



ALERT

NUMBER 94
May /June 2011

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.

To request articles, please contact Ms. Gu Hong or Ms. Wang Wei by telephone, fax, mail or e-mail guhx@state.gov, or ircacee@state.gov. To request by mail, please circle the articles you wish to receive, include your name, address, and telephone number and return this list to us.

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Information Resource Center (IRC)
American Center for Educational Exchange
Jingguang Center, Suite 2801
Hujialou, Chaoyang Qu
Beijing, 100020
Tel: 86-10-6597-3242, Ext.5212 or 5207
Fax: 86-10-6597-3006

<http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/irc.html>

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Economics and Trade

1. DO MEGA SPORTING EVENTS PROMOTE INTERNATIONAL TRADE?

Rose, Andrew; Spiegel, Mark

SAIS Review of International Affairs, Winter-Spring 2011

The authors write that hosting large sporting events, such as the Olympic Games or the World Cup, allows countries to signal their desire to participate on the world stage. Rose and Spiegel, with the University of California at Berkeley and the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, respectively, note that proponents of major sporting events point to tangible benefits of doing so, such as increased trade. However, their studies suggest that the economic benefit associated with mega sporting events seldom justifies the considerable expense of building infrastructure that has a peak usage of only a few weeks. While hosting games does boost trade, the authors believe the primary benefit to hosting a sporting event is a greater openness to the outside world and an increase in international standing. They note that unsuccessful bidders for the Olympic Games experience the same increase in reputation and a boost in trade, at a substantially lower cost.

2. THE GREATEST COUNTRY ON EARTH

Stiglitz, Joseph

Slate, March 7, 2011

The Indian Ocean island nation of Mauritius is not particularly wealthy, nor does it have natural resources. Yet, the author notes, Mauritius has developed a thriving, diverse economy, a democratic political system, a strong social safety net, free higher education and widespread homeownership. Stiglitz says that American and European politicians could learn a lot from what some have called the “Mauritius miracle”; he believes that a key to the country’s success is that Mauritius has chosen a way to organize society that leads to less inequality. The country has also decided that most military spending is a waste of money, and realized that universal education is essential to social unity, given Mauritius’ potential religious and ethnic differences. Currently available online at <http://www.slate.com/id/2287534/?GT1=38001>

3. HOW WISCONSIN CAN TURN ECONOMIC AUSTERITY INTO PROSPERITY

Brown, Ellen

Market Oracle, March 7, 2011

The author, an attorney, writes that as states struggle to balance their budgets to deal with shrinking revenues, pension funds for state government employees are on the chopping block. Brown points out that this need not be the case; by forming a state-owned bank, Wisconsin could put its public pension fund into the bank, and manage the funds in-house or put it to work by lending to local businesses; this would generate tax revenues for the state and cover annual pension payouts. She points to the example of North Dakota, the only state in the country to have its own bank, and the only state to escape the credit crunch. Several other states are exploring the possibility of setting up their own state-owned banks. Available online at <http://www.marketoracle.co.uk/Article26754.html>

4. INVESTING IN GROWTH

Arslanalp, Serkan; Bornhorst, Fabian; Gupta, Sanjeev

Finance & Development, March 2011

The authors, all with the International Monetary Fund, write that policymakers in developing countries point to the lack of infrastructure as an impediment to growth and the difficulty in

obtaining financing. The authors note that the important question is whether a country should expand its public investment; to explore the issue of the productivity of public infrastructure, they conducted a study of 48 advanced and developing nations during the period 1960-2001. They found that, overall, public investment has a positive effect on growth; however, the higher the levels of public capital stock, the growth effect of additional capital stock diminishes. In advanced economies with very high levels of public capital stock, the growth effect is close to zero, with public investment being used more as a demand management tool to counter the business cycle. Their study finds that for developing economies, the payoff is greater but accrues over a longer period of time. Currently available online at <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2011/03/Arslanalp.htm>

5. **THE RESURRECTION**

Hirsch, Michael

National Journal, March 26, 2011

In this profile of Citigroup and its CEO Vikram Pandit, the author notes that the resurgent “too big to fail” Wall Street banks are growing bigger and more global than before, earning more of their profits overseas and pushing out or buying up smaller competitors. Hirsch notes that many of the regulatory reforms enacted after the 2008-2009 financial crash have yet to take effect; regulators abroad agree even less on a common strategy than do those in Washington. He notes that the underlying instabilities that resulted in the global crisis have remained unresolved. As these giant financial institutions expand their global reach, Hirsch warns that the U.S. government may be put in the position of becoming the guarantor of last resort for banks over which it has even less control and oversight than previously. Currently available online at <http://www.nationaljournal.com/magazine/vikram-pandit-s-citigroup-growing-out-of-washington-s-control--20110328?page=1>

6. **WILL WE BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN & REPLACE OUR ENERGY & TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IN A POST-PEAK OIL WORLD?**

Brown, Jeffrey

ASPO-USA, posted April 4, 2011

The author, an independent petroleum geologist, notes that developed countries worldwide are facing huge costs associated with maintaining and replacing aging infrastructure. This will entail a large expenditure of resources and energy, chiefly petroleum, but Brown, who has extensively documented an ongoing and accelerating trend in the decline of global oil exports, believes that large-scale maintenance and replacement is unlikely to happen. In an energy- and resource-constrained future, Brown states that “what can’t be funded and maintained won’t be funded and maintained” – already, many local governments in the U.S. are turning paved county roads back into gravel because they can’t afford the upkeep. Natural disasters, such as the earthquake and tsunami that recently hit Japan and the hurricanes that struck the U.S. Gulf Coast in 2005, will only aggravate the problem. He believes that the U.S. will eventually be forced to conduct “triage” on its infrastructure; however, no serious discussion of this possibility is taking place, as most government planners are still working on the assumption of future increases in automobile traffic. Currently available online at <http://www.energybulletin.net/stories/2011-04-04/commentary-will-we-be-able-maintain-replace-our-energy-transportation-infrastructure>

International Security

7. ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE, STRATEGIC FORESIGHT, AND IMPACTS ON MILITARY POWER

Briggs, Chad
Parameters, Autumn 2010

Briggs, with the Air University, USAF, writes that researchers have accepted for the past two decades that security cannot be well understood without taking environmental factors into account, yet a clear recognition of environmental security has yet to be adopted at the highest policy levels. The author writes that the environment has long been regarded as a constant, but in recent years there has been recognition that global environmental change presents completely new risks to security, and that new methods must be developed to assess these risks. Briggs argues that the military planners are able to assess complex and uncertain risks, but they need to engage with a wider network of researchers and scientists. He explores some of the lessons learned from the security community and the need for scenario planning to provide adequate early warning of security risks. Currently available online at <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/Articles/2010autumn/Briggs.pdf>

8. THE NEW TERRITORIAL IMPERATIVE

Hickman, John
Comparative Strategy, December 2010

In the 1990s, many scholars predicted that the nation-state was in decline, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. However, events over the last decade contradict these predictions. The author, with the Department of Government and International Studies at Berry College in Georgia, writes that the state remains the primary focus for researchers of international relations, because territory is the primary basis for power in the international system. He notes that Russia has not hesitated to wage war for control of territory, and has reestablished much of its traditional sphere of influence. Indonesia and India, which both battle multiple separatist insurgencies in the 1990s, have resisted fragmentation. Two new articles of the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea allow coastal states to claim sovereignty over much wider exclusive economic zones than before, and over geographic features such as the continental shelf; over a third of the world's oceans may now be claimed as sovereign territory. Hickman believes that natural resource depletion may become a primary motivator in the future for claims of territorial sovereignty.

9. SAVING NATO: RENUNCIATION OF THE ARTICLE 5 GUARANTEE

Fedyszyn, Thomas
Orbis, Summer 2010

Fedyszyn, Chair of the Naval War College Eurasian Studies Group, writes that a cornerstone of NATO are the territorial security guarantees of Article 5 of the NATO Charter, which states that "an attack upon one ... is an attack upon ... all." The author notes that the responsibility for collective defense offered by NATO during the Cold War has now expanded to include regional and global dialogue, cooperation and crisis management, saying that NATO has "graduated from military strategy to grand strategy." Fedyszyn argues that these two facets of NATO are now working at cross-purposes to each other, and the Article 5 security guarantees are becoming counterproductive. Renouncing Article 5 would go a long way toward defusing the friction with Russia over NATO expansion into Eastern Europe, says Fedyszyn, and would also allow non-European nations such as Japan, South Korea and Australia to participate in NATO without

having to shoulder responsibility for territorial security in Europe. The effectiveness of Article 5 has increasingly been called into question anyway, he says, by such events as the U.S. refusal of offers of NATO help after Sept. 11, recalcitrance on the part of Germany and Turkey regarding the wars in Iraq and the slow pace of response to the cyber-attacks on Estonia in 2007. Fedyszyn says that NATO's de facto transformation to a principal player in international security means that it "cannot live in both worlds of competition and cooperation" at once. While this admitting this transformation by renouncing the territorial security guarantee would be difficult psychologically, it "could also be celebrated as the culmination of the first chapter in NATO's life and the enabling of its second."

10. SOVEREIGNTY AND THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN CYBERSPACE

Lewis, James

Brown Journal of World Affairs, Spring/Summer 2010

The author, Senior Fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, writes that "the concept of cyberspace being a global commons due to its supposed lack of borders is best seen as a wish rather than a description". The Internet began as a U.S. government enterprise for defense and research, but the government opened it to the public during a period of major political change after the Cold War. The notion of the Internet as a commons was shaped by the anti-authoritarian culture of the Internet pioneers and the U.S. preference for markets and limited government; this is being challenged by present-day conditions, in which the Internet is no longer an exclusive preserve of the U.S., but an arena in which nations contend. The Internet was never designed to be a system upon which hundreds of millions of people would depend, and in which so much economic activity would take place. Lewis believes that government is crucial to defending the Internet, because sophisticated intelligence and military services would overwhelm private efforts. The Internet is now a public good, and "just as we do not expect airlines to defend our airspace against MiGs, we should not expect private companies to defend cyberspace against foreign governments."

11. STRATEGIC LATENCY AND WORLD ORDER

Davis, Zachary

Orbis, Winter 2011

The author, Senior Fellow at the Center for Global Security Research at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, writes that technological progress occurs unevenly and in an unpredictable fashion, with the potential of many discoveries remaining unappreciated for decades or longer. This also holds true for technologies which could confer military or economic advantage, but which remain untapped, a condition he terms "strategic latency". Davis notes that this is not necessarily due to inattention, but also to restraint, as in the case of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, in which only a few nations have chosen to move from a civilian or research stage to a weapons program. Space and geo-engineering are also examples of fields that have not been exploited in a widespread manner for military purposes. The global nonproliferation regime and programs to control the spread of dual-use technologies represent a form of intentional latency. Davis writes that terrorist groups have "intent without capability" – they do not possess WMD capabilities of their own, but seek to circumvent the forces of moderation by gaining access to the latent capabilities of the industrial infrastructure of nation-states. He also notes that cyberspace, nanotechnology, bioengineering and micromanufacturing are emerging technologies that nation-states are finding increasingly difficult to control, and that we "have yet to come to terms with their latent potential".

12. **UNDERSTANDING THE REVOLUTIONS OF 2011: WEAKNESS AND RESILIENCE IN MIDDLE EASTERN AUTOCRACIES**

Goldstone, Jack
Foreign Affairs, April 14, 2011

Goldstone, professor at George Mason University's School of Public Policy, writes that, for a revolution to succeed, several factors must converge. It is not often that the interests of elites, the middle class, students, different ethnic and groups, and different socioeconomic groups coincide, and these are the necessary ingredients of a viable revolution. "Sultanist" autocratic regimes, such as those in Egypt and Tunisia, can generate successful revolutions because their power strategies and ways of concentrating wealth ultimately make them vulnerable. But post-revolution transitions are difficult, and implementing reforms will be challenging.

Democracy and Global Issues

13. **THE FOOD BUBBLE**

Kaufman, Frederick
Harper's, July 2010

When Wall Street bankers realized they could profit from gambling on investment futures of certain food commodities and created the Goldman Sachs Commodity Index, the outcome for ordinary people across the globe was disastrous. This clearly-written investigative article shows how turning wheat into a vehicle for stock market speculation raised the price of a staple food by 80 percent worldwide and precipitated the food riots of 2008; the author notes that the ranks of the hungry had increased by 250 million in a single year. The speculative bubble burst, but prices were slow to fall; even more disquieting, says Kaufman, it could happen again.

14. **GOOGLE'S LOSS: THE PUBLIC'S GAIN**

Darnton, Robert
New York Review of Books, April 28, 2011

The seven years since Google launched its Google Book Search Project -- to digitalize all books that have ever been printed -- have been marked with a series of lawsuits for violation of copyright. Google has proposed settlements, but a recent court decision rejected their viability. This article explores where Google went wrong and what is right about such a project that would make literature more widely available. Darnton advocates using the lessons learned to create a digital public library that would offer access while giving copyright holders their due.

15. **INTERNET FREEDOM: HISTORIC ROOTS AND THE ROAD FORWARD**

Ross, Alec
SAIS Review of International Affairs, Summer-Fall 2010

The author, Senior Advisor for Innovation to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, is tasked with maximizing the potential of technology in service of America's diplomatic and development goals. This article addresses the need to protect and promote the positive social and economic benefits of network technologies by mapping out the principles of Internet freedom, its history, contemporary context and conceptual framework, and providing an overview of how the work of the State Department can help achieve its goals. While in many regards, limits to Internet freedom have grown across the globe, the State Department has and will continue to promote freedom through diplomacy, monitoring and reporting, programming, and policy. In her remarks

on Internet freedom in January of 2010, Secretary of State Clinton said, “On their own, new technologies do not take sides in the struggle for freedom and progress, but the United States does. We stand for a single Internet where all of humanity has equal access to knowledge and ideas.” It is a complicated project that spans difficult issues in economics, human rights, and social opportunity but it is rooted in simple principles that have stood the test of time. Open societies offering equal access to an unfettered marketplace of ideas and commerce flourish and deliver social and economic benefits to their citizens. The work of Internet freedom seeks to bring these goals into twenty-first century statecraft. Currently available online at http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/sais_review/summary/v030/30.2.ross.html

16. LANGUISHING LANGUAGES

Block, Ben

Worldwatch, July/August 2010

Almost half of the world’s 6700 languages could become extinct by the end of this century, according to one estimate made by the United Nations. If those languages die, a unique view of the world will expire with them. People who live close to their land and rely upon its resources for their existence use their language to describe their environment with a precision and nuance that other languages can’t approach. Currently, experts estimate that some 470 languages are on the critical list, 182 of them in the Western Hemisphere, 152 in the Pacific and the remainder divided among other regions. Block reports on one successful effort to resuscitate a dying language in the Hawaiian Islands. The native language was forbidden in the schools after the United States annexed the islands in the 19th Century, so by the 1980s, very few children in Hawaii spoke the language. Parents boycotted the schools and developed their own curriculum to revive the language for a new generation, and now thousands of youngsters speak the language of “Aloha.” Some other tribal groups have turned to traditional songs as a tool in language preservation.

17. MIND GAMES: HOW TOXIC CHEMICALS ARE IMPAIRING CHILDREN’S ABILITY TO LEARN

Steingraber, Sandra

Orion, March-April 2011

While environmental toxins such as lead have been successfully curbed by law and resulted in a decrease in brain damage in children, many other commonly-used neurotoxins remain unregulated. Chemicals in pesticides, flame retardants and hydrocarbons released by fossil fuels, among other substances that pollute the air, water and general environment, may contribute to the skyrocketing incidence of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and autism. Backing her argument with statistics, the author advocates tough regulations that screen out harmful chemicals before they enter the marketplace. Currently available online at <http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/6162/>

18. NATURAL LABORATORY

Cart, Julie

National Wildlife, April/May 2011

Yellowstone National Park has become a foremost laboratory for study of the effects of global warming because it is so close to its original state and hosts such a wide variety of flora and fauna. Scientists have already recorded changes in water levels, a rise in destructive pine beetle infestations, and negative, or potentially negative, impacts on fish and wildlife species. Climate change presents a significant management challenge to this unique ecosystem. Scientists in

Yellowstone look to create new strategies for protecting the diversity of such compromised natural preserves. Currently available online at <http://www.nwf.org/en/News-and-Magazines/National-Wildlife/Animals/Archives/2011/Studying-Global-Warming-at-Yellowstone.aspx>

19. PEACEPLAYERS INTERNATIONAL: A CASE STUDY ON THE USE OF SPORT AS A TOOL FOR CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

Tuohey, Brendan; Cognato, Brian
SAIS Review of International Affairs, Winter-Spring 2011

The authors, both with PeacePlayers International (PPI), describe their organization's approach to conflict transformation. PPI, which was founded in 2001, has helped over 50,000 young people overcome deep ethnic, religious or social divides in their communities through basketball. The authors have identified four key program components as integral to its success: local leadership; a balance between educational and sports content in programming; maintaining frequent, long-term contact; and structures for external leadership development. Over time, children can develop the shared histories that support true friendship, creating lasting relationships in the service of inter-communal reconciliation.

20. TURNING TO DUST

Tennesen, Michael
Discover, May 2010

The author notes that dust storms have been occurring with greater severity and frequency around the world due to drought, rising temperatures and a shift from grasslands to shrubs. Tennesen writes that the problem has been building for decades – wars, energy exploration, agriculture, cattle grazing and development have broken up the soil surfaces in many arid regions and released massive quantities of dust into the atmosphere. Dust can travel large distances; dust storms originating in the Gobi Desert have blown across the Atlantic Ocean, via the Pacific and the United States. Windborne dust can carry toxic substances, such as heavy metals or pesticides from dried lake beds. Desertification has become most pronounced in northern China and in the Lake Chad region in northern Africa, and is shrinking the amount of arable land. Tennesen writes that researchers are experimenting with various methods to slow erosion and encourage regrowth of native grasses in arid regions; better farming and grazing practices, less development and fewer off-road vehicles would also help stem the tide against dust. Currently available online at http://discovermagazine.com/2010/may/26-fighting-against-a-global-dust-bowl/article_view?b_start:int=0&-C= with the title FIGHTING AGAINST A GLOBAL DUST BOWL.

U.S. Society and Values

21. THE BETRAYAL OF PUBLIC WORKERS

Pollin, Robert; Thompson, Jeffrey
The Nation, February 16, 2011

The Great Recession and its aftermath could bring even more severe assaults on the living standards and basic rights of ordinary Americans, write the authors. A wide swath of elected officials and opinion leaders have singled out public-sector unions as deadweight burdens sapping the economy's vitality, despite the fact that the recession was caused by Wall Street risk-taking, not public union payrolls, they say. The recession has severely hurt the coffers of local

governments, they note, but rather than gouging state and local government employees, most of whom are not eligible for Social Security, states and municipalities need to raise taxes on the wealthy households most able to pay. They should also broaden their sources of tax revenue by taxing services such as payments to lawyers, and taxing items purchased over the Internet. The authors argue that state and local governments also have to stop giving out large tax breaks to corporations as inducements to locate there. They predict that if states declare bankruptcy they will break their obligations to employees, vendors, pensioners and even bondholders, which will undermine the basic foundations of the U.S. economy. Currently available online at <http://www.thenation.com/article/158647/betrayal-public-workers>

22. **CUYAHOGA CONNECTIONS**

Woods, Tori

Land & People, Fall/Winter 2010, pp. 10-17

Cleveland, Ohio is one of the so-called “Rust Belt” cities, once-thriving industrial centers that went into decline as the nation moved from an industrial to an information age, leaving behind an aging, rusting infrastructure. Too often, these industrial graveyards separate the heart of the surviving city from its waterfront and access to its river or harbor. A movement has been underway in recent years to clean up former industrial areas and regain river access; this article describes how the effort is unfolding in Cleveland, located on the Cuyahoga River at Lake Erie. A broad consortium of conservation and development groups is coming together to establish parks, trails and greenways through the former industrial area to allow city residents a clear path to the water. Woods quotes one of the principals in the effort, “This work is not just about parks and trails, it’s about creating a new Cleveland.” Currently available online at <http://www.landandpeople-digital.com/landnpeople/winter2010#pg12>

23. **GENERATION WHY?**

Smith, Zadie

New York Review of Books, November 25, 2010

Novelist Zadie Smith reviews the book *YOU ARE NOT A GADGET* by master programmer Jaron Lanier, and the film “The Social Network,” as starting points for reflections on where social media are taking society. “When a human being becomes a set of data on a website like Facebook, he or she is reduced,” she writes, to the world of Harvard sophomore Mark Zuckerberg, who is creating an Internet of shallow conformity. The software in use -- often “haphazard, accidental” in design, according to Lanier -- contributes to this homogenized mind. Lanier warns against entrapment “in someone else’s recent careless thoughts,” a sentiment echoed by Smith.

24. **MY MONSTER, MY SELF: ON NICHOLAS CARR AND WILLIAM POWERS**

Greenberg, Gary

The Nation, March 16, 2011

The author writes that mobile phones and the Internet have made the young fundamentally different than older adults. Greenberg reviews Nicholas Carr’s *THE SHALLOWS* and William Powers’ *HAMLET’S BLACKBERRY*, which attempt to tell us who we are becoming now that we swim in an endless stream of digital data. Their books are in part confessional accounts of their discovery of their dependence on their cell phones and how the online life has changed them. Reading has been supplanted, as Carr puts it, by “the speedy, superficial skimming of information” culled from the links generated by a Google search, which discourages “any deep, prolonged engagement with a single argument, idea, or narrative.” Constantly in the digital crowd, we are deprived of depth and substance, even when we don’t know it. With every Google

search or friend request or tweet or stolen look at your BlackBerry, you are that much more firmly plugged into the collective and that much less in touch with yourself. Some scientists have found that daily use of digital devices “stimulates brain cell alteration.” The flood of information makes us more susceptible to distraction; if we want to preserve the health of our brains, says Greenberg, we must carve out a “peaceful spot where contemplativeness can work its restorative magic.” Currently available online at <http://www.thenation.com/article/159279/my-monster-myself-nicholas-carr-and-william-powers>

25. **URBAN PLANTING**

Cosier, Susan

Audubon, March-April 2011

Abandoned lots, marginal land and even rooftops in cities across the United States are being turned into small scale farms to supply urban dwellers, farmers markets and restaurants with local produce. City Farm in Chicago, Illinois, Slicker Farm in Oakland, California, and the Garden Resource Program in Detroit, Michigan are three such enterprises. Urban farms may be less efficient than huge factory farms, but may also be more sustainable because of their much smaller carbon footprint. More importantly, urban agriculture brings healthy food to low-income communities where it is harder to obtain and more expensive than unhealthy fast food. Currently available online at <http://www.audubonmagazine.org/currents/currents1103.html>

26. **THE WIDER SKY**

Nance, Kevin

Poets & Writers, March-April 2011

This profile of African-American poet Nikki Finney traces how the complexities of her South Carolina heritage influence her work and her life. Her poems on politics, people and personal relationships are both artful and audacious. Her mentors include poet Nikki Giovanni and the late novelist Toni Cade Bambara, and she now inspires her own creative writing students at the University of Kentucky. Her most recent book of poems is HEAD OFF & SPLIT (2011).