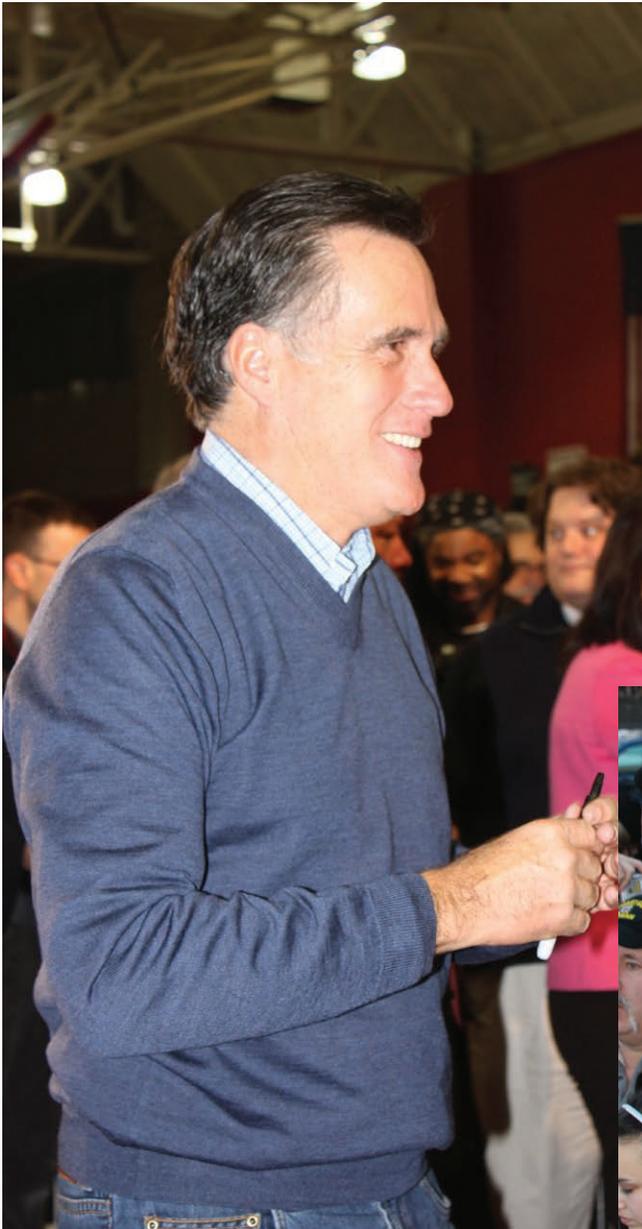


Vital Signs



WILL MCDONALD (IV)



Is it Really Romney's Turn in 2012?

US-PAKISTAN RELATIONS • EUROPEAN FINANCIAL CRISIS • PENN STATE SCANDAL



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What do Machiavelli and former Penn State Football coach Joe Paterno have in common? Apparently, a slightly skewed set of leadership priorities.

In his political treatise, *The Prince*, Niccolo Machiavelli vehemently asserts that "politics have no relation to morality." Politics, in Machiavellian terms, means the Prince's unwavering dedication to the strength and prestige of the state; morality, by the same narrow definition, the Prince's unnecessary—even detrimental—desire to follow the dominant values of his Christian community.

Machiavelli's political ideology stems from a negative simplification of human nature: because man was inherently corrupt in his pursuits, so in turn should be the prince. Thus, Machiavelli argues that the separation of politics and morality is not only acceptable, but necessary for the success of any principedom. The Prince is urged to take whatever measures are necessary to fortify the state and enhance his image—even if he must forgo ethical behavior.

In Machiavelli's ideal world, politics and morality exist in two separate realms of

an existence measured by achievement and reputation, not inner virtue. The ends do not simply justify the means: they excuse them. It is this controversial promotion of extra-moral behavior that has kept the *Prince* a focal point of discussion in both the academic and political realm today. It is also the same rationale that our nation has attributed to Joe Paterno, the former football coach of Penn State University who, in the wake of a sexual-abuse scandal involving his former assistant coach and defensive coordinator, Jerry Sandusky, appears to have merely protected his university on a political level, but shamefully betrayed his values on an ethical one.

Over the past 25 years, football has indisputably been the hallmark of Penn State University. From a purely athletic perspective, the success of Penn State's football program has been unparalleled: the team has earned 2 national titles, 3 conference titles, and maintained an 18-year membership in the Big Ten Conference. Yet football's importance for the university is far more multi-dimensional: Penn State football is equally noteworthy for the success it has gained in areas outside the athletic sphere. The program has attracted the public admiration, monetary support, and national reputation that have effectively transformed Penn State from an academically limited state school into a powerful first class research institution.

Without the success of Penn State Football, there would be no Penn State as we know it today. And without legendary coach Joe Paterno, Penn State Football would never have metamorphosed Penn State to the institution it has become. Since 1950, Paterno has served as more than a



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On the Cover

Republican GOP Candidates Mitt Romney, Newt Gingrich and Rick Santorum on the Stump in New Hampshire.

head football coach; he has represented the soul of the university. During his tenure, Paterno redefined the motto “we are Penn State,” equating the university with a strong sense of school tradition, spirit, and values along the way.

Yet the rally-cry that once embodied the integrity of a university has now taken on a new meaning in the public eye. In response to sexual-abuse allegations against Sandusky, “we are Penn State” has become synonymous with “we are scandal, we are child-abuse, we are deception.” The nature of Sandusky’s alleged criminal activity is completely deplorable: he is currently charged for sexually assaulting eight boys over a period spanning from 1994 to 2009—a period in which Sandusky allegedly lured victims into contact by abusing his involvement with his children’s foundation, The Second Mile, as well as his access to Penn State programs and facilities.

The convoluted nature of Sandusky’s alleged behavior as well as his persistent denial makes it extremely difficult for the public to come to grips with the atrocities he may have committed. In turn, we have sought refuge from the ugly reality, diverting our attention from the criminal, Sandusky to the accomplice, the leadership of Penn State. It is the way in which the crime was handled by influential members of the University’s administrative elite, the negligence and cover-ups that enabled Sandusky to maintain his post, that have moved to the forefront of the national consciousness. Much of the speculation regarding the Penn State scandal has focused on the why and the how, not the what.

A universal sense of anxiety and outrage at Penn State officials is fueled by the uncertainty over one ever-changing variable: the extent of knowledge. Which Penn State officials had it? Was it accurate? How did they communicate it? If they had it in *any* form, why didn’t they do more?

The nature of this knowledge is central to the way in which we view the Penn State case. The release of the grand jury report from an investigation starting in 2008 has clarified allegations involving Sandusky and his young victims, but it has only complicated our understanding of how university officials reacted. The biggest source of confusion involves the suspicious chain of communication following a sexual assault incident that former graduate-assistant Mike McQueary witnessed in the football locker-room in 2002. At the time, Sandusky had been retired from Penn State’s football program for three years, but was granted the “emeritus” privilege of continued access to school facilities. It was during this time that Sandusky brought children from his Second Mile foundation into the Penn State locker room. The grand jury report confirms McQueary’s testimony that he “saw a naked boy, Victim 2, whose age he estimated to be ten years old, with his hands up against the wall, being subjected to anal

intercourse by a naked Sandusky.” The following day, McQueary informed coach Joe Paterno of the incident, who fulfilled his legal obligation in relaying the information to the Athletic Director, Tim Curley. Curley assessed the information with senior Vice President Gary Shulz, and decided that Sandusky should be forbidden from taking any of his Second Mile children into the Football locker room. The decision was then cleared by university president Graham Spanier, who agreed that Sandusky should be banned from bringing children onto the Penn State campus. No police report was filed by any of the leadership involved.

The communication involved in this crucial exchange remains frustratingly unclear to the public. Paterno claims the information he received from McQueary conveyed a situation that was merely disturbing—not catastrophically threatening. Curley claims a similarly limited knowledge, citing the behavior he knew of to be “inappropriate” or “horsing around,” not “sexual” in nature. No matter what form of understanding these leaders had, however, their negligence to contact the police demonstrates at best a severe lack of judgment and at worst a conscious attempt to spare the football program by covering up the truth. Somewhere along the line, the leadership of Penn State felt it was more important to preserve their university than to take action against a disturbed and dangerous pedophile. Somewhere along the line, someone could have and should have done more. Why they neglected to do so is as nebulous as the extent of their knowledge of Sandusky’s behavior.

The Penn State scandal has caused national outrage because it illuminates the Machiavellian separation between external image and internal standards that has continuously corrupted our nation’s political and economic leadership today. Take Paterno, for example, the man bearing the brunt of public scrutiny for the current scandal. Paterno’s possible incentives for covering up Sandusky’s behavior are extensive.

It is no secret that any type of sexual-abuse scandal, *especially*



The Statue of Former Football Coach Joe Paterno in front of Penn State’s Beaver Stadium.

“The Penn State Scandal has caused national outrage because it illuminates the Machiavellian separation between external image and internal standards that has continuously corrupted our nation’s political and economic leadership today.”

involving children spells imminent disaster for any institution. Though Paterno did report McQueary’s account to his superiors, he recognized that initiating legal action would only mean suicide for his career and crisis for his university. Instead of going the extra mile, he gave up halfway through the race.

As a man who sat at the helm of Penn State’s institutional development, coach Paterno has been instrumental in solidifying Penn State’s position as both an athletic and academic power. For Paterno, protection of the Penn State football program has been an all-encompassing priority necessary in maintaining the image of Penn State that he was so responsible for creating. The program represents the University’s character, spirit, excellence. It also generates the massive public funding that is funneled into three areas of Paterno’s interest: widespread university development, the football program, and his own paycheck. This money helps to enhance the program itself as well as cover the cost of many underfunded programs at the university. The monetary value of Penn State’s football program is a factor that cannot be overlooked in analyzing the inaction of any of the Penn State leadership—be it Paterno, Curley, Shulz, or Spanier. At its core, money is the force that fuels university growth and dominance. Without it, research grants, athletic scholarships, campus facilities, academic programs, applications, and paychecks all suffer in unison. Paterno holds a financial interest in both his university and his personal future. Whether consciously or not, it is highly possible that Paterno equated football with money—either for himself, his team, or his university.

This desire to pursue self-interest is something that Machiavelli viewed as an unavoidable instinct of human nature. The average man, he argued, was an inherently self-seeking individual who possessed a constant, “insatiable desire to conquer, consume, and elevate.” Man’s own selfishness was to be harnessed and given direction by skill, not suppressed by an inner sense of morality. The way in which we evaluate Paterno’s role in the Penn State scandal suggests our intense discomfort with this principle. We condemn Paterno because we view him as a man who indulged his desire to protect his image, his job, and his university instead of involving himself personally in a morally challenging situation.

In essence, Paterno has taken the heat for the Penn State scandal because his behavior represents such an extreme deviation from the image of Penn State that he played such a crucial role in creating. The divergence between his undeniably impressive track record and his recent shameful behavior only lends evidence to our belief that Paterno represents a double-standard. We single out Paterno precisely because we equated him with the values he projected. To his players and his university, Paterno served as a paragon of sportsmanship and excellence. His apparent standards are epitomized in his famous phrase: “success without honor is an unseasoned dish; it will satisfy

your hunger, but it won’t taste good.” Yet Paterno’s *inaction* after speaking with Mike McQueary demonstrates his inability to balance these two fundamental priorities, success and honor. His “dish” must taste pretty bad today.

To say that Paterno is a heartless, amoral individual is far too extreme. Did Paterno deliberately aim to put young children at risk? Of course not. He did, however, consciously make a decision that protected his own interests at the expense of the welfare of Sandusky’s victims. We expect a transformative figure in university life like Paterno to do not only what’s bureaucratically required, but also what is fundamentally right. True, he did what he had to. But he failed to practice what he preached.

Paterno’s behavior sheds light on how we choose to define leadership within our society. In his negligence, Paterno acted upon the Machiavellian idea that is far too common among our nation’s leadership: the idea that excellence and character exist in two isolated worlds of influence. Ultimately, this separation is completely subjective. Machiavelli’s litmus test for a successful leader was the strength and reputation of the state. But in modern day society, we strive to hold our leadership to a higher standard. Truly great leaders must possess the ability to integrate political success and moral excellence, not detach them. Paterno may have made Machiavelli proud, but he disappointed those who expect leadership to operate on a higher level of morality. The Penn State case illuminates the fundamental difference between achievement and character: achievement is definitive in the short run, yet character is what endures. We need to consciously place a higher premium on who we are, not what we do—even if it affects our temporary success.

AUTHOR’S NOTE: JOE PATERNO DIED JUST AS THIS ISSUE WENT TO PRESS. ALTHOUGH MY ARTICLE CRITICIZES A MAJOR BLUNDER IN PATERNO’S CAREER AS A LEADER, PATERNO’S LEGACY AS A SPIRITED, DRIVEN, AND DEDICATED COACH WILL ENDURE AS WELL. THOUGH WE ARE NOT LIKELY TO FORGET HIS MISTAKE, WE WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO PENN STATE. HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER ARE UNPARALLELED DESPITE A RECENT LAPSE OF JUDGMENT. I HOLD STRONG TO MY OPINIONS ON HOW HE HANDLED THE PENN STATE SCANDAL, BUT I BELIEVE WE SHOULD HONOR HIM FOR THE COUNTLESS POSITIVE WAYS HE CONTRIBUTED TO PENN STATE UNIVERSITY AND FOSTERED A STRONG SENSE OF SCHOOL SPIRIT AND PRIDE.

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Is Greece Stable?

BY TANAY GUPTA

American markets usually do not rise and fall sharply based entirely upon decisions made in Europe. For the last year however, pessimism regarding Europe's financial crisis has been dictating five percent losses on numerous trading days. Focus was placed on the frailty of Greece, which other European powers are now holding accountable for having run up too large of a debt. Buckling under the amount it needs to repay, Greece is struggling to negotiate a bailout plan from a *troika* of lenders. To ensure that Greece is capable of recovering, lenders demanded that the former Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou implement austerity measures. The Greek people are frustrated at this series of austerity laws that only continue to increase in severity. Furthermore, there has been speculation about a default, setting off widespread protests and destabilizing global markets. In the interest of preventing similar fiscal calamities recurring in the future, Greece must default in a planned and orderly way, setting a precedent that motivates other countries to control their expenses.

Greece has been spending far beyond its means for many years—overshadowing even its debt-funded budget for the Athens Olympics in 2004, according to the Southeastern European newspaper *SETimes*. Greece is one of the seventeen states in the European Union that uses the Euro currency, accounting for an area known as the 'Euro zone.' In times of crisis, these nations must work together for mutual benefit. The BBC reports that in 2009, Greece's deficit was 13.6% of its GDP. In other words, if Greece were to add the value of all the goods and services it produces, more than one-eighth of that money would go into paying for its excess spending from just that year. Meanwhile, the *European Commission's* website says that Euro zone regulations require a country's budget deficit to remain below three percent! Greece was allowed to spend without any form of restraint until Europe realized the true breadth of this problem in 2010. Now that this issue has received international attention, Greece has been forced to choose between reducing its deficit and facing expulsion from the Euro zone. The problem that this high deficit level elicits is that the few reluctant investors who do agree to lend Greece money will demand an even higher premium than the one the country has already been paying. The combination of a higher cost of borrowing and increased debt will cause the deficit to rise even further, thereby evoking a cyclical problem that is difficult for countries to resolve.

Major protests are one effect of the government's attempts to combat its deficit crisis. These protests arose because the lenders "bailing out" Greece have demanded that Greece make changes in the way it runs its government. These amendments have come in the form of austerity measures, strict actions that compel Greece to cut government spending and collect more money through taxes. To reduce its deficit, the Greek government brought about various changes, including everything from

public sector pay cuts to additional luxury taxes. As reported by *New York Times'* Rachel Donadio and Niki Kitsantonis, such measures are widely disapproved of by the public. Thus, for Greek officials, such as Finance Minister Evangelos Venizelos, it is really just a balancing act. He admits not having any alternative besides trying to "appease the financial markets."

Countries like France and Germany, which are intent on retaining the stability of the Euro, are now beginning to have trouble in living up to that goal. Credit rating agency Moody's downgraded three major French banks on December 9. Moody's argued that because of attempts to subsidize failing economies—such as Greece—and rescue the European Union, French banks' "Liquidity and funding conditions have deteriorated significantly," reported *Euronews*. In fact, the region's banks must find 114.7 billion Euros to "make them strong enough to withstand the Euro zone debt crisis and restore investor confidence," according to *Reuters*.

According to Donadio, the Greek middle class is tired of watching taxes increase and wages fall, and therefore is not inclined to be "grateful to the so-called troika of foreign lenders — the European Union, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund — that demanded austerity in exchange for loans. Instead, they increasingly feel they have become a de facto European Union "protectorate." People like 50 year-old Defense Ministry employee Dimitris Argyriou are frustrated with the austerity measures, no longer caring what happens to Greece.

However, as in most situations, there *is* another option: default. While it seems to be a feared prospect, the idea itself is straightforward. By defaulting, a government admits its mistake in accumulating too high of a debt and has its debt level cleared. Such a government will be exempt from ever having to return that money to its investors. In essence, defaulting

will allow Greece to bypass the implementation of some of the detested austerity measures and, hence, hopefully reduce public discontent. Take Greek citizen, Akis Tsirogiannis, a man who lost his job at forty-two and fears that by accepting bailout packages, Greece would face a heavily restricted future. Tsirogiannis says, "This [debt] deal, like all the others, is a life sentence of austerity for Greeks." He believes that Greece needs to be able to start all over again and not be required to return money gradually for many years to come. By this token, many support Greek default because it yields the opportunity for Greece to start fresh.

Another benefit of default is that it will leave a lasting precedent, a stark reminder of what happens when countries run a large deficit simply because of their then-thriving economies. Currently however, Greece is just "transferring the burden" to other states in the E.U., remarked Iain Begg, an expert at London School of Economics. Like Tsirogiannis, many Greeks despise the binding nature of receiving loans from other countries and banks. For instance, Victoria Kousidou, a history teacher in Greece, feels that her country no longer belongs to its people. Instead,



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“In 2009, Greece’s Deficit was 13.6% of its GDP... Euro Zone Regulations require a country’s budget deficit to remain below three percent!”

Germany and the EU control it.

This is not to say that defaulting has no disadvantages. One major liability in a Greek default is that unlike defaults in the past, Greece shares its currency with 17 other states in Europe. If Greece admits bankruptcy, then it may drag down much of Europe with it. As a result, world markets would tumble because of the uncertainty tagged with Euro zone destabilization. Furthermore, as America trades heavily with Europe, a Greek default would hurt the American economy as well. Traders are likely to worry that if Greece is expelled from the Euro zone in response to default, what other countries could be next? Italy is under heavy scrutiny since it is struggling to enact austerity measures, measures that Italy desperately needs to bring its economy back on its feet. Peter Bofinger, an economist who advises the German Finance Ministry, explains that because Italy is five times the size of Greece’s economy, “if there is just a 5 percent chance that this [default] affects Italy, then you don’t want to do it.” A debt crisis in Italy, the third-largest economy in Europe, could be just one of the many side effects of Greek default.

Further, there is also a risk of high inflation if Greece defaults. Even if Greece has its debt level cleared and consequently must leave the Euro

Zone, it will still be spending more than it can pay for. As a result, it would have to print more money to keep up with the demand, resulting in a simultaneous depreciation of the value of the new currency. Still, internationally renowned economist Nouriel Roubini argues that such risks are vastly exaggerated. He says that inflation can be “contained at modest levels as the default and exit leads to growth and to greater fiscal discipline.”

Despite these potential risks, for the long-term benefit of Greece and for the protection of countries currently in good financial times, the best option is a default. As the *New York Times*’ Landon Thomas reports, economists are starting to come to terms with this reality and wonder whether the “consequences of a default or a more radical debt restructuring, dire as they may be, would be no worse for Greece than the miserable path it is currently on.” In an age where First World countries are experiencing severe economic difficulties, it is critical to understand and find ways to revitalize their economies before the entire world experiences an economic meltdown.

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Palestinian Statehood: The Only Option

BY CAROLINE DREYFUSS AND
SARA GAGNON

Throughout their complicated histories, Israelis and Palestinians have made news with their perennially clashing policies, which is most notably manifested in their continuing struggle for peace. Beginning soon after the Six-Day War in 1967, the peace process has been fraught with difficulty for both sides. A significant breakthrough appeared to have been reached in 1993 with the signing of the Oslo Accords by the Palestinian and Israeli governments. However, the Accords quickly lost credibility as Palestinians rose up during the Second Intifada (also known as the al-Aqsa Intifada), which lasted from September of 2000 until roughly 2005. Further contributing to the Accords’ marginalization was a 2010 report in the independent pan-Arab newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* declaring that the Palestinian govern-

ment no longer considered itself bound by the provisions of the Oslo agreements. Though neither the Palestinian nor Israeli governments have made any official statement regarding their status, the Oslo Accords are generally considered to be a failure due to their unsuccessful implementation.

The most recent stop on the path to peace, however, was the Palestinian government’s failed attempt at a bid for recognition as an independent state by the United Nations. An action mucwh maligned by the United States and Israel, Palestine’s bid led to much strife within the Security Council. However, it was clear “from the beginning” that Palestine “might not be able to succeed in the Security Council” due to the United States’ status as a permanent member of the Council, which affords them veto power, said Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian envoy to the UN.

As expected, the United States stalled Palestine’s attempt at international recognition.



CHRISHONDROS/ISTOCKPHOTOS

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas meeting with the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon in 2009.

However, the failure of their Security Council bid was overshadowed by their success in UNESCO, the United Nations Educational,

Scientific and Cultural Organization. Admitted into the organization on October 31, 2011, Palestine became its newest member, approved with a vote of 107 to 14, with 52 abstentions. For Palestinians, this new international status may seem like the realization of a long-awaited dream, but unfortunately this apparent breakthrough causes more problems than it solves, as Palestine's success angered the United States. "Today's reckless action by UNESCO is anti-Israel and anti-peace," asserted pro-Israel Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), who chairs the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "It rewards the Palestinian leadership's dangerous scheme to bypass negotiations with Israel and seek recognition of a self-declared 'Palestinian state,' and takes us further from peace in the Middle East."

Even if Palestine's bid in the Security Council had succeeded, the country would still have needed to be able to function peacefully alongside Israel in order to survive. The President of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, has himself argued that statehood alone cannot free his people because violence and military oppression will continue as a result of the Israeli occupation. In the past, the Palestinian Authority has walked out of negotiations when they did not work in their favor, thereby stopping any progress. Most notably, this occurred in 2000 when President Bill Clinton made a sincere effort to broker a comprehensive peace settlement. Supporters of the Palestinians contend that previous negotiations were doomed to failure because of Israel's inflexibility on issues such as the status of Jerusalem and continuing construction of Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories. Nevertheless, the Palestinian government would have much greater prospects for success if it focused on attaining realistic compromises with Israel and less on international public relations.

By bypassing Israel, Palestine is further alienating itself from the United States, an action that their government cannot afford to take if they desire lasting regional peace. It is necessary for the Palestinians to return to the negotiation table and stop trying to take a shortcut to statehood by avoiding talks. A two-state solution is still the ultimate goal for the region. However, direct negotiations are the only route to a lasting, peaceful solution to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Addressing the United Nations General Assembly on September 21, 2011, President Barack Obama said "that the Palestinian people deserve a state of their own." However, "genuine peace can only be realized between Israelis and Palestinians themselves," he continued. Obama went on to note that he, along with many others, is "frustrated by the lack of progress." Nonethe-

less, "there is no shortcut to the end of a conflict that has endured for decades. Peace will not come through statements and resolutions at the UN... Peace depends upon compromise among peoples who must live together long after our speeches are over, and our votes have been counted. That is the path to a Palestinian state." Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised President Obama for his remarks, "thanking him 'for standing with Israel and supporting peace through direct negotiations,'" while Palestinian officials called negotiations unproductive and "utterly unsensical."

The Palestinians apparently had hopes that "going public" with their statehood bid would increase international pressure on the US and thus cause the US to push Israel harder to accommodate the Palestinians in future negotiations. Abbas and his advisors may also have believed that his diplomatic initiative would rebuild his credibility with his own people, who have become increasingly frustrated over his inability to negotiate an end to the occupation of their lands by Israeli troops and settlers. Unfortunately, they underestimated two factors—the inability of Israel's current weak coalition government to make major policy changes, and the strength of the US's alliance with Israel.

Thus, President Obama and the rest of the US government have a point—circumventing the Israelis, declaring a state, and then asking the U.N. to recognize it is a formula for failure. The key issues that have divided the Israelis and the Palestinians in the past, such as Jerusa-

lem, Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, to name a few, will continue to divide them, no matter Palestine's status. In order for peace to prevail, it is vital that these issues are resolved before any side declares victory and moves away from the negotiation table for good.

In short, a Palestinian state is the next logical step in the Israel-Palestine conflict. However, if statehood and international recognition are the ultimate goals, the Palestinian government has missed its mark. Their attempt to dodge Israel and the United States in their quest for statehood is not about to fix anything. Without American and Israeli cooperation, Palestine can never achieve the peaceful statehood it craves. However, new negotiations are forthcoming, and the Palestinians and Israelis have a chance to make necessary forward progress in a conflict that has defined the Middle East for decades.

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Graffiti on an Israeli security wall in the West Bank. Many Palestinians blame the US-Israeli alliance for the lack of progress toward Palestinian statehood.

The Republican Question

BY MELANIE NARATIL

While the primary process of the Democratic Party usually offers excitement and that of the Republican Party tends to finish quickly, this election year may be different. The “anybody but Romney” conservative wing of the Republican Party could boost the fortunes of Ron Paul, Rick Santorum, or Newt Gingrich. However, for this to occur, Republicans will have to turn away from their tendency to elect the “good soldier of the Party” or the candidate “whose turn it is.” Given the anti-Washington sentiment in the Republican base, it is likely that the winner of the Republican primary will be a businessman as a first profession and politician as a second one, highlighting the key question of whether there should be more or less federal government intervention in the economy.

The Republican candidates can be assessed as those who will probably fade early in the contest and those who are most likely to survive well into the primary season. In fact, some fallout has already occurred as Cain, Bachmann, and

Huntsman have withdrawn from the race for different reasons. Although there have been memorable quotes from debates and a surprise in Iowa, Rick Santorum, Newt Gingrich, Jon Huntsman, and Ron Paul will probably fade from consideration before the end of the primary season, even if they do not formally withdraw. Whether it will result from Santorum’s non-mainstream views on gay marriage and immigration, questions about Gingrich’s ethics or DC connections, or Ron Paul’s fringe appeal and sometimes “nutty” quotes, these are not the type of candidates normally selected in the Republican primary. In the most recent (2012) aggregated national polling data on the website, “Real Clear Politics,” Mitt Romney is the only candidate consistently above 20%. Ron Paul, Newt Gingrich, and Rick Santorum have spikes of support in specific states (Paul-NH, Gingrich-FL and Santorum-SC), but they are not likely to survive the early primary battles as viable Republican Presidential nominees. Each of these men has strengths that would attract conservative Republicans, but they have less appeal to moderates and independents in a general election.

Throughout the run-up to the primary season, there have been different “darlings” of the “anyone but Mitt” movement. However, as the experience with Rick Perry and Herman Cain shows, Romney’s progress to the nomination is largely unaffected by the conservative favorite of the moment. Since early September, Romney’s national polling numbers have been increasing in a slow, but steady trend. Paul, Santorum, and Gingrich are all likely to matter less as Romney consolidates his message of electability.

Rick Perry’s entrance into the Republican primary race was met with initial excitement from the conservatives who wanted a “true” conservative. Perry, the current long-serving Governor of Texas, represents many of the conservatives’ interests, such as support for a flat tax, balanced budget, states’ rights, the death penalty, tough criminal penalties, and the Second Amendment’s “right to bear arms.” Since his initial burst onto the election scene, his polling numbers have fallen as he has rivaled Joe Biden in debate gaffes, such as “Social Security is a Ponzi scheme” or his shockingly long memory lapse regarding the Cabinet posts he would eliminate. His clear lack of experience as a national debater is evident, especially in comparison to strong debaters like Romney and Obama. Two days before the South Carolina primary, however, Perry dropped out of the race, due to the lack of “a viable path to victory.”

Herman Cain ran on his success as a businessman with common sense solutions to the problems in Washington, DC. As the former CEO of Godfather’s Pizza, he displayed the ability to lead a large organization, as well as to position himself as the “outsider” in the Republican primary race. His nine-nine-nine plan has resonated with an electorate that longs for simplicity and pragmatism. Cain proposed a nine percent corporate tax, a nine percent income tax, and a nine percent value added tax (national sales tax). To protect the poor or lower middle class, he proposed a nine-zero-nine plan for those with incomes below \$35,000. Following the introduction of this plan, Cain moved from third to first place in some polls, ahead of Romney and Perry, despite concerns that his plan would displace much of the federal tax burden



WILL MCDONALD (IV)

Former Republican GOP Candidate Jon Huntsman rallies supporters at The BeanTowne coffeehouse in Heampstead, New Hampshire.



WILL MCDONALD (IV)

Republican GOP Candidate Mitt Romney at a campaign appearance in New Hampshire.

from the wealthy toward the middle class. Clearly, his simple message and strong non-politician's resume were attractive to many. However, Cain's personal issues surrounding alleged sexual harassment and a decades long affair pressured him to withdraw from the race.

After earning dual degrees from Harvard Law and Harvard Business Schools, Mitt Romney, ex-Governor of Massachusetts, started his professional career by founding Bain Capital. He successfully took over the scandal-ridden Salt Lake City 2002 Olympic Committee until he was elected Governor of Massachusetts in 2002. Although he lost in the 2008 primaries to John McCain, the establishment sees him as a "safe pair of hands" for the Party. His ability to win an election in the "bluest of blue states" shows the bi-partisan appeal necessary in a general election. This appeal is a double-edged sword, as

conservatives doubt whether Romney is a "true" conservative or just a convenient convert to the cause. Furthermore, his introduction of mandatory healthcare in Massachusetts, or "Romneycare" to critics, is seen as support for what conservatives view as the most controversial program of the Obama administration, "Obamacare." In addition, as the primary battle with McCain continued late into the season, there are still scars from that contest that some are unwilling to forget.

In spite of all of this excitement over the possibilities of the Republican campaign, it is important to remember that the Republican Party has a strong tendency to choose the establishment candidate. History reflects its desire to reward the candidate "whose turn it is." Whether it was rewarding the "I paid for this microphone" Reagan in 1980, the loyal Vice President George H.W. Bush in 1988, loyal former VP candidate Bob Dole

in 1996, or party stalwart John McCain in 2008, Republicans tend to choose those who are due, rather than those who are destined to win.

Given Republican history, the "man who is due" is Mitt Romney. Unless there are major issues with the Romney campaign, which is unlikely given his team's experience, it is probable that Romney will be facing Obama in the 2012 general election. The next question will concern the candidate choices for Vice President and the content of the Republican platform. The "anyone but Romney" candidates may fade from the selection pool, but getting their ideas into circulation and potentially influencing the platform and the choice of a VP are good prizes for the runners-up. In fact, the stature attained from championing the conservative cause to keep Romney and the Republicans running further right of center may lead to a 2016 run or at least to consulting, television, and speaking fees for Gingrich, Santorum and Paul. Running and losing may prove more financially beneficial than winning the nomination.

Considering the history of the 2008 campaign, the VP choice will probably not be a wild card like Sarah Palin. With Romney unlikely to take risks with the selection of a running mate, one of the primary contestants or a well-known Republican who has been through the rigors of tough campaigning will probably be selected. The conservative wing of the Republican Party will press for a VP who meets their standards, and Paul, Gingrich, Santorum, and their delegates will certainly have an influence on Romney's choice and perhaps his ultimate electability in a general election.

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"Romney's national polling numbers have been increasing in a slow, but steady trend. Paul, Santorum, and Gingrich are all likely to matter less as Romney consolidates his message of electability."

Bachmann's Misleading HPV Remarks Could Have Lasting Consequences

By EDWARD KONG

Political figures greatly influence their constituents, not only through legislation and executive orders, but also through the media. What politicians say on television can potentially have negative repercussions. Minnesota Representative Michele Bachmann's false comment concerning the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is a prime example of how irresponsible false alarms can adversely affect public health. She called the vaccine, which can prevent cervical cancer, "dangerous."

In a September 2011 debate, Bachmann criticized Texas Governor Rick Perry for trying to mandate that all sixth-grade girls in his state get HPV vaccination, calling the mandate a "government injection through executive order" and "violation of a liberty interest." While one can understand why the vaccination should remain the choice of the parents, Rep. Bachmann, while trying to hammer in the last nail of Perry's proverbial coffin, went too far when she called the vaccine dangerous, bringing up an anecdote by one Florida mother: "She told me that her little daughter took that vaccine, that injection, and she suffered from mental retardation thereafter."

Medical experts responded almost immediately. A day after the debate, The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) released a statement, saying "there is absolutely no scientific validity to [Bachmann's] statement. Since the vaccine has been introduced, more than 35 million doses have been administered, and it has an excellent safety record." The HPV vaccine is deemed safe and recommended by the AAP, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and The Institute of Medicine.

Michele Bachmann later retracted her statement, saying she "had no idea" if it were true, and that "I am not a doctor. I am not a scientist. I am not a physician." It's true,

Bachmann is not a scientist or a doctor; at the time of her remarks she was a politician running for the GOP presidential nomination. And, as Evan Siegfried, spokesperson for the Global and Regional Asperger's Syndrome Partnership said, "She should cease trying to foment fear in order to advance her political agenda."

Bachmann isn't finding much support even among conservatives. Talk radio host Rush Limbaugh said she had "jumped the shark" and Ed Morrissey, a writer for Hot Air, one of the largest conservative blogs, said "it looks more like Bachmann sensed that she had won a point and wanted to go in for the kill, didn't bother to check the facts, and didn't care that she was stoking an anti-vaccination paranoid conspiracy theory, either . . . Neither shines a particularly favorable light on Bachmann." When asked if she intended to apologize for her comments, Bachmann responded, "I'm not going to answer that question," reports *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

Unfortunately, the damage from Bachmann's words has already been done. One statement from a misinformed politician means years of additional work for scientists and researchers. "These things always set you back about three years, which is exactly what we can't afford," said Dr. Rodney E. Willoughby, professor of pediatrics at the Medical College of Wisconsin. "People believe the misinformation that's transmitted about vaccines. And then they make bad decisions with actual dangerous consequences," writes Erik Wemple of *The Washington Post*. Dr. Mark Einstein of the Gynecological Cancer Foundation agrees that politics shouldn't trump sound science. "This is a cancer prevention vaccine, and



Republican GOP Candidate Michele Bachmann

cancer is bipartisan," he said.

Also, although Bachmann's allegations were irresponsible, they probably will not be as harmful as Jenny McCarthy's campaign linking autism to the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, according to William Schaffner, chair of the Dept. of Preventative Medicine at Vanderbilt University. To be fair, Bachmann has now wisely backed off, and the whole incident has "at least helped the HPV vaccine get some ink," writes Michele Promaulayko, Editor-in-Chief of Women's Health for the *Huffington Post*. Increased parental concerns should be met by physician's reassurances. Carol J. Baker, MD, chair of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, recommends

“...the damage from Bachmann’s words has already been done. One statement from a misinformed politician means years of additional work for scientists and researchers.”

informing parents that the vaccine has never caused even one case of mental retardation.

HPV is a serious disease, but only 32% of teenage girls in the United States have received the vaccine. HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States, and while mostly harmless by itself, it is linked to cervical cancer. Some naysayers have (rightly) pointed out that cervical cancer is rare in the United States due to early diagnosis with Pap smear tests. But 12,000 cases and 4,000 deaths from cervical cancer do not include the several hundred thousand women who will need surgery or treatment for abnormalities linked to HPV. The vaccine is 93-100% effective at preventing the two most common types of HPV, and the most common side effect is a sore arm (fainting too, if you’re a teenager). It has also been accepted by the National Catholic Bioethics center. One really has to wonder why HPV vaccination rates are still far behind those of other vaccines released around the same time.

For many parents, the problem is a social one. Because HPV is a sexually transmitted

disease, they feel that by giving their children the vaccine, they are somehow condoning sexual behavior. Doctor Schaffner agreed that 11 or 12 is “a pretty tender age, and parents are having a hard time getting used to this concept.” But the vaccine must be administered before the person contracts the virus. Given the prevalence of the disease, with *half* of all adults getting infected at some point in life, the HPV vaccine is best given before a young woman initiates her sex life. “Of course parents, particularly fathers, think that’s going to happen at around age 34,” Dr. Schaffner said. But for Dr. Lauren Steicher, a gynecologist at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, you don’t have to give your kids “permission to have sex . . . it’s a vaccine to keep them healthy.”

HPV was a tough vaccine to get administered even before Bachmann’s comments. However, politicians need to start affirming rather than preventing the use of science to improve people’s lives, GOP presidential candidates in particular. Michele Bachmann has impeded vaccination efforts by ignoring science. As former Utah governor

and republican presidential candidate Jon Huntsman said, “in order for the Republican Party to win, we can’t run from science.” To be sure, nobody can run from science, and on issues like HPV vaccination, parents must be free to make informed decisions without false statements from politicians. We have the technology to save lives; we just need to move past baseless fears about using it.

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The Buffet Tax: Our Saving Grace?

BY CHRISTINE KUMAR

With the economy still in a downturn, unemployment on a plateau above eight percent, and no hope in sight for many citizens, Americans are still suffering from the 2008 financial crisis. Although there have been many attempts to better the situation, including multiple bail outs and a stimulus of the economy through an increase in money supply, none have successfully cured the faltering economy. Along with other politicians, President Obama has especially been under scrutiny and has received criticism for his failed attempts to get the United States out of

economic turmoil, which he promised in his 2008 presidential campaign. According to Alister Bull, a columnist from Re-

uters, Obama, with the help of billionaire Warren Buffett, has created a new tax plan to generate more revenue to help finance

“The government cannot afford to rely on the wealthy any longer to reinvest in the economy – it is now the government’s responsibility to take hold of the reins.”

“reforms of the Medicare and Medicaid government healthcare programs for elderly and poorer Americans.” The “Buffett Tax” proposes a 5.6% surtax, or an added tax, on those making one million dollars a year or more. Obama is clearly targeting the 1% of American citizens who prosper vastly more than the rest of the country, and wants them to pay a similar tax rate to the middle class that bears much of the tax burden for the remaining 99%. According to *Wall Street Journal* reporter Laura Saunders, Republicans are strongly against this idea, claiming that “increasing such taxes would punish investment” and stunt economic growth. The argument comes down to whether or not U.S. government should not only continue to support the top 1% of our country, but also rely on the wealthy to reinvigorate the economy sufficiently to bring America out of this recession, or if the government should exert more control over wealth distribution and the economy. It’s time for the Obama administration to take a stand against the wealthy and generate revenue for the government to spend to get America back on track.

The whole idea of a Buffett Tax was suggested in a *New York Times* Op-Ed article written by Buffett. The article was meant as an open letter addressed to one of the members of Congress working towards cutting \$1.2 trillion from the federal budget. Buffett recommended taxing the rich more instead of having “a billionaire-friendly Congress...coddle them” and as-

serted that “it’s time for our government to get serious about shared sacrifice.” Buffett reveals that he paid \$6,938,733 in federal taxes in 2010, which was 17.4% of his income. The average tax rate for those earning between \$34,000 and \$60,000 a year, the average income bracket, is 12%. Buffett, who is the second richest person in the United States, pays a slightly higher tax rate than the average American – in fact, Buffett revealed that he paid less taxes percentage-wise than his own secretary. Secretaries of high-ranking financiers have a slightly higher than average salary and they could be taxed at a rate as high as 35%. Like Buffett, many wealthy citizens pay at lower rates than their subordinates because of several loopholes. For example, despite Buffett’s abundant wealth, his salary from his company, Berkshire Hathaway, has been set at \$100,000. The rest of his wealth comes from either long-term capital gain, such as sales of stocks and bonds, or qualifying dividend income; the top tax rate for both types of income is 15%. Buffett and other rich Americans also receive tax deductions for large charitable donations and interest expenses, interest gained from lending money, that decreases their tax rates even further.

People opposing the tax hike believe that it will not only hurt investment but that the Buffett tax is also taking away financial freedom. Representative James Lankford (R-OK) argues that the wealthy have worked hard searching for tax loopholes

to receive the lowest tax rate possible, and that the Buffett tax is not about fixing the loopholes, but instead “seems to have more to do with ‘societal fairness’ than economic prosperity and job creation.” For many years, the wealthy, with the help of the U.S. government, have successfully found and used tax loopholes to reduce their tax rates, but has all that extra money been used to invest in the economy? Have low tax rates for the wealthy created jobs and economic prosperity? The 2008 Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), for example, committed \$700 billion to multiple businesses, including AIG and Citibank, to restore liquidity to the financial markets, but only \$356.2 billion was invested—the rest of the money was kept by the big banks and corporations for themselves. The executives of the banks had the money to reinvest in order to kick-start the economy but, because of a lack of government regulation, they held back. The government cannot afford to rely on the wealthy any longer to reinvest in the economy – it is now the government’s responsibility to take hold of the reins of the economy until the United States is out of this recession.

The Buffett tax is a small, but necessary, step to getting America back to having a stable economy. The revenue generated from the added tax on the wealthy will be used to help the people who have been struggling in this economy and to start paying off federal debts. It has almost been 4 years since the financial crisis and people are still suffering— it’s time for the government to get them the help and recovery they deserve.

MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES



Billionaire Warren Buffett testifying before the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, a government appointed committee that analyzed the causes of the 2008 financial meltdown.

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Afghanistan and Pakistan: With or Against Us?

BY KIRAN BHATT

MARIO TAMA/ISTOCK PHOTOS

It's possible that the only thing more complicated than the military situation and tribal differences in the Middle East is America's diplomacy in the region. There are several interesting, and at times, baffling storylines and subplots present as the Obama administration struggles to sort out the mess in the Middle East, especially in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The intertwining of the Pakistan and Afghanistan situations has become an especially contentious issue. This can be attributed to the United States' alliance with and distribution of billions in aid dollars to Pakistan's military, as well as to the large American military presence in Afghanistan, both of which have become increasingly unpopular both here at home and abroad in the Middle East.

The bizarre circumstances in Afghanistan and Pakistan escalated in the waning days of October when Hamid Karzai, the President of Afghanistan, announced that "if there is ever a war between Pakistan and America, then we will side with Pakistan." It was a strange position for Karzai to take, even by his standards. While his stance unsurprisingly ruffled more than a few feathers in American diplomatic circles, it was also viewed unfavorably by a substantial number of Afghans, including Parliament member Arif Rahmani, who opined that "Pakistan...is the cause of all our [Afghanistan's] problems."

Anatol Lieven, author of *Pakistan: A Hard Country*, suggests that the U.S. should "stop regarding Pakistan as an ally, and start regarding it as an enemy." In Lieven's opinion, relations between the two countries are beyond repair, whether by diplomacy or by financial aid, which he believes Americans view "as a product of... generosity, to which recipients should respond with unconditional gratitude and loyalty." What enrages Americans and has "bred exaggerated bitterness at Pakistani [and Afghan] 'treachery,'" are statements like Karzai's aforementioned head-scratcher, and his dissatisfaction with U.S. aid "for feeding widespread corruption" in Pakistan. Lieven recommends "treat[ing] Pakistan as a sponsor of the Taliban," which it clearly has been, in an attempt to back out of the current "morass of mutual distrust."

In New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman's opinion, President Obama's attempts at diplomacy in the Middle East have floundered compared to that of "cold war titans [like] Henry Kissinger and James Baker," not out of personal failings, but instead because of the uncertainty that looms over every Middle Eastern country that we are dealing with. As Friedman points out, Kissinger's job as secretary of state was made easier by the fact



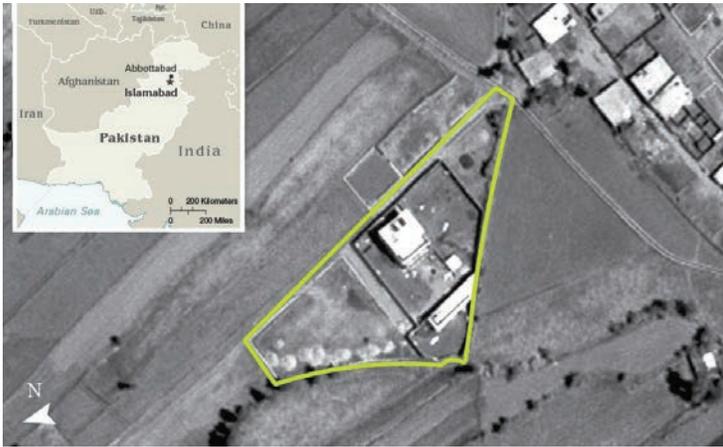
Afghan President Hamid Karzai addressing the United Nations General Assembly in November 2008.

that he "had to persuade just three people to make a deal: an all-powerful Syrian dictator...an Egyptian pharaoh (practically)" and the popular Israeli prime minister, Golda Meir. Obama and Secretary of

State Hillary Clinton unfortunately have to negotiate with decaying and currently fragmented states like Syria and Egypt. Israel is also not as stable as it once was. Friedman's basic point applies just as forcefully to our dealings with the Pakistani and Afghan regimes.

One possibility for the Obama administration that would enable them to continue (and hopefully complete) the war on terror is to seek out and make coordinated attacks on top Al Qaeda operatives by bypassing whatever state is harboring them. This strategy led to Osama Bin Laden's death, and the odds of that result would surely have been lower had the Obama administration tried to cooperate with a barely functional Pakistani government. But this strategy fails to give the Pakistani government and military the respect that we wish we didn't have to, yet probably must, give—respect that derives from their nuclear capabilities. Pakistan has over twenty nuclear sites, six of which have been attacked by terrorists in the past eight years. It is unquestionably important for the United States to keep Pakistan's nuclear facilities secure, in the hopes, as one observer warns, of protecting "Mumbai or New York [from] a nuclear 9/11."

Despite the headaches that come from dealing with incompetent or unreliable allies like Pakistan or Afghanistan, their importance to U.S. security is undeniable. Because of this, it is hard to take



WIKIMEDIACOMMONS

(Left) A CIA satellite image of Osama Bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

Anatol Lieven's advice and break ties with Pakistan. It isn't worth making enemies with another nuclear country in the Middle East. For the time being, it looks like the Obama administration will have to deal with less-than-trustworthy allies, if only to prevent the possibility of a nuclear-armed Al Qaeda.

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Injustice and Capital Punishment

BY ELLEN CAHILL

On September 21st, 2011 all hopes for justice died along with Troy Davis. Davis was convicted of the 1989 murder of police officer Mark MacPhail, who came across a homeless man being attacked and was subsequently shot in the face and chest. Yet, a lack of physical evidence, the recanting of many witnesses' statements and coercion of witnesses by police, created grave doubt that Troy killed the officer, sparking controversy in the case. How can the U.S. Supreme Court allow the execution of a man for a murder when there is so much doubt? True justice was not achieved in the Troy Davis case, which illustrates clearly how flawed and wrong the death penalty is.

In the days leading up to Davis's execution, his supporters lined the streets to rally and protest in his behalf. There was so much doubt of his guilt that protestors said it was impossible for the state to move ahead with the execution. As a final statement, Davis told the MacPhail family, "I did not personally kill your son, father, brother. All I can ask is that you look deeper into this case so you really can finally see the truth." But Troy would not be given any clemency. Even though the weapon was never recovered, and witnesses recanted and changed their statements, he was executed. In this case U.S. courts upheld the death sentence of a man whose complete innocence was a strong possibility, but they cannot be allowed to do so in the future.

In his 1991 trial, witnesses testified that Troy Davis was the triggerman, and shell cas-

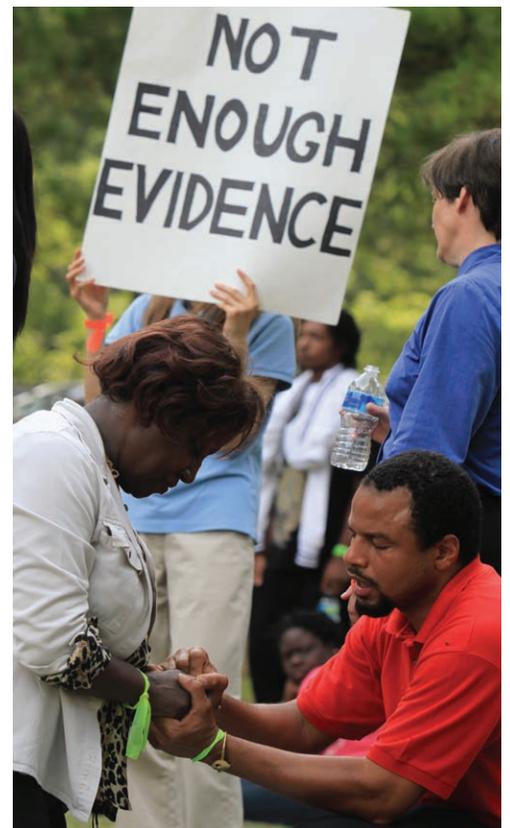
ings were presented as matching those from an earlier shooting that Troy was convicted of as well. Therefore, he was convicted for the murder of MacPhail and sentenced to death. Yet, an astounding seven of the nine witnesses in the case later changed their statements. One witness, Jeffrey Sapp, said, "I didn't want to have any more problems with the cops, so I testified against Troy." Investigators wrongly coerced witnesses, and Troy deserved a second trial. He would never get this trial though, and the court was quick to deny any mercy.

Adding up the coercion, inconsistencies in statements, and lack of evidence, there was no reason Troy should have been executed. The U.S. should not put someone to death if there is any doubt at all of his guilt. Capital punishment is wrong because it is unconstitutional, immoral, barbaric, and error-ridden. It deprives people of due process since it prevents them from benefiting from new evidence or forensic procedures that might reverse their conviction. What if the murder weapon used to kill MacPhail was recovered after Troy was executed and it had the DNA of another person on it? Would it not create a huge protest and reveal a flaw in his original trial?

Executions have no place in society because they are so cruel. If murder demonstrates a lack of respect for human life then killing a criminal is also immoral. Executions send the message that a human being forfeits all respect when he or she has committed a heinous crime and that the appropriate punishment for murder is murder. Our govern-

ment is obviously against the murder of human beings, which it treats as a grave criminal offense, so why are we becoming murderers ourselves? America strives to have justice, but the death penalty is not justice. Society should not deliberately kill any human being, because it is immoral and unjust.

The death penalty is unique because once carried out, it can't be taken back. Therefore,



JESSICA MCGOWAN/GETTY IMAGES

to execute someone for a crime, you need to be completely certain that the person committed the act. Error is inevitable in every case, and there will always be a chance that the wrong decision was made. Marquis de Lafayette said, "I shall ask for the abolition of the punishment of death until I have the infallibility of human judgment demonstrated to me." As humans judging cases, we are not infallible. Since 1900, there have been, on average, more than four cases per year in which innocent people are convicted of murder. Since the courts are bound to make mistakes in convictions, they must not impose the death penalty, which has no margin for error.

By executing people like Troy Davis, the court system is proving it cannot guarantee justice. Mistaken testimony, faulty police work, racial discrimination, inept defense lawyers, and pressure for a conviction add up to a recipe for disaster in capital punishment cases. And after the verdict is made and the criminal is executed, there is no way to resolve the question of the proposed guilt of the convict.

The death penalty not only creates a so-



What happened to innocent until proven guilty? If only my request for a polygraph test had been granted...

CARTOON BY MELANIE NARATIL (IV)

ciety where killing becomes acceptable, it is also barbaric. Lethal injection is no different from hanging or shooting because one is unable to guarantee its painlessness. Cesare Beccaria said, "the death penalty cannot be useful, because of the example of barbarity it gives men." Even the general public agrees that there are better options. When asked simply about whether they approved of the death penalty, 82 percent of people agreed with it.

Yet, when asked to choose between sentencing someone to life imprisonment or death, only 26 percent were in favor of executions. Therefore, life in prison would a more suitable punishment for convicted murderers.

A review of the case of Troy Davis supports the belief that the death penalty should be abolished because of the strong possibility that the state of Georgia was wrong when it convicted and executed him. In the meantime we need to build the sort of judicial system in which we can trust. Therefore, what is needed most urgently is reform in the punishments for certain crimes and fairer sentencing. If we fail to be just, the public will lose faith in the courts, which will endanger the survival of the judicial system.

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(...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16)

question: What societal good is being served here?

All of the foregoing begs the question of whether placing all these people in prison makes us safer. We can answer this by looking at our own State of New Jersey, one of four states singled out for reducing both crime and the prison population in a 2010 case study called "Downscaling Justice." In 1999, New Jersey's incarcerated population was at an all time high, at around 31,000 people. By 2009, this figure was down to 25,000, drawing down the number of prisoners by 6,000 in ten years. (Most other states had, on average, an increase in their prison populations.) The two major factors utilized by the state were reforming the parole system and relaxing certain aspects of 1980s "get tough" drug laws. By removing mandatory minimum three year sentences for "drug free zone" laws and leaving the sentencing to the judge's discretion, the crime rate actually dropped by more than twenty percent. This would suggest that it actually makes us safer to reduce the number of people in prison.

Three other states, New York, Michigan and Kansas, have been implementing alternative prison policies that have reduced their respective incarcerated populations and saved money while actually keeping crime rates moving in the right direction. To accelerate prisoners' eligibility for parole, New York has incorporated incentives to encourage inmates to participate in education and vocational training. Kansas's "Justice Reinvestment" program reduces spending on prisons while increasing spending on the clean up of crime-ridden towns and neighborhoods. Finally, Michigan did away with mandatory drug-related minimum sentences almost entirely. Through means like this, Michigan was able to reduce its prison population by twelve percent while at the same time reducing both violent and property crime by the same percentage, a truly noteworthy feat considering Michigan is one of four states in this country that spends more on prisons than on higher education.



"Don't worry, you'll f.t."

CARTOON BY EMILY HASELTON

Some have observed that a budget is a moral document, in the sense that where a nation spends its money and allocates its resources shows what its values are. Right now, by that measure, the "land of the free" is prioritizing locking up its citizens over a broad range of alternatives, which would likely lead to a safer, more productive, and therefore, more prosperous nation. While it is common knowledge that crime doesn't pay, in the United States, punishment meted out at an exorbitant cost doesn't pay either.

Sources: http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/cr_pri_per_cap-crime-prisoners-per-capita; http://sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/dp_CrackedJusticeMar2011.pdf; <http://economicsofincarceration.com>; <http://www.economist.com/node/16640389>; http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/publications/inc_DownscalingPrisons2010.pdf.

Incarceration Nation

BY HUNTER STIRES

Here's a question: which country has 2.3 million people currently overcrowding its prisons and jails? You'd think this country would be something like Cuba, China, or North Korea. In fact, this "incarceration nation" is the United States of America. By the way, on an absolute basis, China, despite having over 1 billion people and being the world's most populous country, only has about one half the prisoners of the United States, putting them in the Number two slot, with Russia (which has about half the number of China's prisoners) in third. We as a nation have the single largest prison population on the planet. What led to this, and why should we care? Do we actually have more criminals in our country than anywhere else? Is it because we have gung-ho law enforcement who are doing their jobs really well and catching the bad guys? Does having more people in jail make us safer? And, above all, what are the consequences of having a prison population that rivals that of Russia, India, Brazil, Thailand, Ukraine, and South Africa combined?

Let's have a look at some facts. First, more than half our prisoners are in for drug-related offenses. Clearly, our drug laws are far more severe than in other countries. And the percentage of incarcerated members of minority groups is appalling. At present, 90 percent of New York's imprisoned drug offenders are either Latino or African American. Contributing to this troublingly lopsided statistic, the laws for crack cocaine, more popular amongst minorities, are far more severe than those for powdered cocaine, the coca-derivative of choice among their white drug-using counterparts. A March 2011 report by The Sentencing Project, an organization that has been committed to prison reform for nearly 25 years, states that in Missouri, a man caught selling six grams of crack cocaine receives a minimum sentence of ten years in prison, the same minimum sentence for a man caught selling 450 grams of powdered cocaine. In other words, a man found guilty of selling six grams of drugs received the same sentence as another man caught selling 75 times more. Beyond the gross unfairness between these two scenarios, this dramatic imbalance raises yet another question: How would American taxpayers feel once they learn that their government is spending their precious tax dollars locking that first fellow up for a decade, all for selling six grams of drugs? In recent weeks, there have been some long-awaited advances in sentencing reform. Thanks to the persistent work of The Sentencing Project, the disparity between crack and powdered cocaine punishment at the federal level is being rectified. Prisoners in for crack cocaine selling may now apply to get out early, giving them a similar sentence to powdered cocaine users.

These changes in sentencing policy matter deeply, not only for the individuals who have been charged, but for our society overall. The economics of incarceration are staggering. In the year 2000 alone, we spent as a nation 40 billion dollars funding our prisons and jails. And we pay up to one hundred thousand dollars per prisoner per year. Locking one person in a box and watching them every day for a year can cost twice the amount of money needed to send a person to an Ivy League school for that same year—all expenses included. Everyone



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATIONS

talks about the need to better support our nation's school children by reducing class size, increasing faculty salaries and ensuring safe educational environments. In addition, there is much discussion about how much college costs these days and the lack of sufficient state and federal funds to offer robust student loan programs, financial aid, and scholarships. And yet, we direct vital financial resources to locking up our own citizens. Imagine if some of that money were freed up to help people get some form of higher education (such as college or vocational training), which, by the way, would create greater job opportunities for these people and keep them out of jail.

A key turning point in U.S. prison policy began during the 1970s—a time when the nation was crime-ridden and drug use was rampant. Americans wanted to do something. They demanded that politicians “get tough” on crime, especially drug use, which the politicians did with gusto. They passed laws that gave mandatory sentences for many crimes, taking away judges' ability to exercise their own assessment of reasonable punishment or alternative solutions to jail time such as drug rehabilitation. As new politicians entered the political world, they wanted to be seen as tough-on-crime, in an effort to appeal to their electorates. To look tough, they would pass stricter laws than the last guy. And sometimes, these laws were based on obsolete circumstances and became hugely counterproductive. For example, in the year 2000, four American fishermen were charged with importing lobster tails in plastic bags instead of cardboard boxes (yes, that was their “crime”), in violation of a Honduran law that is no longer enforced in Honduras and nobody in that country has bothered to repeal. However, these men were in violation of an *American* law, the Lacey Act, barring Americans from violating foreign hunting and fishing laws in *foreign* territory. Although the original intent of this law was to prevent people from doing things like poaching African elephants, three of the four fishermen received 8 years in prison—for carrying lobsters in the wrong packaging—and two are still in jail. When men like these have been deprived of their freedom because they broke a questionable law they were not aware of, we have to ask the ... (CONTINUED ON PAGE 15)