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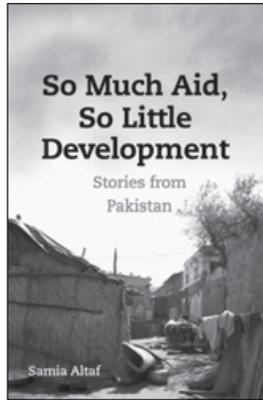
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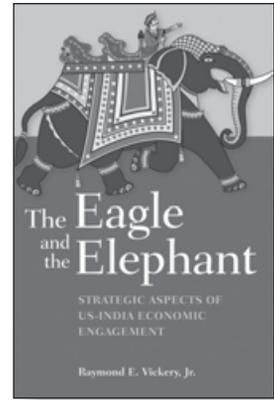
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COVER STORY

**35 The Middle East  
WHAT NEXT?**

Since this spring's eruption of demands for change in the Arab world, uncertainty reigns everywhere. In some countries, long-ruling autocrats still fight viciously for power, while in others, leaders scramble to reach a new accommodation with their suddenly rebellious people. Egyptians and Tunisians, meanwhile, struggle to make good on the promise of democracy. Where did this wave of change come from? And where is it going?

**For America, An Arab Winter |**

*By Aaron David Miller*

**The Long Revolt |** *By Rami G. Khouri*

**The Pink Hijab |** *By Robin Wright*

**Writing the New Rules of the Game |**

*By Donald L. Horowitz*

**16 The WikiLeaks Illusion**

*By Alasdair Roberts |* When WikiLeaks published thousands of confidential government documents last year, most Americans hardly batted an eye.

**22 Beyond the Bully Pulpit**

*By David Greenberg |* With his outsize personality and zest for media attention, Theodore Roosevelt transformed the American presidency forever.

**30 Three Cheers for Blue-Ribbon Panels**

*By Jordan Tama |* Launching a new government commission filled with eminent figures has become Washington's stock answer to national problems. What's surprising is that such groups often get the job done.

**ON THE COVER:** Tahrir Square on February 12, after Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak announced his resignation. **ABOVE:** A young protester on February 7, the 14th day of the demonstrations calling for Mubarak's ouster. *The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.*

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Stingless Authoritarianism, from *Journal of Democracy*

The Little Island That Could, from *National Bureau of Economic Research Digest*

## CURRENT BOOKS

### Best Books About the Civil War

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In recognition of the Civil War sesquicentennial, leading historians and writers single out their favorite books about the war, its aftermath, and its hold on the public imagination. We also review the most notable Civil War books published this season.



78 MY ROAD TO THE CIVIL WAR  
By James M. McPherson

81 WHAT LIKE A BULLET CAN UNDECEIVE!  
By Brenda Wineapple

84 BEST CIVIL WAR MILITARY BOOKS  
By Joseph Glatthaar

87 FOUR ESSENTIAL BOOKS ABOUT ABRAHAM LINCOLN  
By Andrew Ferguson

89 BEST BOOKS ON SLAVERY AND RACE RELATIONS  
By Ira Berlin

92 MY FAVORITE CIVIL WAR NOVELS  
By David S. Reynolds

95 AMERICA AFLAME:  
How the Civil War Created a Nation.  
By David Goldfield  
Reviewed by W. Barksdale Maynard

96 1861:  
The Civil War Awakening.  
By Adam Goodheart  
Reviewed by Christopher Clausen

98 FIGHTING CHANCE:  
The Struggle Over Woman Suffrage and Black Suffrage in Reconstruction America.  
By Faye E. Dudden  
Reviewed by Nina Silber

99 A WORLD ON FIRE:  
Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War.  
By Amanda Foreman  
Reviewed by Don H. Doyle

101 THE UNION WAR.  
By Gary W. Gallagher  
Reviewed by Kevin Adams

102 THE CIVIL WAR:  
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Letting Go

# EDITOR'S COMMENT

## First Look

This is an issue of firsts. Never before has the *WQ*'s Current Books section been devoted entirely to a single subject, as it is with this issue's focus on the Civil War in observance of the war's sesquicentennial. Literary editor Sarah Courteau has created a delightful and informative assemblage of reviews and short essays covering everything from the war's great leaders and battles to novels that capture the trials and tribulations of the anonymous millions who were caught up in the conflict. Best of all, to my mind, the section is much like a battlefield itself in a rare moment free of smoke and haze, with the many contending arguments about the origins and consequences of America's great war visible to all.

There's another first in this issue: All of our feature articles are authored by current or past scholars and staff members of the Woodrow Wilson Center. That doesn't mean we're becoming a house organ—it's just a happy coincidence that testifies to the extraordinary intellectual breadth and strength of the Center. These writers treat subjects ranging from American history to foreign affairs, and their perspectives often clash. In our cover cluster on the Middle East, "What Next?" you will read four extremely knowledgeable authors with different takes on what to expect in the wake of the Arab Spring.

The Center's new director, president, and CEO, Jane Harman, has inaugurated a series of debates and discussions called The National Conversation with the goal of promoting more informed and civil discourse about our national challenges. That's very much in the spirit of what the *WQ* has sought to do for 35 years. It's a great conversation. Join it.

—STEVEN LAGERFELD



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# LETTERS

## THE CITY—IT'S ALIVE

AN OFFICIAL FROM A SIZABLE foundation told a Florida crowd a few months ago that people no longer live in “places.” They spend their time in “spaces”—particularly the virtual space of the Internet. I need to send the speaker your cluster on cities and their comeback [“The City Bounces Back,” Spring ’11]. The evidence in your articles and elsewhere tells us that the concept of place still matters, maybe more than ever.

Overlooked in the idea of space is the new social function cities play. Cities are the places where most Americans construct their identities—whether it’s by joining a marching band, shopping for artisanal grains, or patronizing particular coffee shops. If family, class, occupation, and religion once guided us through life, today each of us cobles together a life of one’s own with the people and activities we discover in the cities where we choose to live.

**Bill Bishop**

*Author, The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America Is Tearing Us Apart (2009)*

*Austin, Texas*

SARAH L. COURTEAU’S THOUGHTFUL essay on her experiences as a

white gentrifier living in a predominantly black low-income neighborhood [“New to the Neighborhood,” Spring ’11] underscores a number of dramatic changes taking place in U.S. cities today. Perhaps none are more dramatic than the willingness of whites to move into previously all-black neighborhoods.

During the 20th century, American cities became so racially segregated that descriptors such as “apartheid” were apt. In *American Apartheid* (1993), the sociologists Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton ably document the myriad discriminatory forces that created “chocolate” cities such as Washington, D.C. Just as important to the creation of segregated cities, however, was white flight to the suburbs and white avoidance of neighborhoods with a substantial black presence—neighborhoods that inevitably became all black. To the extent that residential integration occurred in the post-civil rights era, it almost always meant a few blacks moving into white communities.

Courteau’s experience suggests a new chapter in the life of the American city. This is a chapter of a more integrated metropolis with

blacks (and other persons of color) having the opportunity to move into predominantly white areas and whites moving into neighborhoods with a black identity. A balanced flow of whites and blacks into neighborhoods is the only way that areas can remain integrated. Will this be the case for neighborhoods like Rosedale? The answer to this question will go a long way toward clarifying whether we are truly approaching a postracial era in the United States.

**Lance Freeman**

*Director and Associate Professor  
Urban Planning Program  
Graduate School of Architecture,  
Planning, and Preservation  
Columbia University  
New York, N.Y.*

THE EDITORS’ INTRODUCTION TO Sarah L. Courteau’s article highlights the mixed feelings she has about the term “urban pioneer.” Missing from her well-intentioned reflection is a consideration of the power dynamics that create urban frontiers in the first place. In fact, a discussion of power is virtually absent from all four articles on the city, despite the long history of inequality that the unbalanced distribution of power has produced in urban America. This oversight could allow the reader to uncritically assume that cities are

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“bouncing back” to the benefit of all.

As Courteau notes, the word “pioneer”—particularly in the historical context of the United States—implicitly suggests that the place to which the pioneer has traveled is, at best, a blank slate ready to be “improved” and, at worst, a primitive backwater inhabited by unenlightened people that needs to be civilized. In either case, the modern pioneer is expected to improve her new surroundings, with the help of private developers and the state.

One might ask why longtime residents should have a greater say than newcomers about their neighborhood. As the H Street N.E. developer Courteau cites said, hasn’t the corridor been dominated by different demographic groups throughout its history (first Jewish, then black, and now white young professional)? Yes—but not all change is equal. The gentrification of H Street N.E. did not occur on its own (in contrast to the neighborhood’s previous demographic changes). It was sparked by the state, and followed a tradition of public-private redevelopment that is often inherently prejudiced.

As David Zipper’s article [“Stores and the City,” Spring ’11] shows, developers act according to preconceived notions of what will be successful. It just so happens that the largely white, educated, middle-class demographic that is usually seen as the key to success for such redevelopment is also a boon to Washington, D.C.’s tax base.

We must recognize that such changes in our cities are by no means “natural,” but reflect a conglomeration of powerful forces that clearly favor the perceived desires of one group over those of others.

**Michael McCoy**

*Washington, D.C.*

SARAH L. COURTEAU’S GRACEFUL account of moving into an African-American community in Washington, D.C., weaves an all-too-common narrative of gentrification. Whatever the race, ethnicity, or occupation of gentrifiers, once they achieve a critical density, they undermine the authenticity of the urban experience they crave.

Sometimes they do this directly by bidding up housing prices, offering a windfall fortune to low-income homeowners and pushing renters out. In Courteau’s new neighborhood, gentrifiers renovate homes, marking their presence and establishing the marketability of an area that was once considered too economically marginal or dangerous.

Improvement brings developers and more gentrifiers. The new arrivals encourage entrepreneurs to open restaurants, bars, independent bookstores, organic groceries, and boutiques—all of the “interesting” amenities that fascinate men and women who cultivate their role as cultural consumers. As a result, multicultural urban diversity evolves into a monoculture.

Despite the quantitative studies showing that gentrification

does not displace longtime residents that Courteau cites, the jury is still out on this question. But demographic and cultural shifts are clear. The 2010 U.S. Census shows more white residents living in historically black urban neighborhoods. More affluent families are moving to or choosing to stay in cities. From New York to Dallas to San Francisco, “arts districts” are expanding while low-income areas contract.

Do cities gain or lose from these changes? To the extent that they become safer, cleaner, and more attractive, they win. Increasing the tax base raise revenue to pay for city services. But gentrifiers, especially single homeowners such as Courteau, tend to support private, market-based services that separate them from low-income groups.

Together with the demolition of public housing projects, gentrification dilutes the strong social solidarity and authentic cultural identity of poor parts of cities overwhelmingly inhabited by minorities.

**Sharon Zukin**

*Author, Naked City: The Death and Life of*

*Authentic Urban Places (2010)*

*Professor of Sociology*

*Brooklyn College and City University*

*Graduate Center*

*Brooklyn, N.Y.*

DAVID ZIPPER’S ARTICLE ON THE opening of the Yes! Organic Market in the Fairlawn neighborhood of Washington, D.C., offers a welcome look at the often unsung story of neighborhood economic development. Revitalizing cities is

not always about big, high-profile projects. Incremental changes are necessary to make neighborhoods more likely to attract and retain residents.

D.C. is on the upswing again after decades of decline in which the population shrank, businesses closed, and tax revenue dropped. The challenge of people with jobs such as Zipper's is to manage market forces to preserve neighborhood character in some areas, spur investment interest in other areas, and provide economic opportunities for all residents. As the article shows, it's a tough but important balancing act.

**Martha Ross**

*Deputy Director  
Greater Washington Research  
The Brookings Institution  
Washington, D.C.*

LIKE SO MANY URBAN THINKERS, Tom Vanderbilt believes that innovation and ideas, rather than goods and jobs, drive the economy ["Long Live the Industrial City," Spring '11]. But the Great Recession taught us that our economy cannot survive on ideas and algorithms alone. We need to produce actual goods to build a strong foundation for continued growth. Innovative ideas exist in abundance. The cities that thrive will be the ones that best harness these ideas, turn them into tangible products, and move them efficiently. One great organization devoted to these aims is the Greater Philadelphia Innovation Cluster, which researches energy-efficient construction components and is revolutionizing the building

industry and the job market while creating products it can sell around the world. If the products don't sell, the ideas are worth a lot less.

Vanderbilt also focuses on manufacturing as a means to boost competitiveness. But it can be a path to equity as well. Many of the country's poorest cities are ones where manufacturing jobs were lost in the past half-century and never restored. Organizations such as SFMade in San Francisco support local manufacturers in an effort to grow a diverse work force and restore a job sector that is crucial to the social sustainability of any great city. For cities to truly bounce back, a whole host of critical urban sectors—such as manufacturing, housing, and infrastructure—need to enjoy a lift.

**Diana Lind**

*Editor at Large, Next American City  
Philadelphia, Pa.*

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT needs to get serious about "smart growth" policies and take corrective action to combat the sprawl described by Witold Rybczynski in "Dense, Denser, Densest" [Spring '11]. For starters, removing the home mortgage interest deduction will discourage suburban sprawl. State and federal governments should remove indirect subsidies by ending the construction of roads and other infrastructure serving these outlying areas. Increasing taxes on automobiles, raising the fuel tax, and instituting congestion pricing are all necessary to encourage people to modify their behavior.

Extreme waste is endemic in the American way of life, and it is time for policymakers to render the sprawling suburbs of Phoenix, Arizona, and Charlotte, North Carolina, unaffordable. The net cost savings from enacting such policies would be enormous. Health care costs alone would drop by billions if Americans were forced out of their cars. Policymakers who are serious about curbing the nation's dependence on foreign energy supplies and moving toward a healthier, more sustainable future need to make calculated decisions that promote dense, livable cities.

**Nicholas Mansfield**

*Posted on wilsonquarterly.com*

AFTER READING YOUR commendable cluster on the social and economic resurrection of the city, I was struck by something absent from the four featured articles: animals.

An awareness—or ignorance—of urban ecology can have a powerful influence on the lives of city dwellers, human and not. In the Pacific Northwest, transportation infrastructure is being redesigned, at no small expense, to facilitate wildlife corridors; bears, moose, mountain lions, and other animals will be able to migrate through developed regions unharmed. Cairo recently experienced an emergency when Egyptian authorities unwisely culled the city's pig population, hoping to diminish the threat of swine flu—but inadvertently eliminated a prime source of waste disposal in the process. The Nat- [Continued on page 10]

# AT THE CENTER

## THEN: LEADER OF THE FREE WORLD. NOW: ?

THE U.S. INTERVENTION IN LIBYA IN MARCH added new urgency to a long-simmering debate in Washington over America's role in world affairs. In April, The National Conversation, a new signature series of the Woodrow Wilson Center designed to provide a civil, nonpartisan forum for the discussion of overarching policy concerns, brought together a group of policy luminaries to focus on the issue, with *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman acting as moderator.

Anne-Marie Slaughter, formerly director of policy planning at the U.S. Department of State and now a professor of politics and international affairs at Princeton, summed up the white paper written for the occasion. During the Cold War, she said, the United States was fairly certain of its purpose: It was, as every civics student knew, "the leader of the free world." The global power structure is no longer so simple. A new national strategic "narrative" is needed that acknowledges the changing global landscape and reaffirms the country's commitment to leadership and competitiveness.

The white paper was written by Captain Wayne Porter of the U.S. Navy and Colonel Mark Mykleby of the Marines. The pair wrote as "Mr. Y," in a nod to George Kennan's famous 1947 "X" essay arguing for a policy of containment toward the Soviet Union. (Read Porter and Mykleby's paper online at <http://bit.ly/MrYpaper>.)

Some panelists questioned the assertion that foreign-policy challenges are more complex today than they were before 9/11. Robert Kagan, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, argued that there has rarely been an "easy paradigm for American foreign policy." Nineteenth-century Americans grappled with many of the challenges that are familiar to us—globalization, labor market shifts, and mind-boggling advances in technology and communication. If the world hasn't radically changed, Kagan reasoned, the methods by which we engage with the world should not drastically morph. "You can't quite get rid of deterrence," he said. Nation-states still dominate international relations. "I'm not at all convinced that we've left either the 20th or 19th century . . . in terms of power."

Brent Scowcroft, national security advisor to Presidents Gerald Ford and George H. W. Bush, saw merit in the argument for reinventing the national strategic narrative. "Technology has politicized the world's people in a way they never have been," he contended, pointing to the ease with which people can organize or participate in political acts, such as the Arab Spring. Slaughter echoed Scowcroft's assessment and called attention to three phenomena that make today's global environment new: the opportunity for individuals to wield power previously available only to nation-states (viz. the 9/11 plotters), the growing importance of the ability to attract and mobilize people, and the role of emerging international institutions such as the European Court of Human Rights in "enforcing the rules of global order."

Even if consensus were to be reached about the global paradigm, making good on a new vision might not be practical. Representative Keith Ellison (D-Minn.) voiced concern about the difficulty of aligning a new national strategic narrative with the United States' resources. "We have a military structure that's still in the Soviet era," he charged. Were the priorities the participants were discussing realistic given the pressure on the economy? Should military spending be cut to balance a budget whose deficits were growing due to entitlements such as health care? Steve Clemons, founder of the American Strategy Program at the New America Foundation, argued that the United States' future rested on a more abstract basis—its ability to "recapture the imagination" of the world, to be seen as "the Google of nations" rather than "the General Motors of nations."

The National Conversations are not meant to end at the Wilson Center's doors. A few weeks after the panel, the killing of Osama bin Laden removed a major threat to the United States. Will this development change U.S. policy? In an interview with *The New York Times* after the Abbottabad raid, Mykleby said, "This is a critical moment to talk about a narrative that isn't just focused on threats."



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**X MARKS THE SUBJECT**

THINK OF THE NOTION OF “territory,” and tangible images come to mind: geographers peering at clearly defined countries on maps, defiant animals growling at intruders. According to Charles Maier, the Leverett Saltonstall Professor of History at Harvard University, the concept of territory has not always been so fixed. “It has continually changed along with the other major variables of human history,” he says. In January, Maier arrived at the Woodrow Wilson Center to spend six months working on a book on the subject, which, he explains, is not about nationalism but about what one “can do with a nation.”

Maier was chosen as the Wilson Center's first Distinguished Scholar, a new fellowship reserved for renowned academics who have made lasting contributions to the worlds of scholarship and public policy. Maier, who also had a research stint at the Center in 1989, has enjoyed an illustrious career as a historian, having authored and edited volumes on political economy, empire, the effects of the Marshall Plan, the collapse of East Germany, and other topics since he completed his PhD at Harvard in 1966.

Maier began his study of territory by looking at how the concept has evolved over time. Imperially controlled territory was the norm in Europe after antiquity, until emerging national states organized more cohesive domains. When they expanded overseas, European empires were initially content to base their territorial authority on trading rights and control of broadly



defined landscape features such as river mouths. When territory came to be understood as the province of elites animated by specific political ideologies, however, the importance of drawing and securing borders became more pronounced. By the late 19th century, demarcated territory “seemed the overriding index of measuring national welfare,” and was strongly associated with political decision-making and collective identity. In the 20th century, territory became an even more prominent aspect of how nations were defined, with the Cold War initiating the “territorialization of ideologies.”

Now, Maier claims, the meaning of territory is changing once again. Since the 1970s, modern territoriality has been “severely buffeted” as globalization has remade capital flows, migratory patterns, and communications structures. These are not easy transitions, and the consequences can be seen in the heated debates about financial competitiveness, immigration, and social values that are occurring in many countries, including the United States. Maier hopes that the work he will complete at the Wilson Center “will provide some perspective” as the world navigates this “transformative moment of territoriality.”

[Continued from page 7] ural History Museum of Los Angeles has put urban ecology to use by embarking upon a cutting-edge urban “spider survey,” crowdsourcing data from city residents to learn more about the area’s arachnids, whose numbers far exceed LA’s human population and include poisonous and invasive species.

In short, cities are not only a human story. Any future issue on the city would do well to include vibrant, nonhuman perspectives, as we have a growing population of neighbors we live beside without quite managing to see.

**Geoff Manaugh**

*Blogger, BLDGBLOG*

*Contributing Editor, Wired UK*

*Los Angeles, Calif.*

## HUGO’S HUBRIS

THERE IS NO QUESTION, AFTER reading Joshua Kucera’s excellent piece “What Is Hugo Chávez Up To?” [Spring ’11], that Venezuela is spending far too much economic and political capital on its foreign policy. Almost every economic deal that Venezuela has recently signed seems to be embarrassingly lopsided, benefiting the other party more than Venezuela. Moreover, the deals seem to have little effect on the success of President Hugo Chávez’s efforts to create a global anti-U.S. coalition.

Many of Venezuela’s new foreign-policy ties, as Kucera tells us, involve secret pacts with shadowy regimes such as Iran’s. We cannot know for certain what the stipulations of these agreements are. One thing is sure: U.S. officials are

increasingly worried. Tolerance for Venezuela’s secrecy is waning, especially in Congress. Soon, there will be pressure for the White House to be more confrontational.

The developments highlight the main paradox conveyed by Kucera’s article. Making U.S. foreign policy toward Venezuela more Goliath-like could very well be the only goal of Chávez’s foreign-policy ambitions. A wounded and reduced nationalist such as Chávez knows that nothing can revive his fortunes more than a political confrontation with a giant such as the United States. If all Venezuela gets from its secret dealings is a provoked and aggressive Uncle Sam, then one could conclude, somewhat differently from Kucera, that its foreign-policy investments have been worth every drop of oil that went into them.

**Javier Corrales**

*Professor of Political Science*

*Amherst College*

*Amherst, Mass.*

## THE CLASSICS IN AETERNUM

DANIEL WALKER HOWE [“Classical Education in America,” Spring ’11] suggests that classical languages and literatures lost their preeminence in the American curriculum because “moral relativism undercut trust in the standards the classical authors had long embodied.” Classical authors regularly inspire, inform, and delight, but they do not embody a single standard. They do not even agree among them-

selves—see, for instance, the discussion of civil disobedience in Sophocles’ *Antigone*—and single works can elicit completely different interpretations. Moreover, the classics have no monopoly on virtue. History is sprinkled with dubious projects inspired by Greek and Roman culture. The 1936 Olympics, Benito Mussolini’s building program, and—as Howe reminds us—the political theories of slavery apologist John C. Calhoun are but a few.

Instead, the decline of classics in the undergraduate curriculum, along with the rest of the humanities, comes from the increasing tendency to view a bachelor’s degree as a vocational qualification. This trend may have begun with the founding of land grant colleges in the 1860s, but it has gathered strength amid the economic uncertainties of recent decades.

Its inadequacy, however, is starting to be recognized. As Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa describe in their recent book, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*, students adhering to a liberal arts curriculum tend to derive greater benefit from their college education than those majoring in allegedly more practical fields. Liberal arts students learn to read and write about a wide variety of subjects and wrestle with difficult questions. They are better equipped to be the 21st century’s nimble “knowledge workers” who move easily between projects.

Among the humanities, the classics remain sturdy. While the

University of Albany has closed its classics program, others have expanded or even started ab initio—notably at the University of Miami, whose president, a political scientist, considers a major research institution incomplete without the classics, and at Grand Valley State University in Michigan, which had no classics department a dozen years ago but now has seven tenure-track faculty members.

The American Philological Association exists and thrives because the Greek and Roman cultures of distant millennia still speak to people. We also exist and thrive because we have learned to avoid the hubris of thinking that classical culture is the only one with such power. Advocates for classics do not need to recover their former place of privilege in the curriculum. In the 21st century, no discipline—not even business—is entitled to that privilege.

**Adam D. Blistein**

*Executive Director  
American Philological Association  
Philadelphia, Pa.*

**Kathleen M. Coleman**

*President  
American Philological Association  
Cambridge, Mass.*

## NO MORE NUGGETS

KRISTEN HINMAN RAISES THE important question of how policy can best address high childhood obesity rates[“The School Lunch Wars,” Spring ’11]. School lunches constitute a major component of the school food environment, but the evidence on their association with obesity risk is more mixed than she

suggests. Among studies using nationally representative data, two find that school lunch consumption has no effect on obesity risk; one finds a negative association, and the two finding a positive association report modest effects. While improved school nutrition is still a worthy goal with likely health benefits, it can’t single-handedly blunt the obesity epidemic.

Schools can do more than just regulate lunches. Evidence shows that children are easily influenced by ads. Government could ban the promotion of low-nutrient, high-calorie foods on public school property.

National security is the main reason given for public interest in childhood obesity, but there are others. The public pension system relies on younger working people for its financing. Obesity is associated with higher employer health-insurance costs, greater absenteeism, and greater disability—all hindrances that make the obese less able to support retirees as well as themselves.

**Patricia K. Smith**

*Professor of Economics  
University of Michigan, Dearborn  
Dearborn, Mich.*

KRISTEN HINMAN WRITES THAT a school lunch “war” is raging between food activists (enlightened reformers and celebrity chefs who understand nutrition) and recalcitrant food service directors, ignorant parents, and teachers “who snort, *How can you serve beets to students?*” The reformers, she argues, are fighting a losing battle against childhood obesity and its root cause, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Na-

tional School Lunch Program. “How did a program that was designed to improve the nutrition of the nation’s children,” she asks, “become a culprit in the scourge of childhood obesity?”

Hinman’s piece overlooks two important issues. First, the school lunch program as we know it is the product of social movements and political compromise. During the 1970s, under intense pressure from civil rights and antihunger activists, a program designed essentially to control farm prices became the nation’s most popular welfare program, feeding millions of poor children each day. The offering remains the single most important nutrition program for school-age children, though its administrative structure and menu have always reflected the competing goals of the farm bloc and child welfare advocates.

Second, Hinman underemphasizes the nature of the nation’s food system. The food most Americans buy in the grocery store is processed, packaged, and shipped by food industry giants—the same kind of corporations that deliver large numbers of unhealthy meals for the school lunch program at relatively low cost. The current obesity crisis springs as much from the nature of America’s food system and our collective political choices as from individual decisions about “good” and “bad” food.

**Susan Levine**

*Professor of History and Director  
Institute for the Humanities  
University of Illinois, Chicago  
Chicago, Ill.*

# FINDINGS

BRIEF NOTES OF INTEREST ON ALL TOPICS

## Boys Rule

*Earth needs women*

Are girls vanishing? In India, the 2011 census found about 7.1 million fewer girls than boys below age six. The cause, Prabhat Jha and eight co-authors write in *The Lancet* (June 4), is a level of sex-selective abortion that's rising at a "remarkable" rate.

The researchers note that the boy-girl ratio for firstborn children in India is about normal. (Generally, around 105 boys are born for every 100 girls. Males die younger, so the sexes even out.) But when the first-born child is a girl, the second-born is far more likely to be a boy, particularly among well-off and well-

educated parents—those with the knowledge and wherewithal to get ultrasound tests, which can determine fetal sex, and abortions.

India isn't unique, Mara Hvistendahl reports in *Unnatural Selection: Choosing Boys Over Girls, and the Consequences of a World Full of Men* (PublicAffairs). The planet faces a growing shortage of girls. In China, one town has 176 boys for every 100 girls under age four. Demographer Christophe Guilmo estimates that sex-selective abortion has brought about a cumulative shortage of 163 million females across Asia—more than the total female population of the United States. Girls are disap-

pearing from the Caucasus and the Balkans, too.

There's no simple explanation. "Sex selection happened among Hindus, Muslims, and Christians; among ethnic and political rivals; in economic powerhouses and in countries just on the cusp of development," Hvistendahl writes. Some countries with girl shortages have histories of female infanticide, but others don't.

Although some economists posit that a boy surplus will cause societies to place a greater value on girls, Hvistendahl disagrees. So far, an excess of males has led to lawbreaking—in China, researchers have found that a one percent increase in the male-to-female sex ratio at birth produces at least a five percent increase in crime—as well as sex trafficking of women, forced marriages, polyandry, and legions of potentially restive mateless men.

In response, some countries are starting to enforce long-dormant laws against using ultrasound to determine fetal sex. PR campaigns are being deployed, too. Posters in India say, "Indira Gandhi and Mother Teresa: Your daughter can be one of them." But even if every nation's male-female birth ratio returned to normal tomorrow, the excess male births thus far would skew the global population for decades to come.

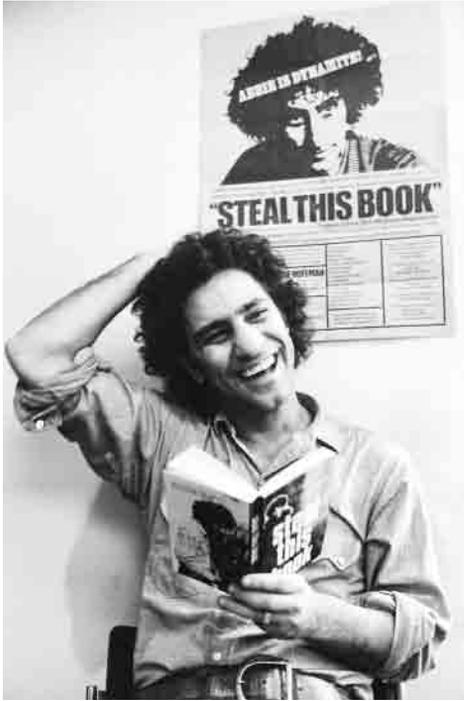


India has seen a rise in male births, particularly among parents whose first child was a girl.

## Stealing the Revolution

*Follow that title*

“Ripping off . . . is an act of revolutionary love,” Abbie Hoffman wrote in *Steal This Book* in 1971. Predict-



Abbie Hoffman poses with a copy of *Steal This Book* in 1971.

ably, the how-to guide to thievery proved controversial, Rachel Shteir recounts in *The Steal: A Cultural History of Shoplifting* (Penguin). After more than two dozen publishers turned down the manuscript, Hoffman raised \$15,000 and published it himself, with Grove Press as distributor.

The book got almost no mainstream reviews. Except for *The San Francisco Chronicle*, newspapers refused to advertise it. Only a handful of bookstores stocked it. Nevertheless, *Steal This Book* sold more than 100,000 copies in four months—with an unknown number

of additional copies shoplifted.

Like Nehru jackets, stealing briefly became chic. *The New York Times Magazine* ran an article headlined “Ripping Off: The New Lifestyle,” which quoted Hoffman as saying, “All our rip-offs together don’t equal one price-fixing scheme by General Electric.” For a dissenting view, the *Times* writer consulted Harvard sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset, who said, “Stealing is stealing even if you call it revolution.”

Jerry Rubin, Hoffman’s fellow yippie, also advocated rebellion through thievery. Then his own apartment was burglarized. “In advocating stealing as a revolutionary act,” he remarked, “I guess I didn’t make clear the difference between stealing from General Motors and stealing from me.”

## Party Time

*Hispanics on the fence*

At first glance, the growing number of Hispanics in the United States looks like great news for the Democrats. In last year’s elections for Congress, Democrats attracted some 60 percent of the Hispanic vote, while Republicans got just 38 percent. Hispanics now represent around 15 percent of the American population. They’re projected to account for as much as one-quarter by 2050.

But in *Miller-McCune* magazine (May–June), Norman H. Nie and three coauthors argue that the Hispanic vote is still up for grabs. According to their analysis, the high vote for Democrats in 2010 and earlier years reflects demographic factors other than ethnicity. Younger voters tend to vote Democratic, as do less educated voters. Hispanics are currently younger and less educated than blacks or non-Hispanic whites. Controlling for age and education, the authors find that Hispanics aren’t yet rooted in either party.

“Hispanics don’t have the generational partisan ties that most of us inherit along with our religious affiliation,” says Nie, a political scientist at Stanford University. The next few years may be crucial, he observes in an interview. “On the one hand, Republicans are stupidly shutting themselves off from a segment of the population that shares a lot of their values. They come off sounding like they just want to send [undocumented immigrants] back home. But for blacks and Hispanics to share leadership in the Democratic Party—I don’t see that as a long-lasting, easy marriage. . . . There are some very big differences in core values, having to do with notions of strong families and notions of entrepreneurship as opposed to dependence upon the state.”

What’s next? “The Democratic Party will try to convince Hispanics that they share an interest in a larger and more caring federal government, and the Republicans will try to communicate that they can help small businesses thrive,” Nie says. “But for now, Hispanics aren’t

comfortable on either side of the aisle.”

## Identity Theft

*Who's in a name?*

In choosing baby names, many soon-to-be parents take inspiration from pop culture. According to the Social Security Administration, the two names that gained the most popularity



Actor Brad Pitt carries his son Knox—whose name is now a popular one for boys—on a recent stroll in New Orleans.

last year were Bentley (for boys) and Maci (for girls). Though neither name broke the top 100, both rose more than 400 places. Maci Bookout and her son, Bentley, were stars of the MTV reality show *Teen Mom* in 2010. The second-fastest-rising name for boys was Kellan; Kellan Lutz stars in the *Twilight* movies. Another newly popular name for boys was Knox,

the name of one of Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt's twins.

Heidi Vandebosch, a communication scholar at the University of Antwerp, has studied the influence of media on baby names. “Names associated with famous persons, who parents might admire or think are good looking or sympathetic, often gain popularity,” she says, “while the names of notorious people might lose popularity, as in the decline of the name Adolf after World War II.” (Adolf lost its luster earlier in the United States: It last appeared in the top 1,000 in 1928.) Parents also often want names that are unusual, Vandebosch says, and the mass media bring new names to public attention. Before long, of course, they're no longer unusual.

But like pop culture figures themselves, names inspired by pop culture come and go. Last year, for the first time since 1954, Elvis wasn't among the top 1,000 boys' names in the

United States. In a press release, Social Security commissioner Michael J. Astrue says the Elvis news leaves him “all shook up.”

## Domestic Warriors

*Rebuilding Fortress America*

A new era of American isolationism may be dawning. The Brookings Institution surveyed more than

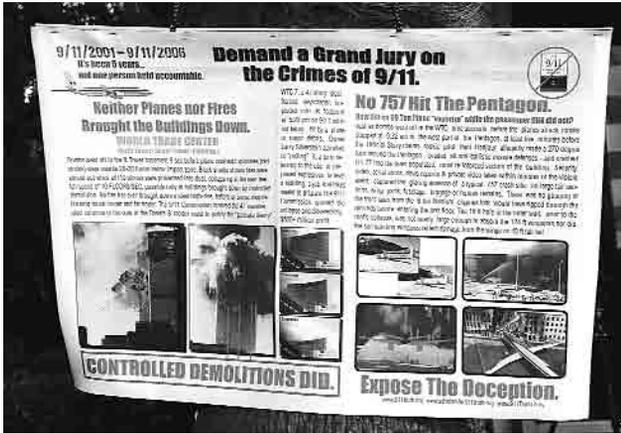
1,000 high school students enrolled in Washington-based leadership conferences or internships—“the next generation of American leaders,” according to the think tank's February report on the study. Nearly 58 percent said that the United States is too involved in global affairs. Just under a third thought that the nation had achieved the right balance, and only a tenth supported greater involvement. In a poll last year sponsored by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, by contrast, two-thirds of American adults said the United States ought to play an active role in world affairs.

Peter W. Singer, who oversaw the Brookings study, says that many young people believe that foreign engagements, particularly the Iraq war, have diverted attention and resources from domestic troubles, such as the damage wrought by Hurricane Katrina. “This isolation narrative . . . is something that one often hears if you actually talk to youth, something too few people in foreign policy do,” he says. “But I wasn't expecting to see such high numbers.” Singer finds the response troubling: “This level of isolationism echoes back to the 1920s and '30s—and the trend back then didn't work out so great.”

## Suspicious Minds

*Birthers, truthers, and blind faith*

Before President Obama released his long-form birth certificate in April, polls found that nearly half of Republicans believed that he had been born outside the United States. But the Right doesn't hold a monopoly on



A 9/11 “truther” poster raised questions on the fifth anniversary of the attacks.

wacky conspiracy theories, Ben Smith writes in *Politico*. To an extent, the 9/11 “truthers” among Democrats mirror the Obama “birthers” among Republicans.

In 2006, Scripps Howard and Ohio University asked Americans, “How likely is it that people in the federal government either assisted in the 9/11 attacks or took no action to stop the attacks because they wanted the United States to go to war in the Middle East?” Nearly 23 percent of Democrats called that scenario very likely, and another 28 percent called it somewhat likely. So, writes Smith, more than half of Democrats considered it at least plausible that 9/11 stemmed from a conspiracy within the U.S. government. (For the nation as a whole, 16 percent said it was very likely and 20 percent said it was somewhat likely.)

Whereas the birthers demanded to see Obama’s birth certificate, the truthers demand a new 9/11 commission. “The truthers claim the last one was tainted because everyone on the commission had some sort of compromising tie to the Washington/Wall Street power structure—and they will

show you all sorts of elaborate flow charts to try to prove this,” Jonathan Kay, author of the newly published *Among the Truthers: A Journey Through America’s Growing Conspiracist Underground* (Harper), writes in an e-mail. “Of course, if this commission ever were formed, as they demand, and if it were to reach the same conclusion as the first 9/11 commission, the conspiracy theorists would immediately reject it, making up new reasons for why all the members were pawns of big oil or whatever, and then demanding a third 9/11 commission—in exactly the same way that hardcore birthers claim the long-form birth certificate that Obama released was actually a fraud.”

## Between the Love Lines

### *Different strokes*

To judge by their quests for romance, Americans and Britons are worlds apart. In *Extravagant Expectations: New Ways to Find Romantic Love in America* (Ivan R. Dee), Paul Hollander deconstructs upscale personal ads from both sides of the Atlantic.

In the United States, Hollander examines ads from *The New York Review of Books*, *Harvard Magazine*, and *Yale Alumni Magazine*. Most of the advertisers seem to be over 50, but they stress their youthful qualities. They’re fun-loving, adventuresome, and athletic, often with a mischievous streak or a touch of whimsy. And a surprising number of the women turn out to resemble actresses: “a younger Faye Dunaway,” “Grace Kelly good looks,” “a younger, dark-haired, more radiant Jane Fonda.”

Some of the similarities may stem from common authorship, Hollander observes. Susan Fox of the Boston-based company Personals Work estimates that she has written thousands of ads for the lovelorn since the early 1990s. She now generally charges \$160 an hour.

Fox-style puffery isn’t evident in *The London Review of Books*. Compared with the Americans, Hollander writes, *LRB* advertisers come across as “less individualistic, less narcissistic, less competitive, and less anxious to make a favorable impression—or their notion of what makes a favorable impression is very different from that of the American writers.” Alternatively, he notes, Britons may be using *LRB* personals to showcase their wit rather than to search for love. One *LRB* ad says, “Bald, short, fat, and ugly male, 53, seeks short-sighted woman with tremendous sexual appetite.” Another declares, “Mature gentleman (62), aged well, noble grey looks, fit and active, sound minded and unfazed by the fickle demands of modern society, seeks—damn it, I have to pee again.”

—Stephen Bates

# The WikiLeaks Illusion

*WikiLeaks' tsunami of revelations from U.S. government sources last year did not change the world, but it did change WikiLeaks.*

BY ALASDAIR ROBERTS

LATE LAST NOVEMBER, THE ANTISECRECY GROUP WikiLeaks achieved the greatest triumph in its short history. A consortium of major news media organizations—including *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Le Monde*, and *El País*—began publishing excerpts from a quarter-million cables between the U.S. State Department and its diplomatic outposts that WikiLeaks had obtained. The group claimed that the cables constituted “the largest set of confidential documents ever to be released into the public domain.” *The Guardian* predicted that the disclosures would trigger a “global diplomatic crisis.”

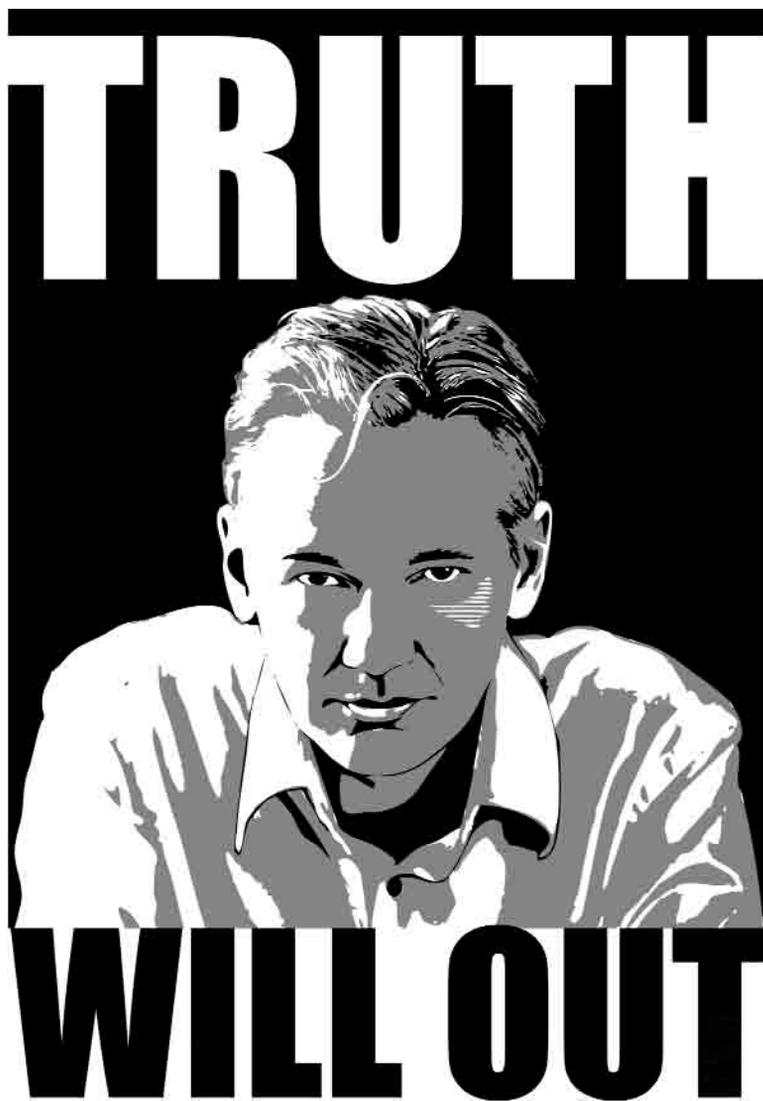
This was the fourth major disclosure orchestrated by WikiLeaks last year. In April, it had released a classified video showing an attack in 2007 by U.S. Army helicopters in the streets of Baghdad that killed 12 people, including two employees of the Reuters news agency. In July, it had collaborated with the news media consortium on the release of 90,000 documents describing U.S. military operations in Afghanistan from 2004 through 2009. These records included new reports of civilian

casualties and “friendly fire” incidents. In October came a similar but larger set of documents—almost 400,000—detailing U.S. military operations in Iraq.

WikiLeaks’ boosters said that the group was waging a war on secrecy, and by the end of 2010 it seemed to be winning. The leaks marked “the end of secrecy in the old-fashioned, Cold War–era sense,” claimed *Guardian* journalists David Leigh and Luke Harding. A Norwegian politician nominated WikiLeaks for the Nobel Peace Prize, saying that it had helped “redraw the map of information freedom.” “Like him or not,” wrote a *Time* magazine journalist in December, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange had “the power to impose his judgment of what should or shouldn’t be secret.”

**D**id the leaks of 2010 really mark the end of “old-fashioned secrecy?” Not by a long shot. Certainly, new information technologies have made it easier to leak sensitive information and broadcast it to the world. A generation ago, leaking was limited by the need to physically copy and smuggle actual documents. Now it is a matter of dragging, dropping, and clicking Send. But there are still impressive barriers to the kind of “radical transparency” WikiLeaks says it wants to achieve. Indeed, the

ALASDAIR ROBERTS, a former Woodrow Wilson Center fellow, is Rappaport Professor of Law and Public Policy at Suffolk University Law School. His books include *Blacked Out: Government Secrecy in the Information Age* (2006) and *The Logic of Discipline: Global Capitalism and the Architecture of Government* (2010).



WikiLeaks leader Julian Assange stares out from a poster championing the organization's cause.

WikiLeaks experience shows how durable those barriers are.

Let's begin by putting the leaks in proper perspective. A common way of showing their significance is to emphasize the sheer volume of material. In July 2010, *The Guardian* described the release of the Afghan war documents as "one of the biggest leaks in U.S. military history." Assange, an Australian computer programmer and activist who had founded WikiLeaks in 2006 (and is currently in Britain facing extradition to Sweden on rape and sexual molestation charges),

compared it to perhaps the most famous leak in history. "The Pentagon Papers was about 10,000 pages," he told the United Kingdom's Channel 4 News, alluding to the secret Pentagon history of America's involvement in Vietnam that was leaked in 1971. By contrast, there were "about 200,000 pages in this material."

The Afghan war logs did not hold the record for long. In October, they were supplanted by the Iraq disclosures, "the greatest data leak in the history of the United States military," according to *Der Spiegel*. Within weeks, WikiLeaks was warning that this record too would soon be shattered. It boasted on Twitter that its next release, the State Department cables, would be "7x the size of the Iraq War Logs." Indeed, it was "an astonishing mountain of words," said the two *Guardian* journalists. "If the tiny memory stick containing the cables had been a set of printed texts, it would have made up a library containing more than 2,000 sizable books."

Gauging the significance of leaks based on document volume involves a logical fallacy. The reasoning is this: If we are in possession of a larger *number* of sensitive documents than ever before, we must also be in possession

of a larger *proportion* of the total stockpile than ever before. But this assumes that the total itself has not changed over time.

In fact, the amount of sensitive information held within the national security apparatus is immensely larger than it was a generation ago. Technological change has caused an explosion in the rate of information production within government agencies, as everywhere else. For example, the leaked State Department cables might have added up to

about two gigabytes of data—one-quarter of an eight-gigabyte memory card. By comparison, it has been estimated that the outgoing Bush White House transferred 77 terabytes of data to the National Archives in 2009. That is almost 10,000 memory cards for the White House alone. The holdings of other agencies are even larger.

The truth is that a count of leaked messages tells us nothing

## WHEN WIKILEAKS released vast quantities of undigested information, the public could not absorb it.

about the significance of a breach. Only six percent of the State Department cables that were leaked last year were classified as secret. And the State Department has said that the network from which the cables were extracted was not even the primary vehicle for disseminating its information. In the period in which most of the quarter-million WikiLeaks cables were distributed within the U.S. government, a State Department official said, “we disseminated 2.4 million cables, 10 times as many, through other systems.”

The 2010 disclosures also revealed fundamental problems with the WikiLeaks project. The logic that initially motivated Assange and his colleagues was straightforward: WikiLeaks would post leaked information on the Internet and rely on the public to interpret it, become outraged, and demand reform. The antisecrecy group, which at the start of last year had a core of about 40 volunteers, had great faith in the capacity of the public to do the right thing. Daniel Domscheit-Berg, who was WikiLeaks’ spokesman until he broke with Assange last fall, explained the reasoning in *Inside WikiLeaks*, a book published earlier this year: “If you provide people sufficient background information, they are capable of behaving correctly and making the right decisions.”

This proposition was soon tested and found wanting. When WikiLeaks released a series of U.S. military counterinsurgency manuals in 2008, Domscheit-Berg thought there would be “outrage around the world, and I expected journalists to beat down our doors.” The manuals described techniques for preventing the overthrow of governments

friendly to the United States. In fact, the reaction was negligible. “No one cared,” writes Domscheit-Berg, “because the subject matter was too complex.”

As the British journalist John Lanchester recently observed, WikiLeaks’ “release of information is unprecedented: But it is not journalism. The data need to be interpreted, studied, made into a story.” WikiLeaks attempted to

do this itself when it released the Baghdad helicopter video. Assange unveiled the video at a news conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., and packaged it so that its significance would be clear. He titled it *Collateral Murder*. The edited video, WikiLeaks

said, provided evidence of “indiscriminate” and “unprovoked” killing of civilians.

Even with this priming, the public reaction was muted. Many people turned on WikiLeaks itself, charging that it had manipulated the video to bolster its allegations of military misconduct. “This strategy for stirring up public interest was a mistake,” Domscheit-Berg agrees. “A lot of people [felt] . . . that they were being led around by the nose.”

The release of the Afghan war documents in July 2010 gave WikiLeaks further evidence of its own limitations. The trove of documents was “vast, confusing, and impossible to navigate,” according to *The Guardian’s* Leigh and Harding, “an impenetrable forest of military jargon.” Furthermore, the logs contained the names of many individuals who had cooperated with the American military and whose lives could be threatened by disclosure. WikiLeaks recognized the need for a “harm minimization” plan but lacked the field knowledge necessary to make good decisions about what should be withheld.

**B**y last summer, all of these difficulties had driven WikiLeaks to seek its partnership with news media organizations. The consortium that handled the disclosures last fall provided several essential services for the group. It gave technical assistance in organizing data and provided the expertise needed to decode and interpret records. It opened a channel to government officials for conversation about the implications

of disclosing information that WikiLeaks itself was unable to establish. Finally, of course, the news media organizations had the capacity to command public attention. They were trusted by readers and possessed a skill in packaging information that WikiLeaks lacked.

By the end of 2010, it was clear that WikiLeaks' modus operandi had fundamentally changed. It had begun with an unambiguous conception of its role as a receiver and distributor of leaked information. At year's end, it was performing a different function: It still hoped to serve as a trusted receiver of leaks, but it was now working with mainstream news media to decide how—or if—leaked information ought to be published. For WikiLeaks, this involved difficult concessions. “We were no longer in control of the process,” Domscheit-Berg later wrote. The outflow of leaked information was now constrained by the newspapers' willingness to invest money and time in sifting through more documents.

For the newspapers that participated in the consortium, the rationale for publishing leaked information was simple. As *The New York Times* explained in an editorial note when the State Department cables were released in November, Americans “have a right to know what is being done in their name.” The cables “tell the unvarnished story of how the government makes its biggest decisions.” This is the conventional journalistic argument in defense of disclosure, and there is no doubt that the WikiLeaks revelations provided vivid and sometimes disturbing illustrations of the ways in which power is wielded by the United States and its allies.

WikiLeaks itself wanted bigger things to flow from its work. It continued to expect outrage and political action. Assange told Britain's Channel 4 News last July that he anticipated that the release of the Afghan war documents would shift public opinion against the war. There was a similar expectation following release of the

Iraq war documents. But these hopes were again disappointed. In some polls, perceptions about the conduct of the Afghan war actually became more favorable after the WikiLeaks release. Meanwhile, opinion about American engagement in Iraq remained essentially unchanged, as it had been for several years.

There are good reasons why disclosures do not necessarily produce significant changes in policy or politics. Much depends on the context of events. When the Pentagon Papers came out in 1971, they contributed to policy change because a host of other forces were pushing in the same direction. The American public was exhausted by the Vietnam War, which at its peak involved the deployment of almost four times as many troops as are now in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many Americans were also increasingly skeptical of all forms of



**WikiLeaks was forced to collaborate with traditional news organizations that could make sense of its revelations for the public. The Web, it discovered, is not an information utopia.**

established authority. The federal government's status was further tarnished by other revelations about abuses of power by the White House, CIA, and FBI.

We live in very different times. There is no popular movement against U.S. military engagement overseas, no broad reaction against established authority in American society, no youth rebellion. The public mood in the United States is one of economic uncertainty and physical insecurity. Many Americans want an assurance that their government is willing and able to act forcefully in

the pursuit of U.S. interests. In this climate, the incidents revealed by WikiLeaks—spying on United Nations diplomats, covert military action against terrorists, negotiations with regimes that are corrupt or guilty of human rights abuses—might not even be construed as abuses of power at all. On the contrary, they could be regarded as proof that the U.S. government is prepared to get its hands dirty to protect its citizens.

Indeed, it could be said that WikiLeaks was doing the

**MANY OF WIKILEAKS' revelations only confirmed things Americans already suspected and were prepared to tolerate.**

one thing Americans least wished for: increasing instability and their sense of anxiety. The more WikiLeaks disclosed last year, the more American public opinion hardened against it. By December, according to a CNN poll, almost 80 percent of Americans disapproved of WikiLeaks' release of U.S. diplomatic and military documents. In a CBS News poll, most respondents said they thought the disclosures were likely to hurt U.S. foreign relations. Three-quarters affirmed that there are "some things the public does not have a right to know if it might affect national security."

As WikiLeaks waited fruitlessly for public outrage, it began to see another obstacle to the execution of its program. WikiLeaks relies on the Internet for the rapid dissemination of leaked information. The assumption, which seemed plausible in the early days of cyberspace, is that the Internet is a vast global commons—a free space that imposes no barrier on the flow of data. But even online, commercial and political considerations routinely compromise the movement of information.

This reality was quickly illustrated after the release of the State Department cables on November 28. Three days later, Amazon Web Services, a subsidiary of Amazon.com that rents space for the storage of digitized information, stopped acting as a host for WikiLeaks' material, alleging that the group had vio-

lated its terms of service. The same day, a smaller firm that provides online graphics capabilities, Tableau Software, discontinued its support. The firm that managed WikiLeaks' domain name, EveryDNS.net, also suspended services, so that the domain name wikileaks.org was no longer operable. On December 20, Apple removed an application from its online store that offered iPhone and iPad users access to the State Department cables.

All of these actions complicated WikiLeaks' ability to distribute leaked information. Decisions by other organizations also undermined its financial viability. Five days after the State Department disclosures, PayPal, which manages online pay-

ments, announced that it would no longer process donations to WikiLeaks, alleging that the group had violated its terms of service by encouraging or facilitating illegal activity. MasterCard and Visa Europe soon followed suit.

Critics alleged that these firms were acting in response to political pressure, and many American legislators did in fact call on businesses to break with WikiLeaks. But direct political pressure was hardly necessary; cold commercial judgment led to the same decision. WikiLeaks produced little revenue for any of these businesses but threatened to entangle all of them in public controversy. A public-relations specialist told Seattle's KIRO News that it was "bizarre" for Amazon to assist WikiLeaks during a holiday season: "I don't think you mix politics with retail." Worse still, businesses were exposed to cyberattacks by opponents of WikiLeaks within the hacker community that disrupted their relationships with other, more profitable clients.

These business decisions hurt WikiLeaks significantly. Assange said they amounted to "economic censorship" and claimed that actions by these financial intermediaries were costing WikiLeaks \$650,000 per week in lost donations.

The leaks also provoked a vigorous reaction by the U.S. government. The Army came down hard on Pri-

vate Bradley Manning, the apparent source of all four of the 2010 disclosures, bringing 34 charges against him. The most serious of these, aiding the enemy, could result in a death sentence, although prosecutors have said they will not seek one. The government is also investigating other individuals in connection with the leaks. Some in Congress have used the episodes to argue for strengthening the law on unauthorized disclosure of national security information, and federal agencies have tightened administrative controls on access to sensitive information. These steps, which may well produce a result precisely the opposite of what WikiLeaks intends by reducing citizens' access to information about the government, have been taken by an administration that promised on its first day in office to "usher in a new era of open government."

**W**ikiLeaks is predicated on the assumption that the social order—the set of structures that channel and legitimize power—is both deceptive and brittle: deceptive in the sense that most people who observe the social order are unaware of the ways in which power is actually used, and brittle in the sense that it is at risk of collapse once people are shown the true nature of things. The primary goal, therefore, is revelation of the truth. In the past it was difficult to do this, mainly because primitive technologies made it difficult to collect and disseminate damning information. But now these technological barriers are gone. And once information is set free, the theory goes, the world will change.

We have seen some of the difficulties with this viewpoint. Even in the age of the Internet, there is no such thing as the instantaneous and complete revelation of the truth. In its undigested form, information often has no transformative power at all. Raw data must be distilled and interpreted, and the attention of a distracted audience must be captured. The process by which this is done is complex and easily influenced by commercial and governmental interests. This was true before the advent of the Internet and remains true today.

Beyond this, there is a final and larger problem. It may well be that many of the things WikiLeaks imag-

ines are secrets are not really secrets at all. It may be that what WikiLeaks revealed when it drew back the curtain is more or less what most Americans already suspected had been going on, and were therefore prepared to tolerate.

To put it another way, much of what WikiLeaks has released might best be described as open secrets. It would have been no great shock to most Americans, for example, to learn about the United States' covert activities against terrorists in Yemen. "The only surprising thing about the WikiLeaks revelations is that they contain no surprises," says the noted Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, a professor at the European Graduate School. "The real disturbance was at the level of appearances: We can no longer pretend we don't know what everyone knows we know."

In a sense, it was odd to expect that there would be great surprises. The diplomatic and national security establishment of the U.S. government employs millions of people. Most of the critical decisions about the development of foreign policy, and about the apparatus necessary to execute that policy, have been made openly by democratically elected leaders, and sanctioned by voters in national elections over the course of 60 years. In broad terms, Americans know how U.S. power is exercised, and for what purpose. And so there are limits to what WikiLeaks can unveil. Even *New York Times* executive editor Bill Keller conceded that the disclosures did not "expose some deep, unsuspected perfidy in high places." They provide only "texture, nuance, and drama."

None of this is an argument for complacency about government secrecy. Precisely because of the scale and importance of the national security apparatus, it ought to be subjected to close scrutiny. Existing oversight mechanisms such as freedom of information laws and declassification policies are inadequate and should be strengthened. The monitoring capacity of news media outlets and other nongovernmental organizations must be enhanced. And citizens should be encouraged to engage more deeply in debates about the aims and methods of U.S. foreign policy. All of these steps involve hard work. There is no technological quick fix. A major difficulty with the WikiLeaks project is that it may delude us into believing otherwise. ■

# Beyond the Bully Pulpit

*TR famously used the “bully pulpit” of the White House to advance his agenda. By the time he left office, “spin” had become a fundamental part of the American presidency.*

BY DAVID GREENBERG

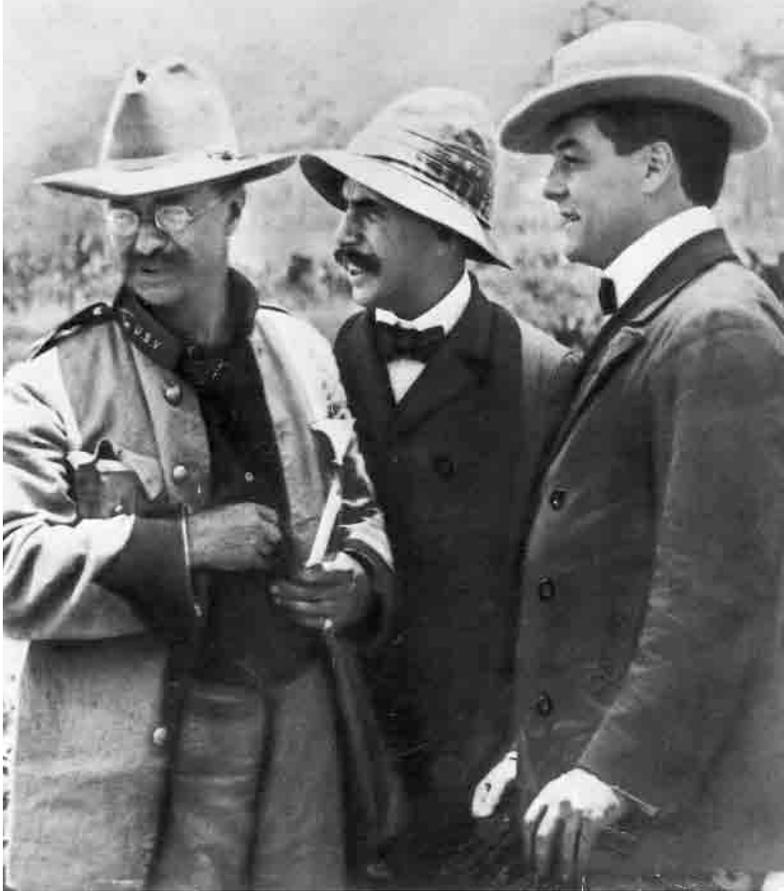
WHEN PRESIDENT WILLIAM MCKINLEY LED THE United States to war against Spain in the spring of 1898, no one was keener to see battle than Theodore Roosevelt. Scion of an upper-crust New York City family and a Harvard graduate, the ambitious, brash assistant Navy secretary had, at 39, already built a reputation for reformist zeal as a New York state assemblyman and as Gotham’s police commissioner. Lately, from his perch in the Navy Department, he had been planning—and agitating—for an all-out confrontation with the dying Spanish Empire. In his official role, he drew up schemes for deploying the U.S. fleet, which he had done much to strengthen. Privately, he mocked the president he served, who, to the exasperation of TR and his fellow war hawks, had been temporizing about military action. “McKinley has no more backbone than a chocolate éclair,” Roosevelt told his friend Henry Cabot Lodge, then the junior Republican senator from Massachusetts.

McKinley soon bowed to political pressure and opted for war. Most Americans applauded. Roosevelt resolved not to validate the sneers that he was just playing at com-

bat. “My power for good, whatever it may be, would be gone if I didn’t try to live up to the doctrines I have tried to preach,” he declared to a friend. Newspaper editorialists demanded that he remain at the Navy Department, where they said his expertise was needed, but Roosevelt quit his desk job, secured a commission as a lieutenant colonel, and set up a training ground in San Antonio, Texas. Along with his friend Leonard Wood, an Army officer and the president’s chief surgeon, he readied for battle an assortment of volunteer cavalymen that ranged from Ivy League footballers and world-class polo players to western cowboys and roughnecks. *The New York Sun*’s Richard Oulahan dubbed the motley regiment the “Rough Riders.” Others called them “Teddy’s Terrors,” even though Wood, not Roosevelt, was the unit’s commander.

As competitive as he was patriotic, Roosevelt meant for his men to vanquish the Spanish in Cuba. But he also wanted the Rough Riders to seize the imagination of Americans at home. While still at camp in Texas, TR wrote to Robert Bridges, the editor of *Scribner’s* magazine, offering him the “first chance” to publish six installments of a (planned) first-person account of his (planned) war exploits—a preview of what would be a full-blown book and, in Roosevelt’s assessment, a “per-

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As a lieutenant colonel during the Spanish-American War, Theodore Roosevelt dazzled reporters such as Stephen Bonsal (center) and Richard Harding Davis (right) with his heroics on the battlefield.

manent historical work.” Bridges accepted. (Published the following year, *The Rough Riders* was an immediate bestseller.) Once TR set off for Cuba, he made sure his favorite reporters would be joining him. And though the vessel that shoved off from Tampa, Florida, was too small to accommodate all of the Rough Riders comfortably, TR insisted that they make room for a passel of journalists. According to one oft-told account, Roosevelt even escorted onboard two motion-picture cameramen from Thomas Edison’s company. Though likely apocryphal, the story captures Roosevelt’s unerring instinct for publicity, which was entirely real.

The conflict in Cuba, dubbed the “Correspondents’

War” for the feverish journalistic interest it provoked, had been grist for the papers ever since the Cuban insurrection against the Spaniards’ repressive rule began in 1895. Playing on—and playing up—the widespread American sympathy for the Cubans, the mass-circulation newspapers and magazines, led by William Randolph Hearst’s *New York Journal* and Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York World*, covered the rebellion avidly. Western Union telegraph cables connecting Havana with Key West—and hence the whole of the United States—gave Americans news of the battles with unprecedented speed.

**T**o the journalistic entourage accompanying the American soldiers, the charismatic Roosevelt was an obvious draw. His reporter companions lavishly recorded instances of his courage, which by all accounts was genuine.

The celebrated reporter Richard Harding Davis, a starry-eyed admirer, described Roosevelt speeding into combat at the Battle of San Juan Hill with “a blue polka-dot handkerchief” around his sombrero—“without doubt the most conspicuous figure in the charge. . . . Mounted high on horseback, and charging the rifle-pits at a gallop and quite alone, Roosevelt made you feel that you would like to cheer.” Newsreels also seared Roosevelt’s stride into the public mind as audiences lapped up shorts starring the Rough Riders. According to *The World*, the young lieutenant colonel had become “more talked about than any man in the country.”



President Theodore Roosevelt holds court at his summer home, Sagamore Hill, on Long Island in 1912. Thanks to the gregarious Roosevelt, subsequent chief executives would never enjoy the calm and privacy of a press-free vacation.

Within weeks, this “splendid little war,” as Secretary of State John Hay described it to TR, was over. That fall, captivated by the hype of his heroism, New York voters elected Roosevelt their governor. Two years later, McKinley, seeking reelection, chose TR as his new running mate; surprising no one, they won handily. Then, in September 1901, a gunman took McKinley’s life, and the American presidency had, in this 42-year-old gamecock, its first full-fledged celebrity.

More than any other U.S. president, Theodore Roosevelt permanently transformed the position of chief executive into “the vital place of action in the system,” as his contemporary Woodrow Wilson put it. What had been largely an administrative position, subordinate in many ways to Congress, grew into the locus of policymaking and the office everyone looked to for leadership on issues large and small. Roosevelt

benefited, of course, from timing: He took office as a new century dawned, when social and economic injustices were crying out for redress from Washington and America was assuming a leading role on the world stage. No longer could presidents dissolve into obscurity like the “lost” chief executives of the Gilded Age, of whom Thomas Wolfe cruelly asked, “Which had the whiskers, which the burnsidies: Which was which?”

Unlike most of his predecessors, TR grasped that effective presidential leadership required shaping public opinion. This insight was not wholly novel. For example, Abraham Lincoln, in his debates with Stephen Douglas in 1858, said, “Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed.” But the boldness of Lincoln’s wartime leadership as commander in chief obscures the fact that he was not a legislative leader.

Besides, Lincoln's embrace of executive power in the name of the public was unusual for 19th-century presidents, most of whom accepted the firm constitutional limits on their capacities, rarely even delivering speeches that amounted to more than ceremonial statements. Roosevelt, in contrast, spoke to the public often, usually with high-flying confidence and an unconcealed point of view. It was significant, too, that by Roosevelt's day public opinion no longer meant, as it once had, the view of "the class which wears black coats and lives in good houses," as the British political scientist James Bryce wrote;

it now signified the mass opinion of a surging, diverse, and increasingly interconnected populace. Appreciating this change, Roosevelt sought to shape the way issues and events were presented to the clamorous hordes in whom political power increasingly resided.

To do so, Roosevelt capitalized on changes in journalism and communications. The old partisan press was giving way to a more objective, independent journalism that valued reporting, and TR realized the advantage in making news. He took the bold step of traveling the country to push legislation and otherwise used what he called the "bully pulpit" to seize the public imagination. Perhaps most important, he cultivated the Washington press corps as none of his predecessors had. The presidential practice of using the mass media to mold public opinion—what today we call *spin*—was in its embryonic state, and no one did more to midwife it into being than Theodore Roosevelt.

**W**ith his zest for the spotlight, Roosevelt was as well equipped as any occupant of the office to carry out this transformation. "One cannot think of him except as part of the public scene, performing on the public stage," wrote the philosopher John Dewey, who was Roosevelt's junior by one year and an unlikely enthusiast. Many Americans, to be sure, found it hard to stomach Roosevelt's antics and his pre-

ternatural confidence in himself. Mark Twain saw TR as one of his own parodic creations come to life—a juvenile, showboating ham, "the Tom Sawyer of the political world of the 20th century; always showing off; . . . he would go to Halifax for half a chance to show off and he would go to hell for a whole one."

To defenders such as Dewey, though, such carping

**MARK TWAIN GRUMBLED that TR  
"would go to Halifax for half a chance to  
show off" and "to hell for a whole one."**

was misdirected, for Roosevelt was merely succeeding on the terms of his age. "To criticize Roosevelt for love of the camera and the headline is childish," the philosopher wrote, "unless we recognize that in such criticism we are condemning the very conditions of any public success during this period." Dewey tolerated Roosevelt's grandstanding, which he noted was a prerequisite for political achievement in the 20th century, particularly for those seeking to impose significant change. As journalist Henry Stoddard explained, the power of the Gilded Age conservatives was so entrenched that it would have been futile for Roosevelt to use the methods "of soft stepping and whispered persuasion" to try to implement his reformist vision.

More than a strategy for governing, Roosevelt's dedication to publicity thoroughly informed his conception of the presidency—a conception that was as bold, novel, and purposeful as Roosevelt himself. Rejecting the view of the executive as chiefly an administrative official, TR considered the president the engine and leader of social change—and fused this idea to that of an activist, reformist state. Over the previous half-century, the unchecked growth of industrial capitalism had raised the critical question of whether government could be enlisted to preserve a modicum of economic opportunity and fairness in society. Roosevelt thought it could, and he equated the drive to reform the rules of economic life—to use

state power to counter the trusts—not with radicalism or socialism, but with responsible governance in the name of the whole nation. In *The Promise of American Life* (1905), Herbert Croly, the theorist of progressivism, called Roosevelt “the first political leader of the American people to identify the national principle with an ideal of reform.”

The national principle that Roosevelt believed in

**FOR ROOSEVELT, fashioning a popular image was not an ego trip but an aspect of modern presidential leadership.**

transcended factional concerns. Unlike most of his predecessors, Roosevelt saw himself as an instrument not of the party that elected him or of a coalition of blocs, but of the will of the people at large. Deriving his power from the general public, however, did not mean slavishly following mass sentiment; TR, like Wilson after him, wanted to discern with his own judgment which policies would truly serve the electorate as a whole. “I do not represent public opinion,” he wrote to the journalist Ray Stannard Baker. “I represent the public. There is a wide difference between the two, between the real interests of the public and the public’s opinion of these interests.” He spoke of the common good as if such a unitary thing were not hard to identify, at least for him.

To the project of galvanizing public opinion, TR brought the boundless force of his personality, channeling it into a moral message. Later generations of liberals, starting with the New Deal, disdained the moralism of progressives in favor of pragmatic political problem-solving. But TR, the quintessential progressive, saw political questions as spiritual ones: His advocacy of social improvement was high-minded and hortatory. In his speeches he denounced greedy corporations, excoriated corruption, implored his audiences to improve their character, and called for a restoration of the manly virtues he held dear. To be sure, the moralism that served as a wellspring of

reform also produced a misguided—and to a later era’s sensibility, hopelessly retrograde—faith in the superiority of his own race, class, and sex to assume the burdens of leadership. (He justified both the conquest of the West and the United States’ acquisition of imperial holdings in the Pacific in nakedly racial terms.) Impatient with the faint of heart, he mistook ambivalence for weakness. “I don’t care how honest

a man is,” he asserted. “If he is timid he is no good.” But if his zeal could yield a misplaced righteousness, and if his restlessness blinded him to the virtues of slow reflection, he did correctly see that rousing America at a critical juncture in the

nation’s economic history demanded a raucous, relentless, and even messianic rhetoric, aimed at the democratic masses.

The activism inherent in Roosevelt’s theory of the presidency has been often noted. Less remarked upon is how the idea also bade him to think broadly about the public. Roosevelt believed that the president should be the duty-bound agent of the American people; but, equally important, he was also the repository for their hopes and fears. Again, publicity counted: The people’s interest in the president as a personality allowed him to dramatize himself, to take advantage of his role not just as a programmatic leader but as a symbol of the nation. “It is doubtful if any power he has over us through his office or through his leadership of a party is so great as this which he exercises directly through his example and character,” wrote William Garrott Brown, a Harvard historian.

TR was acutely conscious of this symbolic role. After one tour of the West, he wrote about his interactions with those who had come to hear him. His remarks, at first glance condescending, actually reflected a keen appreciation of why the presidency mattered. “Most of these people habitually led rather gray lives,” he wrote of his crowds. “And they came in to see the president much as they would have come in to see the circus. It was something to talk over and

remember and tell their children about. But I think that besides the mere curiosity there was a good feeling behind it all, a feeling that the president was their man and symbolized their government, and that they had a proprietary interest in him and wished to see him and that they hoped he embodied their aspirations and their best thought." The president's persona was not a distraction from substantive policy; nor was it a superficial veneer that concealed a different, more authentic inner self. Rather, it was an expression and focal point of public sentiment, a source of inspiration and connection to the democracy. Fashioning a popular image, accordingly, was not an ego trip, or a detour from governing, but an aspect of modern presidential leadership.

**B**y the time he became president, Roosevelt had been practicing the art of publicity for so long that it was second nature. As soon as he entered politics, at age 23, he cultivated reporters, whose company he manifestly enjoyed. In the 1890s, as New York City police commissioner, he conscripted reform-minded reporters Jacob Riis and Lincoln Steffens to guide him through the urban demimonde of cops and criminals; in return, he burnished their reputations and helped them publish their work. In New York's statehouse, Roosevelt had initiated twice-daily sessions with the Albany correspondents, serving up a rapid-fire stream of tidbits, judgments, and jokes.

His ascension to the presidency meant that even more of his life would be on view. Without planning to, he placed his family in the media's crosshairs. From Alice, his daughter from his first marriage, who at 17

burst upon the Georgetown social scene, to the three-year-old Quentin, the six exuberant Roosevelt offspring proved irresistible to society page editors. Roosevelt initially opposed the attention and never stopped complaining, but he also had to see that more ink for the



**In 1927, President Calvin Coolidge donned a full-length feathered headdress for the cameras. Despite his taciturn nature, "Silent Cal" cultivated photo-ops and public-relations stunts, believing, as Theodore Roosevelt did, that the press was essential to advancing his agenda.**

president was an unintended side effect and benefit.

Roosevelt surrendered another bastion of presidential privacy by turning family retreats into working vacations. When McKinley had escaped Washington's fishbowl with visits to his native Canton, Ohio, reporters seldom followed. But in 1902, after the Roosevelts launched a renovation of the Executive Mansion and repaired to his Sagamore Hill estate in Oyster Bay, Long Island, TR announced that he would be conducting offi-

cial business all the while—in one stroke, a reporter noted, “transfer[ring] the capital of the nation to this vil- lage by the sound.” A horde of correspondents tagged along. When the reporters filled the news lulls with gos- sipy accounts of the first family’s antics, the president protested, oblivious to his own role in having whetted the

**PRESIDENTS WHO HAVE mastered the machinery of spin have merely succeeded on the terms of their own age.**

appetite for presidential news. Presidential vacations were never the same again.

If TR drew notice when he didn’t seek it, far more numerous were the times when he pursued it actively—and strategically. To be sure, Roosevelt was building on a foundation laid by others. McKinley, for example, had made the first campaign film, shown in theaters just months after Thomas Edison’s original projectors were up and running—a rudimentary newsreel of the candi- date pacing around his Ohio homestead that, despite its simplicity, sent audiences into frenzied reactions. In his first days in the White House, McKinley hosted an East Room reception for reporters that won him lasting favor. Most important, he allowed the self-effacing George Cortelyou, the White House secretary—a chief of staff and aide-de-camp rolled into one—to begin to organize the handling of press requests for information, which spiked during the Spanish-American War. For the first time, the president had a formal system for dealing with inquiries from White House correspondents, whose ranks were growing every year.

Wisely retaining Cortelyou, who would become his unsung partner in many of his ventures, Roosevelt expanded the White House press operation significantly. Some of TR’s methods would become staples in the presidential bag of tricks. He discovered that releasing bad news on Friday afternoons could bury it in the little-read Saturday papers, while offering good news on tor- pid Sundays could capture Monday’s headlines. He leaked information to reporters, sometimes floating

“trial balloons,” by whispering to select reporters, under the protection of anonymity, of possible future plans; the reporters would then gauge the fallout without the pres- ident having to declare his course publicly. TR also mon- itored the presence—or absence—of cameras at events. He once delayed signing a banal Thanksgiving Day proclamation until the Associated Press photog- rapher arrived; without a picture, such a story would be far less likely to make the front page.

Antagonists were quite correct in identifying Roo- sevelt’s sweeping efforts to promote his agenda and

himself—efforts that understandably offended the guardians of the old order. One vocal detractor, “Pitch- fork Ben” Tillman, a six-foot-tall Democratic senator from South Carolina known for once threatening to spear President Glover Cleveland with a farm tool, com- plained, “Theodore Roosevelt owes more to newspa- pers than any man of his time, or possibly of any other time.” But Tillman and his kind were mistaken in deem- ing the president’s public support illegitimate; enthusi- asm for such initiatives as railroad-rate regulation, pure food and drugs, and antitrust actions was widespread, as was admiration for these policies’ full-throated cham- pion in the White House. What TR understood that Tillman did not was that in the new landscape of mass media, a president’s campaign for publicity—whether fueled by ego or not—constituted a key part of presi- dential leadership, an indispensable means to an end.

This was a crucial insight of Roosevelt’s, and under- standing it as more than self-justification requires rec- onciling the two seemingly contradictory meanings of the word *publicity* in early-20th-century America, both of which meant “making something public.” Originally, the word’s chief connotation wasn’t the self-aggrandizing pursuit of attention, though that usage was becoming more common. Rather, it meant a commitment to lay- ing bare the facts, something like *transparency* or *sun- light*. It signified an objective—not subjective— presentation of previously secluded facts. As overtly partisan journalism fell into disfavor, reporters—like their counterparts in a host of new academic social

sciences—placed increasing weight on the discovery of data and evidence. Even the so-called muckrakers, remembered for their political activism, stressed the disclosure of information as the key to effecting reform. Likewise, progressive politicians such as Roosevelt believed that if the wrongdoing of backroom politics or corporate malfeasance were exposed to the light of day, the ensuing popular outcry would force the powerful to change their ways. When a journalist at *The New York World* wrote that TR's strategy as police commissioner was "Publicity! Publicity! Publicity!" it wasn't simply to mock his love of the headlines; it meant that he was laying open his department's workings for public consideration. As president, Roosevelt often called for publicity as a mechanism for checking the rapacity of the trusts. "The first essential in determining how to deal with the great industrial combinations," he said in his initial presidential message to Congress in 1901, "is knowledge of the facts—publicity."

**W**ithin a few years, the emergence of public-relations professionals in business (and soon thereafter in government) would set these two meanings of publicity in seeming conflict. The hired professionals would gain a reputation for spinning information to put the best face on it, or opportunistically promoting events that lacked intrinsic news value; in so doing, they transformed publicity from a synonym for full disclosure into something like an antonym—a term for selective, self-serving disclosure. For Roosevelt, however, the meanings were never fully distinct, and what his critics might see as the latter practice he justified under the virtuous aura of the former.

Theodore Roosevelt was not alone in developing the machinery of spin that would come to be an indispensable part of the presidency. Not only had his predecessors taken baby steps toward creating mechanisms for influencing public opinion, but several of his contemporaries—most notably Woodrow Wilson—did arguably just as much to direct presidential energies toward the general citizenry. And Wilson would also do much as president to enlarge the office. Both men sought to simplify things for public consumption, but where TR liked to dramatize, Wilson aimed to distill. If Roosevelt belittled Wilson's "academic manner . . . that of the col-

lege professor lecturing his class," Wilson scorned his predecessor's theatrics—even looking askance at the popular use of the nickname "Teddy" as a sign of the unfortunate return of the "old spirit of Andrew Jackson's time over again, the feeling of disrespect and desire to make everything common property."

U.S. political culture retains more than a touch of the Wilsonian disdain for personalities in politics. Americans regularly hear—and tend to endorse—the notion that for politicians to trade on image and style, or for the news media to dwell on such things, is to divert public attention from more pressing business. Every successful president has suffered imputations that he has in sinister fashion charmed the press or used a new medium of communication (radio, television, the Internet) to claim an undeserved standing. But the insights of John Dewey, an apologist for neither public-relations agents nor sensationalist journalism, bear recalling. Presidents who have mastered the machinery of spin, from TR's cousin Franklin to Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama, have merely succeeded on the terms of their own age. If not all of them have shared Roosevelt's taste for grandstanding, they have consciously or intuitively appreciated how his talent for self-dramatization helped him gain the attention and favor of reporters and voters.

Today, presidents have no choice but to constantly tend their images and refine their messages to sustain public support for themselves and their agendas. From Teddy's rudimentary if nonetheless groundbreaking system of White House press management has evolved a vast apparatus of spin—an apparatus that has come to include press secretaries, advertising professionals, public-relations gurus, speechwriters, pollsters, image consultants, media mavens, and now Web masters, social media directors, and videographers.

Americans may resent the powerful influence these people exert over the words and images the president directs their way, and it's understandable that they might wish to see the number of these message shapers reduced. But at the same time, just as TR required new techniques to promote the progressive reforms he sought, so did his successors. Indeed, it's hard to imagine how, without the vast machinery of presidential spin that has developed in the last century, any political change of consequence could ever be achieved. ■

# Three Cheers for Blue-Ribbon Panels

*It is easy to scoff at the prestigious commissions that constantly sprout in Washington as empty exercises in buck passing—until you take stock of all they have accomplished.*

BY JORDAN TAMA

A STUNNING PAGE-ONE WARNING LED OFF THE January 2001 report of the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century. The rise of terrorism and unconventional weapons, it said, “will end the relative invulnerability of the U.S. homeland. . . . A direct attack against American citizens on American soil is likely over the next quarter-century.”

Needless to say, the document landed with a thud, barely reported by the news media and largely ignored by the new administration of President George W. Bush. Eight months later, terrorists brought down the twin towers of the World Trade Center. That sad tale seems to confirm yet again the conventional wisdom that blue-ribbon commissions are toothless and expensive political ornaments.

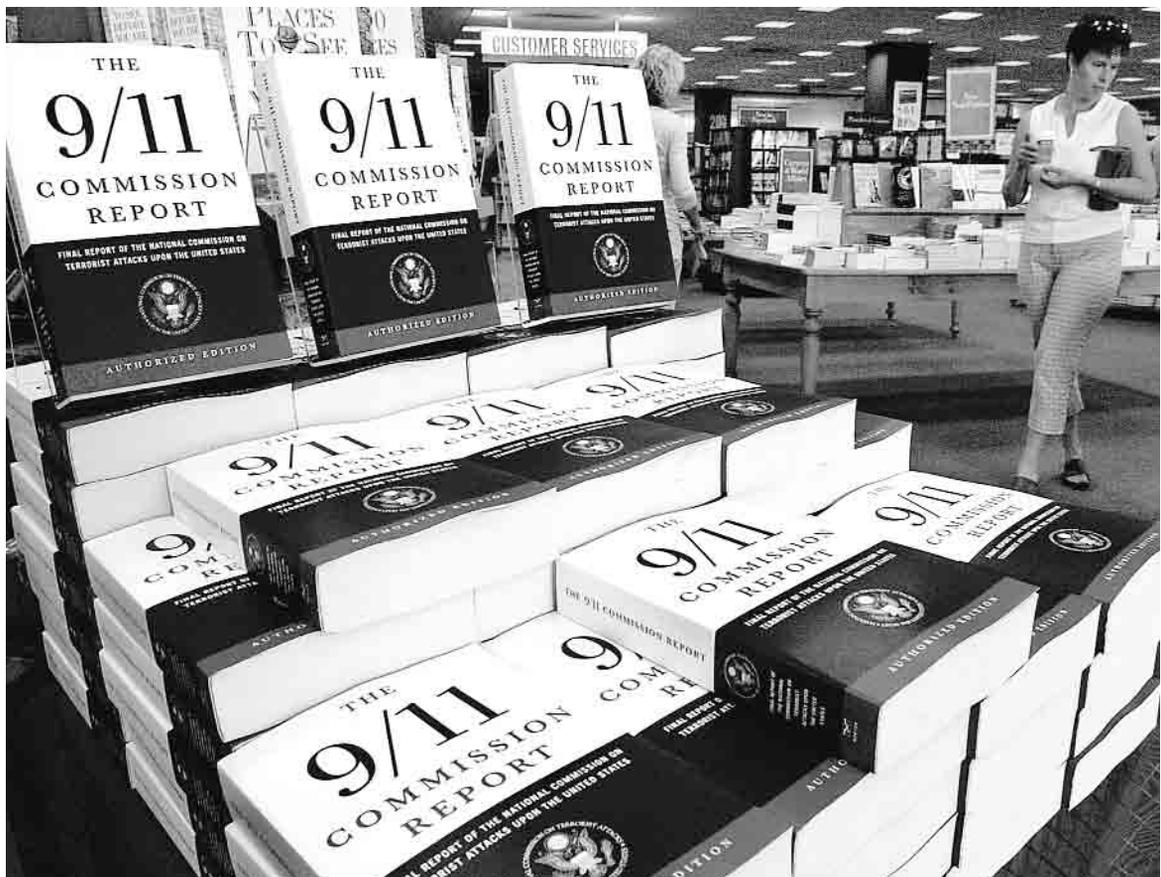
But there is more to the story. In the days after the 9/11 attacks, influential journalists resurrected the report and Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) called the commission’s cochairmen, former senators Gary Hart (D-Colo.) and Warren Rudman (R-N.H.), to testify before the Senate

Governmental Affairs Committee, which Lieberman chaired. Lieberman then introduced legislation based on the commission’s principal proposal, and in November 2002 the Department of Homeland Security was born, bringing some 22 organizations and 180,000 employees under one umbrella. One congressional aide told me, “If the commission hadn’t existed, the department wouldn’t exist.”

**T**his story is not unique: In researching more than 50 commissions that have dealt with national security policy over the past three decades, I found that a surprisingly large number of them catalyzed or influenced important reforms, from the Reagan-era reorganizations of the Defense Department and National Security Council to President Barack Obama’s plan for winding down the Iraq war. Yes, the president and members of Congress often create commissions to avoid dealing with contentious issues and to escape or reduce the political costs of difficult decisions, but with surprising frequency these underappreciated panels spark significant changes.

Commissions succeed because of their unique political credibility. Their authority stems from their independence from the president and Congress, the stature of their mem-

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Published in 2004, the report of the 9/11 Commission landed on bestseller lists and sparked a restructuring of the U.S. intelligence community.

bers, and—especially—their bipartisan makeup. As the American political system becomes more and more polarized, the value of commissions is increasing. Although the frequent resort to such bodies reflects a disheartening failure of the permanent institutions of government to solve problems, commissions have long been one of the country's best tools for forging bipartisan consensus on particular issues. Moreover, at a time when the number of Americans who identify with neither major political party is growing, commissions can serve an important democratic function by promoting ideas that do not have a home in either camp.

The history of commissions has followed the changing contours of American political life. During the Progressive Era, they were instrumental in generating ideas for regulating the economy and protecting the environment. Dur-

ing the 1960s and '70s, Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard M. Nixon relied on commissions as they struggled to deal with domestic turmoil and rapid social change.

Theodore Roosevelt was the first president to make significant use of commissions, appointing panels on public lands, inland waterways, conservation, meat production practices, and monetary policy (the last of which played an important role in the creation of the Federal Reserve System in 1913). In 1947, the legislative branch entered the commission business when a Republican-led Congress appointed former president Herbert Hoover to head a panel tasked with finding ways to shrink a federal government that had ballooned during the New Deal and World War II. (Ironically, Hoover wrote in his memoirs that he had created commissions during his presidency chiefly as a

device to keep administration gadflies occupied.) Reorganization, rather than reduction, was the chief result. Overall, with a few notable exceptions, such as the 9/11 Commission, congressional commissions have been less influential than those created by presidents, in part because Congress takes much longer to establish a panel and appoint its members—delays that may allow a window of opportunity for reform to close.

Most of the early panels focused on relatively dry matters pertaining to government operations, but during the 1960s commissions took on many of the era's hot-button issues, galvanizing public attention. The Warren Commission famously examined the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, while other panels probed urban vio-

**“RUNAWAY” COMMISSIONS are like a hog on ice skates—and can be politically hazardous to those who create them.**

lence, pornography, and drug use. Some bit the hands of the presidents who had created them.

After riots devastated Detroit in 1967, President Johnson created a commission on civil disorders, headed by Illinois governor Otto Kerner. The Kerner Commission's report, which sold more than two million copies, was a searing indictment: “White society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.” The commission embarrassed Johnson by implying that his Great Society social programs were not working: “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.” For all the publicity it received, though, the report did not produce any significant changes in policy.

LBJ learned a lesson that his successors have been acutely sensitive to: Far from being an empty gesture, appointing a commission is full of political risk. Presidents may appoint such bodies, but they cannot control them, and a “runaway commission” such as Kerner's can be a political disaster. As Rhett Dawson, who served as the staff director of commissions on defense management and the Iran-contra scandal, colorfully put it, “Once you create a com-

mission, it's like watching a hog learning to ice-skate. That hog is going to go wherever it wants to go.”

Two trends have emerged during the last few decades. First, foreign policy has become a major focus of commissions, reflecting the rise of conflict in an arena where politics was once said to stop at the water's edge. This trend began in 1983 with President Ronald Reagan's success in using a panel led by former national security advisor Brent Scowcroft to gain congressional backing for the MX intercontinental ballistic missile, a bitterly contested step in the nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union. Second, Congress has become the most prolific creator of new commissions, despite the poor track record of the bodies it has created, establishing 29 of the 45 national security panels born since President Bill Clinton took office in 1993. Many have been the products of frustrated centrist legislators. As Virginia Representative Frank Wolf, a moderate Republican, lamented to me, “Overall, Congress is dysfunctional, partisan, and polarized, and it isn't getting anything done. We need commissions to break out of divisive partisanship.”

Today the president and Congress use commissions for a variety of purposes, from investigating the causes of disasters such as the Gulf of Mexico oil spill to seeking consensus on national challenges such as the federal debt. Perhaps surprisingly, most panels manage to achieve consensus. More than two-thirds of those I studied issued unanimous final reports.

**H**ow is such accord possible in a political world rent by ever more vehement disagreement? While blue-ribbon panels are often mocked for being stocked with political graybeards, these wizened pros can be a great asset. “It helps to have ‘has-beens’ on commissions because they have no political ax to grind,” former secretary of state and Iraq Study Group cochairman James Baker told me.

The five Republicans and five Democrats on the Iraq Study Group (average age: 74) were able to set aside their differences on other issues to agree in 2006 on a comprehensive Iraq strategy. While President Bush rejected the princi-

pal proposals—a change in the U.S. mission from combat to training and counterterrorism, a gradual withdrawal of U.S. troops, and direct engagement with Iran and Syria—then-senator Obama embraced them as his own, and they have guided his administration’s policy. (One element of the gray-beard critique is valid, though: We would be better served by greater gender diversity on commissions.)

Another reason commissions are able to produce consensus—perhaps the rarest of Washington commodities—is the simple opportunity they provide for intense private deliberations. Members often spend dozens of hours together in hearings, discussions, and debates. Some even become friends. It may sound corny, but that time spent together is precious, and contrasts sharply with the contemporary practice on congressional committees, whose members rarely deliberate or socialize with one another. Indeed, most are not even in Washington for large parts of the week. Former senator Slade Gorton (R-Wash.), who served on the 9/11 Commission, recalled to journalist Kristen Lundberg that over the course of the 18-month investigation, “the associations inside the group became more important than those outside.” When Bush administration attorney general John Ashcroft charged that Jamie Gorelick, a former Clinton administration official, was responsible for failed counterterrorism policies, Gorelick’s fellow 9/11 commissioners, and especially the Republicans, passionately came to her defense.

There were plenty of disagreements on the 9/11 Commission. But Gorton said that he and others decided not to write minority opinions that would diminish the final report’s impact, out of “this immense feeling of satisfaction and respect for one another.”

Gorton didn’t say it, but commissioners have self-interested reasons to reach consensus: Legislators on congressional committees can reap valuable publicity and political advantage from loudly breaking ranks. They also have ways other than their committee work of exerting influence. Most commission members, however, have little to gain by going off the reservation. They know that their work will be far more influential if their report is unanimous.

Unanimity sends a powerful signal to policymakers and the public, but it is not enough to ensure success. Political conditions must also be ripe for reform. In the absence of a crisis, the status quo in Washington is more or less set in cement, as advocacy groups and turf-conscious government officials are able to thwart change. Obama White House chief

of staff Rahm Emanuel famously distilled this piece of political wisdom during the financial crisis when he said, “You never want a serious crisis to go to waste.”

Even after such an event, reformers may not carry the day without the political credibility provided by an independent, bipartisan report. An overhaul of the nation’s intelligence agencies only became possible when the 9/11 Commission issued its proposals in July 2004—nearly three years after the terrorist attacks. Having found that failures to share information prevented the agencies from detecting the 9/11 plot, the commission proposed creating the new post of director of national intelligence and a national counterterrorism center. The changes were initially opposed by President Bush and the powerful leaders of the congressional intelligence committees, but strong public support turned the tide. The resulting Intelligence Reform Act of 2004 was the most important intelligence legislation since the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency after World War II.

Almost without anybody noticing, commissions have been central to the American response to terrorism during the past three decades. Following Hezbollah’s 1983 bombing of a Marine barracks in Beirut, which killed 241 U.S. servicemen, sharp criticism of U.S. policy by a commission chaired by retired admiral Robert Long hastened President Reagan’s decision to withdraw American troops. After attacks on U.S. embassies in the early 1980s and in 1998, commission reports guided an overhaul of the State Department’s security operations and built support for a dramatic increase in funding for diplomatic security.

Looking back as we approach the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, it is striking how strongly commissions have shaped the response to that catastrophe. Congress has enacted three major pieces of counterterrorism legislation since 9/11: the Patriot Act in 2001, which gave the Justice Department and other agencies new counterterrorism powers; the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which established the Department of Homeland Security; and, two years later, the Intelligence Reform Act. Two of these landmark laws were spurred by commissions.

If commissions are so powerful, why haven’t President Obama and Congress adopted the recommendations of last year’s National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, with its far-reaching proposals for spending cuts and tax increases?

First, the commission did not issue a unanimous report—only 11 of the 18 members approved the final proposals. A



Launched early last year amid high spirits, the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, chaired by Erskine Bowles (center) and Alan Simpson (right), failed to reach consensus.

divided outcome was predictable, since 12 of the commissioners were members of Congress subject to the same partisan pressures that confront legislators all the time. Obama made these appointments in the hope that they would give the commission a foothold in Congress, but he might have better served this purpose by naming highly respected former members.

Second, despite widespread concern about the federal deficit, there is still no sense of crisis. By contrast, when the Social Security program faced a near-term financing shortfall in 1982, a commission headed by Alan Greenspan provided valuable political cover that allowed the Reagan White House and congressional Democrats to reach a compromise.

Finally, the fiscal commission dealt with issues that have major consequences for Americans' standard of living. It was inevitable that its proposals would stir passionate opposition. Efforts to change foreign policy or reform national security institutions do not usually affect most Americans so directly, a reality that simplifies the task of spurring reform.

Yet it would be premature to declare the fiscal commission a failure. Sixty-four senators signed a letter in March calling on the president to support measures along the lines of the commission's proposals, and Obama's own April deficit reduction proposals drew heavily on the commission's ideas. It remains a long shot that a commission-inspired grand bargain will be enacted before the 2012 election. But if a real

sense of crisis takes hold, many more politicians might endorse the only plan that has strong bipartisan credibility.

Every new commission is greeted with the same complaint: Why can't Congress and the president solve the problem at hand without outsourcing it to an unelected body? But partisanship, turf battles, and the need to gain the support of 60 senators to pass most significant legislation mean that it is very difficult to enact reform—and the complexity of the problems confronting us is only growing. The challenge is exacerbated by today's extreme ideological polarization. As recently as the 1960s, dozens of members of Congress frequently crossed the aisle

to vote with a majority in the other party. Now there is only a handful of such moderates, and they are a dying breed. Middle-of-the-road solutions with broad support among the American people often wither on the vine.

One of the paradoxes of our time is that unelected commissions may improve democratic governance. Even as the polarization of political elites grows, more voters are rejecting the two major parties. Some 40 percent of Americans now call themselves independents, outnumbering Democrats and Republicans. Commission proposals, which typically transcend partisan divides, tend to be supported by most of this enormous constituency. By helping to overcome the parochial pressures that often prevent Republicans and Democrats from agreeing, commissions can make government more responsive. They are an instrument, rather than a betrayal, of democracy.

Commissions cannot forge agreement on solutions to all of the serious challenges facing the United States, and independents are not going to rally around the banner of "commission power" in any future election. But these unique bipartisan bodies can provide a critical boost to reformers seeking to update our government's institutions and policies. Instead of disparaging them, supporters of productive and effective governance should recognize the value of commissions as institutions that help grease the gears of our often creaky democracy. ■

# THE MIDDLE EAST WHAT NEXT?

**T**HE GIDDY OPTIMISM is gone, and the portentous phrase “Arab Spring” is already falling out of use. This year’s revolts have created new challenges for the Arab world, and for the United States and its allies. Yet in the deeper social and political undercurrents that drove the Arab upheavals, there are signs of a new era struggling to be born.



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# For America, An Arab Winter

*The fall of Arab autocrats creates more risks than opportunities for the United States. As Arab political horizons expand, the space for America to pursue its interests may well contract.*

BY AARON DAVID MILLER

MARK TWAIN ONCE OBSERVED THAT HISTORY doesn't repeat; it rhymes. As America reacts to the dramatic changes sweeping the Arab world, it would be wise to keep Twain's insight in mind.

These aren't quite secular revolutions like those of 1789 and 1917, and they certainly aren't Islamic ones, like Iran's in 1979, at least not yet. They more resemble popular uprisings like those in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991.

But even here the differences eclipse the similarities. The Arab world is not shaking off domination by a great imperial power that has entered into decline. And it includes a much wider range of polities than did Eastern Europe ca. 1990—monarchies, republics, and authoritarian regimes of various complexions. The amount and nature of change varies dramatically from country to country. In some cases (Egypt and Tunisia), the uprisings have left many established governmental institutions and political parties in place. In others, efforts to change the status quo have failed and led

to state repression (Bahrain and Syria) or civil war (Libya and Yemen). Elsewhere, in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Kuwait, Jordan, and Lebanon, there's been much less change so far or none at all.

The broader point is that America has never been here before. Whatever rhythmic patterns link the current political turmoil to the past are trumped by the reality that the United States finds itself in terra incognita in a part of the world vital to its national interests, without a unified doctrine to guide it. But the absence of such a lodestar is actually fortuitous. No single strategy could possibly accommodate the differences and variations in play or harmonize America's values, interests, and policies. The last thing the United States needs right now is ideological rigidity. Great powers at times behave inconsistently—even hypocritically—to protect their interests. It's part of their job description.

During most of the time it has been engaged with the Arab world, the United States has dealt either with acquiescent authoritarians who were its allies (in Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia) or with adversarial authoritarians (in Syria and Libya). Iraq was for a time an ally, then an adversary.

All of this (or a great part of it) has now come undone. With some exceptions, most notably Saudi Arabia, every

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**In dealing with each Arab ruler, the United States has struck a different balance between its values and interests. Several key figures gathered at a 2006 summit, including Libya's Muammar al-Qaddafi (right), with Syria's Bashar al-Assad at his side and Yemen's Ali Abdullah Saleh (far left).**

major U.S. ally or adversary in the Arab world has faced disruptive change. On balance, when President Barack Obama's 3 AM phone call came, his first real-time foreign-policy crisis, he responded pretty well under tough circumstances. He made no fatal mistakes or galactic stumbles. And despite the criticism from liberal interventionists and neoconservatives who demanded a more muscular American response, the administration got the big issues right. It has been roundly criticized for its half-in/half-out approach to military intervention in Libya, but even that may prove to have been the best of bad alternatives if Muammar al-Qaddafi falls. The president will have been judged to have accomplished his goal without heavy American involvement, even though for many in Congress it seems too much.

What abound in America's policy aren't failures so much as contradictions and anomalies. The president has called for the removal of one cruel dictator (Qaddafi) but not another (Syria's Bashar al-Assad). His administration helped to ease Egypt's Hosni Mubarak out of power, but couldn't or wouldn't

press the Khalifa monarchy in Bahrain or Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen quite as hard. That the administration's approach to these different situations where values and interests collided came to resemble a giant game of Whac-A-Mole is a result less of the administration's failings than of the impossible situation it faced. It also reflects another key reality: The Arab Spring was not primarily an American story. The United States' capacity to shape events was always quite limited.

As America watches these events unfold, it should be humble and respectful of history's power and uncertainty. The fall of the Arab dictators in Libya and Syria would be a good thing. Even the stability offered by the acquiescent autocrats (in Egypt and Tunisia) was always at best a false one. The long arc of history may smile kindly on the Arab world and over time bring better governance, gender equality, and greater respect for human rights to a region that is in desperate need of them.

But the short term will prove to be a difficult period

for the Arabs, and the United States too. Democracy, or whatever strange hybrid of popular government, weak institutions, and elite control replaces the autocrats, will be a double-edged sword. And American policies, already marked by contradiction and challenge, won't escape its cutting edge. The gaps separating American values, interests, and policies could actually grow, and the

## THE ARAB UPHEAVALS have narrowed the space in which the United States can pursue its policies.

space available to the United States to pursue its policies—from Iran to Gaza to the Arab-Israeli peace process—could contract. The growing influence of Arab public opinion on the actions of Arab governments and the absence of strong leaders will make it much tougher for the United States to pursue its traditional policies. For America, the Arab Spring may well prove to be more an Arab Winter.

In late April, a new poll on Egyptian attitudes toward the United States told the story. Only 20 percent of those surveyed had a favorable view of the United States, with little more than a third expressing confidence that President Obama could be expected to do the right thing in world affairs.

To put it simply, when the Arab uprisings occurred, America wasn't in the most favorable position to cope. It was neither admired and respected nor feared as much as it needed to be in a region that is vital to its national interests.

For at least 18 years, under Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, America's approach to war and peace had produced very mixed results—some would argue failure. In two wars (in Iraq and Afghanistan), victory seemed to be measured not in terms of when the United States would prevail but by when it would be able to leave. Sanctions and cyberworms launched against Iran took a toll on its nuclear program, but high oil prices and an Iranian commitment to uranium enrichment kept the centrifuges spinning. On Arab-Israeli peacemaking, the Obama administration pushed for an Israeli settlements

freeze in 2009 and lost. With no negotiations and no freeze, a good deal of American credibility has been lost as well.

The sum total of the difficulties—those inherited and those self-inflicted—had left President Obama's image much diminished relative to the expectations (inflated to be sure) when he entered office. Words had also outstripped deeds on

both the peace process and democratization. Obama's 2009 speech in Cairo calling for a "new beginning" in relations between the United States and the Muslim world was brilliant, but his actions—such as backing off from pressing Mubarak and other autocrats for reforms—

betrayed his words. Wary of the impracticability of his predecessor's freedom agenda, the president had all but dropped it.

The main event in the Arab upheavals was the fall of Mubarak in Egypt. And the main problem for the United States was that for 30 years, Mubarak had been one of the good guys—supporting U.S. policy on Iran, Gaza, counterterrorism, and the peace process. Egypt was no democracy, and Mubarak was an authoritarian whose security services arrested, tortured, and imprisoned his people, but for every American president since Ronald Reagan he had been a partner and friend.

Mubarak was the epitome of the acquiescent autocrat, the kind of leader with whom America had cut bargains decades earlier. In exchange for a pass on questions of governance, such leaders supported U.S. war- and peacemaking policies. Sure, the Department of State issued tough human rights reports every year, and for a time the George W. Bush administration actually took its freedom agenda seriously. But there was no sustained pressure on issues of human rights or political reform. The Bush administration needed Mubarak's support for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and its efforts to contain Iran.

In Egypt, the Obama administration actually got lucky. The Egyptian military understood history's moment, forced Mubarak out, and refused to launch a massive crackdown on the opposition. With the public's support, it took over the country to oversee a transition until parliamentary and presidential elections could be held. Still, the issues at stake—the

role of the military in an emerging democracy, the influence of the Islamists and the Muslim Brotherhood, how Egypt's economy would fare, what the Egyptian-Israeli relationship would look like—remained unresolved. The United States maintained its close ties with the military and was viewed as a key partner. But it was clear that with the rise of more popular voices, Islamist and secular nationalist alike, the political process would be more open and dynamic. That would almost certainly mean a foreign policy more independent of the United States, and more critical of Washington's policies, not to mention Israel's. It seemed all but certain, as Egypt moved to reach out to Iran and open the border with Hamas-ruled Gaza, that the space for U.S. influence in Cairo would contract. That it was Egypt that brokered the Fatah-Hamas Palestinian unity agreement signed in May, without consulting with Washington, was a telling sign of how much things had already changed.

Elsewhere, the United States wasn't so lucky. In Bahrain, the ruling Khalifas, encouraged and abetted by Saudi Arabia, cracked down on the Shia opposition. American efforts to mediate were rebuffed. The Obama administration, fearful of losing invaluable access to naval and air base facilities, backed off pressuring the regime—at least publicly.

In Bahrain and again in Yemen, unlike in Egypt, America's interests (port facilities, air bases, counterterrorism cooperation) were clearly in conflict with its values (allowing peaceful opposition and pressing hard for reform). The Saudis, worried about the specter of an Iranian presence in a neighboring country with a Shia majority and the restiveness of their own Shia minority, pushed for and supported the repression in Bahrain. Angry about Obama's decision to abandon Mubarak, the Saudis drew the line on the Arab Spring in Bahrain. And there was little the United States was prepared to do about it.

**I**t was striking that of all the countries in the region exposed to pressures for change, Saudi Arabia seemed least affected. Plentiful oil money to buy off discontent, the public's respect for the king, the conservative nature of the society, and a weak tradition of street opposition seemed to make the Saudis different and almost unassailable—at least for the moment. For the Obama administration, it was just as well. How Washington would have responded to serious unrest and a crackdown in the Arab world's most important oil producer was a challenge the White House was glad not

to face. In this regard, most of the monarchies (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Morocco) had weathered the winds of change far better than the presidencies and republics.

Change visited not only America's friends but also its adversaries. In Libya, violence even triggered a U.S.-led (for a time) NATO military intervention, and in Syria, quite to the surprise of many political analysts, the Assad family faced the most serious threat to its rule in 40 years. In both instances, there would be clear gains for the United States if the regime fell, though in the case of Syria, the Obama administration acted as if the risks of Bashar al-Assad's departure outweighed the advantages. Like a Wall Street heavyweight, Syria was too big and important to fail.

The differences in the way the United States reacted to the situations in Libya and Syria pointed up the contradictions in its responses to this incipient Arab Winter—situations in which repression rather than regime change or reform carried the day. Moreover, both situations reflected the limits of U.S. influence and ability to shape the outcomes quickly, easily, or, perhaps in the case of Syria, at all.

In Libya, the United States, pushed by the French and fearing regime atrocities, found itself involved in a strange kind of civil war that pitted poorly organized, underarmed rebels controlling much of the east against Qaddafi's forces in Tripoli and the west.

The U.S. response in Libya was a lowest-common-denominator effort to protect civilians and encourage the opposition in the face of a brutal dictator's harsh repression. The not-so-subtle subtext was that President Obama was determined to avoid heavy American military involvement, let alone boots on the ground and overt efforts at regime change. The United States already occupied Iraq and Afghanistan; it didn't want to own Libya too. The focus from the outset was on getting others to carry the load.

The result—a UN Security Council resolution, a NATO military operation, and an Arab League buy-in for an augmented no-fly zone—produced what one might have imagined: a military stalemate in which NATO bucked up the rebels largely through airpower. The rebels (even with NATO support) weren't strong enough to defeat Qaddafi. And NATO wasn't prepared to do what was necessary to accomplish that end. America's turning over leadership to NATO was further evidence that for President Obama, Libya was not a front-burner issue. Qaddafi's arc, however, seemed headed downward, and given Libya's relatively minor importance in the American scheme of things, the partial U.S.

response, however painful some of its consequences were to watch, may well prove to have been the best one possible.

On the other hand, in Syria, a country of much greater consequence to American interests in the region, the United States didn't even have bad options. Military intervention was out of the question, since Syria possesses real air defenses and chemical and biological weapons. Nor was it possible to construct a coalition to pressure Assad to reform or to resign. This was partly because the Turks, Saudis, and Israelis were all wary of what might follow Assad should he fall.

## THE SWEEPING CHANGES in the Arab world were a reminder to the Palestinians of how little their own situation had changed.

Driven partly by fear of what would come after Assad (Sunni extremists, civil war) and partly by a lack of capacity to influence events, President Obama settled on a limited response—tougher rhetoric and targeted sanctions. But there was no doubt where the administration's bottom line lay. Though there might be considerable benefits to toppling Assad (a cruel regime ended and Syria's ties with Iran loosened, along with a weakening of Syrian clients Hamas and Hezbollah), there were also risks.

The administration's limited response to both the Arab Spring and the Arab Winter reflected certain realities that would likely continue to define U.S. policy.

First, the Middle East upheaval wasn't primarily an American story. Even if the United States had desired a stronger role, it would have only made matters worse by intervening. The historic changes loosed this year throughout the Arab world represented a legitimate and authentic response by the Arabs to the need to reshape their own societies without much in the way of external reference points. This was as it should have been.

Second, even if the Arabs had wanted more intervention by the United States, the Obama administration had little desire to push its way in. Iraq and Afghanistan cast long shadows. Obama's foreign policy had already begun to mirror many of the elements of his predecessor's. As Libya demonstrated, owning Arab countries, putting American forces

on the ground, and regime change were tropes, policies, and outcomes the Obama administration strongly wished to avoid.

The administration also understood that America was still very much caught up in a devil's bargain with a number of authoritarian regimes (Bahrain, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan), and had to be cautious in what it said and did about reform. The United States might argue for democratic change, but its interests might nonetheless demand a strong regard for the status quo. Strikingly, there were no repeats of

the assertive "Qaddafi must go" speech from the White House for Bahrain, Yemen, or Syria.

One of the most notable developments in a region traditionally obsessed with the Israeli-Palestinian issue was how little this subject figured in the political turmoil

that swept through it. Missing were the traditional anti-Zionist, anti-Semitic tropes, burning of Israeli and American flags, and demonstrations for Palestinian rights. None of this meant that the Arab world had given up the cause of Palestine, but it did reflect changing priorities and a focus on domestic matters. It wasn't until mid-May, largely in response to al-Naqba day (the "day of catastrophe," when Palestinians mark the anniversary of Israel's creation and their exile), that violence erupted, as Palestinian protesters—their actions orchestrated by Syria—tried to cross Israel's borders with Syria and Lebanon.

The Israelis might have taken heart from the fact that they weren't the center of attention amid all these changes had the uncertainties created in the process not shaken their confidence. Within the space of two months, Mubarak, Israel's key partner, was gone, and another friend, King Abdullah of Jordan, was under pressure. By May, Syria's Assad was facing the worst-ever challenge to his regime, a development that could have major implications for Israeli security interests in Lebanon and the Golan Heights, where Assad had scrupulously maintained the 1974 U.S.-brokered disengagement agreement. For Israel's tough-minded and suspicious prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, these developments only reinforced his caution about making a deal with the Palestinians. Whatever hopes the long arc of history held out for democratic change in the Arab world and Arab-Israeli peace,



**Still standing:** The Arab monarchies, particularly those in the Persian Gulf, have survived without serious challenges. Here the Saudi (right) and United Arab Emirates (left) finance ministers meet during the Arab Spring.

the immediate future was fraught with uncertainty.

For Palestinians, the political changes sweeping the Arab world were a painful reminder of how little their own situation had changed. Even before the events in Tunisia and Egypt, Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas had concluded that Palestinians needed to break out on their own and not count on Israel or the Obama administration. Toward this end, he and his prime minister, Salam Fayyad, had begun to develop institutions on the ground and a diplomatic initiative for recognition of Palestinian statehood at the United Nations in the fall.

Turmoil in the Arab world only seemed to validate this strategy. Regimes that couldn't deliver what their publics wanted were swept away or faced intense opposition. And to say the least, neither Abbas in Ramallah nor the Hamas leadership in Gaza had delivered. The two sides had been talking unity ever since their bloody split in 2007. To preempt discontent and to broaden their legitimacy, both Hamas and Abbas now seemed more open to reconciliation.

For Hamas, whose base of material support in Syria was increasingly tenuous as a result of Assad's repression and whose Islamist trope seemed out of step with the non-ideo-

logical, youthful, secular character of much of the opposition in the Arab street, unity seemed even more urgent. It was also important for Hamas to keep Egypt, the broker of the unity accord, happy, partly because Cairo controlled the border crossing at Rafah, a lifeline for Gaza. Abbas too saw unity as a chance to ally with Egypt and gain a better position for his UN statehood recognition campaign. After all, it would be easier to argue for statehood in front of the international community with Palestinians at peace rather than at war with one another.

For a U.S. administration that had yet to find an effective strategy to promote Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, Israeli wariness and Palestinian unity

made an already complex situation trickier. If Hamas were to abandon struggle and recognize Israel, there might be a real chance for substantive talks, but that's not what the unity effort was about. What unity did do—in the short term—was raise the threat of a congressional cutoff of U.S. aid to the Palestinian Authority and give Israelis who didn't want to negotiate with Abbas a perfect excuse not to do so.

Worried about drift and the approaching debate over the UN initiative in September, the administration looked for a way to respond. In May, as part of his Arab Spring speech—largely in an effort to demonstrate that he was still committed to a solution and to persuade key European countries not to support the Palestinian initiative—Obama laid out a U.S. position on borders based on those in place before the 1967 Arab-Israeli war with mutually agreed land swaps. The speech sparked an intensely negative reaction from the Israelis, and not much of a positive one from the Palestinians, and reflected the reality that the administration really didn't have the strategy, capacity, or opportunity to translate any of its ideas into serious negotiations, let alone an agreement.

By early summer, there appeared to be no way out of this

conundrum. Neither Abbas nor Netanyahu was willing or able to get into serious negotiations. And the United States seemed powerless to affect matters. The default scenario seemed to be drift as the Palestinians geared up for their UN statehood initiative in September, leaving the United States isolated in opposing them. Even if the administration manages to relaunch the talks, the odds against an agreement appeared overwhelming.

Charles de Gaulle, paraphrasing Sophocles, once reflected that one must wait until the evening to see how splendid the day was. Time will indeed be the ultimate arbiter of what the changes unleashed this year will mean for the future of the Arab world. It's a long movie that will take years to play out, and the story will develop in fundamentally different ways in each country depending on local circumstances. Some popular uprisings have changed regimes; some haven't; others have produced civil war and state repression. The lesson of history is that you never quite end up where you thought you would. We can hope with some confidence that the future holds the prospect of better governance, more accountability, gender equality, and respect for individual rights. But in the summer of 2011, who can make authoritative predictions about where Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Syria, or those countries yet untouched (Jordan and Saudi Arabia) will be in the summer of 2012?

We can, however, say with greater confidence how America will fare. It will be wise as we deal with the region's changes to keep both our hopes and our fears under control. When it comes to this part of the world, Americans (me included) indulge too much in each. Several trend lines seem clear.

First, the gap between America's values and its policies in the region may narrow but will remain. In Bahrain, Yemen, and Syria, the United States will be constrained by its interests from pushing too hard for reform and is likely to be cautious in its support for the opposition. In Egypt, as it becomes clear that a powerful military functioning independently of civilian authority isn't really compatible with democratic values, the United States (because of its close ties to the military) will find itself in a dilemma. Similarly, it will be reluctant to embrace groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood whose views on democracy, gender equality, and Israel are fundamentally different from our own.

Second, as public opinion becomes more influential in shaping domestic and foreign policies in the Arab countries, the space available for U.S. policies and influence may contract. The acquiescent autocrats have acquiesced, albeit often grudgingly, in our approach to Iran, Gaza, Israel, and counterterrorism. The new regimes won't, or at least not as easily. Since most of our policies won't change quickly, or at all, the United States will likely be in for a rough ride, with both emerging governments and old ones.

Indeed, our traditional friends and adversaries are already worried about our reliability. The Saudis were stunned at how quickly we acquiesced in and aided Mubarak's fall, and they were also angered by our support for reforms in Bahrain. The Israelis probably are concerned as well that we plan to squeeze them on the peace process to accommodate the new Arab democrats and carve out greater space for our interests. And in traditionally pro-American monarchies such as Jordan and Morocco that have been spared disruptive change, the kings may wonder how America will react if they too are pressed hard by their publics.

Events in the Arab world may also complicate U.S. policy toward Iran. There are new pariahs now—Syria and Libya—to divert the international community. Egypt will continue to fear Iranian influence, but will likely improve ties and shed the personal animus that influenced Mubarak's approach to the mullahs. And while the Arab Spring has been a setback for Iran's model for change and governance in the Middle East, Iran will be a beneficiary if reforms falter, particularly in Bahrain and Yemen.

Finally, if the tumultuous changes in the Arab world reveal anything, they should be a painful—or happy—reminder that America doesn't run the world. Reinhold Niebuhr said it best decades ago: America can't manage history. This doesn't mean the United States is a potted plant or is in decline, or even that it lacks influence in this region.

The Arab uprisings have important consequences for American interests to be sure, but they are not our story. We can support change through economic and technical aid and by looking for opportunities to defuse political tensions and work toward solutions (when real ones exist), particularly in the Arab-Israeli arena. But there are real limits to our power and influence, particularly in a region where our values and interests will continue to collide and where our policies may by definition be at odds with the rising currents of public opinion. But such is the fate of a great power engaged in a region it cannot remake and from which it cannot retreat. ■

# The Long Revolt

*The Arab world's wave of change was a century in the making. Why expect its effects to become clear in the space of months?*

BY RAMI G. KHOURI

WE ARE WITNESSING TODAY THE CULMINATION of a century of Arab popular struggle for freedom and sovereignty. That struggle was interrupted by many decades of often illusory statehood under the reign of autocrats who were enthusiastically supported by foreign powers. Today's struggle is the single most significant movement of Arab citizens and citizenries since the modern Arab world was created in the early 20th century.

That world was born amid revolts against the region's Ottoman and European overlords. When the European colonial powers finally retreated, the Ottomans having been swept aside by their defeat in World War I, they left behind a collection of Arab countries they essentially had manufactured for their own convenience out of their particular dominions. Twenty-two nominally sovereign Arab states ultimately emerged, and they limped into the 21st century battered and tattered by a combination of forces: their own economic mismanagement and corruption; regional wars and occupations involving Israel, Iran, and recurring invasions by the United States and Britain; severe income disparities resulting from the misuse of oil and gas wealth; and a stunning record of sustained autocracy and authoritarianism unmatched by any other region of the world.

Now Arab countries finally are being born of their own volition rather than through the false-birth handicraft of audacious European officials. The momentous process that is under way today is so complex and was so long in the mak-

ing that it is not surprising that we have a hard time finding a name for it. "Arab Spring" is the tag used in the West. "Revolution" (*thawra*) is the preferred name among those protesting and sometimes battling in the streets in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. In some countries people speak of their "intifada" (uprising), the name popularized by the two Palestinian intifadas against Israeli occupation. Others speak of a "citizen revolt," the "Arab Awakening," or the "Arab Renaissance."

Half a year after the overthrow of the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes that launched this revolt, two important patterns have emerged. First, there is a common set of basic material and political grievances that citizens in most Arab countries share. Second, each regime's response to the protests has been determined by the intersection of two factors: the nature and legitimacy of the regime itself and the intensity of popular grievances. This is why the region is marked by such a variety of revolts and regime responses. There have been two regime changes to date, while active warfare and low-intensity violence continue in a few countries. In others, the national leaders, perhaps feeling themselves on firmer ground, are attempting to mute demands for change with a combination of massive cash handouts to the hard-pressed populace and negotiations, or at least dialogue, with those demanding changes in how power is exercised and citizens are treated.

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Understanding what is happening now and how things might evolve requires, above all, grasping the nature of the grievances that have caused people to go into the streets, knowing they risk death. For decades, the average Arab citizen suffered multiple hardships and injustices. These included rampant corruption, poor wages, a lack of jobs, low-quality education, occupation by foreign powers, security service abuses, and curbs on personal freedoms. By the

**THE ARABS WHO NOW challenge their governments want meaningful voting rights, access to a credible judicial system, and freedom of the press.**

1990s, the Arab order could be defined as one of continuous wars and internal violence, increasingly militaristic and corrupt security states, and burgeoning disparities in citizen well-being as a small, wealthy minority became increasingly distanced from masses of lower-income and poor Arabs. Average people were willing to endure as long as they felt that the future held out the hope of a better life for themselves or their children. From the 1930s to the late '80s, the future did indeed promise a better life for most Arabs. But the upward curve of promise flattened and in some cases reversed during the two decades before the current revolt erupted in Tunisia last December.

In Tunisia, Gallup surveys showed that the percentage of those who were “thriving” (a composite measure of well-being developed by the polling firm) fell by 10 points between 2008 and 2010. In Egypt, it fell by 17 points over a slightly longer period of time. (Last year, only 14 percent of Tunisians and 12 percent of Egyptians were classified as “thriving,” compared with 43 percent of Saudis and somewhat higher percentages of those in other Persian Gulf states.) At the same time, both countries had growing economies, which created a wealthy elite even as the majority of citizens felt that their prospects were declining. Last year, Gallup found that more than a quarter of all young people in Arab states wanted to emigrate—and the proportion reached more than 40 percent in Tunisia, Yemen,

and other countries. Arabs’ confidence in the legitimacy of national elections was low. Dozens of other indicators affirm this picture of mass citizen discontent across the region, with the general exception of the wealthy Persian Gulf oil-producing states.

The Arabs who now challenge their governments share a common desire to achieve both personal and political goals. They want all the normal rights of citizenship, including meaningful voting rights, access to a credible judicial system, and freedom of the press. They want the ability to exercise their human faculties to read and write as they wish, enjoy arts and culture without draconian censorship, discuss public issues, travel and invest as they see fit, wear the clothes and listen to the music they prefer, and participate in the world of ideas that helps shape their society as well as define their public policies.

When Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in Tunisia last December, inspiring the Arab revolt, he was driven to his desperate gesture by a terrible combination of material want and homegrown political humiliation felt by Arabs across the region. The intensity of the resulting demonstrations for serious change and the speed with which they spread throughout the Arab world suggest that these national rebellions, and the common regional trend they represent, will not wither away or be permanently suppressed by police actions.

This revolt is very different from the upsurge of Arab nationalism in the 1950s and '60s, when young Arab states still being born were caught up in a mass emotional and political response to a stultifying combination of what many saw as Israeli and Western aggression. That period of Arab nationalism was perhaps the last gasp of the anticolonial struggle that charismatic leaders such as Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser tapped into so effectively. The mere idea of Arabs with shared identities, rights, and interests fighting for their sovereignty and building new countries electrified masses across the region for a fleeting decade, until the debacle of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war revealed the structural weaknesses of Arab nationalist regimes.

The current revolt is anchored much more solidly in the fierce determination of millions of citizens to live decent

and normal lives, free of material desperation and political indignity. The revolt's intensity and broad scope also reflect the fact that it did not emerge from a vacuum. It is, rather, the culmination of decades of activism by scores of groups small and large that have struggled unsuccessfully for civil and political rights. Those battles erupted in many countries but did not achieve regional momentum, and consequently received little attention abroad. The challenges to the Arab order came from a variety of civil society initiatives, democracy and human rights movements,

Soviet Union's collapse and a serious economic crisis that brought widespread hardship and forced bankrupt authoritarian states to open up their systems enough to allow citizens to air their frustrations and grievances. Roughly between 1986 and 1992, Arabs in the tens of millions embraced the possibilities of a more open press and the ability to create political parties and civil society organizations. Flocking to vote and speak their minds, they forcefully expressed their long-pent-up demand for real citizenship.



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**The last of the line? Egypt's Hosni Mubarak was the third in a series of long-reigning "pharaohs" who have led the nation in modern times.**

more specialized campaigns to promote the rights of women and workers, and thousands of individual writers and academics. Professional associations of lawyers, engineers, and doctors in many Arab countries have long fought for greater rights anchored in the rule of law, and business associations in recent years have also pushed for change, especially in education and the judiciary.

The Arab region enjoyed a brief spell of liberalization beginning in the late 1980s as a result of fallout from the

Islamist movements emerged in the 1980s as the most important challengers of Arab state power, and in most cases they were beaten down by the state's security forces, their members jailed en masse or forced into exile. The important thing about these movements—including the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, Egypt, and Syria; Al-Nahda in Tunisia; Amal and Hezbollah in Lebanon; and the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria—is that in almost every case they grew primarily on the strength of their status as local

groups demanding more citizen rights and empowerment, better government, and less corruption, rather than their criticisms of the United States and Israel. Today's revolt is built on the same foundation, with demands centered on citizen rights and constitutional changes, while foreign-policy issues take, at least for now, a back seat.

One American scholar who has long studied Arab political economy, former American University of Beirut president and Princeton University professor John Waterbury, noted in a private communication some months ago, "Quiescence has never been a consistent feature of the Arab world. Citing only from memory, I note the following: cost of living riots in Casablanca, 1965; food riots in Egypt, 1977; the Hama massacres of 1982 in Syria; cost of living riots in Jordan, Sudan, Algeria in the late 1980s; the Shia uprising in Iraq in 1991; the long-smoldering Islamist insurrection in Algeria after 1991; Houthis and others fighting the regime in Yemen; civil war continuously in the Sudan since the early '80s; the Lebanese civil war, 1976–89; the Palestinians against the Israelis seemingly forever, and so on.

"We should not confuse police states with political docility. There have been at least three other civilian-led protest movements that led to real change, but not to lasting change. In 1964 and again in 1985 civilian demonstrations led to the downfalls of General [Ibrahim] Abboud and Jaafar Numeiry of the Sudan, leading to years of civilian government, until 1989 when General Omar Bashir seized power and remains in power. In the spring of 2005 a million mostly young Lebanese went to Martyrs' Square in Beirut and brought about the downfall of the Karami government and the withdrawal of Syrian military forces from Lebanon."

Egypt alone in recent years has witnessed the rise of the Kefaya movement, which challenged Mubarak family rule in the years before the election of 2005; the judges' movement for the rule of law; human rights and voters' rights movements that included brave pioneers such as Saad Eddin Ibrahim and the Ibn Khaldoun Center; the April 6 Movement, which emerged from the 2008 labor strikes; the vibrant opposition press led by the start-up newspaper *Al-Masry Al-Youm* and others; and thousands of young bloggers who spoke on the Web when they were not allowed to speak in public. Such determined activism for freedom, democracy, and the rule of law has occurred in almost every Arab country over the past two generations.

Some Arab countries are now moving toward radical

change, while in others, citizens' democratic aspirations are frozen by the heavy hand of a ruling security state. New actors are emerging or reasserting themselves, including youth groups, formerly exiled or banned political parties, labor unions, private-sector-led political parties, and reform-oriented civil society organizations. Other actors, notably the military, Islamists, and traditional political parties, are repositioning themselves. The Arab political stage has now been repopulated with a rich array of new and reinvigorated actors. It will be some time before they sort themselves out, determining which will lead and which will play niche roles. Most Arab countries have not engaged in public politics for half a century; they should not be expected to transform themselves instantly.

**E**ven as they are experiencing these momentous changes, Arab countries must deal with four enormous and simultaneous challenges: maintaining security, rekindling economic growth, creating legitimate and participatory governance systems, and preventing mass discontent sparked by unfulfilled expectations from pushing countries back toward autocratic rule. The liberated Arab lands that are able to slowly establish more democratic political governance systems will each take on a different tone and color as they create their own formulas from the possibilities before them: tribal values, pan-Arab sentiment, narrow nationalism, corporate globalism, Islamist influences, and roles for the military. Arab democracies will look very different from Western ones, and the world should have the patience and composure to let the people of this region find their own sustainable balances between religiosity and secularism, state-centered and pan-Arab nationalism, and traditional and modern forms of governance.

The key to success will be the ability of reconfigured democratic Arab systems to institutionalize citizen rights and limits to state power in enforceable constitutional systems, with the rule of law protected by an independent judiciary. These are the common elements of the rallying cry across the region. In every single country where Arab citizens have revolted against their regime, the main demand is for constitutional changes that protect the rights of individuals.

Arab democratization will need time to succeed. It will take at least a decade to show if the change now under way is irreversible—as I believe it is. ■

# The Pink Hijab

*The Arab revolts of 2011 have transformed the image of the Islamic world. One young Egyptian woman's struggle reflects the scope of change—and shows how long it has been in coming.*

BY ROBIN WRIGHT



Dalia Ziada, shown here in March at the Women in the World Summit in New York City, has been a leading activist among the rising pink hijab generation.

THE GREATEST WAVE OF EMPOWERMENT in the early 21st century has produced a new political chic. It has been shaped by conditions conspicuously ripe for unrest. A youth bulge altered the generational balance of power. Rising literacy spurred aspirations beyond daily survival, especially among women. And new technology tools—cheap cell phones with video capabilities, Internet access, social media, and some 500 independent satellite channels launched since 1996—gave ordinary Arabs a larger sense of the world and then allowed them to connect at a crucial juncture.

The new chic has been fashioned by a yearning for change that is at once democratic and indigenous. The restless young chafe at old ways and old leaders, but many who turned out in Cairo's Tahrir ("Liberation") Square this year do not aspire merely to imitate the West. They reject militant jihad and the rigid formulas of the Salafis, yet they fervently embrace their faith as a defining force in their future. They want new systems that are both fully representative and true to their religious values. Their quest, which began quietly long before the so-called Arab Spring, also helps illuminate what lies ahead.

The 21st-century believers are establishing

their voice in hip-hop lyrics and bold comedy, subversive poetry and satirical plays. The cultural uprising is as critical as the political upheaval. The young in particular have been encouraged by a new generation of popular televangelists who preach a softer and more flexible form of Islam. The militant Muslim Brotherhood and its allies may play a powerful role in the new Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world, but they will face strong countercurrents among young Muslims who have their own ideas. They will encounter people like Dalia Ziada.

**D**alia Ziada was 29 when she joined the revolt against President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. She had a particularly long journey to Liberation Square. It started when she was a little girl.

“I am a survivor of female genital mutilation,” Ziada told me as she stirred a steamy espresso in a Cairo café. “In 1990, when I was eight years old, my mother told me to put on my best party dress. It was supposed to be some kind of surprise, a celebration. I found myself instead in a doctor’s office. I shouted and refused, but the doctor gave me a shot. I woke up in terrible physical pain.”

Ziada’s first protest was within her family. As a teenager, she tried to prevent the genital mutilation of her sister and cousins. No female in her family had ever fought back. “And mostly,” she conceded, looking up from her coffee, “I failed.”

In Egypt, the practice of female genital mutilation spans millennia, dating back to the pharaohs. In 2005, a United Nations report found that 97 percent of Egyptian females between the ages of 15 and 49 had undergone one of four types of genital mutilation—clitoridectomy, excision, infibulations, or the miscellaneous pricking, piercing, incising, scraping, or cauterizing of the genital area. The practice is cultural rather than religious in origin, more African than Middle Eastern. Many Christian girls in Egypt have also been genitally mutilated.

In 2006, when she was 24, Ziada had a long debate with an uncle about her seven-year-old cousin Shaimaa, the family’s youngest female child.

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“We talked most of the night. He was shocked at the blunt discussion,” she recalled. “I told him that he had no right to circumcise her. I said I’d cut off Shaimaa’s finger if he went through with it. He looked at me with surprise and said that would ruin her life—and I said, ‘Now you get it.’ I thought I’d lost. But he called me the next day and said I’d convinced him. That’s when I realized I could do things, because I had been able to save someone,” she said. “I decided to see what else I could do.”

Ziada, who comes from a traditional family, does not look the part of sex educator. She is doe eyed and wears no makeup, so her pale, chubby cheeks and colorless lips make her appear younger than she is. In public, she wears hijab coverings in bright florals, rich patterns, or fake designer prints; she changes her scarf daily. She is an observant Muslim, so not a wisp of hair shows. Judging from her eyebrows, her hair must be dark brown.

“Hijab is part of my life,” she told me. “I would feel naked without it.” She often jokes, with a robust laugh at herself, that her scarves are the most interesting part of her wardrobe. Yet her religious commitment defines her life.

Her goal, she wrote when she began her new blog in 2006, “is derived from the ultimate goal that any Muslim seeks; which is to please Almighty Allah.”

Ziada soon became a leading activist among the pink hijab generation, young women committed to their faith, firm in their femininity, and resolute about their rights. With three college classmates, she launched a campaign to educate women about genital mutilation and domestic violence. Then she moved on to human rights. And she ended up at Liberation Square.

“When I grew up,” she explained on her blog, “my personal interest in having more equal rights as a woman expanded to my country.”

Her first big project was translating a comic book called *The Montgomery Story*, which recounts Martin Luther King Jr.’s civil disobedience campaign against racial segregation in 1955. King famously mobilized a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, after Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white man. Dozens of the boycott’s leaders were arrested; a bomb was thrown into King’s home, narrowly missing his wife and child. Yet the movement remained nonviolent. The Supreme Court ultimately ruled that bus segregation was illegal.

“When I read this story, I learned that someone must

take the risk for others to follow,” Ziada told me. “I wanted to be the Martin Luther King of Egypt!”

*The Montgomery Story*, originally an educational tool to promote civil rights among the young or mildly literate, ends with tips on nonviolent activism. One of several groups Ziada worked with distributed copies of her Arabic version across the Middle East.

“Finding a way to explain civil disobedience was very exciting. It was something new for ordinary people,” she said. “Then I started looking for other ways to use nonviolence and civil disobedience for my own campaigns.”

Her next major project was organizing the first human rights film festival in the Arab world. The Mubarak regime tried to block her. “The government reacted as if we were planning a terrorist attack,” she said.

The authorities imposed a stiff fee for showing each film, which Ziada and her backers could not afford. So she cut back from dozens of films to seven. Then government censors denied approval of the films, even though she had avoided movies about Egypt. Undeterred, Ziada went to the censorship board’s offices, waited by the elevator for its director, then rode up with him to plead her case.

“I think he was shocked that I would dare stop and question him,” she told me with a chuckle. “We talked all the way up the elevator. In the end, he was laughing and he gave me approval. Security didn’t believe it.”

The harassment was not over, however. The authorities shut down the theater that had agreed to show the films. Ziada then hastily arranged for various nongovernmental organizations to host a different film and panel discussion every night for a week. “We stopped letting them always tell us no. We started making decisions for ourselves,” she said.

In 2009, facing the same obstacles, Ziada managed to sneak in 20 movies for the second Cairo human rights film festival. To get around official obstacles, she provided the wrong schedule and imaginary venues. In a country with one of the region’s most autocratic regimes, Ziada showed films such as *Orange Revolution*, about the 2004 uprising in Ukraine, and, most daringly, four Egyptian films. One dramatized a well-known incident in which police used a broomstick to sodomize a young man who had intervened when his cousin refused to pay the police a bribe. Another was a Romeo-and-Juliet tale about a young Christian boy who falls in love with a Muslim girl he can never marry. The most potent movie, however, was also the shortest. *Please Spare Our Flowers* is a one-minute film about female gen-

ital mutilation that shows ragged pinking shears slowly snipping off the tops of dozens of beautiful flowers, one by one, just as they’re blooming—each producing a piercing scream from an unseen girl child or baby.

As the pink hijab generation gradually chisels away at centuries of restrictions, the young women are also redefining what it means to wear hijab—as a declaration of activist intent rather than a symbol of being sequestered. The change is visible in virtually every Muslim country. The young are shedding black and gray garb for clothing more colorful and even shape-revealing, albeit still modest. Pink is the most popular hue. Women in their teens, twenties, and thirties also flavor their faith with shades of pastel blue, bright yellow, and rustic orange, occasionally trimmed with sparkles, tassels, or even feathers. Hijab stores from Gaza to Jakarta now carry everything from long denim dresses with rhinestone designs to frilly frocks with matching scarves. *Hijab Fashion*, an Egyptian monthly magazine, was launched in 2004 for the pink hijab generation. It has nothing to do with religiosity. But it is also not just about fashion or vanity.

**T**he Veiled—or al-Motahajiba—is one of Cairo’s new fashion centers combining Islamic feminism and cool. When I visited the shop in 2009, hijab ware was as elegantly displayed on the glass shelves as designer scarves at Neiman Marcus. Shaimaa Hassan, a 20-year-old salesclerk, told me that her favorite color was turquoise. She handed me a booklet of fashionable new hijab styles. The latest fad was the Spanish wrap, so called because the scarf is tied with a large knot at the back, in an allusion to the hairstyles worn by flamenco dancers. As she demonstrated how to wrap it, Hassan explained that she had just finished vocational school in commerce and intended to open her own business someday.

Sabaya, which means “young girls” in Arabic, is a salon, boutique, and café in Cairo’s trendy Heliopolis district. It was launched in 2008 by Hanan Turk, a famous Egyptian ballerina who was recruited for the cinema in 1991. The glamorous young actress appeared in more than 20 major films, both comedies and dramas, in which she often wore racy dresses or exposed ample décolletage. In 2005 she starred in the controversial film *Dunia* (“World”), about a young dancer who

explores her sexual identity and resists pressures to hide her femininity. The director struggled to get it past Egypt's censorship board.

Shortly after finishing the film, however, Turk opted to don hijab. The reaction in Egypt's arts world was electric. "She must have gone crazy," said Yusef Chahine, the director who gave Turk her early break in cinema.

## FOR MANY YOUNG WOMEN, hijab is now about liberation, not confinement.

Turk was unfazed. "I had intended to take this step a long time ago," she declared, "but I never had the guts before." A year later, she announced plans to launch a religious magazine with a noted singer. They called it *Hajj*, after the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. Two years later, she opened Sabaya for fashionable hijabis. A sign in neon lights outside called it a place of "veiled beauty."

Turk remained a fashion plate, devising ways to dramatically drape her curves in stunning colors—and replicate them for other women. In many pictures, she looked even more exotic than she did before hijab. The wares in her store reflected her style.

"There's a tendency among people who don't know Islam to think of the veil as a sign of conservatism, ignorance, or backwardness," Nagwa Abbas, the store manager, told me over lattes at Sabaya's café. "It's just identification. Underneath, we wear what everyone else wears. We're all for women having every opportunity. Our aspirations don't change just because our clothing is different."

For many young women, hijab is now about liberation, not confinement. It's about new possibilities, not the past. It provides a kind of social armor that enables Muslim women to chart their own course, personally or professionally. For Ziada, hijab provides protective cover and legitimacy for campaigns she considers to be the essence of her faith—human rights and justice.

"Families feel much more comfortable allowing their girls to be active, to get higher education, or jobs, or even to go out alone at night when they are wearing hijab," she

told me. "It's a deal between a Muslim girl and society. I agree that I will wear hijab in order to have more space and freedom in return."

In its many forms, hijab is no longer assumed to signal acquiescence. It has instead become an equalizer. It is an instrument that makes a female untouchable as she makes her own decisions in the macho Arab world. It is

a stamp of authenticity as well as a symbolic demand for change. And it is a weapon to help a woman resist extremism's pull into the past. Militants cannot criticize or target her for being corrupted by West-

ern influence.

"The veil is the mask of Egyptian women in a power struggle against the dictatorship of men," explained Nabil Abdel Fattah, author of *The Politics of Religion* (2003), when I stopped to see him at Cairo's al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies. "The veil gives women more power in a man's world."

And Muslim women are increasingly assuming those powers as basic rights.

Education has been a key to the transformation. A 2008 Gallup poll not only found that literacy is the rule rather than the exception among Muslim women, but that they are a growing proportion of university students even in countries with strong religious sentiment. In Iran, 52 percent of women told Gallup they had at least some postsecondary education, while in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon about one-third did. Surprisingly, Gallup also reported that more women had postsecondary educations in Pakistan (13 percent) and Morocco (eight percent) than in Brazil (four percent).

"Now, it's hardly something worth noting that in Egypt, universities are filled with women, in some cases more than men, and they are excelling," one highly educated Egyptian woman told the Gallup researchers. "The valedictorians of Cairo's elite medical school are famously known to almost always be female."

Attitudes about female education have shifted markedly across the Muslim world, according to a 2009 Pew Global Attitudes survey, apart from obvious exceptions such as Afghanistan. In Egypt, 71 percent

of those surveyed said it is as important to educate girls as it is boys (and to educate both sexes equally). In Lebanon, 96 percent agreed. One result of this broad change in attitudes is that young women entering universities across the Islamic world are no longer necessarily English-speakers or the children of Westernized families. Young women in their pastel hijabs are highly visible on every Egyptian campus, including the prestigious American University of Cairo.

Like many of the pink hijabis, Ziada has little taste for Islamist politics. She rejects the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic movement founded in Egypt in 1928 that now has more than 80 offshoots around the world. She considers the group hypocritical for promising to improve life for all Egyptians while also issuing a draft manifesto that said women and Christians should not be allowed to seek the presidency.

“So the only person who can run is a Muslim man,” she told me angrily. “What the hell is this? They talk about democracy all the time, but look at the party’s own structure. They don’t have elections for leaders. There are no women, except in a women-only branch. And when people make petitions to challenge them on something, they don’t get answers.

“You know, ordinary people are not stupid,” she said. “We discovered that they’re working for their own goals, not our interests. They don’t understand the duality of young people who want to be faithful to their religion *and* live a modern life.”

Last year, Ziada started organizing workshops for young Egyptians to encourage civil disobedience rather than confrontation. “Debate, don’t hate,” the promotion poster advised. Working with a Muslim civil society group, she coached activists from other Arab countries on moving from online activism to on-the-street action. Among the trainees were two Tunisian bloggers who, only months later, played critical roles in flashing the story of Mohamed Bouazizi’s self-immolation in Tunisia across the Internet and beginning the Arab Spring.

“You can see,” she told me in a phone call later, with great excitement, “it’s paying off!” Ziada continued her campaign at Liberation Square earlier this year. After protesters set up a permanent camp there, she walked

around the vast plaza distributing copies of *The Montgomery Story*.

“It was a good time,” she told me, “to remind people of the techniques—and to remind them that there were people who did it before us, and we can do it too.”

In every country, the message of the Arab street movements has been the same. “We want democracy. We want freedom,” said a Libyan protester shortly after the uprising began against Moammar Qaddafi. “I want to go on the street feeling like nobody is looking after me, not looking over my shoulder.”

But in Arab countries where rebellion has succeeded in ousting leaders (or will), painful makeovers still lie ahead. None will get through the change quickly. Most will stumble over daunting political and economic challenges. Some may fail. All will grapple to find the right blend of freedom and faith. Globalization—or the traumatic transition to it—may also intensify personal affiliations with faith, and backward-looking groups may profit from the change. Yet the uprisings are among the many signals that the Islamic world is no longer an exception to history’s forces. A new generation is taking the helm. And the vast majority of Muslims are not attracted to the three major models that until recently defined political Islam’s spectrum: Al Qaeda’s purist Salafism, Iran’s Shiite theocracy, and Saudi Arabia’s rigid Wahhabism. All three have a singular vision. All three have no room for anything else.

The new movements are about pluralism and tolerance. The alternatives they create over time—perhaps a great deal of time—may not be liberal in the Western mode. Alcohol and pornography, for example, are not on the list of freedoms endorsed even by liberal Muslims (though hypocrisy is hardly unknown). But most of those who swept away the old order do want to end political monopolies and open up space—to play whatever music they want as well as to have a genuine choice of political parties.

“I’m worried about our future. There are not enough signs that tell you liberalism will be achieved or freedom is guaranteed,” Ziada said shortly after she returned from a “protect the revolution” rally at Liberation Square six weeks after Mubarak’s ouster.

“But I’m not afraid. I know now that I have power,” she told me. “And I know what to do with it.” ■

# Writing the New Rules of the Game

*In Egypt, the next important battles over the political future will be waged with law books and computer keyboards.*

BY DONALD L. HOROWITZ

THE FLEDGLING DEMOCRACIES IN EGYPT AND Tunisia that emerged from the Arab Spring face extraordinary challenges in the months and years ahead. In democratizing countries, the institutions you start out with and the process you use to reform them can take on inordinate importance. The electoral system, the method of revising the constitution, and the sequencing of the reform agenda all affect which forces will be advantaged and which disadvantaged, and whether the outcome is likely to be democratic or not.

The prospects are much brighter in Tunisia, where the transitional regime has been consulting widely with the country's contending political groups as it charts a way forward. Egypt, the largest Arab country and traditionally the center of the Arab world, is the cause of far more anxiety. The Egyptian military has been calling the shots since jubilant crowds cheered President Hosni Mubarak's departure in Tahrir ("Liberation") Square in February, and it is off to an inauspicious start. It has made important decisions without consulting with parties and people from the full political spectrum, scheduling legislative elections for September, with presidential elections to follow in November.

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The short timetable, protested by the liberal-democratic forces that helped bring down the Mubarak dictatorship, virtually ensures that the well-organized Muslim Brotherhood and some reconstituted version of the old regime's National Democratic Party will win a large share of the 508 seats in the all-important lower house of parliament, the People's Assembly. The more democratically oriented parties are probably too young and poorly organized to compete strongly. (In Tunisia, their counterparts won a significant delay in the electoral timetable.) To make matters worse, the New Wafd Party, a rare survivor of the Mubarak years and one of the strongest organizations in the center, announced in June that it was forming a coalition with the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party.

Yet the strength of political parties and the timing of elections are not the only important factors that will influence the fate of Egyptian democracy. That is why the smaller parties are furiously contesting the rules that will govern how the elections are structured. The elections are crucial because the new parliament will select a 100-member committee to draft the constitution. Here, in crafting the rules of the game, is where the die will largely be cast for the future of Egyptian politics. Choose one electoral system, and the small and poorly organized democratic parties will likely be doomed to insignificance. Choose another, and they will have a fighting chance.

Many countries have written new constitutions in the past several decades, and the political scientists who study and often help draft them have learned a great deal about how different choices can shape the politics of new democracies. In those experiences, there are important lessons about what to look (and hope) for as Egypt crafts its fundamental institutions.

At this writing, Egypt's interim military government seems poised to announce that the September parliamentary elections will be governed by a modified version of the country's existing electoral law. This is bad news. The law provides for a common variation on the first-past-the-post system familiar to American voters: In the Egyptian system, candidates from various parties compete in each district, and if no candidate wins a majority, a runoff is held between the top vote-getters.

In many cases, that kind of system is a boon to democracy, since it often forces candidates to reach across group and party lines to build a majority. But the Egyptian story is different. The two largest parties may well be the least inclined of the serious contenders to secular, liberal democracy, and they face a fragmented liberal-democratic opposition. The bigger parties would likely be able to win a large number of seats without reaching out to liberal voters. The result of 50-percent-plus-one elections is that the larger parties get a seat bonus. In each contest, those in the minority—whether it is a minority of 100 voters or a near majority of 50 percent minus one—are effectively denied representation. If the bigger parties win runoff elections again and again, they could receive, say, 70 percent of the seats while receiving only 55 percent of the votes.

There is, however, a bit of good news in the modified electoral rules: Thanks to one of the military government's alterations, some of the seats in parliament will be filled

through what is called a list system of proportional representation. There are many possible variations in the design of such a system, but essentially each party puts up a list of candidates, with its most preferred at the top. Voters cast a ballot for one party list, and that fraction of the list is elected that corresponds to the fraction of votes the list received.

Ordinarily, proportional representation has a centrifugal effect, because it allows many parties, some of them extreme, to win a few seats and enter the legislature. Israel, with its fragmented party system and a contingent of extremists in the Knesset, is the classic example of the pitfalls of such a system. In Egypt, however, the small parties are concentrated in the liberal, secular center. This kind of system (or at least



**A grim electoral past: Egyptian authorities whisked away ballot boxes after the polls closed last year.**

most versions of it) would help them in two ways: It would allow them to win a level of representation they could not achieve in individual, majority-runoff constituencies, and it would confine the Muslim Brotherhood and remnants of the old regime to a share of seats proportional to the fraction of votes they win, denying them a seat bonus.

A key question is how many of the People's Assembly's seats will be filled through proportional voting. One-third is the proportion currently being proposed, but the parties of the democratic center are protesting loudly. They have been demanding that the entire legislature be elected in this

fashion. If that were to occur, and if competing lists were to run for seats in provincial-level districts, as the military has proposed, rather than the smaller districts of the past, small parties would benefit. As a rule, the more members a district can elect, the more proportional the outcome. Perhaps 10 to 20 members may be elected in some of Egypt's larger provinces.

Another feature of proportional systems is the threshold of exclusion: Each party is required to win a certain percentage of the national vote before it is awarded any seats. It would obviously help the smaller parties if Egypt's threshold were set at a low level, perhaps even one percent.

Of course, the smaller parties could help themselves a great deal by amalgamating and urging their followers to vote for a new consolidated democratic party. The problem is not merely that these parties have been slow to get organized. Several of them are led by men who would like to run for president. These parties are reluctant to merge because it might prevent them from nominating their favored presidential candidates.

A list system of proportional representation with a low threshold could, however, carry some risk for the liberal-democratic parties. It could encourage splits among them—and among Islamists, too. In the worst-case scenario, Egypt could be left with a parliament so fragmented that both forming governments and governing would be very difficult for any party. In other words, even the best system one could design would still be full of risks for democrats and for Egypt.

**O**ne final lesson that has emerged from the experience of constitution makers around the world, however, is that design is not everything. How a constitution is written can sometimes matter almost as much as what it contains.

Consider the success of Indonesia. In 1998, when it emerged from decades of authoritarian rule under Suharto, it had important similarities to contemporary Egypt. Its political elites did not know or necessarily trust one another. There were significant divisions among secularists, observant Muslims, and Islamists. The country was home to a Christian minority equal to roughly 10 percent of the population, as Egypt is today, with its Copts. And the old regime's political party still enjoyed popular support.

Indonesia's new democratically elected parliament took

the task of constitution writing upon itself, involving all of the country's major groups in the process: militantly secular nationalists and non-Muslim minorities, secularists with some ties to observant Muslims, explicitly Muslim parties, and avowed Islamists. Over the course of several years, they thrashed out a new constitution through endless back and forth, with hardly a vote taken. Since the revised constitution was put into effect, Indonesia has held two successful national elections, including one in which an incumbent president was defeated and peacefully handed over power to her successor. Indonesians tell pollsters they are quite satisfied with their democracy even as they object to corruption and other flaws.

The Indonesians had a unique incentive to reach a consensus. The old constitution could only be amended by a two-thirds vote, and the party most wedded to it held enough seats to veto changes. So the other parties were forced to talk and bargain. Yet there is also a lesson here for Egypt. If a majority on the committee selected to draft the constitution believe they can ride roughshod over other members, the resulting sense of exclusion will bode ill for acceptance of new institutions.

The lessons from Indonesia and other emerging democracies are clear. The greater the number of individuals and groups involved in drafting a constitution, the higher the resulting level of democracy, the greater the constitutional constraints on government, and perhaps the greater the durability of the resulting constitution. Both the constitution and the everyday politics that come in its wake are improved by the long simmering of a new fundamental law.

In Egypt, some political activists now argue that the new constitution should be completed before legislative elections are held. But a strong case can be made for not rushing this process, particularly as the military has already, by decree, abrogated some of the more authoritarian features of the Mubarak-era constitution. No matter what kind of system the Egyptians design, it will probably work better if the constitution-drafting process is used to create understandings among secular liberals, Islamists, former supporters of the old regime, the Christian minority, and other groups about their intentions, their fears, and their aspirations.

To accomplish this large objective, it is important to get the technical aspects of elections and the constitutional process right. These seemingly small details are likely, in the end, to have a large formative influence—one that may well determine whether a democratic Egypt emerges. ■

# IN ESSENCE

REVIEWS OF ARTICLES FROM PERIODICALS AND SPECIALIZED JOURNALS HERE AND ABROAD

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## FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

### If North Korea Falls

**THE SOURCE:** “The Long Goodbye: The Future North Korea” by Robert D. Kaplan and Abraham M. Denmark, in *World Affairs*, May–June 2011.

OVER THE LAST 50 YEARS, Northeast Asia has been transformed from a remote backwater devastated by war into the crossroads of the 21st century, economically, politically, and militarily. One vestige of the old days remains: North Korea. Impoverished and isolated, it is nevertheless the keystone on which the fragile architecture of the region’s power relations rests. A North Korean collapse—a possibility but not a certainty—could drag China, South Korea, Japan, and possibly the United States into conflict. Robert D. Kaplan and Abraham M. Denmark, both fellows at the Center for a New American Security, warn that these powers are not prepared for the challenge.

It’s a fool’s errand to predict whether or when the regime of

Kim Jong Il or his son will fall apart. The country faces severe challenges at the same time that North Koreans have gained more access to the wider world. Mobile phones have become popular, Korean-language broadcasts of Voice of America and Radio Free Asia are available 24/7, and there is a black market in pornography and South Korean soap opera DVDs. Yet despite increased media availability, many people are so poor that some are said to be surviving on little more than grass. But the regime has withstood decades of extreme poverty. Could the Arab Spring affect North Korea? “It would be more likely . . . to spread to the next galaxy,” says one unnamed expert.

More than one crumbling country has been saved from chaos by its military, as Romania was after the collapse of communism in 1989. North Korea’s army might not be up to the job. It is organized around regional commands. Civil war could

erupt if they weren’t united under an international occupying force. And if the military fractured, “who would control nuclear facilities, biological weapons sites, missile production facilities, dual-use chemical production sites, chemical storage facilities, and weapons research centers?” Kaplan and Denmark ask.

If the regime did fall apart, the population of 22 million would become the responsibility of the international community—in practical terms South Korea, the United States, and China. It’s not clear their three armies could work together. South Korea officially seeks reunification but China benefits from division, preferring a buffer between it and democratic South Korea. Beijing might oppose reunification even after a collapse. Above all, it fears instability, which could send millions of North Korean refugees streaming into Manchuria. South Korea has its own worries about refugees.

Given all these conflicting interests in the region, one thing is clear, the authors write: If North Korea ruptures, “someone is going to lose.” The three powers plus Japan and Russia should be talking now about

what they would do in the event of a collapse that's well within the realm of possibility. Alas, say the authors, there's no sign they're doing that.

## FOREIGN POLICY &amp; DEFENSE

## Latin America Rising

**THE SOURCE:** "The Post-American Hemisphere" by Russell Crandall, in *Foreign Affairs*, May–June 2011.

WHY HAS THERE NEVER BEEN A military coup in Washington?

Because there's no U.S. embassy there.

So goes an old Latin American joke. But according to Russell Crandall, a professor of international politics at Davidson College, it's a joke whose time has passed. U.S. influence in Latin America has been ebbing for the last decade, as Washington's attention has turned toward the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and

homegrown powers such as Brazil, Colombia, and Chile have become ascendant.

Latin America is flourishing. In recent years it has enjoyed unprecedented economic, political, and diplomatic success. Brazil stands out, with an economy that grew 7.5 percent last year, but the average for the region was an impressive 5.6 percent. More than 40 million Latin Americans escaped poverty between 2002 and 2008. Free elections and active civil societies are the new normal, and "armed revolution is now dead in the region that was once its cradle." The recent global economic calamities were not enough to knock Latin America off its promising trajectory. Even most leftist governments, disposed to "fiscal profligacy," reacted with prudent, market-friendly policies.

But present successes could breed fresh challenges, Crandall warns. New alliances and enmities may emerge that could threaten the balance of power.

Brazil is now the leader of the

region, as demonstrated by its key role in creating the Union of South American Nations in 2008. But Colombian, Mexican, and Peruvian officials complain privately about Brazil's "arrogant" diplomacy. One official said, "The new imperialists have arrived, and they speak Portuguese."

Without the United States aggressively policing them, the region's authoritarians—Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, Cuba's Fidel and Raul Castro, and Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega—have sought to play a larger role in regional affairs. But they have been "the biggest losers" in Latin America's realignment, Crandall says. "Nothing hurts [them] more than when other Latin American governments, especially leftist democratic ones, opt for and succeed with capitalist, democratic, or U.S.-friendly policies."

The United States, long used to being Latin America's "master," must adapt to the new realities. So far, Crandall thinks President

## EXCERPT

## The Accidental Revolutionaries

*Like it or not, the United States is a revolutionary power. Whether our government is trying to overthrow foreign dictators is almost irrelevant; American society is the most revolutionary force on the planet. The Internet is more subversive than the CIA in its prime. The dynamism of American society is constantly creating new businesses, new technologies, new ideas, and new social models. These*

*innovations travel, and they make trouble when they do. Saudi conservatives know that whatever geopolitical arrangements the Saudi princes make with the American government, the American people are busily undermining the core principles of Saudi society. It's not just our NGOs educating Saudi women and civil society activists; it's not just the impact of American college life on the rising generation of the Saudi elite. We change the world even when we aren't thinking anything about global revolution—when Hollywood and rap musicians are just trying to make a buck, they are stoking the fires of change around the world.*

—WALTER RUSSELL MEAD, professor of foreign affairs at Bard College, on his blog, *Via Meadia* (June 12, 2011)

Barack Obama is on the right track. His administration's emphasis on mutual respect and equal partnerships has pulled the rug out from under the anti-American authoritarians. A strategy of "patience and understated leadership" will allow the United States to quietly pursue its interests and will enable regional powers to cooperate without the appearance of subservience.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

## How Stuxnet Changed the World

**THE SOURCE:** "Rise of a Cybered Westphalian Age" by Chris C. Demchak and Peter Dombrowski, in *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Spring 2011.

IF THE INTERNET EVER TRULY existed as a free and open global commons, that era vanished forever last year with the launching of the Stuxnet worm. Infected thumb drives and printer spooler software were used to bypass Iranian computer security measures, allowing Stuxnet to reach its target: the centrifuges at the heart of Iran's nuclear program. The crippling attack, whose source remains unknown, reportedly set the Iranians back by months, if not years. Other

nations took note.

Once a virtually borderless world, the Internet is being fenced in. Chris C. Demchak and Peter Dombrowski, both professors at the Naval War College, compare the process to the epoch-making Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which not only ended the Thirty Years' War but also established the nation-state, with clearly demarcated territories under its control, as the dominant institution, along with a new system of interstate relations.

Stuxnet was only the most dramatic of a series of developments that are leading to a new Westphalian cybersystem. Mysterious hackers briefly shut down Estonia's government and banking sites in 2007. Daily attacks on U.S. ".gov" and ".mil" sites "numbered in the millions" by 2008.

Policing the Internet is no longer a matter of punishing individual hackers and other domestic miscreants. Now governments are fighting organized crime and protecting against state-spon-

sored cyberattacks. In 2008, Sweden passed a controversial law allowing police to monitor all Internet traffic in and out of the country. Britain's new Conservative government has "declared cyberthreats to be a top-tier national security issue." And the United States recently established a new Cyber Command that, significantly, is under military rather than civilian control.

Of course, some countries have other motives for restricting the Internet. In China, the government has channeled all Web traffic in and out of the country to three gateways and is developing a new version of the Internet that will label every Chinese computer with its own unique Web address. That will make it much easier for Beijing to control debate and dissent within China.

Not long ago, the authors say, there was much optimistic talk of governing the Internet through some new kind of international arrangement. No longer. The Internet will recapitulate the world of nation-states.

Even nations that do not choose to erect cyberborders will be forced to do so. "Attacks across borders will become state responsibilities, whether or not the state approves or guides the attacks," the authors write. The Internet will soon have a new world order.



Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was not in a dancing mood after the Stuxnet attack.

## FOREIGN POLICY &amp; DEFENSE

## Say Yes to Nukes

**THE SOURCE:** "Thinking About the Unthinkable, Again" by Mark Helprin, in *Claremont Review of Books*, Winter 2010–Spring 2011.

FOR DECADES, THE WORLD HAS lived with the threat of nuclear war, but the dreaded mushroom clouds haven't appeared. Now the Obama administration is seeking to dispel the threat completely, by reducing and perhaps eventually abolishing altogether America's nuclear arsenal.

This is exactly the wrong thing to do, argues Mark Helprin, a senior fellow at the Claremont Institute. Getting rid of all of America's nuclear weapons will *increase* the likelihood of a catastrophic nuclear, biological, or chemical attack—and of conventional wars, too, he says. That's because deterrence—the threat of retaliation that has maintained international equilibrium since the end of World War II—will disappear. In a nuke-free world, the threshold of conflict between major powers would be "vastly lowered."

Furthermore, abolition can't work unless all parties know definitively that it is universal. That's impossible. Even today, no one has a complete inventory of the world's nuclear weapons. And disarmed nations will always have the knowledge to secretly rebuild their nuclear arsenals.

Well, then, the conventional wisdom goes, if abolition isn't immediately practical, let's diminish the threat of nuclear war by severely reducing the number of warheads in our arsenal. Wrong again, says

Helprin. Under the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (NSTART), which came into force this year, countries including the United States, Russia, and China will shrink their arsenals to achieve an agreed-upon parity. But parity is a pipe dream, Helprin says. The strategic balance constantly shifts as new alliances are formed and countries that once were unarmed join the game. Stability isn't attainable.

In the past, the superpowers possessed such a vast advantage that it made no sense for other countries to compete. At most, they might build a nuclear weapons arsenal sufficient to deter opponents. Today, with the number of warheads dwindling and technological advances deliberately frozen, "anyone, no matter how small,

Is it a mistake to reduce—even eventually abolish—America's nuclear arsenal?

can get in the game, and will." And that, Helprin points out, is proliferation—the opposite of what treaties such as NSTART are seeking to achieve.

Reducing the number of warheads also puts small and rogue states on more equal footing with great nuclear powers, Helprin points out. This invites "lesser state adventurism," as would-be aggressors (for example, Iran) are tempted to start regional wars and use a nuclear threat to prevent outside intervention.

Helprin characterizes the idea that fewer nukes means a safer world as a "careless orthodoxy." Diminished

nuclear stockpiles could actually invite trigger-happy nations to launch a first strike, he says. That's because they would have a better chance of taking out enough of an opponent's arsenal to preclude retaliation. At the Cold War's end, Helprin writes, an enemy would have had to factor in more than a thousand U.S. land-based missile targets and 17 nuclear-armed submarines. In the near future, an aggressor will need to take out only 89 fixed land targets and six submarine targets.

To make matters worse, the United States is weakening its conventional forces, Helprin says, increasing the likelihood that it might have to resort to nuclear weapons in a crisis. And the Obama administration is seeking to blunt U.S. ballistic missile defenses. Such a system can't be completely effective, but it *can* preserve the country's capacity to retaliate, and thus provides significant deterrence.

What should the United States do instead? Helprin recommends that it (1) continue to develop safety measures such as open-ocean targeting systems designed to guide launched missiles into water rather than onto inhabited land, (2) maintain missile shields, and (3) focus on keeping weapons out of the hands of "dictatorships, crazy states, lunatics, and medieval theocracies," using force if necessary.

American officials, Helprin concludes, need to carefully consider the complex doctrines and practices that have prevented "even a single detonation either in anger or by accident" in more than 60 years before casting them aside.

## POLITICS &amp; GOVERNMENT

# No Thanks, Mr. Kant

**THE SOURCE:** “In Defense of Politics” by Steven B. Smith, in *National Affairs*, Spring 2011.

THE DREAM OF A WORLD WITHOUT politics lives on. It would be a world without national governments, ruled by international law. German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), who did much to shape this ideal, believed that the application of universal moral law would create a world in which “our moral duties and obligations respect no national boundaries or other parochial attachments such as race, class, or ethnicity,” writes Yale political scientist Steven B. Smith.

Leaving aside the fact that our limited experience with international organizations does not invite confidence, Smith contends that the quest for a depoliticized world is a dangerous delusion. Such a quest would seek to strip the world and its people of the particular—local traditions, habits, and proclivities—in the name of an abstract cosmopolitan ideal.

Smith allows that all these things—which are what make humans political beings—do have a dark side. But the cost of Kant’s world without politics would be too high. It would be as if everyone were asked to give up their native tongues and speak only Esperanto. The gain in increased communication would be outweighed by the losses. Who,

Smith asks, “is the Shakespeare of Esperanto?”

A world without local culture and traditions “can lead only to moral decay, an inability or unwillingness to dedicate one’s life to ideals, to the relatively few things that matter and that give life wholeness and meaning,” Smith writes. “The cosmopolitan state would be a world where nothing really matters, where there is nothing left worth fighting for—a world of entertainments, of fun, of shopping, a world void of moral seriousness.” Even Kant said such a world state would be a “soulless despotism,” but it would be at peace.

Smith blames political thinkers, especially political scientists, for the prevalence of the cosmopolitan ideal. Instead of teaching and studying the all-important quality of political judgment, they have applied empirical scrutiny to every aspect of political life, squeezing all the soul out of it. The discipline is in thrall to “‘game theory,’ which regards politics merely as a marketplace in which individual preferences are formed and utilities maximized.”

Smith thinks this is a terrible mistake. “The purpose of political science is not to stand above or outside the political community as an entomologist observing ant behavior, but to serve as a civic-minded guardian of disputes in

order to restore peace and stability to conflict-ridden situations.”

In the absence of a political education in the classroom, Smith recommends picking up some old books, from Aristotle’s *Politics* and *The Federalist* to the works of fine psychological novelists such as Jane Austen, Henry James, and Leo Tolstoy. They will do a politically minded person far more good than any of the mathematical peregrinations of today’s political scientists, he says.

## POLITICS &amp; GOVERNMENT

## Merit Pay for Congress?

**THE SOURCE:** “Fixing Congress” by Jim Cooper, in *Boston Review*, May–June 2011.

CONGRESS IS BROKEN. THIS little piece of political analysis is a favorite of the chattering class. But do things look so bad to someone on the inside? At least to Representative Jim Cooper (D-Tenn.), they do.

Cooper first won election to the House of Representatives in 1982. Congress was very different then, he remembers, “imperfect but functional.” Speaker of the House Tip O’Neill (D-Mass.) saw himself as leader of the entire House, not just the Democratic caucus. “O’Neill’s was a House intent on making policy, not partisan mischief,” Cooper recalls. He left the wrangling over vote tallies to the majority and minority leaders and, in the end, members were “expected to vote their conscience and their district.” Representatives were thought of as

party loyalists if they voted their party's line 70 or 80 percent of the time.

In those good old days, a group of elite staffers known as the Democratic Study Group provided authoritative memos before each important vote listing the pros and cons of the bill. The quality of these reports was so high that even some Republicans subscribed.

Members from both sides of the aisle would often interact socially outside work. They brought their families to live with them in Washington, D.C. Few representatives were members of what O'Neill called the "Tuesday-Thursday Club"—those who went to their districts over the weekend to see their families and constituents.

All this changed in the 1990s under the leadership of Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), Cooper says. Gingrich centralized power in the office of the Speaker and politicized the position. Committee chairs, powerful under O'Neill, were "emasculated, their authority redirected to the Speaker." Gingrich told incoming Republican members not to move their families to town; he wanted everyone home campaigning on weekends. "Soon everyone belonged to the Tuesday-Thursday Club. Members became strangers, the easier for them to fight." The Democratic Study Group ceased to exist.

When Democrats recaptured the House in 2006, they "quietly adopted" the changes. Freshman Democrats knew no other way. "The truth is that the [Gingrich] model works . . . if you are only interested in partisan control of Congress."

Cooper agrees that two pet causes of reformers—limiting gerrymandering and restricting corporate political spending—would help, but deeper reform is needed. He calls for changing how members of Congress are paid—tying their compensation to performance. He recommends paying members a commission for cutting spending or repealing obsolete laws. The details of such a proposal would be contentious, but "surely there's a way to measure and reward high-quality legislative work."

Congress has gone through other periods of decline and has always bounced back. But this time is different because, as the world's only superpower, the United States has less room for error, Cooper says.

#### POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

## No Small Wonder

**THE SOURCE:** "Making Our Democracy Work: The Yale Lectures" by Stephen Breyer, in *The Yale Law Journal*, June 2011.

JUDICIAL REVIEW—THE DOCTRINE that gives the Supreme Court the power to invalidate unconstitutional laws and actions—may seem like a natural, common feature of a system of divided government. It's anything but, writes Justice Stephen Breyer. Despite widespread distrust of government, Americans accept and respect the dicta of the Supreme Court. Breyer calls this attitude "a treasure."

Perhaps the most remarkable example of the Court's standing is Americans' reaction to the 2000 decision in *Bush v. Gore*, which stopped a recount of votes that had been ordered in Florida by the state's su-

preme court. That decision in effect gave George W. Bush the presidency. Breyer writes, "Despite the strong opposition to the decision, and despite the fact that it might well have been wrong, Americans did not riot in the streets, they did not resort to violence, they reacted peacefully and then followed the Court." Breyer acknowledges that many may wish that people had protested more, perhaps even violently. To them he responds, "I would ask you to turn on the television and look at what happens in countries that solve their problems through violence. Three hundred million Americans have decided to resolve their differences under law instead—even though courts can decide in ways that are unpopular and even though courts may be wrong when they do so."

Breyer says that judges from around the world ask him, "What is the secret?" Unfortunately, there isn't one. What lie behind the authority of the Supreme Court are 200 years of battles over race, slavery, Native Americans, taxation, and other issues. Judicial review was not finally solidified in America through flawless legal reasoning or eloquent judicial opinions, but because in the middle of the 20th century, President Dwight D. Eisenhower was willing to send troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, to enforce the Court's 1955 order to desegregate the schools, knowing that if he didn't, "rule of law itself was at stake."

Just because judicial review today seems enduring, judges should not take it for granted, Breyer warns. In order to preserve this power, judges should follow a judicial philosophy that will "build confidence in the

courts” by “bring[ing] about decisions that work better for Americans.” He recommends judicial prag-

matism, which is premised on a notion of common values and seeks to make legal interpretations that are

purpose based, taking into account how government actually works, not just the words that are on the books.

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

# Comparing the Tippy Tops

**THE SOURCE:** “Top Incomes in the Long Run of History” by Anthony B. Atkinson, Thomas Piketty, and Emmanuel Saez, in *Journal of Economic Literature*, March 2011.

THE EBB AND FLOW OF INCOME inequality over the last century is a well-examined feature of the U.S. economy. How the American experience fits in with the global picture is another matter. New research by economists Anthony B. Atkinson of Oxford University, Thomas Piketty of the Paris School of Economics, and Emmanuel Saez of the University of California, Berkeley, pulls together data on income inequality in more than 20 countries, in some cases as far back as World War I. The authors find that for the first half of the 20th century, countries generally followed similar paths, but in more recent years their trajectories have diverged.

Before mid-century, most countries experienced a general

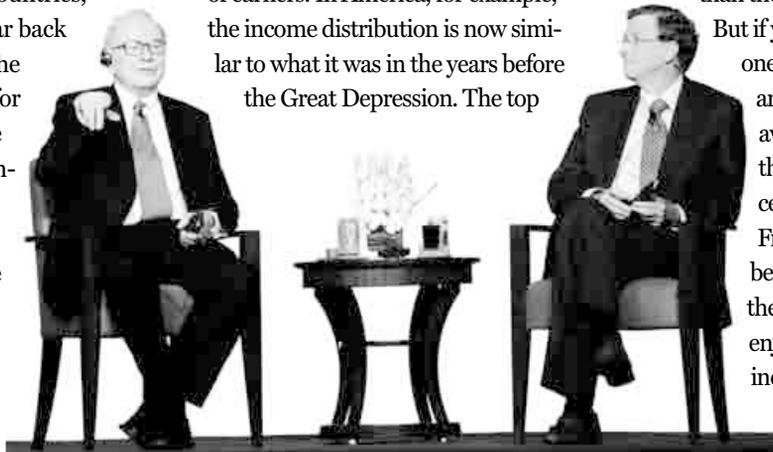
reduction in income disparities, with the super-rich claiming a shrinking percentage of total income. The cause? The two world wars and the Great Depression. Wars in particular are powerful levelers, as capital—both physical and financial—is destroyed, wages and employment drop, and some countries lose territory. But even countries that did not fight in the wars experienced a decline in the concentration of income.

In recent decades, however, the English-speaking world has seen a dramatic increase in the share of income going to the top one percent of earners. In America, for example, the income distribution is now similar to what it was in the years before the Great Depression. The top

one percent of earners more than doubled their share of income between 1976 and 2007, from nine to 24 percent. (To be in the top one percent in 2007, a family had to bring in more than \$398,900.) For the top 0.1 percent of earners, the concentration was even more extreme: They quadrupled their share, from three to 12 percent. Southern European and Nordic countries have seen a small uptick in the share of income going to the top earners, but nothing like what has occurred in English-speaking countries. France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Japan have seen very little, if any, increase in top income shares.

Atkinson and his coauthors say that examining income distribution across countries can change our picture of which countries are prospering most. For example, between 1975 and 2006, average incomes grew markedly faster in the United States than they did in France.

But if you exclude the top one percent of earners and calculate the average using “only” the bottom 99 percent in each country, France has a much better record. There, the non-super-rich enjoyed a 26 percent increase in income, while in the United States they gained only 18 percent.



Warren Buffett and Bill Gates are two well-loved members of the burgeoning billionaire class. Much of America’s economic growth since World War II has been concentrated among the very rich.

ECONOMICS, LABOR &amp; BUSINESS

## What Economists Can Learn from History

**THE SOURCE:** "Economics, History, and Causation" by Randall Morck and Bernard Yeung, in *Business History Review*, Spring 2011.

CONTEMPORARY ECONOMICS IS totally in the thrall of advanced mathematical techniques. Economists should break the spell, argue Randall Morck, a professor of finance at the University of Alberta School of Business, and Bernard Yeung, a professor of economics and management at the National University of Singapore Business School. In particular, economists should mine the field of history, both for the information it can provide and for the methods its practitioners employ, Morck and Yeung say.

Economists, the authors com-

plain, are overly focused on making each individual paper internally consistent and not enough on fitting their ideas within the broader context of their field. Even papers in the same issue of a given journal can be premised on conflicting assumptions. Historians, in contrast, are interested in developing "external consistency." To establish its validity, "a good historical narrative must connect the 'dots' of all relevant historical events with causal links."

An example of the sort of historically rooted economic analysis Morck and Yeung want to see more of is Charles Kindleberger's 1978 book *Manias, Panics, and Crashes*. In the decades since its publication, purely data-driven theories on the nature of booms and busts have been shown to be weak, and Kindleberger's historically rooted research remains the "narrative to beat." The field of development economics in

particular would benefit from studying the histories of poor countries, as researchers will need to understand colonialism in order to understand the persistent poverty in such places.

One of the most significant strengths of historical analysis is that it takes into account the characteristics of individuals, such as leadership, psychology, emotions, personal ties, compulsions, and ambition—factors that economics cannot capture.

Economists may not welcome Morck and Yeung's recommendation, convinced as they are of data's superiority to historical vagaries. Many may argue that historians are inclined to see the world in ways that agree with their "favored narratives." But the authors aren't so concerned: Data may seem neutral, but economists are "hardly immune" to their own methodological biases and ideological callings.

### EXCERPT

## Monopolies, Our Secret Love

*Once upon a time, some thought it obvious that competition was a bad thing, particularly in communications. As Theodore Vail, the president of AT&T, put it in 1913, "The public as a whole has never benefited" from competition. Monopoly, he said, was the better choice. The reason, he argued, is that "all costs of aggressive, uncontrolled competition are eventually borne, directly or indirectly, by the public."*

*Nowadays corporate executives carefully avoid expressing such sentiments. Instead, firms such as*

*AT&T speak of the importance of "vigorous competition" even when it is being eliminated. Anything that might sound like the advocacy of monopoly has fallen into the same category as the advocacy of eugenics. But take a look around. What do you actually see, in so many important markets? The answer, quite obviously, is rule by either a single dominant firm or a small group. This is particularly true in the information and communications industries. Search engines? Google. Social networking? Facebook. Operating systems? Microsoft (mostly). Cell phones? Verizon, AT&T, and Sprint. . . . Could it be that Americans actually like communications monopolists? Do we want dominant firms to run our world?*

—TIM WU, author of *The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires* (2010), in *The New Republic* (June 9, 2011)

## ECONOMICS, LABOR &amp; BUSINESS

## Good Fences Make Good Farms

**THE SOURCE:** “Barbed Wire: Property Rights and Agricultural Development” by Richard Hornbeck, in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, May 2010.

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 19TH century, farmers on the American plains had a problem: If cows and other livestock from neighboring properties trampled their crops, it was the farmers themselves, not the owners of the roaming animals, who were responsible for the damage. The solution was fences, and farmers who lived near woodlands that could supply cheap timber built lots of them. In 1872, the value of America’s fencing stock was roughly equal to the value of all livestock in America, the national debt, or the railroads. Annual fencing repair costs were greater than the total tax revenue of all levels of government.

Out on the plains, where timber

On the American plains, barbed wire kept live-stock from roaming, was cheap to produce, and was easy to put up and maintain.

was scarce, wooden fences were prohibitively expensive. The few farmers who eked out a living there did so by planting mostly hay, which could withstand a bit of trampling. Then, in 1874, Joseph Glidden, a farmer in DeKalb, Illinois, came up with an idea that gave rise to America’s breadbasket: barbed wire.

Barbed wire solved the farmers’ problem: It kept out roaming livestock, was cheap to produce and easy to put up, and required little maintenance. In 1876, writes Harvard economist Richard Hornbeck, large-scale production of barbed wire began, and it was a nearly immediate hit, going from just 1,500 tons produced in 1876 to

around 200,000 tons in 1900. During the intervening two decades, regions of the country with the least woodland saw the greatest increases in settlements, land improvements, land values, productivity, and crops such as corn, wheat, and oats. Hornbeck estimates that the increase in land values due to the availability of barbed wire was equal to nearly one percent of gross domestic product. By 1910, fencing stock on the prairie had increased more than 10-fold and wooden fences had all but disappeared.

Economists have long believed that reliable property rights are an essential ingredient of economic growth. In places where property rights are shaky, people hold back on investing in the productivity of their land and other assets, knowing they may not be able to reap the rewards. The story of barbed wire on the American plains shows that technological improvements, not just legal agreements, can help secure property and thus foster investment and prosperity.

## SOCIETY

## Who Wants a Tax Break?

**THE SOURCE:** “Culture, Context, and the Taste for Redistribution” by Erzo F. P. Luttmer and Monica Singhal, in *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, Feb. 2011.

IN THE HYPER-RATIONAL WORLD described by neoclassical economists, individuals prefer tax and redistributive policies that are in concert with

their self-interest. But researchers have long noted variations from country to country in citizens’ feelings about redistribution: Europeans are more likely to believe that poverty is the consequence of bad luck and support more extensive redistribution policies, whereas

Americans tend to point to laziness and are reluctant to support such policies. Is the gap the product of different economic institutions and situations, or is it something economics can’t account for—culture?

Two economists have now come up with a strategy to tease out those differences. Erzo F. P. Luttmer of Dartmouth College and Monica Singhal of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government looked at immigrants’ political beliefs to see whether newcomers respond to the economic incentives of their

adopted homelands or maintain preferences more in line with the culture of their countries of origin. They find that culture plays a significant role. While people are influenced by their income, the effect of the culture of their home country is just as great, persisting even after 20 years in a new land. Additionally, the children of immigrants retain the policy preferences of their parents' home country, but to a lesser extent.

The authors find that in countries with greater cultural diversity, immigrants tend to more strongly maintain the outlook of their home country. In places that are more homogenous, new arrivals must assimilate faster, and immigrants are more strongly shaped by the culture around them.

Even if the newcomers themselves have little impact on policy, that their values are transmitted to their children means there may be longer-term policy implications of large immigrant influxes. But of course, it's not only foreigners who are influenced by culture—everyone is. It's just when looking at immigrant populations that it's possible to see culture's influence clearly.

## SOCIETY

## Parenthood's Second Wind

**THE SOURCE:** "A Global Perspective on Happiness and Fertility" by Rachel Margolis and Mikko Myrskylä, in *Population and Development Review*, March 2011.

MANY PEOPLE THINK OF PARENTHOOD as one of the defining joys of their lives. But lots of studies

show that moms and dads are less happy than childless adults. Rachel Margolis, a PhD candidate in demography and sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, and demographer Mikko Myrskylä of the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Rostock, Germany, scrutinized the self-rated happiness of more than 200,000 people from 86 countries and concluded that the story of parental happiness is far from straightforward.

On the whole, Margolis and Myrskylä found that parenthood does correlate with a lower degree of self-reported happiness. But the subjective well-being of parents changes dramatically with age. Parents aged 15 to 19 were the unhappiest of all the individuals surveyed, not surprisingly, and parents in their twenties didn't fare much better. In fact, young parents' dispiritedness grew with each child they had.

By their thirties, however, parents were about as happy as people without children. In their forties and onward, parents reported greater happiness levels than childless adults, with each additional child enhancing the parents' sense of well-being. (Having four or more children seemed to put a damper on that joy, however, among all age groups.) The authors surmise that as children grow and become more independent, the burdens of parenting lighten and benefits such as companionship and greater financial security become more pronounced, leading to a greater sense of well-being.

Margolis and Myrskylä discov-

New moms and dads who feel overwhelmed by their babies can take comfort in the fact that almost all parents feel happier as they get older.

ered that the welfare regime and economic health of parents' country of residence also played a role in happiness. Young parents were about as happy as their childless counterparts in countries such as France and Germany, where parents receive some subsidies from the state and don't struggle too much to make a living. In southern Europe and former communist countries, however, where wages are low, unemployment high, and child-rearing assistance from the state practically nonexistent, young parents reported being much more down than their childless peers.

Among older moms and dads, however, it was a different story once again. Parents aged 40 and older were markedly happier than childless people in countries in southern Europe and in former communist countries such as Russia and Bulgaria. In continental Europe and Anglophone countries, older parents were only about as content as their childless peers. The authors believe that in poorer countries children often "act as insurance for old age," providing valuable financial and social support when the state offers peanuts at best.

For new parents despairing at the shrieks of their little one, relief

may be found in the news that they probably won't always feel so beleaguered. "Parenthood changes lives in both positive and negative ways, many of them unexpected by the parents themselves," Margolis and Myrskylä write.

## SOCIETY

## Homeownership and Race

**THE SOURCE:** "Race and Home Ownership from the End of the Civil War to the Present" by William J. Collins and Robert A. Margo, in *The American Economic Review*, May 2011.

IT'S UNSURPRISING THAT homeownership rates for blacks and whites have converged since the Civil War. What is surprising is that nearly all of the convergence happened before 1910. The gap has narrowed by only one

percentage point in the past century.

There have been two distinct periods during which African Americans increased their homeownership: the decades after the Civil War (1870–1910), when the rate increased by 16 percentage points, and the decades after the Depression (1940–80), when it shot upward by 37 percentage points. However, note economists William J. Collins of Vanderbilt University and Robert A. Margo of Boston University, during that latter period white homeownership increased by an equal amount, so the two rates did not converge.

The only real convergence occurred between 1870 and 1910. Black homeownership increased as freed slaves and their children bought small farms. At the same

time, white homeownership fell, chiefly because many whites moved from farms to cities, where they were more likely to rent. About two-thirds of the convergence during the period can be explained by the gains of African Americans.

The black homeownership rate stagnated after 1910, partly because of the Great Migration to northern cities, where most blacks became renters. Both races lost ground during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

From 1940 to 1980, new governmental efforts such as the Federal Housing Administration helped boost homeownership. So did postwar prosperity. Whites increasingly owned homes in the suburbs, which often excluded black families; many African American families bought into

## EXCERPT

## On Boredom

*Some people claim never to have been bored. They lie. One cannot be human without at some time or other having known boredom. Even animals know boredom, we are told, though they are deprived of the ability to complain directly about it. Some of us are more afflicted with boredom than others. Psychologists make the distinction between ordinary and pathological boredom; the latter doesn't cause serious mental problems but is associated with them. Another distinction is that between situational boredom and existential boredom. Situational boredom is caused by the temporary tedium everyone at one time or another encounters: the dull sermon, the longueurs-laden novel, the pompous gent*

*extolling his prowess at the used-tire business. Existential boredom is thought to be the result of existence itself, caused by modern culture and therefore inescapable. Boredom even has some class standing, and was once felt to be an aristocratic attribute. Ennui, it has been said, is the reigning emotion of the dandy.*

*When bored, time slows drastically, the world seems shadowy and vague. Truman Capote once described the novels of James Baldwin as "balls-achingly boring," which conveys something of the agony of boredom yet is inaccurate—not about Baldwin's novels, which are no stroll around the Louvre, but about the effect of boredom itself. Boredom is never so clearly localized. The vagueness of boredom, its vaporousness and its torpor, is part of its mild but genuine torment.*

—**JOSEPH EPSTEIN**, essayist, short-story writer, and former editor of *The American Scholar*, in *Commentary* (June 2011)

the urban neighborhoods whites had fled.

In 2007, only 54 percent of African Americans owned their own homes. That rate is two percentage points lower than the

white rate in 1870. In recent decades, white homeownership has averaged about 77 percent.

Because homes are a major form of wealth in the United States, more is at stake than sim-

ply who owns the roof over a person's head. With income and educational inequalities persistent, there is little prospect for a quick reduction in the racial homeownership gap.

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

# Philosophy for the Few

**THE SOURCE:** "Philosophy That's Not for the Masses" by James Ladyman, in *The Philosopher's Magazine*, Second Quarter 2011.

IT'S A COMMON CHARGE THAT philosophers do little of practical value and fail to make their work relevant and accessible to the general public. University of Bristol philosophy professor James Ladyman has had quite enough of this sort of rubbish. "I do not see why all philosophers, or even most, should be interested in communicating their thoughts . . . to the world," he writes.

The masses generally want answers to big questions: What is the meaning of life? Does a respect for animal life require me to be a vegetarian? But any answer philosophy could provide has long since been offered by generations of wise men past. Today's philosophers immerse themselves in fields such as physics and computer science that push the outer limits of human knowledge. There they can do the work of the gadflies Socrates exalted, applying their philosophical tools to expose flaws in scientists' episte-

mology and methodology. But in order to do so, philosophers must master these obscure, technical fields, and it is this specialization that makes their work so unintelligible to the layperson.

Philosophy should not be held to a different standard than other fields of academic inquiry, Ladyman argues: "Who understands the terms in which mathematicians and theoretical physicists communicate, other than those with sufficient training in the relevant technical areas?" The public is simply not equipped to understand the intricacies of these disciplines. "To these people, much of the dictionary will be impenetrable jargon," he asserts, "so philosophical journals pose no unique problems."

And with so many popular books on philosophy by writers who specialize in mediating between academia and the general population, why should academics have to translate their work themselves?

Perhaps, Ladyman suggests, the charge that philosophy does nothing of value stems from the

fact that the unschooled find it easier to believe that they aren't missing out on anything important than to do the hard work that is needed to understand modern philosophy.

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

# Big Religion

**THE SOURCE:** "American Postwar 'Big Religion': Reconceptualizing 20th-Century American Religion Using Big Science as a Model" by Benjamin E. Zeller, in *Church History*, June 2011.

THE 20TH CENTURY SAW THE rise of the "bigs": big business, big government, and big science. Benjamin E. Zeller, a professor of religion at Harvard College, wants to add one more to the list: big religion.

Although no one has attached the "big" narrative to religion before, Zeller says that American religion since World War II has the same hallmarks as "big science"—heightened institutionalization and professionalization, increased entanglement with the government, a growth of popular support, and, of course, critics.

After the war, church membership jumped, growing from 90 million in 1950 to more than 114 million in 1960. The National Council of Churches (NCC) was established in 1950 (the same year as the National Science Foundation), bringing 25 Protestant denomina-



Billy Graham speaks at Madison Square Garden in 1957. Mainline Protestants and evangelicals alike took to “big religion” in the postwar years.

tions and four Eastern Orthodox patriarchies under one umbrella. What the NCC was to mainline and liberal American Christians, the Billy Graham Crusade was to evangelicals and conservatives. Though different in style and substance, the NCC and Graham’s institution were both large, bureaucratic organizations swarming with administrative professionals.

A fundamental marker of big science is its relationship with the federal government, which feeds it billions of dollars in exchange for research on military, communication, and energy technologies. The First Amendment prohibits government support for religion. Nevertheless, Zeller explains, during the postwar period, religion became increasingly enmeshed with public life—the words “under God” were added to the Pledge of Allegiance, the motto “In God We Trust” appeared on paper currency, and Presidents Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower routinely

linked America’s faith with the fight against communism in public speeches.

Like big science, which was criticized for its elitism and its commitment to research over teaching, big religion had its detractors, who established alternatives such as small nondenominational churches and Christian house meetings. Ironically, Zeller notes, some of the dissident currents grew to be so successful over time that they became part of the fabric of big religion themselves.

In some ways, big religion and big science are both products of the Cold War. Anticommunist sentiment fueled America’s participation in the space race, and at the same time gave rise to religious political rhetoric that contrasted Americans’ faith with “godless” communists.

Today, religion and science can seem at loggerheads, in opposite camps of an endless battle over truth. But it’s worth remembering that not too long ago, in the era of

the bigs, religion and science were unlikely partners in defining the American way of life.

#### RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

## Putting Free Will to the Test

**THE SOURCE:** “Experimental Philosophy and the Problem of Free Will” by Shaun Nichols, in *Science*, March 18, 2011.

**DO HUMANS HAVE FREE WILL?** The question is as old as dirt. Now experimental philosophers are trying to gain insight into the issue in a new way: by using techniques borrowed from the social sciences to uncover the intuitions that drive ordinary people to give different answers to questions about free will.

In one experiment, writes University of Arizona philosophy professor Shaun Nichols, participants are told to imagine a “determined” universe in which “every decision is completely caused by what happened before the

decision.” Study participants tend to respond that people in such a universe should not be held responsible for their actions. But if they are asked whether someone in such a world could be held responsible for killing his own family, participants say yes. “Concrete cases of bad behavior lead people to attribute responsibility,” Nichols observes. This pattern seems to hold true across cultures.

The answer also changes when the scenario is less distant. If told that

many scientists believe that our own world is determined, people are much less forgiving of wrongdoing than they are when the world under consideration is determined but imaginary.

Finally, human responses vary depending on the kind of wrongdoing being discussed. Imagining a determined world, people are less likely to hold a tax evader to blame than they are someone who has committed a more emotionally charged act, such as rape.

The divided responses people give in experimental philosophy tests pretty accurately reflect a centuries-old division among traditional philosophers. Some thinkers have argued that even a determined universe is “compatible” with the concept of moral responsibility, others that it’s not. Nichols says that the new philosophy will shed light on the “psychological mechanisms” behind each approach, and ultimately on the old-as-dirt question itself.

## ARTS & LETTERS

# Beauty, the Ultimate Survivor

**THE SOURCE:** “The Attack on Beauty” by Robert Boyers, in *Salmagundi*, Spring 2011.

BEAUTY HAS NEVER HAD AN easy time, whether under scrutiny from suspicious Puritans or picky Renaissance critics, but the attack on beauty over the last century by modernist artists is the “most serious and sustained,” writes *Salmagundi* founding editor Robert Boyers. They “have dismissed all things relaxing, easy to take in and enjoy, and therefore inimical to the spirit of an art intended to be rigorous, difficult, unpopular. To be impressed by what passed for beauty was felt by many modernist writers and artists to be philistine.”

In past generations, quarrels with beauty have mostly been concerned with what beauty was or how it ought to be valued, but the attack of modernists differs in kind, question-

ing whether beauty is anything more than a personal preference shaped by a particular cultural outlook at a particular moment in time.

Yet while there may be something to these arguments, beauty won’t go away. It crops up in the least likely places, the same pieces of art meant to repudiate the very notion. Marcel Duchamp’s 1917 urinal (which he titled *Fountain*), an early example in a long line of such modernist works, may even seem “beautiful by virtue of its form or the pristinity of its gleaming surface,” Boyers says. Duchamp “could not [have imagined] how inventive artists would be in clinging to improbable versions of the beautiful.”

Artists “have often found it useful to deny or to disguise their predilection for the beautiful.” Wassily Kandinsky, for example, said he sought to “apply the methods of music” and to

capture “the spiritual” in his abstract canvases. What could that mean besides beauty? Such evasions are just descriptions of beauty in “more acceptably sophisticated terms.”

The attack on beauty has been of a piece with a larger cultural assault on anything elitist, Boyers observes. Beauty required discrimination. In its place, “interesting” came into vogue, a more inclusive standard. “The interesting seems to us more reliable if only because it entails a verdict that regards issues of value as naive or spurious,” Boyers remarks.

Such evasions point to a basic concern: our limited ability to pin down what we mean by beauty. To get at that question, Boyers suggests turning not to masterpieces but to a sort of beauty “more modest in scale and ambition”: the aphorism.

A beautiful aphorism is “its own reason for being”—it is eloquent, it exhibits what the critic Denis Donoghue calls “the dancing of speech,” it carries a thrill. (Boyers cites Austrian writer Karl Kraus’s “My language is the universal whore whom I have to make into a virgin” as an example.) “Interesting” works, such as Du-

champ's urinal, are "essentially polemical, persuasive. [They] have no reason for being other than the points they aim to make." But a thing of beauty is "its own reason for being," and thus "wants for nothing, and inspires in us nothing more than the desire for further instances of beauty, for the satisfaction we feel in the presence of objects or expressions that are completely themselves."

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

## No RIP for Print

**THE SOURCES:** Introduction to volume 37, by the editors, *McSweeney's Quarterly Concern*, Spring 2011, and "Five Myths About the 'Information Age'" by Robert Darnton, in *The Chronicle Review*, April 17, 2011.

THE EDITORS OF *McSWEENEY'S Quarterly Concern* have a one-word response to apocalyptic proclam-

ations that the printed word is dead: phooey! They declare we have arrived at a "Golden Age of Reading and Writing."

Over the last year, *McSweeney's* researchers delved into data from Nielsen's Bookscan, which monitors book sales to the general public. The results paint a surprisingly positive picture of the printed word's health.

In recent years, the United States touted record-setting numbers of published authors, publishers, and original book titles. Although there was a slight decline from the all-time high in 2009, book sales comfortably topped one billion volumes last year despite a lackluster economy and continuing mass unemployment. Robert Darnton, director of the Harvard University library, notes that this trend extends beyond America's

borders: China and Brazil are experiencing publishing booms as well. Worldwide, one million new titles will be released this year.

Libraries are similarly feeling the effects of the public's appetite for print. The *McSweeney's* editors write that circulation of library books has reached record levels, and library memberships have increased, with 68 percent of Americans currently holding library cards. Darnton adds that libraries remain vital, not just because they lend books but because they assist people in wading through the information wilderness. This is nothing new, he says. Libraries have always been more than "warehouses of books."

It's only a hoary myth that people in the past had a greater appreciation of the printed word, the *McSweeney's* editors snort. While in

## EXCERPT

## Barry Hannah (1942–2010)

*There was a puncturing quality to Barry's zingers, darts that pop the overblown balloon and send it, whining and deflated, on its pitiable trajectory. I saw this at Oxford restaurants, on panels at the Sewanee Writers' Conference, and, most appreciated where most needed, in the English Department faculty meetings at the University of Mississippi, where we were colleagues. I remember several young hotshot critics were attempting to amp up the introductory class for new grad students.*

*"We need more investiture in critical theory which assumes apprenticeship more than it does doctrinal or methodological instruction," said one.*

*"Yes," agreed another, "but choosing texts and films"—(here a snort from Barry, who read books, watched movies) —"that are not comparatist but destabilize the traditional concept of literature as an isolatable aesthetic object."*

*"Agreed," added a third, "privileging the historicity of such discourses and the cultural phenomena they set out to investigate. Of course, this re-envisioned course deserves a new name."*

*The critics paused, thinking of a course designation worthy.*

*Barry broke the silence. "How about calling it, 'The Death of Joy as We Know It'?"*

*Whoosh. I miss having someone around who could do that.*

—**BETH ANN FENNELLY**, associate professor of English at the University of Mississippi, on Southern writer Barry Hannah, in *The Oxford American* (Issue 72)

the glory year of 1787 only 60 percent of American adults were considered literate, today that number has jumped to 98 percent. Instead of lamenting golden ages past, we should be encouraged that “more people are reading than at any time in human history.”

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

## Graffiti Gets the Glory

**THE SOURCE:** “Radical Graffiti Chic” by Heather Mac Donald, in *City Journal*, Spring 2011.

THE VOGUE FOR STREET ART among elite gallery owners and art collectors recently reached its apotheosis in a major museum exhibit at the Geffen Contemporary, a satellite of Los Angeles’s Museum of Contemporary Art

(MOCA). But visitors with an eye for the ironic will note that the museum sports a fresh coat of paint on its back wall, covering up some unwelcome artistry outside, writes *City Journal* contributing editor Heather Mac Donald. This fresh paint encapsulates the hypocritical stance of graffiti’s admirers, who celebrate street art in the confines of museums and galleries but never on their mansions, and who turn a blind eye to its real and pernicious effects in inner cities.

The Geffen show is the debut exhibit of MOCA’s new director, Jeffrey Deitch, a former New York gallery owner and art agent with a long history of glorifying street art and its creators. Deitch once transformed his gallery into a faux ghetto street, a “Disneysque barrio [that] gave New Yorkers who would never dream of getting off the subway north of

Is graffiti an under-appreciated art form or simply a criminal activity that often goes hand in hand with drug use and truancy?

96th Street that delightful frisson of proximity to the underclass,” Mac Donald tartly observes.

Tellingly, most of the graffiti artists who are venerated by elite art dealers are white and middle class. If art dealers and patrons were to leave their comfy world and interact with young black and Hispanic graffiti artists in the inner city, they would find that graffiti often goes hand in hand with drug use and truancy. By many graffitiists’ own accounts, their pastime encouraged them to skip school and led to their



At a new exhibit at the Geffen Contemporary in Los Angeles, visitors can enjoy a bit of street art without ever having to venture to an untidy street.

dropping out altogether, Mac Donald reports.

She contends that the hypocrisy exhibited by those who glorify graffiti is exceeded by that of the artists themselves, “who wage war on property rights until presented with the opportunity to sell their work or license it to a corporation.” (Stealing is so rampant in the graffiti world that one popular brand of

spray paint is sold only by mail in order to prevent its theft from store shelves.) One graffiti artist, Saber, said in an interview that “there is no room for empathy when there is a motive for profit.” He has sold designs to Levi’s, Hyundai, and Harley-Davidson.

All this is not to say there’s nothing of artistic value in some graffiti murals, Mac Donald

admits. Some show an “intuitive” knack for graphic design. “In theory,” Mac Donald believes it could be possible to have a show about wall-painting “without legitimating a crime. . . . Such an exhibit would include only authorized murals, whether past or present, and would unequivocally condemn taking someone else’s property without permission.”

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

# An Internet for All Time

**THE SOURCE:** “A Memory of Webs Past”  
by Ariel Bleicher, in *IEEE Spectrum*,  
March 2011.

EVER SINCE HUMANS LEARNED to write, they have collected their works into archives, seeking to convey their wisdom and history to future generations. The rise of the Internet poses a daunting new challenge, and not only because of the huge quantity of information it contains.

The very nature of the Web poses a problem, notes Ariel Bleicher, a writer living in New York City. Anything published online “exists in a perpetual state of being updated, and it cannot be considered complete in the absence of everything else it’s hyperlinked to.” As many as two billion people regularly go online, and many of them do a lot more than passively absorb content: They comment, create their own videos, play games,

interact with friends.

The Web’s size defies comprehension. The number of URLs indexed by search engines has exploded from 50 million in 1997 to about three trillion now, but that’s just a small part of the entire Web. Some people estimate that the total “surface” of the Web accessible to archivists’ tools may be six times as large as the indexed areas, and that the “deep” Web, which includes password-protected sites and certain types of databases, may be 500 times larger than that.

Beyond the sheer magnitude of the archival task there is the thorny question of legality. Only a few countries have laws that permit archivists to copy and save virtual documents. In the United States, much of what appears online is copyright protected. The Library of Congress archives only government Web sites and several

thousand other sites whose administrators have voluntarily consented.

And there are technological hurdles. Digital archivists track content with the help of “crawlers”—computer programs that scour the Web. Crawlers cannot see the “hidden” Web: password-protected sites, isolated pages not connected to the broader Web, and “form-fronted” databases that require users to enter search terms in order to pull up information. Existing crawlers have difficulty recognizing “rich media”—anything that moves when a user interacts with it—and other new forms of content.

Finally, who is going to do all of the work of archiving? Google hasn’t made digital archiving a priority, and many of the nonprofit foundations and government offices that have sprung up to fill the void are too small and too resource strapped for such a large project.

Part of the difficulty is knowing what will be of interest to future historians. Indexes of goods that have been sold on eBay may seem trivial today, but they’re just the sort of data that can help illuminate our culture in future centuries.

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

## A Reason for Reason

**THE SOURCE:** "Why Do Humans Reason? Arguments for an Argumentative Theory" by Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber, in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, April 2011.

FOR ALL ITS STELLAR ACHIEVEMENTS, human reason seems particularly ill suited to, well, reasoning. Study after study demonstrates reason's deficiencies, such as the oft-noted confirmation bias (the tendency to recall, select, or interpret evidence in a way that supports one's preexisting beliefs) and people's poor performance on straightforward logic puzzles. Why is reason so defective?

To the contrary, reason isn't defective in the least, argue cognitive scientists Hugo Mercier of the University of Pennsylvania and Dan Sperber of

the Jean Nicod Institute in Paris. The problem is that we've misunderstood why reason exists and measured its strengths and weaknesses against the wrong standards.

Mercier and Sperber argue that reason did not evolve to allow individuals to think through problems and make brilliant decisions on their own. Rather, it serves a fundamentally social purpose: It promotes argument. Research shows that people solve problems more effectively when they debate them in groups—and the interchange also allows people to hone essential social skills. Supposed defects such as the confirmation bias are well fitted to this purpose because they enable people to efficiently marshal the evidence they need in arguing with others.

Most people make a lot of mistakes when reasoning solo, but in group settings they tend to be quite

skilled at making arguments and evaluating those of others. One study found that participants got only about 10 percent of the answers in a tough logic test correct on their own. When they worked in a group, the scores soared to 80 percent. In the absence of a challenge from others, people tend to reach for the most readily available (and often wrong) conclusion. But in groups, better arguments will win out over time.

That the human mind works best when prodded by others should come as no surprise. Over the centuries, groups and pairs of people working together have produced some of the greatest scientific achievements and philosophical dialogues. Even geniuses are quick to say they stand on the shoulders of giants. Social animals that humans are, it takes partners, colleagues, and friends to make the most of the mind.

### EXCERPT

## Physics' Black Holes

*Physics is the most fundamental of the natural sciences; it explains Nature at its deepest level; the edifice it strives to construct is all-encompassing, free of internal contradictions, conceptually compelling and—above all—beautiful. The range of phenomena physics has explained is more than impressive; it underlies the whole of modern civilization. Nevertheless, as a physicist travels along his (in this case) career, the hairline cracks in the edifice become more apparent, as do the dirt swept under the rug, the fudges and the wholesale swindles, with the discon-*

*certing result that the totality occasionally appears more like Bruegel's Tower of Babel as dreamt by a modern slumlord, a ramshackle structure of compartmentalized models soldered together into a skewed heap of explanations as the whole jury-rigged monstrosity tumbles skyward.*

*Of course many grand issues remain unresolved at the frontiers of physics: What is the origin of inertia? Are there extra dimensions? Can a Theory of Everything exist? But even at the undergraduate level, far back from the frontlines, deep holes exist; yet the subject is presented as one of completeness, while the holes—let us say abysses—are planked over in order to camouflage the danger.*

—**TONY ROTHMAN**, a lecturer in physics at Princeton University, in *American Scientist* (May–June 2011)

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

# How Maps Made the World

**THE SOURCE:** “Mapping the Sovereign State: Technology, Authority, and Systemic Change” by Jordan Branch, in *International Organization*, Winter 2011.

IT’S HARD TO IMAGINE A world without modern nation-states as we know them—their power, relationships, and, perhaps most of all, borders. But according to Jordan Branch, a political scientist at the University of California, Berkeley, the modern state may be something of a historical accident, an inadvertent byproduct of 15th-century advances in map-making technologies.

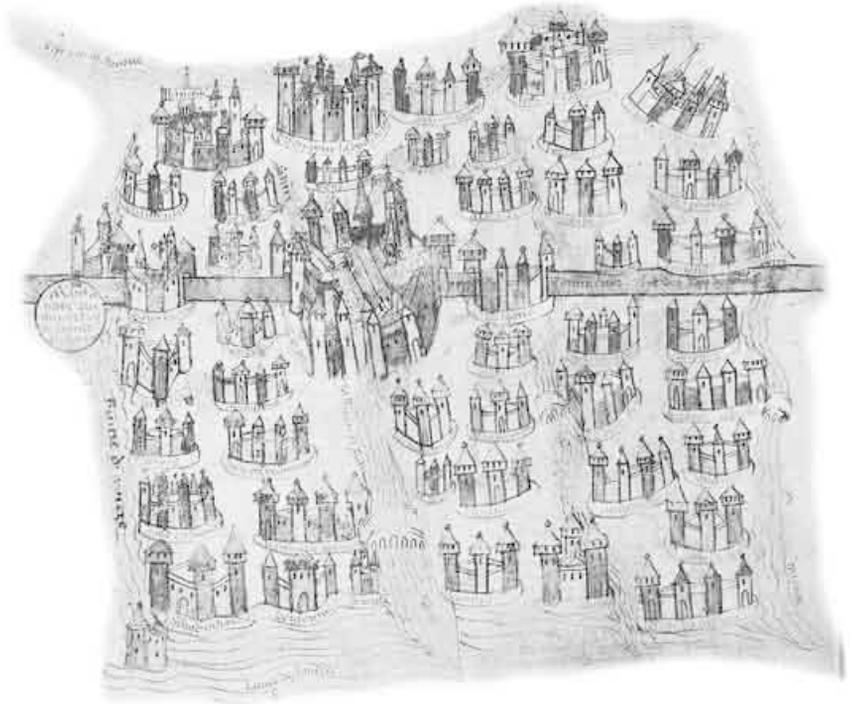
During the later medieval period, various authorities ranging from small-time aristocrats to the Holy Roman emperor claimed power over collections of discrete places, not contiguous territories. Sovereignty centered in cities, towns, and villages and radiated outward, with peripheries often ambiguously defined and little heeded. Medieval maps reflected this reality, emphasizing “the importance of places such as cities over the spaces in between them.” During this time, rulers and travelers used texts for many of the purposes maps serve today, such as providing travel directions and demarcating sovereignty in treaties.

The conceptual shift toward the modern state began in the 15th century, when Ptolemy’s *Geography*, which showed how to create maps based on a coordinate grid of latitude and longitude, was translated into Latin. This new technology required

by its very nature that maps geometrically correlate with the on-the-ground geography. The gaps between power centers could no longer be magically shrunk to insignificance. By happenstance, this shift came just as the printing press was dramatically increasing the quantity of maps in circulation, from a few thousand in the late 15th century to “millions” in the 16th century.

political practices”—for nearly a century, treaties and other sources of political authority would continue to demarcate sovereignty using text.) Color, added by hand after printing to boost a map’s value, only reinforced the notion of complete, undisturbed sovereignty within borders.

Over time, elites, many of whom collected maps as a hobby, began to



A 15th-century map of “all of the realm of France” pays little mind to the spaces separating towns.

The new maps were not ideal for depicting the old mishmash of authorities that text had ably conveyed. Instead, mapmakers simplified sovereignty’s bounds by drawing clear lines of demarcation between powers. By the mid-17th century, nearly all atlas maps showed boundary lines. (However, these lines did not reflect “actual

see the world as the map-makers drew it, focusing not on where power centered but where it ended. Political reality lagged behind: Branch argues that it wasn’t until the post-Napoleonic treaties and negotiations of 1814–15 that borders—and undisturbed sovereignty within them—became the law of the lands.

## OTHER NATIONS

# The Origins of the Sunni Awakening

**THE SOURCE:** "Explaining the Awakening: Engagement, Publicity, and the Transformation of Iraqi Sunni Political Attitudes" by Marc Lynch, in *Security Studies*, Jan. 2011.

FROM 2005 TO 2007, A CHANGE in sentiment rippled across Iraq—the Sunni population turned against Al Qaeda and started working with U.S. forces. Many analysts believe this transformation is what turned the war around and gave the 2007 American military surge the legitimacy among Iraqis it needed to succeed. What kindled this transformation? The surge can't be the cause; it began after the Awakening was already under way. Other common explanations include Al Qaeda's extremism, which repelled Sunnis, and America's counterinsurgency strategy, which attracted them. But to understand how anger at Al Qaeda's violence spread and how the United States was able to communicate its good intentions, says George Washington University political scientist Marc Lynch, it's necessary to examine an overlooked force: Arab-language news media.

Television is the primary source of news for an estimated 80 percent of Iraqis. Until 2004, there was really only one channel available: al-Jazeera. Its "close and often emotional coverage" sparked outrage against the U.S. occupation. But in 2004, competitors began emerging. The Iraqi

government-backed al-Iraqiya was received skeptically, but Arab options from outside Iraq, particularly the Saudi-supported al-Arabiya, gained popularity. Launched in 2003 to compete with al-Jazeera, al-Arabiya was no friend of Al Qaeda. One program, *Death Makers*, showcased "an endless series of exposés featuring hitherto unknown [Al Qaeda] defectors, stories about their extremism and brutality, allegations about their sources of funding," and other revelations. Sunni leaders who had turned against Al Qaeda were al-Arabiya's go-to sources and commentators.

At the same time, al-Jazeera's portrayal of Al Qaeda began to shift. The network now refused to air videos of Al Qaeda's beheadings and often hosted critical discussions about Iraqi jihadists. Jihadists came to hate al-Jazeera, calling it "al-Khanzeera," a pun meaning "pig station," and regarding it as part of the "Zionist-Crusader media."

In this changing media environment, public opinion rapidly tipped

Jihadists have come to hate al-Jazeera. They call it "al-Khanzeera," a pun that means "pig station."

away from Al Qaeda. It wasn't so much that the alternative channels directly persuaded anyone, Lynch believes, but that the proliferation of choices meant that new ideas and opinions could emerge and spread.

## OTHER NATIONS

## India's Vulture Void

**THE SOURCE:** "India's Vanishing Vultures" by Meera Subramanian, in *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Spring 2011.

IT'S NOT EASY TO MUSTER EMPATHY for eaters of the dead. But in India, a precipitous drop in the native vulture population, from 50 million in the mid-1990s to fewer than 60,000 today, has created an environmental and cultural catastrophe. Gone are the creatures that once "scoured the countryside, clearing fields of dead cows and goats," writes Meera Subramanian, a widely published journalist who is also an editor of the online literary magazine *Killing the Buddha*. And while other animals, notably wild dogs, have taken over some of the carrion-eating on land, no scavengers can fill the role vultures once performed for the Parsis, the small, ancient religious sect who give their dead "sky burials" in sacred "Towers of Silence." The massive vultures, their wingspans sometimes reaching eight feet, used to consume the bodies left on open-air scaffolds in a matter of days, but now it can take months for the Parsi dead to decompose.

American microbiologist Lindsay Oaks finally pinpointed the cause of the vultures' demise in



Indigenous vultures, India's indispensable sanitation workers, are now on the brink of extinction.

2003: diclofenac, a painkiller given to farm animals for discomfort from cracked hooves. Vultures gorging on animals treated with diclofenac suffered massive kidney failure. The government banned the substance in 2005, but Subramanian says the law is toothless.

The three prominent species of indigenous vultures, all from the *Gyps* genus, were once able to consume cattle infected with tuberculosis, brucellosis, foot-and-mouth disease, and anthrax with no ill effects. But with the birds gone, humans now must dispose of such animals themselves, Subramanian writes. The fear is that “these diseases could spread among both animal and human populations.”

Attempts to rebuild the vulture population, chiefly at the Pinjore Vulture Conservation Breeding Center north of Delhi, have met with limited success. Only 17 vultures have been bred in the past three years.

In the northwestern Indian state of Rajasthan, Subramanian visited a carcass dump, a five-acre pile of “dead cows, water buffalo, goats, and

camels” brought from nearby Bikaner, a city of half a million. Migrant birds—“mostly Eurasian griffons, bulky steppe eagles, and Egyptian vultures”—come there to feed, but the indigenous *Gyps* vultures, “hardest hit by diclofenac,” are nowhere to be seen. Wild dogs, though, are everywhere, feeding on the rotting carcasses and, especially when in heat, roaming away from the dumping ground to attack local children. India’s dog population is thought to have increased by nearly a third, to some 30 million. It is no accident that India accounts for 70 percent of human rabies deaths in the world.

And dogs can’t solve the dilemma posed by the Parsi Towers of Silence. The sect has struggled to find an alternative for their burial rituals, from installing solar reflectors to help speed the rate of natural decay, to planning for enormous aviaries stocked with captive vultures. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that the effect of other painkillers in human corpses would not be lethal to vultures, too. “Vultures play such a beautiful, natural role in our death

ritual,” one Parsi leader laments. “To replace them is a unique challenge.”

His words are echoed by Asad Rahmani, head of the Bombay Natural History Society, India’s largest and oldest wildlife conservation organization. “There were so many vultures then that you can’t even *think* they could decline,” Rahmani said. “What have we done with them? Now there are dogs. They eat anything, live or dead. There are dogs on

#### OTHER NATIONS

## Stingless Authoritarianism

**THE SOURCE:** “Paradoxes of the New Authoritarianism” by Ivan Krastev, in *Journal of Democracy*, April 2011.

IN THE 20 YEARS SINCE THE collapse of communism, democracy has not exactly flourished in the post-Soviet lands. Instead, a new variety of authoritarianism has arisen in many countries, one that exists in the space between old-style iron-fist authoritarian rule and Western democracy. The new authoritarianism is a paradox, writes Ivan Krastev, who chairs the board of the Center for Liberal Strategies in Bulgaria. The current government of Russia is a paradigmatic example. Russians in all walks of life tend to see the state as a failure, yet it is more resilient than the strong-handed regime that preceded it.

The Russian government “is only moderately repressive,” Krastev says. Russians can travel, surf the Web, and do business freely (but for a “corruption tax”). Almost 10 million of them travel abroad every year. In the early 1990s, many politi-

## OTHER NATIONS

## The Little Island That Could

**THE SOURCE:** “Mauritius: African Success Story” by Jeffrey A. Frankel, in *National Bureau of Economic Research Digest*, May 2011.

TINY MAURITIUS, AN ISLAND nation in the Indian Ocean, is one of the richest, healthiest, and best-governed sub-Saharan African countries. Its per capita gross domestic product grew at an average rate of more than five percent annually from 1970 to 2010. (Africa’s average was about one percent.) It is consistently at the very top of regional rankings for governance and rule of law. Its life expectancy tops 70 and its literacy rate hovers around 90 percent. What is the secret to Mauritius’s success?

It’s not too hard to name sound institutions as important, but that answer doesn’t go deep enough, says Jeffrey A. Frankel of the Kennedy School of Government, at Harvard. How did those institutions come to be?

He cites two key achievements: the establishment of a strong manufacturing sector following independence in 1968 and the ability to

The tiny island of Mauritius is one of sub-Saharan Africa’s great success stories, but the reasons are not easy to describe—or duplicate.

cal scientists believed such freedoms were incompatible with authoritarian rule, that a regime that made such allowances would be “inherently fragile.” But Krastev argues that this openness actually weakens opposition and dissent.

Open borders have enabled dissatisfied citizens—potential activists—to leave the country for greener shores, Krastev says. “Why try to turn Russia into Germany, when there is no guarantee that a lifetime is long enough for that mission, and when Germany is but a short trip away?” One Russian economist recently estimated that more than “two million Russian democrats have left the country in the last decade,” Krastev notes.

At first glance, the new authoritarianism’s lack of a defining ideology seems a weakness, but the absence of a driving vision is actually a source of strength. The Russian government has no ideology beyond an insistence on not being lectured by the United States. Dissidents have nothing to attack, no “ideal against which the regime can be measured and found wanting.” In fact, Krastev observes, many post-Soviet elites view “communist ideology as one of the old regime’s weaknesses,” rather than a unifying force. Moreover, Western powers do not fear the export of a Russian ideology as they once did, and thus they too do not try to undermine the Russian regime.

Krastev says that the new Russian authoritarianism won’t implode the way communism did, but will instead slowly decline. “It is not,” he says, “‘after [Vladimir] Putin, the deluge,’ but ‘after Putin, the dry rot.’”

navigate economic shocks over the years.

But still this answer doesn’t satisfy. What made those achievements possible? Frankel points to five factors: the lack of a standing army, which has allowed the country to put more money into education and health; the establishment of a special export zone that has protected domestic businesses from high taxes and high minimum wage requirements; the good luck of receiving trade preferences from several rich former colonial powers (in part due to Mauritius’s location en route to East Asia); astute diplomacy in early trade negotiations; and a competitively valued currency.

Frankel says that Mauritians also have capable leaders to thank—particularly the first prime minister, Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, who held office from 1968 to 1982—for smart choices, in addition to a parliamentary system that has ensured minority representation.

Still, there may be more to the Mauritian puzzle. Before the Dutch landed there in 1598, Mauritius was completely uninhabited. Frankel says that the lack of an indigenous population has spared the country the ethnic conflict that can emerge when a native group must grapple with colonists and other immigrants. It may be no accident that two other African countries that often rank highly are Seychelles and Cape Verde—both island states lacking an indigenous population.

That’s not to say, though, that Mauritius’s policies can’t be replicated elsewhere in Africa, only that it could be hard to do so.

*In this Civil War issue:*

*James M. McPherson* on becoming a Civil War historian

*Brenda Wineapple* on great writing of the war

*Joseph Glathaar* on military books

*Andrew Ferguson* on Abraham Lincoln

*Ira Berlin* on slavery and race relations

*David S. Reynolds* on historical novels

Book reviews by W. Barksdale Maynard, Christopher Clausen, Nina Silber, Don H. Doyle, Kevin Adams, and Tim Morris

# CURRENT BOOKS

REVIEWS OF NEW AND NOTEWORTHY NONFICTION

## Best Books About the Civil War

*A special section on books past and present*

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO, IN the wee hours of April 12, a mortar shell exploded above Fort Sumter, and the American Civil War began. As more than one of the contributors to this special edition of Current Books remarks, the four years of bloody conflict that followed have transfixed historians and the general public like no other period in the country's history. Many tens of thousands of books have been written on the war, its meaning, and the larger-than-life figures it thrust upon the national imagination. This sesquicentennial year seemed to require a wide-angle view of the best writing about the war.

We asked several prominent writers and historians to single out some of their favorite books on subjects ranging from the war's military campaigns and leaders to the figure whose long shadow falls across it, Abraham Lincoln. We included a list of the best novels written about the Civil War. (Ken Burns has said that he felt inspired to undertake his immensely popular documentary series *The Civil War* after reading *The Killer Angels*, Michael

Shaara's 1974 novel about the Battle of Gettysburg.) Brenda Wineapple describes the powerful writing that came out of the war itself, and Pulitzer Prize-winning historian James M. McPherson gives a personal account of the rewards and hazards of studying a conflict that still resonates

today. In addition, six scholars review some of the most noteworthy new books in a year that has seen an outpouring of publications about the Civil War.

Though so much has been written about the Civil War, many of us draw our knowledge from two sources, both of which have done as much to distort the war as to commemorate it.

I first learned about the clash of North and South at the knees of Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler. As a girl, I was blissfully oblivious to all that was misrepresented or left out in *Gone With the Wind*, Margaret Mitchell's epic historical novel. Since its publication in 1936 and the release three years later of the Hollywood film, historians and others have scorned, with good reason, Mitchell's romantic and decidedly Southern tilt and her crude depictions of plantation



slaves. But their outrage can't diminish the appeal of the ripping good yarn that *Gone With the Wind* undeniably is.

Ken Burns's documentary *The Civil War*, which initially aired in 1990, has done much to educate the public and renew interest in the war. Somberly narrated by historian David McCullough and accompanied by bittersweet fiddle music, it leaves viewers with an amber-tinged sense of the war's tragedy and inevitability (and it turned prominently featured novelist-cum-historian Shelby Foote, with his deep Southern drawl, into a celebrity before his death in 2005). But, as a history professor recently complained in *Slate*, "notions about the war's transcendent meaning forged in the sentimental fires of the film" make it difficult to talk about the conflict's "knotty and complex history of violence, racial conflict, and disunion."

Distortion of one kind or another is inevitable in any treatment of an event as profound and contentious as the Civil War. There's no such

thing as a truly definitive account—even the multivolume works by great historians such as Foote and Bruce Catton must omit much, and bear the marks and limitations of their authors' personalities. To avoid being held captive to any single vision, it's important to rely on a multitude of voices, calling to us from the past and speaking to us in the present. Our contributors point to works both well known and obscure, of varying sympathies and schools of thought, that, taken together, offer a powerful portrait of America during the most traumatic period in its history. I hope you enjoy reading and learning from these pieces as much as I did.

—Sarah L. Courteau

*The images in this section were taken from "The Last Full Measure: Civil War Photographs from the Liljenquist Family Collection," an exhibition on display at the Library of Congress until August 13, 2011. Most of the people in these photographs remain unidentified.*

## My Road to the Civil War

By James M. McPherson

AS WE BEGIN MOVING THROUGH THE SESQUICENTENNIAL commemoration of the American Civil War, my mind returns to the time more than a half-century ago when I decided to become a historian of the Civil War era. Unlike many of my friends and colleagues, I did not have a youthful fascination with the war. When I arrived at Baltimore in 1958 for graduate study at Johns Hopkins University, I had not read anything specifically on the subject, apart from a couple of books by Bruce Catton. I had not taken a college course on the Civil War because my college did not offer such a course.

I had a vague and rather naive interest in the history of the South, in part because, having been born in North Dakota and brought up in Minnesota, I found the South exotic and mysterious.

My senior year in high school, nine black students integrated Little Rock Central High School under the protection of the U.S. Army. I was well enough acquainted with history and current events to know that the constitutional basis for the black students' presence at Central High was the Fourteenth Amendment, one of the most important products of the Civil War. In retrospect, it seems apparent that this awareness planted the seed of my professional interest.

That seed germinated within days of my arrival at Johns Hopkins when, like other incoming graduate students, I met with a prospective adviser. Mine was C. Vann Woodward, the foremost historian of



Union soldier wearing 4th Infantry kepi hat

the American South, whose book *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1955) became almost the bible of the civil rights movement. My appointment was postponed for a day because Vann had been called to Washington to testify before a congressional committee about potential problems in Little Rock as a second year of school desegregation got under way. Here was a revelation: a historian offering counsel on the most important domestic issue of the day. If I had not seen the connection between the Civil War and my own times before, I certainly discovered it then.

That consciousness grew during my four years in Baltimore. The last two of those years were also the opening phase of the commemoration of the Civil War centennial. But that made little impression on me except for the initial events in Charleston, South Carolina, in April 1961 when a black delegate from New Jersey's centennial commission was denied a room at the Francis Marion Hotel. In protest, several Northern delegations walked out of

the events, boycotting them until President John F. Kennedy offered the integrated facilities at the Charleston Naval Base. This offer provoked the Southern delegations to secede from the national commission and hold their own events at the hotel. It all seemed like *déjà vu*.

Apart from this incident, the civil rights movement eclipsed the centennial observations. These were the years of sit-ins and freedom rides in the South, of massive resistance to national laws and court decisions by Southern political leaders, of federal marshals and troops trying to protect civil rights demonstrators, of conflict and violence, of the March on Washington in August 1963, when Martin Luther King Jr. stood before the

Lincoln Memorial and launched his "I have a dream" speech with the words, "Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been scarred in the flame of withering injustice."

It was these parallels between the 1960s and the 1860s, and the roots of events in my own time in events of exactly a century earlier, that propelled me to become a historian of the Civil War and Reconstruction. I wrote my doctoral dissertation—which in 1964 became my first book, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*—on the civil rights activists of the 1860s, the abolitionists who followed through after the demise of slavery by working for civil and political rights and education for freed slaves. After writing three books on these subjects, I grew more and more interested in the political and

military events of the antebellum, war, and reconstruction years that provided the context for the themes that had formed the focus of my early work.

In recent decades, my writings have dealt with broader developments in the political and military history of the era. As Abraham Lincoln expressed it

in his second inaugural address, after almost four years of war, “all else chiefly depends” on “the progress of our arms.” That “all else” included the abolition of slavery and the reconstruction of the Union on the basis

of the “new birth of freedom” Lincoln had invoked at Gettysburg—the issues that had engaged my interest in the Civil War in the first place.

Two percent of the population died in the Civil War, a huge loss of life that has echoed down the generations since 1865.

That war was the most profound and traumatic event experienced by any generation of Americans. Two percent of the population lost their lives in the Civil War. If the same percentage of the population were to die in a war fought today, the number of American deaths would exceed six million. Such a huge loss of life has echoed down the generations since 1865. Of even greater significance, perhaps, the Civil War and Reconstruction did more to shape and reshape American institutions than anything else in our history, even the Revolution of 1776 that gave birth to the nation. That revolution left unresolved two questions that festered deep in the body politic for more than half a century: Could this radical experiment in republican government survive as one nation, indivisible; and could the United States, founded on a charter of freedom, continue to endure half-slave and half-free? Four score and seven years after the Declaration of Independence, Abraham Lincoln answered both questions: The United States must have a new birth of freedom to ensure that the nation would not perish from the earth.

While preserving the nation and abolishing slavery, the Civil War also radically altered the balance of power between the federal and state governments. Eleven of the first 12 amendments to the Constitution had contained a litany of limitations on the powers of the federal government. But the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments (1865, 1868, and 1870), which abolished slavery and mandated civil and political equality for freed slaves, set a precedent whereby six of the next seven amendments provided that Congress “shall have the power” to enforce them by appropriate legislation. However imperfectly Congress has sometimes exercised these powers, especially in the case of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, the Constitution that emerged from the Civil War vastly strengthened the nation at the expense of the states.

Many of the issues over which the Civil War was fought still resonate today: matters of race and citizenship; regional rivalries; the relative powers and responsibilities of federal, state, and local governments. Controversies over the symbolism of the Confederate battle flag continue to arouse passions among Southern whites, many of whom consider it a symbol of a proud heritage, and among blacks and white liberals, for whom it has become a symbol of slavery and white supremacy. The centrality of slavery in the causes of secession and war generates sometimes angry debates between the die-hard minority of Southern historians who wish to deny that centrality and the mainstream who insist on it.

Because writing and teaching history is a dialogue between the present and the past, a historian who writes about the abolition of slavery and the enactment of civil rights legislation and constitutional amendments by the victorious North is also, implicitly and sometimes explicitly, entering into the current debate about these issues. The use of federal power to bring about radical social and political change in the 1860s carries important

implications for the use of federal power to bring about change in matters of race, citizenship, and social welfare today. So long as this remains true—and there is no sign that these issues will go away anytime soon—the Civil War will remain, as historian Shelby Foote

once described it, “the crossroads of our being.”

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## What Like a Bullet Can Undeceive!

By Brenda Wineapple

“HOW SLOWLY OUR LITERATURE GROWS UP!” Nathaniel Hawthorne groused in 1845, never imagining that soon a bloody conflagration would catapult the country’s literature out of a protracted adolescence. Gertrude Stein, writing almost a hundred years later, saw the Civil War as having pushed the fledgling nation smack into the 20th century, thereby making the United States the “oldest country in the world.”

Stein’s perspicacious hyperbole aside, the great writing that came out of the Civil War had its roots in the period just before it, a period of violence, dissent, discomfiture, and fear. As early as 1845, Frederick Douglass was proving Hawthorne right; *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* was a book very much about the difficulty—and necessity—of growing up in a country that kept an entire people ignorant, childlike, subjugated. Then the pacifist Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier, in one of his best and tightest lyrics, “Icha-bod,” decried Massachusetts senator Daniel Webster’s treacherous support of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. It was as if an era of presumed integrity had ended,

which perhaps it had; certainly, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) was calling it into question. And her polemical bestseller appeared just as Herman Melville was cracking open the novel with a far-reaching, far-sighted story about whaling in which the main character drily asks, “Who ain’t a slave?”

Yet the war also goaded writers into a new,



Sisters Lucretia Electa and Louisa Ellen Crosssett, possibly millworkers

unsentimental understanding of form, of content, and of the country. For America was a scribbling nation, never more so than during the war, and not just because of the upsurge in cheaply printed books, illustrated weeklies, magazines, telegraphic dispatches, and patriotic poems, but because of the countless journals kept by those who tended the sick and wounded, the innumerable letters of soldiers to family and friends, the reports of generals in the field and of politicians on the stump, and the printed casualty lists that read like a doomed inversion of the catalogue of Americans Walt Whitman had celebrated in his 1855 poetry collection *Leaves of Grass*.

Wartime journals, with their Balzacian reach, supplanted the novel during the Civil War.

“The old forms rattle,” Ralph Waldo Emerson said in 1861; this was especially true for writers such as Melville. Turning from fiction to poetry to encapsulate what war had wrought—its flickering confusions, horrors, and mendacities—Melville now sought the “plain” phrase and “apt” verse, as he wrote in *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866), “More ponderous than nimble; / For since grimed War here laid aside / His Orient pomp, ’twould ill befit / Overmuch to ply / The rhyme’s barbaric cymbal.” The consolations of Longfellow’s rhymes were not for him. Or, as Melville exclaimed in the poem “Shiloh: A Requiem,” “What like a bullet can undecieve!”

Hawthorne, too, was vexed to nightmare by the conflict ushered in with the shots at Fort Sumter. These were the last years of his own life, though he did not know that; what he did sense was that he could not write a new novel, as he told his publisher, William Ticknor. In 1862, he and Ticknor went to Washington, D.C., to see the war firsthand; the result was not a book but rather Hawthorne’s Swiftian essay “Chiefly About War Matters,” published in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Satirizing the foibles both of human-

kind and, more precisely, the Northern readership of the *Atlantic*, this unequivocal and corrosively antiwar tour de force incorporates within it the objections of Hawthorne’s editor, James T. Fields, in a series of editorial footnotes, written by Hawthorne in the voice of a dull-witted Massachusetts patriot who misunderstands the author’s satire or condemns it as improper. Had Hawthorne lived until the end of the war, and had he continued to write essays, the New Journalism of the next century would have seemed tame beside them.

Emily Dickinson was also ahead of the curve, for her lyrics were already a Kafkaesque distillation of beauty, horror, and unremitting candor. Though for many years she was regarded as the New England recluse who didn’t hear the distant pop of gunfire or, from another point of view, deign to incorporate it into her protomodernist verse, war came to Amherst, as it did to every village and town, and Dickinson published several poems during this period in newspapers that ideologically supported the Union cause or helped raise funds for it. Yet she skeptically computed the high human cost of war, which was also Hawthorne’s point: “Unto like Story—/ Trouble has enticed me—/ How Kinsmen fell—/ Brothers and Sisters—/ who preferred the Glory—” she wrote circa 1862.

In 1867, Dickinson’s friend Thomas Wentworth Higginson—an *Atlantic Monthly* contributor, an abolitionist, and the leader of the first federally authorized regiment of former slaves during the war—published “Negro Spirituals,” an essay that included song lyrics he had scrupulously transcribed while serving with black troops in South Carolina. This essay plus those collected in his *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (1870) constitute some of the minor masterpieces that came directly out of the war. Higginson could hear the voices of unheralded women and men who would, in the future, contribute in no small measure to an American literature. Of course there was a

political agenda here; Higginson's was the emancipation of people as well as form.

**D**rarily jingoistic writing filled the pages of Confederate, Union, Republican, and Democratic newspapers, though partisanship could ripen the work, as was partly true of Henry Timrod, the so-called Poet Laureate of the Confederacy, who served briefly in the army, whose home was burned by William Tecumseh Sherman, and who died from tuberculosis just a year after the war's end. His "Ethnogenesis" welcomed the new Confederate nation born of nature—that is, cotton, or the "snow of Southern summers." Though in the South, poetry such as this often seemed the last, elegiac gasp of a failed romanticism, in no elegy did any poet excel more than Walt Whitman, whose empathetic, gripping war verse provided comfort where there was none. In poems such as "The Wound Dresser," he sings of amputated hands and perforated shoulders, and in his grand and poignant "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," written after Abraham Lincoln's assassination, the poet recalls the hymn "of the gray-brown bird, / With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night."

The critics Edmund Wilson and Daniel Aaron have argued that the Civil War produced no major novel. Mary Boykin Chesnut, the Samuel Pepys of the South, inadvertently suggested why. "I like pleasant, kindly stories now," she wryly commented in 1864. "We are so harrowed by real life. Tragedy is for times of ease." Yet as Wilson notes, Chesnut's nuanced characters and Chekhovian doom make her diary into the war's premier novel. Indeed, wartime journals, with their Balzacian reach, seem to have supplanted the novel: Chesnut's many-mooded diary is a case in point, as is young Baton Rouge native Sarah Morgan's and that of the ferocious record keeper George Templeton Strong. Insatiably curious about the direction of people and things, Strong wondered ceaselessly,

"Who is guilty of this Civil War?"

Yet a remarkable novel did appear, albeit 20 years after the war's end. Though set in the antebellum South, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is unthinkable without the war or Twain's youthful experiences in a conflict-ridden Missouri, so divided in its loyalties, as Twain once said, that "we couldn't really tell which side we were on." But *Huckleberry Finn* is a book about taking a side, the side of conscience.

The mordant Twain began his career as something of a platform speaker. Unfortunately, much of what the Civil War orators produced (vide Anna Dickinson or Sojourner Truth) has disappeared from view. Not so with the speeches of Frederick Douglass, whose wartime writing still rings with clarity, concision, and a gemlike brilliance of intellect and moral passion. But then, violence had early disabused him of illusion, as it had the fanatical John Brown, whose courtroom address and last written words sent a shock of recognition through the nation: "I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood. I had, as I now think vainly, flattered myself that without very much bloodshed it might be done."

Years later, Thomas Higginson observed that Brown, and then the war, helped produce in America a style of simplicity, directness, and unadorned expressiveness. Cooler tones allowed for more complex shades of feeling, even in the letters of Sherman, usually quoted only to expose the type of warfare he cruelly practiced. Yet these letters bristle with conflict, sorrow, outrage. "To those who submit to rightful law and authority, all gentleness and forbearance; but to the petulant and persistent secessionists," Sherman announced, "why, death is mercy, and the quicker he or she is disposed of the better." These emotions are as large, violent, and difficult as war, and rendered with the same ferocity.

More subdued, more famous, and no less pellucid are Ulysses S. Grant's *Personal Memoirs*, which Twain, who published them, called "a model narrative" that "will last as long as the language lasts." For like the diarists, the memoirists composed something that approximated the elusive novel that war made impossible. (Consider, for instance, Ambrose Bierce's 12-part essay "What I Saw of Shiloh," his account of fighting in that great battle as a sergeant in the 9th Indiana Regiment.) Walt Whitman famously said that the real war would never get into the books, but he was wrong; think of its nonfiction, think of its poetry.

And these two forms were conjoined by Lincoln, whose eloquence often blended the un-

pretentiousness of Sherman and Grant with the fresh ingenuities of Dickinson and Melville; the teleological lyricism of Whitman, Timrod, Brown, and Douglass with the caustic, tragic vision of Hawthorne and Chesnut. It contained the sorrow and faith of the spiritual; it could inspire, cajole, reason. Pointed and precise, it seemed to come from nowhere, rattling old forms, sweeping them aside, revising, reconstructing, articulating in pure, deliberate words great horror and great hope.

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## Best Civil War Military Books

By Joseph Glatthaar

WHEN I WAS ASKED TO CHOOSE FIVE GREAT books on military aspects of the Civil War, I was initially thrilled, then perplexed. The Library of Congress, which by no means houses all Civil War volumes, has at least 100,000 books on the subject in its collections. Attempts to narrow the list to five proved to be an impossible chore. Where would I be able to find room for Douglas Southall Freeman's three-volume *Lee's Lieutenants* (1946), James M. McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom* (1988), and the many other great Civil War military books? Ultimately, I chose a handful of very different titles that have had a lasting influence on me. I cannot imagine five books more insightful than these.

### *A Stillness at Appomattox* (1953)

Several years ago, the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, where I teach, hosted a Civil War conference. At dinner one evening my department chair, Lloyd Kramer, posed a question to the scholars assembled around the table: What book first piqued your interest in the

Civil War? Nearly all of us named *The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War*. It has wonderful photographs, fascinating, hand-drawn battle maps, and, best of all, a terrific text by Bruce Catton. For more than five decades, this book and Catton's words have inspired readers, young and old alike. His single best book is *A Stillness at Appomattox*, which won both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award in 1954.

Catton (1899–1978) was a newspaperman and government press secretary turned historian who eventually became the editor of *American Heritage* magazine. In 1951, he published the first in a trilogy about the Union Army of the Potomac. *A Stillness at Appomattox* is the concluding volume. The book begins in early 1864, with a bizarre plan conceived by an even more bizarre man named Judson Kilpatrick to rescue Union prisoners held on Belle Isle in Richmond, and concludes with Ulysses S. Grant's arrival to accept Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House. No Civil War historian ever painted a more vivid canvas with words than Catton, and in *A Stillness at*



Confederate soldier

*Appomattox* he is at his best. The character sketches, colorful anecdotes, and sheer drama are all here. Some have researched campaigns more thoroughly, and others have offered more exceptional insights and analysis, but to my mind, no one has ever told a Civil War story better.

### *The Life of Johnny Reb* (1943)

Bell Irvin Wiley's classic study of the common soldier in the Confederate army, *The Life of Johnny Reb*, was path breaking when it was published in 1943. A professionally trained historian with a doctorate from Yale, Wiley (1906–80) later wrote a companion volume, *The Life of Billy Yank* (1952), which is substantively a better book. During World War II he wrote histories for the U.S. Army Center for Military History, where he gained a comprehensive grasp of how armies functioned and were administered, and that knowledge is reflected in *The Life of Billy Yank*. But there is a deep understanding of—even

empathy for— Johnny Reb that Wiley, a native Tennessean, did not display when writing of Union soldiers. He drew on extensive research into soldiers' letters and diaries for the book, which is chock-full of marvelous anecdotes, humorous tales, colloquial expressions, and charming and creative orthography. It covers enlistment to medical care to combat to camp life, all from the perspective and in the words of Confederate "common soldiers." *The Life of Johnny Reb* is a social portrait of Confederate soldiers that was a full generation ahead of its time.

### *Personal Memoirs* (1885–86)

I first read *Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant* in college, when a history professor suggested the two volumes to me. I was immediately entranced. How could this dogged fighter with such a sanguinary reputation write so simply and clearly? Now I recommend them to students with writing problems. He teaches the great gift of simple, effective prose.

The writing also provides us with a wonderful glimpse of Grant the soldier. He retells dangerous episodes as if he were merely an observer who could not be injured. His ability to recall such extraordinary detail demonstrates just how calm Grant was in a crisis. *Personal Memoirs* also offers insights into the workings of the great general's mind. Amid the chaos and overload of war, Grant had the rare ability to sort through everything and focus on the one, two, or three truly important factors. He grasped problems in all their simplicity and did not worry much about the rest.

From a historical standpoint, *Personal Memoirs* is almost unflinching accurate. Grant's memory fails him only when he writes about capturing Vicksburg. He claims that all along he planned to wait until the spring, when the roads had dried. He would then

march along the west side of the Mississippi River, shuttle across, and campaign from the south. The contemporary record suggests that, after several unsuccessful attempts to take Vicksburg in the winter, he was completely stumped and had planned a frontal assault, when the alternative idea finally came to him.

The last section of volume 2, encompassing the campaigns of 1864 and 1865, is a rehash of the report Grant submitted to the War Department at the end of the war. Having fallen into bankruptcy, the former president was racing against the grim reaper to complete the memoirs and provide a nest egg for his wife, Julia. He died a few days after their completion.

### *Soldiering* (1977)

I stumbled upon *Soldiering* as I researched my dissertation on William T. Sherman's army during the March to the Sea and through the campaign in the Carolinas. Edited by naval historian K. Jack Bauer, it is the Civil War journal of Sergeant Rice C. Bull of the 123rd New York Volunteer Infantry. Bull (1842–1930) kept a detailed diary during the war. Nearly 50 years after he returned to his home near Hartford, New York, he completed the “journal” based on the diary and his wartime letters. Copies passed through the hands of family members, until his daughter shared one with Bauer.

*Soldiering* is the most earnest and charming postwar writing I have ever read. An intelligent yet humble farm lad, Bull enlisted in 1862. He did so from a “sense of duty,” asserting that he and his comrades “felt that if our country was to endure as a way of life as planned by our fathers, it rested with us children to finish the work they had begun.” Wounded twice at the Battle of Chancellorsville, Bull was captured and soon paroled. He returned to the Army five months later and marched through Georgia and the Carolinas. With candor and charm, Bull brings to life his comrades and their experiences, never straying to speculate about matters beyond what

he could see personally. Without boasting, he took great pride in his military service, and the reader finishes *Soldiering* with the knowledge that Rice Bull and a couple of million more like him restored the Union and destroyed slavery.

### *When the World Ended* (1957)

Emma LeConte, a 17-year-old resident of Columbia, South Carolina, whose geologist father worked for the Confederate government, personally witnessed the occupation and destruction of her city and recorded it in her diary. As Sherman's army marched through Georgia and into South Carolina, Emma's father was cut off from the family. For days she lived with fearful uncertainty over his fate, until he was reunited with the family 10 days before the Northern forces arrived.

The strain on residents as Union troops approached was palpable. Emma's mother was terrified, and could barely maintain her composure. “What a degradation!” Emma exclaimed when she described the raising of the Union flag over the capitol. That night, cotton embers, Union firebugs, and high winds transformed Columbia into an inferno. “Imagine night turned into noonday,” she wrote in her extraordinary depiction of that horrific experience. Emma refused to be cowed, and to the end cheered for Lee and his army. She was crushed by the Confederate defeat.

Brilliant and tough-minded, Emma LeConte survived the war, married, and, when her husband died, raised two children on her own. The diary, copied by Emma herself, was one of the first acquisitions of the Southern Historical Collection after its establishment in 1930 at the University of North Carolina, where historian Earl Schenck Miers later came upon it and edited it for publication. It's a remarkable account by a young woman robbed of the last of her youth by the Civil War.

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## Four Essential Books About Abraham Lincoln

By Andrew Ferguson

NO FIGURE LOOMS OVER THE CIVIL WAR AS Abraham Lincoln does, and some 17,000 books—from “spiritual biographies” to business management guides—have been published to attest to the fact. The greatest of these were written by Lincoln himself: I mean the countless collections of his speeches, notes, and letters that have appeared regularly and redundantly since 1865.

But the vast majority of lesser books can be traced back to a single volume. Biblical scholars like to talk about “Q,” a long-vanished compilation of the sayings and stories of Jesus that the Gospel writers evidently used as source material in composing their separate accounts. *Herndon’s Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life* (1889) is the Q of Lincoln literature, the wellspring of much of what we know, or think we know, about Lincoln’s character and pre-presidential life. It is a rambling, eccentric, ill-proportioned, and oddly

beautiful biography, written by Lincoln’s final law partner, William Herndon.

They were an odd couple. Lincoln called his partner Billy and Herndon called him Mr. Lincoln. Where the senior partner was cool and reserved and ironical, Herndon was high-spirited and earnest and easily swayed. Lincoln never tipped his hand in matters of religion and theology; Herndon shocked the locals of Springfield, Illinois, by loudly declaring himself an infidel and free-thinker. Lincoln was a teetotaler and Herndon drank—episodically but heroically.

Their difference in character was well illustrated when a young man came to their law office bearing a new autograph book. Lincoln wrote simply, “Today, Feb. 23, 1858, the owner honored me with the privilege of writing the first name in this book—A. Lincoln.” Herndon autographed the page in a much larger hand: “The struggles of this age and succeeding generations

for God and man—Religion—Humanity and Liberty with all their complex and grand relations—may they triumph and. . .” It went on from there.

Herndon loved Lincoln extravagantly, as both friend and statesman. When news of his partner’s murder reached Springfield, where the shingle of “Lincoln and Herndon” still hung outside his law office, he embarked on a journalistic endeavor unique in American historiography: He interviewed or corresponded with everyone he could find

You can’t understand Abraham Lincoln without understanding the country that has loved him so.

who knew Lincoln, traveling from Chicago to southern Indiana and countless hamlets between. Eventually he lapsed into a prolonged period of depression and penury, but with the help of a friendly journalist he was at last able to fashion the mountain of notes and recollections into a book that was published two years before his death in 1891. From it we get the foundational images of Lincoln: the backwoods boy repulsed by his first sight of slavery, the dreamy romantic heartbroken by the early death of his friend and maybe-sweetheart Ann Rutledge, the folksy lawyer with the steel-trap mind.

Some of Herndon’s material has been debunked in its particulars, but with its telling personal details and flavorsome accounts of frontier life—it reads in parts as vividly as a forgotten chapter from Mark Twain’s *Life on the Mississippi*—no reader will doubt the enduring value of “the essential book,” as the Lincoln scholar David Herbert Donald called it. It is impossible for biographers to take on Lincoln without filtering their work through Billy Herndon, whether they know it or not.

Most of them do know it, of course; indeed, the disputes about the contradictions and inconsistencies in Herndon’s source material are likely to be endless. When Benjamin Thomas wrestled

with Herndon in his great biography *Abraham Lincoln* (1952), for example, he rejected the story of Lincoln’s romance with Ann Rutledge as fanciful. Today, several biographers accept Herndon’s account as too good *not* to be true. Whoever gets the best of the argument, it’s a fact that Thomas wrote a masterpiece, the most readable and reliable one-volume Lincoln biography. He aimed at a general audience, “the Lincoln beginner, . . . the person who can devote only a small portion of his time to learning about Lincoln.” The beginner should begin here. Thomas wore his learning lightly, with a literary flair. And he was probably right about Ann and Abe.

Scholarly entanglements make up a large part of Merrill D. Peterson’s *Lincoln in American Memory* (1994). The book is a history of history: an account of how Lincoln the man and Lincoln the god got all mixed together, from the moment of his martyrdom to the present day. I told myself I would get through this essay without using the cliché “magisterial,” but I’m at a loss otherwise. You can’t understand Lincoln without understanding the country that has loved him so, and Peterson had the gentle touch, wry humor, and scholarly command to tell such a peculiar love story. In all of American historiography there’s nothing else quite like this book, unless it’s another work by Peterson, *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind* (1960). It’s magisterial, too.

Undeniably great, these three books have earned a place on the top shelf not merely of Lincoln books but of American literature. So you might catch your breath reading the claim made by the historian Allen Guelzo that Harry Jaffa’s *Crisis of the House Divided* (1959) is “incontestably the greatest Lincoln book of the 20th century.” But Guelzo is correct, incontestably. Jaffa, who’s still ticking at age 93, is a philosopher, not a historian. It was his mission, as one of his followers (he has followers) put it, to “rescue Lincoln from the historians.” Let the scholar-squirrels tug poor Ann Rutledge this way and that like a wishbone: What make Lincoln Lincoln—what make him inexhaustibly fascin-

ing and supremely important to America and the world—are the ideas that moved him to do what he did.

Jaffa's book is that rare Lincoln volume that is untouched by Herndon's mountain of material. His text instead is the transcript of the great debates between Lincoln and Stephen Douglas during the Illinois senatorial campaign in 1858. When Jaffa wrote, in the late 1950s, fashionable historians saw the debates as mere political maneuvering between two ambitious pols; many still do. Jaffa saw something more: a 19th-century version of an argument begun 2,300 years ago, between Socrates and Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic*. Justice, said Thrasymachus, was simply "the advantage of the strong over the weak." Lincoln saw the same wicked principle in Douglas's "popular sovereignty."

"Two principles," Lincoln said, "have stood face to face from the beginning of time, and will ever continue to struggle. The one is the common right

of humanity and the other the divine right of kings." Jaffa's triumph is to make this grand claim of Lincoln's a matter of immediate importance. In pursuit of facts, historians can detach themselves from their subjects until a reader is left to wonder what all the fuss was about. Jaffa doesn't let us off the hook so easily. "If the issue between Lincoln and Douglas was a mere talking point," Jaffa wrote, "then what justification did Lincoln have to oppose Douglas and bring on such an angry and deep-seated struggle?"

In *Crisis of the House Divided*, Harry Jaffa rescued Lincoln's greatness and, for some of us anyway, made it unassailable. And he did this because he believed that ideas are the motive force in human affairs—the ideas that Socrates pursued, that the Founders embodied, that Lincoln rediscovered in giving his country a new birth of freedom.

ANDREW FERGUSON, a senior editor at *The Weekly Standard*, is the author of *Land of Lincoln: Adventures in Abe's America* (2007).

## Best Books on Slavery and Race Relations

By Ira Berlin

HISTORY IS ABOUT ARGUMENTS, ARGUMENTS that we have about the past. The best history tells us something about ourselves as well as something about bygone times. This is particularly true of the new history of the American Civil War that has emerged—and is emerging—with the sesquicentennial of the great conflict.

During the past generation, one matter—slavery—has transformed the history of the Civil War. Once thought a minor aspect of a contest that was rooted in a dispute about the locus of political power (that is, the issue of states' rights), or, at best, a subterfuge for evading the real issues of sectional differences respecting banks, railroads, tariffs, and land policy, slavery

has emerged as the central cause of the war, as well as the primary determinant of its course and the terms of its settlement. Although the general public still seems fixed on the matter of states' rights—nearly half of Americans, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey, believe it was the reason the war was fought—the focus on slavery has inspired a raft of new scholarship. That, in turn, tells us something about the American people at the beginning of the 21st century.

With this emphasis on slavery has come a new interest in the question of race, a focus no doubt reinforced by the election of America's first black president. The meanings of both whiteness and

blackness have come under scrutiny as historians have investigated the causes of the war, the transformation of the conflict from a war to maintain national unity into a war of liberation, and the nature of Reconstruction, the postwar arrangement that eventually affirmed the demise of slavery but preserved and enhanced the doctrine of white racial supremacy.

Perhaps nowhere do the new history of the Civil War and the renewed interest in the history of race come together better than in Eric Foner's Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (2010). Foner, whose histories of the origin of the Republican Party and Reconstruction have informed American political history for more than a generation, traces Lincoln's evolution from a small-town racist—that is, a believer in the inferiority of people of African descent—to the Emancipator who, in the last year of the war, signaled a willingness to extend suffrage to black men.

Among the achievements of *The Fiery Trial* is that it provides a sense of how deeply and thoroughly the view that black people were inferior to whites pervaded American society. From this perspective, Lincoln's embrace of emancipation and his willingness to imagine—however hesitantly and incompletely—an interracial America are all the more striking. Lincoln's transformation, however, was neither direct nor easy. Foner's genius is in exposing the process by which the president peeled away his old ideas and embraced new ones and in emphasizing



Union soldier

the critical role black people—particularly black soldiers—played in this transformation. As Foner describes the development of Lincoln's beliefs, he gives a sense of how the nation itself changed between 1857, when Chief Justice Roger Taney issued his opinion in the Dred Scott case (which held that black people were not citizens of the United

States and “so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect”) and the ratification, in 1868, of the Fourteenth Amendment (which broadly defined American citizenship to include all born in the United States, black people among them).

If the war recommitted the nation to its founding egalitarian principles—Lincoln's “new birth of freedom”—what happened to that commitment? In *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (2001), a powerful study of the struggle over the memory of the war, Yale historian David Blight explains how the wartime revolution was rolled back. For those who cheered the final demise of slavery and the advances of universal equality, the story of the postwar retreat from civil rights was not a pretty one. It is, however, every bit as gripping as the war itself.

Enlisting an extraordinary array of sources, Blight shows how the fight against slavery was written out of the history of the Civil War. In its place stood the myth of a gallant struggle between principled white men, North and

South, whose shared belief in white supremacy overcame differences that once rankled the nation. As they wrote Jim Crow into law, purveyors of sectional reconciliation largely erased the campaign for black equality—and often black people themselves—from the history books. As Blight makes clear, while the new racial dispensation spoke of sectional comity, the process—both the sectional reconciliation and the new history that fostered it—was contested, as black people and their emancipationist allies resisted the new regime. In the end, the old racial order of white supremacy appeared with a new face. Race—the meaning of blackness and whiteness—which had been remade by the war, was remade again in the war's aftermath.

In emphasizing the fluidity of racial ideas during the Civil War era, Foner and Blight raise the question of what exactly race meant to white Americans in the 19th century. For most scholars, the principle that embodied the American definition of race could be found in a rigid adherence to the one-drop rule, the notion that any measure of African ancestry made an individual black. For most white Americans, this truism, enshrined in law as well as custom, became the signature of the racial regime in the United States and the rule that distinguished it from other racial regimes in the Americas and elsewhere.

Recent work, however, casts doubt on the salience of the one-drop rule. In an ingeniously constructed study of judicial decisions involving racial identity—cases that determined if a person was legally white or not—Ariela J. Gross, a professor of law at the University of Southern California, argues that 19th-century white Americans cared far less about the one-drop rule than has been commonly thought. Her book *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (2008) reveals that time and again, in cases of disputed racial identity, white American jurists chose to ignore evidence of black ancestry in favor of common reputation in the community. That is, if a person acted

white—associated with white people, joined in the white community's social and political life, and behaved in a manner that white men and women characterized as respectable—he or she would be deemed white, even in the face of evidence to the contrary. In short, whiteness was a matter of performance and not a product of heredity or a quotient of blood. In the United States, despite the numerous prohibitions on racial mixing and screeds against miscegenation (a word of American invention), white people did not treat race as a fact of nature but as a product of social interaction.

Other studies of the Civil War era that focus on the matter of race support Gross's findings. One of the most telling is Joshua Rothman's *Notorious in the Neighborhood: Sex and Families Across the Color Line in Virginia, 1787–1861* (2003). In a series of brilliant, iconoclastic essays, Rothman, a history professor at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, provides an eye-opening view of race as it was regarded in antebellum Virginia. In one of his most notable pieces, he focuses on Charlottesville, then a small town just down the road from Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. Nancy West, proprietor of the town's largest bakery during the first decades of the 19th century, was—like several other Charlottesville residents, including a number of Jefferson's children by Sally Hemings—the descendent of a white planter and a black slave woman. West lived openly with David Isaacs, a Jewish dry-goods merchant, with whom she had seven children, one of whom married Eston Hemings, the man whose DNA would eventually confirm Jefferson's relationship with Sally Hemings.

The presence of West and Isaacs clearly grated on some of the town's white residents, who were particularly irked by their practice of

As they wrote Jim Crow into law, purveyors of sectional reconciliation largely erased the campaign for black equality—and often black people themselves—from the history books.

shuttling money back and forth between them to elude creditors. But when the couple were brought to court, charged with living in a lewd and lascivious relationship, the case quietly disappeared from the docket. Another charge, that West and Isaacs were engaged in an illegal common-law marriage—perhaps self-evident given their seven children—likewise disappeared, suggesting that most white residents of Charlottesville had no objection to the presence of these two productive property holders, despite West's color. Again, performance, not blood, determined race.

That is not to say that the laws respecting blood quotient—in Virginia, one black ancestor in four—were not of significance. The one-drop rule clashed constantly with the on-the-ground reality of race. As the sectional conflict heightened in the 1850s, these laws tangled in ways that revealed

the absurdity of racial divisions, as Richmond courts formally denominated those who fell below the official threshold “not-a-Negro.”

The works of Ariela Gross and Joshua Rothman provide a suitable backdrop for an age when the black president of the United States travels to Ireland to celebrate his Irish ancestors and recover his lost apostrophe. In openly characterizing himself as a “mongrel,” President Barack Obama reflects a willingness of the American people to address the complexity of their country's racial history and the war that, as Eric Foner and David Blight demonstrate, set it on a new course.

IRA BERLIN, a professor of history at the University of Maryland, College Park, has written extensively about slavery in America. His books include *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (2002), *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (1999), and *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (1975).

## My Favorite Civil War Novels

By David S. Reynolds

“THE REAL WAR WILL NEVER GET INTO THE books.” So wrote Walt Whitman, who witnessed the Civil War close up as a volunteer nurse in war hospitals in Washington, D.C. As effective as his war writings are, one can read them and yet acknowledge the truth of his point about the war never being fully represented in words. Tens of thousands of Civil War books later, his declaration still holds true. But fiction gives us a visceral understanding of what Whitman called “the seething hell and black infernal background” of the war. Well-crafted novels bring alive the richly textured atmosphere and varied personalities of the war in a way that even the best journalism and history books can't. A number of masterly fiction writers have used the bleak context of the Civil War to offer profound insights into the human condition. Here are my favorite Civil War novels.

### *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895)

Stephen Crane (1871–1900), a minister's son born several years after Appomattox, wrote one of the great war novels of all time when he was scarcely more than a boy. In *The Red Badge of Courage*, he produced powerful war scenes by imaginatively embellishing stories he had heard and read. His brother William, with whom he lived for several years, was an attorney who had schooled himself on the Battles of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, and young Stephen had studied books such as *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (1887–88).

The hero of *The Red Badge of Courage* is Union Army private Henry Fleming, whom Crane refers to as “the youth.” Tossed by moods and emotions in the campground and

on the battlefield, Fleming works his way through cowardice and terror, gaining a sense of manhood after being tried in the crucible of combat. The battle described in the novel is commonly thought to be that of Chancellorsville, but, like the Army officers who appear briefly, it is not named. Crane was uninterested in the specifics of history. The battle he portrays—a murky chaos of smoke, whistling bullets, and soldiers dropping “like bundles”—could be any Civil War engagement, and Henry Fleming is the universal soldier.

### *The Killer Angels* (1974)

In *The Killer Angels*, Michael Shaara (1928–88) dramatizes the activities of well-known participants in the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863. He etches detailed portraits of the Confederate generals, including Robert E. Lee, James Longstreet, J. E. B. Stuart, George Pickett, and Jubal Early, and, on the Union side, officers such as Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, John Buford, and George Meade.

Shaara strips the generals of their mythic trappings and makes them accessibly human. The reserved, blunt Lee has a surprising aversion to slavery and is guided by a Christian conscience. An aggressive warrior who believes in well-organized frontal assaults, he differs from his second in command, Longstreet, who prefers defensive maneuvers, and from Pickett, a dandyish tyro whose hunger for military action fuels his famous, doomed charge across an open field.

A stickler for fact, Shaara provides maps that show the positions of the opposing armies on successive days of the battle. His style has the understated directness of Ernest Hemingway



Confederate soldier

and the sensitivity to human thought patterns reflected in the works of James Joyce and William Faulkner.

After Shaara's death from a heart attack in 1988, his son, Jeffrey, wrote *Gods and Generals*, a prequel to *The Killer Angels*, as well as a sequel, *The Last Full Measure*, and other war novels. All of them were bestsellers, but none approach the magnificence of the original.

### *Love and War* (1984)

John Jakes's entertaining popcorn epic is part of a sprawling trilogy that spans the entire Civil War as it follows the lives of two families: the Mains, South Carolina rice planters, and the Hazards, Pennsylvania steel manufacturers. Linked by friendship and marriage, the families serve as windows on sectional tensions that escalated in the antebellum period (the subject of *North and*

*South*, the first novel in the trilogy), flamed into bloody conflict (*Love and War*), and persisted during Reconstruction (*Heaven and Hell*). Jakes has turned his historical family sagas into something of a cottage industry—he's written 18 consecutive *New York Times* bestsellers—but his Civil War trilogy has a dramatic, human quality that even those who turn up their noses at popular fiction find compelling.

All three novels in the trilogy are terrific, but *Love and War* is the most obvious choice

In *The March*, E. L. Doctorow turns the tables on *Gone With the Wind*, that staple of Civil War literature, by depicting William Tecumseh Sherman's historic march from an anything-but-romantic angle.

for war buffs. Its cast of characters includes the famous—Lincoln, Lee, and Jefferson Davis among them—as well as the unfamiliar and the purely fictional. Jakes has said in interviews that he toured battle sites, read scores of history

books, and pored over *The War of the Rebellion*, a mammoth collection of primary documents of both the Union and Confederate armies. Even his flights of fancy—as in his whimsical account of a radical secessionist plot to assassinate Davis and establish a Pacific Confederacy—come across as credible.

Although Jakes's stated goal of challenging romanticized renditions of the war such as *Gone With the Wind* (1936) is disingenuous—after all, many writers have revealed the war's horror and banality—the book has the feel of history experienced at ground level. Jakes interweaves graphic renderings of Civil War battles with a plot that involves corruption, betrayal, and illicit sex. Small wonder that this thousand-odd-page novel was adapted into an ABC miniseries, *North and South, Book II*, starring marquee actors such as Hal Holbrook, Patrick Swayze, and Lesley-Anne Down.

## *The March* (2005)

My choice of a fourth favorite Civil War novel is a tossup between *The March*, by E. L. Doctorow, a virtuoso writer who once served in the U.S. Army, and the similarly titled and nearly contemporaneous *March*, by former journalist Geraldine Brooks. Brooks spins an imaginary tale around the war experiences of Mr. March, the father in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, who leaves his family to serve in the Union Army. I tip the scales toward Doctorow because he cleverly turns the tables on *Gone With the Wind*, that staple of Civil War literature, by depicting William Tecumseh Sherman's historic march through Georgia and South Carolina from an anything-but-romantic angle.

Doctorow renders the Union Army as a gargantuan, slug-like creature moving inexorably along as Sherman deploys his scorched-earth tactics—stealing livestock, pillaging homes, and burning cities and plantations. Sherman himself, the “small brain” of this monster, is far from general-like. A tall, bristle-chinned, ungainly plebian whose legs almost touch the ground when he sits on his horse, Sherman justifies his actions on the principle that war is hell.

Given this outlook, Doctorow could have produced a predictable tale about war's grim determinism. But part of his novel's magic lies in how its unusual characters—including two comical Southern stragglers who save themselves by donning enemy uniforms, a proud ex-slave who captivates a Union soldier, and a prim Georgia socialite who gives herself to a charismatic Union field surgeon—provide fresh perspectives on the devastating campaign that was the death blow to the South.

DAVID S. REYNOLDS is an English professor at the City University of New York Graduate Center. His books include *Walt Whitman's America* (1995), *John Brown, Abolitionist* (2005), *Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson* (2008), and *Mightier Than the Sword: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Battle for America*, which has just been published.

# Sympathy for the Devil

Reviewed by *W. Barksdale Maynard*

SINCE THE 1960S, HISTORIANS have heartily condemned the antebellum white Southerner as racist, reactionary, un-American, even genocidal. So it is surprising to find a new account of the Civil War era—by an academic, no less—that dares give this stock villain a new hearing. In *America Aflame*, David Goldfield, a historian at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, tries in a sincere way to get inside the mind of the slave owner, to understand what he was thinking and why he felt so threatened by the North that he was ready to go to war.

Without condoning slavery for a second, Goldfield paints a portrait of white Southerners as rightfully proud of the role their ancestors had played in forging a new nation, even as they watched in dismay as the political clout of their region diminished before an expanding North. Worse, they endured no end of verbal abuse for participating in the slave economy—an economy they had found themselves heirs to, and dependent upon, without easy alternatives; that remained perfectly legal under federal law; and in which Northerners themselves participated abundantly by buying cotton goods. From the white Southern perspective, none of this seemed fair.

As abolitionists grew increasingly belligerent in the 1840s, slave owners foresaw nothing but humiliation for themselves in the country that Virginians George Washington and Thomas

**AMERICA AFLAME:**  
How the Civil War  
Created a Nation.

By David Goldfield.  
Bloomsbury.  
632 pp. \$35

Jefferson had heroically established. Southerners “were Americans too,” Goldfield reminds us, even though “the North came to believe that only by excluding the South would there be a future for America.”

Goldfield even hints that something other than blood lust for slavery lay at the heart of Southern motivations: “Throughout the increasingly acrimonious debates of the 1850s, this was at the core of the South’s concerns: to be treated equally in a confederation of equals.” In this assertion is audible a faint echo of the old “states’ rights” thesis—relegated to the academic wastebasket in recent decades—that argued that Confederates fought for the democratic right to govern their own destiny more than they fought to defend slavery. Many Southerners still believe this. In a January Harris poll, two-thirds of whites surveyed in the former Confederate states indicated that the preservation of states’ rights, not slavery, was the main rea-



Confederate soldier

son that the South fought in the Civil War. A reader of Goldfield might feel inclined to give these numerous dissenters a second hearing.

Provocatively, Goldfield points an accusing finger at Protestant evangelism for self-righteously pushing the nation toward a holocaust that killed more than 620,000. And he concludes that the Old South was more sinned against than sinning in this regard. He opens his book with a scene in which a mob torches a Catholic convent in Boston in the 1830s. With apocalyptic rhetoric, Northern evangelicals ferociously assailed not only slave owners but the one million new immigrants from Ireland putatively beholden to Rome, evidence of many American Protestants' all-consuming obsession with "individual freedom as a threatened legacy from the Revolutionary era." An alarmed Daniel Webster warned against politicization of "religious sentiments," only to find himself branded a "fallen angel."

Then God told John Brown to invade Virginia in 1859. This act of terrorism at Harpers Ferry (in what is now West Virginia) triggered a revulsion in the South akin to what many Americans felt toward Al Qaeda after 9/11—and imagine if we learned that Mohamed Atta had been cheerfully bankrolled by six upstanding citizens of our own country, as Brown was by a secret committee in Massachusetts. Adding to the insult, the new Republican Party sent "shock troops of younger voters" called Wide-Awakes into Northern streets in quasi-military midnight demonstrations to the martial strains of "The Freedom Battle Hymn." Caught up in this evangelical tide, Lincoln himself grew portentously "messianic," Goldfield says. In debate with Stephen Douglas, he uncompromisingly declared the sectional dispute "not less than a contest for the advancement of the kingdom of Heaven or the kingdom of Satan."

Among today's professoriate, the Old South is generally about as popular as George W. Bush, Fox News, and waterboarding, so it

is rare to find a book that doesn't instantly and utterly condemn it. Surely Goldfield is gutsy to attempt a balanced look at the Civil War era from a perspective he calls "neither pro-Southern nor pro-Northern." He is no Southern apologist, mind you, but a fair-minded scholar trying to understand the past on its own terms, not ours—and so he gives an ear to the grievances of those old cardboard-cutout devils, the antebellum whites who whistled "Dixie."

W. BARNSDALE MAYNARD is the author of five books on American history and architecture. He designed the Delaware Memorial at Gettysburg.

## A Moral Question

Reviewed by Christopher Clausen

READERS OF THE *NEW YORK Times* and *Washington Post* online op-ed pages were surprised late last year when the two newspapers began blogging a series of events that had taken place a century and a half earlier, starting with the secession of South Carolina in December 1860 and leading within a few months to the Civil War's first shots at Fort Sumter. Although mostly written by professional historians, these blogs resembled their political counterparts in the sense that they tended to be militantly one-sided. Their authors seemed to feel the need to stand with the North against disunion and, above all, against slavery.

It may seem a quaint moral affectation for historians to line up indignantly against a long-vanished and thoroughly discredited institution at this late date, but academic historiography of the Civil War has been moving in that direction since the civil rights movement of the early 1960s, which coincided with the war's centennial. Many older historians believed that eventual reconciliation between North and South had led to the United States'

**1861:**  
The Civil War  
Awakening.

By Adam Goodheart.  
Knopf.  
481 pp. \$28.95



Union soldier

success as a society and world power in the 20th century, and therefore tried to give both sides their due while recognizing their historical distance from us. The newer tendency is to see the war solely in terms of slavery and evaluate the combatants in the light of today's racial attitudes.

One of the *Times*' regular bloggers is Adam Goodheart, director of the C. V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience, at Washington College on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the most "Southern" region of that border state. In his new book about the war's first months, Goodheart goes so far as to declare, "Americans today find it fairly easy to fathom the idea that there was a right side and a wrong side in World War II, a side that stood for freedom and a side that stood against it. . . . We find it harder, though—much harder than most people did in the 1860s—to accept that there was a right side

and a wrong side in our own Civil War. It is difficult to fathom that millions of Americans could have fought as enemies of America."

It's hardly surprising that "most people" in the 1860s saw the war in terms of right and wrong; people engaged in warfare generally do. The problem for anyone who aspires to historical perspective is that Southerners saw the rights and wrongs, including the all-important issue of freedom, in the opposite way from Northerners. For us to approach the Civil War with the same reflexes we bring to contemporary politics (with the exception that we think radical Republicans back then were the good guys instead of the bad) obscures the pastness of the past, and

allows us to adopt a smug pose toward one side. By the standards of today, after all, both North and South had huge moral blind spots.

Correctly emphasizing that without slavery there would have been no secession and no war does not mean that no other important issues were at stake. Yet the Civil War, Goodheart insists, "is a story of how some people clung to the past, while others sought the future; how a new generation of Americans arose to throw aside the cautious ways of its parents and embrace the revolutionary ideals of its grandparents." It may be one sign of his distaste for ambiguity that he fails to notice how the second part of this statement applies at least as well to the seceding South as to the Unionist North.

Like other tillers of overworked historical fields, Goodheart tries to make a familiar story new by writing about (and, as much as possible, quoting from) individuals whose

varied experiences add new perspectives. While these novelistic passages are well sourced and sometimes absorbing, Goodheart's relentless stress on his moralistic thesis narrows the range of unfamiliar voices. All the characters he dwells on at length are anti-slavery Northerners, from future president James Garfield to Elmer Ellsworth, a young friend of President Abraham Lincoln, to Thomas Starr King, an abolitionist clergyman who helped save California for the Union.

Though the story is filled with foreshadowing, Goodheart's main account ends portentously on July 4, 1861, a few weeks before the war's first major battle at Manassas. The transformation of the Northern cause from merely restoring the prewar Union into launching a frontal assault on slavery still lay in the future, which gives the book a curiously prefatory feel.

CHRISTOPHER CLAUSEN, the author of *Faded Mosaic* (2000) and other books, writes frequently about the Civil War and historical memory. His most recent contribution to the *WQ* was "America's Changeable Civil War," in the Spring 2010 issue.

## Free-for-All

Reviewed by Nina Silber

FOR A MOMENT AMID THE ferment after the Civil War, it seemed possible to at least some Americans that women would win the right to vote. The abolition of slavery put broad questions of voting rights and citizenship on the table, and legislators were eager to act. Women suffragists hoped their time had come. Instead, they saw their "fighting chance" evaporate with the ratification in 1870 of the Fifteenth Amendment, which outlawed disenfranchisement on the basis of race but not of sex. Women would have to wait half a century before they secured the vote in 1920.

Faye E. Dudden, a professor of history at Col-

gate College, attempts to shed new light on this episode in *Fighting Chance*. Hers is a tale of the ideological, political, and often intensely personal disputes that pitted former political allies in the abolitionist cause—including Wendell Phillips, Lucy Stone, Frederick Douglass, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony—against one another. As they organized and campaigned for suffrage reforms around the country, these ardent activists eventually divided over the Fifteenth Amendment, which Stanton and Anthony did not support because it failed to give women the vote.

Indeed, the two women ended up espousing a racist agenda that denigrated African-American and immigrant men in order to advance the cause of white womanhood. "Think of Patrick and Sambo and Hans and Yung Tung," Stanton wrote in her newspaper, *The Revolution*, as she editorialized in 1868 about the folly of allowing such ignorant men to make laws for educated women. Dudden seems interested in at least partly exonerating Stanton and Anthony, portraying their racist rhetoric as a response to those she believes were most to blame for upending the fighting chance for women's suffrage—chief among them Boston abolitionist Wendell Phillips, who in 1865 succeeded William Lloyd Garrison as president of the American Anti-Slavery Society.

Money is a central thread in Dudden's story. In a legal and economic system that limited women's access to property and wage-earning opportunities, women reformers encountered onerous financial obstacles in funding their campaigns. Phillips was the trustee of an important bequest that both women's rights and antislavery activists could potentially draw upon. Believing that "antislavery" work would remain unfinished until blacks were accorded the ballot and full rights, he directed the money toward that goal and froze the women out.

Lack of funding was indeed an important factor in women's failure to secure the vote, but

### FIGHTING CHANCE:

The Struggle Over Woman Suffrage and Black Suffrage in Reconstruction America.

By Faye E. Dudden.  
Oxford Univ. Press.  
285 pp. \$34.95



Union sergeant and companion

Dudden's focus on it constrains her analysis. Did Stanton really launch racist diatribes because Phillips deprived her cause of money? Surely the pervasive racism of 19th-century America had something to do with Stanton's attitude, as did her position of relative privilege and her distance—she lived in New York City—from the turmoil of the postwar South. Dudden insists that Phillips, in making the antislavery cause primary even after chattel slavery was declared dead, upheld a “pretense that ‘slavery’ was still at issue.” But she acknowledges that immediately after the war President Andrew Johnson “warned that emancipation was only an experiment.” Can Phillips honestly be accused of upholding a mere “pretense” in the face of what appeared a genuine threat to the cause he and others had worked so hard for?

In her eagerness to play down Stanton's racism, Dudden emphasizes Stanton's lawyerly tendency to argue “in the alternative”—her penchant for trying out different arguments, even

conflicting and racist ones, so long as she could gain some ground. And Dudden recounts other expressions of racial intolerance, including those of Lucy Stone, a supporter of black suffrage, perhaps in an effort to make Stanton and Anthony's bigotry appear less conspicuous.

All this gives readers a vivid sense of the intensely emotional and rancorous political landscape in which reformers worked immediately after the Civil War. Yet too much in this account hinges on highly personal developments that cannot be considered the most telling aspects of the story. Ultimately, the “fighting chance” for winning women's suffrage was lost not because of Wendell Phillips's arrogance or Elizabeth Cady Stanton's lawyerly style of argu-

mentation, but because Americans remained immersed in a climate of intense racial conflict. This volatile atmosphere convinced Phillips and other reformers that a campaign to advance voting rights for women was a liability in the critical work of securing, in the fullest sense, black emancipation.

NINA SILBER, a professor of history at Boston University, has written extensively about gender relations in the Civil War era.

## Battle Over Britain

*Reviewed by Don H. Doyle*

DURING THE 1860S, THE world watched with tremendous interest as the United States descended into a fratricidal war that seemed to doom the young country to fragmentation and prove the experiment in democratic self-government a

### **A WORLD ON FIRE:**

Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War.

*By Amanda Foreman.*  
Random House.  
956 pp. \$35

failure. There were two conflicts: the land war and the diplomatic duel over the recognition of the Confederacy as a sovereign nation. British historian Amanda Foreman has written a splendid book that weaves the war in America together with the diplomatic contest in Britain, the most crucial foreign battle zone.

A century and a half ago, Britain was the world's mightiest maritime power. It also possessed a large industrial economy that depended heavily on cotton from the South. The South's fire-eaters dashed into secession confident that Britain would recognize the Confederacy's independence and aid its struggle with loans, ships, and arms, perhaps even outright military intervention. This confidence derived not only from Britain's economic interests but from Southerners' knowledge that Britain feared that a "cotton famine" might ignite revolutionary social unrest among its workers. King Cotton "waves his scepter . . . over the island of Great Britain," one of the secessionists boasted.

Britain's government and its people were at odds over which side to support. Though the public was strongly antislavery, at the outset of the war it was not clear that the North intended to end the institution, nor that it had any higher moral purpose than to preserve national boundaries. Diplomats and propagandists for North and South worked diligently, often in secret, to persuade politicians, the press, and the public of the righteousness of their respective sides' causes. Foreman deftly shifts among the blood-soaked battlefields in America, the marble halls of government, and the grungy offices of diplomatic legations abroad, building suspense as the fortunes of war and international politics changed by the day.

Abraham Lincoln's secretary of state, William H. Seward, thought secession was all bluff. Even after shots had been fired, he entertained a scheme to foment a war against Spain, France, or Britain that, in his imagina-

tion, might bring the South into patriotic solidarity against an alien enemy. "If any European Power provokes a war," he told William Howard Russell, war correspondent for the hugely influential *Times* of London, "we shall not shrink from it. A contest between Great Britain and the United States would wrap the world in fire." Some thought Seward was coming unhinged from the strain of the secession crisis, but he deliberately and repeatedly issued the same warning to members of the Washington diplomatic corps.

Foreman's book, despite its ominous title, is about how the highly combustible relations between these "uneasy cousins" came close to igniting but did not. In November 1861, two Confederate agents were apprehended by crewmen of a U.S. warship who had come aboard a British mail packet, the *Trent*, in the Bahama Channel. The resulting dispute brought the two nations dangerously close to war before Seward agreed to let the agents go.

That Anglo-American relations survived had much to do with Britain's self-interest—it valued wheat from the North as much as cotton from the South. British leaders also feared a third costly war with the United States, this time with Britain's tenuous possession of Canada at risk. Most important, by early 1863 Lincoln had transformed the conflict into a war for emancipation, and the British public rallied to the cause of the "Union and Liberty," forcing Britain not only to remain neutral but to halt the secret construction of Confederate ships in British ports. The Union's victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg in July 1863 coincided with the changing perception abroad that the Confederacy's cause was to perpetuate human slavery and the Union's was to end it.

Foreman fills her pages with a large cast of fascinating characters, many of them prominent public figures and many more of whom most readers will never have heard: Benjamin Moran, a disgruntled underling in the U.S. legation in London, poured out his tortured soul in a richly detailed diary. Frank Vizetelly,

an artist covering the war for *The Illustrated London News*, seems always to have been on the scene with his keen eye and facile pen. Confederate soldier Francis Dawson, one of some 50,000 Britons who participated in the war on both sides, provided keen observations at every stage of the conflict.

Foreman, who made a splash several years ago with *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, which was made into a movie starring Keira Knightly, has produced a book that is solidly grounded in a prodigious amount of research. Eminent historians have gone before her, but she breaks new ground in telling this vastly complicated story through the eyes of myriad characters. She is also remarkably even-handed. She brings partisans of North and South, American and British, on stage to tell their story, but in the end she upholds the British tradition of neutrality.

DON H. DOYLE, a professor of history at the University of South Carolina, was a public policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center earlier this year. He is at work on a book about the international context of the Civil War.

lagger has been an establishment stalwart. He is the editor of a respected series on significant Civil War battles and campaigns; author of a number of books on the conflict and its cultural legacies, including *The Confederate War* (1997); and a mentor to many of the field's most prominent young scholars.

The premise of *The Union War* is simple: Preserving the Union, rather than abolishing slavery, "remained the paramount goal" for the North. Recent generations of Civil War scholars have completely missed the boat, Gallagher argues. In their quest to resurrect the reputations of abolitionists, emancipationists, and "Radical" Republicans—that is, folks whose values seem more in accord with our own—and uncover the agency of American slaves, they have marginalized the central actors in the great drama, sullied the federal government and its representatives with charges of racism, and completely misread the social cum political cum cultural milieu of the 1860s. He rightly castigates historians of the Civil War who treat it as "a

## At War Over the War

Reviewed by Kevin Adams

MANY HISTORIANS WHO specialize in other periods of U.S. history regard the Civil War as the bastion of antiquarians. Their irritation is inflamed by the public's unending fascination with the war, reflected in the impressive sales figures for academic studies in the field (which swamp those of books in other domains of history) and in the tendency of ordinary Americans to ask historians questions about Chancellorsville rather than their own work.

So it is surprising that leading Civil War historian Gary W. Gallagher, in his book *The Union War*, gives aid and comfort to his scholarly enemies by launching his own attack on other specialists in the Civil War era. A professor of history at the University of Virginia, Gal-

### THE UNION WAR.

By Gary W. Gallagher.  
Harvard Univ. Press.  
215 pp. \$27.95



Union soldier in dress uniform

drama largely devoid of armies, battles, and generals,” blaming this omission on a “dismissive attitude” toward military history cultivated by many in the larger historical profession.

This is heady stuff. And yet *The Union War* is frequently marred by a lack of analytical subtlety. Gallagher tends to depict scholarly disagreements over points of emphasis as intractable—and mutually exclusive—conclusions. In the 1970s, Gallagher writes, historians began a “massive re-evaluation” of the war that placed emancipation and black military participation at the center of the Union war. In time, a new “overarching consensus” emerged that to understand the Civil War, one had not only to start with slavery, but to treat slaves as important historical actors. There are some grounds to quibble with Gallagher here, but this is a fair summation of the field’s evolution. Not so his conclusion, which is that modern histories distort the war when they propose “the emergence of emancipation as an overriding Northern goal.”

In mounting this argument, Gallagher flattens out the complicated motives of loyal Northerners, and pays insufficient attention to change over time. There is no doubt that the preservation of the Union was important at the war’s onset. But what kind of Union? *Harper’s Weekly* editorialized as early as May 1861, “Whatever may be the intentions of the Government, the practical effect of a war in the Southern States, waged by Northern against Southern men, must be to liberate the slaves. This should be well understood.” Gallagher is correct to remind us that many Northerners at the time did not understand the war as a march toward universal liberty, that the course of the war was not predetermined, and that many advances in civil rights for African Americans emerged only because Andrew Johnson’s disastrous Reconstruction policies transformed moderate Republicans into “radicals.” But to insist that a static “Union” should supplant emancipation as the war’s defining feature is precipitous.

By its end, *The Union War* strikes the reader as idiosyncratic and tendentious, by turns incisive,

stubborn, and retrograde. Gallagher’s pointed reminders can be forceful and some hit the mark precisely. More often, however, his analysis and angst not only seem misplaced, but unnecessary. Few specialists would deny that “union” mattered—just as Gallagher frequently concedes the centrality of slavery (and its abolition) to the Civil War era. It’s a question of emphasis—and in his insistence that the only way to study the period is to recapture the notion of the Union that appealed to many Northerners, Gallagher marginalizes the new research questions, methods, and outlooks that define the historian’s craft.

KEVIN ADAMS teaches history at Kent State University and is associate editor of the journal *Civil War History*. He is the author of *Class and Race in the Frontier Army: Military Life in the West, 1870-1890* (2009).

## They Were There

Reviewed by Tim Morris

*THE CIVIL WAR: THE FIRST YEAR*  
Told by Those Who Lived It is

the first of a projected four-volume series from the Library of America, to be released annually during the war’s sesquicentennial. The series will include journalistic accounts, state papers, speeches, diaries, letters, sermons, and even poetry and songs, all of which are meant, the editors say, to offer a narrative of the war years. But if it’s narrative in conception, the first volume is largely rhetorical in content. It hovers somewhere between academic source book and the old educational TV series *You Are There*. Serious collectors of Civil War books will want to own it, and teachers of Civil War history will want to assign it. But the reader looking for a true narrative might be better off staying with one of the many excellent secondary and analytical histories, such as James M. McPherson’s *Battle Cry of Freedom* (1988).

We like to think that going back to primary sources gives us an unbiased, unmediated look at the past. Of course, Americans of 150 years ago were no strangers to editorial bias. Every opinion,

**THE CIVIL WAR:**  
The First Year Told  
by Those Who  
Lived It.

Edited by Brooks D.  
Simpson, Stephen W.  
Sears, and Aaron  
Sheehan-Dean.  
Library of America.  
814 pp. \$37.50

even every sensory perception, recorded in the documents in *The Civil War: The First Year* is filtered through a writer's ideologies. "Most of these documents were not written for publication," observe the editors. But these private thoughts often bear the stamp of public rhetoric, showing how conscious the writers were of the narratives they were spinning. North Carolinian Catherine Edmonston, who witnessed Union attempts to resupply Fort Sumter, wrote in her diary, "The North is sowing the wind; see that ere the next generation she does not reap the Whirlwind!"

That is not to say that the texts collected in *The Civil War: The First Year* are uniform in genre or style. They are highly eclectic, ranging from public pronouncements to intimate family letters, from as-it-happened reporting to decades-later recollection, from calculating persuasive addresses to matter-of-fact life records.

Charles Haydon's diary for May 1861 falls into this last category. Haydon was a sergeant in a Michigan volunteer unit, and the extracts from his diary reproduced here concern his initial deployment to a camp outside Detroit. In these few pages we get a spare sketch of the dull tension of life among men going off to war. "Nearly all the men

have diarrhea [sic] & several are in the hospital quite sick": That was the overwhelming daily reality of Civil War armies. Yet in these pages Haydon never leaves Michigan, never bears witness to what we've come to regard as the great historical events of the war.

In contrast to Haydon's unselfconsciousness, there's former Union officer Abner Doubleday's account of the fall of Fort Sumter. Doubleday published his memoirs in 1876, by which time the defense of Sumter had passed into legend. "In aiming the first gun fired against the rebellion I had no feeling of self-reproach, for I fully believed that the contest was inevitable, and was not of our seeking," he wrote. In all likelihood, the Doubleday of 1861 was more concerned about artillery technique than justifications for deadly force. But he wasn't journaling while he was firing.

*The Civil War: The First Year* shows us actors who knew they were onstage, some of whom had been scripting their parts for years. "The enemy carried out their programme" is Doubleday's curious way of putting it. Theatrics are history too.

TIM MORRIS teaches American literature at the University of Texas, Arlington, and compiles the online bibliography *Guide to Civil War Novels*.

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# PORTRAIT



## *Letting Go*

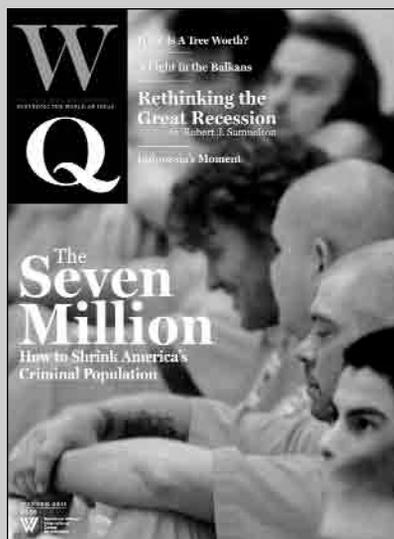
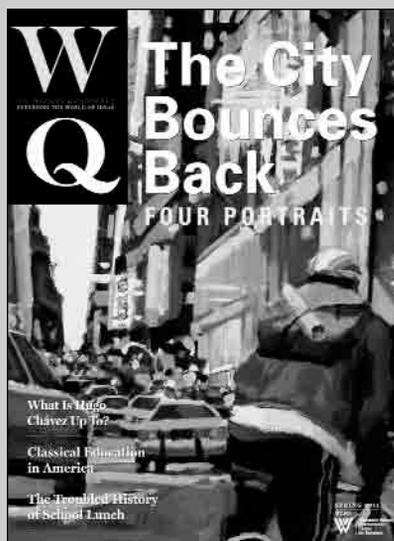
The celebrated photographer Philippe Halsman (1906–79) was best known for his sober, iconic portraits of legendary figures such as Albert Einstein and John F. Kennedy. In a 1959 collection, *The Jump Book*, he took a leap into the lighthearted, charming almost 200 midcentury luminaries, including Marilyn Monroe, the Duke of Windsor, and politician Adlai Stevenson, into being photographed at their most discomposed: while jumping. “Everybody hides behind a mask. In a jump . . . the mask falls. The real self becomes visible,” Halsman declared playfully in the book’s preface. Pictured *sans masque* is one of Halsman’s illustrious subjects, the eminent jurist Learned Hand, of the U. S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, then age 87.

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