

Vital Signs



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE/WIKIMEDIA

Syrian Refugees Continue to Pour into Neighboring Countries



Syrian Civil War	
TANAY GUPTA	2
Sex Scandals in Politics	
MELANIE NARATIL	5
Snowden - Guilty or Not?	
BRANDON KONG	6
iPhone 5C Breaks the Apple Norm	
ALLISON YU	8
Guns for All and All for Guns	
NATE BALLINTYN	9
French View on US Gun Violence	
OSA OMOREGIE	11
Budgetary Problem in Washington	
GUARAV GUPTA	13
Pope of Change	
PRADYUTH MAGANTI	15
The Un-American Miss America?	
HANNAH CURTIS	16
The Feasibility of Time Travel	
ANDREW ALDER	18
Drugged	
SAM KECECI & BRYCE WEISHOLTZ	19
Iran's Nuclear Program	
PETER SHIM	20
Squandered Inheritance	
HUNTER STIRES	21
The Woolly Mammoth Revival	
NATALIE LIFSON	22
IS COLLEGE WORTH IT?	
JOSHUA METZGER	24

EDITORIAL

International Crisis - America Stays at Home

With ongoing violence in Syria, the Geneva II peace talks exist as a forum in which America should be an active participant without engaging in direct military involvement.

BY TANAY GUPTA

In January 2011 a man lit himself on fire in Tunisia, an act that sparked revolutions across the Arab world known as the Arab Spring. However, its effects lasted far longer than just one season, as the name implies. Countries such as Tunisia have been fairly successful in their transitions toward democracy, according to *The Economist*. In Egypt, even after two successive revolutions overthrew Hosni Mubarak and Mohammed Morsi, respectively, the environment still remains unstable. Meanwhile, Syria is plagued by a civil war among Bashar Al Assad's government forces, the rebel Free Syrian Army and various Islamist revolutionary militias. America will have to decide which alternative it wishes to pursue: arming the rebels and thus becoming inextricably involved in the deteriorating crisis, or engaging in diplomacy and enacting sanctions against Syria while thousands continue to die. As the actions of its allies and foes divide America between support for and opposition to intervention in Syria, meticulous



diplomacy appears to be the best route in a region plagued by uncertainty, the enormous costs of war, and factionalism.

The opposing sides in this battle have clear allies; understanding the different countries' interests in and relations with Syria put the war into context. The "Friends of Syria" group that is collaborating with the Rebel Free Syrian Army includes the United States, France, Britain and Turkey. Bashar Al Assad's Syrian government is meanwhile supported by Iran, Russia, China, and Lebanon's Hezbollah. *CNN*'s Holly Yan explained why the three nations support a regime that has supposedly slaughtered tens of thousands of civilians. According to Yan, strategy and religion bind Iran to Syria: through Syria, "Iran can threaten Israel with an arsenal of short-range missiles." This is a major concern for America since Washington deems Iran its greatest threat in the region. Therefore, an attack on Assad's regime could provoke a dangerous reaction from Iran. Iran is also dominated by Muslim Shiites; consequently, it supports the Alawites, a Muslim sect which is an offshoot of the Shiites. Bashar Al Assad's government is mainly Alawite, and Syria is ruled by this minority, which represents only 12 percent of the population.

Other facets of the Assad regime than its sectarian identity have resulted in its alliance with Russia and China. Russia and

On the Cover: Since July 2012, the Za'atari refuge camp has become a shelter for nearly 150,000 refugees - making it Jordan's fourth largest city (UN Refugee Agency).

Vital Signs

Pingry's Journal of Issues & Opinion

VOL. 23, NO. 1 • THE PINGRY SCHOOL, BASKING RIDGE, NJ 07920 • FEBRUARY 2014

Chief Editors/ Tanay Gupta, Melanie Naratil

Associate Editors/ Hunter Stires, Pradyuth Maganti

Copy Editors/ Guarav Gupta, Allison Yu

Layout Editor/ Andrew Alder

Art Editor/ Charlotte Zee

Faculty Advisor/ Dr. Alfred DeSimone

Technical Advisor/ Mr. Thomas Varnes

The opinions expressed in Vital Signs are not necessarily those of the Pingry School, its students, faculty, administration, or trustees. Articles, letters, and cartoons represent the views of their authors. Unsigned letters will not be published.

China have similar interests in working with Assad, which are driven by economics and resistance to America's international dominance. In particular, the Russian defense industry has made four billion dollars from contracts with Syria. As a key arms supplier for Assad, Russia is in direct conflict with the United States, as a country that is struggling to decide whether to supply the Rebels. Furthermore, Russia believes that too often America uses the alibi of humanitarianism as "an excuse for pursuing [its] own political and economic interests." Complicating the issue, Russia holds veto power in the United Nations Security Council, and has already exercised that right against American-backed resolutions to strike Syria. China similarly holds economic interests in Syria, and yet it deals with both the Rebels and the regime. Trade between China and Syria had reached \$2.5 billion just before the Syrian Civil War, *Al Jazeera's* Massoud Hayoun reports. China has worked with Russia by vetoing UN sanctions against Syria on several occasions. It also echoes a Russian belief that foreign countries should not interfere with the internal affairs of UN member states. Iran, Russia, and China thus stand at odds with America and the Friends of Syria.

America's foreign policy is being put to the test in Syria, especially under a Democratic president—who would generally oppose a very active international presence. President Obama's hesitancy is a respectable

reaction for a country weary of war after a decade in Afghanistan and Iraq. A Reuters' poll finds that only about nine percent of the American population wants Obama to take action against Syria. What's shocking about the anti-Assad rebellion America supports, however, is that many of its foot soldiers are actually affiliated with Al Qaeda, according to the Chief Foreign Correspondent for *NBC*, Richard Engel. In early 2013, *USA Today* reflected the same message, adding concisely, "President Obama refuses to provide any direct military aid." Members of Congress as well as government opposition forces in Syria have been pleading with the President to take action, but in a conflict that lacks a "good" side, noninterference may be the best option.

With atrocities being committed by both Assad's regime and rebel forces, it is difficult for America to commit to aiding the rebels. This statement is even more valid due to the fact that, as United Nations Humanitarian Chief Valerie Amos observes, both sides show shocking disregard for the innocent bystanders caught in the middle, as the opposing forces "indiscriminately attack schools, hospitals and power plants, and even medical personnel." She says that they do nothing to protect civilians as they engage in military activity in high population areas. To try to equip one side or the other with arms would thus seem counter-intuitive if the primary objective was to limit the amount of violence.

Moreover, arming the Free Syrian Army is a risky endeavor because they are only united by the goal of taking down Assad; beyond that end, there is little unity in strategy or communication. Taking into account the fact that Al Qaeda will likely expect a piece of the victory if Assad is overthrown, arming the rebels does not appear to be a shrewd move for America.

Though some argue that the time for negotiations has passed, perhaps China's call for diplomacy to bring about a solution to the Syrian crisis is the best. *Time's* Hannah Beech says that "Beijing's opposition to possible American intervention echoes the consensus from much of the rest of the world." Just like Americans at home who want the focus to be fixing the country's financial status, the aggregate international community does not want a superpower to meddle in the Middle East. Chinese President Xi Jinping said that while military force might seem to be a quick fix at first, only a political agreement mediated by the United Nations will create a lasting solution. How he proposes to do that, however, is unclear. While officially allied with Russia and Syria's Assad, China has always opposed the use of military force to bring about resolutions in foreign affairs. *Time's* Beech goes on to cite a major Chinese paper that states that America's hidden agenda is to have Syria overthrown because of Assad's allegiance to Iran, which is a major cause of tension for Israel—a key ally.

Free Syrian Army Rebels cleaning their guns in Aleppo, Syria during the Civil War.

SCOTT BOBB/WIKIMEDIA



The US hoped that the rebels would be able to succeed in the Arab Uprising that began in 2011, but “the rebels are so divided that they cannot overthrow the Syrian government.” Part of America’s diplomacy abroad appears to be governed by its relationship with Israel.

America is really in a bind in the Middle East. On one hand, it is determined to protect Israel, a nation that Iran has had tense encounters with. On the other, America is still under threat from the Al Qaeda military group, which is fighting for the same short-term goal as the Free Syrian Army—the overthrow of the Assad regime. The aggressive foreign policy that the United States has pursued at times in the past has created a cyclical problem that has dug the country into deep debt, while creating enemies that cannot be quelled without indirectly posing new danger to America. A former Israeli government official, Daniel Levy, says that Israel wants its ally to be tougher in the Middle East. This is of course because a “muscular, interventionist America is more useful to Israel than an America that is focused on state-building at home,” the goal which our nation *should* really focus on. With pressure around Iran’s nuclear ambitions and an unrelenting Republican party within the country, President Obama must think hard if the marginal benefit of entering the strife in the Middle-East exceeds the marginal cost.

With all of the international politics in the background, it is important to acknowledge what has happened to the once culturally-rich

country of Syria. *Washington Post’s* Caitlin Dewey analyzes the effects of the Civil War, noting the “relentless bombardment in civilian areas.” Seeing the before and after effects of missile strikes on Aleppo, a Syrian city with a population just less than that of Los Angeles, has been daunting. The city’s oldest and best-preserved cultural landmark, the Great Mosque of Aleppo from the 11th century, has been severely damaged. Meanwhile, more than half of the country’s population is in poverty, based on a report from October 2013 commissioned by United Nations agencies. The report declared that “7.9 million people [have become] poor since the beginning of the crisis, of whom 4.4 million now live in extreme poverty.” Half of the adults in Syria are unemployed, and the same percentage of children no longer attend school. Additionally, by the final quarter of this fiscal year, the country will have suffered a total economic loss of \$100 billion, the Middle-Eastern newspaper *Al Arabiya* reports. While the political ramifications of acting or not acting vary for all of the nations involved, the toll the Syrian Civil War has already taken on its people is massive—nearly 2,000 individuals were killed during a nine day peace conference alone.

The Geneva II conference that ran from January 23 until January 31, 2014 was supposed to take steps towards bringing an end to the violence in Syria. Although the talks failed to produce concrete progress, UN Representative Lakhdar Brahimi pointed out

that this was the first time that “the government and some people who were opposing it met publicly and under the auspices of the United Nations.” Former US State Department official, Anne Marie Slaughter said that the Obama Administration’s Syria policy is focused on ridding “the Syrian regime of its chemical-weapons stockpiles while avoiding direct intervention in the civil war itself.” The United States should remain actively engaged in the Geneva II process in order to advance these objectives.

At a time when American politicians cannot even agree on how to solve the country’s fiscal woes, putting billions of dollars into another war that has no clear endgame seems unwise. China and Russia stand in the way of America imposing an UN-approved strike in Syria. America should refrain from allying with the Free Syrian Army, in part because it is headed by a disorderly mix of factionalized secular rebels. At the same time, supporting a successful revolution could possibly worsen the already tense Israel-Iran relationship. Regardless of the ultimate decision, America must take a clear stance on the Syrian civil war, while the global community finds a practical solution—preferably through an efficient diplomatic process. For the sake of the innocent civilians huddling in their makeshift homes and refugee camps amidst deprivation and constant bombardment, we can only hope that soon, someone will put an end to a bloody conflict that has already dragged on for far too long.



BASMA/FLICKR

A young girl at a rally in the Aleppo Governorate of Menbej. She is wearing the colors of the Syrian National Coalition, used as a flag of independence since late 2011.

Sources: <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21581734-despite-chaos-blood-and-democratic-setbacks-long-process-do-not-give-up>; <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/10/8/china-russia-congratulateeachotheronsyriaatape>; <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/29/world/meast/syria-iran-china-russia-supporters>; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/25/us-syria-crisis-usa-poll>; http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/09/11/20438772-jihadis-gain-ground-in-syrian-rebel-movement-as-moderates-grow-desperate; http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202_162-57609348/syrian-regime-rebels-largely-ignore-united-nations-humanitarian-appeal-envoy-says; <http://world.time.com/2013/09/13/chinas-view-on-syria-crisis-americas-hidden-motivations-are-leading-it-astray>; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-19345629>; <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/23/world/middleeast/obamas-uncertain-path-amid-syria-bloodshed>; <http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2013/09/02/dewayne-wickham-on-obama-and-syria>; <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/08/09/satellite-images-show-syria-neighborhoods-before-and-after-scud-missile-strikes>; <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/10/26/U-N-Half-of-Syrians-living-in-poverty.html>; <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/01/31/un-s-brahimi-round-one-of-syria-peace-talks-failed.html?url=/articles/2014/01/31/un-s-brahimi-round-one-of-syria-peace-talks-failed>.

EDITORIAL

Sex Scandals in Politics

Citizens believe in candidates with both great professional and personal characters, as evidenced by the losses of Eliot Spitzer and Anthony Weiner.

BY MEL NARATIL

Although Eliot Spitzer and Anthony Weiner hoped for a second chance after taking “vacations” from office in the wake of sex scandals, not enough New Yorkers were willing to give them the opportunity to revive their political careers. They wanted to redeem themselves in the eyes of the voters they had previously offended, but both ultimately lost in the New York City Democratic primaries on September 10, 2013. Former Governor Spitzer, who resigned in 2008 after admitting he paid for sex with prostitutes, lost a competitive race for city comptroller, with the Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer beating him by four percent of the votes. Former Representative Weiner, who had lost his congressional seat in 2011 as a result of “sexting” women he barely knew, came in fifth in the mayoral primary, getting less than five percent of the vote. The poor election results for Spitzer and Weiner suggest that, even in socially permissive New York, voters place significance on a candidate’s morality and are hesitant to elect a candidate whose behavior they do not respect.

Leading pre-election opinion polls early in their campaigns, Spitzer and Weiner had reason for optimism. Kenneth Sherrill, a political scientist at CUNY Graduate Center, argued that while elected officials can outlast sex scandals more easily than financial scandals, Spitzer and Weiner had no allies to help them buy time. “They were so lacking in collegiality that they had no friends. Their colleagues were happy to see them go,” Sherrill said. However, the passage of time since Spitzer’s and Weiner’s departures from office had given the public a chance to forgive and forget. Also in their favor was the tendency of in-party primary voters to consider other qualities of the candidates over their past transgressions.

These initial advantages faded as the elections drew nearer and both men began to experience setbacks that weakened their positions. Although Weiner insisted that he had learned from his mistakes, the surfacing of lewd pictures and messages sent by him a year after his resignation from Congress suggested quite the opposite. This occurred only months after he and his wife, Huma Abedin, had commented on their happy family to *People Magazine*. After the new scandal broke *The New York Times* editorial board concluded, “The serially evasive Mr. Weiner should take his marital troubles and personal compulsions out of the public eye, away from cameras, off the Web and out of the race for mayor of New York City.” Weiner emailed his supporters and said that the campaign was “too important to give up because I’ve had embarrassing personal things become public.” In the meantime, Spitzer was making use of his family real estate fortune to finance an extensive

campaign, but he failed to project a coherent message or present enough specifics about what he would do in office if elected. He appealed to New Yorkers to trust him, but trust was a problem when Spitzer’s misdeeds overshadowed his weak message.

Obvious spousal support late in the campaign would have humanized Spitzer and Weiner more. Anthony Weiner’s wife, Huma Abedin, supported his political comeback and stood by his side when new scandalous pictures were revealed on a site called *The Dirty.com*, but she disappeared from public view soon after that. Spitzer’s wife, Silda, was not by his side at all during the campaign, making it easy for tabloids to harass Spitzer about the state of his marriage. In his defense, Spitzer said, “I think it’s fair to say I’m running for office. No other member of my family is running for office. And I think the public is going to judge me, not who else is with me or not with me.” Still, his logic was not accepted by everyone. Wendy Schiller, a political science professor at Brown University, observed, “If the wife goes on the campaign trail or seems really supportive, it makes a huge difference. If she doesn’t, it may raise doubts with women.”

Establishing credibility with voters, especially female ones, would have been easier if the candidates’ wives had been standing by their sides throughout their campaigns.

Spitzer’s and Weiner’s losses in the Democratic primary provide insight into how to best stage a political comeback after being scarred by sex scandals. Perhaps the most important step in appeal-



THOMAS GOOD/WIKIMEDIA

Anthony Weiner at the LGBT Pride Parade in New York City.

ing to voters is to express regret for past misdeeds and demonstrate a successful reformation. Weiner's failure in this area culminated when one of his "sexting" partners, Sydney Leathers, tried to crash his primary night rally. Leathers announced publicly that Weiner needed "to stop being an embarrassment to the city of New York. He's going to continue this behavior. If it's not going to be me, it's going to be some other girl." Although Spitzer did not become mired in an additional scandal during the campaign, opponent Scott Stringer destroyed him in the media by painting Spitzer as a hypocrite who held himself to different standards than he had held others over the course of his professional life—as prosecutor, New York attorney general, and governor. In particular, he blasted Spitzer for being a law enforcer who had broken the law. CNN's Jake Tapper made note of the irony that paying for sex first became a "Class E felony" under a law signed by Spitzer.

For many voters, it was just too difficult to get past either the hypocrisy of Spitzer's strengthening laws against sex trafficking just before becoming a client of the international call girl ring the Emperors Club, or Weiner's proclivity for sending photos of his genitals to strangers he met online. In addition, the potential for a successful comeback depends upon the quality of the competition a scandal-damaged politician faces. In the cases of Spitzer and Weiner, the voters had well-established Democratic alternatives from whom to choose. New Yorkers were able to vote for other

candidates with similar political positions as Spitzer and Weiner, without the scandal.

In the end, the main lesson of Spitzer's and Weiner's attempts at a second chance is that character matters to New Yorkers. Forgiving and forgetting are not that easy, especially with the prevalence of the New York media world that includes two tabloids, an all-news cable network, and multiple radio stations to highlight the candidates' reprehensible behavior. In addition, Weiner's and Spitzer's apologies could have been more effective if they had been less perfunctory and more sincere. Perhaps their failure to achieve political comebacks is a reassuring indication that the public holds candidates accountable for their moral failings.

Sources: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2013/07/24/weiner-scandal-quit-mayoral-race/2582353>; http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/11/nyregion/stringer-defeats-spitzer-in-comptroller-primary.html?_r=0; <http://thinkprogress.org/election/2013/07/11/2282671/heres-why-weiner-and-spitzer-are-getting-second-chances>; <http://www.usatoday.com/story/onpolitics/2013/07/24/eliot-spitzer-prostitutes-weiner-sex-scandal/2583193>; <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Latest-News-Wires/2013/0912/Anthony-Weiner-Eliot-Spitzer-fail-at-polls.-Is-redemption-after-a-sex-scandal-possible-in-NY>; http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/20/anthony-weiner-eliot-spitzer-wives_n_3628897.html; <http://www.politico.com/story/2013/09/weiner-and-spitzer-lost-heres-what-we-learned-96606.html>; <http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Government/2013/07/26/Silda-Spitzer-Wants-To-Divorce-Eliot>.

Snowden - Guilty or Not?

Is it justifiable for millions of Americans and the American government to be enraged with Edward Snowden?

BY BRANDON KONG

Where would you escape to as a fugitive from the world's only superpower? Edward J. Snowden, the computer specialist who disclosed documents that deeply embarrassed the National Security Agency, is an example of how difficult absconding from the United States can be, given the nation's far reaching international influence. After traveling from Hong Kong to Moscow in June, Snowden lived in Sheremetyevo International Airport in Moscow for over a month while submitting requests for asylum in over 20 different countries, most of which were denied. Ironically, the only place in the world where he can currently live without fear of persecution is in Russia, where he was granted temporary political asylum on August 1st. Snowden, however, should not even have to consider asylum in Russia, because he did not commit the acts of espionage or treason with which he has been accused by his critics.



Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Clippings from a variety of publications reveal that Snowden's actions are making headlines.

LYA_CATTEL/ISTOCK

Indeed, Snowden is a true whistle-blower, who deserves respect for exposing illegal activities that were being kept secret by the US government.

Snowden, a former government contractor to the NSA, is currently wanted by the United States for crimes that include theft of government property and violations of the Espionage Act of 1917. Although he faces up to 30 years in prison and numerous fines, he neither has been, nor should be, charged with treason. The sections in the Espionage Act that Snowden has allegedly violated include revealing classified information to “unauthorized persons.” Despite the fact that Snowden chose to leak his information to the public and not to any particular country or government, he is still being labeled as a “spy.” Actually, Snowden selectively chose to reveal information worthy of public disclosure, including accounts of mass surveillance programs, such as PRISM, Xkeyscore, and Tempora, which collect huge amounts of information on both foreigners and US citizens in the name of antiterrorism and homeland security. To make matters worse, the data collected by these systems often stems from searching an individual’s online presence without a warrant.

Although some argue that Snowden’s actions should be regarded as an act of treason, he is not a traitor under US law. “We have a very precise definition of treason in American law,” constitutional law expert Aziz Huq notes, continuing that its definition “is embedded in the Constitution. And it refers to a very narrow class of ‘intentional forms of aiding an enemy in times of war.’” The act of revealing information to the public does not constitute treason, and “traitor” is a very strong word that describes a person with the specific intent on aiding an enemy during a time of war. Snowden was not motivated by money, power or foreign allegiance, but instead by his interpretation of right and wrong. Clearly, he saw that the government’s secret surveillance of US citizens violated the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution, and decided to disclose it.

It seems that U.S citizens tend to agree. A poll released in August by Quinnipiac University in Connecticut surveyed over 1,400 registered voters and found that 55 percent of Americans believed that Snowden is a whistle-blower, or an individual who exposes illegal activities within

an organization, not a traitor, while 11 percent are undecided on the issue. Treasonous or not, Snowden’s leak of NSA documents has stirred debate and ushered in over a dozen new bills that aim to limit domestic spying. Such proposed laws include the NJ Representative Rush Holt-sponsored Surveillance State Repeal Act, which aims to repeal the Patriot Act and Foreign Intelligence Surveillance (FISA) Amendments that have made it easier for the NSA and other government agencies to collect data



LAURA POITRAS/WIKIMEDIA

secretly against US citizens. Despite the slim chance that a bill like this would be passed, it shows that public opinion on government surveillance is changing for the better. Snowden’s actions ignited a controversy and brought new light onto the arguably unconstitutional acts of the NSA and FISA Court.

It is easy to understand why Edward Snowden would choose Russia as a place for asylum, as the only other countries that are offering him refuge involve the risk of flying over EU and US airspace, where the plane carrying him could be forced down by military authorities. Interestingly, the three countries that have even considered offering asylum to an “enemy” of the United States are Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. WikiLeaks’ founder Julian Assange attributes Latin America’s willingness to protect Snowden to the region’s interest in retaining the trust of its

people. He says that this is an ideal example of “Latin American democracy, where you have governments who feel the need to be responsible to their people, who feel the need to live up to the sort of values that they are preaching or they will held to account by the population.” Whether Assange’s analysis is accurate or not, the audacity that these countries have demonstrated is amazing, considering America’s global economic and diplomatic hegemony. The US has applied pressure on numerous countries that received Snowden’s requests for asylum. The aggressive pursuit of Snowden appears to be part of a larger strategy, since the Obama Administration has prosecuted twice as many whistleblowers as any single past presidential administration. With the charges pending against Snowden included, the Obama administration will have been responsible for seven out of the ten total indictments under the Espionage Act in recent history.

For now Edward Snowden appears to have settled into a secretive life in Russia. Although he has not been guaranteed long-term protection from being extradited, he will most likely be allowed to live and even work in Russia while his temporary status is annually renewed. Anatoly Kucherena, Snowden’s lawyer and only direct voice to the outside world, has said that Snowden did not have any plans to leave Russia, and that he has been studying the Russian language. Kucherena added that “he would walk past you and you wouldn’t recognize him...He really does walk freely around the streets.” With only temporary asylum, the future for Edward Snowden is uncertain, and until then, we can only hope for reasonable reform of the NSA’s power and surveillance abilities.

Sources: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/edward-snowden-accepts-venezuela-asylum-2041226>; <http://www.politico.com/story/2013/08/edward-snowden-timeline-of-events-95057.html>; <http://www.quinnipiac.edu/institutes-and-centers/polling-institute/national/release-detail?ReleaseID=1930>; <http://www.voanews.com/content/snowden-traitor/1726272.html>; <http://rt.com/news/assange-interview-snowden-journalists-079/>; <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/08/2013841016657318.html>; <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/10/obama-leaks-aggressive-nixon-report-prosecution>; <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/01/edward-snowden-grant-temporary-asylum-russia>; http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-06-21/world/40116763_1_hong-kong-nsa-justice-department.

iPhone 5C Breaks the Apple Norm

The iPhone 5c is only the beginning of a line of low budget smartphones. In a growing competitive market with Samsung and Nokia, Apple is just helping the consumer.

BY ALLISON YU

What does the “c” stand for in the new iPhone 5c? Color? Contrast? How about cheap? The “c” stands for all of these attributes, and while Apple is primarily using the iPhone 5c’s innovative colors as its main selling point, the targeted market would agree that the most appealing feature is its low price. At a measly \$99, consumers can attain a durable polycarbonate iPhone with the same rapid processor and screen resolution as the iPhone 5. The only problem is, while Apple is trying to be innovative and to open its horizons to a new market, it sacrifices the high-end quality and exclusiveness that avid Apple fans look for in Apple products.

Branching out to over 60 countries worldwide, the iPhone 5c has certainly opened up a new market—one comprised of consumers who are not willing to spend \$100 more for a luxury phone. And although these consumers are raving about how cheap the colored model is, they fail to see that the materials used for this phone—a polycarbonate shell supported by a steel frame—are not worth the actual price of the phone. Also, this new “cheap” handset is still \$549 for a 16GB SIM-free handset, much more expensive than its counterparts such as the HTC One, Samsung Galaxy S4 and Nokia Lumia 925. Of course, potential buyers consider the iPhone 5c’s price cheap relative to the newer iPhone 5s’s pricing, both of which debuted on the same day. On its debut day, the iPhone 5s definitely outshone the iPhone 5c, but together they sold over 9 million units during their launch weekend. And this statistic was to be expected: the iPhone 5s satisfied the average American who always wants the newest and the best, while the iPhone 5c appeared to meet the needs of consumers on a budget who still want the technology and the prestige of the Apple brand.

Although the iPhone 5c seemed to be what many people were looking for, ever since the release date interest in the iPhone 5c has been waning, and rightly so. Apple had tried to counteract this decrease in sales by discontinuing the popular iPhone 5, but to no avail. They reasoned that because the iPhone 5c touts the same technology as the iPhone 5, just in a repackaged form, consumers wavering between the newest iPhone 5s and the iPhone 4s would find a happy medium in the mid-range iPhone 5c. But analyst Ming-Chi Kuo says that while “Apple shipped 11.4 million iPhone 5c units in the September quarter... shipments drop sequentially by 10 percent, to 10.4 million units, in the December quarter.” The decrease in sales shows that Apple may have misjudged the perceived quality of the iPhone 5c. Best Buy, RadioShack, and Walmart have slashed the original

\$99 price tag in half already—and Target is soon to follow. iPhone 4s users have shrewdly realized that the iPhone 5c is really just a carbon copy of the iPhone 5 in a distinctly cheaper shell; so while people just entering the vast world of smart phones or looking for an alternative to their current smartphones might consider this colorful phone, Apple has missed the target of iPhone 4s users who will most likely upgrade to the iPhone 5s when their contract expires.

Even though there has been a continuous decrease in sales, at least new markets have opened up for the iPhone 5c. But while this may be good for Apple’s short-term sales, the image of Apple may be greatly affected. Apple has always boasted that its products are not only premium, but also exclusive. Because of the steep pricing, Apple products have always had the privilege of selling to only a small percentage of the world’s population. Now that customers in developing countries have access to the innovative technology of iPhones, wealthier consumers may see the iPhone 5c as a blemish on Apple’s otherwise premium image. We live in a materialistic world; now that both the exclusivity and superior quality of an Apple product has been stripped away, prospective buyers may be hesitant to buy a product that a wider audience with lower socio-economic status can afford as well.

The iPhone 5c understandably has both pros and cons, but what

is unnerving is that the cons seem to have outweighed the pros. The multiple color options are the most trumpeted feature of the new iPhone, but consumers have already bought colorful and patterned cases to counter the limitation of a monochrome exterior. What’s more, even if the exterior of the iPhone 5c is truly “groundbreaking,” the technology of this phone is the same as its predecessor, the iPhone 5. Apple had the right idea in trying to expand its targeted market. But if anything, perhaps Apple should have designed the iPhone 5c to have the same cutting-edge technology as the iPhone 5s so that the iPhone 5c’s unreasonable price could be justified.



DAVID ROCKOFF (V)

Sources: <http://www.techradar.com/us/reviews/phones/mobile-phones/iphone-5c>; <http://www.trustedreviews.com/news/iphone-5c-sales-predictions-slashed-as-interest-wanes>; <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2013-09-23/apple-sold-9-million-iphones-last-weekend-dot-heres-why>; <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/iphone-5c-apples-first-departure-from-highend-devices>; <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/iphone-5c-and-5s-pros-and-cons>; <http://www.macrumors.com/2013/10/09/apple-announces-two-new-rounds-of-international-iphone-5s-and-5c-launches-starting-on-october-25/>; <http://www.macrumors.com/2013/10/11/target-becomes-latest-retailer-to-cut-price-of-iphone-5c>; <http://www.macrumors.com/roundup/iphone-5c/>; <http://appleinsider.com/articles/13/10/11/apples-iphone-5c-orders-lower-than-expected-insider-says>.

SATIRE

Guns for All and All for Guns

As the number of mass murders continues to rise, many people are left questioning Liberal policies on gun control.

BY NATE BALLINTYN

The amount of gun violence in the United States of America has become increasingly worrisome over the past couple of years; Aurora, Newtown, Tucson, and Virginia Tech are all tragic examples. Aurora's shooting ended after 24-year-old James Holmes killed twelve people and wounded 58 others in a packed movie theater. Just over one year ago, twenty first-graders and six teachers were killed at Sandy-Hook elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut. Within the month of January 2014, there have been shootings at Perdue University and South Carolina State University among a number of other locations.

By any measure, these mass shootings are happening too often and taking the lives of too many people. The vast majority of the victims are unarmed and have never had any lessons in self-defense, let alone military training. Therefore, in all these situations, the victims had to rely on the security personnel at their location, which, especially at an elementary school like Newtown, was non-existent. Something *must* be done.

As a true American, I uphold the Second Amendment to the fullest extent, and to that end, any solution to gun violence must not infringe on our rights to keep and bear arms. Moreover, as Wayne LaPierre has stated, "the only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun." Therefore, I propose that we create a nation of good guys with guns. As part of our public education system, weapons training and self-defense should become skills learned through the grades in school. Just as in science classes, where basic concepts such as the internal structure of an atom are taught to lower grades and more difficult concepts like thermodynamics are taught in higher grades, basic gun safety should be taught with low caliber guns in kindergarten, while accuracy training with higher powered rifles should be taught in high school.

At age four, every child should be given firearms training and, as standard issue, a .22 caliber pistol. In addition, they will be required to become proficient with firing the

pistol and maintaining its parts. As these children grow older, higher caliber pistols should be issued, and by the end of middle school, students should be proficient at maintaining and shooting a .44 Magnum, or equivalent, and have the ability to make a tight grouping on targets positioned 50 yards away. In their freshman year of high school, students will be required to become proficient with a low caliber rifle (less than .30 caliber) and must be able to make a tight grouping on targets at greater than one hundred yards. In their sophomore and junior years, students will learn to use larger caliber rifles and hit targets at longer ranges. Also, if a student chooses, electives in firearms history or interpretation of the Second Amendment with an emphasis on why a well-organized militia requires individual gun ownership may be taken in these years as well. Senior year of high school will have the most difficult requirements, as all seniors will be required to be proficient with a standard issue M-16 assault rifle. In order to graduate cum laude, a student must be proficient with the M-4 carbine as well. College students should have the most difficult requirements of all; every

student must be able to hit a human target at one mile with a .50 caliber sniper rifle by the time they graduate.

Throughout their education, students will be required to compete interscholastically in one or more of the new weapon-centric sports. Sports for lower and middle school students will include competitive shooting, both for accuracy and speed, mini biathlons (combining running and shooting instead of skiing and shooting), and a *Hunger Games*-style fight with paint ball guns. For high school and college students, sports will include shot put with grenades, the long jump away from the blast, and, as soon as they turn 18, Humvee and tank drag racing.

How will this new system help our country become a nation of good guys with guns? Firstly, it will get our nation's kids off of the Call of Duty 4 tournaments, which teaches them that it is okay to be mass murderers. Secondly, specially trained security guards won't even be needed to defend our schools because, having gone through this program, new principals and receptionists will be just as able to fend off an assailant that enters a school; what faculty member wouldn't want

Children get the feel of an M-134D Gatling gun at a navy base in Gulfport, Mississippi.

DEMETRIUS KENNON/WIKIMEDIA



“This system will imbue in our nation’s children a feeling of unparalleled safety because they will become acclimated to environments replete with lethal weaponry.”

that in their job description? Thirdly, this system will imbue in our nation’s children a feeling of unparalleled safety because they will become acclimated to environments replete with lethal weaponry. Moreover, they will feel even safer as they learn that the first line of defense against an assailant is the slaughter of the assailant by their own hands.

Liberal Democrats will protest that the solution is not to kill those who use guns to hurt others but instead is to prevent those people from getting the guns in the first place. We reply that our Second Amendment must always come before any proposed regulation. Therefore, regulations on assault rifles, maximum magazine sizes, caliber restrictions, bullet proof vest distribution, explosives availability, and background checks are intolerable violations of our Constitutional protections, since each one places a limitation upon our unqualified right to bear arms. What’s more, these regulations won’t help cops in the line of duty. As Lindsey Graham rightly states, “changing a magazine” is something that anyone “can do pretty quick.” Thus, the tactical ad-

vantage cops would get from these “small bore” regulations, like making the assailant have to reload more often, have less protection from police bullets, and in general have less opportunity to do damage, is too small to be worth the infringement on Americans’ freedom. Furthermore, where is the harm in the wounding or killing of a police officer in the line of duty while protecting our rights compared to the arrest of an assailant with no bloodshed but with an infringement upon our rights as Americans?

Therefore, I emphasize again, new regulations are not what we should enact; all problems involving bad people who want to harm others should be solved by training good people to use weapons against them. Let’s give neighborhood watch members, like George Zimmerman, armored Humvees to patrol in and drones for aerial reconnaissance. Let’s stop convicts escaping in motor vehicles with RPGs or tanks. Let’s be proactive and secure our waterways by giving every harbormaster a submarine armed with military-grade missiles and torpedoes! Let’s train our neighbors to shoot down hijacked

aircraft with surface-to-air missiles, or better yet, send the Jones family, who live across the street, to fighter school and have their privately owned F-16’s on standby at the local airfield (Boy, it will be even harder to keep up with them then!). Best of all, payment for this entire program could come from taxing everyone for these services, and by achieving savings in military training, Medicaid, Medicare, and Obamacare! Why not!

The Democrats’ proposed regulations are not designed to prevent gun massacres; they are the first of many regulations to remove all guns from the general public of the United States and then repress our society into a state where it is unable to fight back. Once this repression occurs, the events of Hitler’s Germany, Stalin’s Russia, Mao’s China, Castro’s Cuba, Hugo Chavez’s Venezuela, and Al-Assad’s Syria will all occur simultaneously! The threat posed by tyrannical regimes like these is the precise reason that the Second Amendment exists, and we all know that the President secretly plans to lead the United States into a dictatorial dystopia. Therefore, we must not fall for liberal policies that would supposedly prevent the 30,000 annual gun deaths in the U.S., if we truly wish to deter present or future politicians from tyrannizing the free people of the United States.

That is why I call upon Congress, the NRA, President Obama, and all the American people; don’t let your own safety be compromised by misguided attempts to ensure the safety of everyone else in the country. Stand up for your right to own a gun and fight to have this right expanded to all weapons. Fight for your children’s education not only in the use of firearms but also other tools of self-defense like fragmentation grenades. Fight against government oppression, and above all, realize the Second Amendment’s true purpose as set forth by our Founding Fathers!

Sources: <http://www.bradycampaign.org>; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lgu9f-qd_Uo; Stewart, Jon, “Scapegoat Hunter.” The Daily Show. Comedy Central.



JOHN MESSINA/WIKIMEDIA

Learning to shoot is an American tradition that we need to embrace and expand upon.

The French Perspective on US Gun Violence

During his semester away in France, Senior Osa Omoregie encountered French shock at US gun control and the government's handling of mass murders.

BY OSA OMOREGIE

“Do you have a gun in your home?” was one of the most recurring questions French students asked me in France, when they were told that I am an American. Gun ownership is a fascinating yet foreign concept to most of them, since guns are illegal in France under ordinary conditions. This major cultural difference prompts their baffled reactions to news of deaths caused by firearms in the United States. While many French citizens admire American practices and customs, their shock at gun violence has been gradually transforming their image of America from that of a model society into a backward one, obsessed with guns. After all the gun-related tragedies that have occurred recently, the epidemic of gun violence needs to be resolved before it ruins America's foreign reputation.

On January 21, 2013, I started my semester abroad program, in which I would spend the second semester of my junior year in France. I spent five months in Bretagne, northern France, immersing myself in the French language, culture, and lifestyle. By staying with a host family, I could live like a French adolescent. While attending high school, I was treated like a celebrity, as the French students looked to me for up-to-date instruction in American fashion trends, music and teenage slang, among other things. I felt a strong surge of patriotism, which prompted me to see myself as an advocate for my country. As a result, I endeavored to correct as many misconceptions about America as possible, but I always halted mid-sentence when French natives asked me questions like, “Why do Americans need guns?” Their inquiries about guns in America arose more frequently as more news of American gun murders surfaced. One of the major eye-openers was the Connecticut massacre in which 20-year old Adam Lanza entered Sandy Hook Elementary School, shot, and killed 26 people, including 20 children. This massacre was the second-deadliest school shooting in American history, exceeded only by the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007 that left 33 dead. The French also knew—through newspapers, radio news, and TV news broadcasting—that in 2012, 500 people were murdered in Chicago, and that most of these homicides were caused by gang violence and the rapid in-flow of guns. Upon hearing news like this, my host family was not only distressed by the murder rate, but also perplexed by America's easy access to firearms.

The outrageous number of gun-related murders in America is alarming for the French, but what disturbs them more is America's loose gun control perpetuated by the nation's obsession with weapons. After spending five months in France, I have learned that most French adults believe that private gun ownership is implicated in widespread U.S. gun violence. While American gun-control activists advocate stricter gun laws to resolve the problem, many of their French counterparts would promote a ban on gun ownership in America. For most French citizens, the answer to preventing massacres

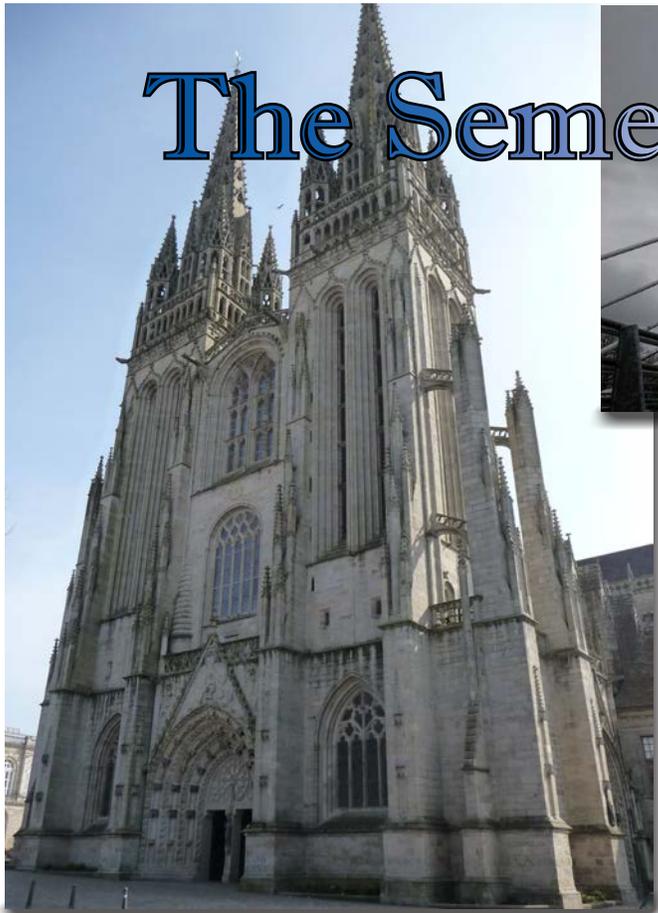
like the Connecticut shooting is to ban firearms altogether. Gun rights activists in America, however, argue that the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution gives them the right to bear arms, and that guns are needed for self-defense and protection against criminals. If U.S. legislators agreed to French citizens' suggestions, civilians would not have the right to possess guns, thus deterring gun violence.

“Why do we need guns? I don't need to own a gun if no one else has one,” said Patrick, my host mother's brother-in-law, as we were having a discussion about prominent issues in America. He and many other French citizens share the same notion; they do not have any incentive to purchase guns since they live in a relatively gun-free environment. In France, civilians are prohibited from possessing firearms, with limited exceptions. Civilians must have a hunting license or shooting sport license in order to possess guns. Meanwhile, approximately 88 per 100 Americans own firearms, and since each state in America passes its own gun laws, civilians can even carry guns in public places—with or without a permit—depending on the jurisdiction. There are still murders by means of firearms in France, but the annual rate is far lower than that of America, a nation that is ranked twenty-eighth globally in its firearm murder rate and first in civilian gun ownership rate. America's loose gun-control measures allowed for a five-year old Kentucky boy to accidentally shoot and kill his two-year old sister with a .22-caliber rifle he received as a birthday gift. In the southern region of America, “it's not uncommon for a 5-year-old to have a gun or for a parent to pass one down to their kid,” said Kentucky State Police Trooper Billy Gregory. When I told my host father of this incident, his reaction was one of horror, but not of surprise.

As the list of U.S. gun massacres continues to grow and little is being done to change the nation's gun laws and cherished gun culture, the French have begun to anticipate more American violence in the near future. Informed French residents I spoke with opined that American legislators have not acted fast enough to prevent future gun-related deaths. As time passes new mass shootings will simply be cited as another example of America's senseless barbarity and obsession with guns. Prohibition of firearms or stricter gun-control measures may not completely prevent gun violence, but they would certainly help the crusade against it. Nonetheless, until measures like these are passed, France's respect for America will continue to diminish.

Sources: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/15/nyregion/shooting-reported-at-connecticut-elementary-school.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0; http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/28/chicago-homicide-rate-201_n_2569472.html; <http://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/france>; <http://ivn.us/2012/12/19/why-gun-regulations-in-france-differ-significantly-from-the-us/>; <http://www.cnn.com/2013/05/01/us/kentucky-accidental-shooting/index.html>; <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/jul/22/gun-homicides-ownership-world-list>.

The Semester in France



Cathédrale St. Corentin de Quimper: *In April, I explored the monuments and history of Quimper, Brittany's most traditional and historical region. It has flags celebrating Brittany's Celtic heritage and many crêperies, since Brittany is home of the crêpe. The Saint Corentin Cathedral is a national monument of Brittany.*



Le Pont de Térénez: *In January 2013, I saw the new Terenez bridge, a cable-stay bridge that was constructed in 2011. This bridge serves as the crossing point between the Corzon peninsula and the metropolitan city, Brest. As the first curved cable-stayed bridge in the world, le Pont de Térénez astounded me with its combination of engineering and aesthetics.*

On January 21st, 2013 I started my semester abroad program in France. I spent the second semester of my junior year in Brittany, a northwest region of France south of Great Britain. While attending a French high school, I learned that some descendants of the Celts kept the native language, Breton, alive. I was so engrossed in the French lifestyle—the food, music, fashion trends, teenage slang—that I became fluent in French within four months. -Osa Omoregie (VI)

(Below) En Bretagne: Although many Breton habitants complain of constant rain, on a sunny day Brittany is one of the most beautiful regions in France. The sun's rays give everything ethereal beauty and the clouds look as if they were painted in the sky.



Crisis in Congress: The Budgetary Problem in Washington

In 2013, the US narrowly averted default and temporarily resolved the government shutdown. The issue could resurface in 2014 in a more dangerous form.

BY GAURAV GUPTA

The Dow Jones Industrial Average slipped by roughly 2000 points in the period surrounding the debt-ceiling debacle of 2011. Unfortunately for Americans, Congress never seems to learn from its mistakes; Congressional leaders again practiced brinksmanship in the weeks preceding the 2013 debt-ceiling deadline, causing the Dow to fall around 1000 points. Although the crisis was resolved and default was averted, the Republicans deliberately “cut it close” to ensure that they could have the best shot at defunding “Obamacare.” A bipartisan deal was finally reached, but it was only temporary; the issue reemerged in January 2014, at which point Congress passed another procrastination-oriented bill to push the debt ceiling debate to February 2014. Once the short-term budget compromise ends in February, the issue will resurface, and is predicted to be catastrophic if the it is not resolved with more expedition than in November 2013 and January 2014. Serious political conflict may erupt again, not only causing turbulence in financial markets, but also adding to existing skepticism about the stability of the American economy.

Despite the obvious political and economic importance of the task, the United States government has recently struggled to negotiate a budget that satisfies both Republicans and Democrats. In 2011, Congress signed a complex deal, which raised the federal debt ceiling for two years and called for further deliberations on a long-term budget plan. That only came after the federal government in 2010 spent \$1.3 billion in borrowing costs to cover shortfalls in revenue. The agreement emerged only two days before the United States would have legally defaulted as a result of neglecting to pay its debts. As the issue resurfaces this month, political and economic analysts are predicting unmitigated disaster if Congress does not reach a long-term deal regarding the debt ceiling. NBC’s Chuck Todd predicts, “the Obama White House and Congress could very well be on their way to another collision course over the debt ceiling”.

The “debt ceiling” is the upper limit on how much the US government is authorized to borrow from companies, individuals or other countries as a way to pay for the different parts of the national budget. The deficit is the amount by which the budget exceeds national revenues derived from taxes. As the U.S. Department of the Treasury officially describes it, the debt ceiling “allows the government

to finance existing legal obligations that Congresses and presidents of both parties have made in the past.” Each fiscal year, Congress drafts a budget specifying the national government’s expenses and income. If a portion of the budget expenditures exceeds national revenue, the government must borrow money to account for the deficit. It is important to note that raising the debt limit does not increase the amount of money that the government can borrow in the future, because raising the debt threshold only helps the government repay current debts. It does not permit the government to accrue further deficits by spending more than its revenue. The debt ceiling has received a lot of attention, because recent battles over whether to raise it highlight the inability of the government to agree on a budget, but this is by no means the first time the value has been raised.

Today, raising the debt ceiling is sure to cause sociopolitical drama, but the US Treasury states that “since 1960, Congress has acted 78 separate times to permanently raise, temporarily extend, or revise the definition of the debt limit.” In fact, according to *USA Today*, the United States has only defaulted on its debt twice: first in 1814, as a result of the War of 1812, and second in 1979, because of a temporary paperwork mix-up. In essence, America has not voluntarily defaulted on its debt in over 200 years. Luckily, it has kept that record alive for another year, and with the recent bill that was passed in January 2014, the issue has been postponed until February. However, negotiations will not be as “smooth” as they were, as both sides of the aisle are annoyed by small agreements that serve only to prolong the problem. Conservative Republicans, who lost out in negotiations for destroying Obamacare, are determined to seek revenge. John Boehner, the Republican

Speaker of the House, has said that we should not default on our debt, or even get close to it, but a ‘clean’ debt limit increase simply won’t pass in the [Republican-controlled] House”.

The concurrent government shutdown in October 2013 amplified, the disputes in Congress over raising the debt ceiling. The idea of the United States government “shutting down” is not unheard of, as there have been 17 shutdowns over the past 40 years, according to the Congressional Research Service. History shows us that government shutdowns have been proven to be manageable. In fact, Charles Kenny for *Bloomberg* notes, “if there’s a silver lining to the shutdown, it’s that the U.S., far more than just about any other country on earth, can withstand it.” So, why was the recent partial government shutdown such a big deal if it has happened so many times before? In 1995—the last government shutdown—the nation



TRACEY LIN (VI)



KEITH ELLISON/ WIKIMEDIA

End Government Shutdown Rally on October 4th, 2013.

was undergoing a period of strong economic growth. In contrast, in 2013 Kenny says, “the budget impasse unnecessarily hurt prospects for recovery” from a harsh recession. As it is, foreign markets are struggling to recover from the 2007 recession, and with the added prospect of an American default, the rate of growth in emerging markets is likely to decrease because of suppressed international trade. What’s worse is that a government default could even cause the second economic crisis in seven years. So, while the government shutdown in itself could be managed, the added prospect of a default magnified the drama in Congress.

Even though the government narrowly avoided economic catastrophe through a last minute deal negotiated by Senate leaders Harry Reid and Mitch McConnell, the consequences have still been severe. First of all, in the weeks before and after the partial government shutdown, the Dow lost more than 800 points. Additionally, the drama in Congress has increased global uncertainty about the American economy. *Reuters’* Richard Cowan and Thomas Ferraro say that every time the US government borders on default, foreign economies become more dubious about the power of the dollar. While the Senate and the House of Representatives endorsed the Reid-McConnell agreement, Cowan and Ferraro point out that the deal “offers only a temporary fix and does not resolve the fundamental issues regarding spending that divide Republicans and Democrats.” This fix ran only until January, when Congress was again able to reach a temporary agreement, but only until the end of February. Because

these resolutions are only temporary, the two parties will have to address the issue again in the near future, and this time Republicans and Democrats will be pressured to reach a conclusive agreement. However, without an agreement the American public faces the potential for another government shutdown this year.

If the United States were to default on its debts, the economic consequences would be dire. Domestically, investors would race to withdraw their money from money market funds—alternatives to banks that are sensitive to major fluctuations in asset prices. As a result, the funds might be forced to suspend payments, generating doubt about bank deposits as well. Thus, as *CNN Money* summarizes, a government default could lead to a “run on the banks,” in which investors would shift their investments from large banks or corporations to precious metals like gold. In 2008, when Lehman Brothers declared bankruptcy, the American economy spiraled into recession. If the government defaulted on its loans, the effect would be augmented because major banks such as Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Goldman Sachs, and Morgan Stanley, would plunge towards a similar fate as Lehman Brothers. An American default would likely cause a global stock market crash as well. *CNN Money’s* Maureen Farrell has predicted that “in the worst-case scenario, the blow to world markets would be so extreme as to cause an immediate economic” crisis. Although Congress was able to prevent default in November 2013 and January 2014, the prospect of default when the issue resurfaces in February would be strong

enough to potentially cause a second Great Depression.

Congress was able to narrowly escape governmental default and economic disaster in October, but the consequences have still been serious. Although a bipartisan “procrastination agreement” was reached that would extend the debt ceiling until February 2014, another Congressional standoff is looming. Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew points out that “no Congress in our history has failed to meet that responsibility,” but politicians predict that February may change the course of American history. For the past three years, conservatives have been conceding to Democratic debt-ceiling stipulations, and “Republicans have been infuriated” time and time again. The House Republicans’ strategic loss to their Democratic counterparts may ignite a fire under the Republican cause come February, when the debt ceiling debate will reemerge. The budget debate and debt ceiling dilemma are only small battles in the ongoing war between the Democrats and the Republicans over the size of government, tax policy, and domestic spending priorities. If the political struggle for supremacy between Democrats and Republicans has resulted in so much panic during the recent talks, should the two parties fail to compromise in the near future, the implications may very well be catastrophic.

Sources: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/the-oval/2013/10/14/obama-default-associated-press-1979-war-of-1812>; <http://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21587809-time-running-out-avert-unnecessary-disaster-struggle-continues>; <http://money.cnn.com/2013/10/15/investing/debt-default-doomsday>; <http://media.cq.com/media/billmonths>; <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2013-10-14/the-u-dot-s-dot-can-survive-a-shutdown-but-not-a-default>; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/16/us-usa-fiscal>; <http://firstread.nbcnews.com/news/2014/01/23/22414954-first-thoughts-debt-ceiling-debate-here-we-go-again>.

“If there’s a silver lining to the shutdown, it’s that the U.S., far more than just about any other country on earth, can withstand it.”



JOHN BAPTIST HERKENHOFF/AGÊNCIA BRASIL

Pope Francis's untraditional approach to pressing world issues has led to much debate surrounding his plans for the Catholic Church.

BY PRADYUTH MAGANTI

The term “revolutionary” has been applied to describe Pope Francis, but so has “unorthodox.” The usual definition of “unorthodox” as it pertains to religion is not applicable in his case, though, since his theological views are similar to those of his predecessors. Pope Francis is unorthodox in that his priorities and style are unconventional or different from the ordinary. In addition his willingness to stay true to his ideals clearly trumps his interest in how he is perceived by the public or by other church leaders. Why is the pope associated with these adjectives, though? Does his deviation from the norm enhance or detract from the effectiveness of his various statements? In other words, does this make him a good pope?

Pope Francis grew up in a simple, pious Catholic household, which could be identified as “traditional.” He was raised in a working-class setting and is considered by many as “the pope of the people” as a result. Prior to his papal inauguration, Jorge Mario Bergoglio was a humble cardinal from Argentina who did not take advantage of the luxuries often provided to church leaders. Back in Argentina, he insisted upon taking the public bus instead of being driven around by a personal chauffeur. Upon his election as pope, he chose to maintain this austere lifestyle by opting to live in the Vatican guesthouse instead of the luxurious papal apartments. This simplified approach to life extends far beyond the vision he has for himself alone. He has been outspoken about his dream for more modest living among the rich and for ameliorating conditions for the poor throughout the world. Still, his dream does not stop here.

The Pope envisions not only better conditions for the poor but also positive changes in many facets of social life. These social changes include ending the mistreatment of gays and advancing women’s

rights, among others. He has spoken out against these inequities that for centuries have been reinforced by Church doctrines. He does not, however, disregard the Church’s fundamental teachings of faith and charity. Rather, he is interested in changing the perspectives and mindsets of Catholics about these world issues. He has been quoted as saying that the Church’s association with the people of the world needs to undergo a transformation.

In fact, “change” is probably not the right word to describe his vision, but rather “upholding” is the better term. Pope Francis is attempting to preserve the Church’s principal teachings by adapting them to the current times. The Catholic Church originated in a different time period—attitudes and practices that may have been applicable to the society of the past need to change to fit the current times. Francis believes that the central lessons that were taught millennia ago are still relevant to society today. Simplicity, equality, and belief in God are what appealed to the Church’s followers almost 2,000 years ago. These same values remain today amongst the followers. The pope argues that the Church strayed from its initial goal of equality when attempting to strictly adhere to the other initial goals of the Church. According to Francis, this is nobody’s wrongdoing but the effect of time and the changing eras.

During the formative era of the Church, people did not imagine that condemning homosexuality and depriving gays of recognition within the Church would become a social injustice. Since gay rights have become a more obvious human rights concern, the Church must change its approach to these issues. Again, the Church values social justice, equality, and belief in God at a higher priority than other values. Though it may appear as if Pope Francis is radically changing the Church, this is not true. He is maintaining the central ideas that the Church stands for. Changing times naturally require some changes in

Photo: Pope Francis interacting with a crowd assembled in Brazil.

policy, but not a complete overhaul. Francis's followers and the papal bureaucracy should do the same. Instead of ostracizing people, they can learn lessons from the pope by preserving the ultimate goals of the Catholic Church.

The pope believes he should focus more on how he wants to change and lead the Church rather than on how he is perceived by the public generally, or by Catholic traditionalists specifically. Francis was elected pope on March 13, 2013. In less than a year, he has announced his positions on a wide variety of controversial topics. One of his most quoted sayings is the following: "if someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?" This is a clear indication of the course Pope Francis desires to chart for the Church. A person should be free to have any emotional preferences as long as it does not affect his faith in God. Few of his predecessors would have risked saying that because of the controversy that would ensue. Pope Francis, however, is not afraid to speak his mind about securing equality and faith in the Lord amongst all of his 1.2 billion followers.

Another similar situation arose regarding the inclusion of women in the Church. The Pope has suggested that he wants a larger role for women in many aspects of church life. He stated, "a church without women would be like the apostolic college without Mary. The Madonna is more important than the apostles, and the Church herself is feminine, the spouse of Christ and a mother." His comments reflect the advancement of women in society throughout the last century.

Undoubtedly, his remarks have raised hopes that change in the rigid ordination rules for priests will become part of his quest to bring the Church up to date. Evidently, Pope Francis will not compromise his ultimate mission to promote equality just to preserve his standing amongst conservatives within the Church.

Pope Francis has without hesitation cast himself as "a pope of change." It is astonishing that he is the first man from the Americas to lead the Roman Catholic Church in the modern era, even though 40% of the world's Catholics live in Latin America. Perhaps his knowledge of economic disparity and social injustice within South America is what has influenced him to become the man he is today, but more importantly, the pope we see today. His tendencies are definitely considered "revolutionary" and "unorthodox," but these characteristics are absolutely refreshing in an era that is experiencing rapid social change. As Pope Francis embarks on his journey to better society, his progressive approach will benefit the Roman Catholic Church as well.

Sources: <http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/pope-francis-revolutionary-vision-article>; <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/pope-francis-not-so-much-a-reformer-as-a-revolutionary>; <http://www.politico.com/story/2013/03/pope-francis-biography-key-facts-life-in-latin-america-and-background>; http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/03/13/17299920-meet-the-new-pope-francis-is-humble-leader-who-takes-the-bus-to-work; <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2013/09/19/pope-francis-church-cant-interfere-with-gays>; <http://world.time.com/2013/09/19/the-four-reform-themes-of-pope-francis-in-new-interview>.

The Un-American Miss America?

The New Miss America Nina Davuluri has received much criticism in a country that prides itself on diversity.

BY HANNAH CURTIS

As much as social media acts as a forum for discussion of political and social controversies, it can also be the cause of these controversies in the first place. A recent example comes from the tweet-fest that broke out after Miss New York Nina Davuluri was crowned Miss America. On September 15th, 2013, Davuluri, an Indian American, was chosen as Miss America 2014. Soon after her victory, however, Twitter exploded with comments regarding how she was the first Indian woman in history to be crowned Miss America. Tweets included "Miss America or Miss Al Qaeda?" and "Miss New York is an Indian... With all due respect, this is America!" The backlash in the social media to the crowning of Davuluri created a sense of humiliation throughout America, where racial diversity is supposed to be accepted and supported.

"And the Arab wins Miss America. Classic." This was one of a range of hostile tweets that immediately followed Davuluri's victory. Davuluri, born in Syracuse, New York, is in fact of Indian heritage and not an Arab. According to Alexander Abad-Santos of the *Atlantic Wire*, "these racists showed that Americans are not only capable of being racists, but also very un-educated racists." However, it should not matter whether Davuluri happens to be of Arab or Indian descent, because after all, America is committed to the ideals of diversity and freedom.

Other fallacies circulated through social media regarding Miss

ANDY JONES/WIKIMEDIA



America's possible ties with the Islamist militant group, Al Qaeda. Abad-Santos further noted, "they are making the claim because they want to call her patriotism into question by equating her with terrorists," terrorists who are not even of the same ethnicity or religion. In some parts of America, there is apparently a misconception that people of a certain skin tone are prone to terrorism. Naming Davuluri as a terrorist revealed the huge gap between preconceived racial notions and reality.

Another controversy that emerged on social media was about whether Miss Kansas, Theresa Vail, should have been crowned Miss America 2014 instead of Davuluri. According to pageant observers, she demonstrated more American qualities than Davuluri. Vail's love for hunting and her tattoos supposedly made her "a better American" in the eyes of many Twitter users. In reaction to this false representation, Abad-Santos said, "there's an implicit message that Vail should also be American because she is white. American, however, is not a skin color." The underlying message that Davuluri is not an accurate representation of America was thus instilled through this theme in the social media as well.

Although all these negative, bigoted remarks have tended to draw sympathy towards Davuluri, the controversy surrounding one of her own alleged past statements did damage her image. A few weeks before Davuluri was crowned, she commented on the former Miss America Mallory Hagan's body size, calling her "fat." Caught on videotape, her criticism of the former crown holder gained attention when Davuluri herself was crowned. One tweet read, "So the girl that won #MissAmerica is the same girl that called Miss America fat? Is that an example we want to teach our kids...?" However, after these accusations surfaced, Davuluri both denied having made the statement, and apologized for any offense that similar remarks made by her supporters may have caused.

As the Hagan-Davuluri episode shows, the Miss America pageant highlights certain messages about a woman's ideal beauty and female identity, which leads to the idea of a "perfect woman" winning the

RUTH ADVOKAT (V)



"It should not matter whether Davuluri happens to be of Arab or Indian descent because, after all, America is committed to the ideals of diversity and freedom."

pageant. Hilary Levey Friedman, a sociologist who is currently writing a book on pageants says that "in some sense, it's always been political because that's [the definition of ideal beauty] a political issue." Whether a member of a recent immigrant group should represent American ideals raises controversy, as many observers argue that America is going through a period of exceptionalism, which is a when a country believes itself to be "exceptional" or special in some way. Exceptionalism ties into the controversy of Davuluri not being "white enough" because many whites believe themselves to be the true possessors of essential American qualities (like those attributed to Miss Kansas).

Social media is used as a forum to express ideas and opinions about practically everything. The criticism following each Miss America pageant has increased over the years, especially as social media has permeated not only American culture, but also the world. Fifty years ago, the means for engaging in controversies were entirely different. Now, all kinds of positive and negative opinions, no matter how questionable, can easily be tossed into the public domain for the whole world to see.

In reaction to all these racial comments, Davuluri stated, "I have to rise above that. I always viewed myself as first and foremost American." Her platform in the competition was "celebrating diversity through cultural competency." And through the exposure generated by negative comments regarding her ethnicity, her pageant platform was actually bolstered.

Although Davuluri has received a lot of negative feedback on her win, she has also earned a lot of positive support among not only her colleagues but also from the social media. One such tweet is "congrats to the new #MissAmerica! A true, born in New York American!! And, to the ignorant & racist people out there, shame on you!!" This view shows pride in the new Miss America, supporting the fact that there is no "cookie cutter Miss America." As she steps into her new role as Miss America 2014, Davuluri will continue to work toward her goal of becoming a physician by applying to medical school with the \$50,000 scholarship that she won from the pageant. She is excited to start her Miss America career and says, "I'm so happy this organization has embraced diversity."

Sources: <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/opinion/os-darryl-owens-miss-america-diversity>; <http://www.missamerica.org/miss-america/meet-miss-america.aspx>; <http://www.kaleo.org/opinion/reactions-to-miss-america-pageant-humiliate-america/article>; <http://www.today.com/style/pageants-get-political-controversy-key>; <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/entertainment/2013/09/first-indian-american-miss-america-has-racists-very-very-confused>; <http://www.buzzfeed.com/ryanhatethis/a-lot-of-people-are-very-upset-that-an-indian-american-woman>; <http://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2013/09/16/new-miss-america-to-be-crowned-in-atlantic-city>; http://www.syracuse.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2013/09/miss_america_fat_nina_davuluri_mallory_hagan_new_york.

In the Nick of Time: Ahead to the Future

For decades, we have dreamed of employing Einstein's Theory of Relativity to travel through time. Now, hope exists for this dream to become a reality.

BY ANDREW ALDER

"Man, I wish I could go back in time and study harder for that test..." How many times have we thought that? How often does the idea of going back and correcting past mistakes come up in our lives? Quite often — almost as often as thoughts of skipping ahead to the future. Many high school freshmen are so anxious to enter their senior year that they wish they could just leap into the future, and likewise, many high school seniors wish they could zip past the whole college application process and just enter college. Most of us, though, see scenarios like these as fantasies — the mere mention of the phrase "time travel" is enough to get someone to roll their eyes in exasperation and blurt out, "That's impossible." But is it?

The answer is both yes and no. While it is theoretically possible to travel into the future, it is impossible to travel backward in time for a number of reasons. The first is explained by the famed grandfather paradox. Suppose for a moment that time travel to the past is, in fact, possible. A person would theoretically be able to travel back in time before he was born and kill his own grandfather, for whatever reason. Thus, one of the person's birth parents would never have been born, and the time traveler would never have been born either, which results in a paradox. This isn't just limited to the literal sense of the example above; there are many situations that would cause a paradox. What if a person could travel back in time to prevent his parents from ever getting married, or to save the life of someone who is dead in the present? These are only a few examples of paradoxes that humans could create through travel into the past.

Along with giving rise to the grandfather paradox, the means of traveling to the past is doubtful. Research indicates that a wormhole might possibly provide the only way to travel to the past. There is still much debate between physicists surrounding the topic of wormholes. Some wholeheartedly reject their existence while others say there

is scant proof that these wormholes exist, not surprising when one realizes that nobody has ever actually seen a wormhole. Furthermore, wormholes are speculated to be extremely tiny, and building one would, in the words of physicist Paul Davies, "require harnessing vast amounts of peculiar quantum field energy and deploying gravitational stabilizing technology that would need the resources of a cosmic super-civilization." The energy needed to fuel this technique is called "exotic matter," an entity that is still under research by physicists, but believed to exist.

All that being said, Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity suggests that it is very possible to travel into the future. Time and distance are not fixed, but are capable of being manipulated by motion and gravity, making them elastic. Thus, time runs slower on the roof of your house than in the basement, since the earth's gravity is weaker on the roof. The closer an object is to the speed of light, the slower time will pass. For instance, if you were to board a spaceship and fly into space for two years at the speed of light and return to Earth, you would have jumped 200 years into the future. This effect is called time dilation, and observations have provided hard evidence that time is indeed elastic.

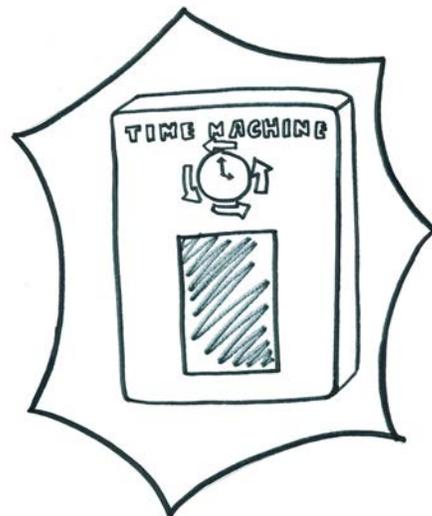
This concept is further explained through a theory called the Twin Paradox, also devised by Einstein. Say we have a pair of twins who are named Anna and Erin. Anna decides to become an astronaut, while Erin remains on Earth. Anna travels for two years in space at a speed close to that of light and returns, and is amazed to see that she looks younger than her sister, Erin, upon her arrival. This type of time travel raises the question, how could one sister be younger than the other? The elasticity of time plays an important role in this example. Though no one has figured out a way for people to travel at speeds where the relativity effect would be significant, the twin paradox is an example of the probable outcome. Another time travel method involves the use of black holes. Black holes yield an intensely powerful gravitational pull, one that even makes light

travel in slow motion. So traveling through a black hole can cause an extreme time warp, a fascinating, albeit dangerous, prospect. From tiny lapses in time to large temporal jumps, traveling into future seems quite possible.

So will we one day be able to travel through time? Going backward is controversial, and even if we learn how to master the technology of exotic matter for travel to the past, the grandfather paradox will forever influence the manner of actions we can take in the past. Yet someday we may be able to travel forward, though it may take many years to figure out a safe method for doing so. With the rapid advance of space technology and the development of a space tourism industry, we will eventually find a way to become masters of time and space. For those of you who often dream about what the world will be like in the year 3000, you just might be able to find out one day.

Sources: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/13/time-travel-possible-physicist-machine-future-only_n; <http://www.cnn.com/2013/05/13/opinion/opinion-time-travel-paul-davies/index>; <http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/review/dr-marc-space/time-travel>; <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/26/wormhole-time-machine>.

CHARLOTTE ZEE (VI)





Performance-enhancing drugs are increasingly becoming integral to the culture of sports.

BY SAM KECECI & BRYCE WEISHOLTZ

“25 to 40 percent of all Major Leaguers are juiced.” With these blunt words retired pitcher David Wells charges that a significant portion of baseball players use steroids, a figure that he claims is rapidly rising. Many iconic athletes have destroyed their own reputations by lying to the media, to the public, and ultimately to a court of law. Three recent examples that attracted widespread media criticism are Ryan Braun, Alex Rodriguez, and Lance Armstrong. All three of these athletes have the potential to make the Hall of Fame for their respective sports, but their PED usage has changed all of that. The use of performance-enhancing drugs has long been, and will continue to be, ingrained in sports culture, plaguing athletic fields for years to come.

Since the Ancient Greeks participated in the original Olympic Games around 500 BC, performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) have allowed athletes to gain an unfair advantage over others. The Olympians used “magical” herbal materials to increase strength and speed. From then on, performance enhancers have been used in sports all over the world. But in particular, the term “steroids” conjures the image of modern major league baseball. It is not difficult to recall the scandals of Ryan Braun and Alex “A-Rod” Rodriguez, as well as the resolved cases of Barry Bonds and Roger “The Rocket” Clemens. Although these cases have come to light in recent years, PEDs are as old as the game itself.

One of the most iconic names in baseball, Alex Rodriguez was accused of using PEDs in 2006. “A-Rod” made his major league debut with the Seattle Mariners in 1994 and was subsequently named American League MVP in 2003, 2005, and 2007. Rodriguez seemed invincible. He was regarded as a role model of how dedication can propel one to the pinnacle of sport. However, his integrity was shattered on the national stage when the Mitchell Report came out in 2006,

highlighting all the players accused of using performance-enhancing drugs. Rodriguez was one of the few active players on Mitchell’s list. He eventually confessed that he used steroids from 2001-2003 with the Texas Rangers. Even worse, in August 2013 it was confirmed that not only did Rodriguez use PEDs during his 2003 MVP season, but he continued to use even after his public apology, destroying the reputation of arguably one of the most treasured figures in sports. On January 11, 2014, Rodriguez was sentenced to an unprecedented 162-game suspension by Major League Baseball, preventing him from playing in the 2014 season or the playoffs. Rodriguez had threatened to sue Major League Baseball as well as the Player’s Union, claiming that the suspension was “manifest disregard for the law” and that the MLB “refused to entertain evidence that was pertinent and material to the outcome.” Though Rodriguez decided to drop the lawsuit, the effects of his steroid use have reverberated far beyond the game of baseball; it is by no means an isolated incident in the growing realm of drugs in sports.

Another recent scandal surrounding substance abuse in baseball involves the Milwaukee Brewers’ Ryan Braun. Braun, thought of as an elite left fielder, admitted to using performance-enhancing drugs in March 2013. Like Rodriguez, Braun denied all usage when he was first suspected, and even passed the drug test administered by the MLB. The second time around, however, Braun was not as fortunate. Having duped baseball fans, and specifically the loyal and small fan base in Milwaukee, Braun released an apology. Although he meant well, the apology served to worsen his case. Fans resented him for withholding information and bringing a bad name to the Brewers franchise. Interestingly enough, just two years before the allegations, Ryan Braun was an MVP winner. Still, Braun and Rodriguez represent only a fraction of the MLB’s PED users.

Over the course of the last thirty years, power records have be-

Photo: (Clockwise from the left) Alex Rodriguez, Lance Amrstrong, and Ryan Braun have all been involved in performance-enhancing drug cases recently. (Wikimedia)

come inaccurate measures of a player's true ability. This "epidemic" of PEDs has forced many to question the authenticity of the incredible records that have been broken recently. Barry Bonds' untouchable record of 762 home runs over his career was only possible because of his steroid use. In 1998, Mark McGwire broke Roger Maris' single-season home run record of 61, by hitting 70 homers, an unprecedented display of baseball prowess. Yet like a number of power hitters of the era, McGwire's feats were only possible with the aid of banned substances. Lou Brock, a retired baseball player and strong activist against steroids, summed up the attitude of the nation when he said, "cheaters can't win and steroids has put us in the position that it's OK to cheat." The "Age of Steroids" has had such a monumental impact on baseball that many records will forever be marred by their artificial nature. Buster Olney, a baseball analyst who has been following the sport since the early 80s remarked on the modern rise of PEDs: "Anybody who loves the game hates the fact that steroids became so pervasive in the sport, but for a 20-year period, I think most of the elite players were using performance-enhancing drugs... This was what the sport was."

As popular as baseball is in America and East Asia, the global sport of cycling has also seen a major blow to the credibility of one of its top racers as a result of PEDs. The most notorious user in recent memory is cyclist Lance Armstrong. The news that the greatest cyclist in the world used blood doping—even after his recovery from testicular cancer—shocked cycling and general sports fans alike. His

foundation, "Livestrong," took a huge hit from the news, and Armstrong's reputation was ruined. When Armstrong was at the pinnacle of his success, he symbolized the power of perseverance to surmount even the toughest of challenges. This ended, though, when evidence of his PED use caused Armstrong to fall from his place atop the world of cycling.

Steroids and other PEDs seem to have become as essential to success in modern sports as proper training used to be. From the historical beginning of athletic competition, athletes have desired to do whatever it takes to be the best. They are willing not only to sacrifice their bodies, but to risk sacrificing the reputations that they have worked so hard to build throughout their careers. Much of this risk-taking is driven by the fundamental desire to be not just a professional athlete, but an elite one at that—and too often, by any means necessary. As long as there are substances available to artificially improve performance, there is little doubt that these drugs will be abused.

SOURCES: http://dash.harvard.edu/handle/2007/12/13/sports/20071213_MITCHELL_FEATURE; http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2007/12/13/sports/20071213_MITCHELL_FEATURE; <http://www.cbssports.com/mlb/eye-on-baseball/22849636/ryan-braun-admits-ped-use-suspended-for-rest-of-2013>; http://sports.yahoo.com/news/sad-road-to-alex-rodriguez-s-211-game-suspension--placement-on-mlb-s-mount-rushmore-of-steroids;http://espn.go.com/new-york/story/_/id/8814011/barry-bonds-roger-clemens-do-not-belong-baseball-hall-fame; <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/10/lance-armstrong-sheryl-crow-doping>; <http://www.cnn.com/2014/01/11/us/alex-rodriguez-suspended/>; http://espn.go.com/new-york/mlb/story/_/id/10288380/alex-rodriguez-sues-mlb-union-seeking-reversal-suspension.



US DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Trepidation is inevitable as Hassan Rouhani ascends to power in Iran with his foreign policies toward the US and Israel still unknown.

BY PETER SHIM

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the last president of Iran, famously proclaimed, "Iran follows [the eradication of Israel] with determination ... and will never ... withdraw from this standpoint and policy." On August 3, 2013 Hassan Rouhani succeeded Ahmadinejad and initiated negotiations over the Iranian nuclear program almost immediately. These negotiations have painted him as a moderate in direct contrast to the previous president. Although the world has been hoping that Rou-

hani would be more moderate, critics still contend that his intentions may not be completely virtuous. However, the method for solving this problem lies not in Iran, but in the United States itself.

Though some observers fear that Iran and Israel will one day attack each other with nuclear weapons, others are skeptical of this scenario, and their suspicions seem to be correct. Because of Nuclear Deterrence Theory, which states that if one country launches a nuclear weapon at another the other country will inevitably retaliate, causing massive damage, it seems rather unlikely that Iran would directly strike at Israel. Alternatively, Iran could give nuclear weapons to terrorist organiza-

Photo: The Geneva interim agreement reached upon on November 24, 2013 was signed between Iran and the P5+1 countries in Geneva, Switzerland. In exchange for temporarily freezing portions of its nuclear program, Iran will face reduced economic sanctions. The agreement, the implementation of which began on January 20, 2014, was the first formal agreement between the United States and Iran in 34 years.

tions like Hezbollah or Hamas to strike at Israel and the United States. While this course of events is itself rather unlikely, the United States would face a certain degree of risk if Iran acquires a nuclear weapon.

In light of these facts, while many may advocate the use of force, such as cyber-attacks, drone strikes and even invasion, these policies are misguided, since they are more likely to push Iran to develop its nuclear program further. A quick history search demonstrates that the United States' willingness to take military action actually incentivized Iran to pursue nuclear weapons in the first place. Since 1898, the United States has conducted 9 wars. Furthermore, in 2003, President Bush, in his State of the Union speech, placed Iran and "their terrorist allies" in an "axis of evil." The Iranians figured that the United States would target them next unless they could stop the United States from attacking. Perhaps as an intimidation method, Iran has threatened America's close ally Israel on multiple occasions. Contrary to the "moderate" stance President Rouhani seems to be taking, he recently asserted, "Iran believes that whoever is for humanity should also be for eradicating the Zionist regime [Israel] as [a] symbol of suppression and discrimination." If these are indeed his true intentions, Rouhani's peace talks may be just a method to buy more time for the nuclear program.

Even though Iran has denied that it aims to produce nuclear weapons, it seems as though possessing them may be the most direct way to make a statement about the legitimacy of the nation in the eyes of foreign powers. Contrary to Iran's statements, the International Atomic Energy Agency indicates that Iran has begun to "work on the development of an indigenous design of a nuclear weapon including the testing of components." Historically, when countries like Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea acquired nuclear weapons, the United States

started treating them more seriously. According to the Cato Institute's Ted Carpenter, Iran too, has learned that "possessing a nuclear arsenal is the [only] way to compel the United States to exhibit caution and respect."

While there are and always will be ideological differences between Iran and the United States, Iran is not necessarily at fault for developing nuclear weapons. The regime change will be inconsequential should the United States continue its policy of threatening military intervention. If the United States ever wants Iran or other countries to stop proliferating nuclear weapons, they must demonstrate a willingness to negotiate and practice military restraint.

An interim agreement on Iran's nuclear enrichment policies was put into force on January 20, 2014. According to the agreement Iran will halt the enrichment of uranium above 5% purity and will dilute its stock of near-20%-enriched uranium. In exchange, the US and other world powers agreed to suspend certain sanctions on trade in precious metals, petrochemical exports, and the automotive sector of Iran. In addition, it was agreed that the US would be able to inspect the site of a reactor monthly. It still remains uncertain whether this will lead to Iran really stopping its weapons development program.

Sources: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium>; <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2383737/Iranian-leader-Hassan-Rouhani-describes-Israel-wound-body-Muslim-world-needs-removed>; <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/ahmadinejad-iran-is-determined-to-eradicate-israel>; <http://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/serials/files/cato-handbook-policymakers>; <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/tehran/axis/map.html>; <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/27/world/middleeast/irans-president-calls-on-israel-to-join-nuclear-treaty>; <http://www.cnn.com/2013/11/23/world/meast/iran-nuclear-deal-details>.

A Squandered Inheritance

Petty politics are impeding America's more critical objectives.

BY HUNTER STIRES

On October 9, 2013 David Ignatius of The Washington Post characterized the government shutdown in terms of Herman Kahn's 1960 theory (and *Dr. Strangelove's* 1964 parody) of a "doomsday machine," a system of nuclear weapons designed to wipe out all life on Earth if a hostile foreign power (in Herman Kahn's case, the Soviet Union) were to undertake some "unacceptable" action. The assured nuclear destruction that would follow the detonation of such a device would leave virtually no survivors to pick up the pieces of a moment's madness. While consequences like these vastly exceed those of the recent U.S. government shutdown, the near undermining of the Full Faith and Credit of the United States will nevertheless have a very real impact for our generation, who will soon inherit the nation and the world President Obama, Speaker Boehner, and Senator Cruz are shaping today.

Within days of the shutdown, John Boehner, after succumbing to pressures from House archconservatives, had already caused serious damage to America's international standing, creating repercussions that will remain long after today's congressional incumbents have left office. For most of our history, politics used to stop at the water's edge. But now, in a "post-consensus" political era, replete with what one conservative columnist has labeled "The Suicide Caucus," domestic squabbles are becoming a regular impediment to our dealings with other countries. On October 2, the shutdown forced President Obama to cancel his trip to a pair of major Asian diplomatic summits in the Philippines and Malaysia, the second such Asian tour the President has

cancelled because of partisan politics. But this particular instance has potentially destabilized our long-term foreign policy in the Far East, a region the President has declared will be the focus of a U.S. strategic rebalancing. While many people in this country saw the shutdown as a symptom of petty politics, onlookers abroad have watched a global superpower crippled by a small group of extremists in its own government. Our allies in the region (and the Philippines in particular) were depending on President Obama's presence and support at those summits to counter China in several territorial disputes in the South China Sea. While Secretary of State John Kerry did attend on our behalf, the President's conspicuous absence gave China's new president, Xi Jinping, the chance to underscore his case that American power is becoming increasingly unreliable in that part of the world. Even aircraft carriers and Tomahawk missiles do not present a credible deterrent if the government that controls them cannot get its House in order.

Even though the shutdown was ultimately resolved and the country is now moving on with relative normalcy, the stain of national embarrassment will be difficult to erase. Power goes hand in hand with respect, and our leaders' recent failure to govern has already cost us a great deal of the latter. It remains to be seen how long it will take us to win back that respect, if we can at all.

Without question, irresponsibility in Congress today will have lasting reverberations in the world tomorrow.

Otto von Bismarck once counseled that political wisdom requires the ability to discern "the distant hoofbeats of history." I wonder what our leaders hear.



FLYING PUFFIN/ WIKIMEDIA

Even if cloning extinct animals becomes possible, scientists must still determine if it's ethical.

BY NATALIE LIFSON

If you've ever seen the 1993 movie "Jurassic Park," then you're familiar with the concept of utilizing the DNA of an extinct species to clone it. Until recently, this notion had been outside the realm of possibility. However, this past July, a female baby woolly mammoth, named Yuka by scientists, was discovered frozen in ice in Siberia. Although woolly mammoths became extinct roughly 10,000 years ago, Yuka is estimated to be approximately 49,000 years old. This is not the first time a woolly mammoth has been discovered deep beneath layers of ice. However, unlike the others, Yuka has been so well preserved that her blood and muscle tissue remain intact, despite the tens of thousands of years that have passed since her death. In fact, after all this time, Yuka has still retained the color of fresh meat. Because of this discovery, scientists may eventually be able to clone Yuka and revive woolly mammoths from extinction.

Pleistocene Park, situated in Siberia, aspires to recreate the environment where

woolly mammoths used to reside. This grassland area was once occupied by a variety of different species of large herbivores, including reindeer, bison, and woolly mammoths. While reindeer and bison have already been relocated to Pleistocene Park, the reintroduction of the extinct woolly mammoth has proven to be a daunting problem.

Although there's a good chance that cloning woolly mammoths may ultimately prove unsuccessful, the revival of the woolly mammoth is still a very real possibility. There are two possible methods for cloning Yuka: either eggs would be withdrawn from a closely related species, such as the Asian elephant, and the woolly mammoth's DNA inserted into them, or cells would be extracted from Yuka's remains and reprogrammed into stem cells. It may also be necessary for a number of broken strands of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) to be collected from Yuka and pieced together. If this were the case, it would also be necessary to use Asian elephant DNA in order to fill in any gaps.

Even if this "DNA merging" works, there may not be enough suitable cells in Yuka to clone another woolly mammoth, and it

would require a large number of the endangered Asian elephant's eggs to even attempt to clone a single woolly mammoth. The supply of eggs would be even more problematic because a single woolly mammoth would not be enough for the species' revival, much less reintroduction into the environment. According to Ian Wilmut, the scientist who was able to clone a sheep named Dolly in 1996, "you need to provide them with friends and neighbors to interact with." Additionally, scientists face the moral dilemma of whether or not it would be right to clone a woolly mammoth if it would essentially be the only existing member of its species. Some would argue that it would not be ethical to create a woolly mammoth only to have it be isolated and companionless. While scientists have considered placing the closely related Asian elephant in the same habitat with a cloned woolly mammoth, this proposition would be akin to placing a human in a habitat with no other company besides chimpanzees. However, while it is not ideal to isolate a cloned woolly mammoth or even place it with Asian elephants, it would be extremely difficult, if not virtually impossible, to clone a second

Photo: Representation of the Woolly Mammoth, on display at the Royal BC Museum

“Although there’s a good chance that cloning woolly mammoths may ultimately prove unsuccessful... [It] is still a very real possibility.”

woolly mammoth with the resources currently available to us.

The controversy surrounding a clone’s potential isolation is not the only ethical issue surrounding the possibility of reviving the woolly mammoth. Before cloning Yuka, it would be necessary for scientists to determine whether a cloned woolly mammoth would lead a good life and be well cared for. The cloned mammoth would almost certainly be held in captivity for its own protection, so it’s critical to ensure that it resides in the proper environment. When they roamed the Earth, mammoths inhabited cold regions, so it would be essential to provide them with the proper temperature as well as diet. For-

tunately, we will have plenty of time to debate the ethical ramifications and technical details, because according to Ian Wilmut, it could be as many as 50 years before we fully develop the technology to clone a woolly mammoth.

Sources: <http://www.foxnews.com/science/2013/07/31/scientist-who-cloned-dolly-on-how-to-clone-woolly-mammoth>; <http://www.theguardian.com/science/2013/jul/31/woolly-mammoth-dna-cloning>; http://www.realclearscience.com/articles/2013/08/01/how_realistic_is_cloning_a_woolly_mammoth; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment>; <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/rare-39-000-year-old-woolly-mammoth-display-japan-article>.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

even if the education provided stays on the same level, other facets of the school will be subsidized instead.

Along with the sheer demand for money being a factor in increasing college tuition costs, the marketing of technology and amenities has become a large problem as well. The implementation of technology into today’s schools has become one of the reasons for increased costs. In order to advertise to potential students that technology is a key concern at the school, each college has purchased the most up-to-date technology. Not surprisingly, this technology is funded through tuition. Amenities have also become a major aspect of college life. Dorms, gyms, campus parks, and libraries have been built on campuses to appeal to a larger number of students; once again this is funded through tuition. Finally, the primary purpose of higher education is the academics, and many colleges continue to fund expanded education programs and professor salaries through tuition.

The increased tuition can also be attributed to decreased government aid and increased administrative spending. The administrative costs of having a greater number of faculty members and more extensive programs have to be paid for. Furthermore, decreasing government aid from state government to colleges has forced colleges to hike tuition. According to the *New York Times*’ Tamar Lewin, “Public universities have been forced to raise tuition largely because state governments, facing huge budget shortfalls, have reduced spending on higher education.” Cuts in subsidies have also led the colleges to face financial difficulties in other departments.

Colleges have raised tuitions because of administrative spending, demand for added resources, vigorous marketing, and decreased government aid. Prices for graduate education in particular have skyrocketed; for instance, the cost of attendance at Harvard Medical School is \$78,670... for 1 year! President Obama has tried to come to terms with the issue and has designed a plan to slow the escalation of college costs. His plan, as written on the White House website, is to “connect financial aid to school performance, support academic innovation and competition, and make college affordable.” Implementing the plan will be extremely difficult, though, because it will be hard to change the conventional standards that colleges run by. Colleges are reluctant to accept a cut in income to accommodate students who don’t want to pay current fees. This attitude has already caused many problems for students trying to pay tuitions, and has led to major difficulties in paying off student loans. The tuition problem has escalated year by year, with the assistance of inflation and the several

cost factors mentioned above. High school students have been faced time and time again with the problem of how to pay for college, and the anxiety they feel will affect their decisions about college and ultimately their futures. Is college really worth it?

Sources: <http://finance.yahoo.com/blogs/just-explain-it/just-explain-why-does-college-education-cost-much-171454934.html>; <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/21/education/21costs.html>; <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/08/22/president-obama-explains-his-plan-combat-rising-college-costs>; <http://www.forbes.com/sites/specialfeatures/2013/07/24/up-up-and-away-college-tuition-is-on-the-rise>; <http://moodle.pingry.org/mod/resource/view.php?id=20295>.



QUANTOCKGOBLIN/WIKIMEDIA
Blair Hall at Princeton University.

Is College Really Worth It?

College tuitions are become more and more burdensome. The government must intervene and help people to qualify for college scholarships as well as to pay back exorbitant student loans.

BY JOSHUA METZGER

As seniors across the nation bite their fingernails in anticipation of their college admission letters, this is an apt time to wonder, is college really worth it? President Obama explains the predicament of many students as “either they say no to college and pay the price for not getting a degree -- and that’s a price that lasts a lifetime -- or you do what it takes to go to college, but then you run the risk that you won’t be able to pay it off because you’ve got so much debt.” Over the last decade, college tuition costs have increased exponentially. These costs have caused troublesome financial situations for college students, who are obligated to use student loans for assistance. However, with interest rates that are high in comparison to the rates that banks pay for money, loan costs are almost insuperable for some college undergraduates, let alone for those who attend

business and medical school. Sky-rocketing college tuition costs have been instigated, for the most part, by decreased government aid, administrative spending, the costs of marketing and amenities, and the demand for more money to finance scholarships and programs.

The first and most imperative motive that is increasing college tuition costs is the demand for money. First, although colleges award scholarships to many students to help defray the cost of education, they are also raising tuition costs for other students to make up for the lost income. Next, colleges are raising prices to gain institutional advantage, because they know that students will pay full cost due to the increased competition among universities in today’s world. A student accepted into a prestigious school will most likely take the acceptance as an incredible opportunity and pay full price in fear of losing such an “invaluable” benefit. As Patrick Callan of the *New York Times* asserts, “A



CHARLOTTE ZEE (VI)

lot of people think we can solve the problem with more financial aid, but I think we have to have some cost containment. For all the talk about reinventing higher education, I don’t see any results.” Colleges are increasing costs because they can; this means that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23



QUANTOCKGOBLIN/WIKIMEDIA

Princeton University’s bronze tigers. How much should we be paying for Ivy League tradition?