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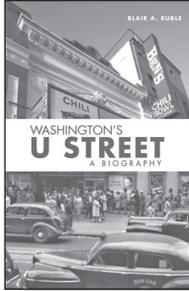
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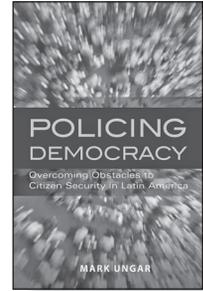


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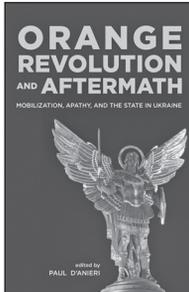
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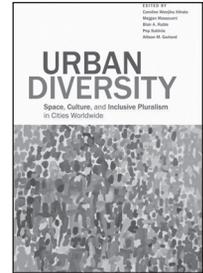
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COVER STORY

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**How to Shrink America's Criminal Population**

Seven million Americans are in prison or on probation or parole. Crime is down, but state prison budgets have ballooned. A new war on crime must focus on reducing repeat offenses by ex-inmates and steering more young people away from crime.

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**ON THE COVER:** Photograph by David Sanders for *The New York Times*, design by Michelle Furman. Inmates at the Arizona State Prison Complex—Phoenix wait to be placed in cells.

*The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.*

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# EDITOR'S COMMENT

## A New War on Crime

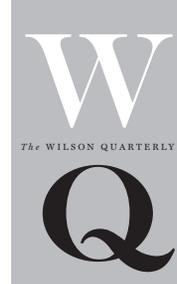
In 1975, when political scientist James Q. Wilson published *Thinking About Crime*, a powerful book that pushed the nation toward a harder line against lawbreakers, I was working with a group of criminals. It was actually a landscape crew, but virtually all of the men on it had been in and out of jail during their lives. When I think about crime, I think about them.

Most of the men were black, some were white, and it was a changing cast, but one part of their stories was always the same. Uneducated, sometimes illiterate, they were single men who lacked the tools and the self-confidence to hope for much better—more than one turned down the chance to be foreman, mostly because they didn't want to play boss to their friends, but also, I think, because they doubted they could handle the responsibility. A few were glowering, malevolent men whom I carefully gave a wide berth, but others were good and in some ways admirable sorts. All worked incredibly hard—and virtually all of them regularly ran afoul of the law, usually for relatively minor infractions.

Why? Wilson saw that poverty and other social disadvantages were often the root cause of crime, as in the case of my coworkers (though alcohol also seemed to be involved whenever they got into trouble). Other than their fear of jail time, they didn't have much reason *not* to break the law. Wilson famously argued for a stronger emphasis on deterrence and punishment, but he also sought to address underlying causes and incentives. It would be "shortsighted," he said, to raise the costs of crime while leaving the rewards of lawful behavior unchanged.

In the years after *Thinking About Crime*, America pursued the first part of Wilson's proposition with far more enthusiasm than it did the second. The get-tough emphasis contributed to the dramatic decline in crime that Joan Petersilia calls one of America's great success stories. But along with two other contributors to this issue, Philip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig, she argues that the benefits of that course have been largely exhausted. It is time to rethink crime. In large measure, that means remembering the other half of Wilson's proposition, and finding new ways to help some of the seven million people who are in and out of America's criminal justice system break free of the demons that keep them coming back.

— STEVEN LAGERFELD



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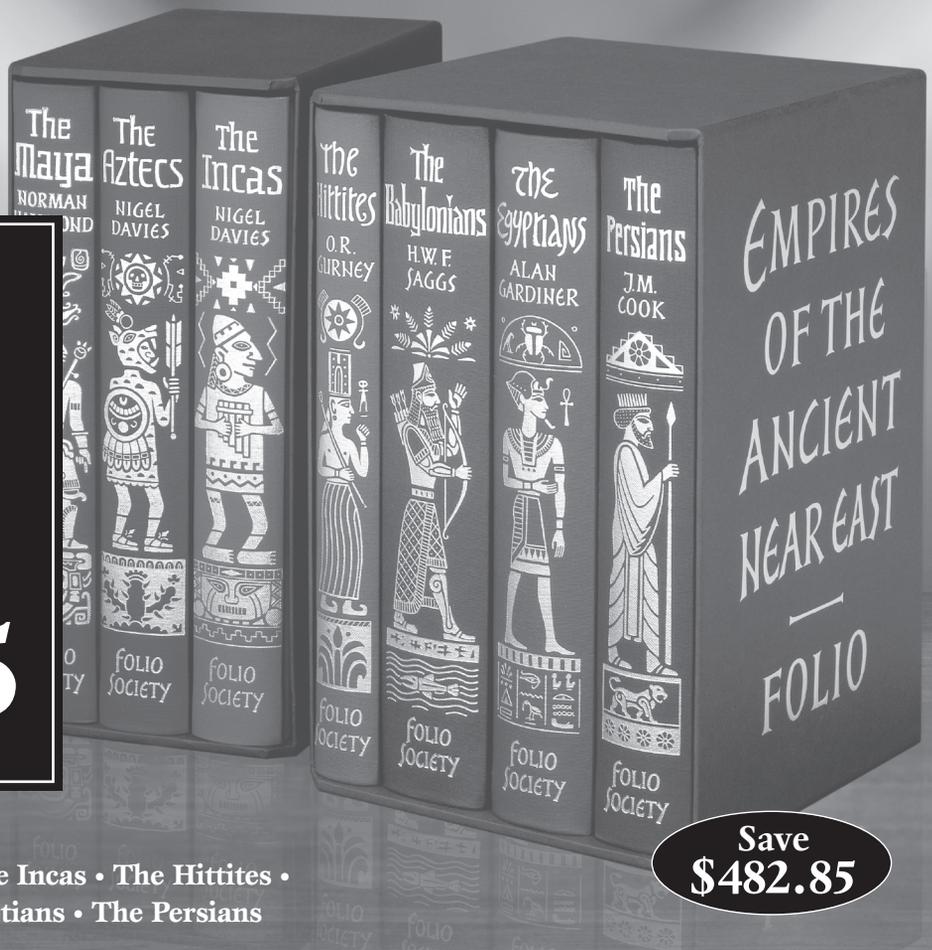
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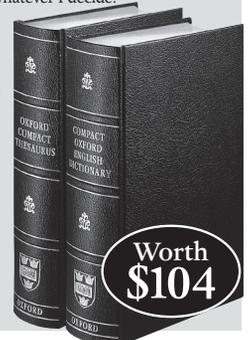
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# LETTERS

## THE CHINA CONUNDRUM

THE EXCHANGE BETWEEN ROSS Terrill and David M. Lampton ["What if China Fails?," Autumn '10] highlights the ambivalence with which Americans view China's recent rise.

In a multilateral world, it is not clear that one country's gain will necessarily be another's loss. I suggest considering the counterfactual of how Anglo-American relations would have been affected if Britain had decided to halt America's rise by intervening on the side of the Confederacy in the American Civil War. The ascent of the United States turned out to be very favorable to Britain, as the two world wars of the 20th century showed. Could not China at some point be an important American ally?

Furthermore, the U.S. and Chinese economies have become so thoroughly interconnected that a Chinese economic setback would not necessarily be in America's interest. Transnational production chains, the interpenetration of markets, the cross-ownership of financial assets, and currency linkages all mean that what happens to the Chinese economy will affect the United States and countries that the United States cares about, such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

It is also difficult to envision

how international diplomacy could be compartmentalized. Cooperation on nuclear proliferation, environmental conservation, international terrorism, contagious diseases, and illegal immigration is not independent from more contentious issues such as currency misalignment or relations across the Taiwan Strait. One cannot take it for granted, in other words, that arms sales to Taiwan would not affect technology transfers to Iran.

Finally, a China caught in domestic disarray, or even one that is democratizing, may not be a more congenial partner for the United States. A vulnerable government may become bellicose rather than conciliatory. Countries in transition also frequently see a resurgence of nationalist or imperialist rhetoric.

As both Terrill and Lampton recognize, things are rarely black and white. More important, Sino-American relations are not a zero-sum contest.

**Steve Chan**

*Professor, Department of Political Science  
University of Colorado, Boulder  
Boulder, Colo.*

CHINA'S ECONOMY IS NOT merely at risk of running into an ecological wall, as David M. Lampton suggests ["We'd Better Hope It

Doesn't!," Autumn '10]. In some parts of the country, it already has.

Rising temperatures are melting glaciers in western China and drying up lakes in the east. The water deficit in the north stands at nine billion cubic meters. Pollution kills 460,000 Chinese each year and causes damage equal to 5.8 percent of gross domestic product. The water from half the country's rivers and lakes is unfit to drink.

These problems are more obvious and immediate than the threats of economic decline, social instability, or military conflict. Environmental challenges, moreover, may make all these threats worse.

Economic growth has suffered as it has become more difficult and expensive to deal with waste, toxins, and emissions, and to secure energy, food, minerals, and other natural resources. The large number of protests against chemical plants and incinerators (the exact number is uncertain because the government has stopped releasing figures) poses a challenge to the established social order. So does the migration of millions of "eco-refugees" from the ravaged grasslands and drought regions, as well as the reckless extraction of resources from western China.

As Ross Terrill notes in "The Case for Selective Failure," [Autumn '10], a few countries might welcome an even bigger stumble by China. But domestic turmoil could easily spill across borders.

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What's more, in the longer term, tensions with other countries are likely to rise as competition for resources and environmentally viable space becomes more intense.

If there's a silver lining to be found here, it's that China's environmental bust is practically as great a source of policymaking momentum as its economic boom. Last year, China invested almost twice as much in clean technology as the United States. Terrill is right to state that China's global influence is limited because it cannot match the American brew of democracy, free markets, and popular culture. But with much of the world suffering an environmental and economic hangover, China has an opportunity to mix up a new tonic of low-carbon energy, sustainable consumption, and poverty alleviation. It will not taste as good, but it may prove healthier.

**Jonathan Watts**

*Author, When a Billion Chinese Jump: How China Will Save the World—Or Destroy It (2010)*  
*Beijing, China*

I APPRECIATED THE THOUGHTFUL articles on the question, What if China fails? But they do not address an equally intriguing conundrum: What are the consequences for China if *America* fails?

China is only the latest in a succession of states that have hitched their wagon to the American import engine. In order for China to have an incentive to keep its currency artificially low, two phenomena must continue: American consumers must remain addicted to buying cheap foreign goods, and American workers must continue

to earn the relatively high wages that keep goods with the label "Made in U.S.A." pricey.

Neither of these dynamics shows any sign of flagging. Will China blindly subsidize cheap exports until the United States racks up obligations beyond its ability to pay? I think not. While China's leaders may be oblivious to the theoretical danger of an American default, they are likely to respond to signs that an impending inflation of the U.S. dollar will eat away the principal value of the Treasury bonds they hold. The only way to reduce the U.S. trade deficit (not to mention the federal budget deficit) may be to get long-term inflation growing at a pace that will erode the value of U.S. bonds as rapidly as China accumulates them.

My hunch is that China's leaders will eventually realize that they cannot be sure that they will get back the true value of all the goods they export to the United States unless they allow an approximately equal amount of goods and services to flow into China from the United States. The slower they are in adopting this view, the less their countrymen will have for all the goods we have bought from them over the years.

**Gregory R. New**

*Washington, D.C.*

CENTURIES BEFORE TROY FELL, China's artisans perfected a complex process for casting molten bronze into elegant vessels, weapons, and musical instruments. Over the centuries China has endured turmoil and invasion, but

it has also presided over sweeping triumphs. Its philosophers, warriors, and scientists are legendary. Failure, at least as a civilization, seems a very remote possibility.

As David M. Lampton and Ross Terrill point out, the failure of China's political and economic systems is another matter. Lampton observes that we [Continued on page 10]

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# AT THE CENTER

## BEYOND THE RESOURCE CURSE IN CHAD

WHEN LORI LEONARD ARRIVED IN CHAD MORE than 20 years ago, she had little idea that the impoverished Central African country would become the focus of her career. At the time, she was just a newly minted BA with a Peace Corps assignment to teach at one of the universities in the capital city, N'Djamena.

Chad, a barren, landlocked country sandwiched between Niger and Sudan, is “a difficult place to get to,” says Leonard, who is currently a Woodrow Wilson Center fellow. But she slowly discovered the riches of a country she calls a “crossroads” of Africa.

Graduate studies at Harvard's School of Public Health called her back to the United States, but Leonard found herself returning to Chad often. In the late 1990s, as a member of the faculty of the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, where she is now an associate professor, she laid the groundwork for the project that brought her to the Woodrow Wilson Center this past September: a pioneering study of the effects on local communities of the World Bank-backed Chad-Cameroon Pipeline.

In the time since Leonard first set foot in Africa, Chad's fortunes have changed dramatically. Petroleum was discovered beneath its scrub-filled terrain in the 1960s, but political instability and inadequate infrastructure kept potential investors away. Then, about 10 years ago, the World Bank signaled that it would support the construction of a pipeline that would pump low-grade crude extracted from the flatlands of southwestern Chad to an offshore export facility in Cameroon.

The pipeline promised to breathe life into Chad's ailing economy. With a budget of \$4.1 billion, it was the largest-ever infrastructure venture in sub-Saharan Africa, and it had a pronounced social-welfare component. The agreement the World Bank brokered with the Chadian government and the consortium of Western oil companies that would operate the pipeline mandated that 80 percent of the government's revenue be invested in health, education, agriculture, the environment, and rural development. The pipeline project got off to a better-than-expected start, and soon developers started to search for more places in Chad to drill for oil.

The World Bank agreement dictated that Chadians whose land was seized for the pipeline receive generous compensation, as well as access to ambitious job-retraining programs. Those efforts were what attracted the attention of Leonard and her team of researchers. In 2001, they began studying the effects of land seizure on three villages, conducting interviews and household surveys, administering health and nutrition exams, and using GPS devices to gauge land use. The effort continues to this day.

What have Leonard and her colleagues found? Those familiar with the notion of the “resource curse”—under which resource-rich countries paradoxically exhibit poor economic growth and low levels of development—won't be surprised. Leonard's study shows that the social programs introduced by the World Bank have not had much positive impact. Programs that train Chadian farmers to work in other occupations, such as carpentry and mechanics, are nice, but they don't create a need for such workers. Transferring large lump sums to landowners for their property has been a flop because many recipients have little experience managing money. And Leonard believes that the teams charged with compensating affected Chadians identified beneficiaries “without understanding the nuances of landownership,” putting women at a particular disadvantage.

In 2008, the World Bank backed out of the pipeline project, claiming that the regime in N'Djamena was not meeting its social investment obligations. The pipeline is now in the hands of the oil consortium and the Chadian government, which continues to devote a portion of the revenue to social programs, effective or not. The social programs are “good PR for the oil companies,” Leonard says. Even so, 10 years after the World Bank project began to tap the country's “black gold,” Chadians' lives haven't significantly improved.

Leonard will spend her year at the Wilson Center writing a book about her decade-long study. Will Chad factor into the next project she tackles? It's possible. It's “a difficult place to know well,” she says. “There's always something to discover.”



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**MINORITY RULES**

Two weeks after the Republicans  
wrested control of the House of Rep-  
resentatives from the Democrats in  
the biggest partisan swing in the  
lower chamber since 1948, the Wil-  
son Center's Congress Project gath-  
ered a group of noted politicos to dis-  
cuss the fortunes of the minority  
party in Congress.

The forecast isn't  
sunny. According to  
former representative  
Robert Walker (R-  
Pa.), members of the  
minority party are  
"more than potted  
plants, but not much."  
Matthew N. Green, an  
assistant professor of  
politics at the Catholic  
University of America,

agreed, noting that "from majority  
status, all else flows," including cru-  
cial committee chairmanships; con-  
trol over the chamber's agenda, rules,  
and procedures; and attention from  
the political press.

But being in the minority party  
does not mean just watching the ink  
dry on the nation's legislation. It can  
be "exhilarating at times," said Walker,  
who spent most of his 20 years in the  
House toiling in what Congress Pro-  
ject director Donald Wolfensberger

called "the minority wilderness."  
When a party's contingent is smaller,  
members can spend more time think-  
ing through legislative proposals and  
criticisms of the majority's positions,  
which can help shape legislation  
if relations between the parties  
are reasonably amicable. Ideally, a

smart majority party  
welcomes criticism  
because it helps mem-  
bers identify weak-  
nesses in their pro-  
posals, Walker said.

A glance at the  
headlines will tell you  
that there is little give  
and take between the  
parties now. Republi-  
cans took back power  
in the House by "just

saying no" to everything on Presi-  
dent Obama's agenda, said former  
representative Vic Fazio (D-Calif.).  
Jackie Calmes, a national corre-  
spondent for *The New York Times*,  
noted that the Republicans voted  
against legislation they had sup-  
ported in previous iterations (such  
as the health care bill, which she  
called "identical" to what Republi-  
cans proposed in 1994) mainly  
because it bore the imprimatur of  
the Democratic Party.

With the political atmosphere so  
polarized, the most important thing  
a party out of power thinks it can do  
is get its opponent to fail, Fazio said.  
That's the way for the minority to get  
what it really wants: to become the  
majority party once more.



Jackie Calmes of *The New York Times*

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[Continued from page 7] shouldn't hope for China to stop growing, "because wishing for a slowdown is not a policy." Indeed, wishing for anything isn't a policy.

However, China's rulers require a more nuanced characterization than what Lampton offers. He says that during the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, Chinese authorities "acted decisively to impose order at key junctures," obscuring the reality that they violently suppressed democratic protest. The moral gulf between the United States and China is clearly not the only difference between them, but there is no better indicator of the stakes of the competition than each nation's vision of domestic and international order.

Wouldn't the United States be better off if China leaned more toward diminished authoritarianism, increased political liberty, transparent military objectives, and relationships with neighbors based on mutual interest rather than fear? Won't Asia also be better off if the U.S. vision—which embraces these goals—emerges as the more influential one? To advance this vision in China, the United States needs assertive, forward-thinking policies, not just hope. The United States should use diplomacy, redoubled efforts to demonstrate our stabilizing military power in Asia, and deft alliance management to encourage peace and democracy throughout the region.

China isn't going to fail. But our policy can and should be to blunt China's darker impulses toward Asia and help nurture the growth

of the political freedoms that the Chinese people want.

**Seth Cropsey**

*Senior Fellow  
Hudson Institute  
Washington, D.C.*

## TAMING THE DEFICIT MONSTER

DOUGLAS J. BESHAROV AND Douglas M. Call ["The Global Budget Race," Autumn '10] capably consider various tax hikes, spending cuts, and retirement savings plans that might be introduced in some combination to restore solvency to Social Security and Medicare over the next 20 years. But their goal of offering a tough—but workable—menu of options for paying down the deficit is elusive. This is in part because the authors use the recent recession and its causes and effects as an excuse to argue for imposing austerity measures. They seem heedless of the danger of plunging our sluggish economy into a death spiral propelled by falling aggregate demand and deflation.

Also absent from the essay is any reference to the bursting of the U.S. housing bubble that precipitated the recession. That crisis had little to do with federal deficits, tax rates, aging populations, or a funding crisis involving outlays for Social Security and Medicare.

Certainly fiscal reforms, government spending cuts, and greater individual responsibility for health care spending and retirement savings are crucial for sustaining Social Security and Medicare over the long term. The immediate

response to the financial catastrophe, however, should be the enactment of vigilant oversight mechanisms and sensible reforms designed to bring balance, coordination, moderation, and overall health to both the public and private sectors.

**Jim Valentine**

*Woodland Hills, Calif.*

A BRIEF LETTER CANNOT PROVIDE a full rebuttal, so let me say generally that the essay by Douglas J. Besharov and Douglas M. Call is tripe throughout. You should not have published it.

By what economic theory is there a "global budget race"? The authors do not say. They give no evidence. No historical examples. Their entire first section is a pastiche of epithets ("staggering," "Ponzi scheme," "unsustainable," "immediacy"). The clinching line is that "most international finance economists agree that the bond market will eventually insist on a solution." Along with being undocumented and unpersuasive (who cares what "international finance economists" think?), this assertion means nothing.

The next two sections betray the title's promise: The global perspective almost disappears in a welter of detail about ways to cut Social Security and Medicare. There is no structured argument here, just a list of proposals and their disadvantages, leading to the authors' preferred option. That is (surprise!) to replace Social Security altogether with defined-contribution "private investment accounts." How survivors and dependents would fare

under this system Besharov and Call do not say.

On Medicare the authors have no real proposal, just a vaguely stated preference for a “two-tiered U.S. health care system,” with one tier a “pared-down version of today’s benefits for low- and middle-income citizens . . . the other a better-cushioned system for the more affluent who are able to spend their own money to buy additional services.” This is, at least, admirably blunt.

Unintentionally, Besharov and Call remind us how progressive and effective Social Security and Medicare really are, and why we should fight to protect them. Let me add that nothing in their economic case withstands scrutiny, nor gives any reason to accept the supposed necessity that these programs be cut.

**James K. Galbraith**

*Lloyd M. Bentsen Jr. Chair in*

*Government/Business Relations*

*Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs*

*University of Texas, Austin*

*Austin, Texas*

I WAS DISAPPOINTED THAT Douglas J. Besharov and Douglas M. Call dismissed the potential impact of focusing on the reduction of “the proverbial waste, fraud, and abuse” in government.

Organizational improvement groups such as the Lean Enterprise Institute and Balanced Scorecard have in many cases successfully streamlined repetitive processes, reduced red tape, established production goals for unfocused staff, and encouraged innovative solutions. These organizations have

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consistently improved employee efficiency by 25 to 40 percent.

I led a local government agency, applied a synthesis of the quality management principles used by these groups, and left office after 20 years with fewer staff performing three times as much work in faster response times than when I started. Government as a whole can easily do the same.

If the president were to embed trained and certified organizational improvement specialists in government agencies, hold monthly strategy meetings, and truly make increased efficiency one of his administration’s top managerial (not political) priorities, the impact on the quality of federal

services and the federal budget would be transformational.

**David Childs**

*CEO, Fit for Service*

*Irving, Texas*

## DNA AND THE DEATH PENALTY

UNFORTUNATELY, THE OUTLINES of Troy Davis’s case, which William Baude compellingly describes in “Last Chance on Death Row” [Autumn ’10], are all too familiar. Time and time again, courts have been confronted with a person who is scheduled for execution but maintains he has evidence of his innocence.

In some cases, the convict is

telling the truth, and DNA testing helps him prove it. For a book forthcoming from Harvard University Press, I have been examining the cases of the first 250 people exonerated by DNA testing, many of whom had a jailhouse informant or multiple eyewitnesses testify to their guilt. The defendants I studied often tried to assert their innocence by attempting to present new evidence years after their convictions, as Davis did. Most of them failed to persuade the courts—until they obtained DNA test results. On average, it took 15 years from their conviction to their exoneration. Even after testing definitively proved their innocence, they often had difficulty securing their release.

What of the vast majority of cases, like Troy Davis's, that are much harder to resolve because DNA testing cannot provide clear answers? Baude is right that we should not look to the courts first for a solution. Judges are institutionally reluctant to second-guess a trial verdict years after it's been passed down. We can, however, look to legislatures. In the past decade, states have passed laws that ease access to DNA testing and establish new procedures to present fresh evidence.

Still, more should be done. Legislatures should dedicate resources to prevent wrongful convictions to begin with. The adoption of sound procedures can reduce the incidence of mistaken eyewitnesses, imprecise forensics, and false confessions. More states are rightfully requiring double-blind eyewitness identifications, closer oversight of

forensic labs, and the recording of interrogations. Defense teams should also receive resources to meaningfully and promptly investigate potential errors before trials begin, or soon thereafter. If we fail to correct errors at a trial's inception, then persuasive evidence may continue to surface years later in serious cases like Troy Davis's. By then, it may be too late to overturn a wrongful conviction.

**Brandon L. Garrett**

*Author, Convicting the Innocent: Where Criminal Prosecutions Go Wrong (forthcoming)*

*Professor, School of Law*

*University of Virginia*

*Charlottesville, Va.*

## **GANDHI'S SPIRITUAL CORE**

IN "GANDHI'S INVISIBLE HANDS" [Autumn '10], Ian Desai provides a unique perspective on the most inspiring human career of the 20th century. A couple of minor clarifications will make the article even more useful.

Early on, Desai refers to "the common conception of Gandhi as a solitary, saintly hero." Gandhi is not best thought of as a "saint" in the Western sense. He was a yogi—a karma yogi, to be exact. Karma yogis, who are often cave-dwelling renunciates, work to turn their mental energies outward to the benefit of the world, as Gandhi did. Spiritual devotion and penetrative awareness are also part of the karma yogi's repertoire. Gandhi may have been the first to completely realize this path—certainly he was the first to do so on such a spectacular scale.

Desai also writes that Gandhi was "a savvy and serial collector of books and people." The appropriate concept here (which Gandhi borrowed from English law) is trusteeship rather than ownership. For their challenging task of rebuilding an ancient culture along modern lines, Gandhi and his associates made use of a great number of books, to be sure. But it must be emphasized that they did not own them. They were these books' trustees—just as they were, or strove to be, trustees of their inner resources. Gandhi was once asked by an anxious coworker, "Do I really need to renounce all my possessions?" He replied, "No. You have to renounce the possessor." That is what the Mahatma spent his whole life doing.

**Michael Nagler**

*Professor Emeritus*

*Department of Classics and*

*Comparative Literature*

*University of California, Berkeley*

*Berkeley, Calif.*

WESTERNERS, IN PARTICULAR, BUT also Indians are often surprised to learn that Mahatma Gandhi was a very savvy and smart operator with organizational, managerial, and political skills of the highest order. They are also unaware that he was exceptionally well read, well educated, and, finally, that he was well born—the son and grandson of prime ministers of a small princely state in Western India. But what is truly extraordinary is the degree of personal honesty and truthfulness he maintained alongside these other skills. A singular man.

**Mari Sitaraman**

*Posted on wilsonquarterly.com*

# FINDINGS

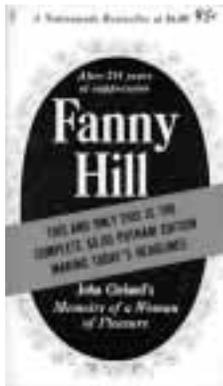
BRIEF NOTES OF INTEREST ON ALL TOPICS

## Dirty Deal

*Dishonest Abe?*

It's fine for members of Congress, but Supreme Court justices aren't supposed to trade votes—especially when somebody's freedom is at stake. Yet that's what happened in two 1966 cases over dirty books and magazines. L. A. Powe Jr. tells the story in the *Journal of Supreme Court History* (July 2010).

One of the cases involved the 18th-century novel *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, better known as *Fanny Hill*, the name of its protagonist. (“Fanny Hill” may have been slang for the female pudendum.) The sex-sodden book was written by John Cleland and published in two parts in 1748 and 1749. Though it had provoked obscenity prosecutions in the United States since the early 19th century, the publisher G. P. Putnam's Sons took a chance

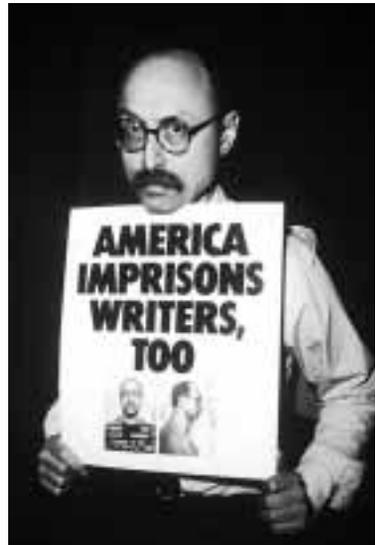


and reprinted the novel in 1963. But a Massachusetts court held that the book violated state obscenity law, and the Supreme Court agreed to hear the appeal.

The other case involved Ralph Ginzburg, a notorious mail-order pornographer. After a federal trial in Philadelphia, he was convicted of obscenity for three works: a book called *The Housewife's Handbook on Selective Promiscuity*, an issue of a magazine called *Eros*—which, scandalously for the time, showed a nude black man embracing a white woman, also unclothed—and a bawdy newsletter called *Liaison*. He was sentenced to three years in prison for the book and two years for the magazine, and fined \$28,000 for the newsletter. He appealed to the Supreme Court.

When the justices conferred on the two cases, a majority, including Abe Fortas, agreed that *Fanny Hill* was obscene. Ginzburg's fate hinged on the decision of Justice Fortas, who said he was unsure which way to vote.

Later, Fortas changed his mind about *Fanny Hill*, for fear that banning the novel would unleash a wave of censorship. Needing one more vote, Fortas approached Justice William Brennan, who had judged *Fanny Hill* and Ginzburg's materials all obscene, and obliquely proposed



In the 1960s, smutty mailings postmarked “Middlesex, N.J.” earned Ralph Ginzburg a federal prison sentence.

a deal. Fortas would vote against Ginzburg, creating a majority in favor of affirming his conviction, if Brennan would join him in letting *Fanny Hill* off the hook. Brennan agreed, and he persuaded Chief Justice Earl Warren to change his vote on the novel as well.

Justice Brennan, writing for a plurality of the Court, said that material generally had to be “utterly without redeeming social value” to be obscene. *Fanny Hill* had at least some redeeming value, according to expert witnesses, so it was safe.

For *Ginzburg v. United States*, Justice Brennan came up with a new test: “pandering.” Ginzburg's publi-

cations had been marketed, Brennan wrote, with “the leer of the sensualist.” Even the postmarks were lascivious: Ginzburg had tried to get mailing privileges in Intercourse and Blue Ball, Pennsylvania, before settling for Middlesex, New Jersey. He ended up serving eight months of his prison sentence.

In a note to Justice William O. Douglas, Justice Fortas later acknowledged that he’d made a mistake. He should have voted to free Ginzburg from the jail sentence while leaving in place the fine. “I was alarmed by Brennan’s vote at Conference to affirm the ban on *Fanny Hill*,” Fortas said. “So contrary to my principles, I . . . came out against Ginzburg—I guess that subconsciously I was affected by G’s slimy qualities.”

Fortas, who resigned from the Court in 1969 over allegations of ethical missteps, added, “Well, live and learn.”

## Pricey Ride

### *Space gamble*

Contrary to the future envisioned in the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the first passenger spacecraft won’t be labeled Pan Am. Instead, hundreds of people have laid down deposits for suborbital flights on Richard Branson’s Virgin Galactic, which will fly out of New Mexico—eventually. Ticket price: \$200,000.

But consider the risk, Charles Seife cautions in *Proofiness: The Dark Arts of Mathematical Deception* (Viking). Since spaceflight began, about one percent of rockets have killed their passengers. “If today’s U.S. passenger aircraft had a similar fail-

ure rate, there would be roughly 275 U.S. plane crashes and 20,000 fatalities every day,” he writes. At Virgin Galactic’s projected launch rate of one flight a week, “there would be only a one in three chance that Virgin Galactic goes for two years without a *Challenger*-type disaster.”

Jackie McQuillan of Virgin Galactic rejects the analogy. Branson’s spacecraft won’t fly as fast or as high as the *Challenger*. Anyway, she says, “the whole point of our effort is to develop a system that is safer by orders of magnitude.”

## Who’s Sorry Now?

### *My bad*

When the actor Jim Belushi titled his 2006 book *Real Men Don’t Apologize*, he may have been on to something. At the University of Waterloo, in Ontario, psychologists Karina Schumann and Michael Ross instructed 66 students, half of them male and half female, to note when they were rude to others and when they apologized for it. The women turned out to voice a third more apologies than the men.

So does macho pride keep men from saying they’re sorry? Not necessarily, the researchers report in *Psychological Science* (November 2010). Both men and women reported apologizing for about four-fifths of transgressions, but the women said they committed significantly more of them. An additional study confirmed that women are likelier to perceive particular acts, such as snapping at a friend, as meriting an apology.

Schumann and Ross speculate

that women may view more behaviors as offensive because they’re more intent on maintaining harmonious relationships, or because they have a lower threshold for social pain. Whatever the reason, it seems that both sexes apologize for behavior they consider inappropriate, but for women, a lot more behavior qualifies.

## Shame Shift

### *Placing the blame*

Medical diagnoses of children sometimes shame the parents, but what’s shameful in one era may not stay that way.

In 1887, for example, Dr. John Langdon Down reflected on his discussions with parents of mentally disabled children. (Down syndrome is named after him.) Parents preferred to hear that disabilities resulted from environmental factors, he wrote, in part because “it frees them from the suspicion of hereditary influence.”

That’s because of the stigma hereditary factors carried at the time, W. R. Albury explains in the online journal *Hektoen International* (September 2010). Eugenists spoke of bettering the human bloodline as a national priority. Many maladies and misbehaviors were attributed to heredity, and people with inferior genes weren’t supposed to reproduce. Consequently, parents cringed upon hearing that heredity lay behind their children’s problems.

Environmental causes were different, especially in families with servants. The blame, Down wrote, could be placed on the nurse, who

“may be suspected of having allowed the infant to fall or of having drugged it with opiates.”

Today, by contrast, the eugenicists have been long silenced, and healthy parenting, not a healthy bloodline, is deemed vital for family and society alike. Rightly or wrongly, many people believe that bad parenting causes some mental disorders. So if a child’s troubles seem to result from environmental causes, parents may blame themselves. But hereditary problems can’t be blamed on anybody, according to Albury, other than perhaps scientists who haven’t yet come up with cures. An explanation that once stigmatized parents now partly exonerates them.

## Woodrow’s Folly

### *Bermuda triangle*

In 1915, President Woodrow Wilson confessed to his fiancée, Edith Bolling Galt, what he later called “a folly long ago loathed and repented of.”

According to Kristie Miller, in her book *Ellen and Edith: Woodrow Wilson’s First Ladies* (University Press of Kansas), the folly began in 1907, when Wilson was president of Princeton University. He was married to the former Ellen Axson, but while vacationing on his own in Bermuda, he passed time with a married woman named Mary Hulbert Peck. “It is not often that I can have the privilege of meeting

anyone whom I can so entirely admire and enjoy,” he wrote her afterward, and sent a book of his essays so that “you may know me a little better.” Peck responded that she’d been unable to tell him face to face “what knowing you has meant to me.”

Thereafter, Wilson and Peck rendezvoused periodically and corresponded frequently. In letters, he said he thought of her with “longing” and was “crazy” to see her again. Peck said she was proud “to feel that you find me worthy of calling me yours.” In Miller’s view, “it is possible, maybe probable, that their relationship had become physically intimate” by 1910, the year Wilson was elected governor of New Jersey. Rumors about the two sometimes circulated, but seemed to have scant effect on his popularity.

The relationship continued, but Peck fretted about the future. “Of course you will be President,” she wrote. “I can see you receding from me now.” She was right. After he won the Democratic presidential nomination in 1912, Wilson complained to her that reporters followed him “*at all times*.” He could no longer see her, but they kept corresponding.

In 1914, during the second year of Wilson’s presidency, Ellen Wilson died. Mary Hulbert (by then she was divorced and no longer Peck) may have harbored hopes of becoming the second Mrs. Wilson. But, explains Miller, marrying her would have been political suicide for Wilson: His opponents would have taken it as proof that he had cheated on his late wife. Instead, the president married Edith Galt, some 17

months after Ellen’s death. “I hope you will have all the happiness that I have missed,” Hulbert sourly wrote.

On a few occasions before and during his presidency, someone supposedly tried to market “salacious” letters Wilson had written to a woman. During the 1912 campaign, Theodore Roosevelt, running as the nominee of the Progressive Party, defended his Democratic competitor, after a fashion.

“Nothing, no evidence,” Roosevelt said, “would ever make the American people believe that a man like Woodrow Wilson, cast so perfectly as the apothecary’s clerk, could ever play Romeo.”

—Stephen Bates



Woodrow Wilson and Mary Hulbert Peck met in Bermuda in 1907.

# Rethinking the Great Recession

*In embracing a victims-and-villains explanation of the recession, Americans are missing important lessons about the future of the U.S. economy.*

BY ROBERT J. SAMUELSON

WE AMERICANS TURN EVERY MAJOR CRISIS INTO a morality tale in which the good guys and the bad guys are identified and praised or vilified accordingly. There's a political, journalistic, and intellectual imperative to find out who caused the crisis, who can be blamed, and who can be indicted (either in legal courts or the court of public opinion) and, if found guilty, be jailed or publicly humbled. The great economic and financial crisis that began in 2007 has been no exception. It has stimulated an outpouring of books, articles, and studies that describe what happened: the making of the housing bubble, the explosion of complex mortgage-backed securities, the ethical and legal shortcuts used to justify dubious but profitable behavior. This extended inquest has produced a long list of possible villains: greedy mortgage brokers and investment bankers, inept government regulators, naive economists, self-serving politicians. What it hasn't done is explain why all this happened.

The story has been all about crime and punishment when it should have been about boom and bust. The boom did not begin with the rise of home prices, as is usually asserted. It began instead with the suppression

of double-digit inflation in the early 1980s, an event that unleashed a quarter-century of what seemed to be steady and dependable prosperity. There were only two recessions, both of them short and mild. Unemployment peaked at 7.8 percent. As inflation fell, interest rates followed. The stock market soared. From 1979 to 1999, stock values rose 14-fold. Housing prices climbed, though less spectacularly. Enriched, Americans borrowed and spent more. But what started as a justifiable response to good economic news—lower inflation—slowly evolved into corrupting overconfidence, the catalyst for the reckless borrowing, overspending, financial speculation, and regulatory lapses that caused the bust.

In some ways, the boom-bust story is both more innocent and more disturbing than the standard explanations of blundering and wrongdoing. It does not excuse the financial excesses, policy mistakes, economic miscalculations, deceptions, and crimes that contributed to the collapse. But it does provide a broader explanation and a context. People were conditioned by a quarter-century of good economic times to believe that we had moved into a new era of reliable economic growth. Homeowners, investors, bankers, and economists all suspended disbelief. Their heady assumptions fostered a get-rich-quick climate in which wishful thinking, exploitation, and illegality flour-

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**What were they thinking?** From Sandy Springs, Georgia, where this house went into foreclosure in 2008, to Wall Street, which traded in mortgage-backed securities, Americans before the Great Recession acted as if the nation would never again experience significant economic turbulence.

ished. People took shortcuts and thought they would get away with them. In this sense, the story is more understandable and innocent than the standard tale of calculated greed and dishonesty.

But the story is also more disturbing in that it batters our faith that modern economics—whether of the Left or Right—can protect us against great instability and insecurity. The financial panic and subsequent Great Recession have demonstrated that the advances in economic management and financial understanding that supposedly protected us from violent business cycles—ruling out another Great Depression—were oversold, exposing us to larger economic reversals than we thought possible. It's true that we've so far avoided another depression, but it was a close call, and the fact that all the

standard weapons (low interest rates, huge government budget deficits) have already been deployed leaves open the disquieting question of what would happen if the economic system again lurched violently into reverse. The economic theorems and tools that we thought could forewarn and protect us are more primitive than we imagined. We have not traveled so far from the panic-prone economies of 1857, 1893, and 1907 as we supposed.

**O**ur experience since 2007 has also revealed a huge contradiction at the center of our politics. Prosperity is almost everyone's goal, but too much prosperity enjoyed for too long tends to

destroy itself. It seems that periodic recessions and burst bubbles—at least those of modest proportions—serve a social purpose by reminding people of economic and financial hazards and by rewarding prudence. Milder setbacks may avert less frequent but larger and more damaging convulsions—such as the one we’re now experiencing—that shake the country’s very political and social foundations. But hardly anyone wants to admit this publicly. What politician is going to campaign on the slogan, “More Recessions, Please”?

In a more honest telling of the story, avaricious Wall Street types, fumbling government regulators, and clueless economists become supporting players

lation, misaligned pay incentives, and a mindless devotion to “free markets” and “efficient markets” theory. The result, it’s said, was an orgy of risk taking, unrestrained either by self-imposed prudence or sensible government oversight. Mortgage brokers and others relaxed lending standards for home mortgages because they were not holding them but passing them on to investment bankers, who packaged them in increasingly arcane securities, which were then bought by other investment entities (pension funds, hedge funds, foreign banks). These investors were in turn reassured because the securities had received high ratings from agencies such as Moody’s, Standard & Poor’s, and Fitch. All along the financial supply chain, people had incentives to minimize or ignore risks because the volume of loans, securitizations, or ratings determined their compensation. The more they ignored risk, the more they earned. The result was a mountain of bad

**THE PROBLEM WAS NOT absent regulation; it was that regulators were no smarter than the regulated.**

in a larger tragedy that is not mainly of their making. If you ask who did make it, the most honest answer is: We all did. Put differently, the widely shared quest for ever-improving prosperity contributed to the conditions that led to the financial and economic collapse. Our economic technocrats as well as our politicians and the general public constantly strive for expansions that last longer, unemployment that falls lower, economic growth that increases faster. Americans crave booms, which bring on busts. That is the unspoken contradiction.

Naturally, it’s unwelcome and unacknowledged. What we want to hear is that we were victimized and that, once the bad actors and practices are purged, we can resume the pursuit of uninterrupted and greater prosperity. So that’s what most crisis postmortems aim to do. They tell us who’s to blame and what we must accomplish to resume the quest for ever greater prosperity. Good policies will replace bad. To simplify only slightly, the theories of the crisis break into two camps—one from the Left, one from the Right.

From the Left, the explanation is greed, deregulation,

debt that had to collapse, to the great peril of the entire financial system and the economy.

The Right’s critique blames the crisis mainly on government, which, it is alleged, encouraged risk taking in two ways. First, through a series of interventions in financial markets, it seemed to protect large investors against losses. Portfolio managers and lenders were conditioned to expect bailouts. Profits were privatized, it said, and losses socialized. In 1984, government bailed out Continental Illinois National Bank and Trust Company, then the nation’s seventh-largest bank. In the early 1990s, the Treasury rescued Mexico, thus protecting private creditors who had invested in short-term Mexican government securities. The protection continued with the bailout of the hedge fund Long-Term Capital Management in 1998. After the tech bubble burst in 2000, the Federal Reserve again rescued investors by lowering interest rates.

The second part of the Right’s argument is that government directly inflated the bubble by keeping interest rates too low (the Federal Reserve’s key rate

fell to one percent in 2003) and subsidizing housing. In particular, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac—government-created and -subsidized institutions—underwrote large parts of the mortgage market, including subprime mortgages.

We can test these theories of the crisis against the evidence. Note: Each aims to answer the same questions. Why did the system spin out of control? What caused the surge in borrowing by households and financial institutions? What led to the decline in lending standards and, as important, the misreading of risk, even by supposedly sophisticated players and observers?

Let's start with the critique from the Left. The presumption is that with adequate regulation, problems would have been identified and corrected before they reached crisis proportions. Although this analysis seems plausible—and has been embraced by many journalists, economists, and politicians, and by much of the public—it rests on a wobbly factual foundation. For starters, many major players *were* regulated: Multiple agencies, including the Federal Reserve, supervised all the large bank-holding companies, including Citigroup, Bank of America, and Wachovia. Washington Mutual, a large mortgage lender that had to be rescued and was merged into JPMorgan Chase, was regulated by the Office of Thrift Supervision. Fannie and Freddie were regulated. To be sure, gaps existed; many mortgage brokers were on loose leashes. But there was enough oversight that alert regulators should have spotted problems and intervened to stop dubious lending.

The problem was not absent regulation; it was that the regulators were no smarter than the regulated. By and large, they didn't anticipate the troubles that would afflict subprime mortgages or the devastating financial and economic ripple effects. The idea that regulators possess superior wisdom rests mainly on the myth that tough regulation in the 1970s and '80s prevented major financial problems. History says otherwise. In the 1980s, more than 1,800 banks failed, including savings and loan associations. Their problems were not anticipated.

More important, many of the largest U.S. banks

almost failed. They had lent billions of dollars to Mexico, Brazil, and other developing countries—loans that could not be repaid. If banks had been forced to recognize these losses immediately, much of the banking system would have been “nationalized,” writes William Isaac, who headed the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation between 1981 and 1985, in his recent book *Senseless Panic*. Losses would have depleted banks' reserves and capital. Instead, regulators temporized. They allowed bad loans to be refinanced until banks' capital increased sufficiently to bear the losses. Still, regulators weren't smart enough to prevent the loans from being made in the first place.

As for greed and dishonesty, their role in the crisis is exaggerated. Of course, greed was widespread on Wall Street and elsewhere. It always is. There was also much mistaken analysis about the worth of mortgages and the complex securities derived from them. But being wrong is not the same as being dishonest, and being greedy is not the same as being criminal. In general, banks and investment banks weren't universally offloading mortgage securities known to be overvalued. Some of this happened; testimony before the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission shows that some banks knew (or should have known) about the poor quality of mortgages. But many big financial institutions kept huge volumes of these securities. They, too, were duped—or duped themselves. That's why there was a crisis. Merrill Lynch, Bear Stearns, and Wachovia, among others, belonged to this group.

If anything, the Right's critique—Wall Street became incautious because government conditioned it to be incautious—is weaker. It's the textbook “moral hazard” argument: If you protect people against the consequences of their bad behavior, you will incite bad behavior. But this explanation simply doesn't fit the facts. Investors usually weren't shielded from their mistakes, and even when they were, it was not possible to know in advance who would and wouldn't be helped. In 1984, the shareholders of Continental Illinois weren't protected; when the FDIC rescued the bank, it also acquired 80 percent of the company's stock. When the Federal Reserve orchestrated a bailout of Long-Term Capital Management in 1998, most of the original shareholders lost the

majority of their stake. After the bursting of the stock market bubble in 2000, most investors weren't spared massive paper losses, even with Alan Greenspan's easy money. From the market's peak in early 2000 to its trough in October 2002, stock values dropped 50 percent, a wealth loss of about \$8.5 trillion, according to the investment advisory firm Wilshire Associates.

Likewise, many investors weren't protected in the current crisis. The share prices of most major financial institutions—even those that survived—declined dramatically. The stockholders of Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers suffered massive losses, and their executives and employees were among the biggest losers. Fannie and Freddie's shareholders met a similar fate. Institutions that were "too big to fail" did fail in a practical sense. It is true that, both before and after the present crisis, some creditors were shielded. Foreign lenders in the Mexican debt crisis of the early 1990s were protected, and most (though not all) lenders to major financial institutions were protected in the present crisis. But to repeat: The protections were not pervasive or predictable enough to inspire the sort of reckless risk taking that actually occurred.

As for interest rates, it is probably true that the very low rates adopted by Greenspan (the one percent rate on overnight loans lasted from June 2003 to June 2004, and even after that, rates remained low for several years) contributed to the speculative climate. Some investors did shift to riskier long-term bonds in an attempt to capture higher interest rates, and the additional demand likely reduced the return on these bonds somewhat. But a bigger effect on long-term rates, including mortgages, seems to have come from massive inflows of foreign money over which the Federal Reserve had no control. Moreover, the fact that housing booms also occurred in England, Spain, and Ireland, among other countries, seems to exonerate the Fed's interest rates policies as the main cause of the housing bubble.

**T**he central question about the crisis that must be answered is, Why was almost everyone fooled? "Almost everyone" includes most economists (starting with Fed chairmen Alan

Greenspan and Ben Bernanke), most investors, most traders, most bankers, the rating agencies, most government regulators, most corporate executives, and most ordinary Americans. There were, of course, exceptions or partial exceptions. Warren Buffett warned against the dangers of financial derivatives—but did not anticipate the problem of mortgages. In *The Big Short* (2010), journalist Michael Lewis chronicled the tale of professional investors who were dismissed as oddballs and deviants when they correctly questioned the worth of subprime mortgages. Economist Nouriel Roubini foresaw the connections between fragile financial markets and the real economy, but his early pessimism was a minority view.

People are conditioned by their experiences. The most obvious explanation of why so many people did not see what was coming is that they'd lived through several decades of good economic times that made them optimistic. Prolonged prosperity seemed to signal that the economic world had become less risky. Of course, there were interruptions to prosperity. Indeed, for much of this period, Americans groused about the economy's shortcomings. Incomes weren't rising fast enough; there was too much inequality; unemployment was a shade too high. These were common complaints. Prosperity didn't seem exceptional. It seemed flawed and imperfect.

That's the point. Beneath the grumbling, people of all walks were coming to take a basic stability and state of well-being for granted. Though business cycles endured, the expectation was that recessions would be infrequent and mild. When large crises loomed, governments—mainly through their central banks, such as the Federal Reserve—seemed capable of preventing calamities. Economists generally concurred that the economy had entered a new era of relative calm. A whole generation of portfolio managers, investors, and financial strategists had profited from decades of exceptional returns on stocks and bonds. But what people didn't realize then—and still don't—is that almost all these favorable trends flowed in one way or another from the suppression of high inflation.

It's hard to recall now, but three decades ago, inflation was the nation's main economic problem. It had risen from negligible levels of about one percent

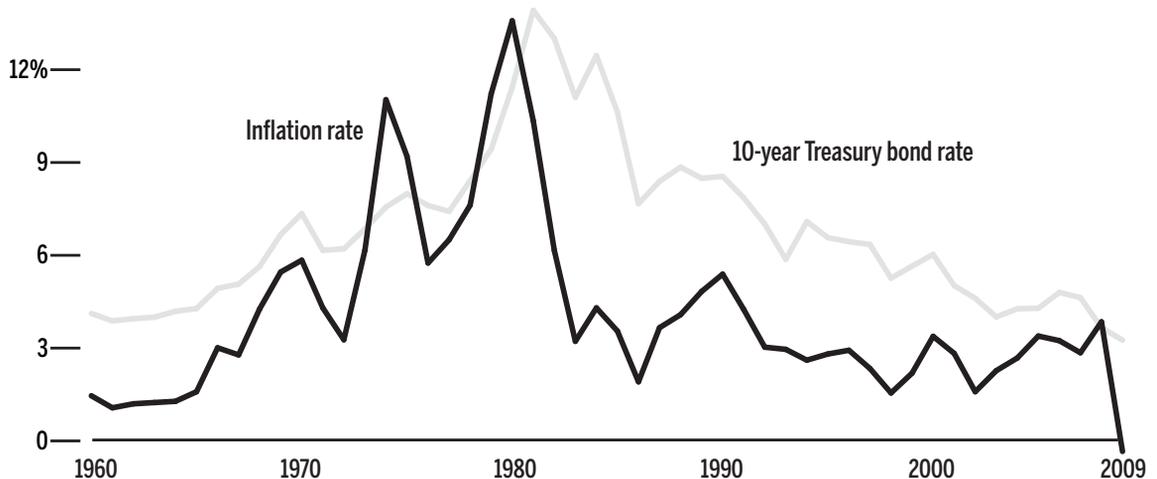
in 1960 to about six percent at the end of the 1960s and to 12 to 14 percent in 1979 and 1980. Hardly anyone believed it could be controlled, although it was a source of deepening havoc, spurring four recessions since 1969, a stagnant stock market, and rising interest rates. And yet, the pessimists were proven wrong. A wrenching recession—deliberately engineered by then-Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker and supported by the newly elected Ronald Reagan—smothered inflationary psychology. It did so in a conventionally destructive way. Volcker tightened credit. Banks' prime interest rates, the rates they charged on loans to their best customers, averaged 19 percent in 1981. There were gluts of jobless workers (unemployment reached 10.8 percent in late 1982), underutilized factories, and vacant stores and office buildings. But by 1984, inflation was down to four percent, and by 2000 it had gradually declined to the unthreatening levels of the early 1960s.

When Americans think of this inflation—if they think of it at all—they focus on inflation's rise and ignore the consequences of its fall, disinflation. But these consequences were huge and mostly beneficial. The two recessions that occurred between 1982 and 2007—those of 1990–91 and 2001—each lasted only eight months. Over an entire quarter-century, the economy was in recession for a total of only 16 months, slightly more than a year. By contrast, the four recessions that struck between 1969 to 1982

lasted a total of 49 months, or about four years out of 13. Peak unemployment, 10.8 percent as noted, was much higher than in the following quarter-century, when it topped out at 7.8 percent. Economists called this subdued business cycle “the Great Moderation,” and wrote papers and organized conferences to explore it. But the basic explanation seemed evident: High and rising inflation was immensely destabilizing; low and falling inflation was not.

Declining inflation also stoked stock market and housing booms. By the end of 1979, the Standard & Poor's 500 index had barely budged from its 1968 level; by year-end 1999, it had risen by a factor of 14. The rise in housing prices was less steep, though still impressive. In 1980, the median-priced existing home sold for \$62,000; by 1999, the median price had climbed to \$141,000. Declining interest rates propelled these increases. As inflation subsided—and as Americans realized that its decline was permanent—interest rates followed. From 1981 to 1999, interest rates on 10-year Treasury bonds fell from almost 14 percent to less than six percent. Lower rates boosted stocks, which became more attractive compared with bonds or money market funds. Greater economic stability helped by making future profits more certain. Lower interest rates increased housing prices by enabling buyers to pay more for homes.

Millions of Americans grew richer. From 1980 to 2000, households' mutual funds and stocks rose in



Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics and Department of the Treasury

Disinflation and declining interest rates beginning in the 1980s lulled Americans into thinking economic wizardry had eliminated economic instability.

value from \$1.1 trillion to \$10.9 trillion. The 10-fold increase outpaced that of median income, which roughly doubled during the same period, reaching \$42,000. Over the same years, households' real estate wealth jumped from \$2.9 trillion to \$12.2 trillion. Feeling richer and less vulnerable to recessions, Americans borrowed more (often against their higher

riskier strategies, because markets were less frenetic. In particular, they could add "leverage"—i.e., borrow more—which, on any given trade, might enhance profits.

So, paradoxically, the reduction of risk prompted Americans to take on more risk. From 1995 to 2007, household debt grew from 92 percent to 138 percent of disposable income. Bear Stearns, Lehman Brothers, and other financial institutions became heavily dependent on short-term loans that underpinned leverage ratios of 30 to 1 or more. (In effect, firms had \$30 of loans for every

**AMERICANS DIDN'T THINK they were behaving foolishly because so many people were doing the same thing.**

home values). This borrowing helped fuel a consumption boom that sustained economic expansion. Disinflation had, it seemed, triggered a virtuous circle of steady economic and wealth growth.

It was not just the real economy of production and jobs that seemed to have become more stable. Financial markets—stocks, bonds, foreign exchange, and securities of all sorts—also seemed calmer. Volatility, a measure of how much prices typically fluctuate, declined in the early 2000s. Sophisticated investors and traders understood this. Studies confirmed it.

Finally, government economic management seemed more skillful. The gravest threats to stability never materialized. In October 1987, the stock market dropped a frightening 20 percent in a single day, but that did not trigger a deep recession. Neither did the 1997–98 Asian financial crisis (when some countries defaulted on loans) or the bursting of the tech bubble in 2000. In each case, the Federal Reserve seemed to check the worst consequences. Faith in the Fed grew; Greenspan was dubbed the "maestro."

Well, if the real economy and financial markets were more stable and the government more adept, then once risky private behaviors would be perceived as less hazardous. People could assume larger debts, because their job and repayment prospects were better and their personal wealth was steadily increasing. Lenders could liberalize credit standards, because borrowers were more reliable. Investors could adopt

\$1 of shareholder capital.) Economists and government regulators became complacent and permissive. Optimism became self-fulfilling and self-reinforcing. Americans didn't think they were behaving foolishly because so many people were doing the same thing. This—not deregulation or investor "moral hazard"—was the foundry in which the crisis was forged.

What now seems unwise could be rationalized then. Although households borrowed more, their wealth expanded so rapidly that their net worth—the difference between what they owned and what they owed—increased. Their financial positions looked stronger. From 1982 to 2004, households' net worth jumped from \$11 trillion to \$53 trillion. Ascending home prices justified easier credit standards, because if (heaven forbid) borrowers defaulted, loans could be recouped from higher home values. Because the rating agencies adopted similarly favorable price assumptions, their models concluded that the risks of mortgage-backed securities were low. No less a figure than Greenspan himself dismissed the possibility of a nationwide housing collapse. People who sold a house usually had to buy another. They had to live somewhere. That process would sustain demand. "While local economies may experience significant speculative price imbalances," he said in 2004, "a national severe price distortion seems most unlikely."

As time passed, the whole system became more fragile and vulnerable. If the complex mortgage secu-

rities held by banks and others began to default—as they did—then the short-term loans that were used to finance the purchase of these securities would be curtailed or withdrawn, threatening the banks’ survival. Because no one knew precisely which banks held which securities (and, therefore, which banks were weakest), this process—once started—could cause a panic within the financial system. Banks, hedge funds, pensions, and corporations would retreat from trading and lending for fear that they might not be repaid. As banks and companies hoarded cash, production and jobs would decrease. Basically, that’s what happened. The initial reaction to disinflation, reflecting its real benefits, had disintegrated into overborrowing, speculation, and self-deception.

It’s worth noting that this explanation of the present crisis is neither widely held nor original. It vindicates Charles Kindleberger, the late economic historian who argued in his 1978 book *Manias, Panics, and Crashes* that financial crises occur in three stages. First comes “displacement”: a favorable development such as new technology, the end of a war, or a change in government that improves the economic outlook. Next is “euphoria”: the process by which a proportionate response to the original development becomes an artificial “bubble.” The last stage is “revulsion”: the recognition of excesses, which leads to panic and a collapse of speculative prices.

Beginning in the 1980s, the U.S. economy followed exactly this pattern. The decline of double-digit inflation was the original “displacement.” The ensuing prolonged prosperity spawned “euphoria,” which culminated in the “revulsion” and panic of 2008. But Kindleberger’s views—which built on those of the economist Hyman Minsky—have never commanded center stage among academic economists. Though widely read and respected, Kindleberger was always something of a renegade. He expressed skepticism and even contempt for the mathematical models and theoretical constructs that have defined mainstream macroeconomics for decades, while paying great attention to historical conditions and events.

If this explanation of the crisis is correct, it raises momentous questions. Since World War II, American democracy has been largely premised on its ability to create ever greater economic benefits—higher living standards, more social protections, greater job and income security—for most of its citizens. The promise has largely succeeded and, in turn, rests heavily on the belief, shared unconsciously by leaders in both parties, that we retain basic control over the economy. Until recently, the consensus among economists was that another Great Depression was unthinkable. We could prevent it. As for recessions, we might not be able to eliminate them entirely, but we could regulate them and minimize the damage. Economic knowledge and management had progressed. These comforting assumptions now hang in doubt.

The great delusion of the boom was that we mistook the one-time benefits of disinflation for a permanent advance in the art of economic stabilization. We did so because it fulfilled our political wish. Ironically, the impulse to improve economic performance degraded economic performance. This happened once before, in the 1960s and ’70s, when academic economists—among them Walter Heller of the University of Minnesota, James Tobin of Yale, and Robert Solow of MIT—sold political leaders on an ambitious agenda. Despite widespread post-World War II prosperity, there had been recessions every three or four years. Invoking John Maynard Keynes, the economists said they could—by manipulating budget deficits and interest rates—smooth business cycles and maintain “full employment” (then defined as four percent unemployment) most of the time. They couldn’t, and the effort to do so created the inflation that crippled the economy for 15 years.

We still haven’t forsaken the hope for perfected prosperity. After the recent crisis, both liberals and conservatives offered therapeutic visions. Liberals promoted expanded regulation to curb Wall Street’s excesses. Conservatives wanted a less activist government that would let markets perform their disciplining functions. Both may achieve some goals. Liberals have already engineered greater regulation. Banks will be required to hold more capital as a cushion against losses. The new financial reform legisla-

tion would allow government to shut large failing financial institutions, such as Lehman Brothers, without resorting to disruptive bankruptcy. Conservatives may take solace from fewer bailouts. They are so unpopular that investors must know that the chances of getting one have diminished. Together, these changes may make the financial system safer.

The trouble is that, like generals fighting the last war, we may be fighting the last economic crisis. Future threats to stability may originate elsewhere. One danger spot is globalization. Economies are intertwined in ways that are only crudely understood. Supply chains are global. Vast sums of money routinely cross borders and shift among currencies. Countries are mutually dependent and mutually vulnerable through many channels: Supplies of oil and other essential raw materials may be curtailed; cyberattacks could cripple vital computer networks; manipulated exchange rates might disrupt trade and investment flows. Economic activity has grown more international, while decision making remains largely with nation-states. Although the global economy has remained basically stable since World War II, there is really no good theory as to why it should stay so—and there are some signs (currency tensions, for instance) that it may not.

Overcommitted welfare states pose another threat. Most affluent nations face similar problems: High budget deficits and government debts may portend a loss of investor confidence, but the deficits and debts have been driven higher by massive social spending—on pensions, health care, unemployment insurance, education—that people have come to expect. Economics and politics are colliding. If the debt and deficits aren't controlled, will investors someday desert bond markets, jolting interest rates upward and triggering a new financial crisis? But if many countries try to control deficits simultaneously, might a tidal wave of spending cuts and tax increases cause a global depression? (The United States, Europe, and Japan still constitute about half the world's economy.) These are all good questions without good answers. The underlying problem is that economic change seems to have outrun economic understanding and control.

It's widely believed that the financial panic and

Great Recession constitute a watershed for global capitalism, which has been (it's said) permanently discredited. Around the world, the political pendulum is swinging from unfettered competition toward more government oversight. Markets have been deemed incorrigibly erratic. Greed must be contained, and the greedy must be taxed. These ideas reflect a real shift in thinking, but in time that may not be seen as the main consequence of the economic collapse. These ideas imply that capitalism was unsupervised and untaxed before. Of course, this is not true. Businesses everywhere, big and small, were and are regulated and taxed. Future changes are likely to be those of degree, in part because countervailing forces, mobile capital being the most obvious, will impose limits. Countries that oppressively regulate or tax are likely to see businesses go elsewhere.

**W**hat looms as the most significant legacy of the crisis is a loss of economic control. Keynes famously remarked that “practical men” are “usually the slaves of some defunct economist.” By this he meant that politics and public opinion are often governed by what economists (living and dead, actually) define as desirable and doable. In the years after World War II, the prevailing assumption among economists, embraced by much of the public, was that we had conquered the classic problem of booms and busts. Grave economic crises afflicted only developing countries or developed countries that had grossly mismanaged their affairs. This common view is no longer tenable. It has been refuted by events.

Our economic knowledge and tools came up short. Either they were overwhelmed by change or their power was always exaggerated. This does not mean that economic growth will cease. Chances are that the United States and the other prosperous nations of the developed world will, over time, get wealthier as a result of technological changes that are now barely glimpsed. But the widespread faith—and the sense of security it imparted—that economic management would forever spare us devastating disruptions has been shattered. Just as there has never been a war to end all wars, there has yet to be an economic theory that can end all serious instability. ■

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# Indonesia's Moment

*It is the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation and a highly successful democracy. How did Indonesia do it?*

BY ROBERT PRINGLE

IT IS HARD FOR A NATION OF 240 MILLION, AND ONE that is overwhelmingly Muslim and a democracy at that, to slip beneath the radar, but until recently that has been Indonesia's fate. Like dozens of other less developed countries, it has rarely come to the world's attention except when it suffered a coup or a particularly sensational natural disaster. In November, however, even as the nation's perennially active Mount Merapi was dramatically erupting again, Indonesia was in the spotlight for another reason, as a visit by President Barack Obama signaled that the country he first saw as a small child has emerged from obscurity.

Obama's decision to go to Indonesia certified a truth already recognized by informed observers. After more than a decade as an increasingly stable and genuinely free democracy, Indonesia is beginning to make its weight felt in the wider world. On Wall Street, where many have been impressed by the nation's steady economic growth, there is talk of Indonesia adding its "I" to the BRICs, as the world's largest emerging economies (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) are collectively known. With the human rights abuses that prevailed during the three-decade regime of President Suharto largely a thing of the past, there is a new warmth in relations with the United States. And even though China has become a major market for Indonesia's products—especially minerals, timber, and fish—Jakarta has

been rattled by China's growing strength in Southeast Asia and its aggressive territorial claims in the South China Sea, and thus more appreciative of America's countervailing power.

Indonesia's upswing began in 1998, when B. J. Habibie, a protégé of Suharto since childhood, succeeded him as president. Habibie is a brilliant, German-educated engineer who rose to the top ranks of Germany's aeronautical industry before Suharto brought him home in 1974 and eventually made him vice president. But Habibie remained an awkward technocrat with no apparent aptitude for politics, often ridiculed for promoting improbable schemes, such as his insistence at the end of the Cold War on purchasing dozens of ships of the defunct East German navy.

Yet in less than two years as president, in the midst of a financial and political meltdown triggered by the Asian financial crisis, Habibie, supported by a robust reform movement, terminated military rule, unchained the press, and ended Indonesia's disastrous 24-year occupation of East Timor.

Most important, he inaugurated a radically decentralized democracy, transferring real power to some 470 districts and cities, instituting local elections all the way to the village level, and allocating a third of the national budget to support the new system. These were not cosmetic changes. Habibie and the reformers who supported him were convinced that a country as huge and diverse as Indonesia

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During his November visit to the country where he lived for several years as a boy, President Barack Obama (with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono) worked to strengthen U.S.-Indonesian relations and vowed to end “years of mistrust” between the West and the Muslim world.

could not have genuine democracy without devolving real power from Jakarta. Seen in its totality, the democratic transformation Habibie authored in Indonesia, now more than a decade old, has had few rivals anywhere.

Indonesia has always been a difficult place to understand, and the surprising developments of the past dozen years have in a way made it an even more complex place. A nation strewn across thousands of islands, with dozens of major languages and innumerable ethnic groups, it is an improbable success story. *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman once described Indonesia as “too big to fail, too messy to work,” and for a time its fledgling democracy made it even messier than before.

Indonesia is probably best understood in terms of dualities. Dualism Number One is embodied in the Indonesian term for “fatherland,” *tanah air*, which literally means land and sea. The sea divides the islands but it also unites them. Because the island interiors are mountainous, the people of the archipelago have always had to reach across the water to connect and trade with others.

Dualism Number Two juxtaposes the fertile island of Java, home to the majority of Indonesians, against all the rest. The others are collectively known as the Outer Islands, where soils are typically poor and hard to cultivate. They are big producers of oil, rubber, spices, timber (from rapidly vanishing tropical forests), gold, copper, and, perhaps most notably, coal.

The Outer Islands include California-sized Sumatra,

with the fervently Islamic province of Aceh at its northern tip; Borneo, four times the size of Java but with only one-twelfth its population; and Sulawesi, the one that on a map looks like a Rorschach inkblot, with so many arms that early explorers thought it was more than one island and called it “the Celebes.”

Dualism Number Three, perhaps the most important, is Apparent Chaos vs. A Degree of Coherence. Apparent Chaos derives mainly from the sheer complexity of Indonesia's diversity and the related messiness of its politics. Indonesia's reputation for chaos also derives from its turbulent past, captured most famously in the 1982 film *The Year of Living Dangerously*, which dramatized the spasm of anticommunist killings in 1965 and 1966 after Suharto took power. (Like many Javanese, he used only a single name.) Generally suave and polite individually, Indonesians historically have had a penchant for kris-wielding mob violence. The word “amuck” is of Malay/Indonesian origin, and anthropologists once used it to describe a peculiarly Southeast Asian form of hysterical mass attack.

The Degree of Coherence results from a shared past, especially a common nationalism forged in resistance to Dutch colonialism. Trade united the archipelago, and at times parts of it were under consolidated political rule. It was blessed by linguistic unity. Most of Indonesia's languages belong to one great family, including the national language, Indonesian. (Papua, Indonesia's half of the great island of New Guinea, is the only region with significantly different linguistic and historical roots, and it is no coincidence that it has a separatist movement.)

Indonesian is a modern version of Malay, a traditional language of regional trade. The Dutch, who began to colonize Indonesia in the 17th century, made Malay into an official administrative language in order to avoid teaching the natives Dutch, which they feared might encourage dangerous notions of equality. When Indonesian nationalists emerged early in the 20th century, they realized they had been handed a national language on a silver platter, and thus avoided the plague of multiple tongues that would afflict so many other nation-builders in the developing world. Today Indonesian is spoken by the overwhelming majority of the population, but usually as a second language.

Dozens of local languages and major cultural variations remain, scattered through Indonesia's fragmented ethnic landscape, but the country's religions are layered, having arrived one on top of another. Most Indonesians were



animists and ancestor worshipers until around the fifth century AD, when Indian traders and holy men introduced Hinduism and Buddhism, together with the concept of divinely endorsed monarchy. These new influences gave birth to the long-lived kingdom of Srivijaya in the seventh century and Majapahit in the late 13th century as well as some of the world's greatest “Indian” art, such as the monumental Borobudur Buddhist temple in central Java.

Islam arrived a millennium later, brought by Muslim Indians who traded in cloves and nutmeg with the people of the Spice Islands in what is now eastern Indonesia. Although Islam gradually became Indonesia's majority religion, the archipelago was never completely Islamized. Hinduism survived on the island of Bali, and important pockets of animism remained elsewhere. The Dutch introduced



Christianity, which took root among animists and the economically important Chinese minority that began arriving on the heels of the Europeans.

Indonesian Islam soon began to display another dualism. In order to achieve widespread conversion of the local people, especially in Java, it was important for Islam to tolerate or incorporate powerful Hindu and animist traditions, much as the Prophet had done when he made the Kaabah, an ancient shrine in Mecca, the central holy place of Islam. But debate about precisely where the line between tradition and Islam should be drawn began early and has continued. By the 19th century, an uneven polarization had developed between those favoring doctrinal strictness—fundamentalism, if you will—and those leaning toward tolerance.

During the Japanese occupation of Indonesia in World

**With 10 million people, Jakarta is one of the world's largest cities, but chaotic conditions—most residents lack running water and there is no subway system—have led some to talk of relocating the capital.**

War II, an enduring division emerged between those who wanted an Islamic state that required adherence to sharia law by all Muslims, and nationalists led by Sukarno (most of them also Muslims). The nationalists, mindful of Indonesia's diversity and bent on national unity above all else, preferred a pluralistic state, requiring only belief in One God. He was assumed by many to be Allah, but this was not enough for those who felt that Indonesia's majority religion deserved a more specific role.

When Sukarno declared independence in 1945, he enshrined his pluralistic credo in the Indonesian constitu-

tion. Advocates of Islamic statehood remain a force, but today the great majority of Indonesia's Muslims are moderates, both doctrinally and politically. Many of them belong to one of two Muslim mass organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, with a combined membership estimated at 60 million.

While the two organizations are internally diverse, they reflect the polarity that developed before the colonial era. NU represents a primarily Javanese tradition of relative toler-

## THE TERRORIST BOMBINGS in Bali in 2002 outraged most Indonesians.

ance, with strong ties to the more mystical Sufi branch of Islam, while Muhammadiyah has been more influenced by fundamentalism.

In contrast to most Islamic organizations in the Middle East, both NU and Muhammadiyah have strongly supported democracy and government development programs. Both operate schools, hospitals, and other affiliates. Neither participates directly in politics, but most members of Islamic political parties in Indonesia—there are about half a dozen major ones, as well as multireligious parties—have ties to one or the other. In line with NU's tradition of relative tolerance, some of its leaders have taken a liberal line on issues such as women's rights, helping the organization to develop a new constituency among Indonesia's burgeoning middle class. Abdurrahman Wahid, a product of NU who succeeded Habibie as president in 1999, even advocated closer ties with Israel.

Yet there is also a darker strand in Indonesian Islam. During the Suharto era, Saudi-financed religious schools promoted Wahhabi-style fundamentalism. The Saudi teachings were not explicitly violent, but they strengthened the intellectual basis for violent extremism, which had already taken root in Indonesian soil. In 1948, a Muslim extremist group calling itself Darul Islam had launched a guerilla war against Sukarno's nationalists in parts of Java and elsewhere. Not finally defeated until 1962, Darul Islam left behind remnants that provided the nuclei for later manifestations of Islamic extremism.

In 1993 two Indonesian clerics, Abdullah Sungkar and

Abu Bakar Bashir, formed Jemaah Islamiyah, a regional Southeast Asian jihadist organization that recruited Indonesians to fight in Afghanistan. The jihadis returned home with motivation and bomb-making know-how, attacking hotels, embassies, and Christian churches, and stoking unrest in Sulawesi and the Maluku (as the Spice Islands are now known). Occurring at the same time that Indonesia was staggering under the impact of widespread unrest and score settling brought on by the beginning of Habibie's

decentralized democracy, the attacks helped persuade many analysts that the country was falling apart.

The ugliest crime of all came in 2002, when Jemaah Islamiyah terrorists bombed a nightclub in Bali, killing

more than 200 people, most of them foreign tourists. The world was shocked: Hindu Bali is supposed to be a place for eating, praying, and loving. But no one was more upset than Indonesians, who are proud of beautiful Bali and keenly appreciate the tourist revenues it generates. The slaughter left Jemaah Islamiyah discredited, and the ensuing government drive against it—Indonesia's security forces now have a deserved reputation for competence—led to a three-year stretch free of violent extremism. Though suicide bombers struck again in 2009, attacking two luxury hotels in Jakarta, the terrorism trend line is down sharply.

Indonesia's Islamic unrest feeds on a streak of paranoia that almost all Indonesian Muslims share to some extent. It has many roots, including resentment over what are seen as the anti-Muslim wars led by the United States in the Middle East and Afghanistan. Equally important is the grating reality that while Muslims are a majority of the population, Islamic activists have been unable to make headway against Indonesia's multireligious constitution.

In 1967, the hopes of Muslim conservatives were high after the army put down a bungled communist power grab and deposed the aging Sukarno. Muslim youth groups in Java had helped the army carry out the killings during "the year of living dangerously," which left thousands of nominally communist peasants dead and communism itself virtually exterminated. When the dust settled, Muslim leaders

expected recognition and political rewards for their support. The newly installed Suharto, however, had spent years as a young army officer pursuing Darul Islam rebels and continued to regard political Islam as a threat. And he also saw it as a convenient replacement for the demolished Indonesian Communist Party as a specter that could be used to justify military rule.

Suharto was not all bad. The first two decades of his reign brought near-double-digit economic growth rates, spurred by oil revenues and the president's technocratic reforms. The introduction of high-yielding rice varieties lifted farmers' incomes, while family planning programs reduced the looming threat of Malthusian disaster in Java and Bali and spurred the emergence of a village-level, motor scooter-riding middle class. From the time of its arrival with the spice trade, Islam in Indonesia had always thrived on commerce, and so it did again. Muslims grew increasingly observant, with headscarves and other forms of Islamic dress becoming more fashionable, while the more relaxed and quasi-animistic Islam of peasant Java practically disappeared.

Prosperity and globalization have nurtured new expressions of Islam, from urban intellectual discussion groups to lifestyle-centered radio ministries. One creative Internet imam caused a minor sensation when he urged his listeners to emulate the Prophet's supposed practice of taking baths with his wife. But rapid change also brought increasing secularization among Indonesia's urban youth. Religious conservatives, disturbed by pornography, nightclubs, and symptoms of female liberation, provided a new political base for a draconian understanding of sharia, including support for such practices as the stoning of adulterers, polygamy (which is legal but controversial), and even, among a small minority, acts of terrorism such as the Bali bombing.

While terrorism is in retreat, Islamic vigilantism is a serious problem, most notoriously the repeated violence by the Islamic Defenders' Front (FPI) against

Ahmadiyah, an Islamic sect that has offended other Muslims by claiming that its founder was a new prophet. The government has often chosen to look the other way. When FPI activists attacked a group of moderate Muslims and others in 2008 who had protested FPI violence, injuring a dozen, the perpetrators got off with short stays in jail. Such incidents, including violence against Christians and their churches in Muslim areas, violate Indonesia's constitutional guarantee of religious freedom. However, the country's generally admirable but very cautious president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, has thus far refused to risk alienating his fundamentalist Muslim supporters by enforcing the law.

The government's reluctance to crack down on the thuggery of the FPI and others is a major blemish on Indonesia's democracy, all the more so because it is accompanied by more general weaknesses in the judicial system, which is shot through with corruption. A



**Seen as eccentric and possibly corrupt when he took over from President Suharto in 1998, B. J. Habibie put Indonesia on its new course.**

few years ago, I interviewed Goenawan Mohamad, a famous Indonesian journalist and Muslim liberal who has felt the sting of FPI intimidation. I asked him if the country needed more laws, perhaps a bill of rights, to control such threats. "No," he said, "we have enough laws; we need to enforce the laws that we have." Most Indonesian intellectuals would probably agree.

Public opinion polling, highly developed in Indonesia, often shows alarming degrees of support (although never majorities) for harsh interpretations of sharia, such as cutting off thieves' hands. But there is no evidence that such sentiment signifies increasing support for an Islamic state. Very different and more credible evidence is available from the results of the four truly free national elections held since Indonesia's independence, in 1955, 1999, 2004, and 2009. Despite

the greatly increased level of Islamic observance over this period, about three-quarters or more of all voters have supported political parties that favor the pluralistic status quo rather than an Islamic state. In 2009, only 13 percent of voters chose parties seeking or appearing to seek a rejection of pluralism.

Indonesia has been the world's third-largest genuine democracy since 1999, and one of its few Muslim-majority ones. That is arguably the most important

regularly get crosswise of each other. Both countries have a dominant religion that is not the state religion. Our respective fundamentalists are shocked by the excesses of youth and do things that worry the moderate majority. Our politicians sometimes make things worse by pandering to vocal minorities.

The Indonesian national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, usually translated as "unity in diversity," seems to mean almost the same thing as *E Pluribus Unum*, and

may have been inspired by American precedent. But if you parse the ancient Balinese text from which it comes, there is a subtle but powerful difference. The text is concerned with the dual religions of the

## WHO DESIGNED INDONESIA'S largest mosque? A Protestant.

quality of the country, even more important than its economic potential or its role in regional affairs. More than one-third of Indonesia's national budget is devoted to supporting decentralized local governments, all of which have lively, competitive elections.

Decentralization seems to be working, despite plenty of bumps in the road. No one was surprised that it added a confusing new layer to the Indonesian policy process. People were taken unaware, however, when local initiative began to stimulate new regional nodes of economic growth in places such as Riau, in central Sumatra, and Samarinda, a coal-mining center in Borneo, reducing Jakarta's hitherto unhealthy dominance. Indonesia's experiment could be a model for other countries, such as Turkey, that have often been too timid to release real power to local governments.

Indonesia's tremendous diversity does make for a messier kind of democracy, but it also makes some kind of democracy imperative. That is an idea that should sound familiar to Americans; it is one reason why the United States has a federal system with several layers of government.

Many facets of Indonesian reality that puzzle outsiders can be understood as a healthy response to diversity. In fact, it often makes sense to look for clues to Indonesian puzzles in the United States, which frequently has forged a similar set of responses to enormous diversity. The national and local components of both the Indonesian and American political systems

Majapahit Empire: Buddhism, the religion of contemplation and scholarship, and Hindu Sivaism, best understood as the religion of state affairs. The verse from which the motto is drawn reads, "They are indeed different, but they are of the same kind, as there is no division in truth." Unity, the verse suggests, is not always seen on the surface, and may sometimes be realized only through striving.

In both the United States and Indonesia, diversity tends to push politicians toward the moderate center—at least in the long run. In a handful of Indonesian localities, politicians who hoped to attract fervently Islamic voters have enacted religiously inspired regulations that forbid women to be outdoors after dark, for example, or require knowledge of the Qur'an as a prerequisite for government employment. The regulations are probably illegal, since the decentralization laws did not empower localities to regulate religion, but Jakarta has done nothing to stop them. Many foreign journalists have pointed to these measures as a sign of creeping "sharia-ization" in Indonesia. What most of them fail to mention is that such regulations have proved to be unpopular with most voters, and no new ones have been enacted since 2006.

It is easy to find portents of disaster in Indonesia's story, but one doesn't need to be an extreme optimist to imagine a fine future for this often-mystifying country. It has become a model democ-



These schoolgirls in the city of Bandung make a pretty picture of pluralism, but concerns about political Islam are never far from the surface.

racy against all odds, and there is every reason to hope that it can continue to build on its recent progress. As in all healthy democracies, its problems are in plain view. For instance, the future role of political Islam remains a question mark. Another issue is uneven economic performance. Indonesia boasts one of the fastest-growing stock markets in Asia and economic growth averaging around six percent; it breezed through the recent global downturn virtually untouched. But its widespread poverty and low rate of job creation are still problematic, and the corruption of the judicial system, combined with the heavy hand of bureaucracy, still deters foreign investment.

Like Americans, Indonesians love political jokes and innuendo. My favorite example of Indonesian humor involves the vast Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta, which President Obama visited on his recent trip. The building was commissioned long ago by President

Sukarno, who once grandiosely claimed that he blended all the world's faiths and philosophies in his own person (though he certainly did not hang on the fine points of any of them). In this syncretic spirit, Sukarno selected a Protestant member of the Batak ethnic group from North Sumatra as the architect of the Istiqlal Mosque, which was to be the largest such structure in Southeast Asia.

Years later, during the Suharto regime, when the mosque was finally inaugurated, people noticed that its vast dome was supported by 12 pillars. Instant uproarious joke—the pillars obviously represented the Twelve Apostles and had been purposely smuggled into the plan by the Christian architect, probably with a wink and a nod from his less than devoutly Muslim patron!

It almost certainly wasn't true, but it was far too funny not to repeat. As long as people are laughing, one can hope, they will keep anger at bay. ■

# What Is a Tree Worth?

*Trees brighten city streets and delight nature-starved urbanites. Now scientists are discovering that they also play a crucial role in the green infrastructure of America's cities.*

BY JILL JONNES

ON APRIL 8, 1905, PRESIDENT THEODORE Roosevelt, attired in a dark suit and top hat, could be found in Fort Worth, Texas, where youngsters looked on from a nearby window as he shoveled soil over the roots of a sapling. It was Arbor Day, which schools across the nation had recently begun commemorating, and the ever vigorous president was demonstrating his hands-on love of trees. For Roosevelt, Arbor Day was no publicity stunt. In an address to America's schoolchildren a couple of years later, he celebrated "the importance of trees to us as a Nation, of what they yield in adornment, comfort, and useful products." He saw trees as vital to the country's well-being: "A people without children would face a hopeless future; a country without trees is almost as hopeless."

For centuries, tree lovers mighty and humble have planted and nurtured trees—elms, oaks, ginkgoes, magnolias, apples, and spruces (to name but a handful of America's 600-some species). "I never before knew the full value of trees," wrote Thomas Jefferson in 1793. "Under them I breakfast, dine, write, read, and receive my company. What would I not give that the trees

planted nearest the house at Monticello were full grown." But trees were often taken for granted in a new nation that seemed to have a limitless supply.

Then along came Julius Sterling Morton, a nature lover who moved to Nebraska in the 1850s, briefly edited the state's first newspaper, and soon entered politics. He conceived of an annual day of tree planting, inaugurating a tradition that was rapidly adopted around the country and then the world. (Today, Arbor Day is observed nationwide on the last Friday in April, though individual states mark it on other days.) In 1874, when Nebraska proclaimed Arbor Day an official holiday, *The Nebraska City News* rhapsodized about trees: "The birds will sing to you from their branches, and their thick foliage will protect you from the dust [and] heat."

But tree lovers quickly learn that many practical-minded Americans—especially politicians—see little value in trees, except perhaps as board timber. Roosevelt was an exception. An ardent birder and conservationist, he reveled in his power to create or enlarge 150 national forests, mainly by presidential fiat. In 1905, he appointed his partner in boxing and bush-whacking, forester Gifford Pinchot, to run the newly created U.S. Forest Service and ensure the wise conservation and use of these public lands.

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**President Theodore Roosevelt, a passionate nature lover, took the recently established Arbor Day very much to heart during his years in the White House. On a brief visit to Fort Worth, Texas, in 1905 he stopped long enough to plant an elm on the grounds of the Carnegie Library.**

Roosevelt's national forests were the grand gesture, but they were supplemented by the more modest efforts of a number of arborists who saw a need for trees in the nation's cities and towns. The Progressive Era witnessed a great burst of urban tree planting, with Chicago's municipal forester declaring in 1911 that "trees planted in front of every home in the city cost but a mere trifle,

and the benefits derived therefrom are inestimable." In the years after World War II, city forestry departments planted new trees and maintained maturing ones, while the U.S. Forest Service became known for Smokey Bear and efforts to fight forest fires that raged out west during the dry season.

By the 1970s, most Americans lived in cities and

suburbs, and the tree lovers among them watched sadly as graceful old elms, big oaks, and verdant small woodlands disappeared, victims of Dutch elm disease, development, and shrinking municipal budgets. This urban deforestation was one more blow to declining cities. City streets stripped of trees lost much of their character and beauty. “Elm trees were part of my life,” one

an American urban forest? How many poplars, ashes, or lindens were there? How old were they and what size? How healthy? How did trees interact with the ecosystem? Did they really affect air quality? Anyone whose family home was shaded by large oaks or maples knew the delicious cool of those trees on a hot summer day, but how much did they reduce the need for air conditioning?

## CHICAGO MAYOR RICHARD Daley Jr., a self-proclaimed tree hugger, wanted to know: Do more trees mean cleaner air?

When thunderstorms lashed down, how many gallons of rainwater did the leaves of a Norway maple absorb and keep out of the stressed sewerage system? And what effect did tree-lined streets and tree-rich land-

Chicago woman ruefully told a forester in the 1980s. She cherished the deep shade and cathedral-like canopy of these majestic giants. “As each one died in my neighborhood . . . the place began to look old, worn, and crowded.” Soon thereafter, she moved to another neighborhood that still had trees.

scaping have on commerce? Or crime? Or human well-being? Finally, how could you quantify the benefits so as to persuade city officials that trees were valuable green infrastructure and not mere ornamentation—or, worse yet, a leafy liability?

Chicago mayor Richard Daley Jr., a self-proclaimed tree-hugger born on Arbor Day, was equally heart sore. Upon taking office in 1989, he vowed to plant a half-million trees as part of his effort to revive his decaying Rust Belt city. “What’s really important? . . . A tree, a child, flowers,” the mayor said in a *Chicago Wilderness Magazine* interview. “Taking care of nature is part of life. If you don’t take care of your tree and don’t take care of your child, they won’t thrive.” Knowing that his city’s air was among the most polluted in the nation, he asked, “Don’t trees clean the air?”

Daley hired a young arborist named Edith Makra to be his “Tree Lady.” She was to get lots of trees planted, but the mayor still wanted to know if more trees meant cleaner air. To get an answer, he prevailed on a fellow tree lover in Congress, 20-term representative Sidney R. Yates (D-Ill.), to earmark some serious federal research dollars. Makra was soon on the phone to the man she believed could answer the mayor’s question, and many others about city trees: Rowan Rowntree, a 55-year-old visionary U.S. Forest Service scientist and the grandson of the famous California wildflower botanist and author Lester Rowntree.

Lumberjacks had long known how to calculate the board feet value of a single lodgepole pine or a vast forest, farmers the price of fruit-tree crops. And yet, in the late 20th century, city trees collectively created an urban forest about which we knew almost nothing. The truth was that no one could provide an answer to Daley’s question that was grounded in science.

“I told him the mayor would be getting us \$900,000 and could he help us,” Makra recalls. The timing was perfect. While studying urban forests in Oakland, Tucson, and Menlo Park, New Jersey, Rowntree and his colleagues had figured out how to establish a science of urban trees, but they lacked critical funding, staff, and data. Now, not only was Makra offering significant financing, but Rowntree had trained two young scientists, Gregory McPherson and David Nowak, who were ideally suited to work on the ambitious project.

In fact, no one had concrete answers to a host of fundamental questions. What was the character of

McPherson had grown up in a small, elm-shaded town in southern Michigan, then discovered a love for



**City dwellers have always delighted in the pleasures of shaded oases like this vest-pocket hideaway in downtown Chicago. Now that scientists can attach a dollar value to the environmental benefits of trees, however, planners are beginning to regard America's urban forests as valuable infrastructure.**

the American West while studying in Utah for a master's degree in landscape architecture. Design was not his strong point, but marshaling data was. He became Rowan's doctoral student at the College of Environmental Science and Forestry at the State University of

New York (SUNY), Syracuse, before taking a tenured position at the University of Arizona in Tucson. That's where he was when Rowntree lured him to Chicago.

Rowntree had met Nowak in the early 1980s when the younger man was a SUNY undergraduate, and was so impressed that he suggested Nowak do a master's in urban forestry with him. In 1987, when Rowntree returned home to Berkeley to help run a U.S. Forest Service research project there, Nowak came out with him to work on his Ph.D. at the University of California. Chicago would be Nowak's first post-doctoral job.

In 1994, after three years of work that encompassed Chicago as well as surrounding Cook and Du Page counties, Rowntree and his protégés issued their study, the "Chicago Urban Forest Climate Project." They could at last report the size of the Chicago metro area's urban forest: It consisted of roughly 51 million trees, two-thirds of which were in "good or excellent condition." The report was replete with

charts and graphs and included detailed information about commercial and residential distribution, tree canopy density, and other attributes of Chicago's woodlands. In Chicago, street trees made up only a tenth of the urban forest, but they provided a quar-

ter of the tree canopy—what a bird flying overhead would see of the leafy tree crowns and foliage that provide shade and cover. And the canopy shaded only 11 percent of the city, less than half of the proportion city officials believed was ideal.

So how *did* all these trees benefit the city? Certainly the trees of Chicago had long sweetened the air and sheltered homes and streets from hot summers and freezing winters, but now here were actual data to show it. “In 1991, trees in Chicago removed an estimated 17 tons of carbon monoxide, 93 tons of sulfur dioxide, 98 tons of nitrogen dioxide, 210 tons of ozone, and 234 tons of particulate matter,” Rowntree and his colleagues said in the conclusion to their report. In neighborhoods where trees were large and lush, they could improve air quality by as much as 15 percent during the hottest hours of midday. More trees and bigger trees meant cleaner air.

Trees in the Chicago metro area sequestered about 155,000 tons of carbon a year. This sounded like a large amount, but, the report noted, that annual intake equaled the amount of carbon emitted by transportation vehicles in the Chicago area in just one week. However, over time the urban forest could sequester as much as eight times more carbon if the city planted greater numbers of large, long-lived species such as oaks or London planes and actively nurtured existing trees to full maturity. A big tree that lives for decades or even a century or two can sequester a thousand times more carbon than, say, a crab apple with a life span of 10 or 20 years.

Everyone “knew” that trees cooled down buildings. McPherson measured the *actual* energy savings from Chicago’s trees. The shade from a large street tree growing to the west of a typical brick residence, he found, could reduce annual air-conditioning energy use by two to seven percent. By planting more trees to cool down built-up city neighborhoods whose higher temperatures made them urban “heat islands,” and promoting utility-sponsored residential tree plantings, the city government could further curtail energy use.

All of this information about an urban forest, never fully documented before, meant that Rowntree

and his colleagues could calculate that forest’s monetary value. The benefits that each tree planted among Chicago’s streets, yards, and businesses provided over its life span came to \$402—more than twice its cost.

Oddly, Daley, who was remaking Chicago as a glamorous green city, never embraced the implications of the report. He pushed tree planting, but not in the scaled-up, strategic way Rowntree and his team had hoped for. In the byzantine world of Chicago politics, no one ever discovered exactly why. Still, Daley’s patronage had made possible groundbreaking tree science.

The Chicago study introduced a radically new way to think about city trees, even for those who had been thinking about urban forests for years. Ray Tretheway, longtime head of the Sacramento Tree Foundation, a nonprofit tree-planting organization, vividly remembers hearing McPherson speak at an urban forestry conference in 1991. “He just blew me away,” Tretheway recalls. “These tree benefits, I’d never heard of this before.” After meeting with McPherson and Rowntree, Tretheway persuaded the U.S. Forest Service to open a new research station in Davis, not far from Sacramento. With the Chicago study concluded, McPherson headed to California to become head of the station’s Center for Urban Forest Research. The University of California, Davis, provided a source of graduate students to carry out the research.

Tretheway acquired a wealth of studies and new data from McPherson and other tree scientists, who in the late 1990s worked up a detailed portrait of Sacramento’s five million trees and their numerous benefits. McPherson’s graduate student Qingfu Xiao did pioneering research on the impact of trees on stormwater dispersal—an expensive problem for the many cities faced with federal mandates to upgrade their sewerage and water systems—by measuring how much rainfall trees of various species and sizes intercepted.

When McPherson had come west, he found under way in Sacramento a real-life study of how trees save energy. In 1989, the Sacramento Municipal Utility District had been forced by outraged voters to close its dysfunctional Rancho Seco nuclear plant. To

reduce its peak load, the electric utility's new, tree-loving CEO, S. David Freeman, had partnered with Tretheway's foundation to plant half a million young trees for free in the yards of residential customers over the course of a decade.

By 1993, more than 111,000 trees had been planted, and the utility wanted to assess whether they were starting to reduce energy use. It gathered information from 326 homes on tree mortality, location, species, and size, as well as all the relevant specs on each house. McPherson's number crunching revealed that a tree planted to the west of a house saved about three times more energy (\$120 versus \$39) in a year than the same kind of tree planted to the south. The shade program underwent "a paradigm shift," according to economist Misha Sarkovich, whom the utility had assigned to monitor the program's impact. Today Sarkovich runs the program, and he evaluates performance not by how many trees are planted but according to the "present value benefit" of each tree, expressed in a dollar amount.

About half of the nearly 500,000 trees the utility has planted in the last 20 years are still alive, and their overhanging boughs have done much to improve customers' quality of life. Some of that improvement can be measured. The trees' shade collectively saves the utility from having to supply \$1.2 million worth of electricity annually. Running the shade program costs the utility \$1.5 million a year. As more trees are planted and the new canopy becomes lusher, the energy savings will continue to grow. When and if it can begin selling carbon credits, the utility will start to make a profit on its shade tree program.

In the post-Chicago years, McPherson and Nowak developed their science and models, engaging in ever more ambitious studies. McPherson began systematically studying a reference city in each of 16 climate zones to expand his database. As this new research became known, city foresters and nonprofit arbor groups increasingly drew on it to advocate for trees.

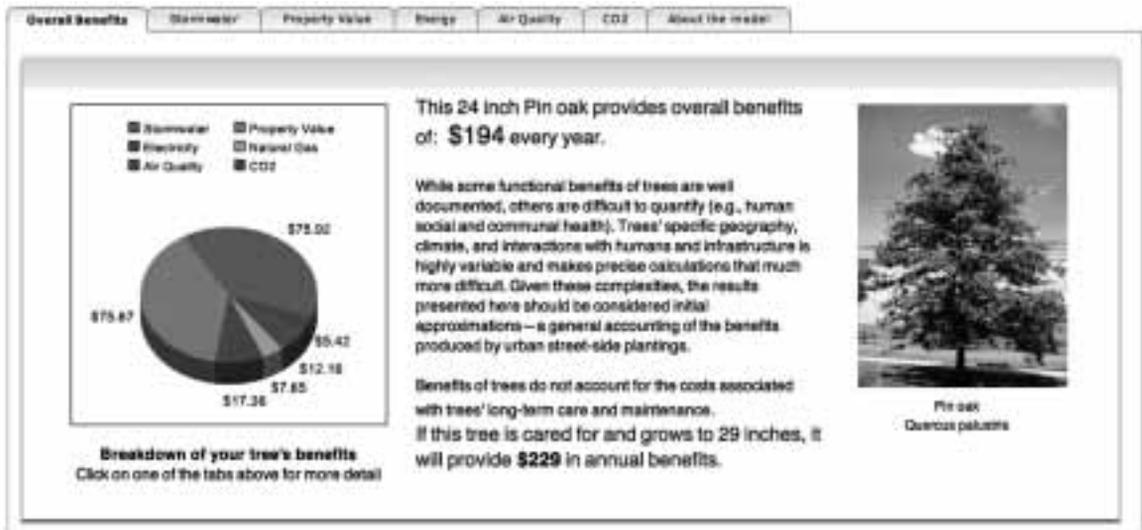
In 2006, McPherson and his colleagues were adding Queens as a reference city when the New York Parks Department asked them to value *all* of New York City's 592,000 street trees. With the advances made over the preceding dozen years, McPherson could deliver a far more sophisticated report than he had for Chicago. Energy savings: New York City's trees annually saved roughly \$28 million,

**A STUDY IN NEW YORK CITY found an impressive net annual benefit from trees of \$100 million.**

or \$47.63 per tree. Air pollution: Each street tree removed an average of 1.73 pounds of air pollutants per year (a benefit of \$9.02 per tree), for a total of more than \$5 million. The report also calculated that street trees reduced stormwater runoff by nearly 900 million gallons each year, saving the city \$35.6 million it would have had to spend to improve its stormwater systems. The average street tree intercepted 1,432 gallons, a service worth \$61, a figure large enough to impress cost-conscious city managers.

McPherson and his colleagues were also able to tally various benefits associated with aesthetics, increased property values and economic activity, reduced human stress, and improved public health, which were estimated at \$52.5 million, or \$90 a tree. These drew on straight-up economic studies of real estate prices as well as social science research, which showed, for example, that hospital patients who could see a tree out the window of their room were discharged a day earlier than those without such a view. Other studies showed that shopping destinations with trees had more customers than those that didn't, and leafy public-housing projects experienced less violence than barren ones.

All these data led to the finding that each year New York City's street trees delivered \$122 million in benefits, or about \$209 a tree. As New York City's



The software program i-Tree can calculate the benefits of any urban tree in America. Here are the results for the pin oak in the author's backyard.

parks and forestry officials well knew, they received \$8 million a year to plant and tend street trees, and spent another \$6.3 million to pay personnel. The net benefit they were getting for all these trees was an impressive \$100 million.

For the first time, urban forestry science had a dramatic effect on public policy: In 2008, Mayor Michael Bloomberg quadrupled the city's forestry budget, from \$8 million to \$31 million (down last year to \$27 million), when he launched Million Trees NYC, a partnership with entertainer Bette Midler's nonprofit New York Restoration Project. McPherson was thrilled to see science elevate urban forestry above the level of "a kumbaya idea." The million trees (350,000 are in the ground so far) planted by 2018 will transform the Big Apple, and those lush, tree-lined streets and shaded parks may well become Bloomberg's most visible legacy.

In Los Angeles, meanwhile, another tree-hugging mayor, Antonio Villaraigosa, had already launched his own Million Trees initiative back in 2006. McPherson and his team, who had worked with the city's schools a few years earlier to determine how trees could cool and shade school property, were called in again. Their mission for Million Trees LA was to gauge the size of the existing canopy, figure out if there was room for another million trees in the 500-square-mile city, and, if there was, determine the best places to plant them.

City officials directed McPherson to create a map

showing the canopy cover in each of the 15 councilmanic districts. While Los Angeles's overall tree canopy covered a respectable 21 percent of the city, the map revealed that the districts with the fewest trees were also the poorest. "When we went around with this map," notes one official, "people who didn't care about trees started to care. Council members in east and south L.A. wanted to know why they didn't have the same level of trees as wealthier neighborhoods."

In the wake of the report, the emphasis of Million Trees LA shifted. "We all knew there were places with fewer trees, but with the map you can really *see* it," says executive director Lisa Sarno. "It's become a matter of social and environmental justice." In poor residential neighborhoods where tree-planting efforts have been stepped up, the demand is for lemon, lime, and orange trees, which produce fruit that is expensive to buy at grocery stores. At long last, this radical new way of thinking about city trees had begun to influence politicians, planners, and city managers.

Once they had the science, urban forestry champions became frustrated by the puzzle of how to disseminate what they had learned. David Nowak, who has long worked out of the U.S. Forest Service's Northeastern Research Station in Syracuse, New York, had begun collaborating with the Davey Tree Expert Company, a nationwide tree care company, to create free computer software that could help others to replicate

his work on the structure and benefits of urban forests. At the University of California, Davis, graduate student Scott Maco was creating similar software for McPherson just for urban street trees, the major concern of most foresters wanting to impress city hall with trees' benefits.

In early 2003, Mark Buscaino, the new head of urban forestry at the U.S. Forest Service, proposed pulling together Nowak and McPherson's work into a free software suite—christened i-Tree—aimed at city foresters, landscape architects, urban planners, and nonprofit tree groups. Gregory Ina, general manager of the Davey Institute at the Davey Tree Expert Company, loved the idea and brought Maco on board in 2005 to run the effort. (Of course, in the long run, more trees will be good for Davey Tree's business.) In tandem with the U.S. Forest Service and other partners, Maco and Davey Tree have worked to make the i-Tree software more sophisticated and easier to customize, and they provide customer support to the municipalities, scholars, foresters, consultants, and nonprofit and citizen groups that use it.

Davey estimates that last year 2,000 i-Tree projects were under way, mostly in the United States. A software package called i-Tree Hydro, which models stormwater hydrology, will be released this winter. One spin-off, developed in partnership with the Washington, D.C., nonprofit organization Casey Trees, is the Tree Benefit Calculator, which tells homeowners the value of their trees. It recently informed me that my 25-year-old backyard pin oak last year provided the following benefits: It intercepted and absorbed 7,669 gallons of rainwater (\$75.92), raised my property value (\$75.67), saved 229 kilowatts of electricity (\$17.36), and improved air quality and stored carbon (\$17.58). Of course, my family also enjoys the pin oak's beauty, the squirrels frolicking about its branches and feasting on acorns, and the many cardinals and other birds it attracts. It buffers us from a nearby busy street, abates noise, and once held a rope swing for my daughter.

**M**ost of us take trees for granted, but when we do think of them, generally we appreciate how they beautify and soften our

world and connect us to nature. (We also sometimes curse them for clogging our gutters with fallen leaves or damaging our property when they fall down.) Trees are the largest and longest-lived structures on our planet. At the White House, one bedroom is still shaded by a magnolia planted by President Andrew Jackson in memory of his wife. But such benefits don't always have traction with public planners and politicians. Money does much of the talking. "The monetizing is a necessary evil," Nowak says. "We know trees have great value, but they're intrinsically underrated. You have to talk the language of people who make decisions."

As we humans wrestle with how to repair the damage we have wrought on nature, and how to slow climate change, urban trees offer an obvious low-tech solution. Every city, McPherson says, should have a "maximally functional" canopy. "We should shoot for a performance standard, like how many megawatt hours of air conditioning we can save, or how many pounds of nitrogen dioxide we can absorb, reducing ozone and smog." Trees can play a role in cooling cities while making them more beautiful, healthier, and friendlier to humans. And at a time when everyone seems to want to go "green," urban forestry science offers meaningful ways to think about how to do that. Business sage Warren Buffett, who knows something about the value of thinking long term, has said, "Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago."

It is easy to imagine that Theodore Roosevelt, who believed that trees added "immeasurably to the wholesome beauty of life," would have been delighted but not surprised to learn of the many practical roles played by the very trees most familiar to Americans—those that surround them in their daily life in cities and suburbs. While science and technology are transforming and expanding the way we think about trees, Rowntree, now a scientist emeritus with the U.S. Forest Service, estimates, "We are only 50 percent of the way to knowing what trees really do for us." What we *have* learned only proves the old proverb truer than ever: "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago, the next best time is today." ■

# A Glimmer in the Balkans

*After 20 years of nation-building in the Balkan countries, a big payoff may be in sight. But it will still be a long time before the United States can declare victory and pull out.*

BY MARTIN SLETZINGER

THERE IS A FOLK SAYING IN THE BALKANS THAT encapsulates the region's centuries of struggle. It goes something like this: "We have reached rock bottom, but we continue to dig."

Twenty years after Slovenia and Croatia seceded from the crumbling state of Yugoslavia, touching off a civil war in Croatia followed by bloody conflicts in Bosnia and elsewhere in the region, the digging continues.

For the United States and its European allies, which quickly plunged into efforts to moderate the Balkan conflicts, the past 20 years have produced hard lessons about the limits of good intentions, the perils of trying to rearrange the affairs of other nations, and the limits of nation-building. The allies have been reminded that it is difficult if not impossible for outsiders to forge new multiethnic states chiefly by military means. It takes a long time for contentious ethnic groups to learn to live together, and requires constant prodding, coaching, and reassurance. Outsiders can't stand back if there is to be any

chance of success, but must immerse themselves in local politics.

These lessons are now being reinforced in Iraq and Afghanistan on a much broader scale, but there are two significant differences. United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization troops never fought a ground war in the former Yugoslavia, arriving as peacekeepers after the fighting was over. And though outsiders, they were operating in a relatively familiar European environment, not a completely alien culture.

Superficially, the situation in the Balkans looks much better than it did only a few years ago. All six countries that emerged from the former Yugoslavia are democracies. Slovenia has joined the European Union, Croatia is knocking on the door, and Macedonia and Montenegro have entered the EU accession process. Only Serbia and Bosnia (known formally as Bosnia and Herzegovina) have failed to move ahead. Serbia remains a de facto EU protectorate, its path to EU membership blocked by its failure to hand over two

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**In Belgrade, Serbs remember the dead on the 10th anniversary of NATO's 1999 bombing of their country, which finally forced an end to the fighting in Kosovo. Old quarrels never really die in the Balkans, but many Serbs are slowly moving toward acceptance of Kosovo's existence as a separate state.**

accused war criminals sought by the international tribunal at The Hague. Bosnia is at peace but has not been able to devise a constitutional structure that satisfies the country's three main ethnic and religious groups. American and EU peacekeepers remain an indispensable presence in both countries.

Under this relatively quiet surface, however, little has changed. The schisms that shattered Yugoslavia and unleashed civil war have been papered over but not resolved. Ethnic and religious conflicts, along with economic backwardness, still plague all but one of the former Yugoslavian republics. (The exception is Slovenia, with its largely homogenous population of ethnic Slovene Catholics and a vigorous export-led

economy.) Ethnic groups throughout the region still hope above all to create their own ethnically pure states by gradually clearing their lands of others or drawing entirely new borders.

During the bloody 1990s, the Americans and Europeans infused their rhetoric with pious appeals for the maintenance of multiculturalism and ethnic diversity in the new Balkan states. But where were they in the decade after the death in 1980 of Yugoslavian leader Josip Broz Tito, when Yugoslavia, which was nothing if not multiethnic, was disintegrating? They barely lifted a finger. Then, in 1995, NATO bombed the ethnic Serbs in Bosnia in order to help preserve multiethnicity there. In 1999, NATO

bombed the Serbs in Serbia and Kosovo in the name of preserving a multicultural Kosovo. Croatia, Macedonia, and other new Balkan states were strongly urged to preserve the shaky multiculturalism of their societies.

The sad fact is, however, that despite all these efforts, ethnic diversity is no longer a distinctive feature of most countries in the region. Croatia's population, for example, was once a typical Balkan jumble,

**DESPITE INTERNATIONAL efforts to preserve it, ethnic diversity is no longer a distinctive feature of the Balkan countries.**

but after the shooting finally stopped, most of the Serbs living in Croatia, some from families that had lived there for centuries, had fled or been driven out, returning only long enough to sell or barter away their homes to the Croatians. Ironically, the only two states that remain multiethnic are Serbia and Bosnia. Serbia still has sizable minorities of Hungarians, Croats, and Roma (gypsies). Bosnia remains multiethnic in theory, but its two constituent entities, the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Serb Republic, are essentially free of minority groups, since virtually all of the Muslims and Croats who once lived in the Serb Republic have fled or been forced out.

The latest monoethnic bloc to emerge is the breakaway statelet of Kosovo, which is now, since most of its Serbs have fled, 95 percent ethnic Albanian. The legality under international law of its unilateral declaration of independence from Serbia in 2008 was disputed, but the United States and most of the EU countries promptly recognized it as a new nation.

**F**rom the beginning, the United States and the Europeans have seen Serbia and the Serbs generally as “the problem”—and the Serbs certainly have given them every reason to think so. Because of the bloody Serbian reactions to the seces-

sion of Croatia in 1991 and Bosnia a year later—both with sizable Serbian minorities—the United States and its leading NATO partners (Great Britain, France, Germany, and the Netherlands) immediately labeled the Serbs as criminal aggressors. Western publics were horrified by the Serbs' violent ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims in Bosnia's Drina Valley, their siege of the Bosnian city of Sarajevo from 1992 to 1996, and the murder of 6,000 Muslim men

and boys in and around the Bosnian town of Srebrenica, to mention just some of the worst offenses. The ranting and general mendacity of Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic and the unsavory personalities surrounding him made it

even easier for the international community, led by the United States, to take a black-and-white view of these interethnic conflicts.

The allies might have been more evenhanded had they seen the Serbs' depredations in historical perspective, as another episode in many rounds of interethnic violence stretching back to the beginning of the 20th century and earlier. From the Serbian point of view (and probably from that of the Serbs' enemies) the events of the 1990s were simply payback. At the same time, the Serbs had special reason to be upset and frightened by the collapse of Tito's Yugoslavia. They made up 40 percent of the country's population and had done the most fighting, dying, and horse trading to help create a new Yugoslavia after World War II. They had the most to lose from its disintegration.

The outsiders also failed to fully appreciate that the Serbs have always been the key local power. An ambitious and hard-nosed people, they established an early medieval empire based in the area that is now Kosovo and over the centuries have stood up to nearly every great empire that has confronted them. The Serbs were the first group in the Balkans to rise up (in 1804) against nearly 500 years of dominion by the Ottoman Empire, ultimately winning a degree of autonomy. They defeated the Hapsburg armies at



**Big trouble in small packages: Serbia, the largest of the states that emerged from the wreckage of Yugoslavia, has only 7.3 million inhabitants, followed by Bosnia and Croatia, which each have about 4.5 million.**

the beginning of World War I, only to be flattened by the Germans a year later. Under Tito, they stood up to Stalin and in 1948 were cast out of the international communist movement, landing on their feet as a leader of the nonaligned countries (and cooperating closely with the West). Today, Serbia remains the single largest nation in the Balkans, even without the 1.8 million people of Kosovo, and most knowledgeable observers agree there will be no stability or security in the region until the Serbs' legitimate concerns are addressed.

Through three different U.S. administrations, beginning under President Bill Clinton, policymakers harbored a strong anti-Serbian bias. That attitude fueled the U.S. imperative to save Bosnia and Croatia as functioning, legitimate states, even though they

had not existed as self-governing polities since the early Middle Ages—and even though it was clear they were going to become largely minority-free states, in flat contradiction of the allies' stated goals. Now, with the mission still incomplete 16 years after the Dayton Peace Accords ended the war in Bosnia, the nation-building efforts that resulted are faltering, especially in Bosnia, where the United States has spent more than \$2 billion on various aid, institution-building, and reconciliation efforts since 1993. An effort led by the EU to craft a constitutional agreement to bring together the largely autonomous Muslim-Croat Federation and Serb Republic (both established under the Dayton Accords) under a fully functioning central government in Sarajevo has made little progress. To make matters worse, Western

nation-building efforts in Bosnia and Kosovo (where some 2,000 U.S. National Guard troops remain as peacekeepers, along with a larger European contingent) have taken a back seat to the larger and more complex undertakings in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**I**t may be difficult to recall today, when the United States is up to its eyeballs in Afghanistan and Iraq, that for nearly a decade, from 1991 through 2000, the Balkans were the primary focus of U.S. diplomatic and military efforts abroad. Clinton administration officials feared that if NATO could not contain the violence on its eastern flank, within Europe itself, it would become militarily irrelevant in

Bosnia many walls still feature graffiti scrawled during the NATO bombing of 1999 cursing Columbus for having discovered America.)

The allies' speedy recognition of Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008 (on the heels of a report by a UN-appointed mediator calling for a more gradual transition) represents yet another entry on the list of their dubious Balkan achievements. In giving Kosovo their imprimatur, they also recognized the borders of 2008 as legal and inviolable. But those borders were arbitrarily established in 1945 when Tito made Kosovo an autonomous province within Serbia, and he later modified them in an effort, ironically, to artificially increase the Serbian population after it had been depleted during and immediately after World War II. No freely elected parliament ever ratified Tito's borders. Why are they now inviolable?

The Western powers insist that altering Kosovo's borders would have created a dangerous precedent for other

## SIXTEEN YEARS AFTER the Dayton Peace Accords, nation-building efforts in the Balkans are faltering, especially in Bosnia.

the post-Cold War world. By coming to the aid of the endangered Muslim population of Bosnia, moreover, they thought they could improve relations with global Islam. Another vain hope. But the anti-Serbian tilt, never openly acknowledged, greatly hampered U.S. efforts to mediate the Balkan conflicts.

The war in Bosnia might have ended significantly sooner had the United States not quietly scuttled earlier attempts at a peace accord on the grounds that any such agreement would legitimate the Serbs' ethnic cleansing in lands they would possess under the settlements—concerns that were largely dropped at Dayton. In the lengthy negotiations over the status of Kosovo, U.S. diplomats adopted a pose of neutrality, but when Kosovo issued its legally questionable declaration of independence from Serbia in 2008, the Bush administration, along with the vast majority of EU members, instantly recognized it. (Nobody was fooled by the American claims of neutrality: A central street in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, bears Bill Clinton's name and is graced by a formidable statue of the former president, while in Ser-

bia many walls still feature graffiti scrawled during the NATO bombing of 1999 cursing Columbus for having discovered America.)

potential breakaways in the region, such as Western Macedonia from Macedonia and, God forbid, the Serb Republic from Bosnia. But it is the West's hasty recognition of Kosovo that has created a dangerous precedent. Seeing how the Serbia-Kosovo border was drawn in the name of establishing a monoethnic state, other states that have significant Albanian minorities—particularly Macedonia, Montenegro, and Greece—must now wonder about the security of their own borders.

These states are painfully aware that Kosovo's independence is bound to feed fuel to the long-simmering passions for a Greater Albania. The ethnic Albanian minority in Macedonia is especially ripe for trouble. Its members, who constitute 20 to 30 percent of Macedonia's population, are crowded into the western part of the country, abutting Kosovo, and they are mostly dissatisfied with their status. Over the horizon lies the frightening prospect of a new Greater Albania incorporating Kosovo, Western Macedonia, and Albania proper. Albania's lead-



Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had a laugh posing last October in front of a statue of former President Bill Clinton in Pristina, Kosovo.

ers vociferously deny any intention of creating such a state, but given all that has been said and written in their country during the past century or more about the dream of what Albanians call Illyria, their claims ring hollow. The Albanians are divided by region, tribe, and religion—about 70 percent are Muslims and 30 percent Christians—but for them, the ethnic identity and language they share come first. And the Albanian diaspora includes many eager nationalists who are willing to lend their considerable financial and political support to the cause, including a significant number in the United States.

While the United States and the Europeans profess to be strongly opposed to the creation of a Greater Albania, it remains to be seen if they have the necessary political will and resources to stop it from emerging. The very prospect of a Greater Albania is a challenge to all the efforts of the past 20 years. How would such an entity, which could fracture three sovereign nations (Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia), be a more stable, morally justifiable, and viable state than the Greater Serbia desired by Milosevic, which was no more than the old Yugoslavia in a new guise? Is it for the creation of such a Greater Albania that the EU, the United Nations, and the United States have tried to move heaven and earth these past 20 years?

For the foreseeable future, however, what matters most in the Balkans are the Serbs.

Remarkably, there has been progress on that front. In October, Serbia's government agreed to direct talks with the leaders of Kosovo under EU auspices. The scope of the negotiations has yet to be determined and the Serbs have emphatically stated that recognition of Kosovo's independence is not on the table, but their willingness to talk at all represents a significant shift.

Since the fall of Milosevic in 2000, Serbia's leaders have disagreed over the fundamental choices confronting their country. A more European-oriented camp, led by President Boris Tadic, sees eventual membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions, especially the EU, as the salvation of Serbia. (Tadic's Democratic Party recently reached an agreement with an important opposition party declaring that EU membership must be Serbia's number one goal—a proposition that will be tested

against public opinion in parliamentary elections tentatively scheduled for this year.) Others, such as former prime minister Vojislav Kostunica, do not reject the European option but insist that the first priority must be to retain Kosovo. In pursuit of this goal, leaders on this

**THERE'S ONLY ONE IDEA that most Serbian leaders agree on: Kosovo must always be part of Serbia.**

side of the Serbian divide have maintained warmer ties with Russia, with which Serbia shares the Orthodox religion, the Cyrillic alphabet, and not much else. The Russians have repaid them by threatening to veto any effort in the UN to recognize and admit Kosovo as a sovereign state.

The only idea most Serbian leaders agree on is that Kosovo must always be part of Serbia. Not a single Serbian leader has dared to state the simple truth that Kosovo is lost. Much of Serbia's population buys into its leaders' delusion, but truth be told, most Serbs don't really care all that much about Kosovo, and few have their bags packed to move there. They are far more concerned with their country's anemic economy and disastrously high unemployment rate (19 percent last year) and its continuing political and economic isolation from the world.

It is no accident that President Tadic agreed to talks with Kosovo not only after much hard lobbying by EU members and the dangled prospect of accelerated EU membership, but after a visit by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton shortly before the Serb's announcement (and one by Vice President Joseph Biden in 2009). While the Europeans are taking the leading role as mediators, the United States long enjoyed the most trust among the Balkan countries. The Clinton and Biden visits have gone a long way toward convincing the Serbs that the United States now really does have their interests in mind as much as those of their neighbors.

Anybody who has been involved in Balkan affairs for any length of time learns to guard against excessive opti-

mism, but these are hopeful signs. Two things must happen for further progress to occur in the Balkans. Serbia must make its way toward membership in the EU, which will not only give it an enormous economic boost but help to weave the Serbs into a web of relationships with the rest of Europe, particularly with other regional powers such as Bulgaria and Romania. But no progress on that front is possible as long as Serbia refuses to deliver its two remaining fugitives to the war crimes tribunal in The Hague, General Ratko Mladic, the notorious

wartime leader of the ethnic Serbs in Bosnia, and Goran Hadzic, a leader of the Croatian Serbs. (Hadzic's whereabouts are uncertain, but even though the Serbian government has offered a large reward and made other gestures toward Mladic's apprehension, there is not much doubt that he continues to enjoy the protection of key members of the Serbian army's general staff and intelligence services.) Serbia will get nowhere until the status of the two fugitives is resolved.

**T**here is very little in the history of the Balkans to suggest that Serbia and its neighbors will find their way to a peaceful future without outside help. Despite the protracted, difficult, and often frustrating nature of their efforts to build peace and nations in the Balkans, it is essential that the United States and its European allies maintain their stabilizing presence in Bosnia and Kosovo, with the EU taking the lead in negotiations and nudging Serbia toward a more moderate stance.

In the end, Serbia and Kosovo are probably best rid of each other. There is little prospect that Serbia will formally recognize Kosovo's existence, but the two neighbors must establish at least a modicum of everyday cooperation. They will be living next to each other for a long, long time. There is conflict in their past, but also amity and a complex web of economic and social ties. If they can find a way to live together in peace, the people of the Balkans may finally leave rock bottom behind. ■

# THE SEVEN MILLION

## How to Shrink America's Criminal Population



After more than a decade of declining crime rates, America's prisons are full and spending on corrections has ballooned. It's time for the next step in the war on crime: breaking the cycle of repeat offenses by people who are already part of the core criminal population and preventing others from going wrong.

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# Beyond the Prison Bubble

*For decades, America's chief answer to crime has been to put more criminals behind bars for longer. That expensive strategy is yielding diminishing returns. It's time for a closer look at ways of helping ex-offenders steer away from crime.*

BY JOAN PETERSILIA

THE ANNOUNCEMENT LAST SUMMER THAT IN 2009 the number of Americans behind bars had increased for the 37th year in a row provoked a fresh round of national soul-searching. With its prisons and jails now holding some 2.4 million inmates—roughly one in every 100 adults—the United States has the highest incarceration rate of any free nation. As a proportion of its population, the United States incarcerates five times more people than Britain, nine times more than Germany, and 12 times more than Japan. “No other rich country is nearly as punitive as the Land of the Free,” *The Economist* has declared.

But a highly significant fact went largely unremarked amid the hubbub: The population of the nation's state prisons, which house all but a relative

handful of convicted felons, decreased by nearly 3,000. Although the drop was slight in percentage terms, it was the first since 1972. (State prisons held 1.4 million inmates at the end of 2009 and federal prisons more than 200,000, while the number held in local jails, mostly for minor crimes, averaged about 770,000 over the course of the year, and the majority had yet to face trial.) In California, which has the nation's largest state prison system, with nearly 170,000 men and women behind bars, the prison population fell for the first time in 38 years. The national prison population—including those held in federal facilities—grew by less than one percent, the slowest rate in the last decade. These changes mean it is very likely that we are seeing the beginning of the end of America's long commitment to what some critics call “mass incarceration.”

If that shift does occur, it will not be because the United States has solved its crime problem. In fact, if there were a close correlation between crime rates

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An influx of offenders forced the states to build more prisons, but annual costs as high as \$50,000 per prisoner are spurring a search for new answers.

and incarceration, the prisons would have begun emptying out in the late 1990s, when crime in most of its forms began to decrease.

**H**ow did we get here? Soaring crime rates, especially in the inner cities, are the most obvious part of the explanation. From 1960 to 1990, the overall U.S. crime rate increased more than fivefold, the frequency of violent crime nearly quadrupled, and the murder rate doubled. Drug use increased. The upsurge was widely blamed on lenient punishment,

particularly for violent repeat offenders. Legislatures responded by passing “get tough” measures, including sentencing guidelines (which required prison sentences for some offenders who in the past might have been put on probation), so-called three-strikes-and-you’re-out laws (which mandated prison terms for repeat offenders), mandatory minimum sentences (forcing judges to impose fixed sentences regardless of mitigating factors), and truth-in-sentencing measures (requiring inmates to serve a greater proportion of their imposed sentence before becoming eligible for parole). These policy changes increased both the probability of going to prison

if convicted and the length of prison terms.

Many liberal critics, pointing out that two-thirds of those imprisoned in federal and state facilities are African Americans and Hispanics, contended that “mass incarceration” is little more than a reworked form of racial and social domination—“the new Jim Crow,” as Michelle Alexander, a law professor at Ohio State University, put it in the title of her recent book.

But virtually all those who study the matter now agree that imprisonment has reached often counterproductive levels, particularly in the case of drug possession and other non-violent crimes. The prominent conservative scholar James Q. Wilson, whose book *Thinking About Crime* (1975) set the national crime control agenda during the 1980s, recently

**MASS IMPRISONMENT has helped reduce crime rates, but the effects have been considerably smaller than proponents claim.**

wrote, “This country imprisons too many people on drug charges with little observable effect.” In my travels around the country I have conducted an unscientific survey of prison administrators, and nearly all of them say that 10 to 15 percent of their inmates could be safely released.

What we are seeing today is a growing recognition that our approach to dealing with convicted criminals is simply too costly. Not only is the price too high, but the benefits are too low. The states now spend an estimated \$50 billion on corrections annually, and the growth of these outlays over the past 20 years has outpaced budget increases for nearly all other essential government services, including transportation, higher education, and public assistance.

California, where I was involved in the corrections system in various capacities under reform-minded governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, pours 10 percent of its massive state budget into correctional facilities. Between 1985 and 2005, it built 21 new prisons—more than one a year. The

state’s prison population surged, and so did costs: The state spent nearly \$10 billion on corrections last year, or about \$50,000 per prisoner. (The national average is \$23,000.) Now that California is grappling with a budget crisis, it is clear that it cannot continue on this course. The evidence for the rest of the country may be less dramatic, but it is no less clear.

These vast sums are not buying as much as many people think. Mass imprisonment has helped reduce crime rates, but most specialists agree that the effects have been considerably smaller than proponents claim and that we are now well past the point of diminishing returns. Confinement behind bars accounted for at most about a quarter of the substantial decline in crime that occurred during the 1990s (mainly, most researchers believe, by preventing imprisoned offenders from committing fresh crimes against the general public rather than by promoting a deterrent effect).

More important, that decline may well be reversed if we don’t do a better job of planning for the reentry of prisoners who have finished their sentences. There is a very simple and immutable “iron law” of imprisonment: Almost everyone who goes to prison ultimately returns home—about 93 percent of all offenders. (A relative handful die in jail; the rest have life sentences or are on death row.) Although the average offender now spends 2.5 years behind bars, many terms are shorter, with the result that 44 percent of all those now housed in state prisons are expected to be released within the year. This year, some 750,000 men and women will go home. Many—if not most—will be no better equipped to make successful, law-abiding lives for themselves than they were before they landed in prison.

Today’s offenders are different from those of the past. They are still overwhelmingly male (though the female proportion of the population has climbed to nine percent), African American or Hispanic, and unskilled. But the offenders leaving prison now are more likely to have fairly long criminal records,

lengthy histories of alcohol and drug abuse, significant periods of unemployment and homelessness, and a physical or mental disability. Their records are more likely to include gang activities and drug dealing. In short, the average offender today leaves prison at a greater disadvantage (and more primed for trouble) than his predecessors did. Yet fewer participate in prison rehabilitation and work programs than a decade ago. When I was cochair of California’s Expert Panel on Rehabilitation in 2007, the panel found that California spent less than \$3,000 per year, per inmate, on rehabilitation programs, and that 50 percent of all prisoners released the year before had not participated in a single program.

Even as the states were cutting back in-house prison programs most severely, in the decade from 1985 to 1995, Congress and state legislatures were passing dozens of laws closing off many job opportunities to ex-offenders and restricting their access to welfare benefits and housing subsidies. Former inmates are now commonly barred from working in some of the economy’s fastest-growing fields, including education, childcare, private security, and nurs-

ing and home health care. Such legal barriers sometimes protect us from dangerous felons, but they also make it hard for men and women who want to go straight to get their feet on the ground.

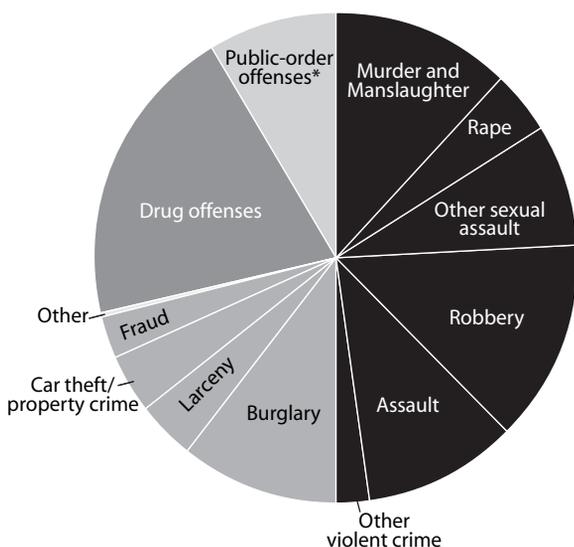
It should not come as a surprise to learn that we have a corrections system that does not correct. The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that two-thirds of released prisoners are rearrested for at least one serious new crime, and more than half are reincarcerated within three years of release. The two-thirds rearrest rate has remained virtually unchanged since the first recidivism study was conducted more than 40 years ago. Former prisoners account for an estimated 15 to 20 percent of all arrests among adults. That means that thousands of Americans are being victimized every year by criminals who have already done time without experiencing “correction.”

At the same time, we are beginning to recognize that our overreliance on locking people up has an especially malign effect on poor urban neighborhoods, where up to 20 percent of the adult male population may be behind bars at any given time. Not only do the men come home with diminished prospects that hurt the whole community, but as criminologist Todd Clear shows in *Imprisoning Communities* (2007), their absence weakens the family and social networks they need when they come home and hurts those left behind. It is no accident that the sons and brothers of men who go to prison are more likely to follow the same path. These trends help cause crime rather than prevent it.

Prison is where some people belong, many for long periods of time. But we need policies that do not produce more crime in the long run.

Budget cutters may rejoice at the chance to gut corrections budgets, and liberal critics of “mass incar-

## What They’re In For (State Prison Populations)



\*Includes drunk driving, vice, weapons, and other offenses

**Drug offenders now account for about 20 percent of all state prison inmates, up from only six percent in 1980. Among all state prison inmates, the average sentence served is 2.5 years. About 38 percent are African American and 20 percent are Hispanic. Roughly two-thirds lack a high school diploma or possess only a GED. Women are still a small minority (less than 10 percent) of those behind bars, but their numbers have grown.**

Source: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics

ceration” may celebrate any policy that shrinks the prison population, but cutting corrections budgets will prove hugely counterproductive if we act without giving serious thought to how we will deal with the offenders who are released. Until recently, for example, Kansas was a model of forward-thinking prison policy. In 2007 the state legislature funded a range of programs—involving education, drug treatment, and

strates that offenders who earn a high school equivalency diploma while behind bars are more likely to get jobs after release. Those who receive vocational skills training are more likely to get jobs and higher wages after release. And those who go through intensive drug treatment programs in prison are less likely to relapse outside of it. If we could implement effective programs, we could expect to reduce recidivism by 15 to 20 percent. To put

**A CHRONIC OFFENDER may cost society more than \$7 million in the course of his criminal career.**

it in concrete terms: About 495,000 of the 750,000 prisoners who will be released this year are likely to be rearrested within three years. With effective programs, we could reduce the number of repeat offenders by nearly 100,000. We could do even

subsidized housing—to help former inmates reintegrate. The approach appeared to work: The number of ex-offenders returning to prison dropped by 16 percent between 2007 and 2009. But then came the economic crisis and cutbacks. According to state legislator Pat Colloton, recidivism rates quickly spiked. Kansas is back where it was in 2007.

To avoid throwing away much of the progress we have made in reducing crime, it is more imperative than ever that we pursue alternatives to prison and new ways to ease inmates’ reentry into civilian life. The good news is that after decades of false starts, researchers have finally begun to zero in on the things that can make a difference in at least some cases. The news was good enough to help persuade the conservative Bush administration to push through the \$330 million Second Chance Act in 2007, giving government agencies and nonprofits the tools to get some of these efforts off the ground. The money was to be doled out over time. The bad news is that amid today’s intensified financial strains, Congress may be reluctant to continue funding this effort to enhance prisoner reentry programs.

better if these efforts were linked to improved services in the community upon release. Such efforts would pay for themselves by reducing future criminal justice and corrections costs. Economist Mark A. Cohen and criminologist Alex Piquero found in a recent study that a high-risk youth who becomes a chronic offender costs society between \$4.2 and \$7.2 million, principally in police and court outlays, property losses, and medical care. We either pay now or pay later—and we pay a lot more later.

Advocates of rehabilitation constantly struggle against the widespread view that “nothing works.” In part, this view grows out of an experience that began in the 1980s, when horrendous prison crowding in southern prisons, economic woes, and court rulings spurred some unusual experiments. When federal courts ordered states either to build new facilities or find some other way to punish offenders, the states began experimenting with alternative sanctions. Georgia, for example, developed an intensive supervision program (ISP) for probationers that yielded some evidence that it reduced recidivism rates—and also appeared to save the state the cost of building two new prisons. By the mid-1990s, virtually every state had passed some kind of legislation for intermediate sanctions.

Probation and parole departments across the country implemented a variety of ISP programs, including boot camps, day reporting centers, and electronic monitoring.

**R**ehabilitation programs reduce recidivism if they incorporate proven principles and are targeted to specific offenders. Research demon-

The hope was that some offenders who normally would have been bound for prison could be “diverted” from expensive prison cells to intensive community programs that could keep a closer watch on them and offer more support services. Other offenders could be released early into community programs. But as I discovered when I was co-director of the RAND Corporation’s national evaluation of ISPs in the early 1990s, despite all the good intentions, most of the ISP dollars wound up being used to fund more drug testing, parole agent contacts, and electronic monitoring rather than enhanced social services. The main result was that offenders who violated court conditions by using drugs, for example, were identified more quickly and sent into custody.

Within a decade, ISPs went from being “the future of American corrections,” as one probation officer enthused to a *Washington Post* reporter in 1985, to what seemed to be a failed social experiment. Most of the programs were dismantled by the late 1990s. Some advocates of the prison buildup pronounced that alternatives to prison had been tried and did not work. But the RAND study found that in places where efforts were actually implemented according to the original design, they were rather effective. Offenders who participated in drug or alcohol treatment, community service, and employment programs had recidivism rates 10 to 20 percent below those of nonparticipating offenders.

Today, we have even more refined knowledge of what works. The most popular approach involves using something akin to a medical technique, focusing on individual cases. Called the risk-need-responsivity (RNR) model, it uses risk assessment tools to size up each person and match him or her to the right program. The treatment efforts are behavioral in nature (with rewards and punishments) and geared to place the sharpest focus on higher-risk offenders. There is a heavy emphasis on cognitive behavioral and “social learning” techniques—ranging from anger management training to sessions devoted to weaning offenders away from their negative and antisocial attitudes. All of these efforts use peers and family members to reinforce their messages. And, as several studies show, they work. Criminologist Edward J. Latessa of the University of Cincinnati studied the results of RNR efforts in Ohio’s 38 halfway house programs and found that they cut the recidivism of high-risk offenders by as much as 20 per-

cent. Several states, including Maine, Illinois, and Oregon, are now using the RNR model.

Community partnerships are another approach that hold great promise. An excellent example is the Boston Reentry Initiative, a city interagency program that brings together law enforcement, social service agencies, and religious institutions to start working with inmates while they are still incarcerated. On the day the prison doors swing open, a family member or mentor is on hand to meet each released prisoner, and social service agencies are prepared to begin working to help the former inmate get a fresh start. The initiative focuses only on the highest-risk offenders leaving prison. They are offered opportunities for work and treatment, but for those who fail to take advantage of them and slip back into crime, the program calls for swift arrest and fast-track prosecution. In a sense, the Boston Reentry Initiative is the ISP experiment all over again—but this time backed with treatment resources, mentorship, and community collaboration. The results have been impressive. Harvard researchers found that participants had a rearrest rate 30 percent lower than that of a matched comparison group.

It is no longer justifiable to say that nothing works. There is scientific evidence that prison and parole programs can reduce recidivism. It is not easy and it is not inexpensive, but it *is* possible. To retreat now would be to pull the rug out from under hundreds of programs that are contributing to the decades-long war against crime, which, whatever its shortcomings, has been one of the nation’s great success stories, vastly improving the lives of ordinary citizens and the vitality of cities. One of the surest ways we know to keep crime down is to prevent those who have committed crimes in the past from doing so again.

That is not to say that criminality is a problem that can always be solved. People go to prison for a reason, and in many cases there is very little or nothing that anyone can do to change the choices they will make in the future. Rehabilitation programs are not for every prisoner, and we should not waste money on those who lack motivation. But it would be foolish not to help those who wish to change. Effective rehabilitation and reentry programs that help offenders go home to stay are good for them, and good for the rest of us, too. ■

# The Bounty Hunter's Pursuit of Justice

*When felony defendants jump bail, bounty hunters spring into action. It's a uniquely American system, and it works.*

BY ALEX TABARROK

ANDREW LUSTER HAD IT ALL: A MULTIMILLION-dollar trust fund, good looks, and a bachelor pad just off the beach in Mussel Shoals, California. Luster, the great-grandson of cosmetics legend Max Factor, spent his days surfing and his nights cruising the clubs. His life would have been sad but unremarkable if he had not had a fetish for sex with unconscious women. When one woman alleged rape, Luster claimed mutual consent, but the videotapes the police discovered when they searched his home told a different story. Eventually, more than 10 women came forward, and he was convicted of 20 counts of rape and sentenced to 124 years in prison. There was only one problem. Luster could not be found.

Shortly before he was expected to take the stand, Luster withdrew funds from his brokerage accounts, found a caretaker for his dog, and skipped town on a \$1 million bail bond. The FBI put Luster on its most-wanted list, but months passed with no results. In the end, the authorities did not find him. But Luster was brought to justice—by a dog (or at least a man who goes by that name). Duane Chapman, star of the A&E reality TV

show *Dog: The Bounty Hunter*, tracked Luster for months. He picked up clues to Luster's whereabouts from old phone bills and from Luster's mother, who inadvertently revealed that her son spoke fluent Spanish. He also gleaned useful information from a mysterious Mr. X who taunted him by e-mail and who may have been Luster himself. Finally, a tip from someone who had seen Dog on television brought Chapman to a small town in Mexico known for its great surfing. Days later, he and his team spotted Luster at a taco stand, apprehended him, and turned him over to the local police.

Most people don't realize how many fugitives from the law there are. About one-quarter of all felony defendants fail to show up on the day of their trial. Some of these absences are due to forgetfulness, hospitalization, or even imprisonment on another charge. But like Luster, many felony defendants skip court with willful intent. The police are charged with recapturing these fugitives, but some of them are chased by an even more tireless pursuer, the bounty hunter.

Bounty hunters and bail bondsmen play an important but unsung role in a legal system whose court dockets are too crowded to provide swift justice. When a suspect is arrested, a judge must make a decision: set the

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suspect free on his own recognizance until the court is ready to proceed, hold the suspect in jail, or release the accused on the condition that he post a bail bond. A bond is a promise backed by incentive. If the suspect shows up on the trial date, he gets his money back; but if he fails to show, the money is forfeited. We don't want to deprive the innocent of their liberty, but we also don't want to give the guilty too much of a head start on their escape. Bail bonds don't solve this problem completely, but they do give judges an additional tool to help them navigate the dilemma.

Bail might be a rich man's privilege were it not for the bail bondsman. (Many bondsmen are women, but "bondsperson" doesn't have quite the same ring, so I'll use the standard terminology.) In return for a non-refundable fee, usually around 10 percent of the bond, a bondsman will put up his own money with the court. A typical bond might run \$6,000. If the defendant shows up, the bondsman earns \$600. But if the defendant flees, the bondsman potentially can forfeit \$6,000. Potentially, because when a fugitive fails to appear, the court gives the bondsman a notice that essentially says, "Bring your charge to justice soon or your money is mine." A bondsman typically has 90 to 180 days to bring a fugitive back to justice, so when a defendant jumps bail, the bondsman lets the dogs loose.

Actually, that last image suggesting a massive manhunt is misleading. Bail bond firms are often small, family-run businesses—the wife writes the bonds and the husband, the "bounty hunter," searches for clients who fail to show up in court.



**Duane "Dog" Chapman's reality TV show imparts a sheen of lurid glamour to bail bonding, which in actuality is an essential industry dominated by mom-and-pop operations.**

Although a bondsman never knows when a desperate client might turn violent, his job is usually routine, as I found out when Dennis Sew volunteered to show me the ropes. Dennis has been in the business for more than 20 years and in 2009 was named agent of the year by the Professional Bail Agents of the United States. Nevertheless, I was apprehensive as I drove to Baltimore early one morning to try my hand at bounty hunting.

When Dennis and I meet, he hands me a photo showing our first fugitive of the day. I'll be honest. I was expecting to see a young African-American male. What can I say? It's Baltimore and I've seen every episode of *The Wire*. But I'm surprised. Taken a few years ago in better times, the picture shows an attractive young woman, perhaps at her prom. She has long blond hair and bright eyes. She is smiling.

We drive to the house where a tip has placed her. It's

**A DEFENDANT WHOSE BOND is co-signed is less likely to flee. "Even the mean ones are afraid of their mom," remarks one seasoned bondsman.**

a middle-class home in a nice suburb. Children's toys are strewn about the garden. I'm accompanied by Dennis and two of his coworkers—a former police officer and a former sheriff's deputy. One of them takes the back while Dennis knocks. A woman still in her nightclothes answers. She does not seem surprised to have four men knocking at her door this early in the morning. She volunteers that we can search the house, and eventually we get the whole story from her.

"Chrissy," our fugitive, is the woman's niece. Chrissy was at the house two days before and may return. The once attractive young woman has had her life ruined by drugs. Or she has ruined her life with drugs—sometimes it's hard to tell. She is now a heroin addict whose boyfriend regularly beats her. The aunt is momentarily shocked when we show her the photo. No, she doesn't look like that anymore—her hair is brown, her face is covered with scabs and usually bruised, and she weighs maybe 85 pounds. "Be gentle with her," the aunt says, even though, she predicts, "she will probably fight."

The aunt gives us another location to scout: a parking lot where Chrissy and her mother are supposedly living out of a car. We are about to leave when the aunt

thanks us for being quiet, because there's a child in the house who was scared the last time the police came by. The child is Chrissy's son. We drive to the location and look for the car. Dennis and his deputies see what looks like the vehicle and knock on one of the dirty windows, peering intently into the interior. The car is empty. Dennis and his deputies will return later.

What it takes to be a successful bounty hunter is mostly persistence and politeness. On most days your

leads don't pay off, so you need to visit and revisit the fugitive's home, work, and favorite hangouts. Waiting is a big part of the game. Why politeness? Well, where do the leads come from? From people like Chrissy's aunt—relatives and friends who might not talk to the police but who will respond to a kind word. Bounty hunters are polite even to the fugitives

who, after all, are also their customers, and sadly, bounty hunters rely a lot on repeat business. One customer of a firm owned by the same family that runs the one Dennis works for told him proudly, "My family and I have been coming to Frank's Bail Bonds for three generations."

Most fugitives don't fight, and Dennis is eager to avoid confrontation. Cowboys don't last long in this business. Most bounty hunters have a working relationship with police officers and will sometimes call on them to make the arrest once a fugitive has been located.

A bounty hunter also benefits from being prepared. A typical application for a bond, for example, requires information about the defendant's residence, employer, former employer, spouse, children (along with their names and schools), spouse's employer, mother, father, automobile (including description, tags, and financing), union membership, previous arrests, and so forth. In addition, bond dealers need access to all kinds of public and private databases. Noted bounty hunter Bob Burton says that a list of friends who work at the telephone, gas, or electric utility, the post office, welfare agencies, and in law enforcement is a major asset. Today, familiarity with the Internet and computer databases is a must.

Good bond dealers master the tricks of their trade. The first three digits of a Social Security number, for example, indicate the state where the number was issued. This information can suggest that an applicant might be lying if he claims to have been born elsewhere, and it may provide a clue about where a skipped defendant has family or friends.

If at all possible, bail bondsmen get a friend or family member to cosign the bond. The reason is simple. A defendant whose bond is cosigned is less likely to flee. As Dennis told me, “In my line of work, I deal with some mean people, people who aren’t afraid of me or the police. But even the mean ones are afraid of their mom, so if I can get Mom to list her house as collateral, I know the defendant is much more likely to show up when he is supposed to.” A defendant whose bond is cosigned is also more likely to be caught if he does flee, because the bondsman will remind the cosigner that if the fugitive can’t be found, it’s not just the bondsman who will be left holding the bag.

Bounty hunters have robust rights to arrest fugitives. They can, for example, lawfully break into a suspect’s home without a warrant, pursue and recover fugitives across state lines without necessity of extradition proceedings, and search and seize without the constraint of the Fourth Amendment’s “reasonableness” requirement. Just like everyone else, however, bounty hunters must obey the criminal statutes. A bounty hunter who uses unreasonable force or mistakenly enters the home of someone who is not a bail jumper is subject to criminal prosecution.

The prerogatives of bounty hunters flow from the historical evolution of bail. Bail began in medieval England as a progressive measure to help defendants get out of jail while they waited, sometimes for many months, for a roving judge to show up to conduct a trial. If the local sheriff knew the accused, he might release him on the defendant’s promise to return for the hearing. More often, however, the sheriff would release the accused to the custody of a surety, usually a brother or friend, who guaranteed that the defendant would present himself when the time came. So, in the common law, custody of the accused was never relinquished but instead was transferred to the surety—the

brother became the keeper—which explains the origin of the strong rights bail bondsmen have to pursue and capture escaped defendants. Initially, the surety’s guarantee to the sheriff was simple: If the accused failed to show, the surety would take his place and be judged as if he were the offender.

The English system provided lots of incentives for sureties to make certain that the accused showed up for trial, but not a lot of incentive to be a surety. The risk to sureties was lessened when courts began to accept pledges of cash rather than of one’s person, but the system was not perfected until personal surety was slowly replaced by a commercial surety system in the United States. That system put incentives on both sides of the equation. Bondsmen had an incentive both to bail defendants out of jail and to chase them down should they flee. By the end of the 19th century, commercial sureties were the norm in the United States. (The Philippines is the only other country with a similar system.)

Bail was widely admired as a progressive institution when the alternative was jail, but in the 1950s and ’60s many judges and law professors began to think that the alternative to bail should be release on a defendant’s own recognizance. Bail looked increasingly like a conservative institution that kept people, especially poor people, in jail. Many opinion makers came to support the creation of pretrial services agencies that would investigate defendants and recommend to judges whether they could be safely released on their own recognizance. In essence, the agencies would replace the judgment of bail bondsmen with the judgment of a professional bureaucracy.

In the early 1960s, the Vera Institute of Justice’s Manhattan Bail Project in New York City began gathering information about local defendants’ community ties and residential and employment stability and summarizing it in a numerical scoring system that it used to identify those who could be recommended for release on their own recognizance. The experiment was successful. The failure-to-appear rate among felony defendants the project recommended for release was no higher than the rate among those released on bail. Largely on the basis of these results, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Federal Bail Reform Act of 1966, which created a presumption in



Bail bond agents cater to captive customers near Los Angeles's 5,000-inmate Men's Central facility.

favor of releasing defendants on their own recognizance.

Although the new law applied only to the federal courts, the states have widely emulated the reforms. Every state now has some kind of pretrial services program, and four (Illinois, Kentucky, Oregon, and Wisconsin) have outlawed commercial bail altogether. In its place, Illinois introduced the government bail or “deposit bond” system. The defendant is required to deposit with the court a small percentage of the face value of the

bond. If the defendant fails to appear, he may lose the deposit and be held liable for the full value of the bond. But while a defendant in a commercial bail system who shows up in court must still pay the bondsman a fee, those who do so in jurisdictions with systems like Illinois's get all their money back (less a small service fee in some cases). And the only people empowered to chase down a defendant who has fled are the police.

The results of the Manhattan Bail Project seemed to support the position of progressives who argued that commercial bail was unnecessary. But all that the findings really demonstrated was that a few carefully selected felony defendants could be safely released on their own recognizance. In reality, the project allowed relatively few defendants to be let go and so could easily cherry pick those who were most likely to appear at trial. As pretrial release programs expanded in the late 1960s and early '70s, failure-to-appear rates increased.

Today, when a defendant fails to appear, an arrest warrant is issued. But if the defendant was released on his own recognizance or on government bail, very little else happens. In many states and cities, the police are overwhelmed with out-

standing arrest warrants. In California, about two million warrants have gone unserved. Many are for minor offenses, but hundreds of thousands are for felonies, including thousands of homicides.

In Philadelphia, where commercial bail has been regulated out of existence, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* recently found that “fugitives jump bail . . . with virtual impunity.” At the end of 2009, the City of Brotherly Love had more than 47,000 unserved arrest warrants. About the only time the city's bail jumpers are recaptured is when they are

arrested for some other crime. One would expect that a criminal on the lam would be careful not to get caught speeding, but foresight is rarely a prominent characteristic of bail jumpers. Routine stops ensnare more than a few of them. When the jails are crowded, however, even serial bail jumpers are often released.

The backlog of unserved warrants has become so bad that Philadelphia and many other cities with similar systems, including Washington, D.C., Indianapolis, and Phoenix, have held “safe surrender” days when fugitives are promised leniency if they turn themselves in at a local church or other neutral location. (Some safe surrender programs even advertise on-site child care.) That’s good for the fugitives, but for victims of crime, both past and future, justice delayed is justice denied.

Unserved warrants tend not to pile up in jurisdictions with commercial bondsmen. In those places, the bail bond agent is on the hook for the bond and thus has a strong incentive to bring those who jump bail to justice. My interest in commercial bail and bounty hunting began when economist Eric Helland and I used data on 36,231 felony defendants released between 1988 and 1996 to investigate the differences between the public and private systems of bail and fugitive recovery. Our study, published in *The Journal of Law and Economics* in 2004, is the largest and most comprehensive ever written on the bail system.

Our research backs up what I found on the street: Bail bondsmen and bounty hunters get their charges to show up for trial, and they recapture them quickly when they do flee. Nationally, the failure-to-appear rate for defendants released on commercial bail is 28 percent lower than the rate for defendants released on their own recognizance, and 18 percent lower than the rate for those released on government bond.

Even more important, when a defendant does skip town, the bounty hunters are the ones who pursue justice with the greatest determination and energy. Defendants sought by bounty hunters are a whopping 50 percent less likely to be on the loose after one year than other bail jumpers.

In addition to being effective, bail bondsmen and bounty hunters work at no cost to the taxpayers. The public reaps a double benefit, because when a bounty

hunter fails to find his man, the bond is forfeit to the government. Because billions of dollars of bail are written every year and not every fugitive is caught, bond forfeits are a small but welcome source of revenue. At the federal level, forfeits help fund the Crime Victim Fund, which does what its name suggests, and in states such as Virginia and North Carolina they yield millions of dollars for public schools. Indeed, budget shortfalls around the nation are leading to a reconsideration of commercial bail. Oregon, which banned commercial bail in 1974, is considering a controversial bill to reinstate it, and even Illinois, nearly 50 years after establishing its alternative system, may once again allow bail bondsmen.

Bail bondsmen monitor defendants, guide them through the court process, and help them show up for trial. When defendants skip town, it’s the bounty hunters who track them down. But despite the benefits of commercial bail, bondsmen and bounty hunters don’t get a lot of thanks. The American Bar Association has said that the commercial bail business is “tawdry,” and Supreme Court justice Harry Blackmun once called it “odorous.” After Dog Chapman arrested the serial rapist Andrew Luster and delivered him to the Mexican police, Dog was the one who ended up in jail. Bounty hunting is illegal in Mexico, and Chapman was charged with kidnapping despite the fact that (according to him) he had a local police officer with him at the time of the arrest. It surely didn’t help Chapman’s case that he was not trying to recover a bond that he had posted, since Luster had put up his own money. Luster was quickly extradited by the FBI, which offered Chapman no gratitude or assistance with the Mexican authorities. As if to rub salt in the wound, the judge in the Luster case refused even to reimburse Chapman for his expenses out of the \$1 million Luster had forfeited.

Dog Chapman’s television show has brought him and the bail bond industry plenty of fame and notoriety, but Chapman is a controversial figure among bondsmen. The famed bounty hunter’s checkered history includes prison time, drug abuse, and charges of racism, and many bondsmen think that “Dog” doesn’t do much for their image. Bondsmen don’t want to be the dogs of criminal justice; they want to be recognized as professionals working alongside police, lawyers, and judges. They are tired of being called “odorous.” Bounty hunters want some respect. The record shows that they’ve earned it. ■

# The Economist's Guide to Crime Busting

*The old divide between hard and soft strategies is breaking down under a wave of new thinking about how to control crime.*

BY PHILIP J. COOK AND JENS LUDWIG

WHAT IS THE MORE COST-EFFECTIVE WAY TO control crime? Is it to focus on making crime unattractive by threatening offenders with long prison terms? Or to make the law-abiding life more attractive by providing better education and job opportunities? It's an old debate. The federal crime commissions of the 1960s emphasized crime's links with poverty and racism, and President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society programs were central to his war on crime. But ultimately the "hawks" won the debate about how to wage that war, as they did later in helping to launch President Richard M. Nixon's war on drugs. The result has been plain to see, with the rate of imprisonment surging to unprecedented heights.

Now the debate has been reopened. It is not so much that the public views mass incarceration, with its disproportionately high levels of imprisonment for blacks and Hispanics, as immoral or racist. Rather, the dreary fact is that, in the face of gaping budget deficits, the states can no longer afford to support huge prison populations. It seems like a good time for the economists to

weigh in, in part because their perspective provides a way to get past the stale debates over whether to adopt "tough" or "soft" solutions.

The economic theory of crime starts with the premise that crime is a choice. It is not the result of character or culture, or not only of those things, but is at bottom a product of decisions individuals make in response to their available options. Most of us choose to abstain from crime in part because we have a lot to lose if we get caught. Even so, we may slip up occasionally—say, at tax time or when driving—but generally the temptations of crime are not strong enough to override our restraint. The calculus for an unemployed dropout with readily available criminal options and few licit prospects is likely to be quite different.

This economic perspective generates a nicely symmetrical approach to crime control. Crime policy should focus both on making criminal opportunities less tempting and on making the law-abiding life more rewarding. We can debate how best to accomplish each of those aims (and long prison terms are by no means the only answer for reducing temptation), but it's important to realize that they are closely linked: The threat of arrest and imprisonment is sharper for those who have something to lose, so giv-

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In downtown Oakland, California, helmeted “Security Ambassador” Quinton Pierce called the police to deal with a drunken man. Pierce and other guards are employed by a business improvement district, a new breed of nonprofit organization that has proliferated nationwide and helped reduce urban crime.

ing at-risk people a bigger stake in the law-abiding life is a deterrent to crime.

Of course, this logic doesn’t always work out. One reason so many people were shocked by the criminal charges against NFL stars Michael Vick (for staging dogfights) and Plaxico Burress (for carrying a gun illegally) is that both had so much to lose. But these cases help prove the rule precisely because they are so rare. When high-income people commit serious crimes, it is much more often in response to opportunities for great financial gain: Investment bilker Bernard

Madoff comes to mind, along with Enron president Jeffrey Skilling and publishing magnate Conrad Black. Thankfully, most of us are spared the temptation to rake in millions from fraudulent dealings by the simple fact that we wouldn’t even know how to begin.

The “crime as choice” perspective expands the discussion of crime control from the question of how many new prisons we need to a wider-ranging consideration of how to make illicit choices less attractive. Here we will focus on three proposals: raising the minimum age at which youths can leave school, promoting business improvement districts and other forms of self-protection, and increasing taxes on alcohol. To understand why

these measures' moment has arrived, it's first necessary to take a brief excursion into the recent history of American crime control efforts.

The most notable feature of that history is that the rate of incarceration has increased by a factor of seven in the last generation. America now locks up one percent of its adult population—the highest rate of imprisonment in the world. While many thoughtful people are uneasy about our policy of mass incarceration, a good number believe that it is justified by the dramatic reductions in crime since the early 1990s. Homicide and robbery rates have declined to levels not seen since the early 1960s. Property crime rates have fallen even more dramatically. As a result, America's cities have seen big improvements in property values and the quality of life. Harlem and many other urban communities that were once hobbled by pervasive crime are thriving. Washington, D.C., the murder capital of the country for a time during the crack epidemic, has become far more livable and secure. These gains are worth a great deal, perhaps even as much as the vast human and financial costs of mass incarceration. But prisons are often given far too much credit for what has occurred.

The general view that crime is suppressed by putting more people behind bars is supported by a commonsense argument: People who are in prison can't commit crimes against those who are not. It would indeed be surprising if locking up so many people didn't have some effect on crime. But even a casual look at the statistics challenges the view that prison trends deserve all or most of the credit for the crime drop. A look at three recent periods (see table) makes it clear that the crime decline of the 1990s did coincide with a large increase in the prison population. But the large crime *increase* during the preceding period coincided with an even bigger jump in imprisonment, and incarceration rates continued to climb after 2000 even though crime rates were relatively static. (Robbery is a good indicator of violent crime generally, and follows the same pattern as the murder

rate during the period 1991–2000.) If the incarceration surge of the 1990s gets credit for the retreat of crime, then the surge that occurred between 1984 and 1991 ought to get the blame for the increase in robberies in that period. Clearly, that doesn't make sense. The point is that we can't learn much from such simplistic comparisons.

There are other reasons to question the size of the impact of putting more people behind bars. As Franklin Zimring, a law professor at the University of California, Berkeley, has pointed out, Canada experienced a drop in crime during the 1990s similar to what the United States saw, but without any notable expansion in its prison population. Of course, Canadians do not make an ideal control group for Americans because too many other variables are different to the north, but the general similarity in crime trends for the two countries is nonetheless worth remarking upon.

In fact, the drop in crime remains an enigma—and, seemingly, a miracle. It was completely unexpected. No expert (or anyone else we know of) predicted it. And now, faced with the fact that this new world of low crime rates is real and has staying power, criminologists have been scrambling to explain it. This is not just an instance of Monday morning quarterbacking. The stakes are high, since the “winning” explanation is bound to influence policy.

In the social sciences, it's usually difficult to provide a satisfactory analysis of past national social and economic trends. There is only one observation—a particular historical trajectory such as the decline in crime—and numerous plausible explanations. There is no way of knowing how that trajectory would have been altered if, say, one of the factors cited as a possible explanation had been removed from the mix. In the case of the decline in crime in the 1990s, there are several possible explanations. In addition to the big increase in the incarceration rate, there were significant expansions of police budgets and an easing of the gang wars over the lucrative crack trade. Other pressures, such as the large increase in the number of children born to unmarried women and the growth of income inequality, probably pushed in the other direction, fostering an increase in crime. It's nearly impossible to sort out the impact of these different forces.

Thinking up possible explanations for the crime drop can be a sort of parlor game for social scientists.

	<b>Prisoners per 100,000 people</b>	<b>Robbery rate</b>
1984–1991	+ 66%	+33%
1991–2000	+ 53	-47
2000–2008	+ 5	0

Why not finger the popularity of hip-hop clothes such as baggy pants, which might impede fashionable young would-be criminals who have to keep one hand on their waistbands? Or what about the obesity epidemic, which might be weighing against the commission of certain active crimes? Or the pervasive video games that serve as a pacifier for the bored and disaffected? The point is that if we're looking for a way forward, historical trends in American life are unlikely to provide much guidance.

Fortunately, it's sometimes possible to isolate and measure the effects of a particular policy, especially if it has been tried in different times and places and a natural control group exists. That is the case with three crime control proposals that deserve serious attention now.

In today's labor market, people who don't have high school diplomas have terrible job prospects and very little to lose in economic terms, so it's not surprising that two-thirds of the inmates in state prisons are high school dropouts. In about half the states it's legal to drop out of school at age 16, but between the 1960s and '80s some states increased their minimum age to 17 or 18. Those changes provide a natural experiment in the effects of extra schooling on crime. Economists Lance Lochner of the University of Western Ontario and Enrico Moretti of the University of California, Berkeley, found that people in the birth cohorts that were forced to stay in school longer had lower crime and incarceration rates as adults than their predecessors did. One extra year of high school reduced arrest rates for young men by about 11 percent. It's not clear what caused this improvement—everything from better economic prospects to the influence of a more salutary peer group could be a factor—but it is a remarkable finding that has been confirmed by similar studies in Britain and Italy.

At a time when state budgets are under severe strain, an increase in mandatory school attendance would be a huge burden. But a lot of additional money for schools could be usefully pared out of states' prison budgets. Imagine that prison sentences were cut back to what they averaged in, say, 1984. That would reduce the size

of the prison population by about 400,000 people while yielding little increase in crime. (The best estimate is that longer prison terms account for about a third of the increase in the nation's prison population.) Spending on corrections would decline by about \$12 billion, enough to fund an additional one million students per year.

It goes without saying that the extra schooling would have a range of positive effects beyond crime reduction. People who earn high school diplomas enjoy better

**ONE EXTRA YEAR of high school  
reduced arrest rates for young men by  
about 11 percent.**

health, improved employment prospects, and greater success in forming families. The same can't be said about those who serve longer prison terms.

Our economics-based "crime as choice" framework also invites consideration of things that can be done on the other side of the ledger, by reducing criminal opportunity. That brings us to our second proposal. One of the most underappreciated developments in crime prevention is the rise of various kinds of private self-protection, from anti-car theft technologies to new forms of community organization.

For many youths, the choice to commit a crime such as shoplifting or robbery is strongly influenced by how many opportunities they see and how lucrative these opportunities appear to be. Private self-protection measures give them a shorter and less appealing menu. Uniforms by themselves tend to restrain vagrant appetites. The ranks of private security guards in the United States have been growing rapidly—at more than one million, they now outnumber police officers. The move toward a cashless economy has made robbery less lucrative, and burglars increasingly must contend with sophisticated alarms on houses. Technological change has also helped. High-tech devices on new vehicles that make starting the engine without the key almost impossible,

along with hidden GPS tracking devices, get much of the credit for sharp declines in vehicle theft. There were fewer car thefts in 2008 than there were 20 years earlier. All of these efforts have the nice effect of taking the profit out of crime without resorting to punishment.

An innovative form of self-protection that deserves special note is the business improvement district. BIDs are relatively new, usually established as nonprofit organizations in downtown commercial areas by merchants and property owners who aim to make their neighborhoods “clean” and “safe”—two words that are repeated like mantras in the world of BIDs. The city government’s role is chiefly to provide the organization with the authority to collect fees from local businesses. There are now more than 1,000 BIDs in American cities, and they are starting to appear in Europe as well. The Hollywood Entertainment BID in California was one of the pioneers in the 1990s. It employs armed private security officers, usually retired law-enforcement officers, who patrol the Hollywood district seven evenings a week, accomplishing a great deal simply by being a presence. They keep an eye on potential troublemakers and get to know the local cast of characters. The BID has also installed eight closed-circuit television cameras for the Los Angeles Police Department to use. All told, the organization spends a little more than \$1 million a year on private security, approximately half of its operating budget.

BIDs have been very effective at reducing crime. A study one of us (Philip J. Cook) carried out with John MacDonald of the University of Pennsylvania found that BIDs cut crime and its associated costs by huge amounts. Every additional \$10,000 a BID spent reduced the social costs of robbery by roughly \$150,000, and of assault by \$44,000. It wasn’t just the number of crimes that dropped, but the number of arrests as well. Moreover, there was no evidence that crime was displaced into nearby neighborhoods.

Our third proposal zeroes in on improving the quality of individuals’ decision making rather than changing the options confronting them. It’s obvious that in considering criminal opportunities, such as whether to break a beer bottle over the head of the obnoxious Yankees fan on the next barstool, people often make foolish, impulsive choices. There are many

reasons for that—hormones, immaturity, stress—but surely one of the most important is intoxication. Public policies that reduce alcohol abuse are a pretty obvious crime prevention measure. During the Euro 2000 soccer championships, the mayor of the Dutch host city of Eindhoven ordered the city’s bars and restaurants to serve only half-strength beer, hoping to stave off violence by Britain’s notorious soccer hooligans. The city remained peaceful for the most part. The next week the games shifted to Belgium, where the beer was full strength and free flowing, and the British fans resumed their violent ways.

Many studies show that alcohol is a significant factor in various kinds of crime. Victim reports suggest that about one-third of those who commit rapes and other sex crimes and one-quarter of those who commit assaults have been drinking. One straightforward way to reduce this sort of crime is to raise the price of beer, wine, and hard liquor. The average state excise tax on beer is now only about 10 cents per 12-oz. bottle. Raising it to 55 cents might not seem like a big increase, but it would be enough to persuade, say, some teenagers not to pick up that second six-pack on Thursday night. Data from a 2007 book by one of us, Cook’s *Paying the Tab*, suggest that a 55-cent tax would reduce beer consumption by perhaps 10 percent and reduce crime by around six percent. And there would be significant fringe benefits, including fewer auto accidents and more money for state treasuries.

These and similar ideas represent a new frontier in thinking about crime. Whatever one thought of the old formula of putting more and more people behind bars, it is simply no longer affordable. Likewise, the old debate between hard and soft approaches to crime has been exhausted. The line between those false extremes is being blurred by new approaches that recognize that we can deter crime by improving peoples’ life chances, and that coercion can in some cases be a key element of such efforts, as with compulsory schooling laws. As in medicine, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. We must learn to think of programs as various as preschool education and drug treatment as elements of our crime-fighting strategy. America’s next war on crime must look at the full spectrum of solutions and pay special attention to giving those people who are most likely to turn to crime the skills and incentives to make a better choice. ■

# IN ESSENCE

REVIEWS OF ARTICLES FROM PERIODICALS AND SPECIALIZED JOURNALS HERE AND ABROAD

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## FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

### What's the Big Idea?

**THE SOURCE:** "Conflict or Cooperation?"  
by Richard K. Betts, in *Foreign Affairs*,  
Nov.–Dec. 2010.

AS THE 20TH CENTURY DREW to a close, foreign policy strategists struggled to imagine what would drive world politics after the end of an era that saw two world wars and a global order defined by the clash between communism and capitalism. Three ideas from that time stand out, argued in the pages of well-known books by Francis Fukuyama, Samuel P. Huntington, and John Mearsheimer.

These three thinkers presented contrasting frameworks for understanding the struggles for global power, and their prescriptions for U.S. policy were starkly different. But today, when one takes account of events since September 11, 2001, and examines "the conditions the authors set for their forecasts, it turns out that they point in a remarkably similar—and pessimistic—direction,"

argues Richard K. Betts, director of the Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University.

Of the three, Fukuyama's vision in *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) is seemingly the outlier. Fukuyama, a former U.S. State Department official who is now a professor of international studies at Stanford, argued that globalization was bringing about the "homogenization of all human societies." With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the triumph of liberal democracy, states would no longer have anything impor-

Three thinkers proposed different frameworks for understanding the global power struggles at the end of the 20th century. Have their ideas stood the test of time?

tant to wage war about.

Huntington's idea, propounded in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996), "was the most novel and jarring," in Betts's opinion. The Harvard political scientist and former U.S. national security adviser saw globalization as a force for generating conflict, not consensus. He argued that civilizations could modernize without accepting Western political ideals. Pushing liberal values would only promote resistance; America would be wise to follow a more isolationist course.

The homogenization Fukuyama made so much of, in Huntington's opinion, pertained only to elites, who make up less than one percent of the world's population. "Somewhere in the Middle East a half-dozen young men could well be dressed in jeans, drinking Coke, listening to rap, and between their bows to Mecca, putting together a bomb to blow up an American airliner," he wrote, five years before 9/11.

Mearsheimer, who Betts describes as "an unregenerate realist," was, like Huntington, not optimistic about the future. The University of Chicago political scientist argued in *The Tragedy*

of *Great Power Politics* (2001) that conflict would continue because societies *always* fight for power, not the spread of “nice ideas.” He predicted that coming conflicts would make people miss the “simplicity and stability of the Cold War.” Walls may fall, but nothing really changes.

Betts argues that some of Fukuyama’s conclusions bring him more in line with his peers than is obvious at first. Fukuyama foresaw a struggle for recognition by many groups, stirring the potent forces of nationalism and religion. He conceded that history could “restart,” particularly if people who felt unrecognized politically sought to assert greater power on the world stage. Fukuyama said little about China, leaving “an elephant-sized exception to the end of history.” If China “restarts” history, the distance between the Fukuyama thesis and the pessimistic scenarios of Mearsheimer and Huntington shrinks considerably.

Big ideas are essential for policymakers, who need an overarching vision as they grapple with daily challenges. But none of these three ideas has become the consensus position for shaping policy; they are “out of step with the attitudes that have dominated U.S. foreign policy and made it overreach after the Cold War.” What is needed, Betts says, is a fourth vision, one that preserves the “compatible elements” of Fukuyama, Huntington, and Mearsheimer, and provides policymakers with a framework to help guide them as they navigate the 21st century.

## FOREIGN POLICY &amp; DEFENSE

## Ending the Endless War

**THE SOURCE:** “The End of Al Qaeda? Rethinking the Legal End of the War on Terror” by Adam Klein, in *Columbia Law Review*, Nov. 2010.

WILL THE WAR ON TERRORISM ever end? The nature of the conflict—irregular, against a nonstate enemy—has raised fears that it won’t. Our traditional understanding of war, with its simple on/off options and relatively clear-cut legal distinctions, is not well suited to the current conflict, argues Adam Klein, a law student at Columbia University.

The war on terrorism is now nearly 10 years old, legally inaugurated by the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force. The law’s scope is broad, giving authority to the president “to use all necessary and appropriate force against those

nations, organizations, or persons” that had any role in the 9/11 attacks “in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States.”

Some aspects of the war on terror do resemble traditional warfare. The terrorist organization Al Qaeda, for example, is hierarchical and centralized, like a sovereign state. It is possible to imagine a time when Al Qaeda, weakened structurally and financially, is no longer a threat. (That time is not now. Al Qaeda was still strong enough in 2009 to assist the would-be Christmas bomber in his attempt to blow up a plane on its way to Detroit from Amsterdam.)

But many terrorism specialists argue that the graver threat today is from homegrown cells and lone individuals, such as Army psychologist Nidal Hasan, charged with the 2009 shootings at Fort Hood, Texas. Such terrorists, aided and inspired by Internet sites, are members of something that is more like a social movement than an organization.



A clear-cut end is unlikely in the war on terrorism, since no one enemy can wave a white flag.

Traditionally, the legal power to detain an enemy combatant is premised on—and limited by—the notion that a soldier is an agent of his sovereign. When the sovereign declares the war over, the soldier is no longer a threat. But that's not true of terrorists who act on the basis of personal ideology.

Congress or the president could end certain aspects of the war on terrorism, such as military action, by a public act. But Klein argues that the federal government will still need the power to detain dangerous individuals. Courts, in his view, should be given the authority to assess the threat a detainee poses and the validity of his detention, in a process akin to deciding whether to release a criminal suspect on bail before trial. Thus, the power to detain would continue until each individual in custody had been released or died in detention.

This hybrid model of a war that extends certain wartime powers beyond others lacks the “superficially satisfying clarity” that comes with the absolute end to traditional wars, Klein concedes. But clarity is not a characteristic of the war in which we are now engaged.

## FOREIGN POLICY &amp; DEFENSE

## The Refugee Crisis That Wasn't

**THE SOURCE:** “The Politics of Aid to Iraqi Refugees in Jordan” by Nicholas Seeley, in *Middle East Report*, Fall 2010.

AFTER THE U.S.-LED INVASION of Iraq in 2003, Iraqi refugees began trickling into neighboring

The United Nations vastly overestimated the number of Iraqi refugees who fled to Jordan following the 2003 invasion.

countries, particularly Jordan. By 2007, the United Nations was estimating that there were 750,000 Iraqis living in Jordan—the equivalent of more than 10 percent of Jordan's population—and some thought even that number was too low. In the United States, Democrats seized on the influx as an indictment of the Bush administration's entire gambit in Iraq. U.S. aid poured in, but much of it has helped poor Jordanians rather than displaced Iraqis. This isn't your typical case of aid gone awry, writes Nicholas Seeley, editor of *JO*, an English-language magazine based in Amman. It turns out that there weren't so many Iraqis who needed help.

Before 2007, in its dealings with international donors, Jordan generally downplayed the number of Iraqis arriving in its cities. King Abdullah II's desert nation was reluctant to provide assistance, worried that the “guests” would get too comfortable and never return to Iraq. In April 2007—perhaps because of international pressure to address the situation—Jordan changed its tune and began arguing that it needed help to deal with a refugee population it claimed was

costing the country \$1 billion a year. The international community directed nearly \$400 million in aid to Jordan to help with the influx of Iraqi refugees from 2007 to 2009.

But evidence has emerged to indicate that the number of Iraqi refugees was nowhere near 750,000. A Norwegian research organization, Fafo, worked with Jordan's Department of Statistics and found that, by one statistical measure, the true number might be as low as 161,000, though Fafo cautioned that some Iraqis may not have identified themselves for fear of deportation.

The United Nations' Refugee Agency has never registered many more than 65,000 Iraqi refugees in Jordan. When Jordan opened its schools to Iraqi children in 2007, officials expected some 50,000 students to enroll, but only 12,000 have, and leaks from the Ministry of Education indicate that even that figure may be inflated. Despite the mounting evidence, Jordanian officials continue to claim that there are more than 500,000 displaced Iraqis within their borders, arguing that other data (such as cell phone registrations) support this higher estimate.

Because Iraqi refugees settled among poor Jordanians, some aid programs stipulated that 25 to 50 percent of the beneficiaries be Jordanian, but it seems likely that a lot more Jordanians than that have been reaping the benefits of American efforts to mitigate the damage caused by the war in Iraq.

## ECONOMICS, LABOR &amp; BUSINESS

# Model Students

**THE SOURCE:** “Macroeconomics After the Crisis: Time to Deal With the Pretense-of-Knowledge Syndrome” by Ricardo J. Caballero, *NBER Working Papers*, Oct. 2010.

SINCE THE FINANCIAL PANIC IN the fall of 2008, many economists have embarked on some soul-searching: How did we miss this? But the failure to predict the largest economic crisis since the Great Depression doesn't bother MIT economist Ricardo J. Caballero. Major crises are “essentially unpredictable,” he says. The big problem is not what economists don't know, but that they think they know more than they do. They aren't asking the right question: What policy advice can economists usefully give when so little is known?

Give credit where credit is due: At the periphery of the field, particularly at the intersection of macroeconomics and corporate finance, researchers are asking narrowly defined questions and producing “sensible but incomplete answers” about real-world events such as liquidity evaporation, bubbles, and contagion.

But the core of macroeconomics “has become so mesmerized with its own

internal logic that it has begun to confuse the precision it has achieved about its own world” with accuracy in describing the real one. Economists have worked to fine-tune a model of great elegance, the “dynamic stochastic general equilibrium approach,” with the hope that ultimately macroeconomics will be able to explain everything. But the economy is too complex for that.

Some may object that Caballero is being impatient, “that with enough time, we will arrive at an El Dorado of macroeconomics.” He thinks that economists are just digging themselves into an ever deeper hole. But he's not saying that the model should be scrapped entirely, just that it should be recognized for what it is: a tool that can help us understand “equilibrium in a frictionless world.”

In the real world, unlike in a model, people make economic decisions with limited information. Every now and then, something will give—for example, the defaults of

the Penn Central Railroad in 1970 and Lehman Brothers in 2008—and people will panic. Such crises are not predictable, and events that cause a crisis one time may not do so the next. Some economists have argued that the oil price spikes in the 2000s caused fewer economic frictions than those of the 1970s because people had come to expect volatility and hence did not panic.

Economists can be most useful not by attempting to predict the future but by studying how to manage the inevitable uncertainty and anxiety of economic life, Caballero concludes. This research would enable them to devise policy options, such as different insurance schemes, that could help quell future panics.

## EXCERPT

### America's Surprising Export Centers

*The 20 cities that most rely on export-related jobs include, not surprisingly, San Jose, Calif.; Seattle; and Portland, Oreg.—Asia-oriented hubs of high-technology innovation filled with young professionals, bike paths, and coffee bars that offer options of Euclidean complexity. But the list also includes places where the morning coffee run is more likely to be McDonald's or Dunkin' Donuts: Hartford, Conn.; Rochester, N.Y.; Milwaukee; Greensboro, N.C.; and Toledo and Youngstown in Ohio. Only San Jose (at 22.7 percent) generated a larger share of its employment from exports than did Wichita, Kans. (22.3 percent), where a vibrant global sales network has developed around civil aviation powers such as Cessna and Hawker Beechcraft.*

—RONALD BROWNSTEIN, editorial director  
of *National Journal* (Winter 2010)

## ECONOMICS, LABOR &amp; BUSINESS

## The Golden Millstone

**THE SOURCE:** “The Slide to Protectionism in the Great Depression: Who Succumbed and Why?” by Barry Eichengreen and Douglas A. Irwin, in *The Journal of Economic History*, Dec. 2010.

ROBERT ZOELICK, THE PRESIDENT of the World Bank, recently suggested that leading economies consider adopting a diluted gold standard (under which currencies are pegged to the price of gold) to help moderate international currency fluctuations. The gold standard is not beloved by mainstream economists, and a study by economists Barry Eichengreen of the University of California, Berkeley, and Douglas A. Irwin of Dartmouth should give Zoelick further pause. Countries that stuck to the gold standard throughout the Great Depression enacted harsh protectionist policies that caused a sharp contraction in international trade; even after economies began to recover, trade lagged.

The Depression is often remem-

bered as a time when every country imposed strict trade barriers in an effort to protect its own. But nations that abandoned the gold standard tightened their trade restrictions “only marginally.” As their currencies devalued, these countries benefited from an influx of gold, as people sought their cheaper goods. To prevent their gold from going overseas, those still on the gold standard were forced to enact tariffs, duties, and other protectionist measures against imported goods.

The first big step toward a restrictive trade era was the enactment in the United States of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930, which raised tariffs by 20 percent. But the wave of protectionist policies did not begin in earnest until 1931. That September, following a financial crisis in Austria, Britain abandoned the gold standard, a move that “sent shock waves through the world economy.” Other countries with close financial ties to Britain followed suit within days, including Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. Japan did so two months later. In general, these countries recovered

from the Depression earlier than those that stayed on the gold standard.

France, which stuck with gold until 1936, reacted to the fall in the value of the British pound (which made British goods cheaper overseas) by imposing a 15 percent surcharge on British goods. The Netherlands, also tied to gold, raised its duties by 25 percent. Between the third quarters of 1931 and 1932, world trade decreased 16 percent.

Once countries ditched the gold standard, they began relaxing their trade restrictions. In 1934, one year after the United States left gold behind, Congress passed the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act, authorizing the president to reduce tariffs. Within four years, the Smoot-Hawley increases were virtually gone.

Ideally, countries should have coordinated a simultaneous devaluation against gold, Eichengreen and Irwin argue. Instead, devaluation occurred willy-nilly between 1931 and 1936. For the countries married to the gold standard during that time, those were five very long years.

## POLITICS &amp; GOVERNMENT

## Don't Blame Polarization

**THE SOURCE:** “The Gridlock Myth” by Michael Barone, in *The American Interest*, Nov.–Dec. 2010.

DOES AMERICA'S POLARIZED political landscape render bipartisan legislation impossible? Are

supermajorities the only way to move beyond gridlock? No, contends Michael Barone, coauthor of *The Almanac of American Politics*. Partisanship isn't the reason why politicians don't reach across

the aisle—rather, it's the fear that they'll lose their seats.

Over the last 30 years, it has been easier to pass bipartisan legislation “when political voting patterns are stable and most members have reason to believe their seats are reasonably safe.”

From 1938 until the late 1970s, when turnover in Congress was low, a loose coalition of centrist Republicans and southern Demo-

crats constituted a reliable voting bloc for many important pieces of legislation. That coalition came undone as liberal Republicans from the Northeast lost their seats and conservative votes in the South shifted to the GOP. After the elections of 1982 and 1984 passed without significant upsets, however, members felt comfortable. In 1985 and 1986, bipartisan majorities passed major legislation on taxes and immigration.

Bipartisanship receded from 1991 to 1995, a period that “saw an upending of political verities.” Republicans were thought to have a hold on the presidency, but Bill Clinton took the White House in 1992. Democrats were thought to own Congress, but they lost control in 1994. The rise of Ross Perot and other third-party candidates added to the uncertainty.

The years from 1995 to 2005 tell an interesting story. Pundits decried the bitter partisanship in Washington, but there was a surprising amount of bipartisan legislation. Despite the hot rhetoric, members of Congress didn’t feel that their seats were especially endangered. President Clinton was able to pass welfare reform in 1996, and he had a good chance of passing Medicare and Social Security reforms too until the impeachment debacle, Barone says.

Even after the divisive election of 2000, bipartisan coalition-building was possible. President George W. Bush enjoyed support from congressional Democrats on his 2001 tax cuts, the No Child

Left Behind education reform effort, the 2003 Medicare prescription drug bill, the invasion of Afghanistan, and the Iraq war (a vote many Democrats later came to regret).

But in 2005, the stable pattern of the prior decade fell apart when support for Republicans dropped sharply in the polls. President Bush’s plans for a comprehensive immigration reform bill, which enjoyed some Democratic support, died in the House because Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.), aware that many Republicans were at risk of losing their seats, refused to press the legislation. Then came the large Democratic majorities after the 2008 election, which removed incentives for bipartisan collaboration. President Barack Obama’s stimulus package, health care legislation, and financial reform all passed with little, if any, Republican support.

The upheaval in the 2010 election, in which Republicans took control of the House, makes it plain “that major legislation addressing long-term problems will have to have bipartisan support to pass.” But because the electorate has been so volatile, Barone thinks it will be difficult for legislators to overcome their fears and make headway on the deficit, entitlement reform, and immigration.

It’s a vicious cycle, Barone observes. “Why are voters so willing to ‘throw out the bums’? Because they think they can’t get much of anything done. Why can’t they get much of anything

done? Because they’re afraid that bipartisan compromise will get them thrown out of office.”

## POLITICS &amp; GOVERNMENT

## Disaster Management 101

**THE SOURCE:** “Our Responder in Chief”  
by Patrick S. Roberts, in *National Affairs*,  
Fall 2010.

WHEN HURRICANE KATRINA pummeled New Orleans in 2005, Americans looked to the White House to handle the crisis. Not long ago this would have seemed odd. Only in the last 60 years, with the advent of executive agencies responsible for national security, has the president become the go-to official for disaster response. Patrick S. Roberts, an assistant professor of public administration at Virginia Tech, warns that the “fixation on the White House badly distorts the way America thinks about and prepares for major disasters.”

For most of the Republic’s history, federal assistance to disaster-stricken communities took the form of one-off congressional appropriations. The first of these came in 1803, when much of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, was destroyed in a fire. Congress provided a temporary waiver of tariffs to residents in hopes of attracting investment to rebuild the city. As a later instance shows, federal intervention could also be ad hoc: When Army troops helped restore order in the aftermath of the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco, they did so “informally,” with no instructions from Washington.

It wasn't until the Great Depression that the federal government formalized its role. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation, created in 1932 to spur investment and lending, was also tasked with disbursing federal money for disaster relief. But it was the Cold War that really drew Washington into dealing with the aftermath of disasters. Agencies such as the Federal Civil Defense Administration were created to help the country in case of nuclear war, but, in part thanks to pressure from state and local governments, they soon became key instruments in responding to natural disasters.

In 1979, Congress created the

Federal Emergency Management Agency, consolidating the various disaster-response programs spread throughout the government. In 2003, FEMA was brought under the aegis of the Department of Homeland Security. Even so, FEMA is not chiefly a hands-on agency; 90 percent of its \$10 billion budget is consumed by grants to state and local governments and to individuals.

The money pot, along with increased media coverage, has changed the politics of disaster. In the past, localities tried to downplay the damage they suffered because they feared driving away potential investors and residents. Today, state and local governments have every

reason to hope that hurricanes, fires, and floods look terrible on television. The 1988 Stafford Act guarantees that the federal government will cover a minimum of 75 percent of the response and recovery costs in presidentially declared disaster areas. Presidents have made more than a thousand such declarations.

It's time for the White House to back off from disaster management, Roberts argues. The federal government should focus on preventing disasters in the first place by redirecting subsidies to steer development away from flood-prone areas, for example, and should encourage state and local officials to ramp up their disaster-prevention efforts.

## SOCIETY

# Getting High in Portugal

**THE SOURCE:** "What Can We Learn From the Portuguese Decriminalization of Illicit Drugs?" by Caitlin Elizabeth Hughes and Alex Stevens, in *The British Journal of Criminology*, Nov. 2010.

DRUG DECRIMINALIZATION IS a topic almost too hot to handle in the United States, but Portugal quietly took the plunge 10 years ago. Since then, overall drug use has increased slightly, but the prevalence of "problematic" (e.g., intravenous) drug use is estimated to have declined, report Australian drug policy researchers Caitlin Elizabeth Hughes and Alex Stevens.

Portugal's decriminalization policy was a response to growing concern in the 1980s and '90s about the spread

of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and hepatitis B and C among users of heroin and other intravenous drugs. Drug use rates in Portugal, a land of 11 million people, have historically been pretty low. In 2001, fewer than eight percent of Portuguese 15-to-64-year-olds admitted to ever having used an illegal drug, compared with about a third of Britons. Yet by 1999 Portugal's rate of drug-related AIDS was the highest in the European Union. Since the policy went into effect, the prevalence of drug users thought to be injecting drugs has declined from 3.5 per 1,000 people to 2.0.

Because of the concern about drug-related diseases, a key

rationale for decriminalization was to provide "a more health-oriented response." The number of users enrolled in drug treatment programs increased by around 60 percent between 1998 and 2008, from a little under 24,000 to more than 38,000.

The greatest success has been in reductions in drug-related mortality, HIV, hepatitis C, and tuberculosis. In particular, there has been a large reduction in opiate-related (i.e., heroin-related) deaths, likely because more heroin addicts are receiving treatment. And the number of HIV/AIDS diagnoses among drug users has declined substantially, from 1,413 in 2000 to just 375 in 2008.

Portugal stands out not because of decriminalization—other nations have done that—but because of its emphasis on treating addiction, which seems to have produced an Iberian success story.

## SOCIETY

## The Blind Aren't Race-Blind

**THE SOURCE:** "Do Blind People See Race? Social, Legal, and Theoretical Considerations" by Osagie K. Obasogie, in *Law and Society Review*, Sept.–Dec., 2010.

"RACE-BLIND" AND "COLOR-blind" are terms that describe a societal ideal. But how do people who literally are blind think about race? Sighted people, according to Osagie K. Obasogie, often assume that the blind, as one sightless person he interviewed put it, exist in "a kind of Star Trek race-blind society." Yet after conducting interviews with 126 sighted and sightless people, Obasogie concluded that "blind people largely understand and experience race the same way that sighted

A new study shows that blind people experience race the same way that sighted individuals do: visually.

individuals do: visually."

Virtually all of the study participants who were blind mentioned skin color as a race-determining factor. Others went beyond color, Obasogie reports, to "demonstrate a rather sophisticated understanding of the range of visual cues," such as bone and face structure, that can be used to identify a person's race. A blind black man Obasogie interviewed noted that other blind people he met always "went for [the] hair," determining his race by touch.

According to Obasogie, an associate professor at the University of California's Hastings College of Law, the visual cues allow blind people to place racial characteristics in societal context, just as they do for sighted people. A blind man Obasogie identifies as Mickey noted that blind people are as prone to "racial prejudice, stereotypes, and misconceptions as anybody else." Some blind interviewees recalled that in their younger years sighted people took pains to alert them to the race of other people. Sometimes sighted people would "impart information about their assumptions about that person," one blind man related, and about "how I should or should not behave, or who I should or should not be talking to."

Obasogie's blind subjects also proved to be race-conscious in their dating behavior. One black man

## EXCERPT

## Feminism's Lost Inheritance

*How many times have we heard women say, "No older woman helped me in my career—my mentors have all been men"? How many surveys report that young women don't want, and distrust, female bosses? How often did we hear during the last presidential election that young women were recoiling from Hillary Clinton because she "reminds me of my mother"? Why does so much of "new" feminist activism and scholarship spurn the work and ideas of the generation that came before? As ungracious as these attitudes may seem, they are grounded in a sad reality: While American feminism has long, and productively, concentrated*

*on getting men to give women some of the power they used to give only to their sons, it hasn't figured out how to pass power down from woman to woman, to bequeath authority to its progeny. Its inability to conceive of a succession has crippled women's progress not just within the women's movement but in every venue of American public life. The women's movement cycled through a long first "wave," and, in increasingly shorter oscillations, a second and third wave, and some say we are now witnessing a fourth. With each go-round, women make gains, but the movement never seems able to establish an enduring birthright, a secure line of descent—to reproduce itself as a strong and sturdy force. At the core of America's most fruitful political movement resides a perpetual barrenness.*

—**SUSAN FALUDI**, author of *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (1991), in *Harper's* (Oct. 2010)

noted that he found it impossible to date outside his race. A white man stopped seeing a black woman as soon as he discovered her skin color.

There is an important practical implication in these findings, Obasogie believes. In *Bowen v. Gilliard* (1987), the Supreme Court defined factors to take into consideration when deciding whether to apply “strict scrutiny” to a case involving an allegation of discrimination; one of them was that a plaintiff have an “obvious, immutable, or distinguishing characteristic.” Obasogie says his research shows that it’s not what people look like that matters, but “the social practices that make such visual distinctions salient and perceptible.”

SOCIETY

## Untying the Knot

**THE SOURCE:** “A Right to Marry?” by Martha C. Nussbaum, in *California Law Review*, June 2010.

WHAT ROLE SHOULD THE state play in marriage? The answer depends on what you think marriage is. According to University of Chicago law professor Martha C. Nussbaum, marriage is an institution with three distinct aspects—religious, civil, and expressive—and the state currently has a hand in all of them. Especially in light of today’s disputes over gay marriage, she suggests that the state’s presence ought to be more limited.

The state’s role in the religious aspect of marriage is pretty straightforward. Lots of people want to have their weddings take

place within a spiritual tradition, and the state endows religious figures with legal authority to perform these ceremonies.

What Nussbaum sees as the civil function of marriage is also cut-and-dried. Wedded couples get tax breaks, insurance benefits, and inheritance rights. They receive preference in adoption and custody decisions. The list of government benefits is long and well known.

It’s when it comes to marriage’s expressive aspect that the appropriate role of the state gets murky. When a couple gets married, they express their love and commitment to each other, and “society, in response, recognizes and dignifies that commitment.” (This unique status in society is one reason why many same-sex couples consider civil union a half-measure and insist on full marital rights.) But there is “something odd about the mixture of casualness and solemnity with which the state behaves as a marrying agent,”

Nussbaum says. It does nothing to investigate whether the couple deserves this privileged status. The wedding of drunken strangers in Las Vegas enjoys the same status as the union of a genuinely devoted pair.

Nussbaum writes that it would be “a lot better, as a matter of both political theory and public policy, if the state withdrew from the marrying business.” She proposes that states

perform civil unions and allow weddings’ expressive aspects to be handled by religious or other groups.

Whatever a state provides in terms of a marriage-type union, it must make open to all, Nussbaum says. The Supreme Court called marriage “one of the basic civil rights of man” in 1967 when it struck down a statute barring interracial marriage in *Loving v. Virginia*. The Court has also upheld



When couples say “I do,” should the government stay out of it?

the right of state prisoners and parents who have fallen behind on child support payments to tie the knot. Even people in polygamous and incestuous relationships have the right to marry, Nussbaum says, though the state’s interest in promoting gender equality and preventing child abuse allows it to forbid them from exercising that right.

Nussbaum goes to great lengths to

show how the controversial unions of one minority—gays and lesbians—do not constitute such a threat. Even so, she does not think the time is right for

the Supreme Court to extend marriage to homosexuals. Such a step would “further politicize the Court and further polarize public opinion.”

Better to let the states experiment, allowing the public to see that gay marriage is not a threat to children or to the institution itself.

## PRESS & MEDIA

# Op-Ed Takes Wing

**THE SOURCE:** “A Profitable Public Sphere: The Creation of the *New York Times* Op-Ed Page” by Michael J. Socolow, in *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, Summer 2010.

IN THE BODY POLITIC’S CIRCULATION system, in which opinion and analysis are the blood that gives life to policymaking, the *New York Times* op-ed page is the heart. What is printed there courses through blogs, magazines, and cable TV, shaping how Americans understand the news. But just a half-century ago, the paper of record had no such page. (Other papers, including *The Washington Post* and *The Los Angeles Times*, at various times had had pages they called “op-ed,” but unlike the op-ed pages we know today, these had relied entirely on staff writers for their content.) Across from the *Times*’ editorials was a different popular section—the obituaries.

A *New York Times* editorial writer, John B. Oakes, began a campaign to establish an op-ed page in the early 1960s following an incident in which he received a piece of commentary from a Suez Canal Company representative about the Egyptian government’s seizure of the canal. But the paper had no space for an essay by an outside

source. Publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger was not keen on Oakes’s idea, not wanting to mess with the popular, revenue-generating obituaries page. Others felt that the op-ed page would “encroach on the interpretative analysis then appearing in the news pages,” and were doubtful that “outside contributions would be of sufficient quality.”

But Oakes would not be deterred. “The function of newspapers and newspapermen,” he

The turbulent 1960s and a determined editorial writer inspired *The New York Times* to launch its signature op-ed page.

said, was to “interpret [the] age to the general public.” Newspapers had the same responsibility to their readers that colleges had to their students: to make them think. (Oakes, a bit of an idealist, was opposed to devoting any of the page’s space to advertisements.)

Oakes’s plans got a boost when, in 1966, *The New York Herald*

*Tribune*—which occasionally published outside contributions of the sort Oakes envisioned—folded. The *Tribune* had provided a conservative counterweight to the *Times*’ more liberal outlook, and some on the *Times* staff felt, as assistant managing editor Harrison Salisbury put it, that the newspaper must commit to “providing a platform for responsible conservative opinion.”

Sulzberger soon convened a study group to flesh out Oakes’s idea. Would the page need its own editor and staff? Would they use syndicated material? Would there be political cartoons? How would advertising fit in? Over the next two years, the group continued to tweak the concept, but it wasn’t until the fall of 1969, when Sulzberger decided to raise the newsstand price from 10 to 15 cents, that he put the plan in motion, hoping that the new feature would preserve readership despite the higher cost. He appointed Salisbury as editor and, in July, publicly announced the page’s impending arrival.

The effort was a quick success, and the paper never looked back. Within its first six months, the new section brought in \$112,000 in advertising profits. Lou Silverstein, one of the page’s designers, later remarked that the 1960s were “a bad time for the country but a good time to start the op-ed page.”

## PRESS &amp; MEDIA

## Renaissance on the Airwaves

**THE SOURCE:** "All Programs Considered" by Bill McKibben, in *The New York Review of Books*, Nov. 11, 2010.

THERE'S SOMETHING OF A mini-renaissance taking place on America's radio waves—particularly on public radio—but you'd be hard-pressed to find any note made of it in most newspapers, on television, or even on public radio itself. Compared with other media, "radio may be the least discussed, debated, [and] understood," remarks author and environmental activist Bill McKibben.

It's not that no one is listening. NPR's flagship news programs, *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*, each draw about 13 million listeners in the course of a week, audiences that dwarf the number of subscribers to major print publication such as *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker*.

And these well-regarded news programs (polls show that public radio is the most trusted news source in the country) are just the tip of the iceberg—a panoply of high-quality call-in shows, local talk programs, and interview shows such as *Fresh Air* round out the standard NPR station's offerings.

Not too long ago, "radio was dead," remembers Robert Krulwich, a host of the science- and philosophy-focused *Radiolab*. "All the smarties were at the *Times* or *The Washington Post*. . . . This group of nutty people wandered in and said, let's do radio. We'll reinvent it." Today, those nutty people run the show, "and now they have a little of the swagger of the *Timesmen*."

McKibben argues that the success of the NPR news programming has "tended to wash out some of the distinctiveness." Today, the creativity is happening elsewhere, in programs such as *Radiolab* and Ira Glass's *This American Life*, a weekly hour that prides itself on producing so-called driveway moments—segments so

good you can't leave your car. Both programs have tackled subjects many traditional news outlets would shy away from. The hosts of *Radiolab*, in "an almost comic attempt to make their job hard," have explored topics such as time, morality, and memory.

The Internet's ascendance has meant that audio files can circulate among friends, and that a program, once aired, has a second life online. Before the Internet, says *Radiolab*'s other host, Jad Abumrad, "it was hard for us to justify the amount of labor we put into it. Because it was disposable, just out there in the world and then gone."

But the economics aren't quite working out, for stations and producers alike. Podcasts are nearly universally offered for free, and many stations can't afford edgier, more experimental programs. One independent producer, Benjamin Walker, estimates that he made \$80 on a widely promoted show called *Theory of Everything* that ran on six NPR stations across the country. "If I thought about it too hard, I would just quit."

## RELIGION &amp; PHILOSOPHY

## Catholicism's Lessons for Islam

**THE SOURCE:** "Making Muslim Democracies" by Jan-Werner Müller, in *The Boston Review*, Nov.-Dec. 2010.

IN 2008, TURKEY'S RULING Justice and Development Party (AKP) narrowly missed being out-

lawed. State prosecutors argued that the conservative AKP—whose official platform includes economic modernization and EU membership—was bent on Islamizing the secular state and moving toward theocracy. Some may see the AKP as

the model of a Muslim party, appealing to believers while playing by democracy's rules, but many others within Turkey and elsewhere continue to fear that Islam and democracy are incompatible.

Concerns that religion and democracy do not mix aren't new, writes Princeton political theorist Jan-Werner Müller, nor are they confined to Islam. In the 19th century and far into the 20th, Catholicism was the big worry. Many blamed Catholicism for "the persistence of dictatorship in Latin Amer-



French philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882–1973) believed that democracy was a Christian ideal.

ica and on the Iberian Peninsula” and believed that Catholic citizens’ deepest loyalties lay with the Vatican. (Memorably, this was a big issue for Catholic presidential candidate John F. Kennedy in 1960.) Yet in the latter half of the 20th century, Christian Democratic parties (generally Catholic-based) informed by “select doctrinal values” but respectful of the church-state divide flourished in Western Europe and to an extent in Latin America. Couldn’t Islam chart a similar course?

Many in the West object that this analogy is false. Some argue that European Catholics only embraced democracy on orders from the Vatican—and Muslims have no similar central institution. Others hold that the character of Christian Democratic ideas wasn’t any more instrumental in Catholics’ eventual political integration than a “specifically Muslim style of democracy” might be, because it is “the structure of democratic inclusion, not the distinctive ideas that inform it, that leads to moderation.”

Don’t be so fast to dismiss the Catholic parallel, says Müller. First, Europe’s newly formed Christian Democratic parties were hardly puppets of the Vatican, which often did not approve of their creation, control their leadership, or condone their left-veering programs. The Vatican endorsed democracy “only after decades of Christian Democratic practice.”

Instead, Müller argues, Christian doctrine did indeed inspire Catholicism’s turn toward democracy. The ideas of French philosopher Jacques Maritain provide one good example. Beginning in the 1930s, he developed an array of arguments that embraced democracy and human rights as Christian ideals. Though Christian Democracy’s “astounding electoral successes” owed a lot to its firm anticommunist stance and other factors, they were aided by an ideology that tacked between believers’ spiritual values and nonbelievers’ need for “assurance that religiously inspired parties would not abandon state neutrality in religious affairs once in power.”

Whether such a path is available to Islam is an open question, Müller concedes. What the Catholic example *does* show is that “the formation of some liberalized Islam by self-consciously moderate and democratic Muslim intellectuals should not be seen as a sideshow.” Debates among Muslims about the role of sharia in state law and the thinking of such polarizing figures as scholar Tariq Ramadan may cause alarm, but they are important for developing a hospitable foundation for democracy. And in entering

the push-and-pull democratic arena, Muslim parties will inevitably be forced to adapt religious precepts and traditions, Müller argues, a fact that “blanket condemnations of Islam as incompatible with democracy overlook.”

#### RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

## Writing Rights

**THE SOURCE:** “Rights, Words, and Laws” by Amartya Sen, in *The New Republic*, Oct. 28, 2010.

WHAT ARE RIGHTS AND WHERE do they come from? Behind the word “rights” are two distinct concepts: a moral and political call to action in the absence of a legal right (i.e., a right to fight for suffrage where none exists) and a right created by law, such as the right to vote. The two ideas are certainly related, but the line from natural rights to legal ones may not be at all direct, observes Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen.

Public recognition of a right often leads to legal recognition, but laws are not the only avenue for establishing rights. Organizations such as Doctors Without Borders and the Red Cross help advance the cause of human rights (such as a right to health care) simply by doing their work. And there are certain cases in which rights can be better established through social criticism and public debate than by statute. For example, law is not the best way to protect a woman’s right to have a voice in family decisions.

Within the legal sphere of rights, laws do not necessarily need to be changed in order for new rights to be

legally recognized. Recognition can come through judicial interpretation. It's "hard not to be an 'originalist' in some sense" when interpreting the Constitution, Sen says, but even that leaves a lot open to discussion about "what exactly of the original enterprise needs to be preserved": the specific language used or the "constitutional motivation." Interpreting the Constitution in light of the motivations at its core—the Framers' vision of a system that would "make room for people with divergent interests and values to live together"—Sen argues, is a more compelling method for keeping it modern.

Surprisingly, adhering to a strict textual interpretation of the Constitution does not proscribe some accommodation to modern ideas. Over time language evolves, and some of the words of the Founders today mean something quite different than they did in 1787. As a result, even a strictly textual reading will change over time. Though the evolution of words and our ideas about human rights may not correspond exactly, it's important to acknowledge that judges who embrace originalism are not just machines but interpreters of words, which, as Samuel Johnson put it, "are but the signs of ideas."

## RELIGION &amp; PHILOSOPHY

## A Jewish Revival

**THE SOURCE:** "The American Jewish Revival of *Musar*" by Geoffrey Claussen, in *The Hedgehog Review*, Summer 2010.

OVER THE LAST DECADE, A small, obscure movement has made inroads into non-Orthodox

American Jewish culture. *Musar* began in Lithuania in the 19th century as a reaction to the extremely scholarly, text-focused Jewish culture that dominated. (The Hebrew word *musar* can be loosely translated as "morality.") Led by Rabbi Israel Salanter (1810–83), proponents argued that text study alone does not lead to greater moral character. Instead, adherents must engage in frequent and rigorous introspection and develop practices to address their character flaws. In certain important ways, the revival of *musar* today is, like the

*Musar*, a rigorous Jewish ethical practice from Lithuania, is gaining adherents in America.

impulse behind its Lithuanian predecessor, countercultural, rejecting the prominent American feel-good ethos of self-esteem coddlers. But, argues Jewish Theological Seminary doctoral candidate Geoffrey Claussen, "there are ways in which the revival of the *musar* movement is encouraged by strong trends in Jewish culture and in the broader American culture."

The practice of *musar* is no walk in the park. It calls for "introspective meditation and journaling, conversations about one's moral situation that elicit critical feedback, chanting and visualization exercises that engage the emotions, a deep commitment

to the ethical and ritual requirements of Jewish law, and engaging in acts of kindness beyond what the law requires." The work is highly individualized. It aims to foster the virtues of "love, justice, compassion, generosity, reverence, faith, humility, equanimity, and patience."

Salanter's hopes for a mass movement were never realized in Lithuania. Traditionalists rejected his methods in favor of more intellectually driven moral education, and liberals were turned off by *musar's* piety, favoring more Western approaches to morality. The would-be movement more or less died out when a large portion of its followers were killed in the Holocaust. Some of those who survived emigrated to America, but few continued to teach the practice. One prominent American rabbi is said to have thought that Americans were not equipped to handle the enormous work that *musar* requires.

Strangely, this movement is now flourishing in America, and particularly among non-Orthodox Jews. Though *musar's* rigor and intensity certainly don't appeal to everyone, some of its elements are a good fit for American Jews. Studies have shown that Americans prefer solitary meditation to group worship. Jews—often alienated by impersonal synagogue services, an ancient liturgy, and prayers in a foreign language—are no exception. Perhaps the most appealing aspect of *musar* is that it speaks a universal language, asking Jews to become more ethical people, not just "better Jews."

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

# Journals Galore

**THE SOURCE:** "Seriality and the Search for Order: Scientific Print and Its Problems During the Late 19th Century" by Alex Csiszar, in *History of Science*, Sept.–Dec. 2010.

IF A SCIENTIST PUBLISHES NEW findings in a journal and no one reads the article, did that scientist still make a discovery?

That question is not very relevant to researchers today because powerful online databases ensure that a publication won't be lost to history. But for scientists in the 19th century, a sudden profusion of specialized scientific periodicals combined with the absence of a tracking system for publications made the threat of obscurity very real, writes Harvard historian Alex Csiszar. One English physicist remarked that "the rediscovery in the

library may be a more difficult and uncertain process than the first discovery in the laboratory."

When scientific journals emerged in the 17th century "they would have been among the last places to look to find authoritative knowledge claims," Csiszar says. Books and monographs, and even informal correspondence among colleagues, not periodicals, were the agreed-upon space in which to document scientific advances. Like newspapers and gazettes of that era, the early scientific journals were not seen as reliable. Many functioned more as specialty news sources, summarizing findings from books.

The development of organizational systems such as comprehensive indexes and bibliographies lagged behind the proliferation of journals.

For scientists, this meant that simply knowing what was known was often impossible. Zoologists, for example, found it increasingly challenging to determine whether a species identified as new really was unknown to the scientific establishment. One complained, "Nearly the whole lives of zoologists will come to be spent in libraries, until the thing gets so intolerable that someone suggests that we burn all the books and start afresh from nature."

Moreover, in the period before scientific journals established their authority, credit for discoveries was often contested. In 1846, when Neptune was first observed by telescope, a French publication credited astronomer Urbain Le Verrier with having earlier predicted the planet's existence. British astronomers protested that John Couch Adams had done so first, in a conjecture that was unpublished but "a subject of common conversation" among his friends. One Frenchman responded

## EXCERPT

## The Light Bulb Myth

*Scientists themselves have done little to disabuse the public of the view that they have thought-bubble moments of brilliance which they then toil to confirm. That's in part because the myth is tidier than the truth. "We retrofit that idea of hypothesis-driven science in part because scientists are too embarrassed to admit that they were stumbling around in the data and stubbed their toe on a finding," said Chris Hilton, senior archivist at the Wellcome Library, which specializes in the history*

*of science. In the biomedical sciences, where we worship at the altar of the randomized controlled trial, the supremacy of the hypothesis is written into our codes of conduct; you are forbidden not to have one. When bright-eyed epidemiology students ask me about "fishing" (our more organic term for data mining), I have to tell them it is streng verboten to trawl through their data until they net some association that will be statistically significant and thus give them a "result." We protect against this wickedness by requiring researchers to tell us what questions they will be answering before they have enrolled a single person in a clinical trial.*

—ELIZABETH PISANI, an epidemiologist and writer, in

*Prospect* (Dec. 2010)

that the only “rational and just way to write the history of science is to rely exclusively on publications having a precise date.”

Over time, that position prevailed. By the beginning of the 20th century, authoritative scientific journals were the place to establish credentials and make findings public. In 1902, Britain’s Royal Society initiated the publication of the *International Catalogue of Scientific Literature*, an annual index running 17 volumes in length and covering all major areas of scientific research.

The rise of journals posed a problem that was bigger than how to organize publications; it was a question of how to organize the entire field of science. Before journals, a common metaphor for nature was a book. Nature was a self-contained, intelligible document that scientists could “read.” But by 1900, the metaphor had changed. Mathematician and physicist Henri Poincaré referred to nature, as Csiszar puts it, “as a vast expanse of print matter, a body the scientist did not so much read through, as search, select from, and catalog.” The medium, it seems, represented the message.

#### SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

## School for Slugs

**THE SOURCE:** “Learning Degree Zero” by D. Graham Burnett, in *Cabinet*, Fall 2010.

WHEN NEUROSCIENTIST ERIC Kandel gave his acceptance speech after winning the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2000, he puckishly flashed a Photoshopped picture of a giant undersea slug sporting a Nobel medal on the



**Undersea slugs don't know the three Rs, but they can learn just enough to be the perfect specimens for scientists who study how learning occurs.**

screen behind him.

*Aplysia californica* is not just any old slug, but “the creature upon which much of the modern scientific understanding of learning has been built,” writes D. Graham Burnett, a Princeton historian and an editor of *Cabinet*.

The first half of the 20th century saw halting progress in the quest to understand what exactly learning is. German psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus identified the “learning curve,” and Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov famously trained animals to respond to certain stimuli in what he called “classical conditioning.” But when it came to describing how learning actually happens, scientists were stymied. Psychologist Karl Lashley joked in 1950, “I sometimes feel, in reviewing the evidence, . . . that the necessary conclusion is that learning is just not possible.”

The study of what are called “model organisms” has produced many core scientific discoveries. Where would genetics be without fruit flies? In the

early 1960s, Kandel was looking for the model organism for the science of learning. Dogs and rats were too complicated, their behavior too intricate. He “wanted to study learning in an animal built for the very simplest kinds of information acquisition and storage,” Burnett says. “An animal that could be understood as a little laboratory learning-machine: limited behavioral repertoire; large, simple wiring; a resilient metabolism; and, ideally, small teeth (no one likes getting chomped by lab animals).”

Enter *Aplysia californica*, a large slug that lives in the kelp forests and rocky reefs off the Pacific coast of the United States. An individual specimen can weigh more than 10 pounds. The slugs’ skin is translucent, allowing them to turn the color of the kelp they eat and hide from predators. “When scrunched up contentedly, they look a bit like rabbits,” Burnett notes. *A. californica* conveniently has huge neurons, and relatively few of them to boot (about 20,000, whereas mammals

can have upward of 100 million). Equally convenient, the slugs “have organized their ‘brain’ into half a dozen little brainlets called ‘ganglia’ which are located in some proximity to the parts of the body they control.”

But could they learn? In the 1960s and ’70s, Kandel and his colleagues showed that if you had patience, a Waterpik, and a cattle prod, you could “train” the slugs. They could get used to stimuli that were harmless, and, notably, they could be classically conditioned, meaning they could learn to associate one stimulus with another. Eerily, they still behaved the same way with “their intact brainlets carefully removed from their bodies and laid on a sheet of glass, . . . provided one didn’t sever the various nerves that wired them up,” Burnett says. Learning, Kandel and his colleagues discovered, happens through what scientists call “synaptic plasticity”—changes that occur in the connection between two neurons in response to stimuli.

Of course, that’s putting it simply, but, like the slugs, sometimes simple things can help us understand something much more complicated.

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

## Brave New Worlds

**THE SOURCE:** “The Four Hundred Years of Planetary Science Since Galileo and Kepler” by Joseph A. Burns, in *Nature*, July 29, 2010.

SCIENTISTS WERE STUNNED IN 1979 when *Voyager 1* revealed Io, a moon of Jupiter long thought to be a dead chunk of rock, to have a number of active volcanoes spewing lava in spectacular plumes above its sur-

face. Io is just one wonder among many uncovered in the last 50 years with the advent of the space age and its interplanetary probes, space-based telescopes, and other technological advances. But the pace and nature of the recent revelations about the solar system—and beyond—also underscore, says Joseph A. Burns, how “sluggish” the pace of discovery was during the 350-year period after Tuscan scientist Galileo Galilei first turned his “improved, but still primitive, telescope heavenward” in 1610.

Until humankind ventured into space, astronomy could advance only at the slow but steady pace of incremental improvements in telescopes, as scientists built larger viewers and improved lenses. Observers counted five moons of Saturn between 1655 and 1684, and added four more by the end of the 19th century. William Herschel’s chance sighting of Uranus in 1781 vastly extended the perceived size of the solar system. From mathematical analysis of that giant planet’s orbital fluctuations, others inferred the existence of Neptune (in 1846) and then Pluto (hailed as the ninth planet upon its discovery in 1930, though recently downgraded to a mere “dwarf planet”). But little was known about the chemical makeup of the planets, moons, comets, and asteroids that populate Earth’s galactic neighborhood.

Despite the 1986 *Challenger* disaster and chronic funding difficulties, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration still managed a series of deep-space triumphs in the 1970s and ’80s with the two *Voyager* missions and follow-up

launches of *Galileo* to Jupiter (1989) and *Cassini-Huygens* to Saturn (1997). The latter mission disclosed Titan (one of Saturn’s moons) to be “a remarkable world,” Burns writes, complete with “globe-girdling, hydrocarbon sand dunes, apparent dendritic valley systems, and regional-scale methane lakes.”

These space missions, says Burns, who teaches astronomy at Cornell University, also uncovered chaos’s “determining role in the solar system’s accumulation and evolution.” Observing the random spin of Hyperion (one of Saturn’s moons) and Mars’s odd oblique orbit forced scientists to completely dispense with the notion of a “clocklike universe” that had persisted even up to the mid-20th century. And evidence of long-ago collisions between Earth and immense extraterrestrial objects, as well as the spectacular impact of the Shoemaker-Levy 9 comet with Jupiter, demonstrated that the universe, far from being a serene, unchanging realm, as observers had once believed, could transform in an instant.

What comes next? Burns applauds NASA’s present strategy to “follow the water” in its search for extraterrestrial life. Could some form of life exist at the bottom of Martian river basins or emerge from frigid Titan’s “rich organic environment”? The list of potentially habitable zones, both in and out of our solar system, has been lengthened in recent years, but, Burns concludes, “if extraterrestrial life is found, probably it will not be where or what scientists currently forecast.”

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

# Gauguin's Stillness

**THE SOURCE:** "Old Vagabond" by Barry Schwabsky, in *The Nation*, Nov. 1, 2010.

PAUL GAUGUIN WAS THE MOST paradoxical of painters: a restless, footloose man who produced paintings of "uncanny stasis," writes *The Nation's* art critic, Barry Schwabsky.

Born in Paris in 1848, Gauguin spent his childhood in France and in Peru, where his grandmother had roots that he liked to believe were Indian. As a stockbroker in Paris he was quite successful, and collected works by Camille Pissarro, Paul Cézanne, and Edgar Degas. In his own right, he was successful as a "Sunday painter." When the markets crashed in 1882, he decided to pursue painting full time. Leaving his Danish wife with their five children in Copenhagen, he set sail for Martinique and Panama, seeking to refresh himself "far from the company of men."

In the late 1880s Gauguin returned to France and was invited to Arles by Vincent van Gogh to help establish a "Studio of the South." After an intense and dramatic collaboration (which some historians now believe ended when Gauguin accidentally severed Van Gogh's ear, though most people place Gauguin in Paris when the incident occurred), Gauguin left for Tahiti, where he produced many of his most famous paintings. In 1901

he took to the seas again, settling in the Marquesas Islands, where he died in 1903.

At the heart of Gauguin's legacy is "the tension between the incessant, restless movement of his life, and the steadiness characteristic of his art," Schwabsky observes. Consider an early painting, *Breton Girls Dancing, Pont-Aven* (1888). "What gives this work its atmosphere is the way the three girls embody an inexplicable stillness," he says. The children look more like they are playing at being statues than enjoying a dance. The one exception to motionlessness is animals. "Even when the animals are shown as

still, you feel they could move at any minute; even when the humans are shown in motion, they seem fixed in place."

This stillness in Gauguin's work "reflects his urge to perceive something eternal within the momentary," Schwabsky notes. Unlike many wanderers, Gauguin was not searching for something new, but "something ancient and perhaps close to vanishing."

Many art historians have not known what to make of Gauguin, often treating him with disdain. Judged through the lens of feminism and anti-colonialism in the 1980s, he was deemed "just one more adventurer" with a "passion for exotica . . . and a sleazy thirst for sex with dark-skinned underage women."

More recently, the critical tide has turned in Gauguin's favor. A new show at the Tate Modern in London attempts to make sense of



The human figures in Paul Gauguin's paintings display an "uncanny stillness," says art critic Barry Schwabsky, while animals seem ready to pounce, as in this 1892 canvas, *Arearea*.

Gauguin's legacy "under the rubric of 'narrative.'" It's a misbegotten effort, in Schwabsky's view. Gauguin was not a storyteller. "The bodies and faces of the Polynesian women Gauguin incessantly painted were not simply offered up for delectation and the projection of fantasies. They possess their own intelligence and keep their own counsel; their slyness and self-possession make them resistant to interpretation, almost indecipherable. Gauguin identified with them precisely because he could not entirely 'read' them."

What matters most about Gauguin is his use of color. His "rich cadences of dissonance and harmony [made] out of color and line, the likes of which had no more been seen before in painting than had his Polynesian subjects," capture a moment and a mood, but their stories are hidden.

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

## Papa's Painful Passion

**THE SOURCE:** "Hemingway in Love: Four Found Letters" by Jeffrey Meyers, in *Raritan*, Summer 2010.

IT SOUNDS A BIT LIKE A HEMINGWAY novel: An aging novelist, bound for Europe on the *Île de France* with his fourth wife, meets a vivacious, attractive fellow passenger, and during the long Atlantic crossing flirtation blossoms into infatuation. During the ensuing month's sojourn in France, the young woman—to the annoyance of the novelist's wife—joins them, and not even the arrival of the woman's own husband blunts the budding affair.

Four recently discovered love letters reveal the players in this *ménage à quatre*: Ernest Hemingway, fresh from completing *Across the River and Into the Trees* (1950), his first novel in 10 years; his wife, Mary; Jigee Viertel (née Virginia Ray of Pittsburgh); and Viertel's husband, Peter, also a writer, who later penned a memoir of Hemingway, *Dangerous Friends*. According to Berkeley-based writer Jeffrey Meyers, author of a 1999 biography of Hemingway, "these letters reveal Hemingway constructing and prolonging a romantic fantasy, part paternal and protective, part courtly and devoted." Jigee seems to have both encouraged and enjoyed the older novelist's attention, and made no effort to conceal it from her husband. Hemingway, she told Peter, simply needed to be "a tiny bit in love with someone in order to feel more alive."

"When you went away," Hemingway wrote to Jigee, after she and Peter left for Paris, "I missed you so badly that better not to talk, nor think, nor write it." He told her, "I feel like people feel after big amputations." He portrayed himself, in a letter sent the next day, as "the loneliest worst dressed man in the world," but made no mention of his wife. Yet it was around this time that Hemingway confessed to Mary—as she revealed in a later memoir—"in devastating detail Jigee's campaign to snare him. [Mary] obviously doesn't appreciate you. We'll have a ranch with horses in California and you can give up the heat of Cuba. I understand your wonderful sensibilities."

Despite these intimate glimpses into Hemingway's doings, Meyers aligns himself with Peter Viertel's

impression of the relationship. Hemingway was, as Meyers puts it, "more in love with the idea of love than with the actual woman, and his painful passion for Jigee was probably not consummated."

Hemingway's infatuation with Jigee fits neatly into a pattern noted earlier by F. Scott Fitzgerald, who once observed, "I have a theory that Ernest needs a new woman for each big book. There was one for the stories and *The Sun Also Rises*. Now there's Pauline [his second wife]. *A Farewell to Arms* is a big book. If there's another big book I think we'll find Ernest has another wife." As Hemingway aged, Meyers believes, and became "more anxious, fearful about his health and his creativity, he needed to be 'a tiny bit in love with someone' to ward off despair and remind him of how he felt when he wrote his best work."

Hemingway's battle with despair ended in suicide in 1961. Jigee, too, met a sad end. Peter abandoned her when she was pregnant with their only child, and she became an alcoholic; in 1960, Meyers reports, "she accidentally lit her nightgown with her cigarette, suffered horrible burns, and died after a month in hospital."

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

## The Death of Dance?

**THE SOURCE:** "Last Rites" by Sara Hamdan, in *First Things*, Aug.–Sept. 2010.

ONLY A FEW DECADES AGO, Mikhail Baryshnikov and Rudolf Nureyev graced the covers of

national magazines. Today, dancers and choreographers find that even a steady income, let alone this degree of fame, is nearly impossible to attain. According to Sara Hamdan, herself a former dancer, “the dance world is crumbling, and young dancers . . . are training for a profession that grows smaller and less significant by the year.”

Dance has fallen out of favor with the public, especially younger audiences. Ballet attendance dropped by a third between 1982 and 2008 and by nearly half among those 18 to 24.

Dance demands a lot of its audience—it’s not an iPod experience. The legacies of the innovative choreographers who turned dance into “a cultural sensation” in the 20th century are now at risk. The Paul Taylor Dance Company, for example, stages about half as many shows today as it did in 2008 and earns fees that are much less than those it received not long ago. The New York City Ballet has laid off dancers, reduced staff salaries, and initiated a hiring freeze, but still has a large deficit.

The only way dance will recover is by finding a way to appeal to young people, Hamdan says. Tough customers, they hold an idea of dance that reflects what they see on videos and television—dance as competition or as a display of pure physical talent. Ballet and modern dance have traditionally concerned themselves with conveying meaningful narratives, and dance companies are reluctant to experiment. Instead, they pour money into restoring marble lobbies and proscenium arches—not a shrewd way

to attract people who are put off by the expense and formality of dance.

Trained dancers find themselves in a difficult situation as companies continue to close, leaving a large number of talented dancers competing for a shrinking number of positions. Much like journalism schools, dance schools have continued to churn out trained professionals despite the field’s decline. Even those dancers with paying work usually need to take on other jobs to pay their bills. Younger dancers find themselves vying against veterans for positions with minor companies. The traditional system of handing down knowledge from one dance generation to the next is breaking down. “Slowly but surely,” Hamdan notes, “a career path is fading away.”

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

## The Paradox of Words

**THE SOURCE:** “The Muse of Impossibility” by Alberto Manguel, in *The Threepenny Review*, Fall 2010.

ARGENTINE ESSAYIST ALBERTO Manguel believes that at the heart of writing lies a paradox: Writers think that they “can construct (or reconstruct) the world through words”—that language can, by expressing reality, create reality—but at the same time, capturing the world with words is impossible. Writers can never create anything more than “something that suggests an approximation to a copy of a blurry intuition of the real thing,” Manguel writes. “All our

The best that writers can achieve, says Argentine essayist Alberto Manguel, is “an approximation to a copy of a blurry intuition of the real thing.”

libraries are the glorious record of that failure.”

The conviction that language can create worlds is an ancient one. According to Jewish mystical thought, God created the 22 letters of Hebrew, and all beings came into existence through the “mere interweaving” of the alphabet: The words of God created the earth and all that lives upon it.

But, Manguel says, this story has a counterpart—the story of the Tower of Babel, where God divided the world’s unified tongue into many, and no longer could any single language encapsulate the essence of any thing. Taken together, these stories illustrate both the promise and the limitations of language.

Every time we use words to express ourselves, we implicitly declare our faith in the words’ ability to convey what we mean, but, says Manguel, “faith in language is, like all true faiths, unaltered by a practice that contradicts its claims—unaltered in spite of our knowledge that whenever we try to say something, however simple, however clear-cut, only a shadow of that something travels from our conception to its utterance, and further from its utterance to its reception and understanding.”

Manguel notes that the paradox of language is “apparent in almost every culture.” Hindu poet Tulsi Das “argued that the reality of fiction is always other than the reality of the material world, and overrides it.” For Zen Buddhists, “the instantaneous illumination or *satori* is always both within and beyond the grasp of words.”

The poet and writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986) explored this paradox throughout his life. In his poem “Ariosto and the Arabs,” he

wrote, “No one can write a book. / For a book truly to be / You require the sunset and the dawn, / Centuries, weapons, and the cleaving sea.”

Could an artist actually create reality in some of his stories? In “The Congress,” Borges’ character “dreams of compiling a complete encyclopedia of the world and in the end realizes that the encyclopedia already exists, and is the world itself.” In another, “Parable of the Palace,” a poet perfectly captures an emperor’s estate, “causing it to dis-

appear.” The only artist whose work is reality, according to Borges, is God.

The futility of attempting to create a world through words gnawed at Borges. He wrote to a friend in 1919, “Sometimes I think that it’s idiotic to have the ambition of being a more-or-less mediocre maker of phrases. But that is my destiny.” Of course, Borges’ “mediocre” phrases are cherished by readers the world over, failures though they might be.

## OTHER NATIONS

# Russia’s Farm Comeback

**THE SOURCE:** “Russia’s Food Policies and Foreign Policy” by Stephen K. Wegren, in *Demokratizatsiya*, Summer 2010.

ONLY 20 YEARS AGO, IMAGES of disgruntled Soviet citizens standing in long queues near run-down groceries were a common sight on Western television. But recently, the fruits of the Russian *zemlya* (earth) have made their way to dinner tables from Oslo to Miami. The resurgence of Russian agriculture introduces a new and intriguing dimension into relations with the often bellicose giant, writes Stephen K. Wegren, a political scientist at Southern Methodist University: food policy.

In the years leading to and following the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russians endured “chronic [food] shortages, poor quality, poor selection, and even food

rationing,” Wegren writes. Long-standing state subsidies for farming collapsed along with communism, bringing agricultural production to a halt and causing food prices to skyrocket—they rose a mind-boggling 2,670 percent in 1992. During these tough years, much of the food Russians managed to get their hands on came from individual garden plots the Soviet government had parceled out when the food crisis dawned in the 1980s.

Buying food from other countries became common practice, with Moscow officials estimating that large Russian cities imported more than 70 percent of their meat in the mid-1990s. In 1998, after a particularly poor harvest, Russia had to accept nearly \$1.5 billion in food aid and humanitarian assistance from the United States and the European Union.

This “political humiliation” spurred the once proud superpower to make big changes to its food policy, Wegren writes.

Over the next few years, the Kremlin plumped the coffers of the country’s agricultural producers by forgiving farm debts, simplifying tax regimes, and increasing financial support through investment, interest-rate subsidies, and credit extensions. The government pledged to shield grain producers from a devastating drop in prices during good harvests (when supply flooded the market and drove down prices) by buying up the country’s surplus grain. In the interest of becoming “food secure,” the state introduced a menu of protectionist quotas, tariffs, and bans to squeeze foreign producers out of the Russian market.

The new policies seem to have paid off: The volume and yield of food commodities produced in Russia have vastly improved, and 78 percent of the country’s farms reported breaking even or making a profit in 2007, compared with

only 11 percent in 1998. Russia rose to become the world's third largest wheat exporter behind the United States and Canada, although a drought in 2010 depressed output of wheat and other grains.

Russia's agricultural rebound doesn't have everyone applauding. Moscow's "boorish international economic behavior," including politically motivated embargoes on French poultry in 2006, Indian rice in 2007, and Georgian wine in 2008, has made many countries wary. Even though Russia is not yet a leading global food producer, the world does not want a new Iron Curtain to snap down around the country's verdant heartland.

OTHER NATIONS

## Pakistani Pop

**THE SOURCE:** "Pop Idols" by Kamila Shamsie, in *Granta*, Autumn 2010.

WHEN NOVELIST KAMILA SHAMSIE left Pakistan for America in the early 1990s, she expected that some of the pop stars of her youth would "fade away." But instead they've transformed themselves, and in ways that "reflect Pakistan's shifting religio-political landscape."

When she was growing up in Pakistan, in the mid-1980s, one thing was obvious, Shamsie reflects: "Youth culture was For-

eign. The privileged among us could visit it, but none of us could live there." But in 1987, a distinctive Pakistani youth culture emerged with the video hit "Dil Dil Pakistan" ("Heart Heart Pakistan"), by the band Vital Signs from Rawalpindi. "Millions of Pakistanis, including my 14-year-old self, fell over in rapture," Shamsie remembers.

As Pakistan's youth culture entered a new era, so did the young country's politics. Over the preceding decade, under the rule of military dictator Mohammad Zia ul-Haq, Islamization had spread throughout Pakistan. Zia's alliance with the United States had brought guns, Shamsie says, and his alliance with the Saudis had brought Wahhabism, a strain of Islam at odds with the deeply personal Sufism that was traditional in Pakistan. In 1986, however, Zia's more secular-minded rival Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan after eight years in exile, and a million people flooded the streets of Lahore to welcome her. That same year, Lahore's Al-Hamra

auditorium hosted its first battle of the bands. In December 1988 Bhutto was sworn in as prime minister. "Elation was in the air, and it had a soundtrack"—"Dil Dil Pakistan."

But Bhutto's election did not presage the bright future many had hoped for. One reason was that Islamization had taken hold. For example, one alumnus of Vital Signs, Junaid Jamshed, became a "fundo," a derogatory term for a fundamentalist. He joined a proselytizing movement that advocates following Muhammad in the most literal ways: the length of one's beard, the style of one's dress, even how one speaks—such as adopting an Arab inflection. Another Vital Signs member, Salman Ahmad, got deeply into Sufism and pioneered Sufi rock. A Vital Signs spinoff band, Junoon, produced rock star Ali Azmat, who has used his fame to fight against Zionism. Together, these paths illustrate the "polarity and discordance" that animate Pakistan today.

"It's a strange business, growing up," Shamsie remarks. "Your teen idols grow up too, and you realize that the vast gulf of years which separated you from them is actually just a narrow ravine, and that you are all roughly part of the same generation. In the particular case of the Pakistani pop pioneers, you also realize that your nation is growing up with you too."



Vital Signs' rock hit "Dil Dil Pakistan" captured the hearts of young Pakistanis in 1987.

## OTHER NATIONS

## China's Confucian Democracy

**THE SOURCE:** "The Shadow of Confucianism" by Tianjian Shi and Jie Lu, in *Journal of Democracy*, Oct. 2010.

HOW IS IT THAT SURVEYS CONSISTENTLY find that the majority of the Chinese population strongly supports both democracy and the country's authoritarian regime? There's a simple explanation, according to Tianjian Shi and Jie Lu, political scientists at Duke University and American University, respectively. In China, "democracy" is understood quite differently than in America and other liberal democracies. Confucian ideas help create a "unique" blend of principles that accommodates the rule of the Chinese Communist Party.

Asked as part of the Asia Barometer Survey (ABS) to judge "how suitable you think democracy is for your

How can the Chinese support both democracy and their country's authoritarian regime?

country," Chinese respondents gave an average score of 8.5 on a one-to-10 scale; only residents of Thailand gave democracy a higher rating. When asked to characterize how democratic their government was, respondents in China—the sole authoritarian regime in the survey—gave a score of 7.2. Only citizens of Thailand and Taiwan gave their governments higher marks.

Then the authors examined Chinese responses to the ABS question, "What does democracy mean to you?" More than 40 percent of those surveyed indicated that they had "no idea what democracy means." Obviously, that alone could explain some of the contradictions in Chinese

views. A smaller group—25 percent—gave answers that track Western understandings of democracy, invoking elections, checks and balances, or the separation of powers.

But a not insubstantial segment, just under 20 percent, described democracy in terms flavored by the Confucian doctrine of *minben*, whose central tenet is expressed in the maxim "*Minwei bangben*," meaning "The people alone are the basis of the state." The Confucian philosopher Mencius (372–289 BC) put it this way: "Most important are the people; next come the land and grain; and last the princes." But the implication is not that the people rule, only that their welfare is central. At its heart, *minben* is a paternalistic ideal: A government is legitimized by the effects of its policies on the people, not the process by which it came to power. More than two millennia after his death, Confucius still shapes Chinese political life.

### EXCERPT

## When in Athens

*The Greek state was not just corrupt but also corrupting. Once you saw how it worked you could understand a phenomenon which otherwise made no sense at all: the difficulty Greek people have saying a kind word about one another. Individual Greeks are delightful: funny, warm, smart, and good company. I left two dozen interviews saying to myself, "What great people!" They do not share the sentiment about one another: The hardest thing to do in Greece is to get one Greek to compliment another behind his back. No success of any kind is regarded without suspicion. Every-*

*one is pretty sure everyone is cheating on his taxes, or bribing politicians, or taking bribes, or lying about the value of his real estate. And this total absence of faith in one another is self-reinforcing. The epidemic of lying and cheating and stealing makes any sort of civic life impossible; the collapse of civic life only encourages more lying, cheating, and stealing. Lacking faith in one another, they fall back on themselves and their families.*

*The structure of the Greek economy is collectivist, but the country, in spirit, is the opposite of a collective. Its real structure is every man for himself. Into this system investors had poured hundreds of billions of dollars. And the credit boom had pushed the country over the edge, into total moral collapse.*

—MICHAEL LEWIS, author of, most recently, *The Big Short*, and a contributing editor of *Vanity Fair* (Oct. 1, 2010)

Also in this issue:

James Morris on old age in the new millennium

Irving Louis Horowitz on communism

James Gibney on armed humanitarians

Steven Lagerfeld on Daniel Patrick Moynihan

Sarah L. Courteau on Montaigne

Troy Jollimore on W. H. Auden in America

Richard Restak on consciousness

Jonathan Rieder on African-American sermons

Kevin M. Schultz on religion in American life

# CURRENT BOOKS

REVIEWS OF NEW AND NOTEWORTHY NONFICTION

## Hurricane Man

Reviewed by Michael O'Donnell

IN A LITTLE ESSAY ABOUT MOZART THAT Saul Bellow wrote toward the end of his life, he expressed admiration for the prodigious composer's facility with melody and harmony, and marveled at the way the music "is given so readily, easily, gratuitously. For it is not a product of effort. What it makes us see is that there are things which must be done easily. Easily or not at all—that is the truth about art." If we needed reminding that Bellow—who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1976, and every other major literary award besides—warrants mention in the same breath as Mozart, we now have it in his collected letters. This volume, well edited and ably introduced by novelist and essayist Benjamin Taylor, who spent years collecting its contents, is at once an autobiographical portrait and a work of literature unto itself.

Bellow (1915–2005) was one of the brilliant English-prose stylists of the 20th century, rivaled perhaps only by James Joyce and Vladimir Nabokov. (The former he admired, the latter he scorned as "one of the great wrong-way rubbers of all time.") He was born in Canada, but when he was nine his family moved to Chicago, where the tasseled dons of Hyde Park strolled past pool

halls and loan sharks.

Capturing this juxtaposition of things high and low became his unique literary mission. Breathing in the sooty air of the

American city, Bellow exhaled hurricanes. He was never anything but a writer, except perhaps a scoundrel; his correspondents were mistresses, wives, editors, lawyers collecting alimony, fans, combatants, and fellow novelists, to whom he was uncommonly generous.

Early in the collection, Bellow provides a sort of mission statement: "A novel, like a letter, should be loose, cover much ground, run swiftly, take risk of mortality and decay." He was responding to a criticism of *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), the autobiographical novel that was his breakout masterpiece. He later cringed at its busyness, and it is true that his mature works, especially *Herzog* (1964) and *Humboldt's Gift* (1975), are more disciplined and refined. But alone among his novels, *Augie March* displays Bellow's full, flexed musculature: He is like a prizefighter who swings in all directions and somehow lands punches

**SAUL BELLOW:**  
Letters.

Edited by  
Benjamin Taylor.  
Viking.  
571 pp. \$35

every time. Beginning with that brassy, counterfactual declaration of independence in the book's opening sentence—"I am an American, Chicago born"—the energy and vitality of Bellow's prose is astonishing. Chicago is the city of broad shoulders, but also the place of giant strides, and after a few pages of *Augie March*, you are sure Bellow could tilt his hat, gather his papers, and walk the Magnificent Mile in just three or four.

The letters display the same extraordinary facility with language that characterizes Bellow's fiction. In 1949, he complained of the kind of mail that had been arriving: "Junk, madness, haughtiness, injury. Enough to provoke a man to abjure all intimacy and withdraw to a tent as far as possible from sea-level, whence life came, and live on snow and hawkshit." After gall bladder surgery, he observed, "The only prominent scar goes through my navel. Out of some sheer primitive magical conviction, I felt the navel to be inviolable." Bellow frequently paused in letters to paint characters in his Dickensian way. Here he is on a university colleague:

He's the archetype of the learned idiot. He's a Harvard Ph.D., conservative to the flap of his long underwear, collects pornographic poetry, has a pistol range in his basement, knows how to mend a dog sled in driving snow and is an Admiral Peary *manqué*, is president of the burial society of Minneapolis, and takes vitamin B1 all summer long on the belief that mosquitoes will not bite a man whose perspiration is saturated with it.

A running theme is Bellow's complaint to friends that he did *not* find writing easy: He may have blared *Così Fan Tutte* from the speakers as the words came, but he was no Mozart. The perplexed reader spends the entire volume evaluating this claim. Bellow was forever apologizing for being an irregular correspondent, and, according to his biographer, James Atlas, he tossed out pages of outstanding fiction because they weren't perfect. He disciplined himself to spend each morning writing, and finishing a book exhausted him. It humanizes Bellow to see him strain. On

the other hand, the letters show that casual brilliance seems to have poured out of his pen. Imagine being a young Philip Roth and receiving these words in 1969: "I knew when I hit Chicago (was it 12 years ago?) and read your stories that you were the real thing. When I was a little kid, there were still blacksmiths around, and I've never forgotten the ring of a real hammer on a real anvil." Whether or not Bellow found making art easy, he certainly made it look easy.

Atlas's definitive 2000 biography, *Bellow*, is excellent but harsh, and Bellow will redeem himself for some readers here, in his own words. The letters bear full witness to his rakish nature: A serial philanderer, he married five times, and usually divorced badly. His expression in the cover photo of the collected letters seems to say, "Darling, be reasonable. It's not as though I actually told you I love you." But the letters also reveal his poignant longing for acceptance from his streetwise father and brothers, his tenderness toward his children, and a fierce love of his friends. It's hard to stay angry with someone who composes lines like this: "My sister's husband has had a stroke again, and this time is partly paralyzed. He lies in the hospital, all the sweetness of his character showing in the new softness of his face. Forgiving everyone."

His letters to and about other writers are among the most fascinating in the collection. He upbraided William Faulkner for seeking to rehabilitate the Hitler sympathizer Ezra Pound. He maintained a workaday chumminess with Ralph Ellison, with whom he once shared lodgings. Evelyn Waugh he denounced as a snob, and Graham Greene as an anti-Semite. George Orwell gets some of the highest praise: "You hardly realize how deep Orwell goes because he is so clear about what he's doing."

Bellow famously wrote people from his own life directly into his fiction, sometimes infuriating them. He was an observer, not an imaginer, and the letters show that the price of his fiction was not borne easily by those around him. In one of the most remarkable letters in the collection, he defends this practice as the artist's prerogative. Bellow placated his childhood friend David Peltz, who protested the appearance of a scene from his



**"A novel, like a letter, should be loose, cover much ground, run swiftly, take risk of mortality and decay," wrote Saul Bellow in one of the many letters he penned during his lifetime.**

own life in *Humboldt's Gift*, by saying, "I should think it would touch you that I was moved to put a hand on your shoulder and wanted to remember you as I took off for the moon. . . . You are welcome to all my facts. You know them, I give them to you. If you have the strength to pick them up, take them with my blessing. Touch them with your imagination and I will kiss your hands." *If you have the strength*—that's a big "if," coming from a muscleman.

The entries toward the volume's end are the most affecting. In his later years, Bellow was called upon to deliver many eulogies as his old comrades gave way, one by one. "It wears out your heart," he wrote after his lifelong friend

Oscar Tarcov died. As he grew physically frail, he tried to reassure his correspondents: "I do go out of doors and rinse my brains in God's icy air without knowing whether the tears in my eyes come from the cold wind or gratitude to my Creator." At the same time he stepped in as a paternal figure after the English novelist Martin Amis's father, Kingsley, died. Martin Amis has written movingly about his connection to Bellow; now we see Bellow's equally poignant side of this improbable literary relationship as he "willingly take[s] up the slack as a sort of adoptive father."

In 1981, Bellow sent his close friend John Cheever, who was dying, a letter full of admiration:

You were engaged, as a writer should be, in transforming yourself. When I

read your collected stories I was moved to see the transformation taking place on the printed page. There's nothing that counts really except this transforming action of the soul. I loved you for this. I loved you anyway, but for this especially.

The same might be said of Bellow himself. Brittle and brilliant as crystal—as prone to slice those who handled him as to dazzle those who gazed on from afar—Bellow attains that rare stature in which all that really matters is what is on the printed page. We no longer have him, but we will always have that.

MICHAEL O'DONNELL'S essays and reviews have appeared in *The Nation*, *The Washington Monthly*, and *The Los Angeles Times*.

# The Old Story

Reviewed by James Morris

IN SEPARATE BOOKS, TED C. Fishman and Susan Jacoby both cry crisis, but in different registers of alarm. Their common theme is the disruptive effects, on nations and individuals, of the coming worldwide increase in the ranks of the aged. Fishman tends toward dispassion; Jacoby, toward exasperation. He's a better guide to the scale of the changes; she's more adept at making them painful and personal. Both sound wake-up calls that go on till afternoon, long after they've made their points. But their troubling message needs to be heard.

Take it in perhaps with a glass of aged scotch.

Fishman is a cool-headed observer, whether as journalist, demographer, or sociologist, and has done a prodigious amount of research. He piles on the facts and figures, from the biological to the economic, the transnational to the domestic, and leaves the worst of their possible consequences to our extrapolating imaginations. Five of his 10 chapters have a geographic focus, on aging populations in two American cities—upscale Sarasota, Florida, and downscale Rockford, Illinois—and in the nations of Spain, Japan, and China. (Several chapter titles even manage to put a smiley face on the dour demographics: “Señor Moment: Spain’s Discovery of Age,” “Japan, Land of the Missing Son.”) Each geographic chapter is headed by attention-grabbing demographic data specific to the region. Thus, there will be 66 million Americans over the age of 65 in 2025. There were 167 million Chinese over the age of 60 in 2009, and the estimate is for

## SHOCK OF GRAY:

The Aging of the World’s Population and How It Pits Young Against Old, Child Against Parent, Worker Against Boss, Company Against Rival, and Nation Against Nation.

By Ted C. Fishman.  
Scribner.  
401 pp. \$27.50

## NEVER SAY DIE:

The Myth and Marketing of the New Old Age.

By Susan Jacoby.  
Pantheon.  
322 pp. \$27.95

438 million in 2050; indeed, China in 2025 “will be home to one-fifth of the world’s population, but home to one-fourth of all people over 65.” By 2050, Spain is projected to have a higher proportion of people over 65—37 percent—than any other country in the world.

How will nations so configured, with declining birthrates, sustain their economic status and prevent crippling fissures in their societies? Where will they find the resources, psychic and financial, to attend to the new numbers of the aged, and on what haphazard landscape of homes, hospitals, hospices, asylums?

Fishman’s geographic chapters are interlaced with others reflecting on various aspects of aging. There is, for example, a universal sequence to how we age physically, and Fishman summarizes it deftly, decade by decade, in a dozen pages that may leave you gone fetal on the floor. Our bodies destroy themselves daily at the molecular level (“We begin to die while still in the womb”) in their progress from the pulled muscles of age 30 to the slack, papery skin and dementia of 80. But the inevitable deterioration doesn’t necessarily hasten death. Thanks, if that’s the word, to stubborn genes or the holding-pattern powers of medicine, the ancient mad may one day number countless millions around the world.

Buried deep in Fishman’s book is an inspired subhead, a backhanded (backsided?) homage to the columnist Thomas L. Friedman: “The World Is Flatulent.” The page is a nice example of how the macro-minded Fishman can also narrow his range, here to foresee a future of better bathrooms for the aged: “Toilets will sport stylish handrails, lift and drop on command, and even spray water in places that older people have a hard time reaching. And because the physical effects of age befoul the air, the toilet deodorizes its bowl, its user, and the room.” Well, that’s

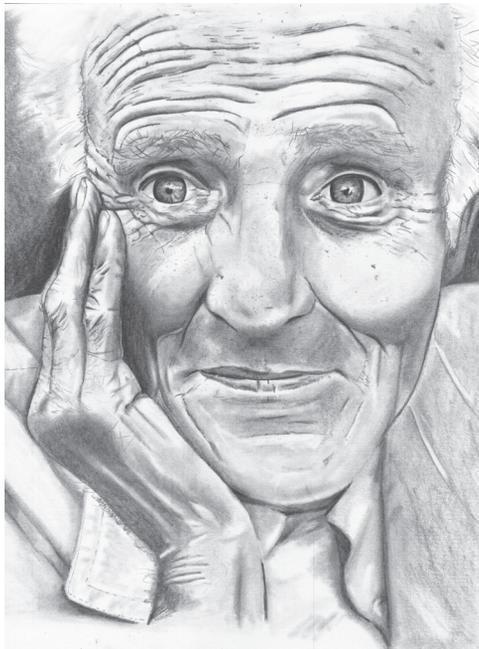
something.

Little about the gassy world to come leaves Susan Jacoby composed. She derides the myths we're fed about aging in favor of what to her is the evident reality. She skewers Americans' fashionable tendency to deny age and postpone death with a lifestyle cocktail of scientific advances, chemical procedures, Pilates, vegetables, and no desserts but their just deserts. She dismisses the psychobabble that calls old age "a time of placid contemplation" or tells the aged they're not getting older, just wiser and happier and freer. She's a secularist and an atheist, and she counters arguments that push the nobility of suffering and oppose what she calls "rational" suicide.

Jacoby makes an essential distinction between the "young old" and the "old old." It's the young old (among whom, at 65, she counts herself) who write books about the privileges of old age and the new opportunities for finding fulfillment by embracing every clap-trap mantra and junk promise that society pitches. The higher wisdom of the moment routinely makes a distinction between chronological age and "real" age. Real age is now what you and your lifestyle will it to be. Real age sends those fond-hope and fat-chance birthday assurances that 70 is the new 50. Yet for every paragliding 80-year-old there are legions of immobile others, pressed to submission by disease or the stony weight of madness.

Chances are the young old won't be cheerleaders for longevity when they cross the line to join

the old old, the shuttered, stumbling, ailing, diapered, defecating, delusional, and adrift old. And it's the likely growing number of the latter that alarms Jacoby. Madness is much on her mind: "The most important thing Americans need to know about dementia is how many of the old—nearly half of those over 85—are affected. The prevalence of Alzheimer's doubles in every five-year period over age 65. These statistics cannot be cited often enough." Science is apparently not close to a cure for dementia, even as scientific, medical, and public health advances keep us alive



Increased longevity means more gray heads than ever before.

the extra years that put us at increasing risk for the condition. America is not prepared—and not preparing—to cope with a great population of devastated minds.

"The two overwhelming problems of real old age in the United States today," Jacoby writes, "are health, which generally worsens over time, and the tendency of all but the richest Americans to grow poorer as they grow older." The most crippling side effect of prolonged illness is often impoverishment, and that reality will not

abate as years are added to lives. Science may one day cure diseases that today are intractable, she acknowledges, but faith in a future redeemed by science must not keep us from doing what the old need now, such as expanding Medicare to help cover "the open-ended care of those who may live for years with Alzheimer's."

Jacoby wears her New Yorker's passion on every page and her liberal politics on almost as many. She wants "a new intergenerational contract that covers social welfare needs for Americans of all generations," and she would "tax all

income, including that of people over 65, at a level necessary to maintain the kind of social safety net that exists in every other developed country—which would include comprehensive health insurance for the young as well as benefits for the old.” Amid the current fierce divisions over health care in this country, her proposals are below the level of the quixotic.

A doomed agenda, then—unless, Jacoby suggests, America’s aging, privileged boomer generation can be persuaded to come to the rescue and use its shortened breath to demand it. To the confluence of developments explored in her book—the medical advances that delay death but may not soon cure the ailments that ravage the extra years, the bankrupting costs to individuals of coping with extended life that is no more than half-life—add one that might have a disproportionate effect. As the charmed boomers come up against the limits of the immortality they had assumed for themselves, they may decide to conclude their lifelong

litany of demands with an insistence that old age and death, if they do have to occur, treat their cohort with due deference and at minimal expense.

In the end, at the end, living and dying both earn their clichés. The dice are rolled, the wheel is spun, and some of us are lucky, and some not. It alters nothing to rail against the roster of reasons why, whether a divine plan, planetary alignment, or bum genes. Does age at least bring wisdom? (Another myth, Jacoby says.) The evidence is mixed. When Verdi was almost 80, he wrote *Falstaff* and set his librettist’s final lines—life is a farce and makes fools of us all; laugh last and you laugh best—to music that itself whirls and laughs. When Sophocles was near 90, he wrote *Oedipus at Colonus*, and his chorus sang that anyone who wants a long life is a fool; not to be born is best, but next best is to die as soon as possible. Amen to them both.

JAMES MORRIS is an editor at large of *The Wilson Quarterly* and a senior scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center.

## Communist Manifesto

Reviewed by Irving Louis Horowitz

WHILE WE ARE ROUTINELY taught that the failure to appreciate “history” may doom us to repeat it, at times forgetfulness may be considered evidence that optimism and innovation can move us beyond past disasters, at least of the human kind. Certainly by most measures,

communism could be counted among the more destructive of such disasters. Having begun with high expectations as an ideology and philosophy in Germany and France in the mid-1800s, it took deadly political form as a system of class rule in the early 20th century. Eventually, communism resulted in the death of millions, and the destruc-

### DICTIONARY OF 20TH-CENTURY COMMUNISM.

Edited by Silvio Pons  
and Robert Service.  
Translated by  
Mark Epstein and  
Charles Townsend.  
Princeton Univ. Press.  
921 pp. \$99.50

tion of entire classes and cultures.

Today, the egalitarian impulses of earlier stages of communism have given way to a dynastic system in places as far flung as North Korea (now entering its third generation of family rule) and Cuba (where Fidel Castro is transferring authority to his brother Raúl). The theoretical underpinning of communism has shifted profoundly from the thirst to cleanse society by liquidating older classes such as the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, to the empowerment of political elites and military strata drawn from the poorer segments of the population. The eventual collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe did not drive such elites from the political scene. Communism as an ideology,

philosophy, party label, and social ethic has suffered defeats but not termination. It is the staying power of communism—now in its third century—and not its historical antecedents that explains the need for *A Dictionary of 20th-Century Communism*.

Those who wrote the promotional literature for this compendium seem not quite certain whether it should be identified as a dictionary of what now exists or an encyclopedic reference to what once was promised by the founders and leaders of communism. The dictionary is essentially a collection of papers by 160 reasonably qualified specialists who have produced more than 400 entries in an oversized effort of nearly 1,000 pages. The challenge to the reviewer is thus complex, and the attempt to be fair is inherently circumscribed by his own prejudices and biases. While I, like many of the contributors to this dictionary, have been interested in the subject all my life, I also strongly believe that communism is no longer a manifesto for the future, but a blueprint to the disasters of the past century.

It is unfortunate that Silvio Pons, who also helped bring forth the original edition of this work in Italian, has not made a similar frank acknowledgment of his limitations. Pons is not only a professor of Eastern European history at the University of Rome, but the director of the Gramsci Institute Foundation, named for Antonio Gramsci, a pivotal figure in the Italian Communist Party in the years after World War I, when fascism gained ascendancy. Doctrinal differences with the Soviet Bolshevik Party notwithstanding, Gramsci remained loyal to the cause of communism all his life, during years of imprisonment by the Fascists, who cordially provided him with writing paper and books while behind bars to state his objections. (That said, the article on Gramsci by Giuseppe Vacca—another scholar affiliated with the Gramsci Institute Foundation—is fair, balanced, and respectful.)

The appearance of Robert Service, a historian at St. Antony's College at Oxford University, as the second editor of both the Italian and English

editions is welcome. As the author of numerous books on communism and Russian history, including *Comrades! A History of World Communism* (2007), Service provides a useful counterweight to the Continental tradition of communist commentary that informs so much of this volume. It is a tradition that still works hard to separate Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin—sparing the founder's thought the contamination of the follower's deeds—and even more, Lenin from Joseph Stalin. Service brings the critical edge shared by important British and American scholars of communism such as Leonard Schapiro, Ronald Radosh, and Walter Laqueur—none of them, astonishingly, listed in the index.

Nevertheless, the dictionary includes some truly insightful profiles of key figures and theoretical articles analyzing such matters as the stages in the evolution of European communism. The dictionary as a whole exhibits a socialist and social-democratic perspective, which is evident in the treatment of such "isms" as McCarthyism in the United States and, in the Soviet Union, Proletkultism (proletarian devotion), regarded in the early days of the Soviet revolution as "the most universal and global of cultures." These entries describe with mixed results the rifts and schisms imposed by ideological thought and utopian goals. They also serve as a reminder of how powerful abstract quasi-theological concepts were in the hearts and souls of communist revolutionaries. Indeed, in his unusually fine analysis of Marxism-Leninism, Italian scholar Vittorio Strada indicates that this overarching ism "performed its ideological function, preserved even after Stalin's death and adapting to the new political situation, only finally to become an empty shell, devoid not only of its sacred qualities, but its credibility."

The surveys of communist parties in various countries—from Albania to Yugoslavia—and regions might well have formed the core of a sepa-

Communism as an ideology, philosophy, party label, and social ethic has suffered defeats but not termination.

rate book. The sweeping essay by University of Bologna historian Francesco Benvenuti outlining the tortured relationships of nationalism and communism, particularism and universalism, armed guerrilla movements and democratic social goals, could have served as a prolegomena for such a volume, along with French political historian Marc Lazar's piece on the roads various countries took to socialism. As it is, these and other well-researched articles are wedged among entries that embrace a variety of other considerations.

The surveys are often notable for what they omit. Not since Robert J. Alexander's *Communism in Latin America* was published in 1957 have we had an in-depth survey of communism in that region. Alas, his book is not recognized in the dictionary's entry on the communist party in Latin America. Perhaps the most egregious problem in this section is the utterly mechanistic allocation of space. The entry on the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) runs only one page, about the same length as that devoted to the parties in Switzerland and Yemen. Worse yet, two of the most important works on the CPUSA are not mentioned: *The American Communist Party, a Critical History, 1919-1957* (1957), by Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, and *The Roots of American Communism* (1957), by Theodore Draper.

The dictionary's sharpest and most telling criticisms of communism come not from authors who grew to maturity in Western democratic societies, but from Russians who experienced Soviet totalitarianism as an everyday fact of life. For example, in her entry on Zhdanovism, Russian scholar Elena Zubkova shows acute understanding of how this peculiar ism served as Stalin's alter ego and second in command during the post-World War II years. Andrey Zhdanov was a key Stalin henchman who served as "curator"—*czar* might have been a better term—of Bolshevik standards for culture. He purged Soviet culture of cosmopolitan and modernist trends in the arts and music, and cleansed the Soviet Union's propaganda arm, the Sovinformburo, of Jews. Zhdanovism stripped the communist regime of its remaining utopian dress and laun-

dered it in a cult of personality.

This volume is far more useful as a collection of specific entries than as a general overview of communism. It fails to explain communism's continued dominance in a pure form in countries ranging from Cuba to North Korea, and in modified form in such a major player of our times as China. Its relativistic approach wouldn't be tolerated in a dictionary on that *other* totalitarian pole, Nazism. Myopically extolling "economic opening" and improved "educational levels" as a consequence of single-party domination and ethnic subjugation (as political scientist Luigi Tomba does in his entry on China) is a disastrous consequence of pure relativism dressed up as social science and historical objectivity.

And at the risk of turning this into a bibliographical critique, simply too many important scholars are overlooked. Worthwhile classical studies by Karl Wittfogel, Sheldon Wolin, and Herbert Marcuse have been included, but there is no mention of such works as Frank H. and Fritzie P. Manuel's monumental study *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (1979) and Melvin Lasky's groundbreaking *Utopia and Revolution* (1976). The Italian origins of this book likely account for the overwhelming number of references to authors from Italy, though even here one wonders what ever happened to encyclopedic figures such as Italian historians Renzo De Felice (mentioned only in passing) and Franco Venturi.

Some figures of note must inevitably be omitted from even an exhaustive reference. Still, the strong bias favoring left-leaning earlier texts whose authors examined communist decision making in economics and politics, often with limited access to information about the quantity and quality of human suffering that is now available through newly opened archives, weakens the objectivity and comprehensiveness that a reader has a right to expect from an authoritative dictionary. The defects are especially notable because the editors and publisher had more than five years to improve and update the entries from the Italian edition, but elected to take essentially the original version as a given.

Still, on balance this is a work well worth reading. Awkward and contradictory as its entries may be, they remind us of the tragedies suffered by so many at the hands of so few. As a political system, communism has many recognized defects and far fewer adherents than in the past. As a moral system, it has provided few guideposts and much disillusion in the search for the good life. Read as a backdrop to a world now entering the second decade of the 21st century,

this panoramic volume of the 20th century is a painful reminder of the continuing search for perfection and the endurance of human imperfection.

IRVING LOUIS HOROWITZ is Hannah Arendt professor emeritus of sociology and political science at Rutgers University. Over the past 60 years, he has written extensively on communism. His books include *Radicalism and the Revolt Against Reason* (1961, rev. ed. 2009), *Behemoth: Main Currents in the History and Theory of Political Sociology* (1999), *Ideology and Utopia in the United States: 1956–1976* (1977), and *The Idea of War and Peace in Contemporary Philosophy* (1957).

## CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

# Masters of Peace

Reviewed by James Gibney

IN THE FIRST 11 MONTHS OF its Iraq deployment, the Fourth Infantry Division's Third Brigade Combat Team spent \$72 million on public works projects in just one Baghdad suburb. That's roughly equivalent to one year of U.S. foreign aid to the entire country of Botswana, but merely a rounding error in the U.S. military's massive outlay of development dollars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In *Armed Humanitarians*, freelance defense correspondent Nathan Hodge sets out to explain how and why the Pentagon embraced the once-dreaded business of nation-building, and the "tectonic shift" that this new mission portends for American foreign policy. Hint: It's not good news.

During the late 1990s, Pentagon theorists such as Thomas Barnett called for the military to develop its ability to cope with "gap" states—those that were not plugged into the world economy, and were therefore more prone to wars and humanitarian crises. The tremendous resources available to the military's regional commanders had already given them de facto control over U.S. policy in many global hot spots. It took the exigencies of 21st-century conflict, however, to overcome the military's reluctance to make school building, road

**ARMED  
HUMANITARIANS:**  
The Rise of the  
Nation Builders.

By Nathan Hodge.  
Bloomsbury.  
338 pp. \$26

fixing, and power generating a part of war fighting. Confronted in Afghanistan and Iraq by the absence or collapse of any functioning state, blooming insurgencies, and a State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) unable and unwilling to engage in nation-building under fire, the U.S. military stepped into the breach.

The relatively lean Army Civil Affairs teams that started an \$8 million military reconstruction effort in Afghanistan in 2002 evolved into a well-funded menagerie of acronyms: CHLCs (Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells, nicknamed "chick licks"), which turned into PRTs (Provincial Reconstruction Teams, composed of Civil Affairs troops, a security detachment, and experts from USAID and the departments of State and Agriculture), which were later supplemented in Iraq by HTTs (Human Terrain Teams, composed of social scientists hired to provide military commanders with cultural insight). The military, meanwhile, was in the throes of what Hodge characterizes as "a full-blown intellectual revolt." Stung by their inability to subdue insurgents in either Iraq or Afghanistan, officers and enlisted soldiers embraced a new counterinsurgency doctrine proposed in 2006 by General David Petraeus. He argued that U.S. forces would not be able to kill or capture their way to victory, and that soldiers must immerse themselves in foreign cultures and, as Hodge puts it, be "as skilled at managing reconstruction funds as they were in sending tank rounds downrange."

They certainly had a lot of funds to manage:

From 2002 to 2006, the portion of all U.S. foreign aid funneled through the military rose from six percent to 22 percent. But efforts to realize the new vision ran into problems on the ground. Private contractors brought in to manage projects often imported their workers, which meant fewer jobs and dollars for needy local economies; the companies also lured skilled employees away from the U.S. government with higher pay. Anthropologists fretted about the ethics of working with the military and balked at serving on the new HTTs, despite fat salaries. More broadly, the PRTs pursued projects that met the short-term needs of military commanders rather than long-term development goals. When officers and units cycled out, whatever progress they had made in cultivating relationships and solving problems was often lost.

Hodge is fair-minded in his critiques—as a former Foreign Service Officer, I ruefully agree with his diagnosis of the State Department’s institutional allergy to innovation and discomfort—and offers crisp, sympathetic portraits of practitioners and champions of the nation-building movement, including Joseph Collins, the retired colonel who pushed the PRT concept, and Montgomery McFate, the pixie-cut, Marin County–bred anthropologist who pioneered the development of HTTs. And Hodge provides some illuminating historical context: Readers of his chapter on the lessons of Vietnam might think the military was trapped in an endless George Santayana loop, in which nothing is ever learned from the past.

Harder to swallow is Hodge’s larger claim that “armed humanitarianism” represents the “new face of American foreign policy.” Even if our fiscal situation were not as dire as it is, the debacles of Iraq and Afghanistan are likely to have a strong inoculative effect on future interventions. Hodge rightly dwells on the obscene imbalance of resources between the Pentagon and the State Department, but that reflects Congress’s long-standing prejudices more than a strategic choice: Appropriating money for our camo-clad boys and girls is always a better populist bet than helping out the striped-pants set.

The enduring legacy of our experiences in Iraq

and Afghanistan may well be better, but not more, armed humanitarianism, as when the Pentagon swiftly mobilized aid after Haiti’s earthquake last year and then withdrew once the immediate crisis eased, leaving the Haitians to make their own choices. As Hodge takes pains to show, in nation-building, less is often more.

JAMES GIBNEY is a features editor at *The Atlantic*.

## The Plan Is All

Reviewed by Blair A. Ruble

WITOLD RYBCZYNSKI, THE author of more than a dozen extraordinarily popular treatises on cities and architecture, is a master of making professional quarrels—over the value of the American suburban landscape, the relative importance of psychological comfort and technical perfection in home design, and others—accessible to nonspecialist readers. In *Makeshift Metropolis*, which grew out of a 2007 lecture at the National Building Museum, he seeks to place contemporary American city planning within the context of American life past and present. This slim and elegant book is just the thing for readers who want to acquaint themselves with the American planning tradition during an evening by the fireplace.

Rybczynski’s core argument is that the United States does indeed have a worthy planning tradition that often is ignored or denied by those who promote an image of a country shaped by individualist capitalists who function absent state control. He makes his case with profiles of well-known urban visionaries of the past—such as Washington, D.C., planner Pierre L’Enfant and architect Frank Lloyd Wright, as well as 20th-century urban landscape critics Lewis Mumford and Jane Jacobs. He also highlights those who are little known beyond professional circles, such as Charles Mulford Robinson, who promoted the City Beautiful movement at the turn of the 20th century, and Robinson’s English counterpart, Raymond Unwin. And he reaches back to recognize largely forgotten figures,

**MAKESHIFT  
METROPOLIS:**  
Ideas About Cities.

By Witold Rybczynski.  
Scribner.  
240 pp. \$24

including Washington, D.C., surveyor Joseph Elliott and Francis Nicholson, who helped establish colonial Annapolis and Williamsburg.

In Rybczynski's view, residents—rather than planners—ultimately determine a plan's success when they decide whether to live, shop, play, and linger in the space the designer has created. Rybczynski demonstrates his point that people drive the process by tracing the movement of America's retail spaces from streets to covered arcades, the latter of which launched the department stores that eventually migrated from downtowns to anchor suburban shopping centers, only to be usurped in recent years by big-box stores. Cities and their surrounding regions are makeshift creations that build up incrementally, as coral accretes on a reef.

The collective expression of individual preference through the market, however, is insufficient to create the sorts of cities required for 21st-century life. The metropolitan regions that constitute many of our modern cities are larger than any single planning entity can handle. Still, metropolitan development requires government support and intervention in myriad ways. Rybczynski cites architect Moshe Safdie's design for Modi'in, a town in Israel that encourages private development of an overall plan that emphasizes access to public space, as a hopeful vision for the urban future.

Rybczynski bookends *Makeshift Metropolis* with descriptions of two very different projects that illustrate Americans' new fascination with waterfronts, which only a generation or two ago were avoided by anyone who sought respectability. He begins with Brooklyn Bridge Park in New York City, a two-decade effort to convert deserted piers into recreational and park land. I was living in Brooklyn Heights when discussions of the project began in 1988, and have followed its evolution since. A rough-and-tumble political and consulting process delayed, but probably perfected, the final plan. I quite agree with Rybczynski that this initiative is likely to grace the pages of planning and urban design textbooks a century from now.

Rybczynski ends with an examination of The Yards, a new office-condominium development adjacent to Washington, D.C.'s new baseball stadium, next to the Navy Yard. He sees in The Yards an attractive high-density plan that doesn't rely on towering apartment buildings. But to me it feels like an etiolated variation on the ever more popular waterfront development scheme. It fails to promote with serendipity and surprise the texture of life as it is actually lived. In a way, however, my misgivings about The Yards underscore Rybczynski's larger point: Only the passage of time and the accumulation of thousands of individual decisions can reveal a plan as a success or failure.

Rybczynski quotes Edward G. Rendell, when Rendell was mayor of Philadelphia. "We can't simply let our cities decline," he declared in 1996 to a group of developers and investors. "After all, you can't have a society without cities." And Rybczynski makes a compelling case that you can't have cities—even sprawling, automobile-oriented cities—without planning, albeit of a makeshift kind. That planning must be humble in its ambitions, fostering multiple projects and urban visions rather than striving to impose just one from above. Fortunately, Americans have a planning tradition worthy of pride. We also have Witold Rybczynski to help lead the way.

BLAIR A. RUBLE, the director of the Kennan Institute and the Comparative Urban Studies Program at the Woodrow Wilson Center, is the author of several books about cities, most recently *Washington's U Street: A Biography* (2010).

## Kids These Days

Reviewed by Michael C. Moynihan

CONSTANTLY IN NEED OF NEW and more terrifying copy, news editors and television producers reach for that evergreen tale—cultural details slightly modified—of America's disillusioned youth. From zoot suit rioters to punk rockers, grunge acolytes to goth kids, the specter of the coming gener-

### NOT QUITE ADULTS:

Why 20-Somethings Are Choosing a Slower Path to Adulthood, and Why It's Good for Everyone.

By Richard Settersten and Barbara E. Ray.  
Bantam.  
239 pp. \$15

ation's apathy and aimlessness, political disengagement and social alienation, continues to alarm parents and financially motivated experts. Today, the problem is the so-called Peter Pan generation of Millennials. Headlines lament that more kids are living at home after high school, waiting to marry, and racking up student loans.

But in *Not Quite Adults*, a book that distills eight years of research supported by the MacArthur Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood, Oregon State University sociologist Richard Settersten and Barbara E. Ray, former communications director for the network, argue that kids aren't simply dragging their heels about growing up. Mining a pile of data from government surveys and other sources, as well as more than 500 interviews conducted with subjects between the ages of 18 and 34, Settersten and Ray conclude that the "traditional milestones" of adulthood—including quickly leaving the parental nest, getting a job, and marrying and having children—have moved back, and that there are significant financial advantages to ambling toward adulthood.

While busting myths about the harmful effects of "helicopter" parenting (it gets a bad rap) and questioning the frequent hand-wringing about the "death of marriage" (putting off wedlock and parenthood helps young people earn a degree), Settersten and Ray devote considerable attention to the American view of higher education. They're skeptical of our one-size-fits-all model that prescribes bachelor's degrees for everyone. Nearly half of students fail to graduate within six years of enrolling in college, thus assuring that they exit without a degree but burdened by sizable debts. The authors make the politically incorrect and undeniably true argument that some students simply aren't cut out for a four-year university (one interviewee chose a college based on the availability of parking) and would be better served by vocational or technical training.

Those who are ready for college, Settersten and Ray contend, should stop gaping at the steep price tag of many institutions and, in light of the vastly higher salaries earned by workers with advanced degrees, view college debt as an investment. It's true that the typical student who graduates with debt from a public university—where the cost of tuition, room, and board grew 67 percent between 1987 and 2008—owes \$20,000. But installments on that debt are equivalent to a monthly car payment, and the value of an education lasts a lot longer than that of a car.

That said, the authors suggest that parents seek détente in the education "arms race" of elevated expectations that goads them to overextend their resources in order to launch their kids into the "top tier." But they offer no concrete suggestions for how this goal could be achieved other than to say that the country



Many kids of today's so-called Peter Pan generation are living at home after high school.

needs “education reform” at the primary level—though whether this means more charter schools and voucher programs, higher teacher pay, or some other remedy isn’t clear.

Settersten and Ray conclude with a number of surprisingly banal prescriptions for the problems Millennials face. It seems obvious that young people should choose their friends wisely, lest they be influenced by rogue peers. It is undeniable that today’s young adults are “creating communities of like minds” and “want freedom and autonomy.” “In the past,” the authors write, “dating eventually led to sex. Today, sex eventually leads to dating.” Yet Millennials are also holding out for a partner who is a “best friend or a soul mate.” None of this would be out of place in a book about the purportedly indifferent Generation X-ers who preceded them, or unfamiliar to those who came of age in the 1980s.

Still, Settersten and Ray have produced an occasionally interesting—and consoling—account of a supposedly troubled generation. And when Millennials reluctantly acquiesce to adulthood, the same concerns will likely be applied to the next generation.

MICHAEL C. MOYNIHAN is a senior editor of *Reason* magazine.

## HISTORY

# The War of Symbols

Reviewed by James Carman

“THE GROWTH OF THE POWER of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Sparta, made war inevitable,” wrote Thucydides in his fifth-century BC chronicle of the Peloponnesian War. Most scholars have accepted his explanation for the causes of the three-decade struggle that reshaped the Greek world. Thucydides’ writings greatly influenced the thinking of 17th-century political philosopher Thomas Hobbes about how and why great powers come into conflict. Together, writes University of Vir-

**SONG OF WRATH:**  
The Peloponnesian  
War Begins.

By J. E. Lendon.  
*Basic Books.*  
608 pp. \$35

ginia historian J. E. Lendon, Thucydides and Hobbes are “the progenitors of the theoretical realism that abides in today’s universities and think tanks.”

But Lendon demurs. He argues that the first 10 years of the Peloponnesian War are best understood not as a struggle between two mighty opponents for survival, but as an often petty contest over *timē*, “which consisted of esteem by others and others’ confirmation of one’s lofty impression of one’s own merits,” with the rest of the Greek world occupying the twin roles of audience and judge.

When the war began, in 431 BC, Sparta, both because of its heroic defense against the Persians at Thermopylae earlier in the century and its frequently demonstrated prowess in land battles, possessed the greater *timē*, and had allied itself with other land-based powers such as Corinth. But Athens dominated the seas and had acquired its own empire of tribute-paying islands. The resulting wealth had enabled the Athenians to build the mighty Acropolis as well as an impregnable wall that protected their port of Piraeus, and they hungered to be seen as Sparta’s equal.

Although the surest way to win such respect was to defeat Sparta on the battlefield, Pericles and other Athenian leaders knew there was little hope of that. Instead, Athens employed a strategy that the playwright Aristophanes later described as “one pot, whacked, kicking back in anger at another pot.” When Spartan forces marched into their lands, the Athenians refused to fight, and the invading warriors could only destroy the crops that lay outside the city walls. Athens, meanwhile, sent its dreaded triremes around the Peloponnesian peninsula, raiding and destroying coastal villages and harrying far-off allies of Sparta to whom the Spartans could not provide promised defense. Though each side worried at various points that its adversary was

Historian J. E. Lendon argues that the first 10 years of the Peloponnesian War are best understood as an often petty contest over reputation.

angling for a destructive advantage, the war was never about extermination.

Lendon is a gifted storyteller and military historian. His *Soldiers and Ghosts* (2005) is a rewarding journey through classical warfare from the Trojan War to the Roman conquests, and the ancient battles he reenacts with his University of Virginia students are regular campus spectacles. In *Song of Wrath*, he deftly explains how battles could turn as much on misapprehensions and chance as on bravery and superior skill. This was especially true at Pylos and Sphacteria (425 BC), where Sparta suffered its most ignoble defeat and—almost unthinkable!—surrendered rather than fight to the death. Lendon writes that “after that Sparta was merely playing for a draw,” which it achieved after besting the Athenians in several battles.

Although most histories of the Peloponnesian War encompass the intervening decade of uneasy peace that followed and Sparta’s eventual defeat of Athens at the great sea battle of Aegospotami in 405 BC, Lendon ends his history with the Peace of Nicias in 421 BC, when the Athenians were up. “The Athenians won both the war itself and, no less necessary in a war of symbols, the simultaneous war to define victory and defeat,” he writes. In his view, the Athenians’ subsequent doom—including their devastating loss of more than 40,000 men who were killed or taken prisoner in a risky expedition to Sicily in 415–413 BC—was brought on only when they “began to look around for some mighty deed they could perform that would raise their rank in the eyes of the Greeks.”

Athens was not, of course, the last power that would overreach and sow the seeds of its own destruction, which is one reason why the world still seeks to draw lessons from this long-ago struggle. But today, Lendon says, the Peloponnesian War’s most telling insights may be about “international actors whose aims and actions the contemporary West finds it hardest to understand and manage: the wrathful ones . . . who seek revenge for ancient slights.”

JAMES CARMAN is managing editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*.

## The Thinking Man’s Politician

Reviewed by Steven Lagerfeld

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN was the kind of figure who almost makes you wish there were more intellectuals in American political life. The problem is, there was only one Moynihan. Professor, bureaucrat, presidential adviser, ambassador, and finally U.S. senator from New York from 1977 to 2001, he could as easily write a White House memo citing Jean Paul Sartre as a warm note to Tammany Hall’s Carmine DeSapio, telling the imprisoned New York City Democratic Party boss in 1972 how sorry he was to hear that federal authorities had denied his request for parole. “If you are ever around Boston,” he wrote, “you should know you have a friend on the Harvard faculty.”

At the time, Moynihan (1927–2003) was enjoying one of his brief sojourns in the academy, having served as domestic policy adviser to President Richard M. Nixon and in lower-level jobs under Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and John F. Kennedy. Soon he would become the U.S. ambassador to India, and then ambassador to the United Nations, where his angry, eloquent (and unsuccessful) crusade against that body’s infamous 1975 resolution declaring that “Zionism is racism” made him a hero to many and probably won him his seat in the Senate.

Just to list these accomplishments—and the list does not include his 18 books and much else—is enough to leave one panting for breath. I’m happy to report that this collection of Moynihan’s letters, journal entries, and other writings, superbly edited by former *New York Times* reporter and editor Steven R. Weisman, is an apt, even riveting testament to Moynihan’s public life. Weisman’s succinct introductions weave the entries into something like a Moynihan memoir. The book displays all the man’s energy, wit, wide-ranging interests, and determination, along with (to Weisman’s great credit) his weaknesses—his insecurities, political

**DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN:**  
A Portrait in  
Letters of an  
American Visionary.

Edited by  
Steven R. Weisman.  
*Public Affairs*.  
705 pp. \$35

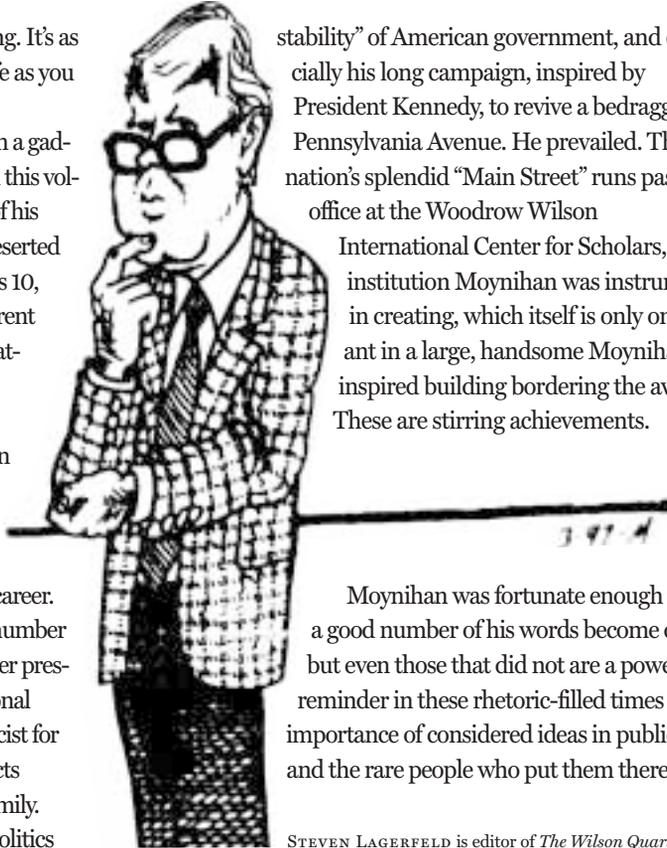
flattery, and occasional whining. It's as vivid a portrait of a political life as you could ask for.

Some have called Moynihan a gadfly, but the writings collected in this volume underline the constancy of his concerns. Moynihan's father deserted the family when Moynihan was 10, and his boyhood in a single-parent working-class family, in Manhattan's rough-and-tumble Hell's Kitchen neighborhood, influenced everything he thought. In 1965, as an aide in the Johnson Labor Department, Moynihan wrote the memo that still, for many, defines his career. Alarmed by the rapidly rising number of black families without a father present, Moynihan called for "national action"—and was branded a racist for pointing out the unpleasant facts about the plight of the black family.

Moynihan's reality-based politics made him a critic of orthodox liberalism as it developed during the 1960s. One of the most extraordinary entries in this volume is his anguished letter to Edward Kennedy after the assassination of Robert Kennedy, accusing the slain leader of having abandoned the "tradition of stable, working-class urban politics"—"your people," he reminded Ted—for the voguish liberal "salons of Central Park West." (It appears the letter was not sent.)

Moynihan followed his own path. He worked steadily for welfare reform, yet bitterly opposed the Clinton administration's 1996 welfare overhaul as disastrously harsh. (He wasn't always right.) After the end of the Cold War, he campaigned relentlessly for a larger role for international law and against excessive government secrecy and the CIA, which he regarded as an incompetent monstrosity.

One cannot turn many pages in this collection before coming upon yet another letter or memo penned in pursuit of one more of Moynihan's abiding concerns: his goal of creating public architecture symbolizing the "dignity, enterprise, vigor, and



stability" of American government, and especially his long campaign, inspired by President Kennedy, to revive a bedraggled Pennsylvania Avenue. He prevailed. The nation's splendid "Main Street" runs past my office at the Woodrow Wilson

International Center for Scholars, an institution Moynihan was instrumental in creating, which itself is only one tenant in a large, handsome Moynihan-inspired building bordering the avenue. These are stirring achievements.

Moynihan was fortunate enough to see a good number of his words become deeds, but even those that did not are a powerful reminder in these rhetoric-filled times of the importance of considered ideas in public life—and the rare people who put them there.

STEVEN LAGERFELD is editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*.

## ARTS & LETTERS

### He Put the *I* in *Tries*

Reviewed by Sarah L. Courteau

LAST FALL, TWO HARVARD psychologists published a study for which they had developed a smartphone application that allowed people to rate their happiness in the midst of everyday activities ranging from sex to commuting. The intrepid (intrusive?) researchers found that people whose minds wander are less happy than those who focus on the present moment. It's the sort of phenomenon Michel de Montaigne would fasten upon if he were alive today—he spent much of his life disciplining himself to live in the here and now—and one more reminder of why the essays of this minor French nobleman

**HOW TO LIVE:**  
Or a Life of  
Montaigne in One  
Question and  
Twenty Attempts  
at an Answer.

By Sarah Bakewell.  
Other Press.  
389 pp. \$25

and vintner have resonated with so many readers in the four centuries since he wrote them.

Living today amid the wheat and chaff of the Age of I, it's easy to forget that not long ago, personal accounts, unless they related heroic and likely exaggerated feats or events for the historical record, weren't written for public consumption. The man who changed that was Montaigne, born near the city of Bordeaux in 1533 to a family that had bootstrapped itself from workaday to nobility. From his pen, which produced 107 essays in all, was born an entire genre based on the idea that writing about one's own experience can, as biographer Sarah Bakewell

Living amid the wheat and chaff of the Age of I, it's easy to forget that not long ago, personal accounts of everyday life weren't written for the public.

puts it, "create a mirror in which other people recognize their own humanity."

Montaigne spent the last two decades of his life fleshing out his essays, when he wasn't

reluctantly attending to the political duties that sought him out, fleeing an outbreak of the plague, or running interference in the religious wars that were rending France. Some of his essays run a few paragraphs, and others are much longer. In my Everyman edition of his complete works, translated by Donald Frame, his essays occupy 1,000 pages, and his letters and travel journals a few hundred more.

What distinguished Montaigne from his contemporaries, as Bakewell explains in *How to Live*, her unconventional and thoroughly charming biography, was his interest in how people—and he was always Subject A—actually live, rather than how they ought to live. Whether he was musing on his sensitivity to human body odor, the consciousness of his beloved cat, or the question of whether a captive is likelier to elicit mercy from his captors through pleading or bravado, Montaigne's writings embody the meaning of the French word *essayeur*, which means to try. He twisted his subjects this way and that, now asking an impertinent question, now adding a colorful observation, now offering a personal or historical anecdote. He often contradicts

himself, a habit that seems to reflect his character as much as the fact that his essays are pastiches of at least three major editions. He added—but seldom subtracted—material over the years.

Montaigne gained a large following before his death in 1592, at age 59, of complications related to kidney stones. Informed by the traditions of Stoicism and Skepticism, he has been regarded by some critics in the years since as a bit of a cold fish (and not sufficiently religious), but many others have found his temperate views a comfort. In *How to Live*, Bakewell organizes her delightful introduction to Montaigne just as the man himself might have wished—not chronologically or comprehensively, but around the loose themes and questions that informed his life and touch upon our own. "I set forth a humble and inglorious life; that does not matter," he wrote. "You can tie up all moral philosophy with a common and private life just as well as with a life of richer stuff." It's hard to imagine a more modern and democratic sentiment in this age when we are all famous for 15 minutes—or believe we have a right to be.

SARAH L. COURTEAU is literary editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*.

## Transatlantic Poet

Reviewed by Troy Jollimore

BY THE TIME OF HIS DEATH in 1973, at age 66, the poet Wystan Hugh Auden had been an American citizen for almost three decades. Born in Britain in 1907, the onetime schoolteacher was already well on his way to

establishing himself as one of the 20th century's leading poets when in 1939 he emigrated to the United States. It is not surprising, then, that at his passing it was American poets who felt most keenly that they had lost a master craftsman and an elder statesman. He had adopted their country as his own, and it had adopted him.

Auden's poems—including such famous lyrics as "September 1, 1939" and "In Memory of W. B. Yeats"—combined elements of the traditional with

### THE AGE OF AUDEN:

Postwar Poetry and the American Scene.

By Aidan Wasley.  
Princeton Univ. Press.  
280 pp. \$35

Modernist innovations; the result was a voice that could move rapidly between a public declamatory tone and one that was markedly personal and intimate. In *The Age of Auden*, University of Georgia English professor Aidan Wasley explores the ways in which Auden's work shaped that of young American writers who read and, in many cases, knew him. During his lifetime, Wasley writes, Auden influenced "a startlingly diverse range of poets whose work would go on to define what we talk about when we talk about contemporary American poetry."

The American edition of a book Auden published in 1941, two years after his arrival in America, was titled *The Double Man*, and Wasley emphasizes the various senses in which the poet's life, career, and even character were bifurcated as he reinvented himself after crossing the Atlantic. "Auden's renunciation of his English poetic identity amounted to a wholesale redefinition of poetry's power and place in the world," Wasley writes. Interestingly, the American poets Auden inspired often identified more with the youthful radicalism of his earlier work than with the apolitical, conservative values he seemed to adopt later in life. Wasley is clearly aware of this fact, though he does not explore it in *The Age of Auden* to the extent some readers might wish.

Wasley pays particular attention to Auden's influence on James Merrill, John Ashbery, and Adrienne Rich. (Auden selected both Ashbery's and Rich's first major collections for the renowned Yale Series of Younger Poets.) For Merrill and Rich—who had complicated relationships with their own fathers—Auden functioned as a poetic father figure. Merrill's most important work, *The Changing Light at Sandover* (1982), begins "in the

shadow of Auden's death and ends with Auden's shadow itself instructing Merrill in the relationship between his own living poetic voice and those of his dead precursors," Wasley writes. Rich saw in Auden a powerful male authority whom she desired both to please and to resist. As her work matured, Wasley says, "Rich would achieve, on her own terms, the 'radical change and significant novelty in artistic style' that Auden had found lacking in her first book." Wasley resists the dominant view that Ashbery's main influence has been Wallace Stevens, arguing—as Ashbery himself has occasionally suggested—that Auden was at least as important, particularly early in Ashbery's career.

"In Memory of W. B. Yeats"—the first poem

Auden wrote after arriving in the United States—contains his famous statement that "poetry makes nothing happen." Wasley returns repeatedly to that phrase, attempting to dispel the idea that Auden meant to express deep pessimism about poetry or skepticism about its power to influence politics and society. A few lines later, Auden wrote that poetry "survives, / A way of happening, a mouth," and Wasley takes this as an indication that Auden hoped poetry might reflect "the world not by standing outside it and looking in, but by taking a fundamental, engaged place within it."

I confess to finding such formulations a bit vague. Of Wasley's main contention—that Auden, for all his Britishness, has exerted a powerful influence on American poetry—there can be no doubt, but it is not a new idea. The book is strongest when it focuses on particular poems, not only those by Ashbery, Merrill, and Rich, but also James Schuyler, Frank O'Hara, and William Meredith. There is an undeniable pleasure in seeing connections drawn between such disparate writers, especially



**Britain's W. H. Auden exerted enormous influence on generations of American poets.**

when these lines converge in a figure as compelling and multifaceted as Auden, and when the delight Wasley himself takes in the poetry of Auden and those he inspired is evident on nearly every page.

TROY JOLLIMORE, an associate professor of philosophy at California State University, Chico, is the author of *Tom Thomson in Purgatory*, which won the 2006 National Book Critics Circle Award for poetry. His second book, *At Lake Seugog*, is forthcoming in the Princeton Series of Contemporary Poets later this year.

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### Mental Maps

Reviewed by Richard Restak

AS YOU READ THIS REVIEW, your brain is undergoing changes by the millisecond. These words and sentences are stimulating ideas and emotions based on your brain's current organization and content, which are reflective of all your experiences up to the present moment. Additional changes will occur as you proceed down this column of type.

Only recently did neuroscientists realize that the human brain exhibits such astonishing plasticity. This insight coincided with the introduction in the 1970s of modern brain-imaging techniques such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). With today's sophisticated methods, including functional MRI, neuroscientists can capture in real time color-coded images of what happens in the brain during distinct mental states—even during “default states,” such as when we're sleeping or daydreaming.

These advances have led neuroscientists to opine on subjects that were once the purview of philosophers, such as mind, self, and consciousness. But studying the self or consciousness is a bit like engaging in the childhood game of trying to jump on one's shadow. While it seems doable, it isn't. Your movements change the position of your target. Fathoming mind, self, and consciousness presents similar paradoxes: The organ of investigation is the same as the organ carrying out the investigation; the processes employed are the same processes the investigator is seeking to understand.

#### SELF COMES TO MIND:

Constructing the Conscious Brain.

By Antonio Damasio.  
Pantheon.  
367 pp. \$28.95

Antonio Damasio, director of the University of Southern California's Brain and Creativity Institute, admits as much in his illuminating book *Self Comes to Mind*. But fortunately, there is a flip side to this conundrum. The development of the self and consciousness enables us to employ reasoning and scientific observation rather than depend on misleading assumptions.

For instance, some neuroscientists still believe that a specific site within the brain is responsible for self and consciousness. Damasio suggests instead that many brain sites, all active at once, are involved. He compares the situation to a symphonic performance in which the musical piece doesn't emerge from one musician or even one section of the orchestra. Instead, the orchestral conductor takes form as the performance unfolds: “For all intents and purposes, a conductor is now leading the orchestra, although the performance has created the conductor—the self—not the other way round.”

According to Damasio, we can best understand the brain as a series of maps that are “changing from moment to moment to reflect the changes that are happening in the neurons that feed them,” much like an electronic billboard on which the display can be “rapidly drawn, redrawn, and overdrawn at the speed of lightning.” Consciousness expands our ability to experience brain maps in the form of images that can be manipulated and reasoned about. In fact, the mind and consciousness partly evolve from the brain's unceasing and dynamic mapping of these images. Incidentally, Damasio doesn't restrict the term *image* to the visual, but uses it to refer to “the brain's momentary maps of everything and of anything, inside our body and around it, concrete as well as abstract, actual or previously recorded in memory.”

The fact that maps and images dwell within the brain and are accessible only to the owner presents a “hurdle” to scientific measurement, as Damasio admits. For this reason, the “mental state/brain state equivalence”—that is, the idea that the mind is indistinguishable from the operations of the brain—“should be regarded as a useful hypothesis rather than a certainty.” He cautions that even using neuroscience techniques more powerful than those

currently available, “we are unlikely ever to chart the full scope of neural phenomena associated with a mental state, even a simple one.”

While most neuroscientists agree with Damasio that consciousness is rooted in biological processes, he goes a step further in emphasizing the importance of the body as a whole rather than the brain alone in the experience of consciousness. He concurs with other neuroscientists that consciousness contributes to adaptability and evolution, but he isn't afraid to make the surprising suggestion (although perhaps not surprising to some pet owners) that animals may possess a rudimentary form of consciousness.

I found *Self Comes to Mind* a delight. But despite Damasio's attempts to address a general audience as well as other neuroscientists, readers with little knowledge about the brain may well experience the cognitive equivalent of seasickness. Still, all is not lost for first-time brain-book readers. Start with the appendix, a lucid summary of the main elements of neuroanatomy and neurophysiology. Next, read chapter 10, “Putting It Together,” in which Damasio sets out his main points minus the jargon-dense and peer-directed hairsplitting of earlier chapters. After that, you'll be reasonably equipped to start reading this book from the beginning. If you do, you will embark on an intellectual journey well worth the effort.

RICHARD RESTAK is the author of 20 books on the brain, including, most recently, *The Playful Brain: The Surprising Science of How Puzzles Improve Your Mind* (2010).

## The Engines of Progress

Reviewed by Mark Reutter

WHEN WE THINK OF GLOBAL power, we think of political or military might or the clout of big corporations. We certainly don't ponder horsepower, a unit of measure originally developed to compare the output of steam engines with the pulling power of draft horses. Vaclav Smil wants to change that. In *Prime Movers of Globalization*, he examines the role of diesel and gas tur-

### PRIME MOVERS OF GLOBALIZATION:

The History and Impact of Diesel Engines and Gas Turbines.

By Vaclav Smil.  
MIT Press.  
261 pp. \$29.95

bine engines in the worldwide economy. Both convert the chemical energy of fuel into the mechanical power—horsepower—that drives objects through the air or across water.

These mechanical powerhouses are the Rodney Dangerfields of globalization, suggests Smil, an environmental scientist at the University of Manitoba and the author of some 30 books. Buried in the bowels of ships, diesel engines move billions of tons of foodstuffs, fuel, and industrial goods between continents. They also propel trains, trucks, and barges. Whirring reliably underneath the wings of planes, gas turbines make possible the flight of jetliners that transport more than five million passengers a day.

While these machines have received little attention, Smil writes, they have “led to epochal shifts in world affairs,” most noticeably the rise of China as the world's manufacturing hub. A modern container ship such as China Shipping Container Lines' *Xin Los Angeles* can transport 24 times more goods than the first container vessels could in the late 1950s. Moreover, it can be loaded and offloaded about 20 times faster than in the days of grappling hooks and sweaty longshoremen, by cranes that are themselves usually powered by diesel engines.

The diesel engine was pivotal in freeing land and sea commerce from the shackles of the thermally inefficient steam engine. German engineer Rudolf Diesel developed the theoretical design in the 1890s, but because the engine's high-pressure system made unprecedented demands on the working parts, several decades passed before it gained widespread use. By then, diesel production had been commandeered by aggressive U.S. upstarts such as Cummins (trucks), Fairbanks-Morse (ships), and General Motors (locomotives).

The gas turbine for jet propulsion is another case in which technical improvements occurred incrementally after the first big leap of invention. Patented by both British and German engineers in the 1930s, the jet turbine was met with skepticism by military authorities and was not commercialized until a Boeing 707 (using a Pratt & Whitney turbo) took flight in 1954. Subsequently, turbine-powered jets rapidly replaced propeller-driven aircraft.

If diesels and turbines have made it possible to shuttle ever-increasing payloads of cargo and people among the continents, they have also changed commercial relations among nations. Consider that the manufacture of both engines was the exclusive preserve of Western nations (plus Japan) through most of their history. No longer. Nearly all large diesel engines designed by European companies are now made in Asia. This is in keeping with Asia's rapid rise to dominance of ocean shipping, with China now accounting for nearly half of the traffic handled by the world's top 20 container terminals.

Backpedaling from his overall claims for the beneficial nature of these two prime movers, Smil adds up the environmental costs of transporting more and more freight and passengers over long distances. In 1996, international shipping accounted for just 1.8 percent of the global carbon dioxide released by fossil fuels. By 2008, ocean shipping was responsible for about four percent. Aviation releases about half the carbon dioxide that shipping does, but jetliners emit greenhouse gases into a more environmentally fragile part of the atmosphere. Still, Smil sees no reliable or affordable alternatives. "Green power" has not found any niche on the high seas or in the air. For the foreseeable future, the global economy will rely on diesel engines and gas turbines.

Smil is a discursive writer who rarely finds a detail about engines that he doesn't want to share, which makes for heavy going at times. And he overplays his insistence that international trade agreements take a subordinate role to diesels and turbines as the drivers of globalization. In fact, both political power and horsepower shape the world's commerce. One sets the rules, the other delivers the goods.

But his descriptions of the mechanics of modern shipping, as well as earlier waves of globalization propelled by steamships and tall-mast vessels, make for stimulating reading. By scrutinizing common yet often-overlooked technologies, Smil offers a fresh and useful perspective on world economics.

MARK REUTTER is a fellow at the Progressive Policy Institute and a former Woodrow Wilson Center fellow. He edited *Railroad History* for eight years and is the author of *Making Steel—Sparrows Point and the Rise and Ruin of American Industrial Might* (1988, rev. ed. 2004).

## RELIGION &amp; PHILOSOPHY

## A Feast of the Spirit

Reviewed by Jonathan Rieder

BLACK CHRISTIANITY HAS always had an ambiguous relationship to American culture. If African slaves grew to embrace Christianity, they did so in their own way: hallowing Exodus and wondering, "If God delivered Daniel, why not every man?" Thus was born the amalgam "Afro-Christianity"—a universal-

istic faith drenched in particularity. The "African-ness" was a matter of style, too, given in moan and shout, which often led whites to view black religion as exotically emotional. Even Martin Luther King Jr. was known to recoil at the sight of a preacher "jumping out" and "screaming with his tune."

Not the least of the virtues of *Preaching With Sacred Fire*, a smorgasbord of an anthology, is to remind the reader of the dazzling array of black preaching. There's plenty of the fire that readers might expect. Toward the end of "The Eagle Stirreth Her Nest," delivered around 1941, the legendary C. L. Franklin, father of Aretha Franklin and King's favorite preacher, breaks into fervent chanting. But that wasn't fireworks for its own sake; Franklin had already well explored his main theme, God's love and mercy. In his 1987 sermon "Chaos or Creation," Charles G. Adams, known as "the Harvard Whooper," launches his signature crescendo only after parsing the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*.

Style, then, can be the vehicle of substance and not its enemy, and in *Preaching With Sacred Fire*, all manner of stylists abound: cerebral, mystical, whimsical, tender, contemplative, offbeat, angry, sublime. Some of the most beautiful moments are gently lyrical. Gardner Taylor, now retired as pastor of Brooklyn's Concord Baptist Church of Christ, asks in a 1982 sermon, "Do you sometimes in the solitude of your own reflection weep a silent tear as the words of that hymn come to you, 'Was it for crimes that I have done, / he groaned upon the tree?'"

## PREACHING WITH SACRED FIRE:

An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present.

Edited by Martha Simmons and Frank A. Thomas.  
W.W. Norton.  
960 pp. \$45

For all the concern with the redemption of “all God’s children,” black preaching has never lost its this-worldly concern for black people: from Frederick Douglass’s lamentation (“This Fourth of July is yours. . . I must mourn”) to King’s reassurance (“We as a people will get there”), from Henry McNeal Turner’s 1898 sermon “God Is a Negro” to Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad’s warning about Judgment Day (“Our oppressors . . . are of the devil!”).

This tradition of jeremiad puts in context the heated sermons of Jeremiah Wright, President Barack Obama’s former minister, who was attacked during the 2008 campaign as a race baiter, among other things. Read in its entirety, Wright’s controversial post-9/11 sermon “The Day of Jerusalem’s Fall” is less an expression of Afrocentric rage than a prophetic chastisement with a pacifist twist. “They moved from the hatred for armed enemies to the hatred of unarmed innocence,” he intoned, equating vengeful Americans with the ancient Israelites when they strayed from faith into retribution. “The babies. The babies. ‘Blessed are they who dash your babies’ brains against a rock.’”

The black pulpit has been a mainly male preserve, but editors Martha Simmons and Frank A. Thomas, both preachers in their own right and publishers of the journal *The African American Pulpit*, restore pride of place to women of God and their precocious feminism. As early as 1833, Jarena Lee, a born-again exhorter, asked, “And why should it be thought impossible, heterodox, or improper for a woman to preach, seeing the Saviour died for the woman as well as the man?”

Ultimately, *Preaching With Sacred Fire* is an invitation: Come savor this feast of history. Still, it’s hard not to wonder if the “Afro” in Afro-Christian can endure. King envisioned the withering away of the “so-called Negro Church” once racism diminished. Just as entertainment, therapy, and marketing now inform white evangelical worship, black empowerment preachers such as T. D. Jakes today give a new twist to the American obsession with emotional recovery and self-improvement. An expanded black middle class resonates to the message of a spate of prosperity preachers.

Yet it’s worth remembering that not so long ago, as a new Great Awakening was unleashing evangelical zeal, theorists of modernity were predicting the triumph of secularism. The “so-called Negro church” is still the place where most black Christians worship. And when hasn’t it had to rebalance its portfolio of race, faith, and citizenship? What’s different in today’s post-civil rights, post-identity politics world is that the meaning of blackness, like Jewishness or gayness, is no longer obvious or ordained: It must be fashioned before it can be chosen. The constancy here is change, the ceaseless need for self and communal reinvention. And what’s more American than that?

JONATHAN RIEDER, a professor of sociology at Barnard College, Columbia University, is the author of *The Word of the Lord Is Upon Me: The Righteous Performance of Martin Luther King Jr.* (2008).

## Bowling With God

Reviewed by Kevin M. Schultz

HARVARD’S ROBERT D. PUTNAM is probably the most famous sociologist in America, especially since 2000, when he published *Bowling Alone*, a landmark book about Americans’ increasing

disconnection since the 1950s from family, friends, neighbors, and community institutions. In the decade since *Bowling Alone* came out, Putnam has turned his gaze on religion, and now, with Notre Dame political scientist David E. Campbell, he has produced *American Grace*, an expansive survey of religion in American life during the past half-century.

It’s a good book, though not as revealing or provocative as *Bowling Alone*. Putnam and Campbell’s thesis, supported by numerous surveys, including two they conducted themselves, is that since 1950 the American religious landscape has become simultaneously more polarized *and* more tolerant. While 72 percent of Americans today think “America is divided along religious lines,” a “whopping 89 percent” (including 83 percent of evangelical Protestants) nevertheless believe that heaven is not reserved solely for those who share

**AMERICAN GRACE:**  
How Religion Divides  
and Unites Us.

By Robert D. Putnam  
and David E. Campbell.  
Simon & Schuster.  
673 pp. \$30

their faith, a finding that suggests tolerance absent just a generation ago.

How has this come to pass? Regarding polarization, Putnam and Campbell propose a three-phase theory. First, the widespread liberalization of sexual mores during the 1960s pushed some people away from the pews. But this initial “earthquake” led to a more important “aftershock”: the Religious Right. Those who came of age from the 1970s to the ’90s provided the bulk of this evangelical movement’s membership (currently about a third of the population), animated not by frustrations with Great Society liberalism or changing gender roles, but mostly by the liberalization of sexual attitudes. When sexual issues became political, evangelicals mobilized. They initially tacked toward Jimmy Carter, the first self-proclaimed born-again president, but once the Democratic Party came out in support of abortion rights in 1980 and the Republicans in opposition, evangelicals aligned with the GOP.

For those who came of age in the 1990s, the likes of Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell were a massive turnoff. That generation became “nones,” proclaiming no religious affiliation, and they became Democrats. This was a second “aftershock,” and its effects are still evident. Nones currently constitute about 17 percent of the population, and, among twentysomethings, they outnumber evangelicals better than 1.5 to one. (The authors do not, however, predict widespread secularization anytime soon.)

If we’ve become more religiously polarized, how have we also become more tolerant? Putnam and Campbell argue that America’s religious marketplace—nearly one-third of Americans at some point change faiths—has created a churning environment in which relatives and friends are likely to be of other faiths. We all have an Aunt Susan who is the most delightful person we know—certainly meritorious of heaven—but who is not of our faith. (The authors call this the “Aunt Susan Principle.”) A Missouri Synod Lutheran pastor, confronted with data showing that more than four-fifths of his denomination don’t believe that one’s faith is the only avenue to heaven, remarked that he and his fellow pastors had “failed.” But while most clergy

side with that pastor, most parishioners are quite happily tolerant. This is the American grace of the book’s title.

Those familiar with the scholarship on religion in America will find these conclusions unsurprising. The rise of the nones, the fact that churches that make stringent demands gain followers at the expense of those that don’t, and the “browning” of American Catholicism as whites depart the faith in droves and Latinos join it are also well-established trends. And one can quibble with some of the authors’ analysis. They paint the 1950s as a time when religious divisions were muted (they weren’t), creating an artificially placid baseline against which to measure events in the years since. The authors also sometimes identify a change over time by comparing surveys that are just one year apart.

But what makes this book a joy to read is the statistical data Putnam and Campbell have collected. Mormons express appreciation for everyone, for instance, while almost everyone dislikes Mormons. Jews are the most loved religious group in America. Half of all married Americans have spouses of a different faith. American religious observance has decreased since the 1950s—fairly significantly since the early 1990s. Adherence to biblical literalism has diminished too. Meanwhile, the intensity of people’s religiosity is predictive of their views on only two political issues, abortion and gay marriage.

Intriguingly, on these two issues Putnam and Campbell find the nation growing less polarized. On the one hand, Americans are increasingly comfortable with gay rights, as greater numbers of people realize they have a gay friend or colleague. On the other hand, members of the generation that came of age in the 1990s, influenced by the widespread availability of contraception (and perhaps ultrasound imaging), are more reluctant to support unregulated abortion. It is feasible that these transformations will take the sting out of the country’s religious polarization, which would likely provoke another realignment of American religion.

KEVIN M. SCHULTZ, an assistant professor of history and Catholic studies at the University of Illinois, Chicago, is the author of the forthcoming book *Tri-Faith America: How Postwar Catholics and Jews Held America to Its Protestant Promise*.

## STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

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# PORTRAIT

#3 & #5 are confusing - redesign sentences?

THE AMERICAN HERITAGE  
dictionary

USAGE BALLOT NO. 11

3. **in behalf of / on behalf of**

a. The lawyer spoke to the media \_\_\_\_\_ his client.

in behalf of

on behalf of

b. After sitting silently as one complaint after another was raised, he finally spoke up \_\_\_\_\_ his kid's coach.

in behalf of

on behalf of

4. **jibe / jive**

a. The two accounts of the incident didn't quite \_\_\_\_\_.

jibe

jive

b. The software doesn't \_\_\_\_\_ with the operating system.

jibe

jive

5. **masterful / masterly**

a. He blotted out his face with an abrupt pat or two, trying to recover his usual \_\_\_\_\_ demeanor.

masterful

masterly

page 2

*Confusing - Sentences are OK either way, but they mean different things*

*But the sentences mean different things depending which is used*

*Same here*

*Again - Either could work, but the meaning of the sentence is very different depending on which is used.*

*This could be OK if it's a tyrant's or overbearing boss's demeanor - no?*

*More obviously OK*

## Dean of Diction

David Foster Wallace, the virtuosic novelist who wrote *Infinite Jest* (1996), was a staunch advocate of flawless grammar, once describing himself as “the sort of person whose idea of Sunday fun was to look for mistakes in Safire’s column’s prose itself.” (William Safire wrote a column on language for *The New York Times Magazine*.) Wallace’s sensibilities made him a fitting pick for *The American Heritage Dictionary’s* Usage Panel, a group of 200 preeminent writers, artists, and thinkers whom the dictionary’s editors annually survey on English usage and grammar. A page from Wallace’s *AHD* questionnaire, which the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas, Austin, acquired along with the bulk of his writings after he committed suicide in 2008, offers a peek at the MacArthur genius grant winner’s zeal for the nuts and bolts of language.



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