

Weinstein's trial: The idea of justice and the trouble with being too 'woke'

The global reckoning on the abuse of power is extraordinary but without proof, allegations can have damaging consequences

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The American public cannot get enough of the chronicles of Harvey Weinstein. The once powerful film producer with over 80 Oscars to his name is currently facing accusations of sexual misconduct by more than 80 women and has been charged with rape and sexual assault. A fallen man though he might be, having gone from Hollywood royalty to pariah since accusations began coming to light in 2017, there was only one story that grabbed as much attention this week as the killing of Iranian commander Qassem Suleimani in Baghdad by a US drone strike, and that was Weinstein's trial.

Just as America was waking up to the news of Suleimani, Weinstein was hit with new sexual assault charges in Los Angeles from two women. One woman claimed he raped her, another said he forced his way into her hotel room and dragged her by the hair to the bathroom.

In the intervening days, news of the Iranian ballistic missiles that rained down on US military facilities in response to Suleimani's killing vied for space with the #MeToo protests staged outside a New York city courtroom that Weinstein limped into, bent forward on a walker for support, to face sexual assault charges.

There is no doubt that Weinstein's reckoning has opened up a new era – that of the #MeToo campaign – and this will ensure that powerful men cannot get away by using their position to prey on the vulnerable. Even as prosecutors are trying to establish patterns in his behaviour that suggest he might be a predatory male, Weinstein is claiming that he was simply having consensual sex with every one of those women. Yet not one actor has stood up



Film producer Harvey Weinstein arrives at New York Criminal Court for his sexual assault trial in New York City.

to vouch for his character. Over time, he has been painted as an odious and terrifying bully who deserves to go down. And what seems very likely at this point is that he will pay for allegedly destroying the lives of many while he was virtually running Hollywood.

But while Weinstein and his ilk might deserve what is coming to them, it is also important to remember that there is a darker side to the #MeToo campaign, one that is not popular to point

out: sexual harassment allegations can be as subjective as they are serious. It is, of course, important that women who felt powerless are having their say but it has opened the door for some women – and also men – who have an axe to grind to accuse others of misconduct without any proof. False accusations can be career-ending. Recently, with Weinstein again in the news, other stories have come on the back of the producer's trial.

One young male editor in a premier New York publishing house told me his tale about dating a female colleague whom he later rejected, not wanting a serious relationship. Spurned, she went to the company's human resources department and filed a sexual misconduct case against him. The male editor was dismissed despite his protests and assertions of innocence while the woman got promoted.

Another story was that of a

South Africa's leaders are facing im

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South Africa is on the brink of collapse. After years of corruption, mismanagement and poor investment, the fruits of the once-promising country have turned rancid. As the country's leaders grapple with the impending disaster on their hands, tensions are boiling over. On January 10, Tito Mboweni, the finance minister, launched a series of tweets underscoring the gravity of the situation: "If you cannot effect deep structural economic reforms, then game over! Stay as you are and you are downgraded to Junck [sic] Status!! The consequences are dire. Your choice."

While his direct audience was unclear, the message was clear. More than a decade of worsening economic indicators has wreaked havoc on the African giant. From eye-popping unemployment of over 29 per cent to stupefying levels of violent crime, South Africa is sinking ever further into the muck.

To complicate matters, the country's once-reliable and cheap electricity has become the single biggest threat to the economy. Eskom, the state power utility, has struggled to keep the lights

on for many months, as one plant breakdown after another have made the electrical grid woefully expensive and unstable.

Eskom authorities have turned to enacting forced blackouts to prevent total system collapse, hitting the economy as businesses and households alike have scrambled for more expensive back-up options like diesel generators – or risk staying in the dark. In December, Eskom was forced to shed so much power from the grid that even vital mining operations in the country were temporarily halted, impacting the country's most critical sector.

Amid the blackouts, Pretoria has thrown billions of dollars at the problem, but to little avail. This is because constructing new plants and improving the existing decrepit infrastructure will take several years, meaning that South Africa's fight to keep the lights on will continue to harm the economy for the foreseeable future. The consequences will be felt well beyond the electrical sector as Moody's Financial Services, the last of the big three credit agencies to not downgrade South Africa to junk status, will review its position in November. It is likely that Moody's will downgrade



Tito Mboweni, South Africa's finance minister, left, is troubled by the economic situation his country is in.

This will force fund managers with investment-grade mandates to dump their South African assets and make others rethink their own positions in the country, worsening already high investment outflows from the country.

Eskom's electricity woes have sucked up several billions of dollars and significant government

attention. Much of this money has been financed by debt, which will increase the burden on the country's taxpayers in the years ahead as the true costs of debt repayment come due. Indeed, significant resources that could have helped address the myriad systemic problems afflicting the country have gone to the putting out of the massive fire that

is Eskom.

Yet South Africa's infrastructure is eroding across the board from roads and bridges to rail and the water system. In fact, historic level droughts in 2019 have been exacerbated by the crumbling water infrastructure, meaning that deadly future water crises will be ever more likely.

But as Rome burns, South Afri

Over a decade of worsening economic indicators has wreaked havoc on the African giant – and politics seems to be the root cause