



ALERT

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ALERT, a publication of the Information Resource Center at the American Center for Educational Exchange, offers abstracts of current articles or reports in major areas of U.S. domestic or international affairs. Full-text articles are available to you upon request or following links at the end of the articles. *ALERT* is also posted on the IRC webpage of the Beijing Embassy website at http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/irc_services.html.

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Economics and Trade

1. THE END OF GROWTH

Heinberg, Richard

MuseLetter No. 222, November 2010

Heinberg, author, educator and speaker, notes that access to abundant and cheap fossil fuels over the last couple of centuries sparked a boom unprecedented in human history of growth in economic activity and human numbers, such that we have now become accustomed to thinking that continuous growth is a normal state of affairs. Heinberg contends that the economic crisis that began in 2007-2008 is not simply another cyclical recession, but represents a permanent break with past decades -- the world is now colliding with fundamental barriers to ongoing economic expansion, namely, the depletion of resources such as fossil fuels and minerals, the proliferation of environmental impacts related to their exploitation and use, and the inability of financial systems geared to never-ending growth to adjust to resource scarcity and to service the mountain of debt in the context of a shrinking economy. Even fast-growing economies such as China may continue to grow for a while longer, but will inevitably reach a ceiling dictated by shrinking natural resources. Heinberg maintains that humanity has to develop a desirable "new normal" that fits with constraints imposed by depleting resources, otherwise "we will create by default a much less desirable 'new normal' whose emergence we are already beginning to see." Adapted from a book set for publication in 2011; currently available online at

<http://richardheinberg.com/222-the-end-of-growth>

2. THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL SECURITY: SOLVENCY, WORK, ADEQUACY, AND EQUITY

Urban Institute, November 12, 2010, 8 pages

Social Security faces a \$5.4 trillion shortfall over the next 75 years, but modest adjustments can halt that slide. Some argue that those adjustments should go beyond solvency, to improve the adequacy and equity of benefits, better protect vulnerable workers, and encourage work at older ages. Although the how and when are still up for debate, policymakers can address these problems without removing the basic protections provided by one of the nation's most popular and successful programs. This brief, which summarizes three Urban Institute events on Capitol Hill, lays out central points of the Social Security debate and options for reform. Currently available online <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412253-Social-Security-Solvency.pdf>

3. GULF NEEDS IMMEDIATE GUIDANCE AND FUNDING, REPORT SAYS

Strohm, Chris

National Journal online, August 27, 2010

President Obama should immediately appoint a senior official to work with disaster relief organizations in the Gulf Coast, while oil giant BP should give those organizations an infusion of cash to help them continue providing services, according to "Before the Next Katrina," a report released in August by the Center for National Policy. "The leadership of nongovernmental organizations shares the widespread local confusion about how the federal response framework for the oil spill will work with the federal response framework for a hurricane," the report states. Currently available online at http://www.nationaljournal.com/njonline/po_20100827_9525.php

4. **A HIGH-RISK ENERGY BOOM SWEEPS ACROSS NORTH AMERICA**

Schneider, Keith

Yale Environment 360, September 30, 2010

The author, a contributor to the New York Times, writes that energy companies are pouring huge sums of money into developing new sources of fossil fuels across the Western U.S. and Canada. This so-called unconventional oil and gas are locked in shale or tar sands formations, and are inaccessible by normal drilling methods. Development of unconventional energy carries high environmental risks, including open-pit mining in the case of the Alberta tar sands and hydraulic fracturing fluids for shale gas. It is more energy-intensive, generating far more CO₂ emissions than conventional drilling, and requires 3-5 times as much water in a region that does not receive much rainfall. Schneider writes that the explosion in unconventional energy extraction “raises a troubling question – at a time when the country should be embracing a renewable energy revolution, it is hurtling in the opposite direction.” Currently available online at

<http://e360.yale.edu/content/feature.msp?id=2324>

5. **IMAGINING A DEFICIT PLAN FROM REPUBLICANS**

Leonhardt, David

New York Times, September 28, 2010

According to Times columnist Leonhardt, cutting the federal budget deficit is impossible without raising taxes or cutting Social Security, Medicare, and defense spending. “And they [those three programs] happen to be the ones the Republican pledge exempts from cuts,” he writes. The Republicans’ Pledge to America is a political document, but truthful fiscal conservatives acknowledge that the federal budget cannot come anywhere near balance only by eliminating waste, privatizing services, and cutting federal jobs and pay. The record of Republicans controlling the White House and Congress in 2001-2006, when they turned a big budget surplus into a big deficit, challenges their fiscal credibility. “Remember, when politicians tell you that they are opposed to tax increases, Medicare cuts, Social Security cuts and military cuts,” Leonhardt says, “they’re really saying that they are in favor of crippling deficits.” Currently available online at

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/29/business/economy/29leonhardt.html?ref=global>

6. **POST-PARTISAN POWER: HOW A LIMITED AND DIRECT APPROACH TO ENERGY INNOVATION CAN DELIVER CLEAN, CHEAP ENERGY, ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY AND NATIONAL PROSPERITY**

Hayward, Steven F., et al

American Enterprise Institute, October 12, 2010, 36 pages

American energy policy is at a standstill. A new approach is needed that focuses on energy innovation as a key driver of American economic growth, national security, and health and safety benefits. This joint paper by the Brookings Institution, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Breakthrough Institute argues that the federal government should invest roughly \$25 billion per year in military procurement, R&D, and a new network of university-private sector innovation hubs to create an energy revolution. The program should be financed through several mechanisms, including a low price on carbon. Currently available online at <http://www.aei.org/docLib/Post-Partisan-Power-Hayward-101310.pdf>

International Security

7. THE ANATOMY OF JAPAN'S SHIFTING SECURITY ORIENTATION

Sunohara, Tsuyoshi

Washington Quarterly, vol. 33, no. 4, October 2010, pp. 39-57

The author, a senior writer with the Japanese newspaper Nikkei, presents a detailed historical overview of the U.S.-Japan security relationship since the end of World War II and an analysis of current political thinking in Japan. Most Japanese believe that the "Yoshida Doctrine," which was adopted at the end of the war and allowed Japan to focus on economic growth and infrastructure development while the United States provided security guarantees, was the right policy at the time. But many now see a need for Japan to move away from dependence on the U.S. toward a more independent security posture, possibly based on U.N.-centered multilateralism rather than the bilateral arrangement with the Americans. While the U.S.-Japan relationship was perceived by many Japanese as heading toward a more equal footing under the George W. Bush administration, with Japan sending troops to Iraq and helping with refueling operations during the war in Afghanistan, there is concern that the Obama administration is slowly downgrading the relationship in order to curry favor with China. In order to improve the situation, both the U.S. and Japan need to "change the way each views the other," acknowledging the new realities. Japan needs to increase its defense spending and embrace the principle of collective self-defense, and the U.S. needs to understand that "the fissures beginning to appear in the alliance's underlying foundation are deeply rooted" and not just a problem with leaders such as recent prime minister Yukio Hatoyama and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). Currently available online at http://www.twq.com/10october/docs/10oct_Sunohara.pdf

8. DEFENDING A NEW DOMAIN

Lynn, William J.

Foreign Affairs, vol. 89, no. 5, September/October 2010, pp. 97-108

According to Lynn, U.S. deputy secretary of defense, the U.S. military's 15,000 networks are probed thousands of times daily through its seven million computing devices scattered across hundreds of installations. For a number of reasons, retaliation to cyberattacks is not an option; instead, the Pentagon relies on deterrence to deny any benefit to attackers. With little ability to predict where and how threats will emerge, the United States needs flexible strategy and capabilities. The Pentagon has already recognized cyberspace as a domain of warfare on par with land, sea, air, and space. The new strategy aims to train and equip cyberdefense forces, employ layered protections with a strong core of active defenses, help secure the networks that run critical infrastructure, build collective defenses with U.S. allies, and invest in the rapid development of additional cyberdefense capabilities.

9. "DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL": THE LAW AND MILITARY POLICY ON SAME-SEX BEHAVIOR

Burrelli, David F.

Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, October 14, 2010, 25 pages

In 1993, new laws and regulations pertaining to homosexuality and U.S. military service came into effect reflecting a compromise in policy. This compromise, colloquially referred to as "don't ask, don't tell," holds that the presence in the armed forces of persons who demonstrate a propensity or intent to engage in same-sex acts would create an unacceptable risk to the high standards of morale, good order and discipline, and unit cohesion which are the essence of military capability. Under this policy, but not the law, service members are not to be asked about

nor allowed to discuss their “same-sex orientation.” The law itself does not prevent service members from being asked about their sexuality. This compromise notwithstanding, the issue has remained politically contentious. Currently available online at http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/R40782_20101014.pdf

10. GRAND STRATEGY OF ‘RESTRAINTMENT’

Martel, William C.

Orbis, vol. 54, no. 3, Summer 2010, pp. 356-373

Martel, Associate Professor of International Security Studies at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, writes that the American strategy of containment that served effectively during the Cold War is no longer relevant to the many challenges we have been facing over the past two decades. He believes that the central problem in American foreign policy today is the failure to articulate a grand strategy as a guide to the policies we need to implement; as a result, our policies have been inconsistent, and have swung between the extremes of defending the status quo or unilateral revision of the system. He points out that some of our policies, such as democracy promotion or threats of military action, have bred resentment of our sense of American exceptionalism; not only have they become less effective, but we may well not have the resources in the future to continue such policies. Martel proposes a strategy of “restraintment”, the purpose of which would be to counteract the forces that undermine international peace and security; it would also be characterized by far greater self-restraint on our part, and greater cooperation with other states and international organizations. He points out that such a strategy would be more consistent with traditional foreign policies of other states; he concludes, “it is time for policymakers and the public to reorient themselves toward a strategy in which U.S. actions are guided, not by a vision of what we want to prevent ... but by a unified vision of the world we want to create.”

Global Issues / Environment

11. THE LATEST FROM THE LABS

Humes, Edward

Sierra Club, September/October 2010

U.S. universities are on the forefront of innovation of clean fuels: turning barnyard waste into biogas at Western Washington University; making microbial biofuels with electricity-eating bacteria at the University of Massachusetts; synthetic trees that scrub carbon dioxide from the air at Columbia University; and smaller, more powerful batteries at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and several other university labs. The author also looks at environmental “techno-fails” such as cold fusion, off-shore drilling and the internal combustion engine. Currently available online at <http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/201009/labs.aspx>

12. REDUCING URBAN WATER USE

Brown, Lester

Earth Policy Institute Book Bytes, November 3, 2010

Brown, founder of the Earth Policy Institute, argues that using water to wash away human and industrial wastes is an “outmoded system, made obsolete by new technologies and water shortages.” Our modern “flush and forget” system disrupts the nutrient cycle by removing nutrients that originated in the soil and dumping them in the sewer system. Not only are these nutrients lost to agriculture, but they cause overload of marine ecosystems, resulting in ocean “dead zones”, and spread pathogens. Additionally, water-based sewage disposal systems are very

expensive to run. Brown writes that composting toilets drastically reduce water usage by removing the toilet from the water system, making it much easier to reclaim the nutrients and recycle used household water. He notes that many developing countries are beginning to realize that high-maintenance water-based sewage systems are not environmentally or economically viable. Currently available online at http://www.earth-policy.org/book_bytes/2010/pb4ch06_ss5

13. **UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR U.S.-BORN CHILDREN**

Passel, Jeffrey

Pew Hispanic Center, August 11, 2010

An estimated 340,000 of the 4.3 million babies born in the United States in 2008 were the offspring of unauthorized immigrants, according to a new analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data by the Pew Hispanic Center, which is part of the nonpartisan Pew Research Center. Nearly 79% of the 5.1 million children younger than age 18 of unauthorized immigrants were born in the United States, making them U.S. citizens by virtue of the 4th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In total, 4 million U.S.-born children of unauthorized immigrant parents resided in this country in 2009, alongside 1.1 million foreign-born children of unauthorized immigrant parents. Currently available online at <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1696/unauthorized-immigrants-babies-born-united-states-citizens?src=prc-latest&proj=peoplepress>

14. **THE WEB MEANS THE END OF FORGETTING**

Rosen, Jeffrey

New York Times Magazine, July 25, 2010, 30-37, 44-45

The author, a professor at George Washington University, notes that legal scholars, technologists and cyberthinkers are wrestling with the first great existential crisis of the digital age -- the impossibility of erasing your posted past. For most users, this includes regrettable activities or photographs posted on sites such as Facebook and MySpace that are now an embarrassment, best left forgotten. But how to do this? Cyberlaw expert Jonathan Zittrain believes that the law should permit people to declare 'reputation bankruptcy' every decade or so, wiping out certain categories of personal information online, especially if it can be viewed by future employers and groups with whom an individual may later have to connect. One solution comes from the University of Washington which is developing a technology called Vanish that makes electronic data, such as e-mail messages and photos and text posted on the Web, 'self-destruct' after a specified period of time. Currently available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/25/magazine/25privacy-t2.html>

15. **YOU ARE WHAT YOU SPEAK**

Deutscher, Guy

New York Times Magazine, August 29, 2010, pp. 42-47

The author, an honorary research fellow at the University of Manchester, believes that the long-discredited idea that your mother tongue shapes your experience of the world may be true after all. Seventy years ago, in 1940, a popular science magazine, M.I.T.'s Technology Review, published a short article that set in motion one of the trendiest intellectual fads of the 20th century, language's power over the mind and the belief that English as the mother tongue restricts the ability of the individual to be able to think what they believe. Unlike other languages, the English language obliges the speaker to specify certain types of information that can be left to the context in other languages, such as German, Spanish and even Chinese, which can use the same verb form for past, present and future actions. Currently available online at

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/29/magazine/29language-t.html> under the title DOES YOUR LANGUAGE SHAPE HOW YOU THINK?

U.S. Society and Values

16. THE BEATS: PICTURES OF A LEGEND

White, Edmund

New York Review of Books, August 19, 2010

This review of the catalog for Beat poet Allen Ginsberg's photographs, exhibited at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., discusses the Beats as self-described legendary geniuses, and the role of Ginsberg, who visually chronicled them. Ginsberg's fame was as a poet, but financial necessity later in life caused him to market his candid photos of friends Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, Neal Cassidy, Peter Orlovsky and others, penning literary captions 40 years after many of the photos were taken. The photos show the subjects in youth, decline and old age, capturing glimpses of their personalities. The Beats wrote about each other's exploits in a myth-making manner, prizing spontaneity in life and art. Currently available online at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2010/aug/19/beats-pictures-legend/>

17. COVERT OPERATIONS

Mayer, Jane

New Yorker, vol. 86, no. 25, August 30, 2010

Charles and David Koch, billionaire brothers and owners of one of the largest privately-held companies in America, have been long-time philanthropists and libertarians who believe in lower taxes, less government, fewer social services and less oversight of industry. Over the course of three decades, they have secretly channeled hundreds of millions of dollars to dozens of groups and organizations that espouse a variety of conservative political causes. This special investigative report chronicles the history of the Koch brothers' undercover political activity, including their financing of the Tea Party movement since its inception in early 2009. Currently available online at

http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/08/30/100830fa_fact_mayer?currentPage=all

18. GOVERNMENT INFORMATION: KEY ONLINE AND PRINT RESOURCES

Sproles, Claudene

Choice, vol. 47, no. 12, August 2010, pp. 2231-2241

The author, a government documents librarian at the University of Louisville, notes that U.S. government information is relevant to a wide range of science and humanities curricula, as well as many facets of everyday life. At some point, students, researchers and the general public will encounter government information, whether it be income-tax forms, Social Security applications or Census Bureau statistics. In the past decade, the format and distribution of such information has changed; many print publications, including standard reference sources, have ceased altogether, or they are now issued in conjunction with their electronic version. The main U.S. government site was GPO Access, created in 1994 by the Government Printing Office (GPO), to provide government electronic information but in 2009, GPO released Federal Digital System (FDsys), with an enhanced digital content management system. This essay attempts to locate some of the most common government information sources.

19. **MAKING POLITICS MORE PERSONAL**

Britt, Bruce

Deliver, vol. 6, no. 4, August 2010, 14-19

One of the most impressive results of the 2008 presidential elections was the success in which Barack Obama's campaign used an array of contemporary marketing techniques; pundits coined the phrase "Brand Obama" to describe his fundraising prowess. One of these was a targeted mail campaign through the U.S. Postal Service. After he became President in January 2009, his organization, Organizing for America (OFA), sent e-mails to supporters asking them to sign a symbolic "Declaration of Support" for President Obama's health care bill, with a free, personalized thank-you certificate to supporters of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act 2010, who donated \$50 to OFA. 350,000 supporters responded to the free certificate, while an additional 6,000 responded to the \$50 donation/framed certificate offer. What these techniques proved was that brands that do the best job of maximizing their messages are smart enough to continue the relationship with direct mail and that marketing continues to play an ever-growing role in the evolution of both political figures and the messages they promote. Direct mail will now be one of the major ways that politicians will be able to communicate with voters.

20. **TEA MINUS ZERO**

Judis, John B.

New Republic, vol. 241, no. 4883, May 27, 2010, pp. 18-21

Once of the fastest-growing political developments in the country has been the conservative Tea Party Movement, which started in February 2009 when CNBC commentator Rick Santelli, speaking from the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, called for a "Chicago Tea Party" to deal with the mortgage crisis. The Tea Parties are the latest in a series of conservative insurgencies, such as the anti-tax rebellion of the late 1970s, and the Moral Majority and Christian Coalition of the 1980s and 1990s. Although not orchestrated by the Republican National Committee, the group has picked up a lot of support from the likes of Fox News host Glenn Beck and former vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin, who have given the Tea Party high-profile coverage. The author notes that as the 2010 elections approach, the Tea Party members are a force to be reckoned with.

The Rule of Law

21. **THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT: TIME TO ADJUST U.S. FOREIGN POLICY**

Zipprich, Scott

Orbis, vol. 54, no. 4, Fall 2010, pp. 644-655

The author, Deputy with the Army Office of the Staff Judge Advocate in Fort Knox, Kentucky, writes that the U.S. has long supported the idea of an International Criminal Court (ICC). However, when it came time to sign the Rome Statute, the treaty that created the ICC, the U.S. refused to sign it, on the grounds that American military personnel serving overseas could be prosecuted by the ICC, or NGOs with anti-American agendas could launch politically-motivated cases with the ICC. In 2002-2004, the Bush administration took further steps to withhold military assistance and economic aid to countries that signed the ICC treaty and who had not signed a bilateral immunity agreement with the U.S. Protests from the international community and reactions from the U.S. military persuaded the administration to relax some of its previous decisions. Zipprich notes that the Obama administration is more favorably disposed to the ICC, but has yet to clearly articulate its policy toward the treaty. He writes that countries that have not

signed the treaty are not immune from the court's jurisdiction, as the ICC's ongoing efforts to prosecute senior officials from Sudan illustrate. U.S. ratification of the treaty would send a clear signal to the world of U.S. commitment to human rights, notes Zipprich, and would enable the U.S. to better enact changes to the treaty; by isolating itself from the treaty, the U.S. continues to lose international credibility.

22. **THE SPEECH ACT: THE FEDERAL RESPONSE TO "LIBEL TOURISM."**

Barbour, Emily C.

Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, September 16, 2010, 18 pages

The 111th Congress considered several bills addressing "libel tourism," the phenomenon of litigants bringing libel suits in foreign jurisdictions so as to benefit from plaintiff-friendly libel laws. Several U.S. states have also responded to libel tourism by enacting statutes that restrict enforcement of foreign libel judgments. On August 10, 2010, President Barack Obama signed into law the Securing the Protection of our Enduring and Established Constitutional Heritage Act (SPEECH Act), P.L. 111-223, codified at 28 U.S.C. §§ 4101-4105, which bars U.S. courts, both state and federal, from recognizing or enforcing a foreign judgment for defamation unless certain requirements, including consistency with the U.S. Constitution and section 230 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. § 230), are satisfied. Currently available online at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41417.pdf>