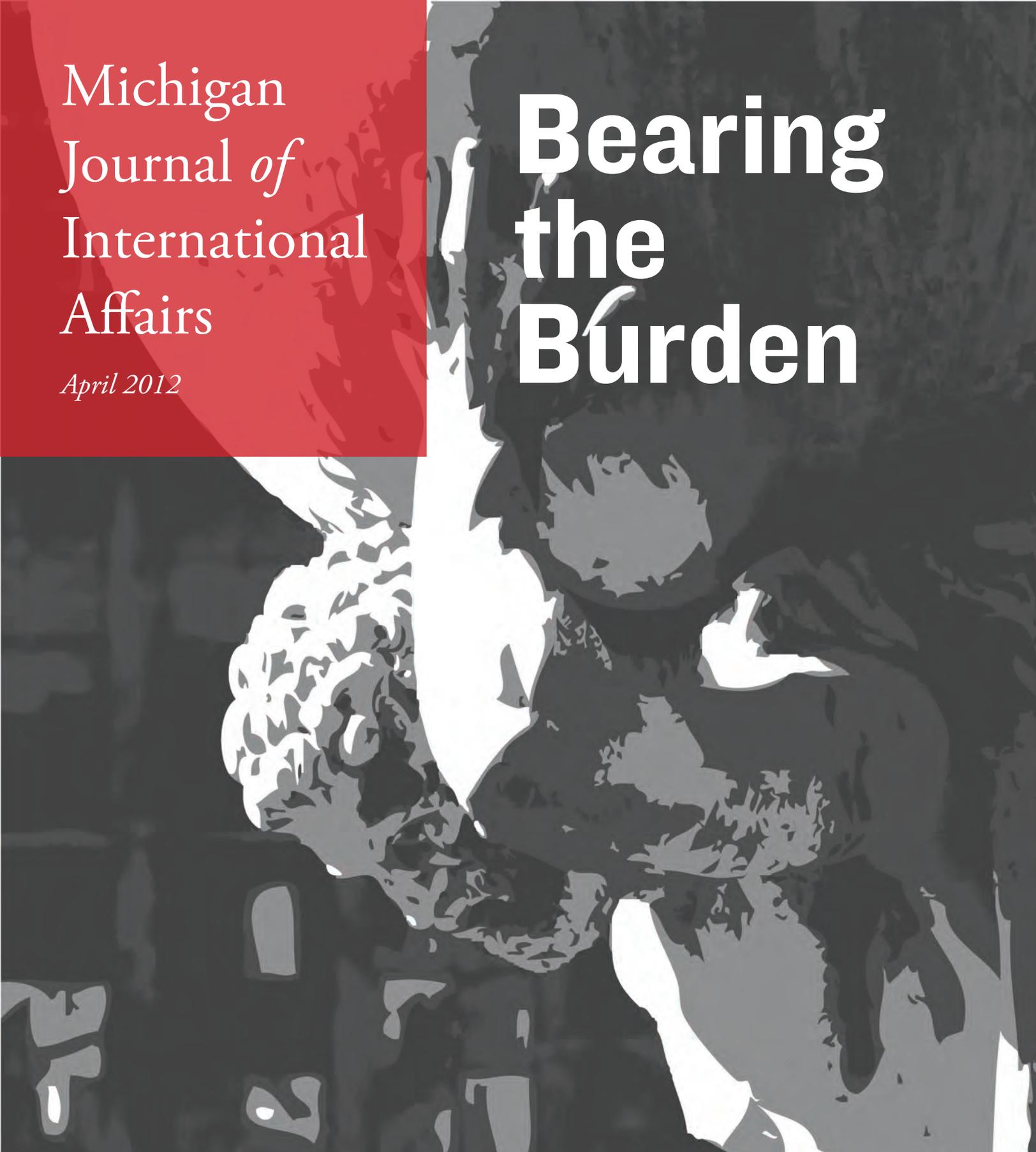


Michigan
Journal *of*
International
Affairs

April 2012

Bearing the Burden



**The Incredible
Sinking Nation** *PG. 23*

BY ANDREW GRAZIOLI

**“The Best Brand
On Earth”** *PG. 36*

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Last Hope** *PG. 42*

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Michigan Journal *of* International Affairs

April 2012

LETTER FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

The first quarter of 2012 finds the international community in flux. In the wake of the Arab Spring and the midst of the European debt crisis, we wait patiently for the slow-to-come normalization of world politics. Freshly renovated social, political and economic landscapes have yet to be smoothed over.

As the celebration of hard-won victories comes to a close, the world collectively engages with that most difficult of moments: the day after revolution. Hung-over from the transformations of the past year, populations around the world must now set themselves to rebuilding what has been removed. The exhilaration of preceding months is yielding to a cold recognition that the task ahead will be arduous. The most important question is only beginning to be asked: who will bear the burden?

In our last issue, “Winter of our Discontent,” we addressed the origins of political upheaval and highlighted the common roots of a discontent that moved fluidly across borders. In this edition, our largest to date, we explore the question of who will accept the high costs of meaningful reform and durable progress. We ask who will be tasked with translating intangible ideals into hard and fast policies. Abandoning the safety of the hypothetical, our writers examine the economic, social and moral consequences of new political realities.

In “The Best Brand Name of Earth,” Caitlin Miller describes how one industry is taking on the economic and historical mantle for all of Greece. Adam Miller’s “Bashar al-Assad’s Last Hope” outlines the difficulty of finding an international solution in Syria given the power of a single actor to derail collective efforts. “The Sinking Nation,” by Andrew Grazioli, highlights the unenviable position of a small nation facing off against overwhelming political and economic interests in hoping to secure its future. These and other articles provide a sober analysis of the tasks that lie ahead as a winter of discontent gives way to a spring of questions.

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Timing is Everything:

Why Now is the Time to Intervene in Somalia

— *Mick Adkins*

On the evening of January 24, 2012, just before he delivered the State of the Union Address, President Obama had some words of praise for Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta. “Good job, tonight,” was all that need be said. Thousands of miles away, a team of Navy Seals had just completed a daring night-time raid, recovering two kidnapped aid workers from Somali pirates and killing all of their assailants. While missions of this sort garner the most headlines, they are merely one piece of the puzzle in Somalia, where decades of instability have become both a domestic and an international concern. Perhaps more important is the tedious work being done by African Union troops hoping to eradicate insurgents and bring stability to the country’s many lawless regions. These diverse efforts speak to the complexity of the problem in Somalia. However, they do have one thing in common: they are working.

The array of military and humanitarian operations currently underway in Somalia would not seem to indicate successful progress toward peace and stability. Yet for once the increase in attention is more related to a growing confidence in the possibility of victory than a degenerating situation on the ground. Echoing this sentiment, Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki, whose country has several thousand troops committed to operations in Somalia, called for an increase in international support to capitalize on recent gains. Kibaki’s assessment of the situation seems correct: the fight against Somali rebels could be reaching a critical tipping point. Military successes on the ground combined with other recent developments could make this a powerful, even decisive moment for Somali peace efforts—if the principal parties involved seize the initiative.

The first major sign of progress has been the clear and unprecedented military advances against the insurgent group al Shabeb, which has controlled large swaths of territory since its formation in 2006. The Islamist rebels have suffered a number of defeats since early 2011, culminating with the loss of the capital city of Mogadishu in August of that year. The key factor in these developments has been the involvement of various African forces in waging a multi-front assault on the group.

Al Shabeb now finds itself fighting Kenyan troops in the south, Ethiopian units and their



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A breakdown of political control in Somalia.

militia allies in the central-western regions, and African Union (AU) troops in Mogadishu and surrounding areas. This has severely strained the rebel group’s ability to control territory and maintain active supply lines. Going forward, the key question will be whether regional players and the AU can coordinate their efforts and form a coherent, unified military and political strategy. Winning the war on the ground is a virtual prerequisite to any meaningful political progress in Somalia. All future success must be built on this important foundation, both in real terms and in the public’s perception that al Shabeb can and will be defeated.

As a conventional war becomes increasingly untenable for the rebels, they will likely revert to the insurgency strategy that has proven itself effective in the past. Yet, new developments might give the AU and its allies reason to be optimistic regarding this scenario, as well. The insurgents recently banned food aid from the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) on the grounds that it was unfit for consumption. Actions like this, along with intransigence on the political side and a reputation for heavy-handed violence, have alienated al Shabeb from the Somali people. As AU forces ratchet up military pressure and begin building a viable political alternative, insurgents will find it difficult to justify their positions and preserve their standing with the population. This social and political cleaving

away from al Shabeb would be a powerful asset to a future counterinsurgency campaign.

The final condition that makes this fight a unique opportunity for Somalia is renewed international interest. In addition to US raids and regional involvement, several other countries have taken a keen interest in the fight against al Shabeb. William Hague recently became the first British foreign secretary to visit Somalia in over twenty years. His visit came in preparation for a planned conference in London that will bring together delegates from over fifty countries to discuss the Somali security situation.

The motivation is clear. Piracy and Somalia’s role as a base for international terrorist groups (al Shabeb is an al Qaeda affiliate) make it of paramount concern to nearly every country in the developed world. While the underlying goal remains constant, the cost-benefit analysis has changed. Military successes headlined by regional players in conjunction with a disaffected Somali public make possible intervention both more likely and more rewarding.

Rather than bearing the brunt of the workload, formerly reluctant international powers could now play a supportive role. Simply providing air support and organizational assistance might be all that is needed to push the conflict to a critical level, as was the case in Libya. The situation in Somalia is just one example of an overarching theme that ought to inform potential third party involvement: the choice of when to enter is equally important as the choice of where. In Somalia, the timing appears right for third-party intervention to yield maximum results.

Reading Between the Lines: The Zuma Administration on Gender Equality

— *Andrea Shafer*

In his 2011 State of the Nation address, South African president Jacob Zuma mentioned “women” three times. Outlining his plans for the year, President Zuma noted the creation of work opportunities, “especially for women in rural areas” and promised to “prioritize crimes against women” and “broaden the scope of reproductive rights.” On February 9, President Zuma again nodded toward South African women three times during his address, this time advocating for a Women Empowerment and Gender Equality bill and acknowledging the “triple challenge of unemployment, poverty, and inequality” affecting women and children. On the surface, President Zuma’s addresses appear to present a promising path toward gender equality in South Africa, yet a further examination of his statements reveals his promises as shallow and unsupported.

Those advocating for gender equality in South Africa have plenty to address: rape and violence against women are common, far more women than men are infected with HIV, and far more jobs are open to men than to women. The unemployment rate for women is higher than that of men: 26 percent compared to twenty percent. As unemployment is startlingly high, Zuma spoke expansively during this year’s address on the necessity of job creation to eradicate poverty (fifty percent of South Africans live in poverty) and inequality. Additionally, his promises to address crimes against women and expand reproductive rights in 2011 sounded like promising steps forward.

Yet, the 2012 State of the Nation address notably lacked any kind of follow-up on Zuma’s promises from the year before. Zuma did not mention his previous assurance that public health benefits would be expanded, offered no statistics to indicate that violence against women had declined, and discussed no budgetary steps that might promote economic empowerment. He offered no report on the progress of creating employment opportunities for women, which is a direct step necessary to lowering female unemployment rates and eliminating poverty. In the eyes of gender rights groups, the 2012 address did not suggest that President Zuma is a leader who will follow through on promises to women. Standing before parliament with no indication of governmental performance weakens the legitimacy of a regime that has publicly dedicated itself to gender equality.

In addition to disregarding the previous year’s promises, President Zuma’s 2012 promises do not



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South African President Jacob Zuma has yet to deliver on promises to increase gender equality.

address how he intends to remedy gender discrepancies. Acknowledging economic inequality and unemployment in the country, Zuma emphasized the importance of providing job opportunities to citizens to eradicate inequality. Increasing job opportunities in infrastructure development, tourism, agriculture, mining, and manufacturing, according to Zuma, will serve the South African economy and its people best. Perhaps it will serve the males best, as these industries are heavily dominated by males. South African women work mainly in low-wage domestic service jobs, which President Zuma has done nothing to address. Infrastructure jobs are crucial to the South African economy, yet past education discrepancies between the genders and child-rearing responsibilities have historically excluded women from these professions. Bolstering these industries to eradicate inequality will require a lot more work than simple financial support – eliminating equality amongst genders means that women need to have access to these industries, requiring educational and family planning reform, to name a few requirements.

The Women Empowerment and Gender Equality bill that Zuma promises to push through the legislature is a small step forward for women’s employment. The bill, which provides sanctions for gender discrimination in government and private sector hiring, does not do enough to support women in their pursuit of better-paying jobs. No methods of training or education maintenance

are provided for in the bill, which are necessary to obtain these jobs in the first place. The scope of the bill is extremely limited, and if Zuma cannot provide jobs for the women to occupy, the spirit of the bill is moot. Even so, this is limited only to the work place, and remedies to other issues that stifle women’s empowerment—violence, for example—are absent.

It will require a more dedicated effort by President Zuma’s administration if it is to gain legitimacy as a government dedicated to women’s empowerment and gender equality. Women need access to better-paying jobs, more health services, and resources to combat violence. They also need to know that the administration is working to make these a reality. In an ironic final statement to parliament, Zuma quoted Charlotte Maxeke, founding president of the African National Congress Women’s League: “This work is not for yourselves—kill that spirit of self, and do not live above your people, but live with them. If you can rise, bring someone with you.” Indeed, Mr. President: Do not leave the women of your country behind.

Inclusiveness in Libya: Competing Identities in Post-Civil War Libya

— *Malcolm Scott*

On March 5, 2012, approximately 3,000 Libyan political and tribal leaders held a conference in Benghazi. The conference members, led by Ahmed Zubair al-Senussi, declared that Cyrenaica (eastern Libya) had become a region autonomous from the rest of the country. The conference desired a separate parliament and sole control of their own police force and judiciary; actual separation from Libya, however, was not demanded. Nevertheless, fears of national fracture filled the country in the wake of this meeting. The threat of national division was so great that the head of the National Transitional Council, Mustafa Abdel Jalil, threatened to use force to maintain national territorial integrity. Indeed, these events were not taken lightly. They revealed tensions between competing local and regional identities in Libya, the effects of which will depend on the National Transitional Council's actions.

The sometimes contradictory goals of Libya's ethnic groups complicate a tribal understanding of the country. There were calls for federalism in Cyrenaica, but also a vehement counter-reaction against such an initiative. In Benghazi and Tripoli, thousands of Libyans demonstrated in favor of a united Libya. Many clerics in Tripoli and Benghazi feared the fracturing of the country and frequently made exhortations against the proposed secession.

While many thousands of eastern Libyans were calling for federalism, an equal number of Libyans opposed this plan. In a similar vein, regional ties had undermined the Gaddafi regime and the Libyan monarch Idriss before him. Indeed, in the past eastern leaders have often appealed to feelings of marginalization in order to build a unified opposition. Regional identities run deep in Cyrenaica, which has distinct attitudes towards its lineage and Islam. However, these regional identities have broader complexities built into their structures. The motley entanglement of unity and federalism promulgated by the former regime makes sense only when one considers how cross-territorial identities are also relevant for many Libyans.

Ties based on shared lineage of the three regions of Libya are not the only relevant forms of self-identification. Survey work done by Amal Obeidi suggests that substantial numbers of Libyans probably hold Arab identity and Arab unity in high regard. At the same time, there is low support for policies such as integration with other areas with high Arab populations or the granting of permission to Arab immigrants to live and



Libya's three major regions.

work in Libya. These results suggest that there are widespread differences between intangible aspirations for unity and its practical implementation. The contrast between the new Libyan government struggling to maintain even basic national cohesion and supporters in Benghazi calling for a united Libya broadly demonstrates this tension.

However, it is not simply a desire for greater unity that is preventing secessions; there are financial interests at stake as well. Cyrenaica contains approximately two thirds of the national oil reserves. Eastern Libyan areas are as important as Fezzan and Tripoli in terms of national oil production. The leaders of Benghazi claim no interest in complete separation or control over oilfields, but other leaders remain apprehensive.

This is nothing new for Libya or Cyrenaica: it has been this way since the mid-twentieth century. The oil dimension could potentially strengthen either the desire for unity or for separation, depending on how the new national government handles it. Since there is a tension between the powers that be in Tripoli and many inhabitants of Cyrenaica, the need for delicate mediation cannot be overstated. Moving forward, the national government must carefully balance gaining control and mediating regional complaints.

A popular desire for unity is a necessary but not sufficient condition to prevent the secession of Cyrenaica. If the National Transitional Council fails to maintain and strengthen its regional control, affective national bonds would certainly not be enough to control militant factions or limit the potential for eastern secession. It cannot be taken for granted that the National Transitional Council

has the capacity to maintain Libya's territorial integrity: without NATO's support the NTC's ability to project power will be limited, at best.

In the long run, the capacity of the National Transitional Council to contain disputes is dependent upon the Tripoli Plan, an agreement made between nine North African governments to collaborate on border control. The member governments have collectively faced numerous border issues dealing with militants and smugglers. Tuareg militants, who had fought on behalf of Muammar al-Gaddafi during the recent civil war, are a likely cause of the border problems Libya has faced along its boundary with Tunisia.

Domestic factors also play a role in the secession question. The recent release of trained groups of soldiers has added much-needed manpower to border security efforts. Additionally, amendments for expanded regional representation have entered the national discourse and won favor with easterners by providing stability and local autonomy. Although the national government is certainly not fully functional, it has managed to use a combination of regional alliances, increased control on the use of force, and the creation of pacifying political institutions to maintain national unity.

This cobbled-together strategy certainly does not guarantee the future of Libya as one nation, but it is a positive first step. The establishment of a new Libyan stock exchange is another example of progress, even though only nine companies are actually listed on it. The social environment is still fragile, though, and militants continue to threaten to undermine these hard-won gains.

At the center of this fragility are the layered identities that course through Libyan society. The NTC's ability to weave these disparate claims of membership into a single coherent narrative will ultimately decide its staying power. The strength of new political institutions will be important in deciding the relevance of these different identities. To that end, the regime has, so far, proven that it can design and execute an effective strategy to capitalize on the malleable ideological commitments of average Libyans. How the new government proceeds in the ensuing months will decide the nature of the Libyan nation and state in the long-term.

The Sum of the Parts: Africa's Emerging Coalition of Terror Groups and What It Means for the West

— *Mick Adkins*

Much ink has been spilled in recent years referencing the spread of Islamic extremism in Africa. Government officials and foreign policy analysts have speculated on the possibility that a poor economic climate, combined with weak and failing states, could make the continent fertile ground for radical ideological appeals. The rise of groups like al Shabeb in Somalia and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which is most prominent in Algeria and neighboring southern regions, has done little to dispel these beliefs.

Both have been highly active in recent years, garnering significant attention from both foreign and domestic security forces. Over the past two months, another Islamist group, Boko Haram, has conducted nearly two dozen attacks, one of which was a single-day raid in the Nigerian city of Kono that killed 185 people. It appears that the quantity, geographic reach, and operational capacity of Islamist terror groups in Africa are all trending upwards. Yet, even more troubling than the raw impact of any one group, some say, are the increasingly close relationships between them.

Just a few years ago, Boko Haram was an organization devoted to burglary, petty theft, and the occasional harassment of rural Christian congregations. The sophistication of its recent attacks like the one at Kono, which involved over 100 fighters and coordinated teams of gunmen and suicide car bombers, almost undoubtedly stems from contact and collaboration with AQIM. Nigerian officials pointed to the complexity of the attack and the choice of weapons, car bombs and a specific type of improvised explosive device, as tell-tale indicators of al Qaeda's involvement. The group has also developed ideological connections with al Shabeb, shifting its orientation to match that group's more far-reaching, global jihadist program over a localized approach.

For its part, al Shabeb has claimed affiliation with al Qaeda since mid-2007. At the time, many analysts viewed this relationship as a symbolic gesture of solidarity, not indicative of any sort of tangible cooperation. However, in recent years, the bond between the two groups has become stronger and more practically-grounded. In February, al Shabeb leaders officially declared the group a part of al Qaeda, releasing a jointly-produced video and pledging support for the latter group's chief strategist, Ayman al Zawahiri.

Operational links between the two groups have also steadily risen. The US Government's National Counterterrorism Center notes that several senior al

“ The key to success, then, is not to hope or expect groups to remain isolated forever, but to have a framework in place to intervene immediately when the parts begin to amalgamate and reconnect.”

Shabeb leaders have trained in Afghanistan under al Qaeda's direction. Moreover, a number of foreigners have participated alongside al Shabeb in Somalia, notably in advisory roles teaching bomb-making and weapons tactics. Yemen's Interior Ministry also released a statement in early March, stating that 300 members of al Shabeb were in-country and collaborating with al Qaeda operatives in the Lahj and Abyan governorates.

Army General Carter Ham, commander of the United States' Africa Command (AFCOM), expressed concern about this increasing integration of African extremists. Ham said that coordination among these groups in training, funding, and operations presents significant challenges to US policymakers. Australian analyst Leah Farrall further echoed these concerns, citing al Shabeb's ability to attract Western passport holders and access foreign support networks as particularly problematic.

Both of these accounts fall in line with the conventional wisdom, which holds that integration presents a serious problem for would-be target nations. It elevates peripheral groups and maximizes their efficacy, leaving the whole much more dangerous than the sum of the parts. In this same vein, counterinsurgency expert and retired Lieutenant Colonel in the Australian Army David Kilcullen speaks of the need to “disaggregate” individual insurgencies in order to combat global terror. His theory holds that victory depends on the counterinsurgent force's ability to disentangle and address each conflict, organization and grievance individually.

Groups acting alone are weak and limited in their activities; integrated groups are able to launch sophisticated attacks because of greater access to funds and wider personnel networks. The theory holds that the key to combating modern terror is, to

paraphrase President Obama, to dismantle, disrupt, and isolate its practitioners. Yet, this conventional wisdom might be overlooking a key advantage for the US in facing an integrated enemy.

The presence of more and stronger bonds between terrorist groups represents a powerful opportunity for the United States' intelligence community. While isolated groups are comparatively less likely to launch far-reaching, highly-destructive attacks, they are also more difficult to find. The linking of each group into a wider operational network presents serious, systematic risks that should not be overlooked. With every electronic correspondence, joint training exercise, or shared funding stream comes another intelligence avenue that could potentially bring down a high value target, dormant cell or other key piece. While alignment with other organizations may allow a group like Boko Haram to punch above its weight in the short-term, it leaves all players involved more visible and more vulnerable to identification and potential intervention from security forces.

Rather than wholly detrimental, collaboration between Africa's numerous Islamic extremists should be viewed as, potentially, highly productive for the US and its allies. Of course, this is not to say that robust terrorist groups with large financial resources and international aims are something to scoff at. September 11 happened because a large, well-funded group was able to evolve long enough to set a catastrophic plan into motion. Indeed, a strategy of disaggregation to limit capacity has been largely effective and should not be abandoned going forward. Al Qaeda's Waziristan-based central wing has been, for the most part, impotent since the 2005 bombings in London, due in no small part to the international community's efforts to isolate and heavily restrict its movement and contacts.

So then, Kilcullen's disaggregation theory might ring true, but it cannot rely on a one-off shot. Rather, it must be seen as an ongoing process that responds to the ebbs and flows of international terror with brutal, timely efficiency. As associations between disparate groups inevitably increase, secu-

rity forces must seize the initiative, exploiting these developments as a golden opportunity to identify, locate and eliminate key groups and figures. The key to success, then, is not to hope or expect groups to remain isolated forever, but to have a framework in place to intervene immediately when the parts begin

to amalgamate and reconnect. In the coming years, an acute understanding of these processes and the ability to maintain a state of hyper-vigilance will decide whether this new integration among African terror groups represents a major threat for the US, or a major coup.

Vital Waters: Restoring Lake Chad

— *Bala Naveen Kakaraparthi*

Forty years ago, a “large expanse of water,” served as the namesake for a budding new nation: *Chad*, would be the lake that gave its name to the country it borders. Located west of Chad and sharing boundaries with Nigeria, Niger, and Cameroon, Lake Chad is a remnant of a gigantic inland sea and was once the largest water reservoir in Africa's Sahel. Wildlife, particularly millions of migratory birds crossing the Sahara Desert, depend on it. Additionally, the Lake Chad Basin is home to over 20 million people who rely on the lake's wetlands for fishing, farming, and hunting. Lake Chad has also been a historical crossroads for trade and cultural exchange between North Africans and people of sub-Saharan Africa. Today, this once-great lake is little more than a puddle.

From the 1960s onwards, significantly decreased levels of rainfall and poorly managed irrigation systems caused a dramatic shrinkage of Lake Chad. This, according to the United Nations Environment Program, resulted in the lake decreasing in size “by 95 percent over roughly 35 years.” Satellite image comparisons from 1970 and 2007 further demonstrate this disastrous change: forty years ago, there were 15,000 square miles of water—five years ago, there were only 500, and the number was still falling.

Already, quarrels over this shortage have emerged, primarily between farmers and fishermen. As the drought takes its toll on dehydrated livestock, farmers demand lake water for their cattle. Yet, fishermen have to preserve water levels to maintain fish populations. Even more worrisome, though, is the possibility of much larger conflicts breaking out. Some of the poorest nations in the world lie in the Lake Chad basin, and as the water continues to diminish, armed engagement may decide who controls this essential resource. With the severity of the situation well-established, moves to restore Lake Chad and pre-empt these scenarios must be taken immediately.

The 2012 theme for Africa Environment Day was Lake Chad, indicating increased attention on this critical but vulnerable water source. At the main celebration event held in Chad's capital city of N'Djamena, Chad's President Idriss Déby declared, “Lake Chad is not only Chadian it is also African, in fact it is even world heritage that deserves being declared as a heritage of humanity.” Déby later stated that, “The AU Commission will spare no effort to sensitize development partners on the urgent



Forty years ago, there were 15,000 square miles of water – five years ago, there were only 500.”

imperative to save Lake Chad, taking advantage of international forums such as the sixth World Water Forum...and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.”

Regional leaders outside of Chad have also demonstrated a keen interest in the lake's preservation. In October 2010, at the African World Forum on Sustainable Development, President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria emphasized the need to salvage the lake. Furthermore, the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), an intergovernmental organization comprised of countries nearest to the lake, has been in existence since 1964, with the riparian states ‘discussing’ for decades how to replenish the water.

Despite this acknowledge of the issues at stake, well-intentioned talk has been accompanied by little, if any, action. The postponement of action ultimately boils down to funding and manpower. Of all its tributaries, the Chari/Logone system provides 95 percent of the lake's water input. Hence, to refill the lake, a dam and over 50 miles of canals would have to be built to pump water from the Congo River uphill to the Chari River, which would then flow to Lake Chad. A feasibility study has still not been carried out on this ambitious project. The feasibility study, which has currently raised only five million dollars, has to be conducted to determine the amount of funding necessary. Until this preliminary step is completed, more of the same will happen: a lot of discourse and an ever-dwindling body of water.

The riparian states in the LCBC and the African Union must use the dialogues at the African World Forum and the recent Africa Environment Day as an opportunity to initiate the mission to rescue Lake Chad. Even before the feasibility study is complete, it is certain that the damming and excavation of canals will demand an extraordinary sum of money and manpower. Therefore, not only must the LCBC countries contribute heavily to the venture, but they also must convince international groups such as the World Water Council, the World Bank, and the

United Nations to inject additional funding.

Despite its substantial cost, this project will yield a number of positive returns. Constructing the dam and miles of canals would require hundreds of thousands of man-years; however, Africa has an enormous labor surplus and the raw numbers to successfully execute such a venture. Once completed, the hydroelectric power generated from the dam would sustain the entire region's energy requirements. Furthermore, the discovery of biofuel made from weeds along Lake Chad, along with potential oil fields in the basin, could reimburse the entire operation. With the lake restored, the subsequent increase in weed biomass would produce an additional, sustainable source of biofuel income. Both of these commodities serve to minimize the endeavor's price-tag, changing the cost-benefit analysis for potential participants. If Lake Chad is refilled, it would be the first-ever replenishment project of its kind in Africa and a revolutionary ecological success story. This is a bold opportunity for mankind to rebuild a dying ecosystem.

While African leaders appear to be dedicated to protecting Lake Chad, this political commitment has to be persistent and expressed in practical terms. It cannot stop at mere idealistic discourse but must be informed by a real agenda. Accompanying these pledges of activism has to be equal support from stakeholders to fund the mobilization of manpower and resources for the restoration venture. If, however, the talks remain just that, and desertification continues, then in another forty years, we may be writing about the former “large expanse of water” that once proudly gave its name to Chad.

Rethinking our Response to the Famine: What Will It Take to Change the Way We Donate?

— *Liz Deschaine*

Last year, the Horn of Africa experienced a famine of unprecedented magnitude. Images of its aftermath surfaced in international news outlets in the summer of 2011. The photos show scenes of devastation and desperation, relaying the trauma inflicted on the local population to the Western world. Most images showed Somali refugees in Kenya, living in squalid conditions. The photos depicted women nursing lifeless babies, lines of refugees waiting for rations, and a profound sadness in the eyes of starving people.

These images spurred the rest of the world to action. Millions of dollars were subsequently donated by those in the United States to help limit the suffering in Africa. Sadly, by the time aid was finally sent out, the famine had become extremely severe and irreversible. The combination of increased food prices and the drought's impact on water availability made it impossible to target the cause of the problem. To combat the immediate effects of the famine, donations of food and water were sent to refugee camps. Donations from the First World were not enough, however, to significantly lessen the suffering, and hundreds of millions of people continued to starve in Kenyan refugee camps.

The majority of the resources needed to alleviate the suffering from the famine were not sent until after the devastation appeared in international media reports. Sadly, this was much too late. Money must be raised prior to such devastation so that it can be spent to attack the root causes of the problem rather than merely the symptoms. Moreover, this sort of strategy was entirely possible because famine is a predictable phenomenon. In fact, the 2010 famine in Somalia, Kenya, and Ethiopia had been predicted by numerous organizations.

Short-term relief, like food and water, proved ineffective at saving people from the devastation. The event proves that a shift needs to occur in the nature of philanthropic spending. There is sharp evidence that a more effective strategy for providing international aid does exist. According to Samuel Lowenberg, a journalist for the *New York Times*, places like Wagberi, Kenya show the outcomes of better planning and spending. Lowenberg describes a farm in Wagberi as “a green oasis.” He visited a women’s cooperative there, where a farm grows kale, cabbage, and peppers. This cooperative had received a small donation from the European Union before the famine occurred and was able to properly prepare to



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A family victimized by the famine in the Horn of Africa.

weather the storm ahead.

The farm in Wagberi survived the famine because it had a well, water pump, windmill, and other resources to help combat the drought and food-shortage crisis. These assets let the community continue to grow crops and support those living there. The European Union’s donation to support this farm not only reduced the cost of emergency relief from the famine, but also allowed these Kenyans to maintain their lifestyles amidst the crisis. This farm has not relied on foreign assistance since the EU’s original donation and is fully funded and staffed by local members of the cooperative. Thus, it can use the original donation to acquire other assets and resources that will be beneficial for years to come. In the time-honored tradition of “teaching a man to fish,” the EU loan successfully implemented an enduring, forward-thinking program of aid.

Funding for self-sustaining farms is, however, quite hard to come by. The project in Wagberi, Kenya, took time to develop, and the outcome was never guaranteed. For these reasons, long-term spending is often avoided by aid organizations. Aid that will not produce an immediate, tangible result simply lacks the compelling narrative necessary to attract investors. Philanthropists, often reacting once a disaster has already occurred, seek

opportunities for instant gratification from their donation. The untimely response to the Horn of Africa’s famine is reminiscent of a greater trend: 3.2 trillion dollars has been spent on African aid, yet the continent has yet to rise up out of underdevelopment. The only way to improve the efficacy of foreign aid to Africa is to fundamentally change the way it is being spent. Long-term projects may have a lower profile and lack photo-op appeal, but they work. The Kenyan farm is just one example that proves that money spent on good development and decreased vulnerability is well worth it.

As long as it takes images of starving babies and helpless mothers to generate donations, past mistakes will be repeated, and the well-intentioned efforts of the developed world will continue to lag behind the grievances they seek to redress. It is the job of the international community to make donations to the Third World that will contribute to its development, which means money used towards the present *and* the future. More programs like the European Union’s, then, must be created and expanded. In the Horn of Africa, a lack of preparation costs hundreds of thousands of lives each year. Reversing this trend will depend on the ability of the developed world to forego the reactionary model of aid in favor of more durable, if tedious, philanthropic projects.

First World Responses to the Famine in East Africa:

Shifting the Focus Away from Overpopulation Concerns to Real Causes and Solutions

— *Elise Aikman*

As the global population tops seven billion, fears of overpopulation and its potential consequences are widespread throughout the developed world. National Geographic devotes an entire online presentation to the topic. Citing the theories of eighteenth-century economist Thomas Malthus, the online presentation “Overpopulation” claims that, “technology has struggled to keep up with burgeoning populations.”

On the surface, crises such as the east African famine would seem to affirm these fears. Last summer, the United States government estimated that 3.7 million people in the region were in danger of starvation. Governments, NGOs, and nonprofits have struggled to understand and mitigate the crisis. For example, the organization People & the Planet, sponsored by the United Nations Population Fund, the World Wide Fund for Nature International, and the International Planned Parenthood Federation among others, posted a commentary on the front page of its website foregrounding population concerns. The article, posted January 27, 2012, points to the East African famine as “a harbinger of worse to come,” if greater efforts are not made in Africa to “slow rapid population growth.”

In light of the worst famine in recent history, it is important to sort out fact from fiction with regard to contributing factors and potential solutions, not only to address the current famine, but to prevent future disasters of its kind. While those fearing overpopulation are often motivated by valid concerns about human and environmental wellbeing, it is inappropriate to point to a famine in an impoverished, underdeveloped region and conclude that there are simply too many people in the world. Such a claim relies not only on faulty logic, but on factual inaccuracies, as well.

The claim that there is not enough food in the world is simply false. According to the United Nations World Food Programme, “[t]here is enough food in the world today for everyone to have the nourishment necessary for a healthy and productive life.” Quite simply, Malthus was wrong in predicting that food supplies would be unable to keep pace with population growth. The fact that millions of people in poorer nations starve, while we in the developed world throw away a signifi-



...famines result from the convergence and interaction of a number of political and environmental factors, but overpopulation isn't one of them.”

cant portion of the food we buy, is not a population problem, but rather a problem of unequal distribution. Food, like education or political influence, is unevenly distributed throughout the world; it is because of this fact that many in need do not have adequate access.

Furthermore, CNN, the international nonprofit organizations UNICEF and Oxfam, and the United Nations all agree that famines result from the convergence and interaction of a number of political and environmental factors, and that overpopulation is not one of them. The factsheet for Oxfam's GROW campaign, a project aimed at providing sustainable nutrition for growing populations, is clear: “You may think hunger is about too many people and too little food. That is not the case.” Instead, Oxfam argues, political turmoil and government instability create conditions where droughts and other natural disasters are more likely to trigger a famine. As the Red Cross points out, Somalia has been plagued by twenty years of internal violence. It is there that the famine has been most severe. Furthermore, CNN reports that “long-term drought, conflict, a succession of poor harvests and rising food and fuel prices” have combined in what the director of UNICEF calls, “the perfect storm.” Responses and preventive efforts need to focus on addressing these factors, not population.

Proponents of population control often cite climate change as a reason to advocate for lower birth rates. Climate change may indeed be a factor in the severity and length of the drought that triggered the current famine; however, the existence of climate change is not sufficient justification to control the populations of third world countries. Rather, climate change ought to impose demands on those whose methods of economic activity

have contributed to it most. Developed nations, not the third world, have emitted the majority of pollutants contributing to climate change. Therefore, it is developed nations who have the responsibility to implement more sustainable methods of production and consumption. We should not draw attention away from fixing the environmental problems we have created by urging poorer nations to have fewer children.

Concerns about overpopulation are not only irrelevant to first-world responses to the famine, but harmful because they distract from the real contributing factors and possible means of effective intervention. Perhaps worse, they unfairly blame the victims of political turmoil and unfavorable weather conditions for the suffering they endure. As residents of well-fed, developed nations, we should not tell the starving Somali mother that she should have had fewer children. Instead, first-world responses to the east African famine should take cues from Oxfam's GROW campaign, and develop sustainable solutions that anticipate, and accommodate, growing populations.

Going Hungry in Malawi

—Justin Schon

On October 29, the *Nyasa Times* reported that Malawi has begun exporting maize to South Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Kenya. This is occurring despite warnings from a Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee that ten of the country's 28 districts will be at risk of food shortage due to dry spells that occurred at critical phases of crop development and maturity during the 2010-2011 growing season. At first glance, one might chalk Malawi's decision to sell maize up to yet another example of a developing country's government foolishly acting against the interests of its people. Further inspection, however, reveals that Malawi's actions may actually be justified.

Until President Bingu wa Mutharika expelled the British High Commissioner in April 2011, few people outside of Malawi had noticed, or seemed to care about, the deteriorating economic and political governance of Mutharika's government. Since then, the UK has cut off aid to the Malawian government, the United States and Germany have put their aid programs under review, and the Malawian government has experienced a general nosedive in international support. Malawi has also seen its relationship with Mozambique worsen over issues like the ill-conceived Nsanje Port, where Malawi's efforts to build a port despite its status as a landlocked country wasted millions of dollars and even led to the arrest of a few Malawians by the Mozambican government. Furthermore, Zambia's long-serving president and strong Mutharika ally Rupiah Banda has just been replaced by Michael Sata, who was unceremoniously deported from Malawi in 2007. One of the few alliances Mutharika has which has not suffered is with Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe. For Malawians, that fact should be very disconcerting.

In response to these deteriorating alliances, the Malawian government appears to be attempting to strengthen its ties to other African countries by embracing a feeling of African unity. In August, Finance Minister Ken Kandodo called for the creation of an African Monetary Fund as an alternative to relying upon the International Monetary Fund. In mid-October, Malawi defied the International Criminal Court (ICC) by refusing to arrest Omar al Bashir—the current President of Sudan—during his visit for a trade fair. This act has further strained Malawi's relations with Western countries and potential donors, but plays well with Africans who are frustrated by what they perceive as the ICC's targeting of Africans for prosecution. Malawi's decision to sell maize to South Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Kenya during a time of need for these three



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countries may be another act to try and win more African support. The Malawian government may have decided that the benefits of assisting other African countries in need and developing new alliances on the continent are worth the cost of putting several districts in greater risk of food shortages.

The benefits of selling maize go beyond merely strengthening Malawi's ties across the continent. Malawi also has the chance to obtain much needed foreign exchange. This year's tobacco sales were roughly a third of what they were last year. Britain's withdrawal of aid has also contributed to Malawi's foreign exchange shortage. With more foreign exchange, it will become easier for Malawi to import essential goods like petrol that have been in short supply for some time.

There is no denying the fact that many developing countries have suffered from their government's ill-conceived policies. This has made it increasingly acceptable to criticize new policies and activities after reading initial news articles or reports. Yet, as this case demonstrates, further inspection can often uncover justification for policies that can lead observers to at least understand why a policy has been enacted, if not to support it, outright.

In Case of Emergency, Claim Thuggery: The Loophole that has Egyptian Activists Worried

— *Michael Clauw*

On January 25, 2011, the people of Egypt began a nationwide revolution to overthrow their long-standing autocratic leader and institute a democratic system. Though Hosni Mubarak stepped down less than three weeks after the revolution began, many revolutionaries say that the fight is far from over. On January 24, 2012, the eve of the revolution's one-year anniversary, Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, Egypt's de facto leader, announced that the country's 30-year-old State of Emergency Law would be lifted. To the casual observer, the partial suspension of this law is clearly a step in the right direction. But to many revolutionaries and insiders skeptical of the current military regime, it is just more of the same.

Although similar laws had been passed before, the current Emergency law has proven resilient. It was implemented by Mubarak's regime in 1981 in response to the assassination of former President Anwar Sadat. Throughout Mubarak's 30 years as Egypt's leader, he consistently renewed the law despite there being no clear opposition or resistance to his regime. The law allows the government to detain citizens indefinitely without a trial, and limits the people's rights to assembly and speech.

The Muslim Brotherhood has consistently opposed the law since its creation. In fact the group that carried out Sadat's assassination was a militant offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. After the assassination, the group had to conduct their operations underground until Mubarak was unseated. In Egypt's first parliamentary elections since the revolution, the Brotherhood's political affiliate, the Freedom and Justice Party, won 38 percent of the seats in parliament.

Although the elections launched the Brotherhood to preeminence in the parliament, the group does not necessarily have control of the government. The Egyptian military has yet to fulfill its post-revolutionary promise to step down as the de facto ruler of the country. While to many the military's partial lifting of the Emergency law is a sign of progress, the military's action may be only a reiteration of Mubarak's authoritarian policies.

Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi said that the Emergency law would be lifted except in the cases of "acts of thuggery," a loosely defined term that can be easily manipulated by those in power. If "thuggery" were to mean, for instance, opposing the peace, it would be possible for the military to use the law against those who protest publicly against the regime.

Although the military has refrained from us-



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ing the "thuggery" clause in a major way since the declaration, tensions may boil over as the military government faces new challenges to its authority. In late March of 2012, the newly formed Egyptian parliament, led by the Muslim Brotherhood, began garnering support for a vote of no confidence on the current government. The Brotherhood is dissatisfied with the current Prime Minister and Cabinet, who they believe are wasting billions of government dollars. Although votes of no confidence are typical of parliamentary democracies, Egypt's interim constitution does not include an article giving congress this power, a fact the military leaders are quick to point out.

As de facto rulers of the country, the military is the only body with explicit authority to dissolve the government, an action that they have no interest in taking. Regardless, the Muslim Brotherhood continues to call for a new government. In response to their continuous demands, Field Marshal Tantawi expressed "extreme indignation," stating, "We were careful not to be provoked, but what happened recently is enough."

With tensions high and presidential elections coming in May, the immediate future and stability of Egyptian politics is in question. While it is clear that Tantawi and the military government always keep their own interests in mind, their good behavior since ending the Emergency Law suggests that they will behave responsibly in the coming months. A successful presidential election is in the best interests of the military, as it will introduce a powerful new voice to serve as an intermediary between the military and the currently anti-military parliament.

If early polls are any indication, that voice may belong to Amr Moussa, a former Secretary General of the Arab League who has the support of many Egyptians. He has led most opinion polls carried out in the past year, and is thought of favorably by 80 percent of Egyptians polled in early

2011. Barring any unexpected candidates or major shifts in public opinion, Moussa looks poised to capture the presidency. He first gained prominence by serving as Hosni Mubarak's foreign minister, but insists that he is not like his old boss. Until the next president is in office and the new constitution is finalized, further instability within the Egyptian government is likely.

Kony Kraze

— Julia Jacovides

Facebook changed overnight. A link to a 30-minute video with some variation of the words “Watch this. No one is too busy to change the world” dominated the usual status updates about weather, school, or spring break. Each link took friends to a YouTube video posted by the group Invisible Children (IC) titled “Kony 2012.”

The video was posted on a Monday in early March and, within 24 hours, had attracted 50 million views. By Saturday, it had almost 67 million. #KONY2012 and #stopkony had trended worldwide for several days on Twitter. Celebrities had even voiced their support for the organization, which focuses on bringing Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony to trial. It is interesting to note that the video, according to *The Guardian*, is most popular among teenagers. It targets a generation that has practically grown up with social media.

The incredible overnight success of a group whose main focus is stopping a thirty-year war is a phenomenal development. It also, however, provides an ironic commentary on global media today by emphasizing how quickly we fall prey to emotionally wrenching images that require little more to respond than pressing a “like” or “share” button on Facebook. In the past year, Wikipedia has joined with many other websites to attempt a similar Internet campaign. Theirs, however, was in opposition to legislation aimed at limiting Internet freedom that, in the end, is likely to have greater success than IC.

In mid-January, Wikipedia and seven thousand other sites shut down for 24 hours in order to protest a piece of legislation called the Stop Online Privacy Act which was meant to limit a free Internet. Like the Kony 2012 campaign, the blackout was meant to shock people into action, and to raise awareness about a formerly obscure issue. The tactics worked: the next day, government officials agreed not to pass the legislation until a compromise existed. Kony 2012, it seems, is trying to mimic Wikipedia’s success.

Within five days of the video’s release, Joseph Kony became one of the most hated men in the world. Kony has been the leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army, a rebel force which has been active for thirty years. He believes himself to be a prophet with magical healing powers, an explanation for his initial support. But, as time went on, he quickly resorted to terror and forcing children into his army. One and a half million people have fled their homes in the region, and remaining parents send their children to cities in order to avoid capture by Kony’s forces. In the Kony video, a self-satisfied voiceover explains how rebels force girls into sexual slavery, and how armed



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Invisible Children supporters sleep outside in Portland, Oregon in 2006 to represent the Central African children who fear abduction. The group emphasizes mass support rather than individual action.

young boys must kill their parents and mutilate their friends.

Even text about the video produces an interesting and hopeless sense of outrage at Kony’s atrocities. Yet, this is exactly the mood that swept the Internet in early March and it marks a loss of curiosity and doubt that does not bode well for the future.

People are willing to watch a half-hour video, and to blog, tweet, and Facebook about it. Yet, they are moving too quickly to really question the matter, to understand the schematics of the situation and the implications of IC’s actions.

Invisible Children aims to end Kony’s influence in central Africa, and does so primarily by raising awareness. The success of its video reflects years of work, and years of being told that the cause would not be successful. The organization was originally denied government support because Joseph Kony posed no pertinent foreign policy threat to the United States.

Yet, humanitarian leaders struck back, arguing that American intervention would help end a decades-long humanitarian crisis. The organization’s critics responded by saying that the cause was extraordinarily paternalistic: a Western nation feeling that it possesses the tools necessary to end an African crisis.

In addition to numerous criticisms of the video, IC’s critics attack the organization for manipulating its audience, knowing that it would respond best to a highly emotional plea.

The Wikipedia blackout, though, required

people to call their congressmen and was in place for only 24 hours. Kony 2012 wants its supporters to pay attention and to raise awareness until the end of the year when, presumably, Kony will have been caught. Wikipedia’s campaign worked; IC’s likely will not.

The reason is not just that attention spans have grown shorter – people are more likely to be an activist for one day than for nine months – but it also concerns the level of interaction. Wikipedia requested that individuals call their congressmen individually, on their own time; it even provided them with politicians’ phone numbers. Invisible Children’s process is vague and requires a large group of supporters. If IC desired an immediate result, it should have followed Wikipedia’s example and provided the video’s viewers with a link to call their congressmen and encourage American intervention in Uganda.

The Kony 2012 achieved its main goal: making Joseph Kony a household name. Millions of individuals instantly became aware of a war that has been ongoing for thirty years; it created a public enemy out of a man whose name, one month ago, was unknown to most college students. Most crucially, it played the media game well. If IC wishes to maintain its momentum, however, it must provide supporters with means of more substantial change other than “liking” or “sharing” a video. The organization needs to continually recharge its supporters with videos, pictures, progress reports, and personal stories in order to spur change.

Get the Falk Out of Here: Tensions Rise Again Over the Falkland Islands

— Greg Brown

“Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the whole House will join me in condemning totally this unprovoked aggression by the government of Argentina against British territory that has not a shred of justification and not a scrap of legality... It is the government’s objective to see that the islands are free from occupation and returned to British administration at the earliest possible moment.”

So proclaimed Prime Minister of Great Britain, Margaret Thatcher, just after the Argentine military landed on the Falkland Islands in the spring of 1982. April 2 will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Falkland Islands War between Argentina and Great Britain, a brief, albeit devastating, war that claimed the lives of nearly one thousand soldiers. Within two months of the outbreak, Argentina admitted a painful and humiliating defeat. However, it would never officially relinquish its right to sovereignty over the Falklands, or *Islas Malvinas* as they are passionately referred to in Argentina.

Since the War, the issue of Falklands sovereignty is usually only considered as the standard and annual battle cry from Argentine politicians that can be predicted like clockwork. However, a new furor has recently emerged that has engulfed all factions of Argentine politics.

The cause of all this? Prince William.

The future King of Britain recently deployed to the Islands as part of his Royal Air Force training. Following his highly publicized, globally-viewed wedding in 2011, there has been a renewed interest in all things Crown-related. As a result, both the British and Argentine governments have increased their rhetoric over the sovereignty of the Islands. The Argentine government has used the deployment of Prince William to paint the British as still hell-bent on colonialism, while the British government has countered by saying that it is Argentina that has the colonialist intentions as the residents of the Islands are overwhelmingly in favor of remaining under British control.

Although the Islands are amongst the most sparsely populated and isolated places on the earth, there are two main explanations as to why the sovereignty of the Islands remains so contentious: oil and ego.

Recently, some experts have suggested that the Islands could be home to large oil reserves, as well as other natural resources that have the potential to boost the coffers for Great Britain. The United Kingdom followed up on this speculation by launching an oil-finding expedition in 2010



...much can be done to mend a broken relationship between Argentina and the United Kingdom.”

off the coast of the Islands. Argentina, which has recently seen some of its natural resources, like hydrocarbons, depleted, aims to use those same resources to gain political popularity among its electorate. As the once-robust Argentine economy begins to wane, the issue of sovereignty could be used as a tool to distract the Argentine public from emerging economic issues.

The other aspect of the feud, however, is the less-regulated ego. The Falkland Islands War in 1982 was a humiliating defeat as Great Britain quickly and soundly defeated Argentina. By continuing to claim sovereignty over the territory, the Argentine government appears to be trying to apologize to the Argentine public for its shortcomings during the war. The same goes for Britain: it would be political suicide to give up the Islands, which it defended at the cost of the lives of hundreds of British soldiers.

Given that the claim to sovereignty over the Islands has been in dispute since the nineteenth century and that the two sides have already gone to war, any solution that would leave both countries satisfied seems out of the question. After all, most of the Falkland Islands’ inhabitants wish to remain under British rule. Therefore, the question that remains is whether anything can reduce the tensions between the two nations.

If egos were pushed aside, the answer would be yes.

Firstly, Prince William will never see an actual battlefield. As the eventual heir to the throne, he is a public treasure more than a public defender, so sending him for Royal Air Force (RAF) training is akin to a photo op for the world press. Sending him to a place where tensions are already high and will only get worse is a grave miscalculation on behalf of the British government. Although the RAF is free to send its soldiers anywhere the British flag flies, sending its most famous soldier to a land with a history of violence is just asking for trouble.

One of the sore sticking points amongst Argentines is that the British government refuses to discuss the issue formally. In order to amend

the situation, both governments should agree to engage in formal talks. Granted, the Falkland Islands are British through and through and should remain that way. Residents speak English, use the British Pound as currency, and drive on the left side of the road. This does not mean, though, that tensions cannot be lowered. Although the British government is not legally obligated to hold formal talks with Argentina regarding the sovereignty of the Islands, doing so could reduce simmering tensions.

Argentina, for its part, should acknowledge that the Falkland Islands rightfully belong under British rule, and that its denizens want it to remain that way. It has already suffered one defeat; another would simply be foolish. Instead, the Argentine government should focus on restoring its relationship with Great Britain, as strengthening economic ties would bring more good to the country than would demanding the rights to a territory that it will almost assuredly never receive.

Although another war seems highly unlikely, much can be done to mend a broken relationship between Argentina and the United Kingdom. In the short run, these concessions might seem painful or humiliating, but in the long run, both sides can reap great benefits.

Anatomy of a Scandal

— Seth Soderborg

In April 2005, two businessmen paid a visit to Maurício Marinho, head of the Brazilian Postal Service's contracting division, at his office in Brasília. They wanted to know how their company could win an information technology contract. Marinho obliged: he and the businessmen would have to "come to an agreement." They talked. The businessmen placed 3,000 *reais* on the table—about 1,200 dollars at the time. Marinho put the money into his left jacket pocket. They continued talking.

One month later, *Veja*, Brazil's most widely-read periodical, published the details of the story. The businessmen had secretly filmed the meeting. Over nearly two hours of footage, Marinho gave the businessmen "a lesson in corruption." He described ways money could be transferred—through accounts opened by stringers, messengers at hotels, currency exchanges—in a way that suggested he knew exactly what he was doing.

Marinho explained that he had close ties with Roberto Jefferson, a federal deputy and head of the ruling coalition-member Brazilian Labour Party (PTB). Jefferson, Marinho explained, "Gives me cover. . . . I don't do anything without consulting him." *Veja* explained that Marinho and two other officials in the postal service worked to ensure that high-ranking members of the PTB would fill important posts in the postal service, and frequently assigned contracts to companies indicated by PTB leaders. Friends rewarded with contracts would make large donations to the party, and companies interested in improving their relationship with the PTB were sometimes willing to over-invest in their service contracts with the postal service, knowing that the difference would go to the PTB.

When the scandal broke, those involved probably believed that they could escape without suffering serious harm. Previous bribery scandals had blown over pretty quickly. With the exception of President Fernando Collor's impeachment in 1992, Brazilian public officials tended not to suffer serious consequences from accusations like the ones made against Jefferson and Marinho. The postal service scandal was different. Millions of people had seen or read excerpts of a recording which seemed to be very good evidence that the head of a major party had systematized bribe-taking and embezzlement within the federal government. Congress acted. The first story about the scandal appeared in *Veja* on May 18, 2005. A congressional commission began investigating the case on June 9.

Yet the accusations against Jefferson were



MARCELLO CASAL JR./AGENCIA BRASIL

Brazilian Labour Party president Roberto Jefferson testifies before a congressional investigating committee.

tainted. A little digging—in this case, a few depositions from the people involved—suggested that the man who ordered the recording be made was himself engaging in foul play. Arthur Wascheck Neto, a businessman who had already won several government contracts, apparently wanted to have Maurício Marinho removed from his position. Both Wascheck and Jefferson would eventually describe their interactions in some detail. Although their accounts differed, an unclear but suggestive picture emerged. Wascheck had arranged to meet with Jefferson after Marinho had been caught on tape, or, depending on the version of the story that was being told, had arranged through an intermediary to have Jefferson see the tape. They may have negotiated; they may not have negotiated. A congressional commission's report made it clear that something was wrong: "[Wascheck's] actions are suspect to the degree that he did not plan to formally denounce Mr. Maurício Marinho." Though they do not come to any conclusions about Wascheck's goals, it is likely that he was attempting to blackmail Jefferson.

When the investigation continued, Jefferson must have realized that no one was coming to his rescue. So he began talking. He talked about something called the "*Mensalão*." *Mensalão* is a word of Jefferson's invention. It means "big monthly," as in "big monthly allowance," and it describes a patronage machine that extended far beyond the postal service and the PTB.

On June 6, 2005, the *Folha de S. Paulo* ran a front-page article headlined: "PT [the Workers' Party] gave an allowance of 30,000 *reais* to MPs, says Jefferson." Two days later, the congressional inquiry commission into the post office scandal took its seats. Their work would validate most of Jefferson's claims.

As the scheme unraveled, it became clear

that the money to buy votes had not come directly from the PT treasury. Instead, a publicist named Marcos Valério provided loans to the PT through his public relations companies. The loans were underwritten by two major banks in Valério's home state of Minas Gerais. BMG Bank and Banco Rural signed off on huge loans to the PT, or to Delúbio Soares himself, allowing Soares, whose net worth was, according to the investigating committee, "163,000 *reais* and a [Toyota] Corolla" to guarantee a loan of 26 million *reais*. Valério did not bother collecting interest on the loans until after the parliamentary inquiry commission had begun issuing subpoenas.

Most of the cash involved in the loans did not come from Valério himself. Companies could contact Valério to express their interest in giving to the PT, and he would arrange for their money to pass through his publicity firms. The money then moved through a series of accounts on its way to the coffers of the PT, sometimes as cash carried in suitcases to Brasília by Valério and his assistants, at other times going directly to the PT in the form of a loan. At least 55.8 million *reais* (about 30 million dollars) passed through the Valério on their way to the PT.

One of the most damaging stories to come out of the *Valérioduto* testimony concerned the Bank of Brazil, a semi-private commercial bank whose CEO is appointed by the president of Brazil. Over four years, the bank had paid Valério's publicity company a total of 93 million *reais* (about 60 million dollars) for several publicity campaigns. Much of this money was given as advances, and the congressional commission found that over 70 million *reais* were, for one reason or another, not documented properly.

Valério's defense was that he was guilty only of cooking his books to cover up extra campaign donations, something the law and the public consider a lesser offense.

But the money was used to buy votes, and Valério, in his testimony, indicated that he was aware of this. He also claimed to have met with Delúbio Soares, the PT's treasurer two to three times each week. These meetings were ostensibly about the PT's public image. Indeed, they might have been—Valério was one of the PT's primary public relations workers. As the commission notes, however, Valério's visits to Brasília coincided with large cash withdrawals and suspicious bank movements. Regardless of whatever else he did in those meetings, he discussed the scheme, and sometimes took

an active role in disbursing money to the parties involved, as when he helped deliver a six-million *real* payment to Liberal Party president Valdemar da Costa Neto.

Throughout his testimony, Valério insisted that the scheme was run from PT headquarters by Delúbio Soares. Jefferson had said that it was in fact José Dirceu, chief of staff to President Lula, who kept the scheme going. Valério eventually admitted that he had, in fact, been to the the presidential residence to meet with Dirceu two or three times. The facts seemed to align with the accusations. Jefferson's picture of a money-laundering and vote-buying scheme run out of the presidential palace seemed, unbelievably, true.

Over the following months, fallout from the scandal worked its way through the government. Jefferson had named 40 government officials in his testimony to the investigative commission, and soon, federal prosecutors unsealed an indictment containing 40 names, beginning with José Dirceu. Nineteen of the accused named in Jefferson's testimony and in the indictment had been elected federal deputies in 2002.

Parliamentary immunity in Brazil ensures that federal deputies are protected from most prosecutions. They cannot stand trial for crimes until after an absolute majority of the deputies

vote to strip them of their political protections. Such a vote can take place only after the congressional Commission on Ethics and Decorum has heard the accusations against a deputy and issued a recommendation in favor of or against expulsion. Importantly, this commission may only open investigations into allegations against *sitting* federal deputies. The ethics commission cannot investigate a deputy who resigns his seat the day before an investigation into his action was to be announced. Four deputies availed themselves of the option to resign. Of these, two ran for seats in the Chamber of Deputies again in 2006; both of them were reelected.

In March, the congressional ethics commission had begun issuing its recommendations, and the chamber had begun voting on whether to expel members accused of involvement in the *Mensalão*. Four were exonerated by the congress in those weeks, including the head of the Liberal Party and the former leader of the PT in the chamber.

Even though the investigating commission confirmed the story of deals conducted within the presidential palace, then-President Lula never was implicated in the scandal. Even as Jefferson named the 40 involved in the scandal at the highest level, he refused to indicate whether the president knew about what was happening. That Lula would have been igno-

rant is implausible. One reporter at *O Globo*, Rio's leading paper, pointed out to this author that "the whole edifice of the government exists so that the president knows." Jefferson, he suggested, never named Lula because he wanted to have the chance to return to politics someday. Denouncing the president would likely close that door to the deputy forever.

A group of dogged investigators have continued collecting evidence in the case, implicating several new actors and suggesting that Lula did, in fact, know exactly what was going on. The former mayor of Brazil's third-largest city, who most recently served as President Dilma Rousseff's campaign manager, may be added to the indictment. A former tourism minister testified that Jefferson once asked Lula directly about the payments, a query to which the then-president failed to respond. These most recent reports confirm what everyone already knew—that everyone knew everything all along. The Supreme Court still has the power to hear the case and try the accused. Were it to do so, it would be an unprecedented blow to corruption in Brazilian politics. Till now, the Supreme Court has rarely chosen to hear corruption cases, and almost never issues criminal penalties. There is little reason to expect that the court will act differently here.

A Storm's A-Blowin' In, Eh!:

A Robocall Scandal Rocks the Great White North

— Greg Brown

If you ask a random American what they think about Canadians, he will most likely respond with something flattering, like “they’re very nice,” or “they’re extremely nice,” or even “they’re the nicest people in the world.” Each comment would of course end with the ubiquitous “eh,” the one word that seems to define the Canadian lexicon as a whole. Nevertheless, when compared to America, Canada has always appeared to be the friendly, stable, and honest neighbor to the north. Given this image that it has presented to the world makes the recent “robocall” scandal in the Great White North all the more shocking.

In the May 2011 elections, the Conservatives surprised all by winning an outright majority in Parliament, the first time that this has happened under Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Conservative party. In February 2012, a few Canadians started to claim having received numerous robocalls—automated telephone voice messages—either stating that their voting station had changed or coming at inconvenient times, like dinner and late at night, claiming to be members of the opposition.

At first, no one seemed to pay much attention to the calls. It was, after all, an election: people expected to be inundated with political messages. However, Elections Canada, the watchdog responsible for monitoring elections, started receiving numerous complaints from citizens of the same city: Guelph, in southern Ontario. Once news broke out about the mass robocalls there, opposition parties immediately started attacking the Conservatives. The Prime Minister and his party quickly fought back, saying that the number of complaints was few and far between, and that the Conservative Party had nothing to do with the calls.

However, upon further investigation, it was discovered that U.S.-based telecom firm RackNine was the company responsible for the numerous robocalls throughout Guelph and other parts of Ontario. The services were allegedly purchased by several MPs in the Conservative party before the election. As of early March 2012, Elections Canada has received a staggering 31,000 complaints regarding the robocalls, and that number only seems to be increasing. Critics have argued that the mass robocalls gave an unfair advantage to the Conservatives by potentially keeping thousands of voters away from the polls, ultimately helping the Conservatives sweep to power.

Although Elections Canada has only begun



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A protestor speaks out about the fraud in Canada's recent elections.

its investigation, there have already been cases of Conservative MPs admitting that they hired the services of RackNine. Prime Minister Harper went before Parliament and denied that his party did any wrongdoing, contradicting what some Conservative MPs have publicly stated. Nevertheless, the scandal could be hinting at what has slowly started to unfold in the Great White North.

For the last decade or so, Canada legislation has become consistently more conservative. Lower taxes, smaller budgets, and more restrictive abortion and anti-gay marriage laws have been a cornerstone of the Harper government, in power since 2006. Canada also fared much better than its developed counterparts during the recent financial crisis due to stringent banking regulations and its vast natural resources. In fact, the Canadian economy has been seen as so strong that Iceland, which was badly damaged during the financial crisis, has even publicly stated that it is interested in abandoning its currency for the Canadian dollar. This notion would have seemed unfathomable ten years ago.

Despite a strong economy, Canadian politics has arguably become more polemical under Harper and the Conservatives. Recently, Quebec MP Justin Trudeau, son of the popular former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, opened up old wounds

when he suggested that Quebec might have to seek independence if Harper takes Canada further to the right. The notion of Quebec sovereignty remains a highly divisive and controversial issue for all Canadians.

Protestors throughout Canada have begun to call for new elections in the wake of the scandal. Although it seems highly unlikely that the Conservatives would call for a new election unless Elections Canada finds widespread evidence of corruption, the country is finding it harder to mask its political dysfunction. Whereas the lagging economy is much to blame for political discord in the U.S., Canadian politicians do not have a weak economy to use as a scapegoat.

The chances that the Conservatives, or the Canadian political system as whole, will walk away untarnished from this scandal seems to diminish with each passing day; the amount of damage done by the robocall scandal actually does remain to be seen. Nevertheless, it seems as though Canadian politics has turned in its clean reputation for something dirtier. The last time the Great White North saw this much contentiousness was arguably in the 1970s, when bilingualism and the idea of Quebec separatism started to become commonplace, and the country was facing great economic uncertainty.

Since then, however, its neighbor to the south has routinely received the vast majority of world attention for political discord. Even in an American presidential election year, when the media the world over focuses great attention to the U.S. and every other election becomes second place, the robocall scandal has still managed to find its way into headlines. Exactly how Prime Minister Harper, who has always been seen as a quiet and reserved leader, moves his party forward from the scandal will be interesting to see. With attacks from the opposition growing, Harper might have to change his leadership style and vocally defend himself and his party if he is to weather this storm.

While polemic battles have always been the norm throughout the world, Canada has always been viewed as something rather different. Sure, its political system has its quirks just like any other nation, but Canada usually comes across as the exception rather than the norm. Now, in the face of the scandal, that image might be permanently tarnished. How Harper and the Conservatives move forward is not yet known. It is clear, however, is that there is an air of change happening in the Great White North.

Us Against the World: Venezuela and Iran's Unlikely Friendship

— Amanda Bourlier

Since ascending to the presidency of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez has striven to increase regional coherency and adopted highly critical rhetoric against the United States. He has made a point of befriending other Latin American leaders who also take a dim view of the US and its foreign policy, most notably Evo Morales of Bolivia and Fidel and Raul Castro in Cuba. Chavez has extended this principle of befriending his enemies' enemies to include Iran in Venezuela's circle of allies. The relationship between Iran and Venezuela—and to a lesser extent, much of Latin America—is particularly troubling because of the potentially damaging effect it may have on international economic sanctions against Iran.

Despite being geographically, linguistically, and culturally distant, the relationship between Venezuela and Iran has flourished in recent years. The two states have signed accords for trade deals and mutual development projects worth an estimated twenty billion dollars. According to media accounts, these agreements include banking, energy deals, and the manufacturing of consumer goods. Some, including weapons deals reportedly involving small arms, drones, and missiles, have already occurred. The leaders of each country meet frequently and share many of the same foreign policy beliefs, including a particular disdain for the United States. There is even allegedly some concern within the Obama administration that Venezuela might be used as a base for Iranian terrorist attacks against US interests, should diplomatic efforts fail to diffuse the current tensions between Iran and the international community.

As long as Iran feels it has loyal friends, it is unlikely to cave to diplomatic efforts. In addition, these allies could undermine the sanctions that, as of February, were hailed publicly by various governments and the UN as the best tactic for forcing Iran to cease nuclear activity. Venezuela traditionally has not shied away from continuing to trade with countries under international criticism. For example, it has been criticized for selling fuel to Syria despite global condemnation and sanctions geared towards ending the regime's violence against civilians. With Venezuela's strong ties to Iran and political isolation from much of the rest of the international community, it has minimal incentives to halt trade.

According to the Petersen International Institute for Economics, sanctions have only been ef-



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Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez.

fective roughly a third of the time in the past 40 years. Studies have shown that sanctions work best when they are as multilateral as possible. As long as some countries are still willing to trade with Iran, sanctions imposed by others are less likely to put enough economic pressure on Iran for it to change its nuclear policies. Venezuela's continued trade in a variety of significant industries, then, is troubling. If reports citing Israel's plans to initiate a preemptive strike in the case that sanctions fail are accurate, violent conflict seems inevitable.

It should be noted that Venezuela is not the only Latin American country to which Iran has reached out. Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Ecuador have also pledged support for Iran, and in the past few years, the number of Iranian embassies in Latin America has doubled. Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad even began 2012 with a four-country tour to Cuba, Nicaragua, and Ecuador, in addition to Venezuela.

Western leaders should seriously consider why it is that Latin American countries are so receptive to Iran's friendly advances. Perception of the United States and Europe in Latin America has historically been very mixed. Due to colonial and post-independence intervention including economic exploitation and interference in national politics—often by arming various factions—many Latin American countries are distrustful toward Western powers. Perceptions of the US and

EU have not improved over the last decade. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq appear imperialistic to many Latin American, generating suspicion in countries that have long existed under the shadow of frequent international interventions. Perhaps, then, it should be no surprise that some regional figures like Chavez have boosted their popularity by criticizing and undermining US policy.

Many Latin American countries elected new governments last fall, bringing a host of fresh politicians to the region ripe for the international community to court to its causes. Even Venezuela, which seems the most entrenched in its support for Iran, might not prove impossible to win over in the long run: Chavez faces an unusually strong and united opposition in the upcoming elections. Even if Chavez manages to maintain power, he may be forced to abandon some of his less profitable positions due to dwindling popular support in the face of a slow economy, higher crime, and general isolation outside of the region.

Other world leaders should take advantage of this unique situation to reach out to the Latin American countries that support Iran in an effort to boost the effectiveness of the sanctions. Otherwise, Iran may have enough connections to remain resistant to international pressure, which may spark an avoidable international conflict.

Prisoners in Peril:

Latin America's Struggle to Keep its Prisoners Safe

— Austen Hufford

At approximately 10:50 pm on Tuesday, February 14, a fire broke out at the Penitenciaría Nacional de Comayagua, a prison in Comayagua, Honduras. It rapidly ripped through the crumbling walls of the overcrowded jail. Hundreds of prisoners were burned alive in their cells; others were shot by the guards while trying to escape the flames. While accidents do happen, many more died than should have. Firefighters were not able to enter the prison until 11:30 pm because they could not find the key. But, by that time, most of the fire had already burned out. The numbers speak for themselves: the prison was filled to almost twice its capacity and, that night, there were almost nine hundred prisoners on the roster but only twelve guards on duty. In the end, approximately 350 died—more than half of which were simply awaiting trial.

This is just one example of the failings of the Latin American prison system. In February, more than 40 inmates were killed in riots in Mexican prisons. In an article written earlier that month before the fire, the *LA Times* reported that the overcrowding of Latin American prisons was causing a high death rate behind bars. Dozens of prisoners in Uruguay, Argentina, Venezuela, and Chile died as a result of violence in the two weeks preceding the article.

Corruption runs rampant and contributes to the problem. Poorly paid guards are able to make money by helping prisoners sneak in contraband or looking the other way. A recent raid in Acapulco, Mexico uncovered cells complete with flat-screen TVs, fighting roosters, and in-house prostitutes. Some guards are fearful of not cooperating with prisoners because of their ability to control criminal enterprises even while still behind bars. For those with power, prison might seem almost like a hotel; for those without, it is anything but.

A 2011 report from Brazil's Supreme Court described how prisoners had to stay inside 24 hours a day. They were fed only one daily meal and sometimes did not even have mattresses or beds. There was not enough room for all the prisoners to lie down at the same time. The report led to the release of 36,000 prisoners—more than seven percent of the total prison population.

These examples, unfortunately, are just a few of many. The system is a clear and utter failure; it violates the human rights of millions. Even prisoners deserve to live without fear for their well-being. One suggested solution—building more prisons—is not the answer.



Prisoners had to stay inside 24 hours a day. They were fed only one meal daily and sometimes didn't even have mattresses or beds."

A report by the Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Delinquency, which studied prisons between 1992 and 2002, said all seventeen Latin American countries it surveyed had overpopulated jails. In Nicaragua, jails were at 104 percent capacity; in Honduras the percentage rose to 209 percent.

In a majority of Latin American countries, over 50 percent of prisoners are awaiting sentencing. In Western Europe, the average is around 25 percent. People who have not had their day in court are being held in horrible conditions. Many of them are probably guilty, but many are innocent too. Those who cannot afford a good lawyer have little chance of being exonerated.

In developed countries, a system of bail is widely used instead of detainment except for those most likely to flee. In Latin America, however, the gangs are so strong and the justice system is so weak that judges do want to let any criminals out of sight for a second. While flight risk might remain high, detaining everyone until trial is not the answer. Innocence tribunals composed of three or more judges should be set up to go through the massive backlog of inmates awaiting trial. They should determine, on a case by case basis, whether the inmate should be held without bond. There should also be a limit on how long a prisoner can remain behind bars without a trial, and a hearing before the tribunal should be required to extend this limit. Additionally, prisons should not be filled up with petty drug users and small time non-violent dealers. Drug courts, like those now being tested in the United States, should be set up. These courts use a combination of education, drug treatment and testing, and some community service instead of prison. They offer lower recidivism rates and are cheaper than normal courts. This is exactly what Latin American countries need: less recidivism means both less crowded prisons in the future and fewer drug addicts.

Prisons should also be opened up to journalists and NGOs. NGOs can provide much needed

care, food, and legal and spiritual advice. Journalists can keep the public informed and help reduce both corruption and horrible conditions. Eventually, this constant pressure will force the governments to improve their prisons. Of course there will be some security concerns but having some of the costs of prisons shared by NGOs outweighs most of these concerns.

It is easy to say that more money should be spent on prisons, guards, or prison food. The money is, indeed, needed. However, it is not likely to be forthcoming. Instead solutions need to focus on finding the most cost-effective ways to improve prison conditions.

The Invisible Country: Drug Trade Control in Guatemala

—*Julia Jacovides*

Guatemala is a land of beauty: full of mountains, lakes, and vivid colors. It is hard, perhaps, to reconcile these notions with the stories of drug-induced, corruption-driven violence that regularly emerge from its depths. Violent tales from places like El Naranjo, a city in the middle of the country, where 27 laborers were decapitated and their heads littered across a field. Neighbors claimed they had no knowledge of the attack, its perpetrators, or its cause. Or the lurid story of Ricardo Paz, who, though he left school at age eleven, quickly rose through the ranks of a drug gang called “Pandilla 18,” translated to “Gang 18.” His stories reflect a life of almost non-stop murder, in which he even killed some of his own gang members.

After Mexican officials began cracking down on Mexico’s drug trade in the last decade, mafias shuffled south into what is known as the “northern triangle”: Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. The largest number went to Guatemala, making it the new center of drug violence in Central America and around the globe. Two factors are responsible for the exponential increase in drug trafficking in Guatemala. First, and most important, is the American demand for cocaine. In the past, it encouraged the growth of the drug trade in Mexico. But, due to recent crackdowns in the country, understandably, mafias have moved their business elsewhere. Second, the government is corrupt and lacks control both over the situation and over itself: the mafia has infiltrated its ranks, and the well-to-do businessmen with heavy government influence ensure that attempts to implement taxes that would bolster the state fail.

Together, these factors have secured the region the title of one of the most deadly areas on earth. There are 46 murders per 100,000 people. This is double the amount in Mexico and nearly ten times more than that in the United States. The murder rate has doubled in the past ten years and is now higher than it was during the country’s civil war. The most horrifying aspect of these numbers is that only five percent of murders result in prosecution.

These two causes illustrate how varied an approach one must take to ending the problem. A solution to drug violence in Guatemala must address its complex sources, namely international demand and domestic complicity. In particular, the country needs reforms that will minimize and eliminate the drug trade, improve education, and increase the amount of foreign aid.

Marking the root of the violence, Guatemala now plays the integral role of intermediary in the



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A look at the misleading serenity of the Guatemalan Countryside.

drug trade. It is estimated that two-fifths of its murders are related to drugs. Practically the entire amount of cocaine that enters the United States first passes through its borders. And, although ten years ago the Central American region transferred less cocaine than Mexico, in 2008 it handled three times more than Mexico and the Caribbean combined.

These statistics merely underscore the drug trade’s global reach: ending trafficking in Guatemala would move production into another poor and unprepared country. This international aspect means that the response itself must be international. A global drug trade crackdown, characterized by better border security and inspection as well as the removal of corrupt civil servants, must happen now. Everyone from congressmen to civil servants must see that the drug trade creates more problems than it solves.

The violence does not bode well for its citizens who suffer the most from living in a country saturated with crime. The World Bank believes that almost half of Guatemala’s children are perpetually malnourished, likely due to years of poor governance and the recent rise of the lucrative, but unproductive and destructive, drug trade. This number is worse than Ethiopia’s. Lack of preparation—the average Guatemalan attends school only for about four years—and perpetual domestic strife has spurred many to seek refuge in the United States. Guatemala’s primary concern should be increasing education standards to provide citizens with op-

portunities outside the drug trade. Such standards will also create a demand for skilled labor and will therefore strengthen the economy. A country without an effective education system is a country with no future.

Any attempt to change Guatemala starts with money, something the government does not have enough of. In the past, the United States has viewed the seven Central American countries as potential democratic allies. This view was predominant throughout the Cold War, when the region was both a meeting place and playing ground for communist and democratic powers. When the battle ended twenty years ago, unfortunately, American politicians and constituents essentially ignored the area, which allowed it to fall prey to economic hazards and the drug trade. However, it is time for America to again offer aid money to rebuild infrastructure in Guatemala so that the country can again focus on the people’s welfare. Unfortunately, as the world fights to emerge from its economic downturn, this seems unlikely.

And, so, Guatemala must improve itself with the resources available to it. For, as long as the drug trade is lucrative—and as long as people reap benefits from it—the murders will continue. As long as there is always somewhere else for trafficking to relocate to, it will. The ultimate solution would be to rid the world of this illegal business. This will not happen, however, until it the region works together and constructs a cohesive plan to combat the trade.

(Another) Landmark Trial for Haiti

— Lissa Kryska

In early January, eight Haitian police officers were convicted and sentenced for their role in a prison massacre that occurred following the devastation of the 2010 earthquake. This trial was an important development in a country where police, military, and government officers are rarely held accountable for their crimes. The case is also reminiscent of a landmark court decision from 2000, the celebrated convictions from which were then overturned in 2005. Indeed, in a country where corruption is a deeply imbedded part of the system, it can be incredibly difficult to truly provide any lasting semblance justice for its people.

For the recent massacre, death toll estimates begin at twenty and climb from there. The prison's original explanation for the deaths was that a prisoner had killed his fellow inmates in a "disturbance." However, The New York Times was skeptical and launched an investigation. They found that it was in fact the prison guards, allegedly unprovoked, who had shot the unarmed prisoners. A subsequent inquiry by the UN and the Haitian government arrived at the same conclusion.

These investigations led to the trial of fourteen people, ranging in rank from low-level prison guards up to the warden himself. Eight were sentenced. One of the eight was the leader of the riot police, believed to have fled the country. He was tried and found guilty *in absentia*. This is an example of one of the many obstacles built into Haiti's justice system. Verdicts like this one lack meaningful staying power, because under Haitian law a defendant found guilty *in absentia* has the right to request a new trial once he or she is apprehended.

Events surrounding the trial gave a telling explanation as to why so few guilty verdicts were delivered; Witnesses, prosecuting lawyers, and judge all received multitude of violent threats and were not given protection. When delivering his verdict, the judge declared: "The decision of the judge is his expression of the truth. There are other versions that exist but this is mine. And that is the law." This reminder of the rule of law may well have been necessary in a country that has notoriously ignored, or been unable to enforce it, time and time again.

The fact that government officers, some of them high ranking, were put on trial and that over half of them were found guilty is indeed a breakthrough for the Haitian justice system, a landmark conviction that will hopefully set a new precedent of accountability. But no follow-through on the promise of improvements can be taken for granted, and no verdict is ever really fi-

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...the international community is overly optimistic about progress and fails to pay proper attention to the regressions and backslides that follow initial improvements.”

nal, as Haiti found out in the aftermath of a similar trial that took place almost fifteen years ago.

In 2000, a court case emerged in which 22 Haitian military and police personnel were tried for their roles in a 1994 massacre in the seaside town of Raboteau. The massacre took place under the country's 1991-1994 de facto military dictatorship and, although the number of deaths is unknown, estimates reach as high as fifty. It took five years to get the case to trial. The judge then found sixteen of the 22 guilty and gave many of them life sentences. Like the recent prison trial, the Raboteau trial was hailed as a landmark case for human rights in Haiti.

Unfortunately, neither the verdict nor the promise of accountability lasted. In 2005, Haiti's Supreme Court overturned the verdict and ended the sentences of all who had been imprisoned. It cited an obscure 1928 law, and gave it precedence over conflicting passages in the 1987 constitution that would have kept the verdict as it was. A new trial was not presented as an option; the perpetrators walked free. The most disturbing aspect of the overturned convictions is that the arguments that led to the change were not made by the defense: the court provided the justification, itself.

The two cases are strikingly similar. They both involve police and military figures taking part in a massacre and trying to cover it up. In each case, almost half of the defendants were not convicted, and there were additional convictions made *in absentia*. However, Haiti must ensure that they do not become alike in another aspect—convictions overturned by a corrupt government after media attention has died down.

Haiti's government needs far-reaching reforms if it is going to end the corruption that has plagued it for years. Ghosts from its past, like the Raboteau killers, need to be held accountable and face justice. This will send a message that this is a government which will no longer be complicit in the murder of its own people. A better system of accountability must be put in place for all branches of the military and police forces. Super-

rriors should be held responsible for ensuring that those under them are not committing atrocities, and there should be an avenue for their inferiors to report them, anonymously, for investigation when necessary.

The courts need improvement as well. The loyalties of those serving on them, especially the Supreme Court, need to be closely examined. If they have a connection to those on trial, an alternate judge or court should be assigned to the case. Laws, like the one allowing for a retrial of those found guilty *in absentia*, need to be changed, so that people are not encouraged to flee the country or hide to avoid meaningful sentencing. Corrupt government officers outside of the military and the justice system need to face punishment, as well.

When the Raboteau trial took place, it was reported on widely by the global media. However, it is much more difficult to find information or archived articles about the 2005 decision to overturn the convictions. Too often the international community is overly optimistic about progress and fails to pay proper attention to the regressions and backslides that follow initial improvements.

The events following and consolidating a victory are just as important as the moment of victory itself. The sentencing that occurred a few weeks ago is indeed a landmark moment, and it could lead to promising changes in Haiti's justice system. However, it could just as easily turn into another Raboteau case, once again allowing murderers to walk free. In order for the country to continue on a path towards transparency and accountability, the Haitian government needs to make sure that this grand moment for human rights is more than just a temporary victory.

A Blessing in Disguise

— *Caroline Bissonnette*

Earlier this year, the United States Congress gave President Barack Obama an ultimatum. He was allotted a 60-day time frame, at the end of which he was to make a decision regarding the continuation of the controversial Keystone XL pipeline project—a potential oil pipeline that would stretch from Canada to the Texas coast. Obama ultimately rejected the project, citing environmental concerns raised by activists across the continent. This decision led to outcry from American and Canadian officials alike who saw the project as a necessary and beneficial partnership between North America's largest producer and its largest consumer of oil. However, the fall-out from the Obama administration's rejection of the project has shrouded an ultimately positive move in a cloud of doubt and resentment. With the prospect of building the Keystone pipeline off the table, Canada is considering a new project that would help supply the world's second largest importer of foreign oil: China. By refusing the pipeline's construction, the U.S. has prompted Canada to turn its entrepreneurial eye to the East in what could be the beginning of an extremely beneficial partnership.

Currently in China there are about 50 million vehicles on the road, and by the year 2020 that number is expected to triple. As China's need for oil continues to grow, so does its dependence on OPEC countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. In the long term it would serve American, Canadian, and Chinese interests to wean China off of OPEC oil. This is especially crucial when considering the delicate situation surrounding Iran, the US, and the Strait of Hormuz. A tiny waterway connecting the Persian Gulf with the rest of the world, the Strait of Hormuz is perhaps the most critical waterway on the planet: 75 percent of the crude oil that passes through the narrow channel every day is destined for Asian countries, primarily China. In an escalating feud over Iran's nuclear intentions, Iran has threatened in January to close the strait in response to Western economic sanctions against the country.

The Keystone XL pipeline, if completed, would have stretched from Alberta, Canada, all the way down to Texas. Alberta—home to the world's third largest oil reserves after Saudi Arabia and Venezuela—currently houses over 170 billion barrels of oil and produces 1.5 million barrels daily. This number is expected to more than double by the year 2025 as the global demand for oil continues to grow.

Currently, about 97 percent of all Canadian oil exports are bound for the United States, which means Canada faces a tricky situation. Its Ameri-



Protesters stand outside of the White House in August 2011 in opposition to the Keystone XL Pipeline project.

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can partnership is extremely profitable, but with such little diversity in its exports, the industry is at the mercy of American political and economic fluctuations. The controversy surrounding the Keystone pipeline project highlights the dependence Canada has developed on America as its primary oil consumer. A potential Chinese-Canadian oil partnership could be exactly what Canada needs to provide its oil industry with financial stability. The \$5.5 billion pipeline was seen as essential to continuing Canada's path towards becoming major player in the world oil market, but with the project wrapped up in red tape, the country has been forced to explore its other options.

A second project known as the Northern Gateway pipeline is currently in the works to expand Chinese consumption of Canadian oil. This pipeline would span between Alberta and a small village on British Columbia's Western coast known as Kitamaat. If the project is approved, the village of Kitamaat would be transformed into a massive seaport, able to handle 220 oil tankers a year and 525,000 barrels of oil a day. Citizens of British Columbia have already begun to raise many of the same environmental concerns that stymied the Keystone XL project, including the impending threat of oil spills in the Douglas Channel – the pristine yet treacherous pass through which the oil tankers would be forced to navigate. These concerns are very real memories of the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989, and serve as a reminder of what

could happen if the stringent safety precautions promised for such a project were to fail.

Apart from potential environmental effects, the Northern Gateway pipeline has the potential to change the face of the Canadian oil industry. China's demand for foreign oil is skyrocketing, and Canada could be the country to help satisfy that demand. On a recent trip to China, Canada's Prime Minister Stephen Harper met with President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao, and other top Chinese officials to discuss the possible burgeoning relationship between these two countries; oil was high on the agenda.

With China's ever increasing need for oil and Canada's vested interest in diversifying its oil exportation, these two countries could be heading toward an advantageous relationship for both parties involved. The prevention of the Keystone XL project, which has been criticized as a detriment to both the Canadian and American economies, has been misconstrued: in the long run, this partnership has the potential to benefit both the economies of China and Canada, in addition to easing tensions caused by the reliance of the US and China on OPEC oil.

A Conservative Hope for Mexico's Political Future

— *Tanika Raychaudhuri*

In Mexico, corruption and male-dominated party machines dominate politics. Josefina Vázquez Mota, a conservative female presidential nominee, has the potential, however, to change that. On July 1, Mexico will be holding its third general election since the country reestablished a democratic system of government in 2000. This year's race is particularly heated because it will determine the country's direction after twelve years of rule by the conservative National Action Party (PAN), years defined by intense drug violence.

While Felipe Calderón, Mexico's current President, remains fairly popular, the Mexican Constitution does not allow him to run for reelection. Many are critical of his use of military force against powerful drug cartels across Mexico. More than 47,000 people have died in drug-related violence since Calderón took office in 2006. This violent and unsuccessful cartel policy could damage support for PAN, which may be why the party nominated, Josefina Vázquez Mota. As the first woman to run on a major party ticket for the Mexican presidency, Vázquez Mota vows to govern in a traditionally Mexican but distinctly feminine vein.

While the nominees from all three major political parties the PAN, Institutional Revolution Party (PRI), and Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD)—have a good chance of winning the election, each has a very different appeal. The Institutional Revolution Party (PRI) is a centrist party that garners support from the poor agricultural class, and ruled Mexico autocratically from 1929 until 2000. Though the PRI currently leads the national polls, its candidate, Enrique Peña Nieto, lacks the charisma typical of Latin American politicians.

The left-leaning Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) has a strong presence in rural southern Mexico. Andrés López-Obrador, the party's candidate, is a prominent national politician who lost the 2006 elections by a margin of 0.58 percent. The former mayor of the prosperous Mexico City, López-Obrador would likely bring socialist reforms to the national government.

Josefina Vázquez Mota's nomination as the PAN candidate broke the male-dominated hierarchy of the Mexican party machinery. As current leader of the lower house of the legislature and the Secretary of Education under Calderón, Vázquez Mota is well qualified for the job. Though she is a driven modern politician, with more in common with Hillary Clinton or Angela Merkel than the average Mexican housewife, Vázquez Mota's novel approach to politics places her within the bounds



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Josefina Vázquez Mota, the 2012 PAN Presidential Nominee.

of traditional Mexican gender roles.

Vázquez Mota has successfully campaigned on the premise of her Mexican values. On her campaign website, she states that she strongly believes in the traditional work ethic of the Mexican people and will return this quality to government. Throughout her web content, she emphasizes that she is a female advocate for Mexico by describing herself as, “a Mexican woman.”

Vázquez Mota aims to distance herself from the image of modernity, but makes it clear that she will bring a female perspective to the Presidency. When she announced her campaign in September, she said, “My campaign will not be waged merely on the premise that I am a woman,” adding that she would “govern like a woman and not try to imitate men”.

The PAN's decision to back a female candidate suggests a climate of political change in Mexico. Against a landscape of drug-related violence and a climbing death rate, Mexico's aggressive, masculine political culture is failing. A conservative female president who appeals to traditional Mexican gender norms can perhaps restore stability and faith in the Mexican political system.

A culture of male-dominance permeates political, economic, and domestic spheres in Mexico. Males are thought to possess a character trait called

“machismo” and typically express their power through aggression. Women are viewed as “self-sacrificing” and are expected to follow men with silent resilience.

Recent statistics suggests these attitudes are changing as more women start to work outside the home. That change, though, may have more to do with increasing levels of poverty than to female empowerment. An increasing number of women hold seats in the legislature, largely due to a thirty percent gender quota, but their presence creates a platform for women in national government. In a volatile political climate whose violence carries overtones of “machismo,” a woman who embodies the traditional “self-sacrificing” mentality is the ideal candidate for political change.

Vázquez Mota's appeal is similar to that of conservative female candidates in recent US political history. However, her campaign has been far more successful than those of her American counterparts, Sarah Palin and Michelle Bachmann. In a country that values gender equality and stability, these candidates' appeals to traditional values hold little weight. In Mexico, the appeal of tradition is poignant. Vázquez Mota is not trying to break any perceived limitations; she simply aims to end violence through conservative policies based on traditional Mexican values.

Band-Aid Visas: Immigrant Labor Won't Fix Haiti's Problems Back Home

— *Amanda Bourlier*

UN vehicles move through the badly damaged streets of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, following the devastating January 2010 earthquake. (Wikipedia)

On the heels of the second anniversary of Haiti's 2010 earthquake, Brazil has generated headlines for granting work visas to several thousand Haitians who entered the country illegally. This represents an interesting alternative to helping Haiti with international donations, not to mention a significant change to the typical response when finding illegal immigrants: deportation. Unfortunately, a work visa program for Haitian immigrants is merely a short-term solution for a very small portion of those affected by the earthquake.

Twenty-four months after one of the worst humanitarian disasters in history, a catastrophe that left hundreds of thousands dead and an entire nation flattened, crushingly little has changed for Haiti. Reliable numbers are difficult to find, but unemployment estimates range from 40 to 60 percent, and many who have jobs are said to be underemployed. Haiti has no unemployment benefits program, no government-assisted healthcare, and no food stamps; its only social assistance comes from international aid that is subject to the whim of political agendas and the attention spans of foreign citizens. According to the UN Refugee Agency, 500,000 people are still considered formally displaced and many of those whose lives were affected by the earthquake continue live in extremely poor conditions.

The earthquake was not the last disaster to befall the already struggling nation. Since 2010, Haitians have had to contend with a hurricane, a cholera outbreak, and a much slower-than-hoped-for recovery. While an estimated 10 billion dollars of foreign aid was pledged, only about two-thirds of that has been distributed. Even after dispersal to NGOs and government programs, much of that funding has remained unspent, or worse—sent straight back to non-Haitian firms through foreign contracting.

Brazil's recent efforts to legally employ Haitians do, at first glance, seem quite laudable. Brazil is not the first country to offer visas to immigrants from Haiti; thousands of Haitians living undocumented in the United States were granted short-term visas immediately following the earthquake, and many more moved—documented or otherwise—to the U.S. shortly thereafter. The Center for Global Development, a non-partisan think-tank, claim that these newer immigrants along with those already in the U.S. send around 2 billion dollars to Haiti per year. Brazil's actions will likely generate money for Haiti in the same way, if on a smaller scale due to the smaller



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UN vehicles move through the badly damaged streets of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, following the devastating January 2010 earthquake.

number of Haitian immigrants in Brazil.

Haitians desperate for jobs with the means to travel appear to have found themselves in Brazil, which is currently experiencing a record low unemployment rate of 5.2 percent even as the country struggles to complete enormous national projects in preparation for the upcoming World Cup and Olympic Games. Those given work will likely find better lives than are attainable at present in Haiti. Of course, Brazil benefits as well. Aside from apparently filling a gap in the Brazilian workforce (if it did not, Haitian immigrants would have been deported like other illegal immigrants), the continued international concern about Haiti means that this gesture raises Brazil's level of influence in Latin and South America, a major Brazilian foreign policy goal in recent years. For now, despite significant income inequalities and recently stalled growth, Brazil's economy is capable of absorbing a few thousand extra workers without problems.

Granting three thousand individuals work visas, however, does nothing to address the root causes of unemployment and dreadful standards of living in Haiti. While some income earned by Haitian immigrants in Brazil will likely be sent back to family members in Haiti, possibly leading to development there, the vast majority of Haitians are too poor to even consider travelling to Brazil, let alone support themselves until they find employment. Additionally, work visas are not valid forever; when unemploy-

ment inevitably begins to rise again and Brazilian citizens find themselves looking for jobs, Haitians on work visas will likely find they have overstayed their welcome. These Haitians, and any more that come seeking work visas, will have no choice but to return to Haiti.

Despite being beneficial to the few that are fortunate enough to get them, work visas, regardless of the country that grants them, are nothing but a short-term, small-scale solution to the much bigger problems facing Haiti. More meaningful results can be obtained through a structured program that would be better reach larger segments of the Haitian population, especially the very poorest that lack the means to find work abroad. A good solution would be for aid organizations to strive to award Haitian firms with reconstruction contracts, rather than outsourcing them to foreign companies. This would put thousands to work within their local communities while creating the badly needed basic infrastructure necessary to support future development. Greater investment directly into the Haitian economy in this way would help create lasting jobs instead of relying on popular one-time international donations or short-term work visas. Of course, if it were easy to create development in impoverished countries, the second anniversary of the quake would have been marked by somber optimism about the progress Haiti had made in two years, rather than pessimism about its lack of change.

Mexico's War on Drugs: A Failed State?

— Arthur Wandzel

December 11, 2006, marked the date of Felipe Calderon's inauguration as president and the beginning of a five-year counter-narcotics program that has wreaked havoc upon the nation. At its inception, Calderon's anti-drug campaign scattered 6,500 federal troops in drug-trafficking hotspots throughout Mexico with the intention of disbanding influential drug cartels.

Since then, the military presence in these areas has expanded greatly: more than 45,000 troops now patrol the country at tremendous governmental expense. As Calderon's war on drugs continues, news journalists have underscored the campaign's slow progress and grim death toll—now approaching 50,000.

Some of them say that Mexico is a failed state with little hope of regaining nationwide security. One thing is certain: Mexico must develop a more comprehensive plan; Acknowledging that military force alone cannot provide sustainable results would be an important first step. A holistic approach that places equal focus upon community building and counter-narcotic action, Mexico may regain a foothold towards restoring nationwide security.

Although the war on drugs can be felt throughout the country, districts along the Mexican-American boarder bear the brunt of the violence. Here, notorious cartels—such as the Arellano Felix Organization, Los Zetas and La Sinaloa—jockey for control of borderland wastes. Control of access points into the U.S. means everything for these drug cartels. Cities with close proximity to the U.S. have strategic importance as drug-smuggling transit zones. For President Calderon, reducing the power of Mexican drug cartels means taking control of these northern districts.

The military's approach—breaking apart prominent drug trafficking organizations through planned raids—has not been successful. When the military presses forward, drug cartels push back. "A hornet's nest has been kicked," remarked one BBC reporter: as the violent battle between drug cartels and the Mexican government escalate, so does the tenacity and boldness of regional drug lords.

In Ciudad Juarez, gruesome reports of assassinations in broad daylight and car bombings committed by the hands of cartel-related gangs fill local news headlines. More than two thousand people have been murdered in this city alone; Ciudad Juarez reflects the costs underlying Mexico's war on drugs. President Calderon insists that the homicide rates in Mexico's most violent cities have



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Mexican troops at a checkpoint.

dropped, with Ciudad Juarez being a prime example: killings in Juarez decreased by 40 percent from 2010 to 2011. But the nationwide homicide rate continues to climb. Critics claim that the slow stabilization of death rates does not reflect the effectiveness of government policy but rather the defeat of rival cartels by one another.

Recent massacres in the north underscore the expense of confronting deeply rooted drug trafficking organizations. As public morale flags, the Mexican people are more and more willing to call for a general cease-fire. President Calderon remains staunchly against retuning to things as they were: "The government must act with the full force of the state against [drug cartels]. I will not rest until Mexico is safe."

President Calderon asserts that Mexico must continue pushing forward with the war on drugs, and analysts agree on a fundamental level. The drug trade represents a systematic threat to national security: drug-trafficking degrades social, economic, and political institutions, which in turn attracts and encourages even more intense criminal activity. Functioning as a vicious self-perpetuating cycle, ending the drug trade requires an active and unified effort by the Mexican government. The question ought not be whether the war on drugs should continue, but rather how it should be fought in the future.

So far, President Calderon's anti-drug campaign mainly focuses on backing the military with advanced equipment and training. Military task forces aim to achieve results quickly by fragment-

ing larger drug cartels into smaller criminal gangs. But when one cartel splinters, other groups pick up the pieces, rearrange, and restart drug trafficking operations just as before.

Resilience among drug trafficking organizations reflects how high demand motivates willing suppliers for business, be it legal or illegal, no matter the potential costs. As employers of millions, typically drawn from the poor working class, drug cartels are deeply interwoven with poverty, one that calls for a more sophisticated treatment that deals with the economic and social root of the problem.

If President Calderon wants to achieve long-lasting results, he must place greater emphasis on institution-building and community development. A few tried-and-tested solutions that have worked well in Colombia specifically target the underprivileged poor. Programs providing community clubs and sports teams limit youth participation with urban gangs and drug cartels, and programs that improve teenage education and make government jobs available to adults allow greater financial independence. Programs like these will diminish support for drug trafficking organizations by enabling stable social development. Strengthening civil society would allow the Mexican Government to more effectively fight drugs with less violence. Whether Mexico proves to be a failed state will depend on whether the government makes security or development its first priority. Evidence from elsewhere shows that lasting security gains follow sustained community engagement.

The Incredible Sinking Nation

— *Andrew Grazioli*

The Republic of Maldives is one of the world's smallest nations, both in terms of land area and population. Spanning 35,000 square miles and spread across 1,000 islands in the Indian Ocean, the Maldives are home to just under 400,000 people. Additionally, the Maldives hold the distinction of being the planet's lowest country—the average ground level is just 1.5 meters above sea level. While highly vulnerable to natural disasters, such as tsunamis (the 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake caused some \$400 million worth of damage), the nation's low elevation also presents a somewhat more unique challenge: a serious threat from rising sea levels caused by global climate change.

Here in the United States, we are able to comfortably distance ourselves from the consequences of climate change. Every once in a while we hear about the extinction of yet another species of animal, but for the most part we will not be affected by climate change in any tangible or immediate way. Not so in the Maldives. Over the last century, sea levels have risen eight inches and predictions by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicate that the sea could potentially rise another twenty-three inches by the year 2100. In other words, there is now a serious possibility the Maldives will have to be entirely abandoned as, one by one, its islands slip below sea-level.

The Maldivian government is not blind to this threat. In October 2009, then-President Mohamed Nasheed participated in an elaborate stunt intended to highlight the danger posed by climate change. The President and eleven ministers donned scuba gear and held what they advertised as the world's first "underwater cabinet meeting." Nasheed summed up their efforts: "We are trying to send a message to the world about what is happening and what would happen to the Maldives if climate change isn't checked. If the Maldives is not saved, today we do not feel there is much chance for the rest of the world."

Nasheed and his government intend to do their part; upon taking office in 2009, he pledged to make the Maldives carbon neutral within a decade. Initiatives were launched to move the island nation toward renewable wind and solar energy. In an effort to win over public opinion in support of these plans to reduce carbon emissions, Nasheed called attention to the fact that 30% of the nation's GDP was being spent on purchasing fossil fuels. With a transition to cheap, renewable sources of energy and electric-powered transportation, the Maldives can save money while it cuts emission levels.

For the people of the Maldives, however, the



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Malé, the capital of the Maldives.

problem is also geopolitical; the small nation lacks the economic clout to influence other nations to take their plight seriously. Countries such as the United States or China—the two largest contributors of greenhouse gas emissions—have little incentive to sacrifice their own industrial capabilities in favor of environmental protection. Since the entire GDP of the Maldives is about ten percent of Delaware's, the nation simply has no leverage in negotiations.

Despite these difficulties, the Maldives is doing its best to convince other nations to limit emissions. The Alliance of Small Island States, which includes countries such as Tuvalu and Kiribati as well as Maldives, has been focused primarily on the threat of global climate change for over two decades. Banding together with others remains one of the few ways Maldives is able to exert any influence on global affairs. The Alliance of Small Island States includes 36 members of the United Nations, or 20% of the UN's total membership. This is a potentially powerful voting bloc and could be the Maldives best means of amplifying its political voice.

In the end, the long-term prospects for the Maldives depend on the willingness of larger nations to make real progress on the issue of global climate change. A tentative agreement, which could be promising, was reached during the 2011 United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Durban, South Africa. The goal was to secure a global climate agreement in advance of the expiration of the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period, which ends in 2012. Still, scientists and environmental groups have warned that the deal is not as strong as it needs to be. At least for the moment, the Maldives and other nations in similar positions are largely alone, at the mercy of more powerful states, struggling to be heard.

The Taiwanese Presidential Election: Democracy and Beyond

— Peter Han

On January 14, the incumbent President of Taiwan, Ma Ying-jeou, defeated his challenger, Tsai Ing-wen, by a wide margin. Because Taiwan is the only country in the Chinese-speaking world that holds national democratic elections, and with the Party election in the People's Republic of China soon to come, this victory will have serious ramifications for the relationship across the Taiwan Strait.

Perhaps most importantly, Ma's reelection reaffirms the peaceful and cooperative relationship between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China, a development that PRC leaders are undoubtedly pleased with. As the PRC's State Council commented, "the correct path...has won the support of the majority of our Taiwanese compatriots." Indeed, Ma's reelection will likely accelerate the growth of the economic cooperation between the two nations. The Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement signed in 2010, a brainchild of Ma Ying-jeou which is actively opposed by the Democratic Progressive Party, has extensively promoted bilateral trade between China and Taiwan. In 2011, just the first full year since the signing of the controversial agreement, the volume of trade increased by more than 47 percent.

The People's Republic of China is expected to have its own presidential election within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) later this year, and relations with Taiwan will, as always, be a major political topic. In 1994, Taiwanese president Li Denghui declared that Taiwan was an independent state. This proclamation, coupled with the United States' earlier decision to issue him a visa, broke with longstanding precedent and humiliated the PRC. Subsequently, China test-launched mid-range missiles in the Taiwan Sea in an event called the Taiwan Strait Crisis. This overstepping of traditional boundaries and the saber rattling that ensued highlights the underlying tensions that are ever-present in cross-strait relations. Conversely, Ma's cautious foreign policy lessens the likelihood of another Taiwan Strait Crisis, and his reelection will lend credence to the positions of more moderate members of the CCP.

The Taiwanese presidential election will also have profound implications on the rest of the Chinese-speaking world. Both the 2001 and 2002 Presidential elections were heavily influenced by political scandals, and many Chinese voters questioned the viability of widespread democratic elections. However, the widely covered 2012 election has shown the entire Chinese community that suc-



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Ma Ying-jeou visiting UC Berkeley to discuss diplomatic dealings with the PRC.

cessful democratic elections are a real possibility. On his Google+ account, Ma Ying-jeou addressed young people from mainland China, telling them that the election shows that democracy may bring peace and prosperity to the Chinese community, as a whole. In doing so, the Taiwanese president demonstrated the potential for cross-border communication and solidarity. However, despite these affective ties, espousal of democratic ideals to the greater Chinese community must be undertaken cautiously and with an appreciation for the volatility inherent to the PRC-ROC relationship.

This election may have especially profound implications for political activists in Hong Kong, who consistently advocate for the right to elect their governor through a parliamentary vote. The issue has already gained significant local traction and now that Taiwan's democracy has set an example for the citizens of Hong Kong, it will prove harder to dissuade them. Ultimately, such democratic reforms in Taiwan and Hong Kong may set up a "dangerous" example, forcing Beijing to promote democratic reforms in local areas.

As always, the regime will have to manage pacifying concessions closely in order to avoid deeper societal changes. The PRC's ability to maintain control without gripping too tightly will play a prominent role in their response to rhetorical appeals for democracy coming from Taiwan. The likelihood of confrontation depends on Beijing's self-confidence in its ability to absorb and contain the influx of democratic messages from across the Strait.

In his 2011 New Year's address, Ma Ying-jeou

declared that Republic of China will serve as a paragon of democracy for the Chinese-speaking world. The prosperity he promised to the people of the Republic of China has yet to be realized, but the message sent out by this election could not be clearer. As he himself said, it was the people's victory, and a victory for democracy. The longevity of this victory, however, will come down to Ma's skill in navigating regional redlines while promoting the ideals that brought him into office.

Proceeding With Caution: The Prospects for Free Trade in East Asia

— *Alex Hartley*

In early January, South Korean President Lee Myung Bak visited China, hoping to sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries. Indeed, there has been a growing push in the region for better trade relations, with Japan and South Korea reopening discussions for a similar agreement in late 2011. The east Asian economies of Japan, South Korea, and China are all highly dependent on exports, and while this suggests that more regional free trade will be an economic catalyst, all three countries are fighting hard for every available manufacturing job. This is especially true as China attempts to break into the higher-end electronics market and hopes to begin designing its own products. As a result, more free trade agreements in this already competitive environment bring with them decided geopolitical risks along with their economic benefits.

For most of the 20th century, South Korea, Japan, and China became rich by focusing on manufacturing goods for export. While South Korea and Japan focused on electronics, high-tech research and automotive manufacturing, China carved its own niche by perfecting the mass-production of low-end goods. Today, however, China is beginning to hollow out the manufacturing base of these other countries, particularly as trade and capital exchange restrictions are relaxed. In other words, modern China could very well steal away even high-tech capital and jobs from its neighboring competitors.

Generally speaking, South Korea and China enjoy close trading relations; bilateral trade is projected to reach 300 billion US dollars by 2015. However, for a free trade agreement to be completed between the two countries, the South Korean government would have to take domestic measures to protect its agriculture market from Chinese imports. Japan has similar issues; its agricultural industry is small and inefficient by international standards, and relies on heavy tariffs for protection. Further complicating the issue, there are major disparities in the labor, economic, and environmental standards between the three nations. While South Korea and Japan are in somewhat similar stages of economic development and can thus harmonize their standards more easily, China remains an outlier. Bringing it into line with the standards of developed countries is practically impossible at this point. More permissive environmental legislation and a more lax workers-rights environment further tip the



If they are successful, a free trade agreement will benefit all involved, with the assembling of goods done in China and manufacturing of higher-end products being handled by Japan and South Korea.”

scales to Beijing's favor and could make potential partners reluctant to strike a deal.

Finally, outsourcing and relocation of industry remains a major fear for both the South Korean and Japanese governments. According to the *Asia Times*, as of 2005 China was South Korea's largest trading partner, replacing the United States. Moreover, South Korean tech giant Samsung employs 50,000 people in China and has shifted much of its research and development work there. Similarly, Japanese companies are moving their work overseas to China, producing additional fears of a Chinese labor takeover. Many high-tech companies worry that this shift in personnel will allow Japanese trade secrets to be leaked to foreign interests. To combat this problem, some Japanese companies are resisting labor migration trends by “in-sourcing” their work from other countries. This is because the Japanese work force is seen as being more skilled, and less likely to leak secrets to competitors. The strategic dynamics at play, along with apprehensions over possible upticks in unemployment and lost labor opportunities all combine to undermine efforts to establish a free trade zone.

Ultimately, South Korean and Japanese companies will remain competitive with China to the degree that they can maintain their technological advantage and better-trained workforce. If they are successful, a Free Trade Agreement will benefit all involved, with the assembling of goods done in China and the manufacturing of higher-end products being handled by Japan and South Korea. However, as manufacturing processes become simpler, Japan and South Korea could see their advantage in skilled labor nullified. A corresponding shift of jobs to China could destabilize regional relations and upset the delicate balance that must underwrite any trade agreement. Go-

ing forward, all players involved will likely proceed cautiously so as to avoid entering into any agreements that might prove disastrous if and when economic and labor conditions change.

The Tragedy of Burgeoning India: Dysfunctional Politics in the Way of Progress

— *Sharik Bashir*

India is an extremely diverse country that includes a billion people who speak more than one thousand different languages. It is a country with a massive domestic market and immense potential for growth. India is a hotbed for foreign investment. The world's largest multinational corporations flock to India to take advantage of low wages and India's own corporations make up some of the largest and most successful corporate empires in the world. Economics aside, India has also laid down strong democratic foundations and has created a strong national identity, despite its ethnic diversity. Indeed, India's democracy has been undisturbed since it gained independence in 1947. But the picture is not as rosy as it seems. India's corrupt politics severely hinder attempts to fulfill the country's potential. The existing politicians need to clean up their act and an infusion of new young progressive politicians is also sorely needed. India's leading parties need to abandon the archaic dynastic party system in favor of a more modern political arrangement.

Rahul Gandhi, son of Indian National Congress (Congress) boss Sonia Gandhi, lost heavily in the midterm elections held in March despite rejecting an offer to join the government in order to focus on campaigning. The Gandhi surname was the only thing Rahul had going for him. Congress, the governing party in India, is losing support rapidly. Despite the heavy funding that Rahul Gandhi received, Congress nevertheless performed poorly in the elections. Priyanka Gandhi, Rahul's sister, tried to play the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty card but the voters did not buy in to the rhetoric. India no longer wants leaders who inherit their positions. Sonia Gandhi's efforts to bring her son into power have not worked to her favor. Rahul and Congress' struggles are a reflection of the desires of the Indian voters, who have made their opinion clear that lineage is a backwards justification for political placement. Even though India has remarkably maintained the strong democratic character of its government institutions, the parties themselves must become more democratic.

With the beginning of the new millennium, corruption and a suffocating bureaucracy seemed a thing of the past for India. After the economic liberalization of the 1990s, India's businesses began to fill the void that a shrinking public sector had left. Trade became more open which allowed multinationals to come and invest, and government reforms helped to foster continued economic growth. In a country with a growing middle



Rahul and Congress' struggles are a reflection of the desires of the Indian voters, who have made their opinion clear that lineage is a backwards justification for political placement.

class and increasingly open trade, firms worldwide were eager to capitalize on India's business-friendly environment. However, recently, demons of the past have woken again and begun to sabotage economic activity.

In India, a huge number of poor people are largely disenfranchised and the relative few who enjoy significant wealth have the government in their pockets. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's government in Delhi is plagued by corruption scandals. Moreover, corruption is not just a feature of Congress; rather, it is a far-reaching, trans-party problem. In the recent 2G spectrum scandal of 2010 it was discovered that Indian government officials were illegally undercharging mobile companies for frequency allocation licenses which would then be used to sell 2G network subscriptions. This scam ranked second in Time Magazine's annual list of the 'top 10 abuses of power'. Another scam in 2010 involving prominent members of government was the Commonwealth Games Scam in which there was large scale misappropriation of money that was meant to be spent on organizing the Games. Corruption is not just a problem at the top levels, either. At every level of transaction by the government, there are middlemen to take their cut and siphon off a share of the fees involved. Indeed, a large portion of the budget intended for spending on services is lost in bureaucratic red tape.

Although the country is experiencing a growth rate of approximately seven percent, some economists argue that such a high growth rate is the minimum required to prevent India from collapsing. Pervasive poverty levels in India are severe enough to put constant pressure on the government, nearly to the point of breaking it. Given the potentially poisonous domestic employment situation, India's economic future is highly leveraged on external business. Without at least a six percent growth rate, economists argue that India cannot

attract the kind of foreign investment needed to offset the massive current account deficits and pay for imported energy.

Still, there are reasons for cautious optimism. The midterm elections show how people are challenging the old order in India. In the past, Congress and Bharati Janta Party (BJP) were absolutely dominant. Now Indian politics are becoming more pluralized as people shift support to other parties. BJP and Congress both suffered heavy losses in the midterm elections. People are increasingly moving away from voting strictly along religious or caste lines. Women are also participating in the democratic process in greater numbers. Congress and BJP are losing their hegemony in regions that they once dominated. These are all positive signs that indicate a growing awareness of the need for change among India's electorate.

India is often described as a superpower-in-waiting. Yet, the country will never reach that status without meaningful reform of its political party structure. The political parties can no longer afford the constant corruption scandals that have been a mainstay for years, as they have crushed the potential of the nation. The government needs to open up trade, become more liberal and continue to encourage foreign investment. More importantly, substantive changes in the political culture need to accompany these economic efforts. Dichotomous inequality and shady political dealings cannot be ignored forever: a freer market must come alongside a freer people if it is to endure. Politicians must release the shackles that hold down this economic giant as it would truly be a tragic tail if India were not to meet its full potential.

A Vulnerable Leader, and an Opportunity

— *Soo Ji Ha*

On December 17, 2011, more than seventeen years of rule by the North Korean dictator Kim Jong-il came to an end. North Korean party elites successfully concealed his death from the outside world for over two days, as the regime was relatively prepared for this following his major stroke in August 2008. His subsequent recovery during the next three years gave him the opportunity to plan the succession of his son, Kim Jong-un.

Though Jong-un is a mysterious figure, it is known that he is the youngest son of Jong-il, that he studied in a Swiss school, and that the North Koreans currently praise him as the Great Successor. He is also an inexperienced, untested 28-year old. Beyond that, he remains an enigma.

Kim Jong-un's succession is an opportune time for the United States, along with South Korea and China, to restore talks regarding the North's nuclear program. Recently, tensions have been high: in 2005, North Korea agreed to abandon its nuclear programs, but later revealed that it was secretly building a facility to enrich uranium. With this in mind, some question whether North Korea is dependable enough to undertake this kind of agreement, but if there is any hope of reviving anti-nuclear talks, there will be few better opportunities than now.

This hope of an agreement may be possible due to a less experienced leader taking power. Unlike Jong-un, who only started to take over his father's duties in September 2010, Jong-il was groomed for twenty years before coming into power in 1994. As early as 1987, Jong-il demonstrated his willingness to use force and his ability to set policy when he ordered the bombing of a Korean Air flight that killed all 115 people on board.

In contrast, Jong-un is 28 years old and has no military experience. Although North Korea has tried to sculpt his image into that of his grandfather Kim Il-sung, it is unclear whether he will live up to these comparisons. Equally uncertain is whether or not he has as hard and uncompromising a personality as his father, Kim Jong-il.

Currently, though, it seems that Jong-un is still largely at the mercy of internal political forces. In order to maintain party and popular support, he must balance the fight against impoverishment with the desire to develop into a nuclear country. Any decision to increase food aid to the country, though, will increase his standing and support within North Korea. Thus, the death of the "Dear Leader," as he was called in North Korea, may be cause for some hope of better times for the impoverished citizens of North Korea.

Jong-un should focus first on economic and food assistance, since North Korea's disastrous



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economic policies over six decades have left the country barren. According to the World Food Program, the growth of one in three North Korean children is stunted, and nearly one in five is underweight. Signs of hardship can also be seen in the capital, Pyongyang, where power shortages occur frequently and only a few solitary government cars travel the massive thoroughfares.

Economic assistance can take the form of additional support for the Rason Special Economic zone, located thirty miles from China in the remote northern port towns of Rajin and Sonborg. Although on the surface, Rason is an unlikely site for prosperity, its port remains ice-free, a rarity in Northeast Asia, and officials there see shipping as a pillar of economic growth, along with seafood processing and tourism. As inducements, they offer full foreign control and minimum monthly wages lower than can be found in China. Developing successful economic relationships here will undoubtedly lead to more agreeable long-term negotiations and interstate connections.

Moreover, with North Korea's announcement in January 2012 that it is open to further negotiations to halt its uranium program, the United States along with South Korea should signal interest in developing productive relationships with the North. This could be accomplished by declaring that neither state harbors hostile intent towards the new leader, and that both sides could work towards eradicating the military standoff on the Korean peninsula.

The United States and China worked together during North Korea's transition of power to restrain military provocations by the new leadership. This joint effort was a good way to strengthen mutual trust between the two countries, as well, and increased the likelihood that China will pressure North Korea to change more rapidly.

Considering North Korea's history, many

doubt the possibility of reliable negotiations or authentic change. Yet, no matter how unlikely the prospects, such an opportunity is something that cannot be overlooked. The appointment of a relatively weak Great Successor might be a needed change that will make a better future for the North Korean people, its neighbors, and the United States.

The Balancing Act: Economic Growth and Workers' Rights in Tomorrow's China

— *Leslie Teng*

The label “Made in China” has become a mainstay in our national vocabulary. It is arguably the world’s most ubiquitous label today, adorning everything from clothes to furniture to electronics. It is a daily reminder of China’s global trade and manufacturing dominance. Over the four decades since President Nixon’s historic visit, China has propelled itself from a primarily agrarian economy to an industrial giant. But, China’s economic success has come at a human price.

China maintains its competitive edge in manufacturing through cheap labor, mass assembly-line work, long hours and few employee benefits. Factory workers are frequently housed on-site, packed into makeshift apartment complexes or converted warehouses. This allows companies to mandate long working hours, maximizing production and profits while keeping costs low. Such conditions have outraged human rights observers from the US and other developed countries. Regardless, the demand for Chinese-made products continues unabated, perpetuating these harsh working conditions.

Recently, however, workers in China have begun taking action themselves and have started to voice their concerns and demands for policy change. Their calls for higher wages and more humane working and living conditions have unnerved China’s governing elite. In a nation where dissent is not tolerated and people are frequently jailed for expressing anti-government sentiments, such open defiance is exceedingly dangerous, if not unthinkable. Accordingly, the government has cracked down on the protests by breaking up assemblies, arresting agitators, censoring media coverage, and shutting down online centers of dialogue. So far, Beijing has been successful in limiting the expansion of isolated local protests and preventing the development of a unified national movement. Still, it seems only a matter of time before Beijing can no longer stifle such widespread discontent amongst its working class.

These protests likely portend things to come. For years, the government was able to maintain control over the people by blocking certain websites, jailing dissidents and curtailing any political organization, typically avoiding open violence. However, these workers’ movements have been occurring with increased frequency, forcing the government to respond with increasingly dra-

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...the regime must engage, in a meaningful way, with the challenges and competing national interests it faces. China’s future, both in terms of economic growth and regime stability, will depend on finding a solution to this dilemma.”

conian methods. As a result, the government’s crackdowns may be causing it to lose the public relations battle, and indeed, some factory workers have been able to win hard-fought concessions related to higher pay and better working conditions. So far, Beijing has been able to keep these successes at the local level. However, the increased visibility of its domestic policies could give momentum to oppositional movements and result in unwanted international attention. Should the government be forced to recognize the workers’ demands for higher pay on a wider stage, there will also be substantial economic repercussions.

Higher pay means increased production costs. As the cost of production rises, the price of the goods will also rise. As a result, Chinese exports will be less price-effective, potentially prompting China’s trading partners to import from other countries with lower production costs, such as India. Given the fact that exports account for roughly 40 percent of China’s GDP, a dip in the volume of exports would seriously imperil China’s explosive economic expansion. The government faces a difficult task in balancing the two poles of the debate: listening to worker’s demands while continuing to maintain the comparative economic advantages that allowed the country to average roughly ten percent annual GDP growth rates over the past two decades.

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, Chinese leaders may feel particularly sensitive to internal strife, and this vulnerability may cause Beijing to exert its muscle in an overly aggressive manner. Undoubtedly, China wants to write its own narra-

tive. The regime would like to maintain the initiative in navigating bottom-up domestic pressures on the way to pursuing its own economic agenda. But, whether or not Beijing can placate the growing discontent of its massive factory working class without appearing to kowtow or without suffering severe economic consequences is unknown. With a growing middle-class, continued economic development and the pressures of globalization all looming large, outmoded authoritarian posturing will no longer suffice in silencing wayward political voices. Rather, the regime must engage, in a meaningful way, with the challenges and competing national interests it faces. China’s future, both in terms of economic growth and regime stability, will depend on finding a solution to this dilemma.

All Eyes on Bangladesh: Expansion and Exploitation in the Garment Industry

— Annie Devine

A recent report by McKinsey & Company predicts that Bangladesh is on its way to becoming a dominant source for ready-made garments. With its apparel industry projected to grow seven to nine percent each year, Bangladesh is expected to triple its garment exports by 2022. But while fashion brands are clamoring to expand within this growing market, there is little concern for the workers who make the system of ready-made garments possible.

As public knowledge of sweatshops and labor abuses has increased in recent decades, many prominent brands have spoken out against exploitation. Few have genuinely committed to changing it. Garment labor conditions appear sporadically in the media, framed as dramatic exposés whenever a particular tragedy occurs, only to be gradually ignored as other stories fill up subsequent news cycles. Garment factories in Bangladesh are home to labor abuses and sweatshop conditions, so it is essential that any brands planning to shift their sourcing to this region also work to enforce better labor conditions and stricter safety regulations for these workers.

Oxfam reports that over 300 workers in Bangladesh have lost their lives to factory fires in the last ten years. Two such tragedies occurred in February and December of 2010, killing 21 and 31 workers, respectively, and injuring dozens more. The December fire broke out on the ninth floor of a 10-story factory just north of Dhaka, and while factory owners suspected an electrical short circuit, even follow-up reports have stated that the exact cause of the fire is still unclear. The “That’s It Sportswear Ltd” the factory is owned by the Ha-Meem Group, whose buyers include American Eagle, Gap/Old Navy, JC Penney, Kohl’s, Sears, Target, Wal-Mart, H&M, and Zara. Numerous workers jumped out of tenth floor to escape the flames because many of the emergency exits were locked. Oxfam notes that it is alarmingly common for factory owners to lock their doors, largely as a means of preventing workers from taking unauthorized breaks or stealing clothing from stock rooms.

Three days before the December 2010 fire, the New York Times reported that three Bangladeshi workers from the same area were killed during labor protests. Other workers involved in the protest said they were angry that so many factories had failed to follow through on an 80 percent minimum wage increase that had recently been mandated by the Bangladeshi government. Had factories complied, the increased wages would have brought worker earnings to about 43 dollars a month. Charles



Numerous workers jumped out of tenth floor to escape the flames because many of the emergency exits were locked. It is alarmingly common for factory owners to lock their doors, largely as a means of preventing workers from taking unauthorized breaks or stealing clothing from stock rooms.”

Kernaghan, Director of the Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights, compares the Bangladeshi fires to the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire in New York City. That fire killed 146 of the factory’s 500 workers, becoming a powerful emblem of movements for unionization and worker protection in the US. Kernaghan points out that workers at the Triangle factory made 14 cents an hour in 1911, which adjusted for inflation would be worth 3 dollars and 18 cents today. The workers at the Ha-Meem factory in Bangladesh are earning maximum wages of 28 cents an hour, about one tenth of what wages were in the US one hundred years ago. The *New York Times* reported that after the December 2010 fire, the Ha-Meem Group and the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association each said they would pay 1,400 dollars to the families of those killed. Activists like Kernaghan believe that this compensation is too little, too late, and only reinforces the hypocrisy of brands that favor ignore human rights abuses while enforcing laws to protect their own products. As Kernaghan says:

“The Gap label is protected under intellectual property and copyright laws... But when you say to Gap or Wal-Mart or these other companies, ‘Can’t we have similar laws to protect the rights of the 18 year old women who made these garments?’ they say, ‘No, that would be an impediment to free trade.’”

Nevertheless, improvements are taking place slowly but surely. Before his death in 2010, Neil Kearney, General Secretary of the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF), worked extensively to improve

factory conditions around the world—particularly in Bangladesh. As reported by the BBC, Kearney played a major role in shutting down some of the worst factories owned by the Windy Group on the outskirts of Dhaka, helping the company to open new buildings with more space, brighter lighting, and all-around better conditions for its workers. Kearney was not blind to the enormity of the problem, and he fully believed in the power of buyers to shape the future of the industry, estimating that less than one percent of them had actively committed themselves to the cause of safe working conditions. Beyond buyers, it seems that a multifaceted approach involving consumers, factory owners, and activist organizations will be essential for combating worker exploitation as Bangladesh becomes an increasingly prominent part of the apparel sector during the coming years.

The McKinsey & Company research that predicted strong growth in Bangladesh drew on interviews with the chief purchasing officers (CPOs) for European and US apparel brands, as well as ready-made garment suppliers in Bangladesh. Most CPOs expressed concerns about dominant suppliers in China; most were related to the instability of raw materials prices, capacity issues, and labor cost increases. The report also outlined the top three issues that CPOs and local suppliers saw as potential challenges with Bangladeshi markets—infrastructure, compliance, and supplier performance. Considering the level of abuse that has already taken place in Bangladesh factories, it is clear that these industry players need to add “worker welfare” to their list of concerns. As the garment industry expands, labor exploitation should expand with it.

Footing the Bill: South Korea's Unification Tax

— *Taecheon Kim*

Last South Korean Independence Day, President Lee Myung-bak proposed the introduction of a unification tax to cover the costs of an eventual unification with North Korea. Since then, Koreans have engaged in a heated dispute over the necessity of the tax. Some are actively talking about how the tax might be collected while others strongly assert that the discussion itself must be stopped. The unification tax proposal is the first policy that tries to prepare the resources for the unification, and may be well-timed in light of the geopolitical situations in the Korean peninsula. Because such a tax would be the only way to adequately prepare for the possibility of reunification, the unification tax should be introduced as soon as possible.

Were the Koreans to unify, costs, in accordance with the research by several institutes, are expected to be colossal. The Korean Development Institute estimated it to be USD 322 billion; the Bank of Korea to be USD 900 billion (Hong 15); the US National Defense Research Institute estimated USD 50 billion to USD 670 billion (Wolf, and Akramov 11-12); and Stanford University Asia Pacific Research Center to be USD 2 trillion to USD 5 trillion (Beck 2). Though each institute has different estimates, all of them give us the same message: Korean unification entails a great deal of unification costs. Without financial preparation, economic shock would be unavoidable were the Koreans to unite.

However, there has not been any single policy that tries to financially prepare for the unification costs. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the unification policy seemed to be only a name. In this period, the South Korean policy towards North Korea was focused mainly on national defense to deter armed attack. From the 1990s to the 2000s, the so-called Sunshine Policy marked a turnaround in the relationship between the two Koreas. The official change of the attitude of the South towards the North led to various forms of the cooperation between the two governments, culminating in a meeting between South Korean President Kim Dae-jung with North Korean President Kim Jong-il in Pyongyang. In this era, the peaceful atmosphere in the Korean peninsula was at its acme. Nevertheless, the Sunshine Policy has also its limit, that is, even though it focused on before-and-during the unification era, it did not see beyond it. In other words, although it increased the possibility of the unification, it did not cover any ways to finance the funds that would be needed after the



The GNP gap between the two Koreas now is greater than a factor of 15—even bigger than that between the two Germanies in 1990.”

unification. The unification tax that has just been proposed is the only policy under discussion for which the countries could prepare.

Most opponents of the unification tax argue that the government should not introduce a new tax, but utilize the existing South-North Cooperation Fund, which was set up under the Sunshine Policy (Kang 1). However, because of its objective and scale, the fund is unlikely to be sufficient. In accordance with the Inter-Korean Cooperation Law, the fund was established to facilitate inter-cooperation to increase the possibility of the unification. Although it can be used for the political, economic and cultural collaboration until the unification, it cannot be used for investing in physical and social infrastructure in North Korea after the unification. Moreover, even though the law would be revised for the future use, its maximum value of USD 1.2 billion would make it unable to be the major source for the unification costs (Institute for Far Eastern Studies 1). Thus, the existing South-North Cooperation Fund does not have the same effects that would be made by the unification tax.

The unification tax is a timely policy that needs to be introduced quickly. The faster the unification tax is enforced, the more unification costs could be covered. The German unification case gives a good lesson to the Korean government. Before its unification, the German government annually collected about USD 10 billion for 10 years (Yang 2). However, the amount they collected, roughly USD 100 billion before the unification, was far less than the nearly USD 2 trillion they spent after the unification (Beck 2). Hastily, the government introduced the special tax, but it was already too late. In consequence of their poor preparation, the German economy stagnated (Kim 1). The economic burden of the Korean unification is anticipated to be more than that of the German unification. Some economic experts point out that South Korea's economic size now is two-thirds of West Germany's in 1989, but North Korea's is similar to East Germany's. Besides, the

GNP gap between the two Koreas now is more than 15 times—even bigger than that of the two Germanies in 1990 (Hong 15). Korean unification would entail greater economic costs than the German unification, so the Korean government should prepare financial resources longer than the German government did.

Taking into account the abruptly-changing geopolitical situations in North Korea, the introduction of the unification tax needs to be expedited. The accession of Kim Jong Un may lead to severe friction among political leaders in North Korea in the near future. Moreover, the possibility of a volcanic eruption at Mount Baekdu, means that North Korea's already poverty-stricken economy could deteriorate further (Choi 2).

The unification tax is the most realistic policy for collecting enough finances to handle the costs of Korean unification. The unification costs, from a minimum of USD 50 billion to a maximum of USD 5 trillion, are unavoidable. To finance this amount, alternative ways that the opponents have suggested—utilizing special funds, collecting unused taxes, issuing national bonds, selling business permits, privatizing public assets and attracting foreign aid—have significant limitations. First, utilizing special funds is not sufficient. The biggest special fund in South Korea, the lottery fund, is reserved for government budget and welfare projects by Besides, even if the lottery law were revised for future use, its annual profits are only about USD 800 million; thus, it is not possible to reach up the minimum calculation of the unification costs, USD 50 billion (Korea Lottery Commission).

Government budget surpluses are also unlikely to be effective. Since the value of unused taxes is different every year, it is difficult to set up a target quantity with it, and since its size is even smaller than the special funds, it is almost certain not to be enough to cover unification costs. From 2004 to 2008, for instance, the amount of unused taxes was USD 14 million, USD 22.5 million, USD

30.3 million, USD 168.4 million, and USD 61 million respectively (Korea National Tax Service 1).

Issuing governments bonds is even less likely to be a sound method. Issuing national bonds means that the country would have foreign debts. If so, the government has to repay the interests as well as the principal. For this reason, this option might induce negative effects on the financial structure of the country. Intuitively, owing a debt now in order to save for the future seems very unreasonable.

Last, other alternatives—selling business permits, privatizing public assets and attracting foreign aid—are not an option that can be chosen now. The selling of permits for businesses in North Korea to companies and the disposing of North Korean government assets would be possible only after unification. And, because foreign aid would be decided by donor countries in the process of the unification, it cannot be accurately accounted for by the Korean government now.

Taking these limitations into consideration, the use of alternatives to the unification tax does not seem feasible to pay for unification costs, although some of them might be used in order to reduce the tax burden. Tax is a major means for financing resources to achieve policy goals because of its numerous targets: a unification tax might reach the whole population, and make use of various methods, including, but not limited to income taxes, corporation taxes, value-added taxes. Therefore, the unification tax seems the most realistic policy in preparation for the unification costs; hence, its introduction is indispensable.

There is a children's song, "Our hope is unification even in our wildest dream," that almost all the South Korean people know. Like the lyrics of the song, South Koreans have been dreaming of the unification over the past six decades. Except for singing the song, they have done nothing to prepare for the era they profess to dream of. That is, although they dreamed of the unification, they did not do their best to make their dream come true. Now is time to move for the dream by introducing the unification tax.

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A Failure to Communicate: The Failure of an Adequate European Crisis Response is Ultimately a Failure of Influencing Public Perception

— John Schoettle

Europe's leaders are losing. Nine European credit ratings have been cut by S&P, including France's cherished 'AAA' rating. Greece formally defaulted at the beginning of March. Now, respected bond investor and former IMF official Mohamed El-Erian is pointing to Portugal as the next shoe to drop. European Central Bank (ECB) loans to major European banks are propping up Europe's entire financial system. Italian and Spanish debt yields, in the meantime, are still at unsustainable levels.

Since the crisis began, European leaders, led by German Prime Minister Angela Merkel, have dragged their feet, opting for slow progress even as speculation raises the chances of a sudden run. This inadequate response resides in a failure to sell the necessary measures to Eurozone citizens. Leaders have shied away from directly telling their constituents two important things: Germany and the other strong countries will have to foot the bill sooner or later for any defaults in the periphery, and, more importantly, the Euro is vital to Europe's future, and its members should do whatever it takes to sustain it. Prime Minister Merkel must lead from the front to articulate the importance of the Euro to Germany's and Europe's citizens. Without such a measure, Europe will likely continue splinter, as nationalist governments, bent on ridding the continent of the Euro replace pro-European governments. If this happens, decades of economic and political progress in the EU will disintegrate.

For most of 2011, more than half of poll respondents in Germany believed that the Eurozone would better off without Greece. The prominent German business newspaper *Handelsblatt* ran the headline, "Athens subsidized exhibitionists and pedophiles," reporting that the Greek government provides disability insurance to "pedophiles and pyromaniacs." It is no surprise that so many Germans refuse to pay for bailing out such people. Working in this climate, Angela Merkel, unwilling to jeopardize her reelection prospects, has had to move slowly toward a bailout while demanding painful austerity cuts in Europe's troubled periphery. Meanwhile, French President Nicolas Sarkozy's more aggressive approach to the crisis may cost him re-election this spring.

Even in troubled countries likely to receive help, the Euro is subject to renewed skepticism. A January 2012 poll found that 65 percent of Ital-



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Spanish President Mariano Rajoy, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, and German Prime Minister Angela Merkel need to create public support to fix Europe.

ians thought that the adoption of the Euro has damaged the Italian economy. 31 percent thought Italy should return to the lira.

What is lost in the day-to-day rhetoric against bailouts is a serious long-term choice Europe must make between much tighter fiscal integration to strengthen monetary integration or a partial break-up of the Euro to create a much smaller but stronger northern bloc. Merkel and the rest of Europe's leaders understand that the latter would lead to a painful recession arising from formerly Euro-denominated debt that would suddenly become worthless.

Without more public support, however, Merkel and the rest of Eurozone leaders cannot act decisively to stem the crisis, let alone pass the fiscal treaty agreed to in December. The fiscal treaty is the first step to tighter fiscal integration, harshly punishing violations of budget deficit limitations. Any significant change to the current Maastricht Treaty, necessary under the fiscal treaty, will require public referendums throughout Europe. A rejection in any of these countries would throw the effort into chaos. Additionally, Germany cannot pledge more money to curtail the crisis if angry voters will vote against Merkel to install a chancellor who would renege on the treaty. In such a precarious position, Merkel can no longer focus on publicly deriding the irresponsible periphery of Europe to score political points at home. Public support for a real solution to the crisis will only come when Merkel becomes more

forthright with her citizens in her speeches and rhetoric.

Merkel must repeat over and over again that the adoption of the Euro has benefitted all of its members, especially Germany. Since adopting the Euro in 1999, German carmakers have saved between 300 million and 500 million euros (\$400 million to \$660 million) each year through lower transaction costs. Additionally, according to the ECB, Germany has gained competitiveness since the Euro began in 1999, not only against other industrial nations but also other members of the Eurozone. At the same time, this competitiveness has actually come at the cost to countries like Greece and Ireland that have experienced higher labor costs as the Euro increased in value.

Germany has not only become more competitive, but its workers have benefited, too. According to the Prognos institute, almost three million jobs in Germany depend on exports to the Eurozone while 4.4 million jobs depend on exporting to the EU as a whole. In January, German unemployment hit the lowest levels since reunification in 1991. The benefits that would continue to accrue to Germany if the union remains stable would greatly outweigh monetary costs of propping up the Euro. If Merkel stood up at the podium and highlighted these facts, she could move to address the crisis faster and, maybe, put Europe one step ahead of crisis. Until then, expect more frenzied media coverage, more predictions of the Euro's imminent demise, and no real solutions.

A New Tale of Old Repression: The Heavy Costs of Polling in Putin's Russia

— Annika Conrad

In the weeks leading up to the March 4 Russian presidential election, the Russian government temporarily seized the independent, non-partisan polling group Golos. The harassment began in early December, with a large-scale hacking attack launched against the Golos website and servers. Subsequently, all other websites and media outlets that published information from Golos crashed as well. The email accounts of Lydia Shibanova, director of Golos, and her deputy director were also hacked and blocked. While at an airport in December, Shibanova was held for twelve hours, though not officially detained, while officials withheld and searched her laptop computer. According to Shibanova, the hackers now have the personal information of Golos volunteers, correspondences, and voting data. On the day of the election, armed security guards and election commission officials prevented many Golos monitors from entering polling centers; some were intimidated into leaving. Simultaneously, election monitors lost mobile phone service, preventing any documentation of the event. Next, an unexplained electricity blackout struck the Golos headquarters, disabling cable, internet and phone service. The coordination and sophistication of this repression campaign against Golos undoubtedly speaks to uneasiness within the Kremlin, and is indicative of little progress Russian electoral reform.

These intimidation practices against Golos came after the group alleged that the United Russia Party, led by sitting Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, had committed numerous violations of the electoral code. These allegations led to a Moscow court decision in late 2011, ruling that Putin's party had committed nearly five thousand electoral violations by publishing polls within five days of the election. Defenders of Putin's party later sent a letter to Golos stating the group was engaged in "spreading rumors under the guise of reliable facts in attempt to blacken the party and some of its members." In contrast with these claims, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which has sent over three hundred election monitors to Russia, stated that it has been "closely monitoring the situation regarding Golos. Golos has proven to be a valuable and important source of objective information."

The treatment and intimidation of Golos should not come as much of a surprise. In recent years, Russia has sought redemption over



The coordination and sophistication of this repression campaign against Golos undoubtedly speaks to uneasiness within the Kremlin, and is indicative of little progress Russian electoral reform."

the atrocities committed by oppressive leaders in the past, yet the remarks by political leaders following the Golos incident indicate that the historically politically troubled country is still far from perfect. Vladimir Churov, head of the Central Election Commission, said, "Putin is always right." Andrei Morgunov, the regional Golos chief for the Nizhny Novgorod region stated, "We're far from Moscow—they can do whatever they want." And, most unsettling, President Dmitry Medvedev, member of the United Russia Party said that he would gladly give his seat for Putin. All of these statements are indicative of Russia's poisoned political culture, where opposition to the official line is rare and the regime's reach extends far beyond traditional channels of power.

After the announcement of presidential elections results, a liberal protest formed in Moscow speaking out against Putin. Reports estimate that up to eight thousand people participated. They claimed that the election was a fraud, chanting, "Fascism will not win," until the police arrived and detained multiple peaceful protesters. There was no television coverage of the protests. The freedom to demonstrate peacefully in addition to the independence of Golos as a polling organization are vital to standards of democracy, and Russia's inability to grant these freedoms is damaging to the country's image as a democratic society.

The government's mentality toward Golos draws many parallels to Russia's history under the Soviets. Upon taking power in 1955, Nikita Khrushchev delivered a speech to the Politburo denouncing Stalin's policies. A few minutes into Khrushchev's diatribe, somebody shouted out, "Why didn't you challenge him then, the way you are now?" The room fell silent, as Khrushchev asked, "Who said that?" After a long silence, Khrushchev chuckled, "Now you know

why I did not speak up against Stalin when I sat where you now sit." This exchange was indicative of the stifling political atmosphere of Soviet Russia. Decades later, the government intimidated and silenced an independent group whose views and data disagreed with the ruling party. Formal pathways and the means used may have changed, but the regime's overall disposition and willingness to tolerate dissent has remained constant under Putin.

Putin wields great power but is now an unpopular leader faced with protests and calls for a new election. Although the ultimate effect of the intimidation of Golos on the voting results is unknown, the newly elected President Putin continues to carry the burden of reestablishing Russia as a democratic country that will not gravitate toward the centralized regime of Stalin. The legacies of a checkered past loom over a nation where a fine line separates ideally strong leadership and autocrats overstepping boundaries. Yet, there is a difference between the use and abuse of power, and the Russian people and their leaders have different opinions on when that line is crossed.

The Slave Next Door: Modern Domestic Servitude in Europe

— Kylee Stair

The term “slavery” is frequently present in the glossaries of history books and viewed as one of the darkest eras of human history, but slavery is not merely an occurrence of the past. As of late, the prevalence of international domestic servitude has drawn international attention. Though this phenomenon can be masked by a multitude of names—servitude, unprotected labor, or forced labor—it is indeed human trafficking, a form of modern day slavery.

According to the International Labor Organization, an estimated 12.3 million people worldwide are currently enslaved. Although this includes other forms of human trafficking, including bonded labor (when labor functions as loan repayment) and sexual slavery, forced domestic servants comprise the majority of this estimate. Moreover, it also makes up for a significant portion of additional, unreported cases. The individuals, predominantly women and children, are forced into substandard living conditions to perform inhumane work at the mercy of their employers. These modern day slaves lack knowledge of outside resources, lack monetary compensation, and are unable to leave the house. The issue is particularly problematic in Europe, where the conglomeration of independent countries makes international regulation increasingly difficult. Fortunately, however, nations have responded proactively and enacted both international and national instruments to fight domestic servitude.

The list of international legal conventions banning all forms of slavery is expansive. It includes the 1926 Slavery Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention of Human Rights, the European Social Charter, the Convention on Domestic Workers, and multiple statutes from the International Labor Organization. Yet, despite these explicit bans, many disregard slavery as an instance of the past, and the issue does not receive the attention necessary for substantial regulation. As of 2001, the Council of Europe has reevaluated the effectiveness of these measures, which were previously thought of as sufficient to address the problem. In addition to the 2008 Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the council has begun to stress the necessity of supplemental national action. Two countries in particular, the United Kingdom and France, have led notable crusades against domestic servitude.

In response to pressure from the Council



Slavery is not history... Although the victims are largely invisible, domestic servitude constitutes a global human rights concern. Every region in the world is affected.”

**—UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery,
Gulnara Shahinian, in her 2011 report to the United Nations
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

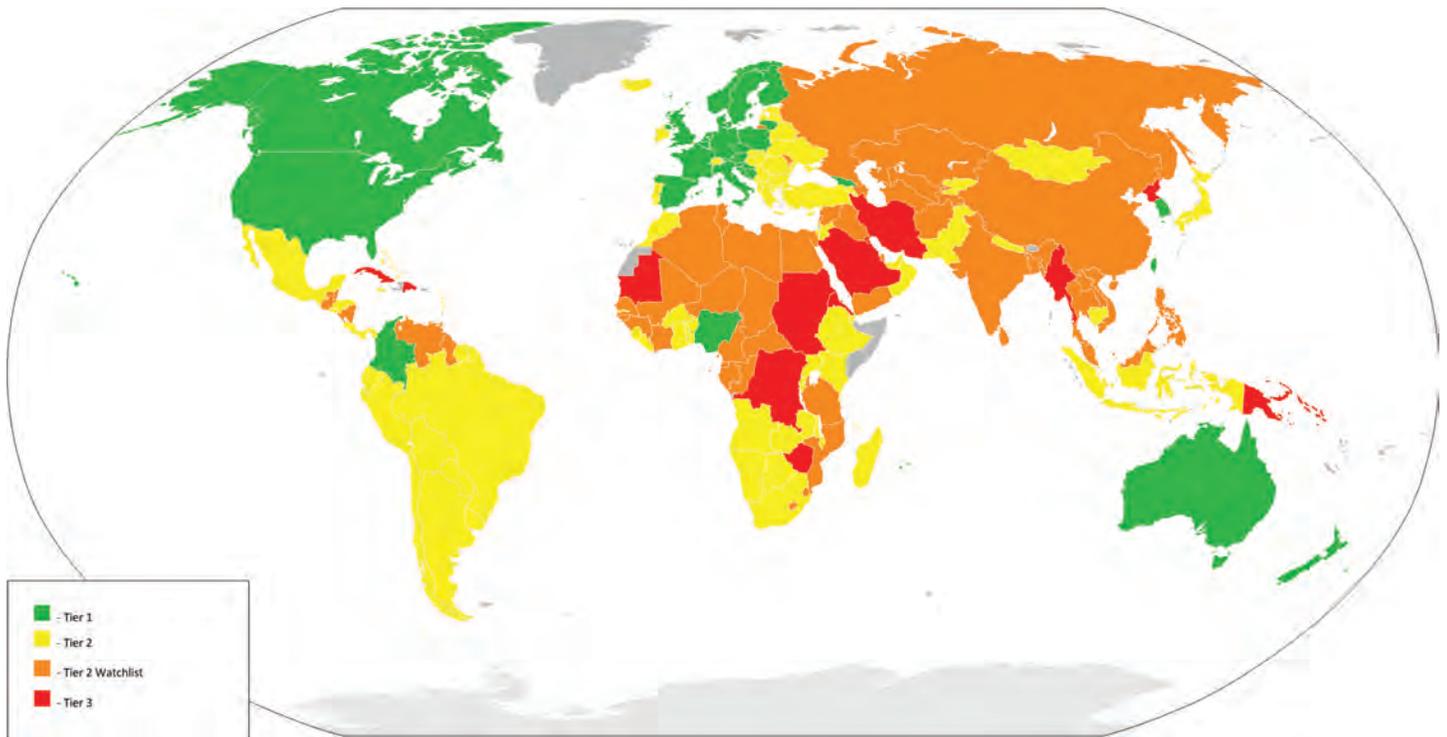
of Europe, the UK enacted two new policies in 2004. The first, the Asylum and Immigration Act, criminalized forced labor connected to human trafficking; the second, the Gangmasters Licensing Act, created a licensing database system for migrant workers entering the country, with the intent of continually tracking and assessing the personal situation of each licensee. However, in addition to the logistical limitations of these acts, British law only protects standard, official immigrants. Unofficial immigrants smuggled illegally into the country, often against their own will, comprise the majority of the population subjected to domestic servitude, yet these policies do not offer them any protection.

Contrarily, France modified its Law on Internal Security (*Loi sur la sécurité intérieure*) in 2003 to expressly prohibit human trafficking, the precursor to most cases of domestic servitude. Then, in 2005, the landmark case *Siliadin v France* tested the European Convention of Human Rights for the first time in history. Siwa-Akofa Siliadin, a Togolese national, entered Paris at the age of fifteen, having agreed to work as a paid maid for several months in exchange for a French education. Instead, two families confiscated Siliadin's passport and forced her to perform compulsory labor over four years without pay or time off. The court ruled in Siliadin's favor, declaring that she had been denied sufficient and effective protection as stipulated in Article 4 in the European Convention of Human Rights. Furthermore, the ruling required that nations obligate governments to actively intervene and protect individuals held in violation of the convention. In 2008, the French

government adjusted the criminal code and established various agencies to comply with the obligations. Yet, how effective these measures will be is unknown.

In addition to the legal instruments mentioned above, a number of NGOs are waging a public fight against domestic servitude as modern slavery. In conjunction with international human rights and labor organizations like Amnesty International and the International Labor Organization, two British organizations are dedicated to this cause: Afruca advocates for African children living in the UK and attempts to reduce their vulnerability to exploitation, and Kayalaan provides advice and support to migrant workers. In France, the Committee against Modern Slavery provides legal assistance and support to victims. For example, it was instrumental in developing the case of *Siliadin v France*. Thus, countries can adopt various non-profit or nongovernmental strategies to attack forced domestic servitude. As in the UK, organizations can target specific groups vulnerable to domestic servitude, or, as in France, they can work with current cases to alleviate their suffering.

The two nations have adopted different strategies to combat domestic servitude: the UK attempts to regulate and monitor migrant workers from their entrance to the country, while France criminalizes domestic servitude itself and actively intervenes in order to detect its occurrence. Organizations at the international level also contribute by raising awareness and providing additional support. Unfortunately, these measures are not enough. Although they



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This map from the US Department of State shows the tier rankings of compliance with human trafficking standards, ranging from green (best) to red (worst). Yet, even in the complying nations, millions of cases of domestic servitude still occur undetected.

are invaluable in theory, implementing these policies is still an issue. The true complexities of domestic servitude eradication are identification, investigation, and prosecution, and the legislation does not solve for these ambiguities. Indeed, it is debatable whether governments have the capability to carry out these measures without searching every home. Likewise, investigation into instances of domestic servitude is sparse, often disregarded due to a lack of resources or other priorities. Based on these limitations, the prosecution of perpetrators of forced servitude is extremely limited. Most violators are prosecuted on other minor charges; the average sentence is less than twelve months, largely because domestic servitude is considered a consequence, and not a subtype, of human trafficking. This flaw in the legal system allows perpetrators to escape severe punishment due to a technicality which defines domestic servitude as the equivalent of a secondary offense.

In order to adequately suppress modern slavery law enforcement agencies and supportive NGOs must train staff to identify and locate cases of domestic servitude. Although this has occurred on a small scale, mass national and even international training programs should be implemented. Cooperating governments must work to classify domestic servitude as human trafficking and independently eligible for the same punishments. This could lend authorities and courts the necessary power to combat the issue and effectively deter further instances.

Modern day slavery in the form of domestic servitude in Europe does not receive the attention it deserves. By masking the problem with

less striking names and maintaining a passive attitude, countries are neglecting thousands, or perhaps millions, of citizens and depriving them of their legal and natural rights as human beings. Although slavery seems a thing of the past, it continues to occur in the civilized nations thought to abolish it. It is no longer acceptable to ignore this ugly fact. Significant and immediate action must be taken in order to liberate the victims of domestic servitude, true slaves in the modern world.

“The Best Brand on Earth”

The Role of Greece’s Cultural Heritage in the Current Financial Crisis

— Caitlin Miller

Now entering its fifth year of austerity, debt and financial difficulties cripples Greece. Unemployment stands at a staggering 20.9 percent, and Greece owes 133 percent of its 305.6 billion dollar GDP, a figure projected to rise by at least 140 percent in the coming year. If Greece goes bankrupt, some fear that the result could trigger a global financial catastrophe even worse than the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008. As such, the Troika, comprised of the EU, IMF, and European Central Bank, bailed out Greece with a 170 billion dollar “rescue loan.” Although this measure would prevent bankruptcy, Greece may only be able to reduce debt to 120 percent of the GDP by 2020.

To add insult to injury, a string of high-profile museum thefts—two in the past two months—are weakening confidence as to whether the nation can protect its proud cultural heritage. The first heist came in January, when thieves stole a painting by twentieth century artist Picasso that was given to the Athens National Gallery by Picasso himself. On February 17, two masked gunmen robbed the Museum of Ancient Games in Olympia of sixty-five precious artifacts dating from the ninth to fourth centuries BCE. Although the artifacts were cataloged and displayed in Olympia, and therefore cannot be sold on the antiques market, officials from Greece’s Ministry of Culture call the loss a “tragedy.” The event even prompted Culture Minister Pavlos Geroulanos to resign.

Many point to the severe cutbacks in the Greek Culture Ministry as an explanation for the crimes. The Culture and Tourism Ministry’s budget has been cut twenty percent since 2010; currently, the budget makes up just 0.7 percent of Greece’s total annual expenditure. As a result, Greece’s museums are painfully understaffed. Many have warned that the government’s inability to fund proper security has severely limited their power to protect these culturally significant artifacts. As one representative stated, “There are no funds for new guard hirings. There are 2,000 of us, and there should be 4,000... As a result, our monuments and sites don’t have optimum protection – even though guards are doing their very best to protect our heritage.” The nature of the theft in Olympia makes this point abundantly clear: the two male gunmen bound and gagged one security guard, a 48 year-old woman, who was the only guard on duty at the time of the robbery. As one culture ministry official noted, it seemed more like a simple holdup than a professional heist.



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From its iconic perch atop the acropolis, the Parthenon watches Athens burn.

On top of everything, these difficulties come on the heels of a highly public debate between England and Greece over the rightful place of the Elgin Marbles. Greece claims that the marble statues, taken from the Parthenon in the early 19th century by Lord Elgin and brought back to Britain, rightfully belong in Greece. When Britain countered that Greece did not have the proper space to store and exhibit such important pieces of world heritage, Greece responded by building a brand new museum to house the works. The Acropolis Museum, which opened to the public in June 2009, reportedly cost approximately two hundred million dollars to build. In light of the recent events in Athens and Olympia, Greece may have been better advised to spend their money protecting the artifacts they do have, rather than building museums to house those they have yet to acquire.

Indeed, the money that Greece’s Culture Ministry desperately needs may come from the monuments themselves. For decades, filming permits at Greek cultural heritage sites have been famously difficult to procure, as the Central Archeological Council (KAS) has traditionally been highly restrictive in granting them. In some cases, it is easy to see why Greece is so protective of their past – after all, someone has to tell America’s Next Top Model that they cannot conduct a photo shoot at the three thousand year old

Knossos Palace on Crete. Moreover, even if someone obtains a permit, it has been exceedingly expensive to film at these locations in the past. But in a radical move, the Culture Ministry is now dramatically lowering the cost of shooting on site at Greece’s greatest structures, in hopes of extracting some much-needed revenue from its iconic monuments.

While many inside Greece’s government have lauded this move, noting that Greece’s classical past is a world-famous yet tremendously under-utilized resource, the announcement spurred public outrage. Local newspapers claimed that the government would be “renting out” the Parthenon, disrespecting history in order to make money (the culture minister vehemently denied these claims). The individuals behind these criticisms may want to reconsider the substance of these propositions and how this plan could benefit their country. Although these are dire times for Greece, the one area of its economy that has not been impacted by financial troubles is tourism. A record 16.5 million people visited Greece in 2011, a figure up twelve percent from 2010. Tourism makes up almost one fifth of Greece’s GDP and one in five of its jobs. There is a fine line between promoting and disrespecting legacy; if Greece can execute the former in such a way that it can increase its revenue, this could be a shrewd – and potentially lifesaving – move for the nation’s economy. Ancient Greece is, as some current occupants have put it, the “best brand name on Earth.” Taking tasteful advantage of this fact by placing more attention on ancient monuments and artifacts could not only help the country out of debt, but also protect its cultural heritage and prevent further events like those in Olympia and Athens.

Watch for Thorns: Rethinking the UK's Fair Trade Flower Industry

— Annie Devine

The UK currently spends about two billion dollars per year on cut flowers, and over ninety percent of those flowers are imported from abroad, according to Jan Lloyd, the chief executive of New Covent Garden Market in London. Kenyan imports account for nearly a quarter of the UK's flower market, and has reportedly quickly become the largest flower exporter to the EU.

The fair trade movement has made its way into the flower industry in recent years as the abuse and exploitation of Kenyan farmers became increasingly visible. Many critics, though, believe that fair trade flowers actually undermine their own goals of trade parity and economic justice. More specifically, Catherine Dolan of the University of Oxford argues that fair trade flowers perpetuate the inequitable power dynamic between Kenya and the UK by employing ethics as a mode of governmentality over the African "other," thus affirming the dependency of the African producers while reinforcing their ongoing debt to Northern benefactors. Indeed, the problematic aspects of the UK's participation in the Kenyan fair-trade flower industry are worth examining as fair trade becomes an increasingly relevant part of the global economy.

The value of the international flower trade has risen from three billion dollars to forty billion dollars over the last fifty years, with the US and Europe collectively consuming about 23 trillion flowers per year. While the flower industry in Europe dates back to the Covent Garden markets of seventeenth century London, it was not until the late 1960s that Western nations began importing flowers from countries near the equator such as Colombia, Ecuador, and Kenya. A December 2011 report by the World Bank notes that the floriculture industry is Kenya's fastest growing sector and second-largest exporter, employing over 50,000 people and serving as a major force in the country's economic expansion in recent years.

Still, this has not stopped human rights organizations from directing media attention to the exploitative nature of the distant farms that grow these flowers, and advocating for more fair trade practices within the industry. Groups such as the Kenya Women Workers' Organization have thoroughly documented the unlivable wages, the sexual harassment and rape of workers, and the chemical hazards of pesticide poisoning found on many of the Kenyan farms.

As a result of Europe's growing awareness and support for labor reform, UK grocery giant Tesco



ENVIRONMENTAL GEOGRAPHY

A Kenyan worker holds up some flowers on a farm near the town of Naivasha.

began selling the country's first fair trade flowers in 2004. Since then, conditions have improved for Kenyan farmers: flower companies have started investing money back into the communities of their employees, increasing worker benefits, and implementing strategies for reduced environmental impact.

Kenya's largest fair trade flower farm, Oserian, serves as a distinct illustration of these effects. The Guardian reports that eight percent of the export price for Oserian flowers is now funding local community projects. In addition, benefits like maternity leave have been enhanced, and the company has started both to employ hydroponic farming in order to reduce its water usage and to obtain the majority of its energy from a geothermal spring.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the fair trade system has its own set of flaws, not the least of which is enforcement. Despite Oserian's certification and public commitment to fair trade principles, for instance, workers at the farm recently rioted after many of them were fired for participating in a strike during a dispute over wages and working conditions. Local police reportedly used teargas to control the crowd, and many of the rioters were severely injured.

Beyond the somewhat common issues of implementation and enforcement, many are beginning to question the very nature of fair trade and whether it is even possible to facilitate a true "partnership" between a nation like Kenya and a global superpower like the UK. Catherine Dolan maintains that despite its largely good intentions, the fair trade flower move-

ment has ultimately cultivated a system of exchange that is more hierarchical than equitable. She writes: "Fairtrade thus not only forges new relationships between cosmopolitan consumers and the have-nots of the Global South but also recuperates an enduring connection between Britain and its African subjects, drawing on memory of distance and difference in pursuit of commonality and community."

This relationship primarily manifests itself in terms of the standardization of fair trade, since audits and certification intended to enhance the welfare of workers are often experienced as distant measures of authority and control. When Dolan asked a group of Kenyan farmers about their perceptions of fair trade, the vast majority did not have a clear grasp of the concept, generally conflating it with strict labor codes or a kind of charity practice carried out by the UK. Many of them also mentioned their limited role in the community projects that the flower companies were investing in, which farm owners and fair trade managers often dictated without much regard for input from the workers. Other farmers expressed concerns over the implementation of child labor as part of the fair trade certification process, since many of them relied on their children's income to survive and felt that the work was reasonable considering there were no nearby schools in their communities.

Dolan and many others have used these examples to argue that the top-down approach of the fair trade process is unsustainable, and circumscribes the agency of producers by relying on the structural and

ideological power of wealthier nations like the UK. Since fair trade consumers have historically enjoyed more social, economic and geographical privileges than fair trade producers, their purchase decisions reinforce their inherent power in the relationship. As Dolan put it: “While consumers describe fair trade as a way to shrink the distance that divides the privileged north from the wanting south, fair trade potentially naturalizes this separation and, by extension, the asymmetrical access to resources that motivates consumers to give in the first instance.”

Indeed, Oxfam recently reported that a number of regional organizations across Africa are worried that the continent’s heavy reliance on exports to Western nations undermines its own development. At the eighteenth African Union Summit in Janu-

ary, it was noted that intra-African trade comprises a mere eleven percent of total trade in Africa, whereas intra-trade represents 52 percent and 82 percent of the total trade in Asia and Europe, respectively.

The enormous growth of fair trade floriculture in countries like Kenya has also triggered environmental effects that have further hindered domestic growth within Africa. Thousands have reportedly migrated to various lake regions to seek jobs in the flower industry. In the process, Kenya’s fresh water supply has been stretched to accommodate these new concentrated communities in addition to the needs of the flower farms.

At the same time, prolonged drought in the Horn of Africa has severely diminished the water supply for Kenya’s livestock owners and increased

the costs of hydropower production to the detriment of the industrial sector. So while fair trade may be improving conditions for the Kenyan farmers who supply flowers to the UK, many believe that such processes encourage African nations to prioritize their export industries over their own pressing domestic issues.

A coalition of scholars, environmentalists, human rights advocates, and even leaders within the fair trade movement are starting to come together to reevaluate the merits of current fair trade strategies. If countries like the UK genuinely want to facilitate a more equitable relationship with their producers in Kenya and encourage more ethical consumption, they must become active participants in this discussion.

Where to Worship?

Allowing Spain’s Religions Minorities to Worship Properly

— Dale Spicer

The “Ground Zero” mosque debates in the US, the banning of minarets in Switzerland, and recent controversy over a proposal to build a mosque near the site of the 2012 Olympic Games in London are perhaps the most commonly known outcries against mosque building. In Spain, local opposition to the construction of mosques has severely restricted the number of functional mosques, despite a growing Islamic population. In 1992, on the 500-year anniversary of the unification of the peninsula, Spain’s leaders developed the Cooperation Agreement with the Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE). The agreement established optional classes about Islam for students in public schools, legal recognition of marriages performed according to Islamic traditions, rights for Muslims to celebrate religious holidays, rights for the CIE to preserve Islamic historical sites in Spain, and most importantly protection and recognition for mosques. The privileges and assurances that the agreement promises Muslim communities sound ideal, but in practice the agreement has failed to effectively provide Muslims opportunities to construct new mosques in their communities. In order to serve the growing Islamic population of Spain, the government must protect Muslim communities’ right to establish new purpose-built centers of worship.

Approximately 690 currently registered Islamic religious centers exist in Spain. Of the 690 religious spaces, only 13 are permanent structures built exclusively for religious functions; the remaining spaces are relatively small prayer rooms converted from garages, residential apartments, warehouses, or store front commercial properties. These religious spaces serve the 1.4 million Muslims living in Spain. Approximately 2000 protestant churches in the coun-



In these municipalities, local communities organized to either shut down existing mosques or prevent construction of new mosques. In most cases local residents employed petition campaigns aimed at dissuading local governments from authorizing the use of a property for worship.”

try serve a religious community similar in size to the Islamic population.

Victoria Burnett, reporting for New York Times in 2008, wrote about a mosque in Lleida, located in a hastily converted garage where over one thousand Muslims gathered to pray on Fridays. Burnett cites local landlords who refuse to rent space to Muslims as one source of the shortage of mosques in Spain. She also attributes mosque shortages in Spain to the lack of resources that any poor immigrant community faces and resistance from local communities afraid of “alien culture” or “violent radicals.” Nearly two years later, Fiona Govan reported that Mayor Angel Ros closed the same neighborhood garage mosque in because Friday prayers consistently drew crowds exceeding the authorized capacity of 240 worshippers. The image of over 1000 Muslims crowding together in a converted garage every Friday shows that this minority religious community needs government as-

sistance.

After closing the Lleida neighborhood garage mosque, Angel Ros stated that “the municipality has no obligation to provide places of worship.” Mayor Ros is right: Spain’s constitution guarantees freedom to practice any chosen religion; it does not guarantee a place to worship. But the 1992 Cooperation Agreement does promise protection and recognition for mosques. This protection should be expanded to guarantee Muslims the right to construct new mosques within their communities and prohibit landowners from refusing to sell or rent land to Muslims who intend to establish places of worship on the property. New legislation enforcing the rights outlined by the cooperation agreement would prove Spain’s commitment to protecting the rights of minority religious communities. To ensure Muslims have places to worship, Spain’s government officials could also make interest-based financing available

for mosque building or provide land for Muslim organizations to build mosques on. In addition, on Spain's current tax form employees can check a box to donate a percentage of their income to the Catholic Church. Similar procedures should be available for minorities to fund their religious organizations.

Three factors could make any new initiatives aimed at enforcing Islamic rights to establish new religious centers extremely unpopular: local resistance to mosques in Spain, the current European political climate, and Spain's struggling economy. Since 1990, local residents have mobilized against mosques in 56 Spanish municipalities. In these municipalities, local

communities organized to either shut down existing mosques or prevent construction of new mosques. In most cases local residents employed petition campaigns aimed at dissuading local governments from authorizing the use of a property for worship. Nearly all European public figures are wrestling with public anxieties about growing Islamic populations. Some political figures have successfully used fears of immigration or local perceptions of growing Islamic populations to secure political victories. Anti-immigration political currents have increasingly focused on immigrants from predominately Islamic countries and may influence Spanish leaders to reconsider policies

that would be unpopular among other member nations of the EU.

Finally, Spain's leaders are currently facing a nearly 25 percent national unemployment rate, with unemployment rates among the nation's youth climbing as high as fifty percent. Due to the severity of Spain's recent economic decline, Spanish lawmakers will likely focus the majority of their efforts on revitalizing the economy rather than providing a minority community with equal access to sites of worship. To one of Spain's largest religious minorities, that would be unfortunate.

Will the 2012 Olympic Games Help or Hurt England's Economy?

— Caitlin Miller

As speculations about Europe's future range in morbidity from temporary recession to imminent collapse, one of its biggest capitals prepares for the world's most celebrated biennial tradition – the Olympics, to be held in London, England.

The upcoming games are already being heralded as the most diverse Olympics on record; commentators expect unprecedented levels of female participants, with at least one female athlete representing every country competing. Not only do the Olympics mark an opportunity to boost global morale and cooperation, but they also provide Britain with the unique chance to give a much-needed boost to its economy.

Hundreds of thousands of people will flock to London from July 27 to August 12 to attend the sporting spectacular – and during their stay they will spend money at local shops, hotels, restaurants, and the various other businesses located in the urban center. In an attempt to fuel the buying power that will accompany this surge in consumers, London officials are relaxing the Sunday Trading Laws for the duration of the Olympic Games. Normally, businesses in England are open for only six hours on Sundays; by extending this time, officials hope to encourage tourists to shop, thereby increasing revenue and stimulating the local economy. As George Osborne, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, recently told the BBC: "We have got the whole world coming to London and the rest of the country for the Olympics... It would be a great shame, particularly when some of the big Olympic events are on a Sunday, if the country had a 'closed for business' sign on it."

The Olympics mean not only more physical buying power in London, but increased international interest as well. The world's eyes will be on England, and officials hope that this worldwide attention will increase international investment

in Britain. One sector that particularly looks to benefit is the housing market. Property agents such as Savills predict that international interest in England will lead to a spike in the housing market in 2012, with prime prices rising an estimated ten percent. England's Business Minister Mark Prisk commented at a recent conference: "The London 2012 Olympic Games are an unrivalled opportunity for our country and our businesses to sell themselves right around the globe... They are a global shop window, which we can use to showcase the very best that this country has to offer."

Although the UK stands to benefit tremendously from the upcoming Olympics, many fear that increased revenue from tourism and international attention will not be nearly enough to cover the astronomical costs of hosting the games. When London won the bid in 2005, it was estimated that the cost to Britain would be approximately \$3.8 billion: this figure has exploded to almost \$15 billion as the expenses of security, the opening and closing ceremonies, and other factors continue to accumulate. There are questions as to whether it is worth spending \$800 million on building an 80,000-seat Olympic stadium that is likely to fall into disuse and disrepair after the games have ended. This is exactly the scenario that occurred in Athens, which still pays millions of dollars annually to maintain the dozen or so stadiums used during the 2004 Olympics that have since been completely abandoned. And while almost \$6 billion has been awarded to local construction firms to build the venues, this is a cost largely falling on the taxpayers' backs.

Indeed, it seems that much of England's population is wary, if not angry, about the enormous spending in preparation for this summer. Understandably, the population is frustrated with the



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A London Underground train decorated to promote London's Olympic bid.

government for constructing lavish new swimming pools and stadiums while simultaneously raising taxes and eliminating support for the lower class. And while the government continues to insist that the long-term economic benefits will mitigate the current spending, many are upset over what is perceived to be an overt display of wealth that Britain simply does not have: less than half of businesses involved in a recent national survey believed that the Olympics will raise positive sentiment or bolster the national economy. The end of the Olympic Games will mark the one-year anniversary of the London riots last August, which were believed by some to be a result of deep-seated economic inequalities in British society.

Ultimately, the organizers of the 2012 Olympics may want to reconsider the implications of a negative economic impact in the wake of the Games this summer. While the hosting of such a massive celebration is undoubtedly expensive, the Olympics are first and foremost about bringing together local and global communities, not deepening socioeconomic disparities that often lead to public unrest and violence.

Scapegoating the Rating Agencies

— John Schoettle

“Completely over the top and also unfair”—Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker summed up the sentiment of many European leaders regarding Standard & Poor’s (S&P) credit downgrades of nine European countries in early January. The downgrade jeopardizes the bailout effort, especially if Fitch or Moody’s also downgrade. With France and Austria losing the top rating, it will be more difficult for the European Financial Stability Fund to raise the money needed to provide support for Greece and other troubled European periphery countries.

Throughout the European media and political circles, reactions to the downgrade ranged from confusion to disappointment, all steeped with righteous anger. Some have turned to publicly deriding S&P for slapping triple-A ratings onto toxic mortgage securities during the worst of the previous mortgage bubble. Others have proposed creating a European credit rating agency that is more “transparent” than the current major US-based credit agencies: Moody’s, S&P, and Fitch. Perhaps the most egregious response is that the credit ratings have somehow perpetuated the crisis through their warnings and S&P’s ultimate downgrades. Although patently false, the claim is an easy sell to angry voters as an explanation for the inability to stem the crisis.

Each response is indicative of the widespread scapegoating and empty rhetoric that many European leaders have resorted to in combating the sovereign debt crisis. The latest outcry’s credibility has been cheapened by thinly veiled and desperate political opportunism. Of any country downgraded, France had the most at stake losing its coveted AAA rating. In addition to losing a symbolic point of national pride, the French government is poised for massive leadership changes going forward. Facing a re-election fight in late spring, President Nicolas Sarkozy told his aides that if France lost its rating, “I’m dead.” It is no wonder that the Sarkozy government came out swinging against the downgrade claiming that it meant nothing, and his aides have attacked the credit agencies’ credibility.

In Germany, former Free Democratic Party (FDP) leader and current Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle has accused the ratings agencies of needlessly perpetuating fear in the markets as European leaders work to stem the crisis. His criticism, however, comes as his party, the junior member in the ruling government coalition, unravels internally. As a result, some of his party members call for his resignation. Free Democrat support has fallen in a national poll from almost fifteen percent in mid-2009 to around two percent



Instead of picking petty fights with the credit rating agencies which only make them look in over their heads, European executives and bureaucrats should keep focusing on producing credible plans.”

at the end of 2011. In 2012, the FDP government collapsed in one of the few German states where it was in a ruling coalition, with the blame placed on internal conflict among FDP members. In such a backdrop, Minister Westerwelle’s anger appears little more than an attempt to score political points. Aside from his desperation, his solution to create a new rating agency will not work either. A European rating agency created in the midst of crisis would carry little credibility especially as it feels the pressure to issue favorable ratings. The public would perceive it to be a political puppet to stamp approval of European actions with the same credibility as the Chinese rating agency Dagong, which is noted for being heavily influenced by the Chinese government. Even worse, the European Parliament unveiled in February a draft report giving the EU broad regulatory power to prohibit sovereign credit ratings if countries do not want them. In addition to the easily-spotted desperation, it is disingenuous to claim that the agencies have lost credibility while having previously institutionalized their importance when times were good in the past few decades.

German Prime Minister and Christian Democrat Angela Merkel, who still maintains relatively high approval ratings, has responsibly refrained from going after the agencies. Instead, Westerwelle’s actions have further pushed Merkel to distance herself and party away from their crumbling junior coalition partner in order to ensure reelection. Fed up with FDP infighting and perceived incompetence, she has ignored FDP demands to force Great Britain to implement a financial transactions tax along with the rest of the EU.

Finally, the downgrades were no surprise. Stocks on the Germany’s DAX and British FTSE actually rose the Monday after the action. For months, French bond yields (the government’s cost to borrowing money) have been much higher than the safer German bunds, indicating a risk premium to lending the country money. S&P only iterated what everyone had known for months: these countries already carry a lot of debt

and will have to take on even more to bailout their euro compatriots. Additionally, investors do not consider rating agencies to be the final judge on credit quality. In fact, after the US credit downgrade in the summer of 2011, investors flocked to government debt, pushing down interest costs for the government.

Instead of picking petty fights with the credit rating agencies which only makes them look in over their heads, European executives and bureaucrats should keep focusing on producing credible plans. If they succeed, the people that ultimately count, debt holders and the public, will respond favorably, regardless of any credit rating.

A One-Sided Deal: Liberal Media Loses its Voice in Hungary

— *Emily Meier*

Hungary, a once notable democratic state, appears to be slipping back into previous authoritarian tendencies. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his Fidesz Party government have recently passed a new constitution which extensively limits the power of the judiciary, and removes many of the checks and balances on the executive branch. However, this is not Orbán's first attack on human rights. Last year, on the cusp of Hungary taking the EU's presidency, Orbán and his government, boosted by winning more than two-thirds of the Hungarian Parliament in 2010, enacted a new set of restrictions and guidelines for the content of mass media. The purpose of the act was "the promotion of the integrity of society." Holding up the integrity of a society sounds ideal in theory, but a closer look at the act indicates its true motivation to be an elimination of any anti-government media. During these measures, the EU has only half-heartedly taken steps to prevent these government measures. The Fidesz Party continues to dominate the media, and the EU must take stronger countermeasures to prevent the loss of journalistic freedom in the country.

These new laws give a vague set of guidelines that leave room for authoritarian interpretation. The "interpretation" of the legislation, however, is at the discretion of the newly formed News Media Council. Currently, the council members are made up of Fidesz party sympathizers, and the chair of the council is appointed by the prime minister himself. When a piece of media fails to adhere to these new guidelines, the charged party must pay a fine of approximately \$700,000.

Orbán's grip on the media in Hungary has continued to strengthen. To start, nearly every operating news outlet is privately funded by the Fidesz. This is not unusual in Hungary, where a large portion of advertisement revenue originates from the government, usually for tourism or transportation. Since taking office, however, Orbán and his government have slowly pushed out any anti-government media outlets by strategically withholding advertising on any unfavorable news outlets. Additionally, private businesses have also withdrawn their advertisements. Many private businesses that receive governmental contracts fear that Orbán's government will cut a portion of reimbursements if private businesses advertise on unapproved outlets. Lack of financing pushes liberal media out of the market and allows pro-government news sources to fill the gaps.

Many international human rights groups have



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Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán speaking at the European People's Party Congress in 2009.

criticized Hungary's action, calling it a violation of the EU's democratic foundation. Despite all of this, the Hungarian government completely denies any wrongdoing. Orbán's government stated that their media act was not unprecedented, citing examples of neighboring union countries with similar regulations. This retort is false, according to a recent study by the Central European University's Center for Media and Communication Studies.. The study exposed that each comparison that Orbán's government made was either wrong or lacking in fundamental details and context.

The EU and the Council of Europe have increased pressure on Hungary to amend their new constitution, going as far as threatening to take them to court for breaching EU law. Yet, they have only touched upon the violations surrounding the media act, leaving many liberal media outlets to fend for themselves. Recently, one of the remaining critical radio stations has been battling to even keep its frequency on Hungarian radio.

The EU must take Hungary's limits on the freedom of the press more seriously. Earlier last year, the EU sent "legal experts" to sift through the laws in search of any clear breaches. This surface level evaluation apparently satisfied the EU in 2011, however, as time has passed, it became clear that the vague media guidelines were being

interrupted in order to snuff out any and all government critical media.

As a violation of a basic democratic principle, the EU should push harder for reform. In response to the Act, a council of Europe representatives said, "We have other problems elsewhere in Europe." This is understandable, given the recent financial crisis, however, the EU has the power to make Orbán listen. They could follow suit with their actions over the constitution, and take Orbán and his government to court. Another option would be to simply withhold certain financial packages that lower Hungary's borrowing interest rates. If Hungary is to remain a stable member of the EU, the people need to stay informed. When the Hungarian people are left in the dark about internal happenings, the government is set up slip further into an authoritarian regime.

Bashar al-Assad's Last Hope: Russia?

Why Syria is Still Standing

— Adam Miller

No longer is the popular slogan “God, Syria, Bashar, that is enough!” being chanted in the streets of Damascus and Homs. Instead, a new slogan, “God, Syria, Freedom, that is enough!” has taken over after, according to estimates released February 1 by the United Nations, Syrian security forces killed more than 7,000 protestors since the uprising began in March 2011. The United States and much of the international community has, for some time, actively denounced the Syrian government's brutal crackdowns, due in large part to the horrific tales of abuse reported by Syrians. While most of the international community does appear to be concerned with what is happening within the country's border, Russia has consistently been the key roadblock to collective action. Most recently, it vetoed a UN Security Council Resolution condemning Bashar al-Assad and calling for him to step down. China too has vetoed such a resolution, reportedly to maintain its positive relationship with the Kremlin.

Ongoing external pressure is nothing new in Syria, where the Assad family has ruled for more than forty years. Throughout that time, long-standing ethnic and religious tensions have simmered just below the surface. The country is now in the midst of massive social upheaval, despite deadly state repression aimed at curtailing any sort of meaningful opposition. These protests, to which the Syrian authorities have responded with overwhelming military force, pose the greatest challenge to the Assad family's long-standing reign. As casualties rise, the Russians, and Chinese, have been very unhelpful to international peace efforts. Russian strategic and commercial interests within Syria are likely the driving force behind their support of the Syrian regime, but such interests may no longer be strong enough to justify the Russians' polarizing support of Assad. Should Bashar al-Assad waver, the Russians will likely join in international opposition against him despite their current stance and obstruction of the UN Resolution aimed at ousting him.

Particularly worrisome to the international community is the critical role Syria plays in the Middle East. Any chaos here could devolve violently through a sort of domino effect in countries like Lebanon and Israel where powerful militant proxy groups like Hamas and Hezbollah could be mobilized, given Syria's alliance with Iran and shared hatred of Israel. From an international security standpoint, Syria's close ties with Shi'a



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Assad with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev whilst on a visit to Sochi in August 2008.

power Iran, an arch-foe of the US, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, could potentially draw those powers into an even more dangerous Middle Eastern conflict.

Perhaps most concerning, at least by Washington's standards, is Russia's support of the Assad regime and its status as a fellow permanent UN Security Council member. On January 31, Russia joined with China to block a plan presented to the U.N. Security Council by Morocco, and supported by the Arab League that called on Assad to transfer power to his deputy, who would then call a general election. The resolution went on to state that should Assad not comply within 15 days, undisclosed “further measures” would be taken. However, Moscow already had vetoed one resolution denouncing Assad's use of force in October. As Western leaders sought to overthrow the Syrian dictator from power, Assad's old friends in Moscow sent an aircraft-carrying missile cruiser to Syrian waters in a show of support last month and went so far as to ship his troops a consignment of Yakhont cruise missiles.

It is commonplace in the Western world to simply deem Russia's recent actions as an attempt to retake lost pride and reclaim their place in the world as a superpower. However, Russia's recent actions appear to be more calculated than that.

First, strategic interests are at stake. In Tartus, Syria hosts the sole remaining Russian naval base on the Mediterranean, currently being refurbished by 600 Russian technicians after a long period of disuse. To give up this Middle Eastern beachhead would be a serious strategic loss for Moscow. Secondly, although limited, Russia does have real commercial interests in Syria. Contracts to sell arms to Damascus—both those signed and under negotiation—total 5 billion dollars. Moreover, having lost 13 billion dollars due to international sanctions on Iran and 4.5 billion dollars in canceled contracts to Libya, Russia's defense industry is already suffering. Besides arms exports, Russian companies have major investments in Syria's infrastructure, energy and tourism sectors, which were estimated to be worth 19.4 billion dollars in 2009. Beyond commercial and strategic interests, the Kremlin's greatest fear is of instability in the Middle East and Central Asia. Russian policymakers already worry about the northward spread of Islamic militancy and opium if the departure of NATO from Afghanistan leads to a Taliban resurgence and state collapse.

Whether the relationship between Syria and Russia is merely one of strategic interaction or of durable friendship and solidarity remains to

be fully seen. Despite the Russians' recent backing of the Syrian regime, their support is likely to weaken unless al-Assad is able to completely crush his opposition in a short timeframe. This is likely not because of any moral imperatives on the part of the Russians, but rather by their inability to handle the loss of official Syrian support, no matter the victor. Should Assad fall, the Russians cannot afford to alienate his successors, given their strategic and business interests at

stake. The duality of the Kremlin's stance cannot be overlooked: the same day Russia blocked the UN resolution proposed by Morocco, Russian Foreign Secretary Sergei Lavrov said that "We are not friends or allies of President Assad."

Regardless of the on again, off again relationship that is shared by Syria and Russia, Kremlin policymakers still seem to believe that Bashar al-Assad has a reasonable chance at survival. Should the situation in Syria take a turn for the worse,

however, it is probable that minor rephrasing of the UN resolution would be enough to ease Russian fears and bring them aboard with NATO and the Arab League. It is unfortunate that further suffering in Syria seems to be a prerequisite for international action on account of a lone holdout. Such is the logic of collective action, a fact that undoubtedly enters into the calculus of Russia's senior leadership as they decide on their next move.

Plight of the Iranian Baha'is

— *Maya Ragsdale*

The Baha'is of Iran have experienced relentless persecution since the founding of their faith in the nineteenth century. Though there are over 300,000 members of the Baha'i community in Iran, making them the largest religious minority, their existence is denied and suffocated by the Iranian government. In the past three decades, hundreds of Baha'is have been arrested, tortured, and executed. Tens of thousands more have been deprived of jobs and education, simply for refusing to recant their beliefs. After Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979, the persecution of Baha'is took a systematic form and was enshrined as official government policy. In 1993, a secret government memorandum was exposed that had been drafted by the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council and signed by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei. In simple terms, it stated that the "progress and development" of the Baha'i community "shall be blocked." The persecution of Baha'is is not simply written into the minds of Iranian authorities, but has also been written into official government policy.

To understand why Baha'is face more extreme persecution than any other religious minority in Iran, it is important to look at the teachings of the faith and how it threatens the status quo. One reason is the Baha'is insistence on not having religious authority held over them, while Islamic clergy members dominate the Iranian regime. The Baha'i Faith is highly individualistic in its teachings about spirituality. Baha'is emphasize the spiritual unity of mankind and believe that God sent a series of divine messengers that suited the needs of the present time and the spiritual enlightenment of the people. These messengers include Abraham, Buddha, Krishna, Jesus, Muhammad, and most recently, Baha'u'llah. The very foundation on which the Baha'i faith is based, the revelations of Baha'u'llah, challenges the Islamic conception that Muhammad's revelations were God's final divine message. Baha'is believe that God progressively reveals his will through divine messengers, whose purpose is to help humans develop moral and spiritual qualities. So, each religion is seen as just one part of this chain of progression, and Baha'u'llah is seen as the



The persecution of Baha'is is not simply written into the minds of Iranian authorities, but also written into official government policy."

Messenger of our times, and the Baha'i faith as the religion that suits the needs of the present day. The Baha'i teachings include numerous social principles, such as equality of men and women, elimination of all forms of prejudice, loyalty to one's government, world peace, harmony of religion and science, equal distribution of wealth, and service to humanity. These social principles directly threaten the politicized Islam practiced by governmental authorities in Iran.

Attaining an education is important to these social principles, which Baha'is can use to fulfill their social responsibilities. Yet, Iranian authorities cut off their access to higher education and Baha'is experience harassment even during their primary schooling. Baha'is are not permitted to attend universities in Iran, unless they identify themselves as one of the four religions recognized by the state or university entrance exams: Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian, or Muslim. The Iranian government said that if Baha'is identify themselves as Muslims, they would be allowed to enroll, but most Baha'is refuse to denounce their beliefs and succumb to the regime's religious persecution. Since the Iranian government denied Baha'is access to higher education, the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education (BIHE) was founded in 1987 to give them their only chance at university-level education. The *New York Times* called the establishment of the BIHE "an elaborate act of communal self-preservation." Classes were held in private homes and approximately 900 students enrolled. In 1998, Iranian authorities raided more than 500 Baha'i homes and offices, arrested hundreds of people, and confiscated books and

computer equipment. Still, volunteer teachers and administrators continued to put their efforts into the university. In May 2011, the Iranian government launched an organized assault in an attempt to shut down the BIHE; they raided over thirty homes and detained more than a dozen professors and administrators. Some are still in prison, simply because they taught students in the BIHE.

Baha'is have appealed to the United Nations and have engaged in consultations with UNICEF, UNIFEM, and the WHO, among other organization. The case of their persecution has received international attention from Amnesty International, who co-sponsored a documentary about their educational strife. As this issue has received increasing international attention, more organizations have pledged their support to the cause of the Iranian Baha'is. Currently, more than 65 universities around the world accept BIHE credit, which marks international support for Baha'i students who would otherwise be shut off from participating in the global economy. But support for Iranian Baha'is must be made more effective. The conditions of their plight must receive more public attention, so that progress can be made against religious oppression. The Iranian government will not change their policies without international pressure. Teachers are still jailed, education is still denied, and religious persecution is still practiced in a systematic fashion. Education must not be held hostage to political or religious tyranny.

The Resurgence of the Afghan Taliban: How the Taliban has Come to Take Back Afghanistan

— Paul Sherman

There may be a role for the Taliban in Afghanistan's future. This notion contrasts sharply with the situation seen in 2002, when the Taliban were fleeing from a Western invasion led by the United States. It appeared then that Afghanistan would finally be rebuilt after years of foreign invasions, civil war and heavy-handed rule by the Taliban regime. Yet, only ten years later, the hope of bringing stability to Afghanistan is fading. Most of the country's infrastructure remains limited. The opium trade is booming, although the legitimate economy is improving only ever so slightly. Western intervention in Afghanistan has struggled so mightily in part, the resurgence of the Taliban has slowed the rebuilding process. However, if addressed in the right way, Afghanistan could still make significant progress toward prosperity and stability. But, this will only be possible if all parties are involved in the process, including the Taliban.

One of the main reasons that the Taliban initially became stronger was the United States' diversion of attention and resources from Afghanistan to Iraq in 2003. In retrospect, it is clear that the Bush administration made a gross miscalculation. With a decrease in pressure from the US military and intelligence community, Taliban militants were able to recover and receive much-needed funding and other forms of aid from external groups, including Pakistan. Facing only a limited number of coalition forces, the Taliban has been able to re-emerge. In addition to low troop levels, American tactics on the ground have not improved the situation. US soldiers, for example, have tried to uncover the Taliban by engaging with civilians, since it is difficult to separate extremists from the general population. Yet, the value of the intelligence received has often been highly questionable. In some cases, Afghans have told American soldiers to target rivals in nearby villages or other innocent bystanders in order to settle debts or exact revenge. Additionally, US airstrikes have occasionally resulted in unnecessary civilian casualties. The massacre of 17 civilians by Staff Sergeant Robert Bales in early March of 2012 serves as another high-profile example of the harsh treatment of civilians, however unsanctioned, and the political blowback that can follow. This heavy collateral damage has made Afghans more resentful of the U.S. presence in their country. As a result, the Taliban have been able to find traction for their anti-US, anti-foreign message.

Moreover, the Taliban have built up their strength by bringing back the opium trade. Poppy

“**While they have been detrimental to the reconstruction of Afghanistan in the past, the Taliban will need to play an important role in that process going forward.**”

cultivation and illicit drug-smuggling continues to comprise a large portion of the Afghan economy. The Congressional Research Service reported that in the 1970s, Afghanistan only had enough poppy to meet local and regional demand. However, there has been a trend of increasing poppy production, leading to the exportation of Afghanistan's opium crop. According to the CIA, Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world, with a GDP of \$29.99 billion and an unemployment rate of 35 percent. Since economic turmoil has been the historical norm, the opium trade is often the only avenue for ordinary Afghans to make a living. This is particularly true in lawless areas, where the current Kabul government has little authority or ability to initiate aid programs.

Furthermore, Afghanistan has lacked the infrastructure and institutions that are necessary for the nation building process. Current Afghan President Hamid Karzai has little control over the country beyond Kabul, and there have been major Taliban attacks even in the capital city. Poor transportation infrastructure and a lack of main highways further limit the central authority's ability to project its power into the periphery in any appreciable manner. Without a powerful state to contend with, the Taliban have been able to seize territory, intimidate local leaders and recruit new members unabated.

While they have been detrimental to the reconstruction of Afghanistan in the past, the Taliban will need to play an important role in that process going forward. This is undoubtedly a difficult pill for the US administration to swallow; however, it is the country's best chance to solidify itself as a viable, stable state. If the Taliban are not involved in the new government, they will be more likely to continue their violent resistance to the central government indefinitely.

By making them stakeholders, the US might be able to expect some degree of moderation and

cooperation on joint-efforts. The West is going to have to take a calculated risk with the Taliban if they are willing to improve the future of Afghanistan. A self-confident, legitimized Taliban may cooperate on economic and political measures as they will have formal channels through which to address their goals. Moreover, with codified responsibility to their constituents, the Taliban will have major incentives to cooperate with other parties and participate in governance. Official power carries along with it important mechanisms of accountability and a mandate to get things done.

It should be noted that the Taliban have not always been seen as an intractable group incapable of negotiation. In 1998, the Taliban and the United States were very close to coming to a peace deal that would have sent Osama Bin Laden to his death thirteen years earlier. There is an older caucus within the Taliban who are not vehemently opposed to the United States and the West and are willing to work on a peace deal. In fact, in recent months, the Taliban has announced that they would be open to participating in peace talks. Afghanistan has a long road ahead if it is to become a fully-functioning, durable state. Accomplishing that task will require an open-mind and a willingness to put all options of the table: including making a deal with a group we have fought intensely for over a decade. Such is the nature of building a nation in Afghanistan's difficult political environment.

The Religious Divide: Neglecting Women's Rights in Israel

— Meg Scribner

Naama Margolese, an eight year old Orthodox Jew from Beit Shimesh, a small town outside of Jerusalem, has quickly come to symbolize a sharp divide over religion in Israel. Footage of Haredi men harassing Naama on her walk to school has placed the spotlight on religious tensions in Israel, provoking outrage across the nation. Spit on and called a “whore” and a “Nazi” due to her uncovered arms, Naama is now too afraid to make the short journey every morning.

Naama's case is not the only example of radical Jewish extremism in Israel. The Haredi community, the most conservative of the Jewish sects often described as “ultra-Orthodox,” has been working hard to diminish the role of women in the public sphere. Despite the Israeli Supreme Court's ruling a year ago that gender segregation on buses and sidewalks was unlawful, it has remained a norm in many Haredi communities. In addition, so-called “modesty patrols” have taken it upon themselves to enforce moral codes in certain Israeli neighborhoods. Reports have surfaced of Haredi men pelting women with stones for red blouses, and pepper spraying women who socialize with men. Extremists have gone so far as to remove public benches so that women cannot sit outside with their children.

While Haredi Judaism is the fastest growing Jewish sect in Israel, it is important to note that the Haredim do not represent the beliefs of the greater Jewish population. In the weeks since these events, there has been uproar against the Haredi community. Religious leaders in Israel have spoken out against extremism, and it was in fact an ultra-Orthodox rabbi who brought attention to Naama's story. Naama's case is emblematic of the Israeli government's failure to promote and enforce gender equality in the face of discrimination by ultra-Orthodox Jewish sects.

Both Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and President Shimon Peres have condemned the actions of Israel's radical Jews, and President Peres has urged the nation “to save the majority from the hands of a small minority.” This meek denunciation shows a troubling disregard for Israeli citizens who deserve to have their rights protected. It is not the responsibility of the Israeli people to enforce gender equality; it is the responsibility of their government. Israelis should not focus their energy on protesting a conservative sect that will not change its dogma to satisfy the public. Rather, they should be protesting a government that is fail-



An Israeli bus marked “gender-segregated.”

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ing to protect its people's civil liberties.

The Israeli Supreme Court ruled in January of 2011 that gender segregation is unlawful, yet the ruling has proved toothless. The Court declared that enforcement of this decision would not occur for another year; many police forces have made it their policy in the last twelve months to continue facilitating gender segregation as a means of keeping peace in conservative communities. More than a year has passed since the Supreme Court's decision, and, despite the declaration by Transport Minister Israel Katz that “gender segregation on buses is unacceptable and illegal,” it has continued. The time has come for the Court's ruling to be enforced.

Established in 1948, Israel is still a new country, and the religious division at issue here is an obstacle to defining its national identity. In the years since its establishment, Israeli society has been characterized by Jewish solidarity. In constant conflict with its Arab neighbors, such solidarity has been necessary for Israel to establish itself as a strong state. There thus exists in both public and private consciousness a sentiment that

to turn away from a portion of the Jewish community would be to undermine the united front that Israel has presented to its enemies. But Israeli society is now being threatened internally. Prime Minister Netanyahu has stated that sex discrimination will not be tolerated in the “democratic, Western, liberal state” that is Israel. If Prime Minister Netanyahu truly believes that Israel is such a state, he must lead the government in taking a definitive stance against practices that discriminate against half of the Israeli population.

The Israeli government should not attempt to persecute the Haredim for their conservative beliefs; like any Israeli citizens, they are entitled to freely practice their religion without fear of discrimination. That said, it is the Israeli government's responsibility to see to it that in turn, the Haredim do not persecute Israelis who do not follow the same moral code. The assault of an eight year old girl should not have been necessary for this issue to become part of the national political agenda. Now that it has, the government must live up to the egalitarian principles enshrined in Israel's constitution.

The Israeli Apartheid: Demonization vs. Realization

— Adam Miller

Today, the need for reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians has never been greater. Pressure for a two-state solution has been mounting since October 2011 when the Palestinian Authority requested full membership at the United Nations. Adding further tension to an already tightly-wound situation, an apartheid analogy has surfaced comparing Israel's treatment of the Palestinians to South Africa's treatment of non-whites during its apartheid era. Contributing to the problem, even the United Nations has used the analogy. While the basis of these claims is up for debate, there can be no doubt that the use of such an analogy will likely preclude, rather than promote, peace, and harmony throughout the region. It is critical that such assertions be examined for their merit, in order to foster critical discussion over the Israeli regime's conduct, rather than merely destructive murmurings.

Those who compare Israel's treatment of Palestinians to South Africa's treatment of non-whites argue that the system of division in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, which includes Jewish-only settlements, military checkpoints, and the physical West Bank barrier, resembles certain aspects of the South African Apartheid regime. Moreover, a controversial marriage law and the ongoing use of Palestinians as cheap labor also prove prominent in this rhetorical claim. Some believe that elements of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory constitute colonialism and apartheid, both of which run contrary to the norms of International Law.

Apartheid's original origin is as the Afrikaans word for 'separateness' or 'separate development', obviously used to designate the official state policy of racial discrimination implemented in South Africa between 1948-1994. However, as stated previously, the legal definition of apartheid applies to any situation anywhere in the world where the following three core elements exist: (i) that two distinct racial groups can be identified; (ii) that 'inhuman acts' are committed against the subordinate group; and (iii) that such acts are committed systematically in the context of an institutionalized regime of domination by one group over the other. The Russell Tribunal, which convened in Cape Town in 2011, was formed to investigate and analyze Israeli policies toward the Palestinians as they relate to the 1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid. It found that Palestinians are subjected to systematic human rights violations that ultimately preclude their development and prevent the Palestinians as a group from participating in political, economic, social, and cultural life.



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Huwara Checkpoint, one of many Israeli checkpoints and closures that restrict the movement of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, which have been compared to the Apartheid pass laws in South Africa.

The Russell Tribunal is, in essence, a court of international public opinion. Currently, Israel cannot be held accountable for its actions by any international tribunal as it refuses to accept the jurisdiction of either the International Court of Justice or the International Criminal Court. The Russell Tribunal is seen as a potential remedy for this gap in the system of justice because it provides for accountability through popular opinion. Richard Goldstone notes that, "It does not seek to obstruct the peace process. On the contrary, it wishes to promote it. But there can be no peace without justice."

Ultimately, the Tribunal's specific findings were two-fold. First, it found that Israel subjects the Palestinian people to an "institutionalized regime of domination amounting to apartheid as defined under international law" and that this regime manifests itself, in varying types and degrees of intensity, against different categories of Palestinians depending on their particular location. They also found that the Palestinians living under military rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are subject to a "particularly aggravated form of apartheid." Palestinian citizens of Israel, while entitled to vote, are not part of the Jewish nation as defined by Israeli law and are therefore excluded from the benefits of Jewish nationality and subject to systematic discrimination across the broad spectrum of recognized human rights. The Tribunal concluded that Israel's rule over the Palestinian people, wherever they reside, collectively amounts to a "single integrated regime of apartheid."

Those of an opposite opinion, however, would argue that the analogy is invalid because the West Bank and Gaza are not part of sovereign Israel and

are in fact governed by the Palestinian Authority, and thus cannot be compared to the internal policies of apartheid South Africa. Within Israel itself, critics of the analogy note that Israel cannot accurately be called an apartheid state because Israeli law guarantees Arab citizens of Israel the same rights as other Israeli citizens without distinction of race, creed, or sex. In addition, Israel's Arab citizens can and do run in elections and become ministers in the Israeli government.

The apartheid analogy, in the context of differences between Israeli and South African policies is almost certainly inadequate to accurately describe such a complex and long-standing conflict. Kadalie, Rhoda, and Julia Bertelsmann, black South Africans whose families fought against apartheid believe that equating Apartheid South Africa and present-day Israel simply does not ring true: "Israel is not an apartheid state. Israel's human rights record in the occupied territories, its settlement policy, and its firm responses to terror may sometimes warrant criticism." That being said, they also point out that former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert himself warned that Israel could face an apartheid-style struggle if it did not reach a deal with the Palestinians and end the occupation in the West Bank.

Other critics of the apartheid analogy state that it is intended to delegitimize and demonize Israel and Zionism, applying a higher standard of behavior to the Jewish state than to other nations or to the Palestinian Authority in order to justify boycotting, ostracism, or elimination of the State of Israel. They would point out that blatant "apartheid"-like treatment of Palestinian refugees

in the Palestinian Authority territory, Jordan and Lebanon, is ignored and are not the subject of delegitimization campaigns, showing a double standard.

Policies of apartheid and occupation are undoubtedly different and must be viewed as such. Apartheid South Africa was a state that practiced outright discrimination against its own people. It sought to fragment the country into white South Africa and black Bantustan. Its security laws were used to brutally suppress opposition to apartheid. Israel, on the other hand, is an occupying power

that controls a foreign territory and its people under a regime recognized by international law. Yet, it cannot be ignored that Israel discriminates against Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in favor of half a million Israeli settlers. Its restrictions on freedom of movement, manifested in countless humiliating checkpoints, resemble the “pass laws” of apartheid. Its destruction of Palestinian homes resembles the destruction of homes belonging to blacks under apartheid’s Group Areas Act. Many believe that Israel has even gone beyond apartheid South Africa in constructing separate (and un-

equal) roads for Palestinians and settlers.

Ultimately, it is unclear whether the State of Israel has committed the crime of Apartheid. What is clear is that Jewish-Arab relations in Israel and the West Bank cannot be simplified to a narrative of Jewish discrimination alone. Hostility and suspicion exist on both sides. The Apartheid analogy is, in all likelihood, neither entirely false nor without some legitimate basis. The Apartheid debate is significant as a symbolic statement but real progress on correcting internal inequalities and suppressing violence ought to be the focus.

A Fly in the Ointment: The Global Effects of Sino-Iranian Relations

— David Riley

In June 2010, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed a resolution that, for the fifth time since 2006, placed sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iran’s nuclear program. The resolution also tightened the preexisting embargo on conventional arms sales to Iran, and strengthened the ban on further development of Iran’s ballistic missile program. Since then, the People’s Republic of China has carefully positioned itself as a formal supporter of the sanctions, while at the same time filling the resultant vacuum left by US and European companies in Iran’s energy and defense sectors. Unless the risks begin to greatly exceed the rewards, China will continue to undermine international sanctions against Iran through strategic interaction with Tehran.

China’s current foreign policy is partly centered on a desire to build up its oil reserves. Currently, China’s reserves are equivalent to about 30 days of oil imports. Most developed countries hold strategic reserves equivalent to 90 days of imports. As the price of crude oil continues to rise, due in part to European and US embargos on Iranian oil, it is becoming more costly for China to purchase the oil it seeks. China has therefore deepened its engagement in the Middle East, especially Iran, to circumvent the international oil market.

This is not a new strategy for China. In the late 1990s, China filled the opening left behind by western oil companies in Sudan, when international sanctions followed a civil war between the Khartoum government and rebel forces. China invested billions in Sudan’s oil companies, facilitating their export capabilities. Soon, China had a 40 percent share in the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company, and Sudanese oil accounted for 7 percent of Chinese petroleum imports.

China’s relationship with Iran is similar. In 2004, Sinopec, one of China’s largest petroleum companies, signed a 70 billion dollar agreement to develop Iran’s Yadavaran oil field and buy 250 million tons



Unless the risks begin to notably exceed the rewards, China will continue to undermine international sanctions against Iran through strategic interaction with Tehran.”

of natural gas from Iran over the next 30 years. More recently, negotiations have taken place regarding a pipeline from Iran to Pakistan, from where oil could be transported to China by rail or road.

In addition to these energy agreements, China has expanded exports of manufactured goods and capital to Iran. Projects like the expansion of Tehran’s subway system, laying fiber optics for Iran’s broadband network, along with new Chinese auto and television factories in the country, all serve to strengthen China’s image in Tehran.

Iran’s goals in its relationship with China are many. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and with a place on the International Atomic Energy Agency’s Board of Governors, China is well-placed to provide Tehran with political cover as their nuclear program comes under further scrutiny. This, as well as the economic relief China offers, acts as a hefty counterweight to US and UN Security Council efforts to isolate Iran from the rest of the world.

Recent interactions with Iran, however, indicate some hedging on China’s part, likely in order to mollify the US and its allies. Beijing has slowly replaced binding energy contracts with non-binding memoranda of understanding, which can be revoked at any time. The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China just pulled out of negotiations for the Iran-Pakistan pipeline in early March, citing “geopolitical” reasons. China is now adopting a more conservative approach to Iran.

It is likely that the US and its allies have increased pressure on China in order to loosen its ties with Iran. In 2008, the US State Department shared intelligence with key allies detailing Chinese arms sales to Iran, hoping to bring the arrangement to an end. The US now claims to have definitive evidence that Iran provides small arms to terrorist organizations like Hezbollah and Hamas. These dealings put significant strain on China’s relationship with the West, and have had substantial destabilizing effects on the greater Middle East. As with their energy arrangements with Iran, though, China has been careful even as it rolled back this program, reducing arms sales from 100 million dollars between 2002 and 2005, to 50 million between 2007 and 2010.

The US and its European allies can disrupt the relationship between Iran and China in a variety of other ways. Saudi Arabia, an important US ally in the Middle East, could play a key role in leveraging China away from Iran and toward the West, since the kingdom is already the leading supplier of petrochemicals to Chinese textile manufacturers. As the international sanctions on Iran continue to take effect, China may conclude that the political costs of their relationship with Iran outweigh the benefits. For now, however, it appears that China will continue to use its peripheral status within the established international order to carefully advance its interests through investment and trade with Iran.

The Sixty Percent: Iranian Youth and the Future of a Regime

How Today's Iranian Youth Are Threatening the Status Quo

— *Raya Saksouk*

A familiar scene played out on the rooftops of Tehran this past year. Amid a slew of protests drawing from the Arab Spring, Iranians climbed to the heights of their city and hurled their shouts of protest into the night. “Allahu akbar!” they cried. “God is great!” The episode was one in a long history of Iranian protest, a narrative stretching as far back as the early twentieth century and always with one demographic in common: youth.

Now—as in 1979, when throngs of disillusioned youth carried the Revolution—a considerable challenge to the regime rests in the nation's youth. In the words of a 2010 brief from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Iranian youth are among the most politically active of all fifty-seven countries across the Islamic world. Their presence has been felt in the regime's political agenda for the past thirteen years, and together they comprise the Republic's most substantial source of critique.

Indeed, the USIP pegs more than 60 percent of the population as under the age of 30. Young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine make up forty percent of the total electorate. This unusual swell in demographic is the result of a government campaign beginning in 1979 and stretching through the 1980s. In the effort to promote an Islamic tenet encouraging earlier marriage and larger families, the government often provided per-capita incentives in the line of food and material goods to larger families. It was, in the end, an investment, their presumable aim to cultivate future soldiers. Population growth has since slowed, however, ensuring that this particular sector of the population will continue to be the largest for many years to come. Amounting to between forty and fifty million people, they are the children and grandchildren of the revolution.

The problems endured by today's Iranian youth, however, are slightly different from those challenged by their parents and grandparents 20 and 30 years ago. Unemployment has increased twofold in the last two decades, and youth between the ages of fifteen and 29 make up 70 percent of the unemployed. One result of this is the inevitable westward emigration otherwise known as Iran's “brain drain”—a gaping hole through which billions of dollars in human capital are lost every year.

Frustrations are more than just economic,



HAMED SABER/WIKIPEDIA

Iranian youth in support of 2009's burgeoning Green Movement.

however. The Republic has a record of apprehending journalists and critics of the regime, and it has garnered attention in the past for its persecution of artists, filmmakers, and musicians.

Fearing it might spark sympathy for the opposition, the regime has been hesitant to issue any major crackdowns on youth culture. Instead, it has come to exercise its power in the minutiae of everyday life. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini played a significant part in the crackdown on the country's musicians during his presidency in the 1980s. Attitudes began to change with the 1997 election of reformist President Khatami. Later, under Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, however, Iranians in violation of any such regulations are often arrested. In 2010, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini went so far as to declare the promotion and teaching of music “not compatible with the highest values of the sacred regime of the Islamic Republic.” Later in that same year, to name a more trivial example of the regime's oppressive influence, a ban was issued on certain Western hairstyles.

Not all of Iran's youth number among the opposition. Many of them have joined ranks with one of the government's primary paramilitary forces called the Basij. The Basij, or Basij-e Mostaz'afin—literally, the “Mobilization of the Oppressed”—are young people recruited from Iran's lower- and working-classes, easily recog-

nizable plainclothes officers trained to enforce Iranian Islamic law, forcefully crush protests, and maintain political stability. The force in its entirety allegedly boasts around 13.6 million recruits, or twenty percent of the population. Almost five million of these are school children.

The youth, today, are more connected to the outside world than ever. Iran boasts one of the highest numbers of active blogs in the Middle East, and web sites like Facebook, while blocked, are still accessible to the computer-savvy. University enrollment, meanwhile, is up seven times since the revolution, and more than sixty percent of its graduates are female. It is no surprise that opposition groups stem from university campuses.

The Green Movement, born in the summer of 2009 during an uprising set off by the disputed results of that year's presidential race, is the most well-known. Protestors claimed election fraud at the pronouncement of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's reelection, and a youth movement rose under the unofficial leadership of Mir-Hossein Mousavi, the losing candidate, and Mehdi Karroubi, a leading reformist politician. The movement was responsible for eight months of unrest in 2009, during which dozens were killed, hundreds injured, and thousands arrested.

Using the Basij and other paramilitary groups, however, the government responded with force to regain control over its most restive constituency. Security on university campuses has been tightened. Expulsions and mass detentions have been doled out to student activists. During the demonstrations of early 2011, Mousavi and Karroubi, both of whom called on Iranians to protest, were placed under house arrest and have yet to be released. Protestors in the streets, moreover, were met with force despite the government's articulated praise of similar protests in Egypt and Tunisia. The fight forges on.

Without actually changing laws, young Iranians have, in what Iranian-American journalist Azadeh Moaveni dubs their “lipstick jihad,” slowly altered the fabric of Iranian society. Eventually, they will be the generation displacing the Revolution-era rulers of 2012. Until then, their presence will continue to build in the smaller pockets of everyday life.

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