



## **Remapping the World and Nowruz in Iran: The Week in Global-Affairs Writing**

The highlights from seven days of reading about the world

March 24, 2017, by ANNA DIAMOND



Curator Olga Subiros checks globes visualising world data at the Big Bang Data exhibition at Somerset House on December 2, 2015, in London, England. Peter Macdiarmid / Getty

### **The Global Gag Rule: America's Deadly Export**

Jill Filipovic | Foreign Policy

“The order doesn’t apply to U.S.-based organizations because it violates Americans’ First Amendment rights; no such protections extend overseas. Family planning advocates from Washington, D.C., to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia worry that Trump’s Global Gag Rule will not only roll back many of the modest but critical gains African countries have made on safe abortion, but also the decade’s worth of progress in increasing family planning,

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decreasing maternal mortality, and promoting democracy and women's rights more broadly.

'Murder does not mean just picking a gun or a knife and killing people,' Gbagbo said. 'Denying someone their legitimate, rightful access to a service, as a health worker, is equally as murderous as killing someone.' This is exactly what he and the organization he works for fear the Gag Rule will do."

### **The Dutch Donald Trump Loses**

Amy Davidson | The New Yorker

"The fear was that, after a near-miss in Austria, three months ago, the Continent was emulating Trump and reverting to its basest image of itself and of others. In fact, Europe's current populist-nationalist movements predate Trump's ascendance, and, at times, it isn't clear who is nurturing whom. Wilders, for example, was a featured speaker at a 2010 rally in New York, protesting the construction of an Islamic community facility near the World Trade Center site, and he has since written for Breitbart News. Representative Steve King, the Iowa Republican, was praising Wilders when he remarked, earlier this month, that Western civilization could not be saved by 'somebody else's babies.'"

### **Celebrating Nowruz in Iran**

Yasmin Khan | Roads & Kingdoms

"Nowruz means 'new day' and takes place on the spring equinox, typically falling on March 20 or 21 in the Western calendar. It is a festival that has been celebrated in Iran for over 2,500 years and marks the end of winter and beginning of spring in the northern hemisphere. Its roots lie in Zoroastrianism, the ancient religion of Iran, whose practices are filled with rituals and symbolism associated with the five elements of earth, water, fire, air, and ether. Zoroastrianism is thought to have been one of the world's first monotheistic religions, with many of its beliefs and practices deeply connected to nature. Today, 38 years after the Islamic revolution in Iran, Nowruz remains Iran's most significant and celebrated annual festival, overshadowing the traditional Islamic festivals such as Eid e Fitr."

### **Xi Jinping: The Illusion of Greatness**

Ian Johnson | The New York Review of Books

"Xi came to power offering a similarly broad range of reforms and pledging to 'rejuvenate' the nation. But his measures have been limited to the classic nationalist-authoritarian-traditionalist playbook. He has pursued an expansionist foreign policy, occupying and militarizing vast reaches of the South China Sea, while at home he has cracked down on corruption and promoted traditional values.

A crucial part of this has been enhancing his own control. At a plenum of the Communist Party last autumn, Xi was elevated to a 'core' leader, putting him on a higher plane than

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other leaders in the recent past—the idea being that China needed even firmer leadership to get through tough times.”

### **Boston Schools Ditch Conventional World Maps in Favor of This One**

Akilah Johnson | The Boston Globe

“‘So this is about maps, but it isn’t about maps,’ Rose said. ‘It’s about a paradigm shift in our district. We’ve had a very fixed view that is very Eurocentric. How do we talk about other viewpoints? This is a great jump off point.’

The previous map, created in 1569 by Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator for navigational purposes, warps the sizes of continents and countries. Africa is three times bigger than North America, for example, but appears smaller on the map. On the Mercator map, Greenland looks massive compared with Africa, which is actually 14 times bigger than the island. And while Alaska appears to eclipse Mexico, the country’s 49th state can actually fit inside of our nation’s neighbor to the south with room to spare.”

### **The Last Hollow Laugh**

Paul Sagar | Aeon

“This year marks the 25th anniversary of Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). Rarely read but often denigrated, it might be the most maligned, unfairly dismissed and misunderstood book of the post-war era. Which is unfortunate for at least one reason: Fukuyama might have done a better job of predicting the political turmoil that engulfed Western democracies in 2016—from Brexit, to Trump, to the Italian Referendum—than anybody else.

This should sound surprising. After all, Fukuyama’s name has for more than two decades been synonymous with a fin-de-siècle Western triumphalism. According to the conventional wisdom, he is supposed to have claimed that the collapse of the communist regimes in eastern Europe and the United States’ victory in the Cold War meant that liberal capitalist democracy was unambiguously the best form of human political organisation possible. To his popular critics—sometimes on the Right, but most especially on the Left—*The End of History* was thus a pseudo-intellectual justification for a hyper-liberal capitalist ideology, whose high-water mark was the disastrous administration of George W Bush. Fukuyama’s tagline—‘the end of history’—was seized upon by critics as proof that he was attempting to legitimate neoconservative hubris, cloaking a pernicious ideology with the façade of inevitability.”

<https://www.theatlantic.com/amp/article/520380/>