other. She allows herself to be treated, as if begging forgiveness.

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September 19, 1985. I am at the corner of Orizaba and San Luis Potosí, Colonia Roma, on a formless and compact mass of broken concrete and shriveled steel, embodying my own "nobodyness" like any twenty-year-old. I cannot believe myself

to be the subject of the verbs of being, *estar* or *ser*, much less of the same in the future tense. I must dig into the wreckage, stone by stone, to find Luis. I know that he and his family are buried here. We dig and dig, hoping to find them alive. But after a week, I have left my childhood friend behind me. He represented that unique form of human empathy, a fortress for two sickly boys, a friendship that would never see the face of death or betrayal.

I remember being in La Roma, walking, digging, and mourning the death of Luis, and thousands more. I left La Roma, headed for Eje Cuauhtémoc to help my father, an oncologist, move his patients from the ruins of the Centro Médico Nacional—my father's raison d'être—to hospitals on the solid ground of the south of the city. The megalopolis swallowed Luis and my father's hospital, as it engulfed the decrepit and dated city that we, the generation of 1985, would leave behind us, buried.

The loss was bittersweet. We took pleasure in burying the Mexico City of our parents' generation, but we also buried our own friends. This feeling of being orphaned brings sadness, fear, and excitement. Each of us also left our youth buried there, lost in the smells of butane and death, misdirected by the sounds of sirens, screams, terror, rage. Life has reinforced us, solidified us, for hours, days, decades, for as long as the lull between one echo of the earthquake and the next might last. *Amacizarse*, to reinforce, to solidify ourselves—it has been an unforgettable experience of collective learning.

To be a chilango *is to be a survivor.*

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September 19, 2017. I am teaching in the Colegio de México as a visiting professor. And then once again, just as on September 19, 1985, the solid Colegio building shakes and creaks. All of a sudden, the professor and his lesson have become irrelevant. I head for the stairs, and as soon as I take my first step I am again the sickly boy of more than three decades earlier, besieged by terror as hard as volcanic rock, as the lava begins to flow anew. In just seconds, everything ceases to be what it is, or rather is reduced to essences, and in essence we are no more than flesh willing to live or die. I pause before the staircase, letting the panicky crowd move past me—not out of courtesy, but defeat. I am prepared for what may come next. But I manage to get out. The building is intact. My mind is at the corner of Orizaba and San Luis Potosí, back in 1985, as I wait for a bus to the Chapultepec Metro. I want to flee from here and from myself. After almost two hours in the bus, we have hardly moved.

As in 1985, September 19, 2017, brings me new earthquake friends. A professor, a poet, and I get off the bus and walk along Avenida Revolución. To reinforce ourselves, to solidify ourselves, we speak of crime in Mexico, of poetry. Avenida Revolución has become the artery of a wounded but living creature, whose cells, impeded by the traffic, are rushing to the sidewalks to walk, to keep the monster alive. We find the Barranca del Muerto Metro station open; we go down the steps, a train eventually comes, I get off at Polanco. Then I walk farther, toward Defensa Nacional, on my way home.

For decades I have borne the weight of 1985 as I walk, whether in Polanco or anywhere else. Because of that burden, the earthquake of 2017 did not easily enter my memory, but reenacted it. Every building, in any city, is a question mark: why trust in firmness? *¡Amacícense!* Reinforce yourselves!

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I talk to myself with my feet, I write and sing with my feet, I flee myself and stay within myself through my feet. But for my generation, to walk the city after an earthquake is to converse with the city in tones of postcoital lucidity and resignation. How is it possible that another September 19th, 32 years later, has brought me back to my essence? I walk and walk, once again reduced to the terror of living and being this "I" that I was before, which I have never stopped being. I can reinforce myself (*amacizarme*) in Chicago or in Barcelona, but what of my sister who now hates the house where she was happy for so long? Or those who cannot return to their homes? Or the many who died?

Amacizarse, to reinforce and rebuild oneself. Structures can be reinforced; what is more difficult is reinforcing the collective soul of this monster of mine. You young people who took to the streets in 2017, welcome to the club! The club of those whose faith, souls, and feet are made of Play-Doh, the club in which *amacizsarse* is to behave as if one has forgotten, if only for a short while, that the world is fragile. In our club, there is a distinct, if contained, feeling of having been born into a world in which both society and the laws of physics are unfair, unequal, and flimsy. There is something

strictly physical, in no way ethereal or spiritual, that has made us ask ourselves time and again: Is it possible that once upon a time, the streets, houses, buildings, and our lives, our souls and beliefs, were not flimsy? How does one solidify or reinforce memories without causing oneself harm?

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The revolting monster of the Valley of Anáhuac is not to be trusted; it never has been. Not in the seventeenth century, nor in the twentieth, not today, and not tomorrow. But something about my miserable city has seduced millions. Memories of September 19, 2017, will certainly drive many away, as did September 19, 1985. Just as many new *chilangos* will replace them. As the rock band El Tri put it in a 1992 song, "*chilango, chilango incomprendido / chilango, defequense por necesidad…*" ("*chilango*, *chilango*, misunderstood / *chilango*, inhabitant of the city out of necessity"—though *defequense* also alludes to defecation).

Eventually La Condesa and La Roma will forget that they were the Jerusalem of hipsterdom, for a few years at least. The generation of the earthquake saw the Plaza Río de Janeiro, in La Roma, converted into Hamburg in 1945, and Calle Amsterdam, in La Condesa, become Guernica in 1937. In 1985 or 1986, it would have been impossible to imagine what La Condesa and La Roma were to become over the course of the next three decades. What happened? I don't know. What will those neighborhoods be in the future? I don't know. Style and urban speculation are neither sentimental nor rational. After two 19ths, two different Septembers, the only sentimental and rational thing to do would be to leave the place behind. But here we are still.

My heart ached for La Condesa and La Roma, I mourned their missing and their homeless, but life won out in the end, despite everything. And the city did, too, because the city is much more than La Condesa and La Roma. The monster is immense, and it never fell, nor will it fall. I reinforce myself by thinking that to be a *chilango* is to be a survivor . . . "*chilango, chilango incomprendido / chilango, defequense por necesidad . . .*" City of mine: *Amacízate, y siénteme como te siento yo.* Reinforce yourself, and feel my presence as I feel yours. ■

Time for an Alternative Politics of Migration

ALEXANDRA DÉLANO ALONSO

In 2019, 70,302 people from Central America, Cuba, Venezuela, and other countries requested asylum in Mexico, more than double the number of requests in 2018 and an increase of more than 5,000 percent compared with the 1,296 requests received by Mexico's Commission for Refugees in 2013. On the US side of the border, according to the Department of Homeland Security, defensive asylum applications to prevent deportation increased from 47,137 in 2014 to 159,473 in 2018, with the largest numbers filed by citizens of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador (78,762) and Mexico (24,412).

This shift in the region toward forced migration instead of the well-established pattern of mostly economic, circular migration has occurred as a result of changing economic, political, and climate conditions, as well as changes in the US and Mexican migration regimes. But the root causes are not new: poverty, inequality, corruption, and the inability of governments in Mexico and Central America to provide minimal guarantees of safety and well-being for a majority of their populations. Policies such as Mexico's war on drug cartels and El Salvador's "tough hand" approach to gangs have led to pervasive insecurity and violence. Rising global temperatures have also affected the livelihoods of many people in Honduras and El Salvador who depended on harvests that are no longer viable due to drought and crop disease.

The widespread poverty, exclusion, and violence that push people to move in search of safety and the opportunity to live and work with dignity, along with the widespread backlash against their arrival, make it clear that existing frameworks have failed to effectively address the causes and effects of migration. There is a need for alternative approaches, principles, and actions—some of which are already being articulated and practiced by grassroots organizations throughout the Central America–US corridor.

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SURVIVAL ROUTES

The historical roots of the movement of people across the region are deep. In recent decades, they include US military interventions in the Central American civil wars of the 1980s, which drove many to flee north. The US deportation apparatus developed in the 1990s led to the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Central American youth, charged with felonies or minor offenses that now constituted deportable crimes. Migrants' experiences of discrimination and exclusion in the United States—due in part to the absence of integration policies—formed the conditions for their involvement in gangs. Deported gang members found themselves back in countries where civil wars, extractive industries, and foreign intervention had left weak political, economic, and judicial systems, and limited opportunities.

Meanwhile, temporary worker programs and other visa and regularization programs throughout the twentieth century facilitated strong ties among families and communities who built transnational connections and circular migration routes across Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Central America. But moving through the region to balance economic needs and family ties became increasingly challenging as a result of US border-enforcement policies since the mid-1990s—and, more recently, the stringent policies put in place by Mexico in the past five years.

Many of today's migrants were deported from the United States and are seeking to reunite with family members they left there. Others who returned to their home countries can no longer provide for families that depended on their remittances for decades. Although the governments of El Salvador and Mexico celebrate return migrants as heroes, they offer limited paths for economic opportunity and reintegration, whereas the threat of criminal organizations looms large.

The only alternative is to flee again, as Salvadoran journalist Oscar Martínez puts it. This is not a choice. It is a strategy of survival. The causes of migration are multiple and blurred because they often include different forms of violence (threats

from gangs and drug cartels, domestic and sexual abuse, and gender discrimination), the pull of family ties, and the search for economic opportunities that offer a way out of poverty and hunger.

THE MAKING OF A 'CRISIS'

The rise in migration flows from Central America, the Caribbean, Venezuela, and other countries through Mexico in the past five years has drawn attention not just because of the numbers but also due to the characteristics of the migrants—particularly the large number of unaccompanied minors. Migrants have also developed new strategies, including traveling in families or larger groups, and filing more asylum petitions.

In the last months of 2018 and the beginning of 2019, Donald Trump ratcheted up his politicization of a border "crisis" and the supposed threat of criminals entering the United States through the Mexican border. He was responding to media coverage of groups of thousands of people (the largest of them was estimated at 10,000) walking in "caravans" from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala through Mexico en route to the United States. Trump seized on this to justify his calls for emergency measures to control the border, to impose more restrictions on asylum, and to pressure Mexico to implement stricter controls on its southern and northern borders—threatening to impose tariffs or cancel the recently renegotiated North American Free Trade Agreement unless it complied.

Mexico has contributed to making migration more dangerous.

The portrayal of the "caravans" as an unprecedented "crisis" deflects responsibility for the policies that have created the conditions for such migration. It seeks to justify a continuation of the emphasis on deterrence that has been the default approach of both the US and Mexican governments for years, regardless of the parties in power. In the absence of safe and regular channels for migration, people trying to return to the United States after being deported, or migrating for the first time for reasons of survival, know that the only way to minimize the risks of the journey, avoid family separation, and improve their chances of making it past the US border is to go through the asylum system, as families or as a group.

But under the Trump administration, the US asylum system has become more difficult to access, with stricter eligibility standards, increased detention periods in subpar conditions, family separation, and restricted opportunities to make a case in immigration courts. The costs and dangers of an attempt to reach the United States are higher—but still not enough to deter those who measure the odds against the alternative of risking their families' lives by staying home.

Mexico has contributed to making migration more dangerous with its Programa Frontera Sur, established in 2014 to control transit migration through the country, partly in response to pressure from the Obama administration. The program purported to protect migrants' rights through improvements in institutional infrastructure, regional collaboration and resource sharing with neighboring countries, and interagency coordination. But the reality was a dramatic expansion of security controls, checkpoints, border patrols, detentions—and more deportations than the United States has carried out since 2015.

This strategy increased the risks and violence along migration routes, compounded by rampant corruption within the Mexican National Institute for Migration and the police, and the long-standing presence of smugglers and drug cartels along migrant corridors. There has been a dramatic surge in crimes against migrants: kidnappings, extortion, sexual abuse, human trafficking, murders, and disappearances. Such perils have been known for years, drawing fresh attention after a 2010 massacre of 72 migrants in San Fernando, in the state of Tamaulipas near the Texas border. But they have become more visible as the media and civil society organizations in Mexico and Central America, including mothers of the disappeared, have attempted to hold the government accountable.

SHORT-LIVED HOPES

Andrés Manuel López Obrador's victory in the July 2018 Mexican presidential election was a clear response by voters to the spread of violence and insecurity throughout the country. It reflected the majority's disappointment with a series of governments that had maintained a status quo disproportionately benefiting elites. The former Mexico City mayor, a left-wing populist, inspired voters with his promises to end corruption and impunity, to offer an alternative to the use of military force against drug cartels, and to address the structural causes of poverty and inequality.

Although migration was not a priority in his campaign platform—his agenda on this key issue was surprisingly limited, considering the heightened anti-immigrant and anti-Mexican rhetoric in the United States—López Obrador emphasized that focusing on economic development would reduce the pressures for emigration. In his first speech as president-elect, he promised, "Whoever decides to emigrate will do so as a choice and not out of necessity."

As Trump continued to push for a border wall, López Obrador argued that Mexico's best foreign policy move would be to focus on regional collaboration with neighbors south of its border. Olga Sánchez Cordero, his appointee for interior minister, promised that Mexico would be a country of open doors, honoring its tradition of welcoming exiles from Latin American dictatorships as well as refugees from Central America's civil wars during the 1980s. The selection of Tonatiuh Guillén, a renowned scholar, as director of the national migration agency was received as another positive signal of a holistic agenda centered on human rights, inclusion, and regional cooperation instead of control and security.

Guillén's resignation after six months in office was an ominous sign of the gap between those principles and the reality of the new government's enforcement actions. The combination of the furor over the migrant "caravans" and Trump's demands soon led to a complete reversal of López Obrador's promises, leaving migrants and the communities in which they arrive in a more precarious and dangerous situation than ever before.

A STRATEGY OF CONTROL

Mexico's initial response to the "caravans" was to issue humanitarian visas allowing free, regularized movement through the country; promise jobs for everyone, migrants and Mexicans alike; and propose a long-term regional development plan that would reduce the pressures of emigration. The decision to allow the groups of migrants to pass through Mexico was criticized by the Trump administration as a weak policy that would create incentives for more "caravans" to come. It also drew a backlash from anti-immigrant groups in Mexico with slogans such as "Make Tijuana Great Again," echoing the US rhetoric of criminalization and scapegoating.

López Obrador's discourse of solidarity and brotherhood soon fizzled out as the pressure from the Trump administration increased with a demand for a "safe third country" agreement that would force asylum seekers to request asylum in Mexico instead of the United States. Although Mexico pushed back, it agreed (under a threat of trade tariffs) to the Migrant Protection Protocols, commonly referred to as Remain in Mexico, which allows US authorities to send asylum seekers back to Mexico to await a court date.

To date, more than 58,000 asylum seekers (including 13,000 children) have been returned to Mexico under this agreement, and are living in precarious conditions in border towns where the threat of drug-related violence is high. They have no clarity about the length of their waiting period (estimated at up to two years) and limited access to lawyers. Since Mexico lacks resources to provide shelters or other support for asylum seekers, many live in makeshift camps with no humanitarian assistance. Confronted with these unsanitary and unsafe conditions, some families have decided to send their children on their own across the US border, or have given up on their cases.

Along the southern border, the Mexican government has deployed the recently created National Guard, a police force with no training for handling migration, to control the northward flows of people. Thousands of migrants are being held in crowded, unsanitary detention centers or stranded in shelters and informal camps in the border state of Chiapas, one of the poorest in the country. With no hope in the backlogged and abysmally underfunded Mexican asylum system, their only certainty is that returning to their places of origin is not an option. Many have died in attempts to find alternative routes north, and others have resorted to precarious labor, including low-wage jobs on coffee plantations or sex work.

While publicly rejecting Trump's demand that Mexico pay for a border wall, López Obrador has continued and even increased his predecessor Enrique Peña Nieto's concentration of resources on preventing people from moving north. Instead of addressing the structural causes of emigration, Mexico has fallen into the same logic of enforcement that has proved deadly and ineffective in the United States and other parts of the world: attempting to create deterrence by increasing the risks of migration.

Meanwhile, the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras have set aside the goals of regional cooperation and development. Under US pressure, all three signed "safe third country" agreements in exchange for various inducements:

the possibility of extending temporary worker programs for Guatemala and temporary protected status for Salvadorans, as well as a resumption of foreign aid that had been halted earlier in the year. This is a policy likely to result in even more dangerous conditions than those now faced by asylum seekers in Mexico.

OTHER APPROACHES

Since the responses to migration by governments in the region have been not only insufficient but also harmful, grassroots organizations have filled the gap and mobilized resources to create new models of support for migrants and refugees, as well as the communities they settle in. Innovative and transformative examples include a network of migrant shelters across Central America and Mexico, deportee/returnee organizations in Mexico, and sanctuary coalitions in the United States.

Civil society groups are working to build coalitions of local communities and organizations across borders, and advocating for approaches that demonstrate the connections between the hardships faced by migrants and other forms of discrimination and exclusion based on gender, race, or indigeneity. This work goes beyond urgent responses to "migrant crises." These groups are concerned with broader questions of equality and justice, recognizing that the conditions that push migrants to leave their homes in El Salvador or Haiti are often also present in the communities where they arrive, and not only in Mexico. Migrants also encounter some of these structural forms of discrimination and exclusion in the United States.

The alternative politics of migration that civil society groups are pushing for is not just about long-overdue changes in laws, policies, and institutions. They seek to address the conditions of poverty, inequality, and violence that affect both migrants and their host communities. As anti-immigrant sentiment begins to emerge more openly in Mexico, the government should return its focus to creating economic opportunity and guaranteeing the right to migrate. Investing in infrastructure to help migrants gain access to work—and also to housing, education, health care, and mental health services—can benefit both migrants and Mexicans.

Some of these initiatives have been focused on the *maquiladora* sector—the factories in Mexican border cities, where there is labor scarcity and growing interest in incorporating migrants into the local workforce, but also a history of unsafe and exploitative labor conditions. Increasing migration has drawn renewed attention to issues such as informal employment, low wages, and barriers to access to public health and education. Exploitation, discrimination, and inadequate infrastructure affect migrants and locals alike.

On the US side, the August 2019 massacre of 22 people at a Walmart store in El Paso, Texas, laid bare the consequences of the anti-Mexican, anti-Latino rhetoric ascendant in the past few years. But Trump's xenophobic outbursts and policies have forced activists, lawyers, and governments to react with urgent countermeasures, leaving little time and few resources for pursuing longer-term strategies of inclusion, equity, and justice—or policies that address the concerns of both migrants and the communities in which they settle.

Central America and Mexico need to strengthen their justice systems to reduce the endemic crime that drives migration. There is also a need for sustainable development programs, which should be led by local communities to avoid repeating the problems of previous initiatives that benefited corporate interests at the expense of community and environmental priorities.

Immigration reform proposals should reflect a regional perspective. They could include providing temporary work and humanitarian visas, regularizing undocumented migration and expanding channels for legal migration, preventing family separation, and sharing resources to support organizations and legal aid groups that offer information, assistance, and shelter to migrants. Redirecting resources from detention, deportation, and border control to such measures would reduce the pressure on borders and, most importantly, create safer and more humane conditions.

The desire for an alternative migration framework grounded in principles of dignity and justice has been expressed by the Mexicans who voted for a political transformation, by the individuals, families, and groups migrating in search of a better life, and by the volunteers who offer shelter, food, and community to migrants moving through Central America, Mexico, the United States, and Canada. Their vision of solidarity and mutuality sees in migration an opportunity to address the conditions of inequality and exclusion within economic and political systems that affect us all. The hope for an alternative can only come from the efforts of those who believe that a different system is necessary and possible, those who are already building it, and those who are willing to join them. ■

Jamaica's Paradoxes

BRIAN MEEKS

In his new book, *The Confounding Island*, the eminent sociologist Orlando Patterson returns, following many intellectual detours, to considering the present and possible futures of his homeland. Patterson's preoccupation, one commonly found in Jamaican discourse and Caribbean studies generally, is what he refers to as the "Jamaican Paradox." What accounts, he asks, for the country's inordinately large international profile, its globally recognized excellence in sports and popular culture, and an accompanying name recognition far beyond its minuscule size? And why, at the same time, does the island seem caught in a developmental trap, with four decades of economic stagnation and a daunting social sclerosis glaringly evident in a murder rate that regularly registers among the highest in the world? Patterson's explanations are complex and difficult to summarize. Suffice it to say that while he eschews simple answers, he places significant weight on institutional solutions.

The Confounding Island: Jamaica and the Postcolonial Predicament
by Orlando Patterson
Harvard University Press, 2019

In the first chapter's title, Patterson poses another typical question: "Why has Jamaica Trailed Barbados on the Path to Sustained Growth?" Both Barbados and Jamaica are former British West Indian colonies with predominantly African-descended populations and outwardly similar histories. Yet Barbados, by far the smaller of the two, has outpaced Jamaica on all criteria for economic growth, development, and social well-being. Patterson counters the prevalent argument that "good policies" explain Barbados's success. He suggests that the peculiarities of its history led to the development of institutions that allowed an emergent class of black state builders not only to absorb policymaking techniques from the British, but also to learn how to effectively implement them. This did not happen to the same extent in Jamaica, where cultural and institutional learning followed a different path, leading to the emergence of state builders with limited capacity to make policy work.

This institutional turn by Patterson, building on perspectives advanced by the economist Daron Acemoglu and others, delivers many insights. I am concerned, however, that by emphasizing institutional acuity, he misses other essential distinctions between the two countries. In Barbados, for instance, the white planters settled and remained after slavery ended, unlike in Jamaica, where absentee ownership—always a main feature of its slave plantation system—only increased in the decades following emancipation.

This tendency for the owners of capital to hedge their bets was thus embedded in Jamaica's social DNA. That might help explain why, at the first hint of radicalism on the part of Prime Minister Michael Manley's democratic socialist government in the 1970s, local capital decamped—and has not truly recommitted to the island since then. While it is true that Barbados never experienced a radical moment comparable to the Jamaican 1970s, the long history of compromise and accommodation between white Barbadian capital and various black postcolonial governments has undergirded Barbados's relative economic stability by retaining significant wealth on the island. Patterson doesn't say much to counter this argument; his foregrounding of institutional capacity effectively ignores it. (Another question is whether Barbados can count as a success story any longer, in light of its own recent experiences with budgetary overreach and fiscal crisis.)

In his second chapter, Patterson addresses the agonizingly stubborn persistence of a culture of violence in contemporary Jamaica. Using transitional state theory and sweeping comparisons drawn from international development data, he concludes that Jamaica is stalled on both the curve to full democracy and the curve to "self-sustained" economic growth. This has been compounded, he says, by "overurbanization," very low levels

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of employment, particularly among youth, and what he describes as pervasive miseducation that leaves many with sufficient schooling to see and articulate a better life, but insufficiently skilled to change their conditions. I find this chapter less convincing, both in its reliance on comparative global statistics, which elides a discussion of local causation, and in its underlying and far too sanguine assumptions about the actual democratic content of Jamaican democracy. Patterson pays too little attention to recent Jamaican history—particularly how, in the first postcolonial decades, politicians encouraged the arming of partisan factions and the institutionalization of so-called garrison communities.

His third chapter, "Were Female Workers Preferred in Jamaica's Early Development?" is more compelling. Retracing the brutality of slavery and the distorted version of capitalism that subsequently emerged, he concludes that the notion that the female population was disciplined and incorporated into the workforce, while men were marginalized and thus excluded from disciplinary regimes, is a nonissue. The system was equally brutal to both, but women still suffered, particularly through gender bias in pay and sexual violence in the workplace. I agree with Patterson's conclusions, though I am uncertain as to how this chapter blends with and builds on the book's earlier chapters.

Top performers

The following three chapters are, unsurprisingly, the most entertaining. Patterson brings his sociological lens to bear on two instances of outstanding Jamaican international success—in the spheres of athletics, particularly sprinting, and popular music, notably reggae. He also explores the specific historical forces that led to a riot in 1968 at a famous cricket match featuring the West Indies and England.

These three chapters show Patterson at his best, as he explores the deep institutional roots, cultural traditions, and reinforcing effects of cumulative success that brought Jamaica, over many decades, to the highest levels of sports and popular music, garnering huge global recognition. He explains how generations of Jamaican musicians have used the institutions and structures of globalization to absorb, while subtly modifying, various genres such as blues, calypso, and jazz in order to invent entirely new forms like ska, rocksteady, reggae, and dancehall. These new forms, in turn, through secondary migration, have helped to give birth to further global hybrid genres, most notably hip-hop.

Patterson offers a bracing case study of the impact of cross-cultural fertilization and skillful interweaving of the global with the local, or "glocalization," in the past half-century. He persuasively proposes that if the lessons derived from these experiences—particularly the sheer self-confidence and creativity that rocketed Jamaican music to the top, or made the sprinter Usain Bolt a global star—were deployed in other avenues of national endeavor, this might jump-start the country out of its long economic stagnation.

Lifetime engagement

In a later chapter, Patterson revisits his own role as an adviser to Manley in the 1970s to describe in a very concrete and often heartbreaking way their failed attempt to introduce and implement basic welfare policies for the poor. By examining his experiences as the government official charged with not only designing these policies, but also guiding their implementation, he gives substance to his central proposal that the ability to implement policy was often inadequate or missing in Jamaican institutional and social development. The book's final chapter is also about Manley—an interesting if somewhat nostalgic reflection on the personality, philosophy, and life of this leader of the 1970s social-democratic movement for popular empowerment.

The Confounding Island is a worthwhile read. Patterson's lifetime engagement with Jamaica and its difficult postcolonial passage deserves careful analysis, and his focus on institutional weaknesses is clearly one important avenue of explanation that demands further consideration. However, it is pursued at the expense of others that equally require attention.

How much weight, for instance, should be given to the sheer power and obstinacy of Jamaica's dominant elites, who, working with the United States, brought the Manley regime to heel in the years leading up the bloody election of 1980? What effect did the defeat of Manley's People's National Party have in undermining the very sense of popular self-confidence that Patterson recognizes as a key element in any successful project of national development? How much emphasis must be given to the role of the international financial institutions that insisted on ruthless, ideologically driven austerity policies from 1977 to the present,

ravaging the poor and leading to an unprecedented emigration of skilled Jamaicans from the working and middle classes? What about the politics of partisan clientelism, which, pioneered by the right but ultimately indulged in by both major political parties, laid the foundation for deep divisions, tribalism, and urban warfare?

These questions suggest my own view: deep structural inequalities in Jamaica are reflected in the political system and routinely sideline the majority from participating in any meaningful form. This exclusion has been exacerbated in the neoliberal era by the effective gutting of the last vestiges of a political sovereignty that had only begun to consolidate in the 1970s. Attempts to reset Jamaican development by reforming institutional, managerial practices will likely prove unsuccessful without also addressing the overarching problems of entrenched inequality, social marginalization, and limited democratic engagement. What's needed is the kind of political will that can both advance reforms to improve the situation of the majority, and work beyond the confines of the nation to build transnational coalitions able to confront the inequities created by concentrations of global financial and economic power. ■

December 2019

INTERNATIONAL

Climate Change

Dec. 13—The annual UN climate meeting, held this time in Madrid, ends in disappointment after the US and other major carbon emitters—including Australia, Brazil, China, and India—thwart proposals for increasing countries' nonbinding commitments to reduce emissions under the 2015 Paris Agreement. The US, which is withdrawing from the agreement, also blocks progress on measures to compensate poorer countries for loss and damage from climate change.

Middle East

Dec. 29—The US military launches airstrikes against 5 facilities in Syria and Iraq linked to Iranian-backed militia Kataib Hezbollah, escalating tensions between the US and Iran. US officials say the attack is a response to a Dec. 27 rocket attack by the group on a base in Iraq, in which a US contractor was killed.

Trade

Dec. 19—The US House of Representatives approves the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, a renegotiated version of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The vote clears the way for the measure to be passed by the Senate and signed into law by President Donald Trump. US labor unions have endorsed the deal as having stronger labor and environmental protections than its predecessor.

AFGHANISTAN

Dec. 22—Election officials release preliminary results of September's presidential election: incumbent Ashraf Ghani has 50.6% of the vote. His main challenger, Abdullah Abdullah, has 39.5% but refuses to concede, alleging fraud. Abdullah served as the government's chief executive under a power-sharing deal after disputing the 2014 election result.

ALGERIA

Dec. 13—Former Prime Minister Abdelmadjid Tebboune is declared the winner of a Dec. 12 presidential election with 58% of the vote. Turnout is just 41%, according to official results. Many of the protesters who forced the resignation of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika in April boycotted the election as a sham designed to install Tebboune, the military's preferred candidate; he and the other candidates all had links to the regime.

AUSTRALIA

Dec. 22—Prime Minister Scott Morrison apologizes for vacationing in Hawaii while bushfires unprecedented in scope and severity spread across the country. Drought and record-breaking heat have exacerbated the fires, and 2 volunteer firefighters were killed Dec. 19. Morrison, an outspoken supporter of the coal industry, has opposed measures to address climate change.

BOLIVIA

Dec. 12—Former President Evo Morales arrives in Argentina, which has granted him asylum. He resigned in November and initially sought refuge in Mexico, after mass protests following a disputed election prompted the military to call on him to step down.

ETHIOPIA

Dec. 10—Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed accepts the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway, for steps he has taken to end a long-running border dispute with neighboring Eritrea.

INDIA

Dec. 11—The upper house of Parliament gives final approval to a bill that will give citizenship to refugees from neighboring countries who belong to persecuted religious minorities, but excludes Muslims. The measure sparks nationwide protests and clashes with police, as opponents call it a threat to India's heritage as a secular democracy. More than 20 are killed and 100s arrested.

ISRAEL

Dec. 11—Leaders of the 2 largest parties, Likud and Blue and White, fail to reach a power-sharing agreement after each party was unable to form its own ruling coalition following a September election. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was indicted in November on corruption charges, is to head a caretaker government until a March election, the 3rd in a year.

NIGER

Dec. 10—A group affiliated with the Islamic State kills 71 soldiers in an attack on a military base near the border with Mali. It is the latest in a series of ambushes by jihadist forces in the Sahel, despite the presence of 4,500 French soldiers in the region.

SAUDI ARABIA

Dec. 23—Prosecutors announce that 5 men have been sentenced to death for their roles in the October 2018 murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. But senior officials implicated in the killing are spared, including a top adviser to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Western intelligence agencies reportedly determined that the crown prince ordered the killing.

SOUTH AFRICA

Dec. 13—President Cyril Ramaphosa convenes an emergency meeting in response to planned electricity cuts that have persisted for more than a week in order to avoid a collapse of the power grid after heavy rains caused widespread flooding. Eskom, the public utility that supplies more than 90% of the nation's power, has been crippled by poorly maintained coal-fired power plants, a massive debt burden, and corruption.

UKRAINE

Dec. 9—At a peace conference in Paris, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky meets for the 1st time with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, who backs separatist militias in a stalemated war in eastern Ukraine that has left more than 13,000 dead. The 2 leaders agree to exchange prisoners of war and pledge to honor a 2015 cease-fire that has been repeatedly violated.

UNITED KINGDOM

Dec. 12—In a general election, the Conservative Party wins a decisive majority of 365 of the 650 seats in the House of Commons, enabling Prime Minister Boris Johnson to proceed with his plan to withdraw the nation from the European Union, more than 3 years after voters narrowly supported exiting the EU in a referendum.

UNITED STATES

Dec. 18—The House of Representatives votes to impeach Trump for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress in connection with his efforts to pressure Ukraine to open a corruption probe into former Vice President Joe Biden, a potential challenger in the 2020 presidential election. A trial in the Senate will determine whether to remove Trump from office. ■