

International's 10-point corruption scale—is hardly sterling, and surveys show that little more than a third of its people express confidence in their national governments. A public that perceives its government as ineffective and riddled with corruption, Grigorescu writes, is a public ripe for arguments that the weaknesses of democracy itself are the problem.

PRESS & MEDIA

Democracy in a Sentence

THE SOURCE: "Rejected by *The New York Times*? Why Academics Struggle to Get Published in National Newspapers" by Douglas A. Borer, in *International Studies Perspectives*, Aug. 2006.

NOTHING IS QUITE AS GRATIFYING to the Ph.D.-animated ego as hearing the phrase, "I loved your op-ed in the paper." Two impulses spur academics to submit opinion

pieces to the brutal cursor of newspaper editors. One is disgust with published pundits, and the second is celebrity, according to Douglas A. Borer, associate professor of defense analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. The chances of making it into one of the big four—*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *The Wall Street Journal*—are only somewhat better than the odds of winning the Powerball lottery. Even so, some intrepid scholar breaks the barrier every week.

Academics must speed up, tighten up, and keep trying, Borer writes. Get an idea and deliver a finished product in 24 to 36 hours. Keep even the most profound topics to 700 words—



"We do not usually acknowledge unsolicited manuscripts, but we want you to know that we tore yours into tiny pieces. Yours sincerely, The Op-Ed Page."

newspapers have to cede much of their space to advertisements that pay the bills. Avoid long definitions. "We know that use of that ever-loaded term 'democracy' in a journal article entails a commitment of four or more pages of literature review in order to dodge the finely honed machetes of peer reviewers," Borer writes. "In an op-ed you can explain democracy in a sentence."

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Why Be Reasonable?

THE SOURCE: "The Morality of Human Rights: A Problem for Nonbelievers?" by Michael J. Perry, in *Commonweal*, July 14, 2006.

THOUGH THE 20TH CENTURY witnessed some of the worst instances of man's inhumanity to man, it also saw the birth of the human rights movement. As German philosopher Jürgen Habermas has noted, the language of human rights is now the only one

"in which the opponents and victims of murderous regimes and civil wars can raise their voices against violence, repression, and persecution." But on what authority does that language rest? If human rights, as some have suggested, have their foundation only in religious teachings, how long, as the Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz asked, "can they stay afloat if the bottom is taken out?"

According to Michael J. Perry, a professor of law at Emory University, the three documents that make up what is informally called the International Bill of Rights—the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966)—are "famously silent" on the question of why we should live our lives in a way that respects human dignity. Perry says that "a number of contemporary thinkers have tried to provide a nonreligious ground for the moral-