



INFOALERT MAY 2009

DEMOCRACY AND GLOBAL ISSUES

IA36 Brown, Lester. **Could Food Shortages Bring Down Civilization?**

Scientific American May 2009 Currently available online at

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=civilization-food-shortages&page=5>

The author, president of the Earth Policy Institute, writes that the biggest threat to global stability is the potential for food crises in poor countries to cause government collapse. Food scarcity and the resulting higher food prices are pushing poor countries into chaos. Such "failed states" can export disease, terrorism, illicit drugs, weapons and refugees. Water shortages, soil erosion and rising temperatures from global warming are placing severe limits on food production. Without massive and rapid intervention to address these three environmental factors, the author argues, a series of government collapses could threaten the world order.

IA37 Palser, Barb. **Hitting The Tweet Spot.** American Journalism Review. April-

May 2009 Currently available online at http://www.ajr.org/article_printable.asp?id=4737

Palser, director of digital media for McGraw-Hill Broadcasting, recommends that news outlets use Twitter to reach elusive and sought-after audiences, such as 18- to 34-year-olds who are more likely to read a newspaper on a mobile phone or Web site. While Twitter is successful in reaching these audiences, the question remains on how to use Twitter to generate revenue for the news organizations. The most likely benefit, she says, is that the Web offerings will benefit from increased traffic from Twitter links. "Tweets" – 140 character mini-blogs – can be used as a valuable news tool. During the October 2007 Southern California wildfires, for example, news organizations such as the Los Angeles Times and San Diego public radio station KPBS used Twitter to efficiently dispatch urgent bits of information, such as evacuation orders, shelter locations, and firefighting progress. A number of news organizations have incorporated Twitter into their daily operations by using Tweets to automatically feed Web headlines and breaking news and to invite suggestions and questions from subscribers.

IA38 Kumar, Priya. **Journalist Of The Future.** (American Journalism Review,

April/May 2009) Currently available online at <http://www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=4735>

NBC's Mara Schiavocampo is being hailed as the first "digital correspondent." After spending a year as a freelance reporter "not bound by geography," the network was so impressed it created a new position for her to showcase her cinema-verité style of storytelling. Schiavocampo comes up with story ideas, shoots video and still photography, edits, blogs and produces packages for the Web and television. She travels where she pleases and covers subjects ranging from how Detroit citizens are coping with the struggling auto industry to the popularity of cupcakes to how Hindu

temples in India sell hair from devotees for Americans' hair extensions. Her stories, NBC Senior Vice President Alexandra Wallace, "convey an intimacy and honesty sometimes lost in traditional stories."

IA39 World Press Freedom Day 2009: Media, Dialogue and Mutual Understanding. [U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization]. April 2009. Available at: http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=27867&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

The potential of media in fostering dialogue, mutual understanding and reconciliation will be the topic of UNESCO World Press Freedom Day 2009 to be celebrated on 2-3 May 2009. As the only UN agency with a mandate to defend freedom of expression and press freedom, UNESCO has placed mutual understanding, and dialogue through media at the core of its mission. Indeed, UNESCO's Constitution, adopted in November 1945, states that the Organization will "collaborate in the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of all peoples, through all means of mass communication" and "promote the free flow of ideas by word and image". At this year's conference and celebrations, UNESCO invites participants to explore the enormous potential of media to serve as a platform for dialogue and a vehicle for understanding.

IA40 Sennot, Charles M. Roll The Dice: How One Journalist Gambled On The Future Of News. Columbia Journalism Review March-April 2009 Currently available online at http://www.cjr.org/cover_story/roll_the_dice.php?page=all

Sennot, a former Boston Globe correspondent, writes of his transition from being a traditional print journalist to co-founding GlobalPost.com, an online "collaborative" foreign news agency that has attracted major journalists who write on a freelance basis for a modest stipends and shares in the company. Despite the trepidation of entering a new realm, and a shortfall in funding, GlobalPost.com was launched and is among a group that includes ProPublica and Politico moving the news delivery model forward. It also offers an entrepreneurial landing spot for journalists exiting traditional print careers. "It is an exciting time, a historic shift in how the world will be informed," Sennot writes. He is currently GlobalPost.com's executive editor.

ECONOMIC SECURITY AND TRADE

IA41 Bertini, Catherine; Glickman, Dan. Farm Futures Foreign Affairs Vol. 88, No. 3, May/June 2009, pp. 93-105 Currently available online at <http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/FA.pdf>

The U.S. should make agricultural development its top foreign aid priority and get other international donors to do the same, say Bertini, a former head of the United Nations World Food Program, and Glickman, a former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. They say chronic hunger, which now affects nearly 1 billion people around the world, is a national security threat. Terrorists are using free food to lure hungry students into organizations that teach extremism. Diseases related to hunger are the world's leading health threat, claiming more lives than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. But, the authors write, the traditional approach to foreign aid has been defensive, such as the U.S. putting more than \$2 billion into food aid in 2008 to cope with a global food crisis. The focus, instead, should be on helping rural communities, especially in Africa and Asia, become more self-sufficient in food production. Key to this approach is making loans, improved seeds and fertilizers, and training in better farming methods available, especially to women farmers, who are the ones primarily responsible for farming in developing countries. The

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authors call for the U.S. Congress to pass the Lugar-Casey Global Food Security Act to boost funds for agricultural research and education. They want the Congress to change policies that currently give preference to U.S. carriers transporting aid, and call for the United States to consolidate the administration of U.S. food aid programs under one agency.

IA42 Loeffler, Rachel L. **Bank Shots: How The Financial System Can Isolate Rogues.** Foreign Affairs vol. 88, no. 2, March-April 2009 Currently available online at <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/64822/rachel-l-loeffler/bank-shots>

According to Loeffler, former deputy director of global affairs at the U.S. Treasury Department, the U.S. government has effectively used financial sanctions carried out by global banks to apply pressure to North Korea and Iran. "Given the role that banks, rather than governments, now play as agents of international isolation," Loeffler says, "policymakers must develop a more sophisticated and accurate understanding of what this new tool of statecraft can and cannot do." Using financial measures routinely risks losing their effectiveness; the U.S. government needs in each case to show a clear connection between the financial activities of a rogue state and the global financial system, as it did in revealing deceptive practices by the Central Bank of Iran. It must also deal with resistance from a global bank in a situation when a target country's assets makes up a significant share of that bank's business.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

IA43 Struwe, Lars B. **For A Greater Horn Of Africa Sea Patrol: A Strategic Analysis Of The Somali Pirate Challenge** (Danish Institute for Military Studies, March 2009, 44 pp.) This report is on the Internet at http://www.difms.dk/files/upload/20090313_141940_DIMS09_GreaterHornAfricaSeaPatrol_LarsStruwe.pdf

The author notes that the number of pirate attacks off Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden doubled to over 100 in 2008. Somalia-based pirates threaten freedom of the seas in a vital maritime route. The problem of deterring pirates will be aided through constant patrolling, international cooperation, shared intelligence and destruction of pirate bases. There needs to be more analysis of the best practices used to isolate and combat pirates, according to this study, and more insight is needed into the pirates' lives and their methods of operation. Most importantly, this report calls for the creation of a Greater Horn of Africa Sea Patrol to secure freedom of navigation. The regional maritime unit would be formed by the coastal states from Egypt to Tanzania. It would support countries that already have a regional naval presence and help with specific tasks such as environmental monitoring and fishery inspection.

IA44 Johnson, Simon. **The Quiet Coup.** Atlantic Monthly. May 2009
Currently available online at <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200905/imf-advice>

Johnson, former chief economist of the International Monetary Fund, writes that the Obama administration is unlikely to reform the U.S. financial system because his top economic advisers have been recruited from the leading investment banks, the very institutions in need of reform. "The finance industry has effectively captured our government," Johnson writes; "recovery will fail unless we break the financial oligarchy that is blocking essential reform." Johnson said that the U.S. financial troubles are similar to the crises that brought heavily indebted developing countries

to the IMF for loans. The author, now a scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, asserts that the U.S. financial disaster was brought about by an "Oligarchy, running the country rather like a profit-seeking company in which they are the controlling shareholders." He said that government bailouts of the banks that have become too big to fail are not incentives to reform. "The government's velvet-glove approach with banks ... is inadequate to change the behavior of a financial sector accustomed to doing business on its own terms," Johnson asserts. In contrast to the administration's bailout strategy, Johnson has another proposal: nationalize troubled banks and break them up as necessary. Without thorough banking reform, the author said that the world risks going into an economic slump worse than the Great Depression. "We face a synchronized downturn in almost all countries, a weakening of confidence among individuals and firms, and major problems for government finances," Johnson writes.

IA45 Mousseau, Michael. **The Social Market Roots Of Democratic Peace**

International Security vol. 33, no. 4, Spring 2009, pp. 87—114 Online link to full text available at <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/isec.2009.33.4.52>

The author, associate professor of international relations at Koc University in Istanbul, writes that democracy does not cause peace among nations. Rather, domestic conditions cause both democracy and peace. From 1961 to 2001, democratic nations engaged in numerous conflicts with each other, including at least one war, yet not a single fatal militarized incident occurred between nations with economies characterized by widespread public participation. In such contract-intensive economies, individuals learn to respect the choices of others and value equal application of the law; they demand liberal democracy at home and perceive it in their interest to respect the rights of nations and international law abroad. The consequences involve more than just peace: the contract-intensive democracies are in natural alliance against any challenges to the Westphalian system of law and order by state or nonstate actors. Because China and Russia lack contractualist economies, this economic divide will define great power politics in the coming decade. To address the challenges posed by China and Russia and secure their citizens from terrorism, the contract-intensive powers should focus their efforts on supporting global economic opportunity, rather than on promoting democracy.

US SOCIETY AND VALUES

IA46 Bedord, Jean. **Ebooks Hit Critical Mass: Where Do Libraries Fit With Oprah?** Online vol. 33, no. 3, May/June 2009, pp. 14-17

The author, a private consultant, was one of the earliest eBook readers and one of its strongest proponents of the then-emerging format. The earliest eBooks were large, bulky contraptions that looked like thick binders. Since then, readers have shrunk to the size of a thin paperback, more titles are available (now a major key to the success of eBooks), and the term "eBook" is now part of the general lexicon. Much of the credit for this change goes to television celebrity Oprah Winfrey's endorsement of the Amazon Kindle, which did much to change the mind-set for both readers and publishers, plus infrastructure changes that created larger inventories of book titles. When eBooks first launched, there were less than 10,000 titles available. In contrast, present users (thanks to Kindle) have 230,000 titles. Overdrive claims more than 150,000 titles; NetLibrary has over 180,000 titles while Google has just announced the availability of more than 1,5 million public domain books for the iPhone and the Android-based.