ARTICLE ALERT

February 2010

Article Alert *is a monthly product of the Information Resource Center of the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai. It brings to your attention abstracts of current articles in the areas of rule of law, economics, the environment, regional security, U.S. society and more. Most of full texts are accessible from Internet. To get a free subscription, please send a sign-up email to Shanghaiirc@state.gov.*

ENVIROMENT AND ENERGY

[1] Facing Extinction: 9 Steps to Save Biodiversity
Roman, Joe; Ehrlich, Paul et al.
Solutions, No. 1, January-February 2010
Click here for available text on the Internet [HTML format]

Four distinguished authors outline conservationists' responsibility to defend and restore ecosystems in a world where biodiversity is increasingly compromised by climate change and human activity. They propose nine ways to do this that involve local communities, individual and national economics, biodiversity endowments, and education to increase "bioliteracy." With so many species extinct or on the brink of extinction, the goal is to reach "zero extinction" by returning to good stewardship.

ECONOMICS AND TRADE ISSUES

[2] Poverty, Disconnected
Kanbur, Ravi
Finance & Development, vol. 46, no. 4, December 2009
Click here for available text on the Internet [HTML format]

Kanbur, professor of economics at Cornell University, notes that relying on official statistics such as GDP numbers often paints too rosy a picture of the incidence of poverty; economists have long sought ways to provide a more complete picture of the state of the poor. He notes that the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, established by the French government, goes a long way to address this discrepancy. Kanbur highlights the numerous ways in which the disconnect between the optimistic picture on poverty painted by official data and the more pessimistic assessment by grassroots activists manifests itself. If the population of a given country is growing faster than the poverty rate is declining, then the absolute number of people living in poverty is in fact growing. Privatizing public services may show a growth in official GDP, but it does not reflect the decline in well-being from the disappearance of those public services. Measuring the per-capita consumption by individual household in many developing countries does not reflect the reality that, often,

women and children receive a much smaller share of household consumption than men. Kanbur notes that "there is plenty of work to be done" in helping authorities design policies that enable more people to escape poverty.

[3] How a New Jobless Era Will Transform America
Peck, Don
Atlantic Monthly, March 2010
Click here for available text on the Internet [HTML format]

The author notes that the official unemployment figures in the U.S. understate the magnitude of the jobs crisis; the percentage of unemployed and underemployed have approached the highest figure since the 1930s. Despite official pronouncements that the recession is over, a prolonged era of high joblessness is just beginning. Peck writes that it will have a profound effect on the prospects, character and behavior patterns of a generation of young people who are just now trying to enter the workforce. For the first time in U.S. history, the majority of the jobs in the country will be held by women, as the shrinking of the traditional manufacturing industries and trades falls disproportionately on men. Peck fears that the longer the jobless period lasts, the greater the negative effect it will have on the stability of households and communities around the country.

[4] Tragedy at Toyota: How Not To Lead In Crisis
William George
Harvard Business School. February 22, 2010.
Click here for available text on the Internet [HTML format]

"Toyota can only regain its footing by transforming itself from top to bottom to deliver the highest quality automobiles," says Harvard Business School professor Bill George of the beleaguered automobile company that in recent months has recalled 8 million vehicles. He offers seven recommendations for restoring consumer confidence in the safety and quality behind the storied brand.

[5] A New Breed of Brand Advocates: Social Networking Redefines Consumer Engagement
Deloitte. February 2010.
Click here for available text on the Internet [PDF format, 12 pages]

Consumer product companies are witnessing a profound transformation in how they reach and engage consumers. A number of technology and social trends are changing the way consumer product companies connect with consumers and more importantly how consumers interact with each other in influencing buying decisions.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

[6] Foreign Policy in an Age of Austerity: A Conversation with Brent Scowcroft
Garfinkle, Adam
American Interest, January/February 2010

Click here for available text on the Internet [HTML format]

In a "clear-and-plain-talk" interview with AI editor Adam Garfinkle, former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft predicts that the U.S. is at the end of a period of growing defense and national-security budgets regardless of the state of the economy, partly due to growing sentiment that other public policy areas need more attention. Scowcroft notes that austerity "might make us think harder about priorities," forcing us to make decisions that we have put off since 9/11 "because there was enough money to do everything." He believes that the military will need to better match what they buy with what they need, noting that the services have traditionally favored technology, where they are strongest, rather than plan for the "messy, labor-intensive wars" that are more likely. Scowcroft likens our national-security budget to a bank -- no financial institution can pay off all its obligations at any given time, "likewise, the U.S. cannot fulfill all the claims on our security assets at once." He believes that we need the State Department now more than ever, because it has to "deal with a world whose population is now more politicized than ever," and that is one of the reasons terrorism has become intractable.

[8] Submarine Arms Race in the Pacific: The Chinese Challenge to U.S. Undersea Supremacy
Mackenzie Eaglen, Jon Rodeback
The Heritage Foundation. February 2, 2010
Click here for available text on the Internet [PDF format, 13 pages]

Since the end of the Cold War, China has dramatically expanded its navy, especially its submarine fleet, adding dozens of attack submarines since 1995. During the same period, the U.S. attack submarine fleet has shrunk to 53, and it is projected to fall to 41 in 2028. Australia, India, and other Pacific countries have taken note of the shifting balance and have responded with their own naval buildups, particularly of their submarine fleets. Unless the U.S. stops--and reverses--the decline of its own fleet, U.S. military superiority in the Pacific will continue to wane, severely limiting the Navy's ability to operate in the region, to protect U.S. interests, and to support U.S. friends and allies, says the brief.

[9] Demonizing China: Pundits Get its Role in Africa Wrong
Barry Sautman, Yan Hairong
YaleGlobal, 10 February 2010
Click here for available text on the Internet [HTML]

China's growing trade with and investment in, Africa have been much decried of late. It exploits African resources, critics have charged, makes shady deals with despots and warlords, and leaves the population no better, perhaps worse, than the Europeans before. But according to professors Sautman and Yan, China's role in Africa has been much maligned. Though China mainly imports oil and other resources from the continent, the country has helped to finance infrastructure projects based on loans with lower interest rates than most Europeans are willing to make. Such projects are less likely to fuel corruption too, as they are built by Chinese firms backed by Beijing. Moreover, the low cost Chinese goods that many argue are displacing locally manufactured products are actually shutting out developed country goods. But China also has its fair share of black spots: Chinese-controlled mines have conditions no better than

European ones, for instance. China may be the newest scapegoat for Africa's development problems, but in the end, the debate on China's involvement in Africa misses the point – that of improving the lot of the poorest continent in the world. – YaleGlobal

EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

[10] In India, a Student-recruiting Industry Ups the Ante for U.S. Colleges
Fischer, Karin
Chronicle of Higher Education, Vol. 56, No. 18, January 15, 2009, pp. A1, A20-22
Click here for available text on the Internet [HTML format]

India has already been the leading country of origin for international students in the U.S. for eight consecutive years, with over 100,000 students here last year. The potential for growth in those numbers is mind-boggling: 220 million children are enrolled in primary and secondary schools in India, but the country's 400 universities can accommodate fewer than 10 million students. Yet American colleges and universities face obstacles in recruiting those students. Australia and Singapore are closer, and some Indian parents perceive the U.S. as being too liberal. Some U.S. states prohibit schools from contracting with third-party recruiters, and U.S. State Department policy bars any college-advising programs it sponsors abroad from forming partnerships with commercial recruiting agents, one of the largest of which in India typically charges 10-20 percent of first-year tuition. Institutions in other countries have long routinely paid for the services of agents, says Fischer, the Chronicle's international education writer. "Although many American colleges remain uneasy about the ethics of paying recruiters a commission to attract students, they are dealing with agents whether they like it or not. Most Indian students studying in the United States turn to independent counselors for help in admissions," she says. The future remains unclear, however; some see the agent-based model as broken, but one of the largest recruiters, IDP Education, signed up its first dozen U.S. clients last month.

[11] What Makes A Great Teacher?
Ripley, Amanda
Atlantic Monthly, January-February 2010
Click here for available text on the Internet [HTML format]

Ripley writes that educational systems in the U.S. "have never identified excellent teachers in any reliable, objective way ... Instead, we tend to ascribe their gifts to some mystical quality that we can recognize and revere -- but not replicate." However, one organization in America has been systematically pursuing this goal for more than a decade -- tracking hundreds of thousands of kids, and analyzing why some teachers can move kids three grade levels ahead in one year and others can't. Teach for America, a nonprofit that recruits college graduates to spend two years teaching in low-income schools, began outside the educational establishment and has largely remained there. Almost half a million American children are being taught by its 7,300 teachers this year, and the organization tracks test-score data, linked to each teacher, for 85 percent to 90 percent of those kids, most of whom are poor and African-American or Latino.

Teach for America has found that "superstar" teachers set big goals for their students, recruit students and their families into the teaching process and ensure that everything they do contributes to student learning; however, the most important trait of all is that superstar teachers are incredibly persistent in attaining goals. Knowledge matters, but not in every case, Teach for America has found; graduating from an elite school or having a master's degree in education does not make much difference on classroom effectiveness. Now that the Obama administration is offering USD 4 billion to identify and cultivate effective teachers, the states must take radical steps in the education field, where efforts to measure teacher performance based on student test scores have long been fought.

[12] An International Look At High-speed Broadband
Darrell M. West.
Brookings Institution. February 23, 2010.
Click here for available text on the Internet [PDF format, 21 pages].

In the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the U.S. Congress charged the Federal Communications Commission with developing a national broadband policy by March 17, 2010. In the report, the author looks at what other countries are doing in terms of broadband applications.

[13] The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program 2009: The Global "Go-to Think Tanks"
James G. McGann.
University of Pennsylvania. January 31, 2010.
Click here for available text on the Internet [PDF format]

The rankings are based on a global survey of hundreds of scholars and experts, according to the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program at the University of Pennsylvania. The index evaluates a total of 6305 think tanks worldwide. Close to 400 organizations were nominated and ranked by a global panel of 300 experts.

U.S. SOCIETY AND VALUES

[14] The Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change.
PewResearch Center, February 24, 2010
Click here for available text on the Internet [Summary, HTML format]
Click here for available text on the Internet [Full Report, PDF format]

Generations, like people, have personalities, and Millennials -- the American teens and twenty-somethings who are making the passage into adulthood at the start of a new millennium -- have begun to forge theirs: confident, self-expressive, liberal, upbeat and open to change. They are more ethnically and racially diverse than older adults. They're less religious, less likely to have served in the military, and are on track to become the most educated generation in American history…

[15] Women Breaking Musical Barriers
Smithsonian Institute. March 2010.
Click here for available text on the Internet [HTML format, various paging].

Recordings by women fill the archives of Smithsonian Folkways, but we shouldn't take them for granted. Gender discrimination and gender segregation have posed considerable barriers to women's musical talent. Still, many women musicians around the world challenge traditionally held beliefs about gender and women's social status simply by playing a certain instrument or singing a certain song.

[16] Experiencing War: Women of Four Wars
Veterans History Project, Library of Congress. 2010.
Click here for available text on the Internet [HTML format, various paging].

The four major wars in which American women served after World War II can be split into two pairs. Korea and Vietnam were conflicts fought in Asian countries divided by the politics of the Cold War. The Persian Gulf War and the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq were fought in the Middle East and grew out of tensions over aggression in that region and, in the latter instance, the 9/11 attacks. For women, the first two wars signaled few advances in their roles in military service, but in the two recent wars, the areas of women's participation expanded immensely, with potentially more dire consequences.

[17] The History of Women and Education
National Women's History Museum. 2010.
Click here for available text on the Internet [HTML format]

Until recently, women have largely been excluded from the educational system. While Harvard opened in 1636, the first college to admit women did not do so for another 200 years. Women did not begin attending college in equal numbers to men until as recently as 1980. Education is something that women today often take for granted and they do not think about all of the hard work it took to attain the right to education. In the past, women with little education often believed that they were not capable of things like participating in politics, having a career or even owning property. Women who were lucky enough to have received a quality education were more likely to be pioneers in civic activism and make history. By understanding the history of women's education one is able to better appreciate how far we have come and the extraordinary women who got us here.

[18] How the Recession Has Changed American Migration
Michael Barone
The American, February 17, 2010
Click here for available text on the Internet [HTML format]

America's changing demography has had enormous consequences in every realm of life. Americans historically have been a mobile people. But the old saying that Americans have been moving from the Snow Belt to the Sun Belt fails to capture what has been happening from 1990 to the onset of the current recession in 2007. And there are entirely new realities due to the recession that are remaking states and regions in important ways