

Social Justice Watch 0901

[图集精选](#)

[消息精选](#)

[Bilingual Education in Inner Mongolia: An Explainer](#)

[Germany is launching a new experiment in basic income](#)

[The end of liberal democracy in the Philippines](#)

[‘Queer Eye’, Jordan Peterson and the battle for depressed men](#)

来源：[Social Justice Watch](#)

[镜像](#)

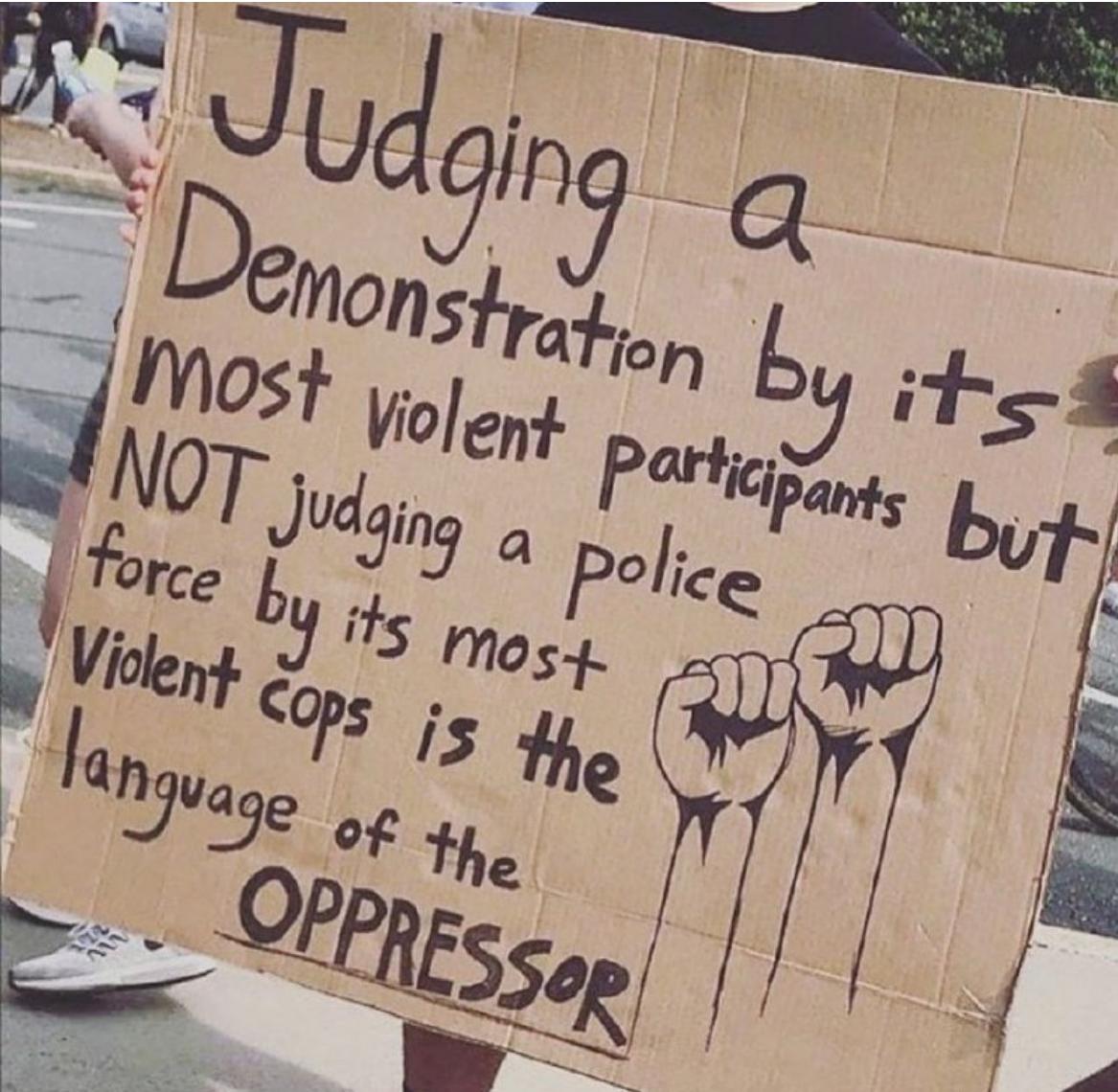
图集精选

[返回目录](#)



Germany is launching a new experiment in basic income [source](#)

Judging a
Demonstration by its
most violent Participants but
NOT judging a Police
force by its most
Violent cops is the
language of the
OPPRESSOR





[**#BREAKING**](#) Belarus police arrest tens of protesters in opposition march: AFP
[source](#)



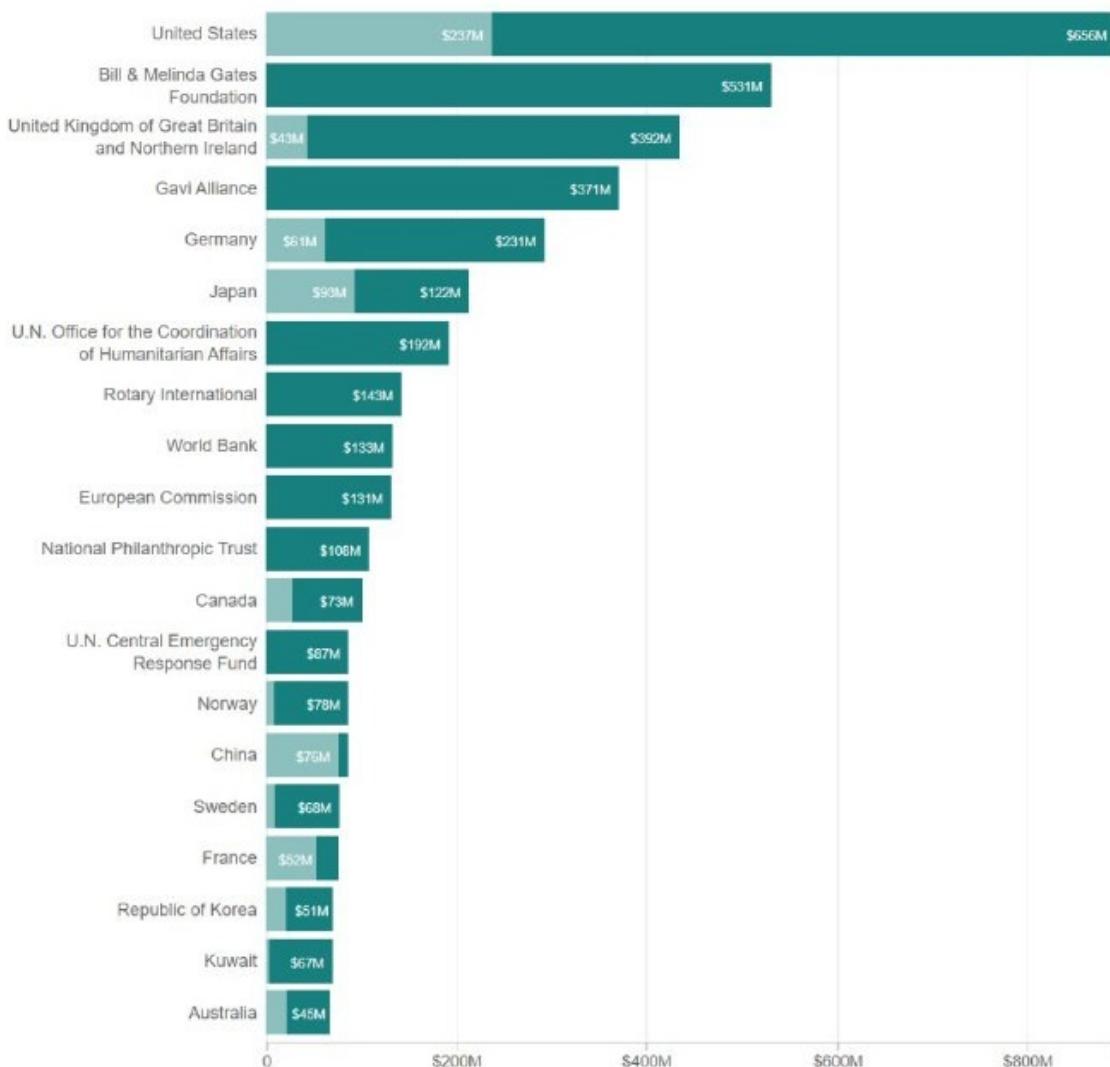
😊 Narcissa Stique 😊
@JMarcusGuevarra

Literally no gay person has approached me and forced me to be gay. I did, however, have some people from the church approach me and guilt me into joining their religion saying that I am going to hell for my choices. So who's forcing whose lifestyle now?

Last Year's Top Contributors To The World Health Organization

For the two-year budget cycle of 2018 and 2019, the U.S. government pledged to contribute \$893 million to WHO's budget – consisting of "assessed contributions" (dues paid by member countries) and voluntary contributions.

Assessed Voluntary



Source: *World Health Organization*

Credit: *Stephanie Adeline/NPR*

圖表來源：[NPR](#)





Chinese gold mining operations have devastated a part of the Central African Republic. We described how the area around the river was polluted and dangerous -- with big pits, loose dirt, gravel.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr19/2708/2020/en/source>

中国方言地图





If you'd like to read about counter-mapping and the recognition of languages that the state tries to erase, here's an open access article I wrote about that: [link source](#)

[返回目录](#)

消息精选

[返回目录](#)

1. Most (alt-right bishops, Youtube stars, evangelical pastors) started their speeches by announcing the enormous number of children they had fathered – as though success comes with the capacity to ejaculate.
2. Like Jung, Gramsci showed that our subconscious shapes how we see the world. But unlike Jung, he was able to explain how our subconscious is itself shaped by the world: not by mystical interventions or mythical memories, but by human institutions, like schools, churches, armies and the arts.
3. The alternative to fighting depression is to see it as a business opportunity. Neoliberalism makes millions miserable, producing vast markets for fake cures. Pablo Escobar, Billy Graham, Mark Zuckerberg and Jordan Peterson all got rich hawking false solutions to the crisis of disconnection.
4. The problem is isolation in communities torn apart by brutal inequality, a world where we're told to run ever-faster to keep up.
5. Peterson's message isn't just "Don't change the world." It's "Don't change who the world tells you that you are." And it does profound damage.

telegra.ph/Queer-Eye-Jordan-Peterson-and-the-battle-for-depressed-men-08-29-2

Telegraph

‘Queer Eye’, Jordan Peterson and the battle for depressed men
‘Queer Eye’, Jordan Peterson and the battle for depressed men Progressives need to learn from the Netflix show’s battles against toxic masculinity. And the Fab Five need to recruit a trade union organiser.

telegra.ph/Germany-is-launching-a-new-experiment-in-basic-income-08-29

Telegraph

Germany is launching a new experiment in basic income

Starting this month, life is about to get easier for 120 Germans. They will receive 1,200 euros (\$1,430) every month for three years as part of a new experiment in basic income.

[telegra.ph/The-end-of-liberal-democracy-in-the-Philippines-08-29-2](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/The-end-of-liberal-democracy-in-the-Philippines-08-29-2)

Telegraph

The end of liberal democracy in the Philippines

On July 3 2020, despite waves of popular resistance and incisive legal critique, President Rodrigo Duterte passed an Anti-Terrorism law that would give the executive government sweeping powers to imprison and repress political activists under the guise of...

lausanhk.org/2020/beyond-politics-of-survival

Lausan

Beyond a 'politics of survival': Transforming Singapore's migrant domestic worker labor regime - Lausan

Singapore must reckon with the centrality of indentured servitude to this "politics of survival" and to transform the conditions of its contemporary workforce.

Something is seriously wrong when a prosecutor agrees to release a person today if he pleads guilty but if he pleads not guilty and demands a jury trial he is too dangerous to be released and has to wait in jail for jury trials to reconvene while a deadly virus runs rampant. [source](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9v6givfTEA>

YouTube

Covid-19: why the economy could fare worse than you think | The Economist

Three months after lockdown was relaxed in China, its economy is now running at around 90% of normal levels. Although 90% may sound fine, for many it could be catastrophic. Read more here: <https://econ.st/2AeZ86k>

Further reading:

...

telegra.ph/Bilingual-Education-in-Inner-Mongolia-An-Explainer-08-31

Telegraph

Bilingual Education in Inner Mongolia: An Explainer

Written on 30 August 2020. Posted in Article, Online Only. Author: Christopher P. Atwood China today is in the midst of closing out a three-quarters of a century experiment. That experiment was in minority-language education for certain select ethnic groups:...

<https://crimethinc.com/2019/09/20/three-months-of-insurrection-an-anarchist-collective-in-hong-kong-appraises-the-achievements-and-limits-of-the-revolt>

CrimethInc.

Three Months of Insurrection

In the following timeline and interview, an anarchist collective in Hong Kong presents a complete overview of the months-long uprising, reviewing its achievements, identifying its limits, celebrati...

Reading [@books_and_reads](#)

Podcasts [@podcasts_discuss](#)

English [@english_learning_discuss](#)

Channel collection [@channel_push](#)

Twitter collection [@twitter_read](#)

Message search [@msg_index_bot](#)

↑ a few recommend channels / bots

Hong Kong has always fought to remember Tiananmen. Now it fights to remember its own trauma. It's only been a year and the wounds are still fresh, but it's already becoming a crime to remember. Lord, have mercy.

https://lausan.hk/2020/11-articles-voice-of-hongkongers/_source

Lausan

11 articles on revolution in the words of Hongkongers themselves - Lausan
On the one-year anniversary of the Prince Edward MTR attacks, revisit our writing and translating that center the voices of Hongkongers in struggle

[返回目录](#)

Bilingual Education in Inner Mongolia: An Explainer

[返回目录](#)



Written on 30 August 2020. Posted in Article, Online Only.

Author: Christopher P. Atwood

China today is in the midst of closing out a three-quarters of a century experiment. That experiment was in minority-language education for certain select ethnic groups: Mongols, Uyghurs, Tibetans, Kazakhs, and Koreans. A heritage of both China's decentralised past and the Soviet model, minority-language education is now being replaced by a new model of 'bilingual education' in which Chinese is the language of instruction and minority

languages are at most a topic of instruction, one hour a day. This summer, the new model was brought to Inner Mongolia where it has sparked perhaps the largest wave of protest in almost three decades. What is this new model of ‘bilingual education’ and why is Inner Mongolia now the epicentre of resistance?

Q: What is the ‘bilingual education’ issue in Inner Mongolia?

Q: What will the practical effect of this policy on the school day be?

Q: What’s the stated rationale for the policy?

Q: Isn’t ‘Bilingual Education’ a good thing for minority languages?

Q: Can Mongolian language abilities be preserved under ‘Bilingual Education’?

Q: Is Mongolian language being banned? Is the Mongolian script being banned?

Q: How long has this policy been in the works?

Q: Is this a local policy, or a Beijing policy?

Q: Is this related to issues in Xinjiang and Tibet? To Xi Jinping’s policies of ideological centralisation?

Q: Is This Related to the ‘Second Generation Ethnic Policy’ (第二代民族政策) promoted by policy academics in Beijing?

Q: How long has Mongolian-medium education existed in Inner Mongolia?

Q: What are the People’s Republic of China’s policies on minority-language medium education? How have they changed?

Q: Lots of dialects in China, like Cantonese and Hokkienese, don’t even have one hour a day in the class to teach their language. Shouldn’t Inner Mongolians be grateful to get that?

Q: Why is Mongolian-language education so important in Inner Mongolia?

Q: Don’t all Mongols speak Chinese anyway?

Q: Mongols are only 17 percent of the population of Inner Mongolia. Isn't it impossible for them to think of preserving Mongolian language over the long term?

Q: What percentage of ethnic Mongols in Inner Mongolia still speak Mongolian?

Q: Do Mongol parents still desire Mongolian-language education for their children?

Q: How does the opposition deal with the claim that this policy is necessary to resolve the minorities' backwardness, illiteracy, and isolation from national life?

Q: How are Inner Mongolian activists responding to this new policy?

Q: How have the authorities responded?

Q: Is this the first time the Inner Mongolian government has tried to curtail or eliminate Mongolian-medium education?

Q: Who's leading the resistance? Are they outside Inner Mongolia?

Q: We hear a lot about Tibet and Xinjiang, but not so much about Inner Mongolia. How similar are these cases? How different?

Q: Why adopt this new policy now? Are there long-term causes?

Q: Are there specific short-term reasons?

Q: How likely is it to be successful?

The Policy Change

Q: What is the 'bilingual education' issue in Inner Mongolia?

A: This summer, the Inner Mongolian Educational Department announced a plan to make changes to education throughout the nine years of compulsory schooling in Inner Mongolia. The plan is to begin transitioning to the state-compiled textbooks for 'language and literature', 'morality and law (politics)', and 'history' classes. The key point is that these classes will be taught in the national common language—Mandarin Chinese. This policy will be formally

implemented from the beginning of school, this 1 September, starting with ‘language and literature’ in first and seventh grade. Next year, it will be extended to ‘morality and law’ and then to ‘history’ in 2022. So from 2022, if all goes according to plan, all students in Inner Mongolia will be taking all three of these classes solely in Chinese, on the basis of the Chinese state-compiled textbooks. Previously, in many schools in Inner Mongolia, all of these subjects were taught in Mongolian through high school.

Q: What will the practical effect of this policy on the school day be?

A: Currently, Inner Mongolian schools have six to seven hours of class per day. In a typical Mongolian-medium school, all the classes will be in Mongolian for the first two years, and all the language and literature classes will be focussed on Mongolian language and literature. From third grade on an hour a day of Chinese language would be added, and from sixth to tenth grade a foreign language would be added.

The practical effect of this reform will be to change three subjects of instruction into Chinese-medium courses. Mongolian language classes have been promised to continue alongside ‘language and literature’ (Chinese) and the remaining classes—currently mathematics, sciences, art, music, and physical education—will continue to be taught in Mongolian. But the policy documents envision the new subjects being given greater prominence in the curriculum and taught at lower levels. At the same time, there is also a promise of no increase in school hours. Thus the share of the class hours for the ‘local classes’ per week is being reduced in order to increase the class hours for the ‘national classes’, which cannot but reduce the hours conducted in Mongolian.

One immediate area of concern is the job security of the existing teaching staff. According to the official documents, most teachers currently teaching in Mongolian should be able to switch to teaching in Chinese over the summer with some additional training. In certain areas, they envision having to bring current or recently retired teachers with Chinese-teaching experience to assist in the transition. Official documents also strive to assure teachers that the changes will not affect their job seniority or pensions, and that they will be given opportunities for retraining if needed.

In the long run, this policy will have knock-on effects into college. At present, Inner Mongolian universities have Mongolian-medium classes in history and

other social sciences. What will happen when there are no more students with grade-school training in Mongolian language in these topics? Similarly, employment chances for those who have trained to teach history, morality and law, and language and literature in Mongolian can only decline sharply.

Q: What's the stated rationale for the policy?

A: According to the official rationale, the main benefit of this change is that the new national textbook and curriculum standards for these three classes—‘language and literature,’ ‘morality and law,’ and ‘history’—are of the highest quality. This textbook has already been implemented from 2017 in ethnic schools in Xinjiang and from 2018 in ethnic schools in Tibet—Tibetan- and Uyghur-medium schools had already been eliminated and the law mostly affected the Mongolian and Shibe schools in those regions. The documents insist that other classes will not be affected, and that the ongoing Mongolian (and Korean) language and literature class will not be influenced.

At the same time, the documents prominently cite Chinese president Xi Jinping’s emphasis on having a shared language as a crucial link for communication and, in turn, for mutual understanding and ‘common identification’. They also cite improving mastery of the common national language as the basis for more success in the ‘job market, in receiving modern arts and sciences education, and in integrating into the society.’

Left unanswered is the question: why couldn’t the new textbooks have been simply translated into Mongolian? In fact, the curriculum in use for morality, politics, and history in Inner Mongolia’s Mongolian-medium schools today is translated from Chinese, with no specific Inner Mongolian content. The only exception currently is Mongolian language and literature.

Q: Isn’t ‘Bilingual Education’ a good thing for minority languages?

A: In many countries, an hour a day every day in school for a minority language would be considered a great advance in multicultural education. In Inner Mongolia, however, it represents a dramatic decline in the educational status of the language. In Mongolian-medium schools in China up until the present, all the classes up through grade twelve are in Mongolian, with classes teaching Chinese and foreign languages added in from third grade on.

Theorists of education speak of the language as either the ‘medium’—the

language in which the teaching occurs—or the ‘subject’—that which is being taught. The key issue here is that under the new policy the subjects that will be taught with Mongolian as the medium will be cut back severely.

Technically, even now Mongolian-medium schools are ‘bilingual’ from the third grade onward since Chinese language is also taught in them. Thus, some in China speak of the current ‘Model 1’ bilingual education versus the new ‘Model 2’ bilingual education. But in general, activists reject the term ‘bilingual education’, seeing it as a way of prioritising Chinese over Mongolian; historically the experience of Xinjiang and Tibet shows that this is a realistic fear.

Q: Can Mongolian language abilities be preserved under ‘Bilingual Education’?

A: There are reasons to doubt whether this is possible.

First of all, there is an obvious trend—going from studying all your classes in Mongolian to just a few is a massive downgrade. This is a result of central government policy to improve familiarity in the ‘national common language’; will further downgrades be coming down the pipeline? In Xinjiang, a policy of ‘vigorous promotion’ of ‘bilingual education’ began in 2004 and by 2006 there was purely Chinese-language education down to the kindergarten level in some rural areas.

Secondly, as numerous studies of Mongolian-medium schools in Inner Mongolia have shown, even there, the ‘hidden curriculum’ clearly treats Chinese knowledge and Chinese institutions as more important than Mongol knowledge and Mongol institutions. As a result of this hidden curriculum, Mongol children even in Mongolian-medium schools often neglect Mongolian-oriented curricula—a neglect that frequently leads to regret after ethnic consciousness-raising in college. The very emphasis placed on the three national-level classes makes them obviously important subjects—the implication that truly important subjects need to be taught in Chinese will not be lost on Mongolian pupils.

Third, the change will cripple the ability of those Mongol children in Mongolian-medium schools to express themselves in their mother tongue on a full range of subjects. Literacy is not an on/off thing, but occurs in a range of social functions, which must be practiced to be successfully mastered. The

removal of politics, morals and morality, and history from the range of subjects that Mongolian children will be trained to read, write, listen, and speak about in their mother tongue will further weaken the language, pushing it closer towards a ‘kitchen language’ that can only be used for in-family conversations and lacks vocabulary and rhetorical sophistication for public written and oral use.

Within China, the discourse of development is absolutely pervasive—all aspects of society can be ranked as ‘developed’ or ‘backward’ and all movement should be from ‘backwards’ to ‘developed.’ With regard to language, this perspective means that languages can be ‘developed’ and that all people in China have a constitutional right to ‘develop’ their native language. Article 4 of the Chinese Constitution states: ‘All nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages.’ Schooling is the key site for such development. When a central policy is implemented that says Mongolian language is no longer capable of serving as the medium for the vital subjects of language, politics, morals, and history, the message in a Chinese developmental context is clear: Mongolian is backward and cannot be developed.

Q: Is Mongolian language being banned? Is the Mongolian script being banned?

A: Definitely not. Even strong opponents of the proposed change recognise that in ethnic Mongol schools in Inner Mongolia, Mongolian will continue to be taught as a subject—although critics say that this amounts to treating the Mongolian mother tongue ‘like a foreign language’. Nor has there been any moves to ban the use of Mongolian language in public or in schools outside of class. Mongolian language radio and TV are continuing, and given their importance in projecting a favourable image of China to independent Mongolia are unlikely to be cut back. Limitations on Mongolian-language social media platforms like Bainu appear to have been temporary, and they are apparently operating again.

The Policy’s Background

Q: How long has this policy been in the works?

Policy documents mention that the unified national curriculum in the three subjects was first rolled out in September 2017. It was first implemented in Xinjiang in 2017 and then in Tibet in 2018. Reports indicate that implementation

of this policy was attempted in a Mongol banner (county) of Shiliin Gol League also in 2018, but was dropped in the face of quiet resistance. Official documents say that this year, the new curriculum is being extended to schools in Inner Mongolia, Gansu, Jilin, Liaoning, Qinghai, and Sichuan. The focus appears to be the remaining Mongolian language schools in China, as those regions, with the exception of Sichuan—where Tibetan is the main minority language—all have Mongolian autonomous districts with Mongolian language schooling. However, details on application to the other five province-level units are lacking.

As far as this round in Inner Mongolia goes, this policy appears to have first been disclosed around June 2020 in Tongliao municipality—an area in southeastern Inner Mongolia with a large ethnic Mongol population—in connection with a visit on 4 June by a delegation led by Ge Weiwei, the deputy section chief of the Ethnic Education Section of the Ministry of Education, accompanied by a ‘researcher’ from his department, Chogbayar. During that visit he emphasised deficiencies in the command of the ‘common national language’ and the need to improve it. By late June, reports emerged that teachers in the Tongliao municipality would have to begin the first of the three subjects (language and literature) in Chinese in September. By Monday, 6 July, the first petitions against this policy began to circulate on WeChat, at this point speaking only of Tongliao. On 17 August, the extension of this policy to all of Inner Mongolia was first announced by the Regional Department of Education in closed meetings, and all subordinate administrative units were ordered to begin planning implementation from 18 August. On 23 August, posts by Mongols related to the topic of ‘Bilingual Education’ began to be systematically removed from social media in Inner Mongolia. Han Chinese outside the region, however, report being still able to discuss the topic.

Q: Is this a local policy, or a Beijing policy?

The participation of national-level educational administrators like Ge Weiwei, and even more the emphasis on a nationally approved curriculum and a steady process of implementation, show that this policy is being driven from Beijing. Some of the designers at the national level are ethnic Mongols like Chogbayar and the details of implementation are being worked out in Höhhot, but the overall initiative is undoubtedly from the centre. Yet at the same time, regional officials are being pushed out front to take the lead in visibly implementing it.

Q: Is this related to issues in Xinjiang and Tibet? To Xi Jinping’s policies of

ideological centralisation?

A: The impetus behind the national-level policy to revise and issue a new central curriculum and textbooks in language and literature, morality and law, and history is undoubtedly part of the turn towards Chinese nationalism and ideological transformation under the Xi administration. By this time, however, even if local conditions are still impeding full implementation of Chinese-medium education in remoter parts of Xinjiang and Tibet, Uyghur- and Tibetan-medium education in Xinjiang and Tibet had already been largely eliminated, and Mongolian and Korean were the only minority languages continuing to be used as media for instruction in China, at least in theory. The application of this policy to Korean areas of Jilin and Liaoning would presumably have the same effect on Korean-medium education in China.

Q: Is This Related to the ‘Second Generation Ethnic Policy’ (第二代民族政策) promoted by policy academics in Beijing?

A: Yes, many members of the opposition have argued that the new policy is surreptitiously implementing this ‘Second Generation Ethnic Policy’. The ‘Second Generation Ethnic Policy’ has been advocated by figures like Professor Hu Angang of the Centre for China Studies, a think tank affiliated with Tsinghua University, Hu Lianhe, an official in the United Front Department also associated with the same centre, and Anthropology Professor Ma Rong of Peking University. These thinkers claim that the Soviet-based ethnic autonomy built into China’s constitutional structure was a mistake and should be replaced by a ‘depoliticised’ ethnic policy modelled on that of the United States, where ethnic groups have individual rights to equality but no rights to territorial autonomy and no state-supported educational or cultural maintenance. This would involve changing autonomous areas, prefectures, and counties in China into ordinary territorial units, and involve a transition to purely Chinese language education. During his trip to Tongliao, Gu Weiwei referred positively to these ideas

During this year’s delayed ‘Two Sessions’ that opened on 21 May, representatives of one of the eight legally recognised non-Communist parties in China, the Chinese Association for Promoting Democracy, submitted a proposal based on the ‘Second Generation Ethnic Policy’ viewpoint. This proposal sought a new law on the ‘National Common Spoken and Written Language’ (国家通用语言文字), arguing that new conditions in China made the existing law ‘unable

to meet the needs of economic and social development and of national development.' Specifically, this party argued that Inner Mongolia's ethnic educational policy was out of line with the promotion of a common national language.

Although the non-Communist parties in China do not have significant political power, they often speak for public intellectuals particularly in the 'advanced' coastal areas of China. The proposal by the Chinese Association for Promoting Democracy shares numerous verbal similarities with the new Inner Mongolian proposal, such as the reference not to 'Chinese language' but to 'National Common Spoken and Written Language'. Clearly the new policy in Inner Mongolia is in line with the thinking of many in China's wealthier and more cosmopolitan regions that see ethnic autonomy as an outdated legacy of Soviet tutelage and a drag on developing China's poorer and more rural West.

Education and the Mongols of Inner Mongolia

Q: How long has Mongolian-medium education existed in Inner Mongolia?

A: Formal education in the Mongolian language has existed in some form since the creation of the Mongolian alphabet in 1206. After the conversion of the Mongols to the Gelug (Yellow Hat) school of Tibetan Buddhism in 1581, Tibetan language education became strongly dominant for the 40 percent or more of children who spent some time in the monasteries. However, even after the Mongols came under the control of China's last dynasty, the Manchu Qing (1636–1912), the autonomous Mongol principalities, or 'banners,' continued to use Mongolian as the official language of administration, together with Manchu (Chinese was not allowed to be used in administration). Scribes in the local governments were expected to train a regular number of pupils each year. After 1901, as Beijing turned to a new settler colonialist policy of replacing Mongol herders with Han farmers, new Chinese schools were founded alongside the Tibetan-language monasteries. In response, a 'New Schools' movement promoted secular Mongolian language education, alongside Chinese language, as a new avenue for development and liberation. From 1931, in Japanese-occupied Inner Mongolia, these schools became part of a broad Mongolian-medium school system. After 1945, the Chinese Communist Party seemed to 'get' that aspiration for Mongolian cultural development in a way that the Nationalist Party did not. The Party won crucial support of Mongols in the Chinese Civil War by affirming this policy, which has continued, although in

increasingly limited form, to the present.

Q: What are the People's Republic of China's (PRC) policies on minority-language medium education? How have they changed?

A: From the founding of the PRC up through the 1980s, five minority languages were used as media for education: Mongolian, Uyghur, Tibetan, Kazakh, and Korean. In these languages pupils learned not just language and literature of their own language, but also math, natural and social sciences, and history. This policy continued in rural areas even through the Cultural Revolution, at least in Inner Mongolia. After 2000, Tibetan and Uyghur language education became increasingly restricted, in response to political unrest and the government's perceived need to monitor non-Chinese speakers. In Tibet, the beginning of Chinese language was advanced from third grade to first in 2001, and from 2010 to the present 'bilingual education' has been used as a label for promoting a movement from Tibetan as medium and Chinese as a subject to Chinese as the medium and Tibetan as the subject. In Xinjiang the transition was much more abrupt. From 2002 to 2005, Uyghur- and Kazakh-medium education in Xinjiang was replaced by Chinese-language education, with at most a few hours of Uyghur per week. Mongolian and Korean are thus the last of the five minority languages in which education in a full range of subjects occurs in the minority languages.

Q: Lots of dialects in China, like Cantonese and Hokkienese, don't even have one hour a day in the class to teach their language. Shouldn't Inner Mongolians be grateful to get that?

A: Mongolian language is completely unrelated to Chinese—it is not very closely related to any other language, but it is fairly similar in many ways to Turkish and Manchu. Its script is also a unique alphabet, written vertically, that ultimately derives from the Middle East. The Mongolian literary tradition that begins with the *Secret History of the Mongols* (c. 1252) and continues with poems, histories, philosophy, novels, and other writings is completely independent of the Chinese tradition. Thus, it cannot be compared to dialects of Chinese like Shanghainese (Wu), Fujianese (Hokkienese), Cantonese, and so on, in which famous figures of those provinces have long written in classical Chinese as a common language of all Sinitic language speakers.

Q: Why is Mongolian-language education so important in Inner Mongolia?

A: Even as steppe nomads, Mongols traditionally valued education. Whatever may be the case for other nomadic conquerors, the Mongols valued literacy, education, and religious and philosophical traditions. Legends of the Mongols destroying libraries in Baghdad or elsewhere are just that, legends, with no basis in fact. Before the twentieth century, Buddhist learning was highly valued, as were the traditional histories and rituals of Chinggis Khan and his successors. Although schools were small in scale, they were densely inhabited. Owen Lattimore reported in the 1920s that in his experience, the nomadic Mongols were more literate than the Chinese farmers colonising their grasslands.

As a result of this ‘New Schools’ movement in the early twentieth century, schooling acquired a deep significance for Inner Mongolians. The movement was also closely associated with Mongolian nationalism, and its proponents often also participated in pan-Mongolian movements to join independent Mongolia (then the Mongolian People’s Republic). But even when nationalist political movements reached a dead end, the importance of education continued. For many, cultural nationalism and educational renewal became a substitute for political nationalism. Enlightenment and schooling became the way to preserve the future of the Mongol people. Public schools teaching Mongolian thus acquired something like the significance for Mongols that Buddhist monasteries have for Tibetans and Islamic holidays and shrines have for Uyghurs.

Q: Don’t all Mongols speak Chinese anyway?

A: The misleading impression that the Mongols have been completely assimilated already is due to several factors: 1) Unlike the Uyghurs and Tibetans, the Mongols in Inner Mongolia did not have a significant urban tradition, and thus had no urban districts with a distinctively Mongol urban residential architecture—the Tibetan-style Buddhist monasteries of Höhhot and a few other cities are separate cases. 2) Mongols in urban areas are thus as a rule employed in Chinese enterprises and work units and speak relatively fluent Chinese. 3) The entire infrastructure of tourism and communication for visitors to Inner Mongolia is controlled and conducted in Chinese, thus establishing an expectation that Mongols meeting people from outside Inner Mongolia, whether fellow citizens of the PRC or foreigners, will of course speak only in Chinese, apart from a few stereotyped phrases.

Those who can actually speak Mongolian, whether visitors from independent Mongolia or the occasional specialist in Mongolian studies who speaks

Mongolian, find, however, that there is a whole second subculture of Mongolian speakers in urban areas of Inner Mongolia and in a few cities outside Inner Mongolia, such as Beijing. Inner Mongolian social media, such as Bainu, provide opportunities to communicate in a purely Mongolian environment.

Q: Mongols are only 17 percent of the population of Inner Mongolia. Isn't it impossible for them to think of preserving Mongolian language over the long term?

A: Although the Mongols are a very small percentage of the Inner Mongolian population as a whole, this statistic is very misleading. Inner Mongolia has several large cities and densely inhabited farming counties. But it also has a large number of 'banners'—traditionally Mongol county-level units—where herding or mixed herding and farming take place. In ten such 'banners' in Inner Mongolia, ethnic Mongols are the absolute majority; in another five, ethnic Mongols are more than a third of the population. Even in 'banners' where Mongols seem a small percentage, they often form local majorities. Since, however, areas where Mongols are the majority tend to have low population density, they can be easily overlooked in aggregate statistics.

That said, the process of urbanisation has undoubtedly accelerated the residential integration of Mongol and Han Chinese populations. The general Chinese trend of urbanisation has been accelerated in pastoral regions by targeted programmes such as 'ecological resettlement' (生态移民), which has dealt with real or purported over-grazing in steppe areas by resettling the majority of the residents to apartment blocks built in neighbouring towns or urban areas. Although these relocations have had varying results on the ground, they were always accompanied by the closing of rural (as a rule, Mongolian-medium) schools. At the same time, the expansion of mining has established new communities, almost purely Han Chinese, in previously Mongol areas.

This has been accompanied by an increase in intermarriage of Mongols with Han. In 1982, about 14 percent of all marriages were mixed marriages between Mongols and Han; today, among newly married Mongols, 40 percent of marriages are contracted with Han partners. This number remains very uneven, however, with strong pockets of mostly Mongol communities where intermarriage is quite rare.

Q: What percentage of ethnic Mongols in Inner Mongolia still speak

Mongolian?

A: Answering this question is difficult due to issues of definition both of who is a Mongol and what does it mean to ‘use’ a language. In the early 1980s, a large number of people previously considered Han who could claim one Mongol grandparent changed their registration to Mongol for a number of reasons; socially, however, most of them were not part of Mongol social circles and virtually none of them spoke Mongolian. It may be somewhat artificial thus to consider every person registered as a ‘Mongol’ by Chinese *minzu* (民族, ethnicity or nationality) as being Mongolian for sociolinguistic purposes. Similarly, it is common for people to answer questions about native or home language more according to how they think they should answer or would like to be able to answer.

As of 1988, it was estimated that almost 80 percent of the Mongols spoke Mongolian as their main or mother tongue. At present, this has dropped to around perhaps around 60 percent. As with intermarriage and demographics, this single figure conflates vastly different rates from districts where Mongolian language ability is virtually unknown among the resident Mongols to districts where it is still virtually universal.

Q: Do Mongol parents still desire Mongolian-language education for their children?

A: After China’s move towards a free market economy in the 1990s, the previous model for minority language education definitely showed stress. Although autonomous areas in China hire relatively large numbers of minority cadres, educators, and cultural workers, where the minority language is valued, commercial and industrial organisations, particularly if they are privately owned and Han dominated, tend to have overwhelming Chinese speaking environments. Such enterprises are much less likely to hire from Mongolian-medium schools.

As a result, the number of Mongols choosing Mongolian-medium school has slowly declined, from almost 60 percent in 1990 to a little over 30 percent today. At the same time, certain new opportunities for Mongolian-speakers have opened up, particularly representing Chinese investors operating in independent Mongolia, or Mongolian firms operating in China. Many Inner Mongolian students now also choose to study abroad in independent Mongolia, and Chinese government offers generous scholarships to students from independent Mongolia

to study in Inner Mongolia.

Q: How does the opposition deal with the claim that this policy is necessary to resolve the minorities' backwardness, illiteracy, and isolation from national life?

A: The ‘Second Generation National Policy’ policy school builds on a stereotype of all minorities in China as ‘poor’ and ‘backward’. This impression is widely shared in China, even by Mongols themselves. Arguments that separate minority-language education systems must thus be inferior in quality and a drag on development have a lot of surface plausibility in a Chinese context.

If backwardness is measured by illiteracy, however, this impression is false in Inner Mongolia. In fact ethnic Mongols in Inner Mongolia have a higher rate of literacy than the ethnic Chinese of Inner Mongolia. In 1982, illiterates were 24 percent of ethnic Mongols in Inner Mongolia over 12 years of age; for Han Chinese, the comparable figure was 26 percent.

Nor has Inner Mongolian education lacked quality. In response to the current crisis, a writer or writers using the pseudonym ‘Red Horse Reading Club’ pointed out that Shabag village in eastern Inner Mongolia has only 1,268 people, all Mongols educated in Mongolian, but it has produced ten current or graduate PhDs students, 17 MAs, and more than 290 university graduates. As he concluded, ‘This nationality education system in Inner Mongolia is the successful realisation of the Party’s nationalities policy’—it’s not broken, so it doesn’t need fixing.

Opposition to the New Policy and Prospects for the Future

Q: How are Inner Mongolian activists responding to this new policy?

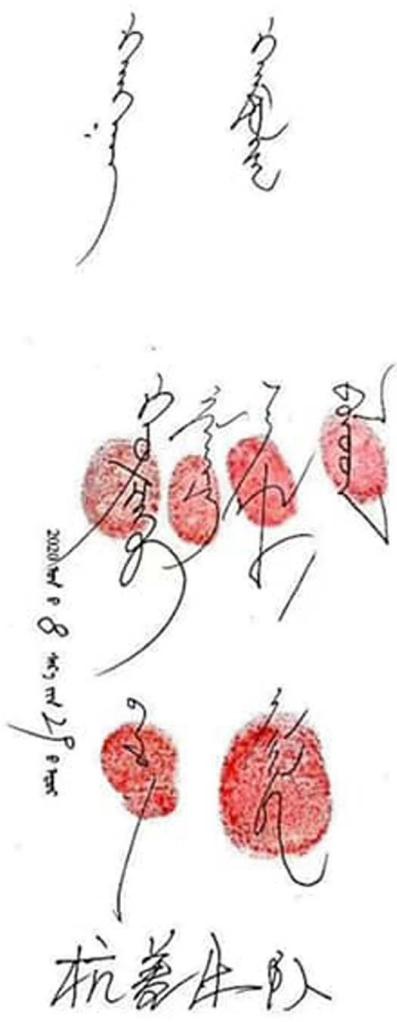
A: Currently Mongols in Inner Mongolia are actively petitioning against it. Within two days of the public announcement of the policy on 6 July, 4,200 petitions had already been circulated. Undoubtedly vastly more have signed since then. Following regular Chinese practice, petitioners have been giving their fingerprints in red ink and sometimes their ID numbers along with the signatures; many such petitions have been shared on social media. The opposition is said to be particularly strong in Shiliin Gol League, the east-central region of Inner Mongolia and the region that sets the dialect standard for

Mongolian language. Some have shared videos in which *sumu* (township level units) show petitions claiming that 100 percent of the households have signed.

In one petition shared on social media, 85 teachers from the Mongolian Ethnic Primary School in Plain Blue Banner (Zhenglan Qi) in Shiliin Gol signed their names. In signing, they imitated Inner Mongolia's famous pre-revolutionary 'circles' or *duguilang* resistance groups, who signed their names in a circle so that leaders could not be singled out for punishment. Many other schools have followed suit. Nine of Inner Mongolia's most popular bands have also shared petitions against the new proposal on social media.



2019年8月26日，蒙古国乌兰巴托。蒙古国歌手杭盖乐队在乌兰巴托的表演。杭盖乐队由七位成员组成，他们都是蒙古族人，擅长演唱蒙古民歌。他们的音乐风格融合了传统蒙古音乐和现代流行音乐元素，受到了许多人的喜爱。杭盖乐队的名字“杭盖”在蒙古语中意为“苍狼”，象征着他们对草原和自然的热爱。



Petition signed by Inner Mongolian rock band Hanggai.

Anonymous leaflets have also actively circulated, calling for demonstrations to take place in each of the twelve major administrative centres of Inner Mongolia. They also advocate a student-and-teacher strike beginning with the first day of school on Tuesday, 1 September. Already videos have been shared of rural parents gathering at town boarding schools to take their students back home. It is difficult to tell from outside the region, but the call for a student-and-teacher strike actually seems to be getting some traction.

The overwhelming emphasis of the petitioners is that Mongolian-medium education has been successful and has existed in the PRC for 70 years. They thus claim to be simply defending an existing, successful policy, not demanding any new rights or any change in China's constitutional structure.

Petitioners accuse the new policies of violating both the PRC's constitutional guarantee of the right to use and develop their own language and the Autonomy Law of the PRC, of violating the spirit of Xi Jinping Thought, and of damaging ethnic unity between Mongols and Han. Slogans at the projected demonstration are supposed to be 'non-political' and focussed solely on protecting legally guaranteed language rights. Undoubtedly there is a large amount of rhetorical calculation in this stance, as well as sincere commitment to maintaining the constitutional status quo. How much pragmatism and how much sincere commitment is impossible to say.

It should also be noted that proponents of the 'Second Generation Ethnic Policy', which many Mongols have identified as the source of this policy, do indeed regard the constitutional framework of China's ethnic policy to be fundamentally flawed and in need of revision. To that degree, activists' point that they are the ones, and not the proponents of the new policy, who are standing for the PRC's existing constitutionally-based autonomy policy is not just rhetoric, but a fact.

Q: How have the authorities responded?

A: It seems clear from the openness of the petition and demonstration activity that there must be considerable behind-the-scenes support for the movement from ethnic Mongol cadres and supportive Han colleagues. Social media discussion of the topic at first was not blocked, despite the *sub rosa* nature of the

policy roll out. But in a harbinger of things to come, Chimedдоржийн, a famous historian with his doctorate from Bonn University and head of the Mongolian Study Center of Inner Mongolian University, was removed from his position on 7 August for making a nine-minute viral video criticising the new proposal.

On 23 August, the Mongolian social media application Bainu was closed, and discussions of ‘Bilingual Education’ were removed from WeChat and other Chinese sites. Numerous Mongols report receiving late night phone calls from police officers telling them to cease participating in the movement and threatening that those who participate in the upcoming demonstrations or strikes will be fired.

On 28 August, police in Höhhot began breaking up public meetings to collect petitions and activists began to receive invitations to come to the police office ‘to have tea’ (a common method of warning in China).

The next day, state-owned media gave high-profile official reassurance in the name of the Inner Mongolian Party secretary Shi Taifeng that five things would not change:

- No other change to the curriculum in Inner Mongolia’s ethnic primary and junior high schools;
- No change to textbooks;
- No change to the language and script of instruction;
- No change to the hours of Mongolian and Korean classes;
- No change to the current model of bilingual instruction

This ‘Five No Changes’ (五个不变) slogan just reiterates assurances already given in the official documents; more important is that it puts the Party hierarchy firmly behind the new policy.

Q: Is this the first time the Inner Mongolian government has tried to curtail or eliminate Mongolian-medium education?

A: No. Beginning in the 1990s, there have been sporadic attempts to limit Mongolian-medium education. Such a proposal was made in 1993, but it was defeated by a mobilisation of cadres, particularly from Eastern Inner Mongolia, where traditions of Mongolian language education are particularly strong, and which is the place of origin for many of Inner Mongolia’s ethnic cadres. There was another attempt in 2018, which again appears to have been defeated through

mobilisation of cadres in Inner Mongolia. These episodes established a pattern of working within the system to defend Mongolian language. In this strategy, the support of Mongol cadres is crucial. Although Mongols are only 17 percent of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region's population, they are over a third of the cadres and include the region's chair, and many vice chairs (although not the secretary of the region's Communist Party committee).

Q: Who's leading the resistance? Are they outside Inner Mongolia?

A: So far, the resistance is public at the grassroots, but anonymous in leadership, if any, and entirely rooted in Inner Mongolia. It is hard to believe that this degree of opposition is possible without significant leadership, probably from ethnic Mongol cadres within the Inner Mongolian government as well as the teachers themselves. But all proponents on social media picture themselves simply as ordinary teachers, students, and parents.

From the beginning, information about this new policy and resistance to it has travelled along social, local place, and kinship networks to those outside Inner Mongolia. In these networks, Mongols in Japan have played a crucial role. Until recently, Japanese was, for historical and linguistic reasons, the most widely taught foreign language in Inner Mongolia's Mongolian-medium schools—the replacement of Japanese by English in these schools is just another aspect of the convergence of Inner Mongolian education with broader Chinese national trends. A number of Inner Mongolian scholars such as Yang Haiying have built successful careers in Japan and they have become key figures in petitioning and spreading knowledge about these movements. Similarly, the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Centre has played that role in the United States. Mongols abroad often package news of resistance in Inner Mongolia with a much more radical edge, seeing the new policy as the culmination of a long Chinese programme of assimilation. It is unclear to what degree this perspective is shared inside Inner Mongolia.

Q: We hear a lot about Tibet and Xinjiang, but not so much about Inner Mongolia. How similar are these cases? How different?

A: Compared to Uyghurs and Tibetans, Mongols in China have sometimes been positioned as a 'model minority'—a position that is even more commonly applied to the Koreans of China. Mongolian nationalism has existed in Inner Mongolia and was a strong force from the mid-1920s through the 1940s, and has

existed in covert forms through the present. However, armed resistance by anti-Communist Mongols was mostly crushed by 1952 and flight of refugees to independent Mongolia has not been common. There have not been any massive and highly visible instances of interethnic conflict like the 2008 unrest in Lhasa or the 2009 Shaoguan lynching and the demonstrations in response in Ürümqi.

From its origins in the late nineteenth century, Mongolian nationalism has been strongly secular. This secularism and common participation in the Moscow-led world Communist movement were the grounds on which Mongolian nationalist movements based in the eastern part of the region were able to forge a strong alliance with the Chinese Communist Party. This alliance was deeply damaged during the Cultural Revolution, when Mongols suffered from a massive and brutal ethnically directed purge, the so-called ‘Nei Ren Dang’ (内人党) case, based on the allegation that a secret Mongol nationalist party still existed and was controlling Inner Mongolian policy. In the words of one writer, in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, many Mongols felt that ‘In return for our milk-white kindness we received a black curse.’ These words were written about the Gang of Four but have often been taken by Mongols to apply to the Chinese state as a whole.

Despite these grievances, however, the focus of Mongolian nationalism on secular education, an area of cultural life controlled and funded by the state, has made the partnership of educated Mongols with the Party-state relatively more harmonious compared to Tibet or Xinjiang. Inner Mongolian society and culture remains ‘legible’ to Han Chinese in a way that Uyghur and Tibetan society and culture, seen through the lenses of Islamophobia and secularist discourses about ‘primitive superstition’, has not been.

There are certainly nationalists in Inner Mongolia who think outside the Chinese constitutional framework. But Mongol nationalists are far less openly radical and the repressive powers of the Chinese state are far less in evidence in Inner Mongolia than in Tibet or Xinjiang—a fact often lamented by Mongol nationalists outside China. Yet when dissidence has emerged, such as in the 2011 wave of protests over a protesting herder being killed by a truck driver for a coal mine, the ‘carrot’ brandished along with the ‘stick’ of repression has usually taken the form of support for Mongolian cultural and educational institutions.

More importantly, even among those adjusted to the system, there is a strong

sense of a Mongol ethnonational community with corporate interests that can be furthered by the Chinese state—or betrayed. The ‘model minority’ positioning that Mongols often embrace, of loyalty freely given to the Chinese state, has at the same time the possibility of turning into claims of Chinese bad faith. Claims by activists that the new policy endangers ‘ethnic unity’ are an implicit threat that such sentiments of betrayal could be reengaged today in response.

Q: Why adopt this new policy now? Are there long-term causes?

A: Over the long term, Mongolian-medium education has been in decline, its percentage of Mongolian school age children dropping by about half since 1990. Urbanisation, accelerated by ‘ecological migration’ and other policies, has diminished residential segregation. The changing labour market makes it more difficult for Mongolian-medium school graduates to find jobs. At the same time, the rise of Chinese nationalism, and the sense that Uyghur and Tibetan nationalist movements threaten China’s geopolitical interests, and the new ‘Second Generation Ethnic Policy’ movement show that tolerance for open expression of ethnic diversity in public life is waning.

All of these factors have made implementation of this policy more thinkable. Yet even now, it is important to remember that the implementing documents envision the possibility of needing large numbers of new and temporary teachers to make up for the lack of existing Chinese-trained teachers. Mongolian-language education may have been ailing, but it is by no means dead.

A comparison can be made here with the Buryat Mongols of Siberia. After the Russian Revolution, Buryat Mongols, with help from the Russian Communist government, created a system of ethnic Buryat-language medium schools. This school system was in fact one of the models for the system adopted in Inner Mongolia from the 1940s. It survived the Stalin purges and the thaw under Khrushchev. But from middle of the 1960s, the Buryat-medium classes were slowly curtailed and eventually by the mid-1970s eliminated, leaving only Buryat as a subject of instruction and a skeletal infrastructure of radio and TV. Even if the market economy was not a factor in the Soviet Union’s case, many of the long-term factors used to explain these changes are similar to those at work in Inner Mongolia: urbanisation, diversification in the labour market, a retreat from earlier liberalising trends. The result was a further decline in Buryat language skills such that it is now almost a purely rural, ‘kitchen’ language, rarely spoken in public contexts, and not used even at home by the majority of

urban Buryats.

Q: Are there specific short-term reasons?

A: There is no way to know at present about any specific short-term reasons for implementing the new policy. In recent years, educational and ideological centralisation and control has clearly been a focus of the Xi Jinping administration. We also know from the process of curriculum and class material unification that since 2017, the central government has been desiring greater linguistic, educational, and ideological unification in the autonomous areas. The Covid-19 pandemic removed one major possible reason for hesitation: the increasingly thick social connections between independent Mongolia and Inner Mongolia. The closing of the border with Mongolia and the rupture of personal travel between Inner Mongolia and the Mongol diaspora in Japan removed at least one possible source of uncertainty about the consequences.

Q: How likely is it to be successful?

A: The previous successful resistance in 1993 and 2018 is perhaps a model for this movement. At that time, the push for change was much less intense, and hence the popular mobilisation was much less widespread. In 2011, a wave of demonstrations occurred in Inner Mongolia, when a herder was killed by a truck driver during a local demonstration against the occupation of local grasslands by a mining company. The result was some new environmental regulations, sacking the local Party chief, and the execution of the truck driver.

But the best precedent for this movement may be the large student demonstrations of 1981–82, in which Mongol students from Inner Mongolia demonstrated against the continued prioritisation of farming over herding and the government sponsorship of outside Han migration into Inner Mongolia. Those demonstrations ended with a partial victory; policy was changed to prioritise herding and the demonstration leaders were given qualified amnesty. Presumably this is the most realistic positive outcome for the resistance now: revocation of the new policy, return to the status quo, and non-persecution of the participants and leaders.

Unfortunately, although the actual policy implementation has been at the regional level, without direct involvement of the central organs, news broadcasts announcing the policy did explicitly mention the support from the centre. Thus a

retreat in which the autonomous region leadership would take the fall for mistaken policies, and the situation would return to the uneasy equilibrium of the past, seems unlikely.

Moreover, the current moment is hardly propitious. The rupture of international people-to-people ties due to the pandemic, the palpable sense of crisis in China's relations with the outside world, the continued and unremitting repression in Xinjiang and Tibet: all make it hard to envision a public retreat being allowed by the Chinese government at this point. Smart money would have to be on a big show of repression on 1 September, a fizzling of the demonstrations, punishment of a few selected ringleaders, and a sullen acquiescence.

In the short term, the 'Five No Changes' slogan of 29 August would halt in the middle the transition from 'Model 1' bilingual education (Mongolian as medium; Chinese as subject) to 'Model 2' (Chinese as medium; Mongolian as subject). But even if this is where things eventually land, the need to issue loud reassurance that no further changes will be made would show that only continued resistance can slow the decline of Mongolian-medium instruction.

The call for demonstrations on 1 September specifically warns that 'Since the opposition will probably have to go on for many days, please be spiritually prepared.' If significant demonstrations and/or student-and-teacher strikes do emerge, the open opposition on social media and by petitions will certainly give the authorities a large number of targets if they opt for large-scale repression. If the strikes do gain traction and authorities follow through on the threat to fire striking Mongolian teachers and staff, the authorities would have the need and opportunity to transform Inner Mongolian schools in one blow. In the short run, such a response might be feasible, but it will mark a fundamental change in the relationship of ethnic Mongols, particularly the educated elites, to the Chinese state.

Cover Photo: Petition against the new bilingual education policy in both Chinese and Mongolian signed by all the residents of Dalanhua village, Chifeng municipality.



Christopher P. Atwood

Christopher P. Atwood (PhD 1994, Indiana University) is a professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Pennsylvania, where he teaches the history of Mongolia and the Inner Asian borderlands of China. He is the author of *Young Mongols and Vigilantes in Inner Mongolia's Interregnum Decades* (2002), and *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (2004).

[原文](#)

[返回目录](#)

Germany is launching a new experiment in basic income

[返回目录](#)



Jürgen Schupp, left, a senior research fellow at the German Institute for Economic Research, is leading a new long-term study on basic income.

Starting this month, life is about to get easier for 120 Germans. They will receive 1,200 euros (\$1,430) every month for three years as part of a new experiment in basic income.

The general idea behind basic income — that the government should give every citizen a regular infusion of free money with no strings attached — has moved from the fringes into the mainstream over the past few years, with several countries running trials to test its effects.

The coronavirus pandemic has only made basic income more popular. With the crisis generating so much financial loss and uncertainty, advocates around the world are arguing that citizens desperately need some sort of guaranteed income. In the US, a coalition of mayors is pushing for this, while in Spain, monthly payments have been going to the nation's poorest families since June.

In Germany, the amount being given to the 120 participants in the new study is just above the country's poverty line. It certainly won't make them Rockefellers, but it may ease their experience during the pandemic. They will fill out questionnaires about how the basic income has affected their emotional wellbeing, home life, and work life. Their responses will then be compared with the responses of a control group: 1,380 people who are not receiving a basic income.

The German Institute for Economic Research is conducting the study. It is funded by 140,000 private donations collected by a nonprofit group called Mein Grundeinkommen.

That group has been active in this arena for years. In 2014, it used crowdfunding to set up a basic income raffle. By the end of 2019, it had awarded almost 500 basic incomes to people all over the world who had submitted their names. Each received about \$1,100 per month for a year. According to FastCompany, 80 percent of recipients said the income made them less anxious, more than half said it enabled them to continue their education, and 35 percent said they feel more motivated at work.

This is consistent with the evidence available so far about basic income, which suggests that it tends to boost happiness, health, school attendance, and trust in social institutions, while reducing crime. The effect on employment status is a bit more equivocal, but a major trial in Finland found that basic income doesn't seem to be a disincentive to finding work — a concern that critics have raised about basic income.

Still, those worries persist. And critics claim that a basic income could cheat economies out of productivity, and cheat individuals out of the sense of meaning that work can bring. Plus, they say, it's just plain unaffordable for the government to pay every citizen enough to live on regardless of whether they work. The evidence so far does not support these critiques.

Jürgen Schupp, who is directing the new experiment in Germany, told *Der Spiegel* that the study will allow everyone to have a more evidence-based debate.

"The debate about the basic income has so far been like a philosophical salon in good moments and a war of faith in bad times," he said. "It is — on both sides

— shaped by clichés: Opponents claim that with a basic income people would stop working in order to dull on the couch with fast food and streaming services. Proponents argue that people will continue to do fulfilling work, become more creative and charitable, and save democracy.”

Schupp said he wants to raise the quality of the debate by replacing clichés with empirical knowledge. That’s something everyone should be able to get behind, whatever their preexisting notions about basic income.

[原文](#)

[返回目录](#)

The end of liberal democracy in the Philippines

[返回目录](#)



President Rodrigo Duterte delivers a message at the Heroes Hall in Malacañan on September 12, 2016

On July 3 2020, despite waves of popular resistance and incisive legal critique, President Rodrigo Duterte passed an Anti-Terrorism law that would give the executive government sweeping powers to imprison and repress political activists under the guise of combating terrorism. These powers include the ability of the executive branch to authorize what amount to warrantless arrests, the arbitrary detention of those suspected of aiding or inciting terrorism for up to 24 days, and the complete supersession of judicial checks on presidential authority. Understandably, many Filipinos are concerned that the law's passage will usher in a new era of repression, akin to martial law under the Marcos dictatorship. Yet unlike the Marcos dictatorship, **Duterte's right wing populism stems from decades of liberal democracy that failed to address the economic needs of the Filipino people.**

The proponents of Philippine liberal democracy, from President Corazon “Cory” Aquino to her son Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino, essentially promised the Filipino people that poverty and economic inequality could be quelled through anti-corruption measures and liberal political reform. However, liberal reforms only ended up entrenching the institutional power of

political dynasties without meaningfully improving the lives of the most oppressed, providing the stage for Duterte's rise to power on a populist, anti-elite platform. The Anti-Terrorism Bill, now codified into law, is the resurgence of right wing populism, sprouting from the carcass of the EDSA Revolution's co-optation by the liberal elite.

In 1986, the People Power Revolution (also known as the EDSA revolution) led to the ousting of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos and the presidency of Corazon "Cory" Aquino. As the wife of assassinated senator and Marcos-opponent Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, Cory's rise was hailed worldwide as the triumph of democracy against Marcos' dictatorial regime. She symbolized a newfound Filipino commitment to the ideals of liberal democracy, which were enshrined as principles in the 1987 Constitution. Yet despite Cory's widespread support, she was never able to unify the various political forces who challenged or who stood against the Marcos regime. Instead, her presidency is best understood as a tug-of-war between a wide range of coalitions who sought to influence the new spokesperson of the Filipino people.

Roughly, these coalitions can be divided up into the radical (primarily national democratic) left, who wanted to extend the promise of liberal democracy into genuine agrarian reform and economic justice; the more centrist upper-middle classes, which consisted of Church officials, and business leaders who despite welcoming an end to Marcos-era repression, only paid lip service to the ideals of free elections and speech; and right-wing military groups such as the Reform the Armed Forces Movement, whose aspirations for a strong repressive state in the mold of Marcos led them to launch a series of failed coups against the Aquinos. In the end, Cory's own strong ties to landholding interests (her family's landholdings included the over 6,000 hectare sugar plantation Hacienda Luisita), coupled with internal strife within the Philippine left, led her government on a path of socially conservative, economically neoliberal policy making coupled with a public commitment to liberal democratic norms.

The national democratic left, who broke decisively with Cory after she oversaw the killing of 21 peasants protesting for land reform on Mendiola Bridge in January 1987, remained the most vocal critics of her new liberal order. They rightfully saw that Cory's commitment to democratic principles and constitutional freedoms meant nothing if those principles were not coupled with economic justice and genuine agrarian reform. Yet the left's own political

legitimacy had been weakened after they failed to participate in the broad coalition that helmed the People Power Revolution. As such, their critique of Cory went unheeded by the government. Despite reforming the Constitution to place greater checks on presidential power, she simultaneously continued the neoliberal economic agenda of Marcos' regime.

Today, around one million Filipinos leave the country each year to work abroad.

Cory's now infamous refusal to repudiate the national debt upon her rise to power, alongside her continued pursuit of foreign investment and loans from the IMF and the World Bank, caused the Philippines to be further incorporated into the neoliberal world system. The primary consequence of this rising debt was a state-sponsored surge in overseas Filipino workers, who today can be seen throughout the globe doing precarious labor as seafarers, nurses, and domestic workers. This turn to overseas employment for Filipinos was first encouraged by the Marcos government, which sought to service the national debt with the remittances workers sent home. Despite rejecting Marcos' dictatorial regime, Cory essentially continued his policies of labor export. Under Cory, the Philippine state brokered contracts with foreign states to have Filipino workers fill labor demand; meanwhile, at home, her government began recasting overseas Filipino workers as national heroes, pushing more and more Filipinos to consider work abroad as a preferable alternative to a lack of domestic opportunities. Today, around one million Filipinos leave the country each year to work abroad.

Cory's popular global and national appeal arose from her reputation as an icon of emergent democracy. Describing her presidential campaign against Marcos before the United States Congress in 1986, she presented herself as a self-conscious champion of a people who longed for the restoration of democratic norms: "Wherever I went in the campaign, slum area or impoverished village, they came to me with one cry, democracy. Not food, although they clearly needed it but democracy. Not work, although they surely wanted it but democracy." However, despite her lip service to democratic practice, Cory continued the brutal military repression of activists who challenged the fragile consensus between center and right that she had brokered, with extrajudicial killings rising under her regime.

Filipinos who were born in the early to late '90s live in a post-Cory era where the subsequent presidents combined economic liberalization, a rhetorical

commitment to anti-corruption measures and political reform, and the military repression of dissent under the broad banner of “liberal democracy.” Under Cory’s successor Fidel Ramos, the police and military apparatus were given more powers, forcing communist and Muslim separatist revolutionary movements in the southern Philippines to cede ground. Meanwhile, Ramos’ socio-economic Philippines 2000 program, which was designed to hasten industry development, only further increased the hold of foreign capital on the Filipino people. Under Ramos, state and paramilitary forces conducted military operations against local communities to clear the way for foreign mining and other projects of resource extraction.

By the time the Philippines’ subsequent presidents came into power, the cracks of decades of neoliberal policies began to show. Corruption grew rampant. Foreign capital remained among a clique of landlords, business tycoons, local politician-warlords, who allied with whichever regime was in power. Elections and protests remained regular, but felt more like empty gestures towards an unrealized aspiration for democracy than genuine power to the people. These democratic practices continued to be marred by political violence; in a particularly egregious case in 2009, 57 people were murdered by the militia of Maguindanao mayor Andal Ampatuan, Jr. for their support of an opposition candidate. During this time, the government also disappeared many activists who went too far in their demands for economic justice. Among the middle and upper classes, political disaffection replaced the democratic enthusiasm of the EDSA revolution.

While bankers, real estate developers, and business owners benefited from lower interest rates and a rising GDP, the share of agricultural and manufacturing sectors in the economy stagnated or shrunk.

President Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino’s presidency was, in retrospect, the dying breath of a liberal democratic consensus that for the preceding decades had tried to keep the masses pliant. Noynoy became a popular candidate after the death of his mother Cory Aquino because he promised to continue her legacy of democratic reform and ran on a presidential slogan that promised to end poverty by ending corruption. However, Noynoy only oversaw increasing economic inequality. While bankers, real estate developers, and business owners benefited from lower interest rates and a rising GDP, the share of agricultural and manufacturing sectors in the economy stagnated or shrunk. Meanwhile, his ostensible commitment to combating dynastic corruption was belied by his own

membership in one of the most prominent political families in the Philippines. Increasingly, it became clear to the Filipino people that Aquino's version of liberal democracy and economic growth ultimately benefited the elite—from enterprising business owners to entrenched political dynasties.

This environment of political disillusionment set the stage of Rodrigo Duterte's rise to power as a presidential candidate who rhetorically positioned himself as an outsider—a foul-mouthed, truth-telling strongman from southern Mindanao who would not put up with the pretensions of an imperial elite that ranged from Manila to Washington. His strong stance against criminals and drug dealers provided a popular scapegoat for the socioeconomic ills of the country, deftly situating the blame for poverty not on a lack of economic justice or agrarian reform, but rather on the poor choices of social malcontents. His campaign painted an image of a nation on the brink of disaster, assailed by drug lords and armed communist insurgents, which required a leader who could substitute democratic practice with the violent exercise of political will. Ultimately, Duterte's election can be understood as the people's verdict on the failure of the Aquinos to deliver on the promises of their cacique-led liberal democracy.

Liberal democracy, as practiced by the landed elite and dynastic families of our nation, has never worked.

More than 30 years after the EDSA revolution, we stand in a new era of executive power and political repression. If we fail to recognize that Duterte's popularity is a result of the past few decades' inability to create economic justice for ordinary people, we risk making the same mistakes as our predecessors. Liberal democracy, as practiced by the landed elite and dynastic families of our nation, has never worked. Neither will Duterte's military authoritarian regime, despite its promises of social change through the eradication of drug users and leftist dissenters. As we condemn Duterte's dictatorial rule, let us also call for a democracy that challenges the limits of economic liberalism, one that is committed to overturning the economic status quo in favor of the masses.

In the face of terror, let us continue to dream. *Makibaka, huwag matakot.*

[原文](#)

[返回目录](#)

‘Queer Eye’, Jordan Peterson and the battle for depressed men

[返回目录](#)

‘Queer Eye’, Jordan Peterson and the battle for depressed men

Progressives need to learn from the Netflix show’s battles against toxic masculinity. And the Fab Five need to recruit a trade union organiser.



The Fab Five: Jonathan Van Ness, Karamo Brown, Bobby Berk, Tan France, and Antoni Porowski. | (Photo By Sthanlee B. Mirador/Sipa USA)

While I was undercover at a far Right conference in Italy last year, it was easy to hide how I really felt about the people I was ‘befriending’. I’d been feigning enthusiasm for years.

Just before I went on that trip, I'd finally gone to see my GP. After nine months of therapy I was still utterly miserable, and my counsellor had suggested it was time to start trying pills.

It had felt good to say the words out loud – “I think I have some combination of depression and ADHD.” And it had felt even better when the doctor listened, asked careful questions, prescribed fluoxetine for the former and referred me to a specialist for the latter – leading to a diagnosis this spring.

We'd agreed I'd start on the pills after my time posing as an alt-Right donor in Verona (the snooze-inducing side effects in the first month wouldn't sit well with the work). And so as I hustled my way into the ultra-conservative networks at the World Congress of Families – spinning my cover story to a senior adviser to Marine Le Pen, breakfasting with a rock-star of alt-Right YouTube, conspiring with the man who does phone-tracking for Trump – I had to spend half my brainpower on grinding back against an endless cycle of unwanted thoughts. To pretend that my torso was something other than an insatiable black hole.

But that was nothing new.

Netflix therapy

I'd got through the previous months with patient support from my partner, and two brilliant Netflix shows, Rachel Bloom's mental-health musical ‘Crazy Ex-Girlfriend’, and the rebooted ‘Queer Eye’, a careful exploration of toxic masculinity and male depression in the dying days of neoliberalism, neatly tucked into the format of a makeover reality TV show.

In each ‘Queer Eye’ episode, the ‘Fab Five’ co-hosts give a struggling hero – usually a depressed man – a lifestyle refresh: teaching him to cook something scrumptious, buying him stylish clothes, grooming him, doing up his house and supporting him to confront troubles in their life.

What this means for each character varies. But the underlying message of every cry-athon episode is the same. Toxic masculinity and competitive ultra-capitalism have taught men life lessons which make us miserable. To find joy, we need to unlearn.

While reality TV is notoriously cruel, the ‘Queer Eye’ cast specialise in kindness. Each of them opens up about their own struggles: grooming expert Jonathan Van Ness is an HIV+ non-binary former sex worker and ex-meth addict. Interior designer Bobby Berk is estranged from his Bible-belt family, and was a homeless teenager.

Culture expert Karamo Brown is of Jamaican-Mexican heritage, grew up “very poor” and became a father at 17. Fashion aficionado Tan France comes from a “very strict” Muslim household in Doncaster, and is one of the first openly gay people of South Asian descent on a major show. Chef Antoni Porowski, the son of Polish migrants to Canada, is estranged from his mother.

Each episode, I would sob to a stream of touching moments and familiar feelings, and an unbearable pressure would slip from my chest.

Far Right masculinity

As I gossiped around that Veronese conference hall, I realised I had rarely met people who so desperately needed to learn from the Fab Five.

The event was a sort of rally for far Right forces hoping to storm the European elections. But the combination of speakers seemed a bit incongruous: Catholic bishops and alt-Right YouTube stars; Italian far Right politicians and American evangelical pastors. **While most started their speeches by announcing the enormous number of children they had fathered – as though success comes with the capacity to ejaculate** – they were otherwise an odd mix.

When you met their audience, it all made sense. This was a world which gave struggling men meaning. Rather than helping us confront our demons, it suggested we worship them, weaving myths about masculine superiority, encouraging a world in which husbands and fathers are mini-dictators. A world where “the strong and the weak will know their place”, as Franco’s great grandson, the self-proclaimed heir to the French throne, declared from the main stage.

The key preacher in this world wasn’t any priest. He wasn’t even there: it was Jordan Peterson.

The rise of Peterson

Over the previous year my brothers and male friends and I – most of us stalked by our own black dogs – had watched in horror as the alt-Right Canadian psychology professor conquered YouTube. Like an addictive substance, he lured depressed young men back to the toxic behaviours and power hierarchies which crushed their souls. And he won fame.

Initially, he got it by demanding a return to traditional gender roles. Peterson first became famous pretending that new Canadian laws would require him to use trans people's preferred pronouns, and raging against this invented injustice. He has criticised the Pill, and its impact on the relationship between women and men, and is best known for comparing humans to lobsters, which he claims have strict social hierarchies.

He also has a history of sympathising with Adolf Hitler.

Peterson says he's a follower of Carl Jung, the Swiss founder of analytic psychology most famous for the idea of 'collective unconscious'. But like too many in a field which tends to treat problems as personal rather than social, Peterson treats our shared instincts and archetypes as almost mystical and unchanging forces, rather than the product of a society in which we all participate. He encourages fans to accept their place in a world where we almost all suffer from collective and unconscious racism, sexism and snobbery, rather than seeking to change it.

Peterson tries to understand the collective unconscious by glimpsing the flickerings of dreams and reading between the lines of myths. But social scientists have shown how the invisible lenses through which we all see the world aren't cast down by the gods or conjured up by magic. They are ground by history and economics and culture and the struggles of people against power. They are best explained not by Carl Jung in his tower on Lake Zurich, but by Antonio Gramsci in his prison cell on the Adriatic.

Like Jung, Gramsci showed that our subconscious shapes how we see the world. But unlike Jung, he was able to explain how our subconscious is itself shaped by the world: not by mystical interventions or mythical memories, but by human institutions, like schools, churches, armies and the arts. For nearly a century, rigorous research has developed our understanding of what he called 'hegemony', challenging us to question the 'common sense' we're taught to intuit.

Just as Gramsci was jailed by Mussolini, the propagandists of the powerful have long sought to shut these thinkers down, and sold us nonsense instead.

Writer and publisher Dan Hind offers an explanation for Peterson's cult. Because they focus your mind on your mood, any self-help book delivers positive feelings – briefly: the average is six weeks. But that's long enough to encourage friends to buy the book, and to crave a return to the nice feelings once they have passed.

This is why self-help is great for publishing companies. A world that makes people depressed endlessly produces mini-cults and sales booms. But like any addictive substance, the buzz soon goes, leaving victims pining for the next fix, and publishers with the next hit.

There are exceptions. Rumi's reflections endure. Much of religion can be seen as self-help. But Peterson was only different from the more fleeting examples of his genre because he tapped into a vast alt-Right YouTube universe.

The fan boys

I've interviewed people in streets across Central Europe about the far Right, and I've run into many who are susceptible to the firm hand of ultraconservative psychobabble. The well-dressed young man in Košice, eastern Slovakia, who I met in February and who raged, in English, against 'gender ideology'. The multilingual middle-class woman in Poprad in the High Tatra Mountains who was a member of the neo-Nazi party because of her opposition to LGBTQI rights. The young far Right activists in Zagreb in 2018 who were campaigning against the Istanbul convention on gendered violence, because its definition of gender is trans-inclusive.

And there was Madrid last year. At the end of my time at the World Congress of Families in Verona, the half of me that was there trudged onto a plane to Spain, having connected with the far Right party Vox. A few days later, I sat, soulless, in the lobby of a swanky hotel trying to focus past the grinding in my head and onto my conversation with the man behind Vox, the Spanish-American Ivan Esponosa de Los Monteros, who had been told I was a potential donor.

He talked smoothly in the language of the World Congress of Families, gently suggesting that gender-violence laws discriminated against men, that equal

marriage gives same-sex couples not equality, but superiority, because they ‘uniquely’ couldn’t have children. Marriage, apparently, is intended for biological parents.

Like Peterson, he tried to frame himself as the real warrior for human rights, the true liberal.

Esponosa invited me to a vast Vox rally in a bullring outside Madrid. There, the tone was different. Wrapped in flags and with the energy of the crowd, the party’s neo-fascist roots were showing. But while the racism was implied, the sexism was clear: the testosterone in the amphitheatre gave it the aroma of a Trumpian locker room.



The Vox rally. The flag reads "España do Facha, Vox" - roughly "fascist Spain, Vox". | Adam Ramsay

The attraction of these movements shouldn’t be surprising. If you are the sort of person who is accustomed to being given power by social hierarchies – white, male, straight – then those who tell you to wield that power with pride, that doing so will make you feel alive, will always be a source of temptation.

One reason that openDemocracy’s Tracking the Backlash project focuses on the war on women’s and LGBTQI rights is that toxic masculinity is a key ingredient

in the cocktail that has intoxicated so many young men in recent years, and drawn them into far Right movements.

Just as we can't fully understand the rise of Trump without understanding Gamergate, incels, and the 4Chan community, we can't understand the elite institutions driving us to authoritarian capitalism without understanding the sociology, psychology and social movements of toxic masculinity.

'Queer Eye' season five

In late 2019, Jordan Peterson checked into rehab in Russia, crashing from public life. A fad steak-and-salt diet “the world’s most influential intellectual” had promoted to millions seems to have left him gravely sick. The cosmic battle between Peterson with his ‘toughen up’ masculine individualism and the Fab Five with their emotional solidarity was a key front in the culture war. And the new season of ‘Queer Eye’ is a victory parade.

In season five, released on Netflix this summer, the politics stops being subtle. They help a gay pastor accept himself. They study the psychological violence of Black impoverishment in three episodes with heroes bound by its chains. They show the struggle of migrant families through the eyes of a fishmonger and a pediatrician.

They even spend a week with a young climate activist, helping ensure that she and her Sunrise Movement housemates don’t burn out in their drive to stop the planet from burning. And of course they return to their old theme of toxic masculinity.

While it’s easy to criticise the show as consumerist ‘change your wardrobe, change your life’ claptrap, the underlying messages are much more positive. Again and again, men are supported to open up to those around them, and ask for help.

Where Jordan Peterson sees a world of individuals who must make themselves strong, the Fab Five understand that we rely on each other. It’s no coincidence that the show isn’t based around a single, charismatic, middle-aged White male guru, but instead, a collective. It’s not just chance that, while Peterson is only really an expert in magical thinking, the Fab Five each have their own, specific craft.

Fulfilment doesn't come from reaching up, but from reaching out to those around you.

This ideology underpinning the show is perhaps best expressed through Karamo Brown, the culture expert. Netflix's 'Queer Eye' is a re-boot of the 2003-7 programme 'Queer Eye for the Straight Guy', which had a different Fab Five. In that version, the "culture vulture" Jai Rodriguez focussed on culture as in 'the arts', often giving the shows' heroes tickets to a performance of some kind.

But when Brown – a former social worker in the LGBTQI Black community – applied for the role in the reboot, he pitched it as referring to culture as 'how we live together'. That he got it tells us why the new version is successful, and points to a deep shift in US politics.

At the turn of the millennium, when the original aired, liberals in the US still largely believed in the American dream. Help people access the spaces of the class above them, and you give them a ladder to socially climb. The world is made of winners and losers, and the original Fab Five helped you win.

As we arrive in the 2020s, the next generation of liberals in the world's declining superpower are beginning to see through that mythology. Fulfilment doesn't come from reaching up, but from reaching out to those around you.

Drugs and disconnection

The alternative to fighting depression is to see it as a business opportunity. Neoliberalism makes millions miserable, producing vast markets for fake cures. Pablo Escobar, Billy Graham, Mark Zuckerberg and Jordan Peterson all got rich hawking false solutions to the crisis of disconnection.

My addictions are Facebook and Twitter. There, I've invented a constantly connected version of me. I have a stage on which to show off. Flickering screens command my attention. Internet debates distract from internal quarrels. Reality becomes a shadow and I become comfortably numb.

But just as lonely rats will choose cocaine over food, while rats kept in groups will get high in moderation, the drug is no more cause than cure. **The problem is isolation in communities torn apart by brutal inequality, a world where we're told to run ever-faster to keep up.** A society of spectacle, which taught

me to aspire to celebrity.

That neoliberalism changed us isn't a side-effect. It was the point of turning every joy of human life into a commodity. In 1981, Margaret Thatcher famously told the Sunday Times: "Economics are the method; the object is to change the heart and soul." She did. By the time she left office, the suicide rate among young men had increased by 50%.

In search of class

Despite the role of our economic system in producing the depression pandemic, 'Queer Eye' – like the American liberalism it grows from – is missing an understanding of class.

That's not to say that it doesn't look at poverty. A number of its heroes are clearly imprisoned by lack of funds. But again and again, the lesson it teaches is that the path to financial security runs through entrepreneurialism. More than one of the Fab Five gained access to the middle class by building their own firms, and a huge number of the people they help are struggling business owners.

And this is where modern American liberalism evaporates in the daylight of reality. Of course a small number of people can find their way out of poverty through their own business ventures. But with limited access to capital, they will usually end up being crushed by a bigger beast, and most people won't be given an investment by Netflix. The data shows that people in the US consistently overestimate the possibility of social mobility, and repeating that bedtime story helps no one.

The final episode focuses on a gym owner in an historically Black area of Philadelphia. Gentrification threatens his business and his community. But the only response to this from the team is to modernise the gym – which, in all likelihood, won't be enough as the area's landlords jack up the rent.

Just as you can only really explain the astonishing popularity of the musical 'Hamilton' when you understand it is an attempt by liberal America to snatch their country's foundation myth from the shadow of Trumpism, the popularity of 'Queer Eye' makes most sense when you see it as an attempt to reframe the national myth: the American dream.

Know your place

In the twelve years from the collapse of the global financial system to the pandemic-induced collapse of the real economy, Western economies massively inflated the prices of their assets with billions of dollars of quantitative easing.

As a result, those who already owned assets – houses or otherwise – did OK. Those who didn’t struggled. Wages have been stagnant in the US for decades, and millions who believed that by now they would have entered the middle class have discovered that they are very definitely working class.

It’s not surprising that many of the characters the show focuses on feel they haven’t made much financial progress in recent years. Most Americans haven’t.

For Jordan Peterson, the solution to this situation – and the reason he is beloved of the powerful – is to accept it. The sixth of his famous ‘12 Rules for Life’ – the title of his bestselling 2018 book – is “Set your house in perfect order before you criticize the world.” In other words, ‘know your place’.

And his implicit message goes a lot further than that. The prominence that he – and so many of his fellow travellers – give to **their refusal to accept trans people only makes sense when you understand that for them, there is no greater sin than refusing to accept your place in the social hierarchy**. After all, if you endlessly work hard to accept your rank in a world which makes you miserable, you resent no one more than those who refuse to follow. To be trans is to transgress against their world order, and they can’t stand it.

Peterson’s message isn’t just “Don’t change the world.” It’s “Don’t change who the world tells you that you are.” And it does profound damage. In January last year, my friend Danielle, a brilliant activist who had started to come out as a trans woman, took her own life. Like thousands of others every year, she was struggling with a world that refused to accept her.

Ripping society apart

Too often, mental health is individualised. As with physical health, we are taught to believe that it is down to us, on our own, to sort it out. And as with physical health, this is essentially a neoliberal lie.

In June 2018, the World Psychiatric Association published a paper which gathered research from across the developed world and showed that there is “a statistically significant positive relationship between income inequality and risk of depression”. Equally, people at the rough end of racism are much more likely to suffer from poor mental health.

This shouldn’t surprise anyone. Inequality rips society apart. It tears us away from those around us, severing the connections of community.

I can only really speak to the impact it has on the ultra-privileged, like me. Boarding school forced me to grow up fast, but incompletely. I endlessly replay the terrible lessons I learned there, showing off but closing up. So much of life became performance without connection. Social media addiction hardly helps.

But the woes of the posh boys aren’t really the point. If I struggle to live in this world, how does everyone else cope? The same 2018 meta-study shows it is those with the lowest incomes who are hit hardest by the depression pandemic.

My neighbour is a doctor in one of Scotland’s poorest areas. Many of his patients who want help with depression face, he says, lifelong circumstances which would make any rational person miserable. But he can’t prescribe the abolition of poverty.

Progressive alienation

For much of the Left, the reaction is the opposite to the right’s individualism. It is: “Organise with millions of others to overthrow an economic system which makes us all sick.”

Of course this is something we should do. But exhortations to join the revolution aren’t much help to those who are desperately miserable now. Our political systems – particularly in Britain and the US – are *designed* to alienate. The purpose of them is to put off mass participation. And most people are put off. The prospect of wading through the factional flame wars of party politics, or of being beaten off the streets by increasingly militarised police, is unlikely to salve to the hole in your chest where your soul has been ripped out.

So many progressive groups are full of people searching for salvation from the depression pandemic. And, fairly consistently, they fail. We fail. Because while

hurling yourself at the great injustices of the world is a great way to feel significant, it's also a brilliant way to distract yourself from inner turmoil, rather than resolving it.

Exhortations to join the revolution aren't much help to those who are desperately miserable now

And in activist communities, feelings so often play out in over-intellectualised power politics. If everyone is telling themselves they are there for the greater good, then it's hard to admit the real reason you're upset is that your ego has been bashed. It's hard to admit that you're just performing your own neuroses when the planet's burning. It's easier to disguise hurt feelings behind ideological spars. Too often, people find it easier to split a movement than confront their own demons.

In this context, Jordan Peterson's suggestion that you "tidy your bedroom" can seem to many like the only option: it answers the crisis of alienation by showing you something you do have power over. And it works: tidying your room is a remarkably effective way to feel better, for a bit. For a generation living in shared flats or parental homes longer than they expected, your bedroom may be the only space that you can control on your own.

Fortunately, the idea that you have control on your own or not at all is just the propaganda of the powerful. Because while activist groups are a terrible alternative to therapy, organising with our peers is the best tool we have for taking back control of our lives.

The challenge for the left, then, is to learn how to organise miserable people, and to learn to organise while miserable. Depressed people shouldn't be encouraged to treat politics as a distraction from their misery, but to look straight into their misery, and use it as a lens to better understand the world and a motivation to change it, together.

And that has to include giving the sort of depressed young men lured to Peterson the chance to connect with those who are different from them, to emancipate themselves from social hierarchies which are making them miserable, too.

This learning is already happening in many ways, through political networks, unions, and campaign groups. It's a major theme of openDemocracy's Transformation section. But what it needs is the touch of popular culture.

The super six

And this is why ‘Queer Eye’ needs a makeover. Because just as social movements need to learn from ‘Queer Eye’ about masculinity, misery and joy, ‘Queer Eye’ needs to learn from social movements about how real change happens. What better time than season six to introduce a sixth character, specialising in helping people organise not just the objects around them, but their community?

In some episodes, they might focus on workplace struggle, establishing a trade union branch with colleagues and helping them negotiate better conditions with employers. After all, the data is stark: US workers who are members of unions earn significantly more than those who aren’t. And yet trade union membership has halved since 1983.

In some, they might knock on neighbouring doors and set up a tenants’ union. All across the Western world, renters have responded to the housing crisis by getting organised.

And in others, maybe they’d organise a marginalised neighbourhood to confront a local oppressor. Every community has plenty.

Rising through the US class system is impossible for most. Even more than most Western countries, ‘success’ is hereditary. Yet generation after generation of US TV shows repackage the lie of the American dream, leading millions to miserable attempts that are doomed to fail, and luring them away from the statistically proven route to improving their prospects: workplace organising.

But with Black Lives Matter launching under the first Black president, the US has started to understand that change isn’t a matter of individual progress. ‘People like you’ getting to the top of the ladder doesn’t make it easier to reach the rungs. Emancipation is achieved together, or not at all.

All politics is culture war: we interpret our material interests through lenses ground by society. And as the critic Raymond Williams powerfully argued, you can’t separate culture as ‘how we live together’ from culture as ‘the arts’. The latter is a powerful tool for carving the former.

And so as the ‘Queer Eye’ crew look ahead to their next season, glinting with

medals for their battles against patriarchy, it's time for them to start to unpick the American dream and expose it for what it is: the core lie at the heart of American nationalism.

Winning the culture war

In last year's European elections, the far Right didn't do as well as many had projected. Since Trump's 2016 election, millions everywhere have been inspired to take part in politics, desperate to oppose his cruelty.

It's easy to focus on the hard misogyny, racism and transphobia I find when I go on my wanderings around Europe, but they don't dominate. In most communities, most bigotries are more subtle. In most places – including places with significant support for far Right parties – most people hate the far Right.

In a day in Nyíregyháza, an eastern 'stronghold' of Hungary's far Right governing Fidez, I found lots of people who reluctantly vote for them. But very few who actually like them. Hanging around Czechia's communist-era housing estates, where thousands vote for the country's supposed 'populists', I struggled to find anyone who did so enthusiastically. They really aren't very popular.

Across the world, White supremacists and defenders of patriarchy aren't feeling dominant. Their shouts are the squeals of the losers, the howls of White men failing to adjust to a world we're increasingly being made to share.

The Fab Five/Peterson grudge match is really only an Anglosphere millennial phenomenon. Netflix doesn't release viewer data, but, like the shows' hosts, and me, its audience is surely mostly in its thirties. We are the children of the 1990s, whose future taught us to be alone. And we aren't really young anymore: half the people in the US are younger than us.

In the coming years, millions of members of Generation Z will arrive in polling booths for the first time, and, across most of the Western world, polling consistently shows this is a cohort inspired not by Peterson, but by Greta Thunberg, Bernie Sanders and Black Lives Matter.

These are the K-pop stans and the TikTok teens who trolled Trump in Tulsa and drown out White supremacists in floods of memes. The culture war of that generation will be fought out in a boxing ring in Madison Square Gardens,

between the British-Nigerian YouTuber and Black Lives Matter activist KSI and Jake Paul, the White US rival he has accused of being racist. That'll happen once the pandemic is over. But it's another story. And you'll need someone younger than me to write it for you.

Finding the joy

The pills have helped, as have kung fu classes. Getting better at talking about it has helped too, perhaps more. I sometimes think that depression is the word we give to disconnection produced by an atomised society. Perhaps most importantly, opening up brought me closer to my partner.

In February, Juliette got the train across Europe and met me in Vienna. There, she asked me to marry her.

A couple of months later, early one morning, I sat up in bed, filled with hope. After what felt like too many minutes, she came back into the room with a serene smile on her face and showed me the test: positive. She's due in January, and I've never been happier.

With thanks to Dan Hind, Danielle Myriam, George Ramsay and, most of all, Juliette Daigre.

[原文](#)

[返回目录](#)