

# We Don't Need No Education

Thought control in the classroom is real -- and it works.

BY ALICIA P.Q. WITTMAYER

It was the summer of 2012, and Hong Kong was in an uproar. The pro-Beijing government's attempts to put in place a so-called "patriotic education" curriculum -- one with lessons similar to those taught in mainland China -- were met with howls of protest across the city. The government claimed it was only trying to further a more thorough understanding of Chinese culture and history. Hong Kong, of course, operates under different laws that provide greater rights and freedoms than the mainland. And Hong Kongers, ever defensive of their way of life, took to the streets by the tens of thousands.

Teenagers gave impassioned speeches; students went on hunger strikes; parents cried that their children should not be brainwashed.

Did the protesters overreact? After all, the hubbub was just about textbooks -- not the outright denial of free speech or another right.

In fact, a new study indicates that those decrying "thought control" were right to worry:

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A group of economists from universities in the United States, Hong Kong, China, and Germany set out to measure how much a government can influence the thinking of its citizenry via education. They examined changes to the mainland Chinese high school curriculum that were rolled out between 2004 and 2010, with the explicit goal of turning potentially rebellious students into upstanding members of the Communist Party's harmonious society. A 2001 Education

Ministry document explained that the curriculum sought to "form in students a correct worldview, a correct view on life, and a correct value system."

To find out whether the changes worked, the researchers conducted a survey of the political views of 2,000 students at Peking University, some of whom had studied under the new curriculum and some of whom had not. Noam Yuchtman, one of the paper's authors, said the team had doubts that the reforms had been effective. After all, citizens know that the Chinese government is inclined toward indoctrination, and the university's students are among the country's brightest.

Turns out, the new curriculum worked like a charm. The authors found that students who studied it were more likely to view China's system as democratic and more likely to trust government officials, and they were more suspicious of unrestrained, American-style capitalism. (The government's attempts to influence students' attitudes toward ethnic minorities were less successful, as were its efforts to convince students to prioritize the environment over economic growth.)

Yuchtman and his co-authors show that the stakes of education disputes -- whether they're waged over Chinese national values, evolution, or World War II history -- are high. The researchers warn against classroom content that is manipulated to benefit a country's elite, by glossing over its historical wrongdoings, for example.

In Hong Kong, the government eventually backed down. The "patriotic education" plans have been put on ice, and the rowdy protests have ceased. Hong Kong students won't have to worry about being another brick in the wall -- at least for now.

Illustration by Pete Ryan for FP

# Epiphanies from Jack Matlock

Former U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union Jack Matlock on the flawed "reset" with Russia, Washington's cliques, and how the Ukraine crisis is a product of NATO expansion.

BY ELIAS GROLL

The post-Cold War order that reigned over Eastern Europe for more than two decades is cracking -- some might even say shattering. In Kiev, the tumultuous Maidan revolution gave birth to a fragile new government, and Ukraine is still teetering on the verge of civil war. The Crimean peninsula now belongs to Russia, which has also massed troops for months along Ukraine's eastern border. And amid the chaos, Washington and Moscow have relentlessly traded angry insults over which of them is to blame for the unrest. Indeed, relations between the United States and Russia have arguably reached their lowest point since the fall of the Soviet Union.

As Jack Matlock sees it, the situation likely could have been avoided: From 1987 to 1991, Matlock was the U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, where he had a front-row seat to the end of the Cold War, and he sees current tensions as largely the result of poor policy choices in the intervening decades. Foreign Policy spoke with Matlock in June about U.S.-Russia diplomacy, NATO expansion, and whether all the furious criticisms of President Barack Obama's foreign policy hold water.

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**The Ukraine crisis was a product, in large part, of the policy of indefinite expansion of NATO to the east.** If there had been no possibility of Ukraine ever becoming part of NATO, and therefore Sevastopol becoming a NATO base, Russia would not have invaded Crimea. It is as simple as that.

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**Americans have lived for nearly two centuries with the Monroe Doctrine.** Why don't we understand that other countries are sensitive about military bases from potential rivals not only coming up to their borders, but taking land which they have historically

considered theirs? These are extremely emotional issues -- issues that are made to order for any authoritarian ruler that wants to strengthen his rule.

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**It was our goal in 1991 to try to keep the republics of the Soviet Union**, other than the three Baltic states, together in some sort of federation. We didn't force the breakup of the Soviet Union. To think that you can just treat the states as if they were traditionally independent countries with a sort of a hands-off relationship to each other is simply absurd.

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**The basic concept of the Obama administration's "reset" had the flaw** that the United States continued to, quote, "support democratic forces within Russia." What Vladimir Putin believes is that the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the Rose Revolution in Georgia were plots actually organized by the CIA and that the United States is trying to do the same thing in Russia. When people started demonstrations in Moscow the year before last and Washington made it publicly clear it was dismayed by Putin coming back into the presidency -- that was not very smart diplomacy. You may not like him, but you shut up if you've gotta deal with the guy.

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**In the case of Syria, there was a definite difference of opinion** about what the impact of trying to remove Bashar al-Assad would be. The Russians were convinced that al Qaeda would seize a good part of the territory. So the idea that they are helping keep Assad in power: Yes, they are! They are afraid of what would happen to the country. They have pointed out that America didn't do all that well in Iraq, invading it. We haven't done all that great in Libya. Why the hell do we want to keep on? The American people certainly don't want us to. But you have almost a clique in Washington that just can't look at any atrocity in the world without wanting the United States to get involved militarily.

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**I think Obama is moving in the right direction in general.** I'm with his foreign policy about 80 percent, and most of the criticism of him, I think, has been quite unfounded -- these ridiculous investigations over Benghazi and now over the prisoner release. I'm almost ashamed of our politics. Obama is handling those things as well as he can.

Illustration by Robert Ball for FP

## Third Gender: A Short History

From ancient Greece to modern Pakistan, the political and cultural emergence of a complex, controversial term.

BY JAKE SCOBEEY-THAL

Social convention says there are two types of people: male and female. And you know who's who based on their genitalia. But in fact, various cultures have long recognized members who buck the biological binary. The ancients wrote of people who were neither men nor women; individuals have been swapping genders for centuries; and intellectuals have fiercely debated the connection between the body and the self. Today, there are many populations with alternative identities, such as *hijras* in South Asia, *kathoeys* in Thailand, and *muxes* in Mexico. Yet these groups haven't had it easy, often facing discrimination and violence. Only recently has the fight for legal recognition -- and respect -- of "third gender" begun to bear fruit, thanks to pioneering activists and policymakers. The world, it seems, is slowly embracing an adage once restricted to liberal universities: Gender is a construct, and people should be able to define it for themselves.

**385-380 B.C.**  Greek philosopher Plato writes *Symposium*, in which men at a drinking party philosophize about the nature of love. Aristophanes, a comic playwright, tells a story of creation in which "original human nature" includes a third sex. This sex "was a distinct kind, with a body shape and a name

of its own, constituted by the union of the male and the female, but now only the word 'androgynous' is preserved, and that as a term of reproach."

## Around 200 B.C.

- The *Manusmriti* (*Laws of Manu*), which forms the basis of Hindu rules, says, "A male child is produced by a greater quantity of male seed, a female child by the prevalence of the female; if both are equal, a third-sex child or boy-and-girl twins are produced." But like many other early writings on human identity, the *Manusmriti* does not distinguish between biological traits and a person's social role. The former determines the latter.

## 77 B.C.

- Gaius, a Roman slave and eunuch, is denied inheritance on the grounds, according to art historian Lynn Roller, of being "neither a man nor a woman." He is "not even allowed to plead his own case, lest the court be polluted by his obscene presence and corrupt voice." Eunuchs, typically castrated men, often hold trusted positions — such as servants or priests — but they are also treated as abnormal.

## 1400s

- Sworn virgins emerge in Albanian communities in the Balkans. Known as *buqmeshas* ("he-she"), the virgins are women who take oaths of celibacy and live as men in order to gain certain rights and privileges. For instance, after the death of a head of household and in the absence of male heirs, a woman could become a buqmeshas to secure her family's property and honor.

## 1860s

- Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, a German thinker and writer, outlines a theory of homosexuality using "third sex" to categorize men attracted to other men. He also describes such a man as having "a female psyche confined in a male body." This theory competes with Charles Darwin's writings on sexual selection, which assert that two sexes exist for the purpose of reproduction.

## 1871

- British administrators pass the Criminal Tribes Act in India, effectively outlawing the country's *hijras* — a community that includes people born with both male and female biological traits (called "intersex" today), transgender people (those whose gender identity doesn't match their sex assigned at birth), eunuchs, and even cross-dressers. Celebrated in sacred Indian texts, hijras had long been part of South Asian cultures, but colonial authorities viewed them as violating the social order.

## 1918

- Earl Lind (also known as Ralph Werther and Jennie June) publishes *The Autobiography of an Androgyne*, a memoir about coming to identify as "third sex." The book, still studied widely by scholars of gender and sexuality, describes the author's life in New York City, sexual encounters with both men and women, and decision to undergo castration.

## 1951-1952

- Christine Jorgensen, born George William Jorgensen in New York, completes sex-reassignment surgery in Denmark. Jorgensen, who served in the U.S. Army, gains national recognition as the first American widely known to have had the surgery. New York's *Daily News* runs a front-page story with the headline, "Ex-GI Becomes Blonde Beauty." (The United States, however, legally recognizes only two genders; this remains the case today.)

- 1950s** ○ Psychologist John Money popularizes the term "gender role." He controversially studies intersex children to understand how social and environmental factors, in addition to genetic and hormonal ones, help determine whether a person identifies as male or female. Money's theories provide an important basis for efforts — spearheaded by the burgeoning feminist movement — to argue that gender is not simply a function of biology.
- 1966** ○ Endocrinologist Harry Benjamin, who treated Jorgensen, publishes *The Transsexual Phenomenon* with a "sex orientation scale" for men engaging in feminine behaviors. At one end are men who occasionally dress as women but don't want to be female; at the other end are men who consider themselves female and urgently want reassignment surgery. "The dominant status of the genital organs for the determination of one's sex," Benjamin writes, "has been shaken."
- 1970s** ○ Mexicans in Oaxaca state establish Vela de las Intrepidas (Vigil of the Intrepids), a festival celebrating ambiguous gender identities. The Zapotec culture embraces a third-gender population called *muxes*, men who consider themselves women and others who don't strictly identify one way or the other. Muxes trace back to pre-Columbian times, when there were "cross-dressing Aztec priests and Mayan gods who were male and female at the same time," according to the *New York Times*.
- 1980** ○ The American Psychiatric Association (APA) codifies "gender identity disorder," a condition in which there is a disparity between a person's assigned sex and expressed gender identity. The diagnosis allows practitioners to justify hormone treatment, sex-reassignment surgery, and other care. But critics argue that categorizing certain gender identities as mental illness is discriminatory. (In 2012, the APA renames the condition "gender dysphoria.")
- 1980s** ○ Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, issues a fatwa proclaiming no religious restriction on reassignment surgery, previously sanctioned only for intersex people. The ayatollah had been lobbied by transgender activist Maryam Khatoon Molkara. Today, Iran is a top destination for the surgery, but the trend has a dark underbelly: Many gay Iranians choose surgery to avoid persecution for homosexuality, which is still punishable by death. Iran does not recognize alternative genders.
- Dec. 21, 2007** ○ Nepal's Supreme Court mandates that the government establish a third-gender category ("other") on citizenship documents. The ruling comes in an anti-discrimination case filed by Sanjiv Pant, Asia's first openly gay federal-level politician and founder of the Blue Diamond Society, an NGO that works closely with transgender sex workers (long targets of police brutality in Nepal). Despite the ruling, third-gender people continue to report harassment. As of 2014, according to activists, only five individuals had officially registered as "other."
- Dec. 23, 2009** ○ Pakistan's Supreme Court orders the creation of national identity cards on which hijras can identify as a distinct gender.
- Sept. 15, 2011** ○ The Australian government announces that passports will include a third-gender option. However, the new regime has limitations: Applicants wishing to select "X" as their gender must provide a letter from a medical professional confirming that they are intersex or do not identify

with the sex assigned to them at birth. (Similarly, people wishing to change their gender — from, say, female to male — must provide a letter confirming that they are undergoing treatment for a gender transition.)

**Nov. 1, 2013**



Germany announces that it will allow parents to register newborns as indeterminate on birth certificates. The legislation is adopted to mitigate pressure to pursue immediate surgery for babies born with ambiguous physical features. A review by the German Ethics Council had revealed problems created by forced operations. "I will remain the patchwork created by doctors, bruised and scarred," one adult tells the BBC of surgery performed soon after birth.

**Feb. 13, 2014**



Facebook expands gender settings on user profiles. These include some 50 new options, including "disgender" (someone who has a gender identity regularly associated with his or her biological sex), "neutrois" (someone who rejects a gender binary entirely), and — simply — "other."

**April 15, 2014**



India's Supreme Court recognizes the right of people, including hijras, to identify as third gender. The ruling requires the government to establish quotas for third-gender people in employment and education, like those already in place for other minorities. The court states, "It is the right of every human being to choose their gender."

Illustration by Craig & Karl for FP