

Article Round Up

July 2009

Economic Security and Trade

1. Dams in China turn the Mekong into a River of Discord
Michael Richardson. Yale Global, July 2009, 3 pages.

Since 1986, China has begun four dam construction projects along the Mekong River, and countries in Southeast Asia have taken notice. As China plans to construct four more dams on the Mekong, which may pose a considerable threat to the river and its economic resources, countries have spoken up. China has not joined the Mekong River Commission (MRC), in spite of requests from the four lower Mekong basin member countries. The article notes that Cambodia's great lake Tonle Sap and Vietnam's Mekong Delta are especially at risk from future projects. Vietnam fears that these projects could exacerbate the problems of sea water intrusion and salination in the lower Mekong Delta. MRC countries fear that the economic burden of these projects will ultimately fall on them.

2. What Went Wrong With Economics?
The Economist, July 2009, 3 pages.

This article discusses the reputation of the academic discipline of economics in light of the global financial crisis. It notes that a short few years ago, economics was being used to explain ever more human behavior, from drug-dealing to sumo-wrestling. Nevertheless, in the wake of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, even economists are in doubt about the fundamentals of their discipline. The article evaluates the three main criticisms being hurled at economists: that macro- and financial economists helped cause the crisis, that they failed to spot it, and that they have no idea how to fix it. It concludes by discussing the prospects for the discipline in the future.

3. Restoring American Competitiveness
Gary P. Pisano and Willy C. Shih. Harvard Business Review, July/Aug 2009, 11 pages.

This article evaluates the competitiveness of the United States, especially in the manufacturing sector. It describes a competitiveness problem, claiming that decades of outsourcing manufacturing have left U.S. industry without the means to innovate. It then offers two recommendations to reverse this trend. First, it asserts that the government must reevaluate its support for scientific research by increasing funding and promoting broad collaboration among business, academia, and government. Second, it proposes that corporate management must restructure its practices and focus more on research and development. It discusses both of these recommendations in detail.

4. Financial Economics: Efficiency and Beyond

The Economist, July 2009, 7 pages.

http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14030296

This is the second article of a special report about economics in the wake of the global financial crisis. In it, the author evaluates the efficient-markets hypothesis (EMH), which has underpinned the financial industry's theoretical models for years. The article defines the EMH and then moves on to evaluate its level of responsibility for the global economic crisis. It evaluates alternative theories to the EMH, especially behavioral economics, and concludes by speculating on the future of economic principles.

Social Issues and Governance

5. The Death of Macho

Reihan Salam. The Atlantic, July/Aug 2009, 6 pages.

This article evaluates the impact of the global financial crisis on male dominance of institutional power. It notes that the recession has had a drastically disproportionate influence on men and claims that it has served as a catalyst for 'the death of macho', or the end of an era of male institutional dominance. It points to Iceland as an example where the male-dominated power structure has come crumbling down. It then speculates on the effects of this potential shift as it applies to the Western world, as well as Russia, Asia, and the developing world, where the notion of male dominance of institutions is still firmly entrenched.

6. Taking the Hill

Matt Bai. The New York Times Magazine, July 2009, 19 pages.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/07/magazine/07congress-t.html>

The author discusses President Obama's attempts at health care reform in the U.S. A new health care system is a legislative goal that has eluded every Democratic president since Harry Truman. Making good on his campaign promise will require not only public expenditure on an enormous scale, but also activism and creativity. The author notes that health-care spending in the U.S. nearly doubled in the last decade, reaching about 16 percent of the gross domestic product, the highest percentage on record. He also notes that some businesses that might have opposed reform in 1993 are now desperate to address their growing health care costs, and insurance companies and health care providers seem increasingly open to compromise if it means they can avoid the more drastic forms of government regulation.

7. Globalization's Ugly Side: Sex Slavery

John Boudreau. The Mercury News, June 2009, 4 pages.

The article details the effects of globalization on the international sex trade, writing from Rach Gia, Vietnam. It claims that traffickers prey on young girls who are living in dire straits by offering them the false promise of riches and an opportunity to help their families. It claims that hundreds of young girls are trafficked across the border from Vietnam to Cambodia or China annually. It also states that this type of trafficking is part of a wider epidemic, the result of the concurrent expansions of the global sex trade and globalization.

8. California: The Ungovernable State

The Economist, May 2009, 6 pages.

This article discusses the problems with government of California, the most populous state in the United States. With a massive budget gap over \$40 billion and the worst bond rating in the United States, California's finances are catastrophic. The article discusses why, chronicling the California-specific quirks that have compounded these problems. In California, most districts are gerrymandered (shaped awkwardly to be highly Democratic or Republican), the most competitive elections are the primaries, and as a result the more extremist candidates tend to win. It also discusses the issue of citizen ballot initiatives before concluding that California needs to have a convention to rewrite its State Constitution.

Regional Security

9. Maritime Issues and Sovereignty Disputes in East Asia

Deputy Assistant Secretary Scott Marciel, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, July 2009, 7 pages.

<http://www.foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2009/MarcielTestimony090715p.pdf>

This Senate testimony focuses on regional security in East Asian waters. The speaker discusses the importance of Asia's waters, noting that the sea lanes running through East Asia are among the world's busiest and are responsible for fueling East Asia's economic growth. He then proceeds to discuss three topics: the multiple sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea (including those between Vietnam and China), recent incidents involving China and the activities of U.S. naval vessels in international waters within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and the strategic context of these disputes. He asserts that the United States does not take sides on territorial disputes in this region.

10. Taboo Topics on Contemporary Foreign Policy Discourse

Stephen M. Walt. Foreign Policy, July 2009, 4 pages.

The author details a list of “10 Commandments” in foreign policy discourse that no mainstream policy proposal can challenge. He claims that this poses a threat to the marketplace of free ideas and has the potential to lead to repeated mistakes as dissenters keep quiet or are silenced by majority opinion. He then proceeds to describe each issue in detail, which vary from managing nuclear weapons to talking with enemies. He concludes that conventional wisdom should be challenged more often, and the rewards for those who succeed in challenging the status quo are high.

11. Talking with Insurgents: A Guide for the Perplexed

The Washington Quarterly, April 2009, 13 pages.

http://www.twq.com/09april/docs/09apr_Byman.pdf

The author claims that “talking with insurgents is often a necessary first step toward defeating them or reaching an acceptable compromise.” Nevertheless, he notes that talking is not cheap and can fail or even backfire. He discusses the difficulties of opening discussions – neither side wants to be turned down in a way that causes embarrassment or charges of weakness. He then proceeds to evaluate the potential benefits and risks of talking with insurgents. He concludes that policymakers should always be ready to seize the opportunity and initiate talks when they see the possibility that insurgent groups have become ready to make fundamental changes and move away from violence.

12. Asia’s Rise

Minxin Pei. Foreign Policy, Jul/Aug 2009, 5 pages

The author challenges assumptions about the balance of power between the Western world and Asia in the 21st century. It claims that Asia is likely to continue to have a per-capita GDP lower than most of the Western world for decades, even if it continues its torrid pace of growth. It also notes potential constraints. Furthermore, it challenges the assumption that China will dominate Asia in the 21st century, noting that it has regional neighbors that will strongly resist its efforts to become a regional hegemon and that its soft power will be limited.

13. Shaping the Choices of a Rising China

Thomas J. Christensen. The Washington Quarterly, July 2009

The author discusses U.S. foreign policy toward China under the Bush administration and offers suggestions to the Obama administration. He claims that Bush administration policy toward China was an underappreciated success and advises President Obama to build on this success instead of radically transforming U.S. policy toward China. The article then breaks into three sections: one that evaluates U.S. goals and how to achieve them, another that discusses signs of real progress, and the last, which discusses the continuing challenges

and serious problems that remain. It concludes by reemphasizing the need for continuity in U.S. foreign policy toward China.

Global Issues and Environment

14. Climate Change and the Global Water Crisis: What Businesses Need to Know and Do
Pacific Institute and United Nations Global Impact. May 2009, 12 pages.

This paper explores the effects of global warming on water and energy resources and the global challenges it presents, from both scientific and corporate management perspectives. It covers a number of critical areas, including how climate change is expected to impact water scarcity, quality, and demand; the ways in which water and energy are interconnected; and how businesses can strategically manage water-climate risks. It highlights the impact of climate change on developing countries and those near the equator. It concludes by discussing solutions, focusing on how businesses can comply with the UN Millennium Challenge Goals on climate change.

15. A Survey of Ageing Populations: A Slow-Burning Fuse
The Economist, June 2009, 5 pages.

http://www.economist.com/specialreports/displaystory.cfm?story_id=13888045

This report discusses the long-term impact of ageing populations in the rich world. It claims that the fiscal burden of ageing populations—which includes extra spending on health care, pensions, and long-term care—will have a massive impact on future generations. It then evaluates why the world is getting older, focusing on improvements in healthcare throughout the world and a decline in birthrates in rich countries. The article then speculates on the impact of this ageing process, claiming that it will lead to a decline in productivity and slower economic growth.

16. Moving Heaven and Earth
Graeme Wood. The Atlantic, July/Aug 2009, 6 pages.

This article discusses a number of radical schemes being discussed by scientists for reengineering climate by force. It notes that these ideas, which may be extremely dangerous, are technologically plausible, affordable, and could be acted upon at any time. He notes that some scientists believe that these “geo-engineering” projects are a possible last-chance solution to prevent catastrophic climate change. The article mentions a number of different solutions that have been proposed: planting forests of “carbon-eating trees”, building carbon-capturing grids, and storing carbon-dioxide in the ocean. The author notes a paradox: geo-engineering needs more attention and funding, but attention and funding could backfire and lead people to believe that geo-engineering is the best solution to

climate change, which would dissuade them from the more difficult, more effective task of cutting carbon emissions naturally.

17. Community Based Adaptation to Climate Change

Jessica Ayers and Tim Forsyth. *Environment Magazine*, July/Aug 2009, 9 pages.

This article looks at the effects of climate change on developing countries, noting that the need for adaptation is becoming more pressing. It discusses different approaches to adaptation, comparing the “pollutionist” approach with a more development-oriented one. A pollutionist approach concentrates reducing and limiting greenhouse gas concentrations whereas a development-oriented perspective focuses more on stimulating development that simultaneously works to combat climate change. The article then outlines case studies from Bangladesh and communities near the Arctic in evaluating the development-oriented approach. It concludes by outlining some of the challenges of each approach.

Media, Communications, and Information Technology

18. Is Google Actually Making Us Smarter?

Jamais Cascio. *The Atlantic*, Jul/Aug 2009, 5 pages.

The author claims that human cognition evolves in response to challenges and that this will hold true in the 21st century. He claims that this is already underway, crediting the “hive mind of the Internet,” study-enabling drugs, and simulation technology. He turns his attention to an article written in *The Atlantic* months ago, “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” This article argued that Google facilitates continuous partial attention, effectively rewiring our brains to make us less capable of deep, relaxed contemplation. The author proceeds to refute this conclusion and spends most of the rest of the article outlining why this new technology may in fact serve to make us more intelligent in the long term.

19. Online Education—The Revolution That Wasn't

William R. Doyle. *Change Magazine*, May/June 2009, 3 pages.

When online distance learning was first proposed as a viable alternative to site-based education, many predicted the demise of traditional colleges and universities. They believed that the existence of universities where people could study where and when they want would fundamentally alter the higher education system. However, the author notes that this fundamental change has not occurred. He explores the development of online learning and examines the outcome of some of the predictions about online distance education. He concludes that most students use online education as a supplement to, not as a replacement for, their normal university studies.

20. Circulation Boost?

Will Skowronski. American Journalism Review, June/July 2009, 2 pages.

<http://www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=4768>

This article discusses a growing trend toward newspaper subscriptions for easy-to-carry electronic readers such as the Kindle. These are a way to attract and keep subscribers while cutting back on print and delivery costs. The New York Times, Boston Globe and Washington Post, already available via Kindle, will pilot editions on a newer version of the device this summer. The papers will offer the subscriptions at a reduced cost to readers out of home-delivery range who agree to long-term subscriptions. The Detroit Free Press and the Detroit News, which have already sharply cut back home delivery to save newsroom jobs, plan to rely on electronic editions even more – and so far readers have been receptive to the changes. He concludes that newspapers are taking electronic reading devices more seriously now that the technology is making them more user-friendly– screens are more readable, displays are larger, and batteries last longer.

21. Best Websites for Teaching and Learning

American Library Association, Date Unknown, 3 pages.

The American Library Association has compiled a list of their top 25 websites for teaching and learning. On this list, they rewarded sites that were user-friendly, free, innovative, and activity-encouraging. They listed websites in 6 categories: organization and management, content collaboration, curriculum sharing, media sharing, virtual environments, and social networking and communication. The list hopes to inspire the uninitiated by offering tips with the listing of each website name.

U.S. Society and Culture

22. Moonwalkers

Jeffrey Kluger. Time Magazine, July 2009, 8 pages.

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the first man on the moon, this article is a special report that focuses on the astronauts who participated in the Apollo missions. It describes the character type that NASA was looking for in its astronauts, many of whom were former fighter pilots. Then, it describes the astronauts' feelings and fears during the actual missions, but it focuses mainly on the impact of returning from the moon on the astronauts' psyches. It describes their lives after Apollo, including their careers and hardships.

23. MBAs Gone Wild

Rhakesh Khurana. The American Interest, July-August 2009, 7 pages.

The author blames the economic crisis on the rise of a character type in America known as the "loose individual." He claims this character is bound only by the norm of self-interest

and asks what the source of this selfishness is. He concludes that the responsibility lies with U.S. university business schools. He proceeds to describe the evolution of the American business education, noting how the commitment to teaching corporate social responsibility has waned. He believes that by the late 1980s, business schools had all but abandoned attempts to teach ethical standards in favor of teaching that corporations exist to maximize shareholder value. He concludes by calling for a revamping of business education to restore emphasis to social responsibility and ethics.

24. Cowboys and Immigrants

Lance Morrow. *Smithsonian*, May 2009, 6 pages.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/07/magazine/07congress-t.html>

Morrow writes that over the course of the past century, the two dueling American archetypes of 'cowboy' and 'immigrant' have alternatively dominated American politics. Teddy Roosevelt personified the Frontier, while Franklin Roosevelt became the first "Ellis Island" president, and Lyndon Johnson "embodied both the Frontier and Ellis Island — and tried to enact both, in the Great Society and in Vietnam." Morrow perceives the election of Barack Obama as a "repudiation of the Frontier style of [George W] Bush and Dick Cheney," but also as a generational paradigm shift. Morrow argues that President Obama must approach global issues from both conceptual points of view and be willing to shift into the opposite mind-set as the situation dictates.

25. Postscript: Michael Jackson

Kelefa Sannah. *New Yorker*, July 2009, 3 pages.

This article is the *New Yorker's* obituary for the "King of Pop" Michael Jackson, whose death dominated headlines in the United States in late June and July 2009. It focuses on the death of Mr. Jackson through the eyes of Manu Dibango, an African pop pioneer whose interactions with Jackson show different sides of the pop king—as a talented showman, ruthless businessman, and inspirational musical figure. At the same time, it chronicles the different aspects of Mr. Jackson's career, including his stints as a child star, pop megastar, and public eccentric.