

economy around and placed Bulgaria firmly on the road to Euro-Atlantic integration.” By early 2000, it had privatized 70 percent of state assets and inflation was down to 6 percent. However, unemployment was still above 18 percent, 40 percent of Bulgarians were in poverty, and corruption remained pervasive.

A disillusioned electorate turned last year to Bulgaria’s ex-king, Simeon II, who had been exiled in 1946 by the Communists. Prime Minister Simeon has promised further economic reform, but his “most daunting task” will be fighting corruption. Barany believes he is ready to do just that.

Beijing Is Watching

“Academic Freedom in China” by Qinglian He, in *Academe* (May–June 2002), American Assn. of Univ. Professors, Ste. 500, 1012 14th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Have the market-oriented reforms and greater openness to the West of the last two decades brought academic freedom to China’s scholars and intellectuals? Not really, writes He, a prominent economist and writer who fled China last year.

Scholars are better off than in the Mao era (1949–76), when critics of the regime could be sentenced to prison or death. However, especially since the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, the regime has developed “more sophisticated means of ideological control.”

Chinese academics are permitted to read the Western social science literature and employ its techniques, for example, so long as they refrain from direct criticism of the regime. Cooperative academics get salary raises and perquisites. The study of democracy is not allowed; research on the history of the Chinese Communist Party is restricted; and Beijing’s recent reform policies must be shown in a positive light. “Anyone who goes a little beyond the limits set by the departments may face penalties.”

Chiefly because of pressure from international human rights organizations, today’s penalties are hidden. No longer do the authorities formally announce that a scholar has been fired or had his or her books banned—but that is still what happens. Some offenders are put under police surveillance. (He’s own books were officially banned by the government in December 2000, and she left China to become a visiting scholar at the University of Chicago “after months of being followed by security agents who had broken into her home, tapped her phone, and seized documents and personal items,” noted the *University of Chicago Magazine* last year.)

The communist regime also monitors Western scholars who study China. Those who publicly criticize the regime may see “their visa applications rejected without explanation,” losing access that can be vital to a scholarly career. Beijing’s intimidation has been “quite successful,” according to He, “in influencing images of China’s current situation in western scholarship.”

Lessons from Sierra Leone

“Sierra Leone: The State That Came Back from the Dead” by Michael Chege, in *The Washington Quarterly* (Summer 2002), Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1800 K St., N.W., Ste. 400, Washington, D.C. 20006.

Thanks to British and UN peacekeepers, Sierra Leone finally seems to have left civil war and anarchy behind. The country’s long ordeal offers two important lessons for would-be rescuers of failed states, argues Chege, director of the Center for African Studies at the University of Florida at Gainesville.

The first lesson is not to throw money at corrupt dictatorships that repeatedly break their promises to reform. The International Monetary Fund and other aid organizations increased their development assistance to Sierra Leone from \$18 million in 1975 to \$100 million in 1989, “effectively rewarding the making of a disaster,” says Chege.

Sierra Leone's descent began under President Siaka "Pa" Stevens (1968–85). "The 1973 global oil crisis coincided with a dip in diamond and iron ore prices, opening a deficit in external payments that should have been addressed by cuts in public spending, devaluation of the currency, and export diversification," explains Chege. "Stevens's government did the exact opposite," borrowing lavishly and expanding state control over the economy. The inflation rate rose to 50 percent in the 1980s. "With swiftly declining real wages, Sierra Leone's public servants, including the security forces, turned to graft and pilferage of government supplies." By the time Stevens handed the presidency over to his chosen successor, Joseph Momoh, in 1985, the state had already lost legitimacy.

The real trouble began in 1991, with the appearance of the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF), sponsored by President

Charles Taylor of neighboring Liberia, who sold the rebels arms in exchange for diamonds from Sierra Leone's mines. The long-neglected Sierra Leone armed forces soon capitulated, and the country fell into anarchy. Until earlier this year, "networks of warlords and shady external operators, some of them with links leading indirectly to Al Qaeda," flourished amid "one of the goriest civil wars in recent memory."

Chege's second lesson is that the use of private security companies to prop up weak governments (tried twice in Sierra Leone) is a stopgap solution at best: "Western governments, multilateral development agencies, and private foundations have expended large amounts of aid to promote democratic elections, good governance, civil society, and the rule of law." But they need to support two more things: "professional military and police institutions under accountable, democratically elected governments."

Riyadh's War with the Web

"Dueling for Da'wa: State vs. Society on the Saudi Internet" by Joshua Teitelbaum, in *The Middle East Journal* (Spring 2002), 1761 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-2882.

Ever since its founding in 1902, the modern Saudi state has struggled to "bring its traditional, tribal, and decentralized society under its cultural, ideological, and religious hegemony." Now it confronts an especially insidious foe: the Internet.

The Saudi government offered public Internet access only in 1999, reports Teitelbaum, a senior research fellow at Tel Aviv University's Moshe Dayan Center. Service is expensive and slow; all Saudi Internet traffic is routed through a single server in Riyadh that is equipped with web filtering technology. Early in 2001, when less than seven percent of the Saudi public had access to the Internet, some 200,000 websites were on the proscribed list and 250 were being added every day.

But censorship is an impossible task. Political dissidents such as the exiled London surgeon Sa'd al-Faqih have set up websites abroad; his Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia website (www.islah.org) offers users technical tips on how to get around Saudi cen-

sors. And one need not be a computer wizard to get through. Some Saudis use illegal satellite hookups or simply dial up Internet service providers outside the kingdom.

Like people everywhere, Saudis use the Internet mostly for dating and entertainment, but this can be just as subversive as political dissent in a puritanical land where young men and women are supposed to be introduced by their parents. At Saudi shopping malls, Teitelbaum says, young women discreetly invite suitors to slip them their e-mail addresses and cell phone numbers, for unchaperoned conversations. Internet chat-rooms, many of them apparently uncensored, allow the young to talk about matters of the heart and to debate the many restrictions on women.

The Saudi government also exploits the Internet for its own purposes, notably to promote its Wahhabi version of Islam around the world, but the electronically assisted forces of nature promise the Saudis a pitched battle.