POLITICAL REFLECTION MAGAZINE
e-ISSN: 2042-888X
October
November
December 2020
Vol. VI
No. IV
Issue 25

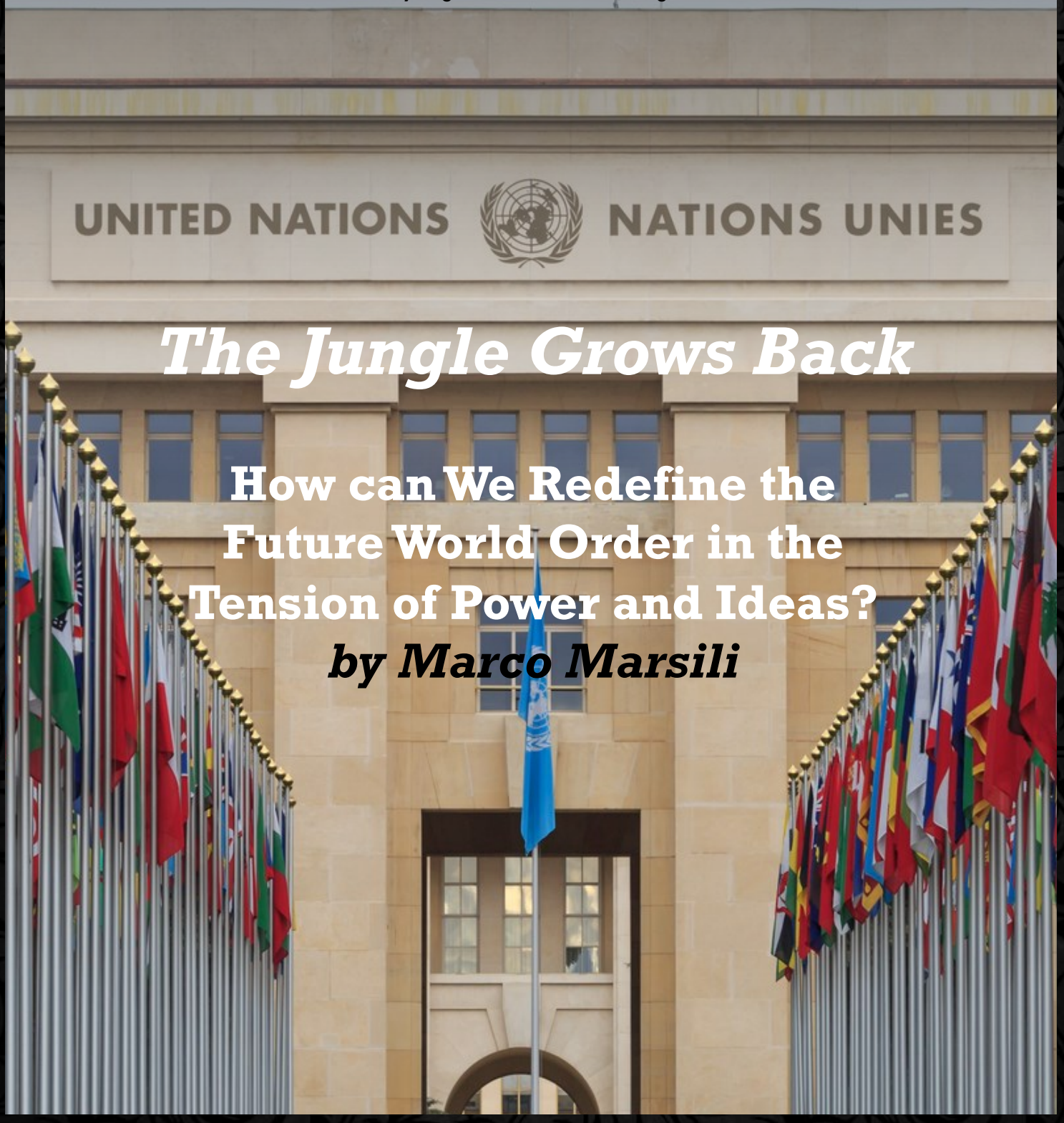
COMMENTARY

Assessing the Risk of Renewed Hostilities in the South Caucasus
by Richard Giragosian

Securitised Migration of the Other in Hungary: A Fantasy Created by the Politics of Fear
by Irem Karamik

INTERVIEW

Interview with Professor Katharyne Mitchell
by Ozgur Tufekci & Rahman Dag



The Jungle Grows Back

How can We Redefine the Future World Order in the Tension of Power and Ideas?

by Marco Marsili

cesran international

CENTRE FOR STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS - CESRAN

International Think-tank www.cesran.org

Consultancy

Research Institute

CESRAN International is headquartered in the UK
CESRAN International is a member of the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI)

CESRAN International is a think-tank specialising on international relations in general, and global peace, conflict and development related issues and challenges.

The main business objective/function is that we provide expertise at an international level to a wide range of policy making actors such as national governments and international organisations. CESRAN with its provisions of academic and semi-academic publications, journals and a fully-functioning website has already become a focal point of expertise on strategic research and analysis with regards to global security and peace. The Centre is particularly unique in being able to bring together wide variety of expertise from different countries and academic disciplines.

The main activities that CESRAN undertakes are providing consultancy services and advice to public and private enterprises, organising international conferences and publishing academic material.

Some of CESRAN's current publications are:

- The Rest: Journal of Politics and Development (biannual, peer reviewed) www.therestjournal.com
- Journal of Conflict Transformation and Security (biannual, peer reviewed)
- Political Reflection Magazine (quarterly) www.politicalreflectionmagazine.com
- CESRAN Paper Series
- CESRAN Policy Brief
- Turkey Focus Policy Brief

CESRAN International also organises an annual international conference since 2014, called **International Conference on Eurasian Politics and Society (IEPAS)**
www.eurasianpoliticsandsociety.org

- **Ranked among the top 150 International think tanks**

PR Political Reflection Magazine

Established in 2010

Submissions:

To submit articles or opinion, please email:

Rahman.dag@cesran.org

or

editors@cesran.org

Note:

The ideal **PR** article length is from **1000** to **2000** words.

cesran international
CENTRE FOR STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS - CESRAN

VOL. 6 - NO. 4

OCTOBER
NOVEMBER
DECEMBER
2020

POLITICAL REFLECTION

e-ISSN: 2042-888X

"ADVANCING DIVERSITY"

Contents

Interview With
Professor Katharyne Mitchell

Ozgur Tufekci & Rahman Dag
oztufekci@cesran.org & rahman.dag@cesran.org

Short biography:

KATHARYNE Mitchell is Dean of the Social Sciences and Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her research focuses on urbanization, migration, education and political geography. Recent books include *Making Workers: Radical Geographies of Education* (2018), and the co-edited volume, *Handbook on Critical Geographies of Migration* (2019). She was awarded a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in 2016.

Question: *Before moving on to substantive questions, we would like to ask you a personal question. It might seem to be a cliché, but we still wonder that what made you want to study spatiality, multiculturalism and neo-liberal citizenship? If it is possible, could you please share a couple of moments that you have with us regarding your academic journey?*

Katharyne Mitchell: My first independent work as a scholar was on the movement of people and capital in the Pacific Rim. For my dissertation, I looked at Hong Kong migration and capital flows to Vancouver, British Columbia, in the 1980s, following Thatcher's decision to return control of Hong Kong to China in the year 1997. At the time, I was studying geography at UC Berkeley, and most of my reading was in urban Marxist geography. I intended to investigate the impact of rapid capital flows into Vancouver from Hong Kong and some of the ramifications of that capital influx for

urbanisation, gentrification, and increasing uneven development in the city. While those processes were important and central to the story of Vancouver's transformation at the time, I discovered that other equally critical stories needed to be examined and analysed. These included struggles over the aesthetics of landscape change that were connected not just to economic processes, but also to questions of nation and race. The capital that was moving into the city and impacting its look and feel as well as its economic development was clearly being racialised by many residents because of the connection with the Hong Kong Chinese migrants who were arriving and establishing citizenship in the city at the same time. This led me to start looking at the ways that economics and culture intersect and impact each other in any spatial encounter. From there I became interested in multiculturalism and citizenship, specifically the ways that these processes are always in formation rather than static, and always about more than just 'culture' or 'nation' alone; they are also about the specific economic context in which they are being conceptualised or promoted at any given time and place.

Question: *Rising populism all over the world has a component of resurfacing historical periods that were powerful in national (majoritarian or authoritarian democracies) or international politics (hegemonic or superpower status). In that sense, would you say these populist movements have historical roots which might label them as fundamentalist?*

Katharyne Mitchell: There is no question in my mind that contemporary populist movements draw on historical periods to assert their legitimacy and dominance. This can be seen in movements such as Pegida and the AfD in Germany, as well as in Trump's call to "Make America Great Again". In the latter, it is never actually pinpointed *when* was the historical period during which America was supposedly so great. However, the inference is that it was a moment in the history of white male strength and authority—one that must be firmly reasserted, with violence if necessary, by strong white male leaders today. Authoritarian populism is on the rise worldwide, in part because of the economic anxiety of those who have been "left behind" by neoliberal globalisation and anger at the liberal-cosmopolitan elite who seem to be profiting from it. In part, it is also coupled with the fear of "the other", who can be racialised to take many forms, but who is always located by populist leaders as outside of the "real" spaces of the nation and its mythic past. A critical component of this anxiety and fear, I would argue, is the angst associated with dislocation—a dislocation that is

emotional and symbolic, but also quite literal—a dislocation from the meanings and securities of an established (historical, rooted) place in the world. What has interested me as a political and urban geographer is the way in which these populist movements and associated ideologies are thus often asserted and resisted in and through the sedimented spaces of the landscape. I have written about this with my colleague Key MacFarlane in a recent paper in the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* where we examine struggles over memory, nation and place that are quite literally "surfaced" in the urban fabric of the city. See: Hamburg's Spaces of Danger: Race, Violence and Memory in a Contemporary Global City.

Question: *Regarding previous questions, refugees have been considered as a new international menace to political and social stability in developed countries, and that is why several European countries have already declared the failure of multiculturalism. Together with rising nationalist sentiments, this may lead to nations replacing liberal multiculturalism with something else. We would like to connect these dramatic developments to the international scale and ask you whether or not rising populist and nationalist movements have the potential to change the liberal international system or order?*

Katharyne Mitchell: The world is definitely in an anti-globalist moment. Migrants and refugees are often perceived and represented as a menace and a drain on resources. This has led to harsher policies and more negative rhetoric at the national scale, including the declaration by some that multiculturalism has been a failure. I think these negative sentiments are already scaling up to the international level. We can see that supranational organisations like the EU are also pursuing more rejectionist, anti-immigrant positions in an effort to appease the far-right parties in a number of member states. We can also see the breakdown of the US-dominated liberal order as Trump shreds old alliances and the BRICS articulate their own brands of national belonging and identity. In a different world moment, this might be the opportunity for a new, more genuine conversation about global multiculturalism and a more progressive, less western-dominated international system. But I fear that what we see with China, Brazil, India, and Russia are equally, if not more regressive attitudes towards immigrants and refugees, paired with rising nationalism and authoritarianism.

Question: *In terms of neoliberal models of governance, about which you have many reservations, national political regimes trying to model*

western political, economic and social structures and way of life have begun to raise their voices, emphasising their uniqueness from the West. Would you consider these political developments as indications that the multilateral international system is breaking down?

Katharyne Mitchell: Yes, in many respects the post-Cold War order is collapsing and the western dominated multilateralism of the Bretton Woods era is at an end. The current attacks on the World Health Organization are the most evident example of this trend. Unfortunately, neoliberal practices such as the privatisation of industry and commonly held property, and the dispossession of the lands and resources of the indigenous and other minority groups continues apace. Thus, while the Washington consensus may be over, many nations emphasising their 'uniqueness' are still operating with the same destructive model of free-market capitalism. Authoritarian populists worldwide make a strong rhetorical show of breaking free of western dominance and developing their own national path of development. But in terms of their core policies and practices, they remain wedded to neoliberal strategies of capitalist accumulation, with all of its attendant ills.

Question: *As you have researched the relations between space and identity, we would like to ask you another question on this issue. Identities and values are quite influential in shaping space, especially predominantly immigrant urban areas and the major squares of cities. How do you think majoritarian parties and nationalist politicians understand and react to the multicultural nature of these parts of the cities? Is it possible that future interventions in these urban areas might affect the relations between host societies and the home countries of immigrants?*

Katharyne Mitchell: In France in 2005, there was great civil unrest that spread across the country in the wake of the death of two teenagers who had been electrocuted after hiding from the police. I had just returned from a year working in Marseille, and I will never forget an expression used by the President at the time, Nicolas Sarkozy, to talk about an immigrant suburb (*banlieue*) near where the electrocution of the young people occurred. He said, *"Vous en avez assez de cette bande de racaille? Eh bien, on va vous en débarrasser."* (You have had enough of this band of scum? Well, we are going to get rid of them for you.) The word "*racaille*" has a connotation in French of something subhuman—so the phrase evokes the disposal of human beings as trash—as waste products. In a similar situation, he spoke of the usefulness of using a *Kårcher* (French power-

washer) to clear out misbehaving youth in primarily immigrant neighbourhoods. I do not think these semantic choices are accidental. They are deliberate and clear signals sent out to white supremacist followers that the leader understands and will deliver on the unspoken promise of (re)building --or making great again—a white nation. This kind of language and symbolic referencing can be seen in the statements, body language, choice of backgrounds, positioning, and photo locations chosen by authoritarian leaders worldwide—with variations on who is racialised as 'white' in different nationalist settings. As a geographer by training, I am always interested in the way that these semantic codings of inside/outside the national body politic are often linked to physical space. It is the immigrant *neighbourhood* that is dirty and corrupt and in need of deep cleansing; it is the urban *square* where the population must be kept in check. These places provide a useful foil for populists, with clear signalling to followers of their supremacist ideologies, yet without having actually to name the outsider with overtly racist language (at least not yet). As to the second part of your question, will the multiple and ongoing attacks on these spaces and the populations who reside in them affect international relations? Unfortunately, in most of these cases, the home countries do not hold the same degree of geopolitical power as the host societies, so the repercussions are minimal. In those cases where there are significant remittances associated with a diasporic migrant population, home countries might offer muted critiques of the treatment of their citizens. But these are generally ignored.

Question: *There is another distinctive discussion on returning religion into national and international politics. You mentioned on the university website that you are currently working on the sanctuary and other forms of humanitarian protection provided by religious communities to refugees and other vulnerable migrants. Could you please share your thoughts about the potential influence of sanctuary practices and other forms of migrant aid offered by religious organisations on national and international politics?*

Katharyne Mitchell: This is a question that has preoccupied me for the past few years. The offer of the religious sanctuary as a form of protection in Europe goes back to at least 600 AD. It occurred in the context where people accused of certain kinds of crimes could be offered sanctuary in a church and thus protected from arrest. This concept was actually recognised in English law up until the 17th century. Even after Enlightenment rationalities of the importance of the rule of law and systems of good governance began to override these types of practices, there remained factions that held onto sanctuary ideals. It was seen as an

alternate form of justice, one that side-stepped and to some extent overruled sovereign (monarch or nation-state) forms of hegemonic authority. Because of this interesting history, I believe that the sanctuary possesses the capacity to contest the existing "order" of things, including at the scale of national and international politics. I have been working on the ways that the practice of sanctuary and other faith-based 'refusal' movements present challenges to liberalism and normative systems of governance. Faith-based organisations have the potential to rework democracy as we know it precisely because they do not 'follow the rules'; they may respond to what they perceive to be a 'higher' level of authority as the arbiter of justice and human dignity, and thus be willing to protect asylum-seekers and vulnerable migrants even when it is against the law. They might also hold non-sovereign, non-liberal concepts such as "sacred space" (such as a church) and "sacred time" (such as God's time) and associated cultural meanings and traditions, which collectively can give them quite a lot of power, even in primarily secular societies. Of course, these non-liberal movements can be either regressive or progressive, but in the humanitarian actions I was interested in, they were quite progressive, serving to challenge increasingly xenophobic attitudes and narrow interpretations towards asylum and refugee status in a growing number of European countries over the past five years. In my empirical research in Germany, for example, certain church networks offered sanctuary to asylum-seekers and were extremely effective in using the related scuffles and struggles with police and the judicial system to make wider political statements about the (in)justice of the asylum process. They thus directly influenced national policy and politics with their faith-inspired humanitarian actions and beliefs.

Question: *We would like to touch upon another issue relating to refugee issues all over the world. Most humanitarian aid provided to refugees is not conditional—it is universally provided regardless of a person's background or identity. But there is also some humanitarian aid that is conditional; it is given selectively on the basis of ethnic, religious, ideological, or even sectarian identities. Would you make a connection between conditional humanitarian understandings and the current multicultural backlash?*

Katharyne Mitchell: I have not really seen this in my own research, so I am just hypothesising here. I imagine that in some contexts, there could be anger that the liberal-universal 'promise' that all be treated equally is not being followed in these types of cases. Even though this liberal promise is founded on various forms of historical violence and never completely

realised, it is a touchstone for many governments and people. If, for example, some aid organisations are only providing humanitarian assistance to Muslim refugees, that might provoke anger and a backlash to liberal mantras such as multiculturalism. But this is not something I have witnessed myself. All of the faith-based organisations I worked with in Europe are deeply committed to non-partisan humanitarian aid, i.e. support that is not conditional on identity or background. Of course, this fear (the fear that others are getting something unfairly because of their identities) can be stoked by populist politicians for their own purposes, just as with anything else.

Question: *You have argued that civic education will shape the next generations' understanding of space, politics and identities, and is especially important in the education of children. There is not yet involvement into the national curriculum to change it in favour of nationalist or populist education, but still, at the spatial, social, political and economic level, there are tendencies to re-shaping young minds in favour of dominant views. Please forgive us bringing this issue into the broader context of international relations, but do you agree that these tendencies might change the root codes of liberal understandings and politics?*

Katharyne Mitchell: Unfortunately, I think this *is* already happening. There are currently very bitter and ongoing struggles over how both history and civic education are portrayed and promoted in children's textbooks in the US, India, Japan, France, Zimbabwe—indeed, many nations. This is because all leaders know that how the past is memorialised and how it becomes part of the archive of collective memory is absolutely critical for how the present can be manipulated and the future imagined and directed. So too, with civic education and how the role of government and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship are depicted. Many classic books on nation-building and nationalism have emphasised the importance of schooling in these topical areas, i.e. what is our system of government, who are we as citizens, and how should we *act* as citizens—citizens of a particular nation and/or citizens of the world? The struggle over children's minds and ways of thinking about history, government, democracy, and democratic participation is absolutely critical for our future. It will affect both national politics and international relations. Indeed, it affects everything—from our collective ability to listen, engage and contribute constructively to our ability to imagine and plan for a progressive planetary future that is inclusive and just for all.

Question: *We know it might have nothing to do with your area of expertise, but there is a popular debate on post-COVID-19 world projections. If you do not mind, could you please share your precious thoughts about it with us?*

Katharyne Mitchell: I do not really feel comfortable making predictions about this yet. It is still too early to see where we are headed I think… !

Question: *Before ending the interview, we would like to take our chance to make you ask a question to yourself. It is because of the fact that an interview cannot cover all the areas of a life-time academic, like yourself, I would kindly like to ask you if there is an issue that you considered as quite significant, but we miss it to ask. If yes, would you tell us about it?*

Katharyne Mitchell:
Thank you—I think we have covered a lot of territories already!

We would like to thank you for your sincere answers and time.

Katharyne Mitchell: Thank you for your questions and for giving me the opportunity to address them in this venue.

Best Regards,

the rest
Journal of Politics and Development
ISSN 2632-4911

Call for Papers

The Rest: Journal of Politics and Development endeavours to become the foremost international forum for academics, researchers and policymakers to share their knowledge and experience in the discipline of international relations and its subfields: international security, international political economy, international organisations, foreign policy analysis, political history, etc.

The Rest: Journal of Politics and Development is an open-access, double-blind peer-reviewed journal. The journal is published at its own website **https://therestjournal.com/***The Rest: Journal of Politics and Development* welcomes submissions of **articles** from related persons involved in the scope of the journal as well as **summary reports of conferences and lecture series** held in social sciences.

Prospective authors should submit 4.000-9.000 words articles for consideration in Microsoft Word-compatible format. For more complete descriptions and submission instructions, please access the Author Guidelines and Style Guidelines pages at the website https://therestjournal.com/ Contributors are urged to read the author guidelines and style guidelines carefully before submitting articles. Articles submissions should be sent through the "MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION" page at the website.

cesran international
CENTRE FOR STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS - CESRAN