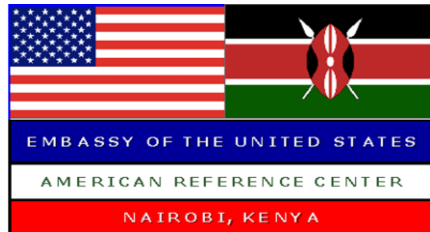




Public Affairs Section
United States Embassy Nairobi



INFOALERT SEPTEMBER 2009 DEMOCRACY AND GLOBAL ISSUES

IA78 Powell, Corey. **The Big Heat** (Discover, June 2009, pp. 38-43)
Currently available online at <http://discovermagazine.com/2009/jun/30-state-of-the-climate-and-science>

Global warming is at once the most alarming challenge and the most controversial. Despite the potential for catastrophic environmental outcomes, a large segment of the U.S. public still doubts that climate change will cause major harm, or that it is occurring at all. Discover Magazine editor-in-chief Powell moderates a discussion between four prominent climate scientists, who discuss the evidence that climate change is occurring. For them, the number of different events that are all happening simultaneously would be very hard to explain if not for global warming -- such as the loss of ice mass in both polar regions, the increasing acidification of the oceans, and the potential for widespread crop failures in many equatorial regions where crops are already being raised at temperatures close to their photosynthetic limits. They fear that it may be too late to make the needed changes if humanity waits until there is international cooperation; what is needed is leadership by the U.S. and Europe, and other nations will follow.

IA79 Podger, Pamela. **The Limits Of Control.** (American Journalism Review, June/July 2009) Currently available online at <http://www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=4798>

For journalists today, social networking sites are increasingly blurring the line between the personal and professional. This creates a host of ethics and etiquette questions for news organizations, which are crafting guidelines for the growing number of staffers using social networks. Generally speaking, the advice to journalists is to identify themselves as journalists, tell recipients they are using social networks in a professional capacity, and remain mindful that people will regard them as representatives of their news organizations. Amy Webb, principal consultant at Webbmedia Group in Baltimore, says news organizations should be pondering the privacy and safety issues of a new crop of tools, including location-

aware services. "When a New York Times reporter logs on to Facebook from his mobile phone, he's sharing a lot more information than his status updates. He's sharing the content he wrote and his location," Webb says. "There are safety and privacy issues around this."

IA80 Fahey, Jonathan. **Wind Power's Weird Effect.** (Forbes Magazine, September 7, 2009) Currently available online at <http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2009/0907/outfront-energy-exelon-wind-powers-weird-effect.html>

The news about wind power is mixed, notes the author. The good news is that, thanks to cheap wind energy, in some parts of the country when there is too much power on the grid, wholesale power prices are now dropping to zero or below at certain times of the day. The bad news is that wind turbines spin the most at night when demand is low and least during afternoons when power is needed. Some power plants are hard pressed to power down when wind power is at its highest. In the long run, the wind power boom could push daytime prices higher. To balance out fickle wind turbines, utilities will need electricity during peak times from gas-fired plants; that intermittent power will be expensive.

IA81 Thompson, Nicholas. **And Data For All.** Wired vol. 17, no. 7, July 2009, pp. 68-71 Currently available online at http://www.wired.com/politics/onlinerights/magazine/17-07/mf_cio

Barack Obama is the first president to appoint a chief information officer for the federal government. Vivek Kundra, who comes to the office having served in a similar position for the District of Columbia, is planning Data.gov, a Web site where all government-produced information will be easy to find, sort and download. When that is done, according to Kundra, the private sector will find ways to use the data which will create new services for the public and new sources of profit for entrepreneurs. He points to the example of the Global Positioning System, which was once the exclusive property of the Department of Defense; now, the system is publicly available and is used for a variety of commercial and public service purposes. "The key is recognizing that we don't have a monopoly on good ideas," Kundra told Thompson in an interview. "And that the federal government doesn't have infinite resources."

ECONOMIC SECURITY AND TRADE

IA82 Kim, J.S. **The Coming Consequences Of Banking Fraud** (Seeking Alpha, posted September 9, 2009) Currently available online at http://seekingalpha.com/article/160619-the-coming-consequences-of-banking-fraud?source=article_sb_popular

The author, an independent financial advisor and analyst, writes that the rally in Western stock markets in recent months has been the result of financial fraud, a "scheme executed by an elite global financial oligarchy ... to fool the world into believing that global economies are recovering." Kim contends that the banking and financial establishment have engaged in transactions that have been kept secret from the public and "will have severe and negative consequences in the not-so-distant future," and the blowback from these activities will exceed the downturn the world experienced in 2008. In view of the worsening economic data, the current stock market rally makes sense only when viewed through the prism of fraud, with the rise of computerized ultra-fast high-frequency proprietary trading programs, and the fact that much of the trading volume in recent weeks has been in only a

handful of financial firms. He adds that all government-produced economic statistics "have been massively distorted towards the side of optimism and away from reality" during financial crisis, and this false front of optimism has been abetted by financial journalists.

IA83 Salam, Reihan. **The Death Of Macho.** Foreign Policy July/August 2009, pp. 65-70 Currently available online at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/06/18/the_death_of_macho

The author, a fellow at the New America Foundation, contends that "the era of male dominance is coming to an end." The current recession is having a disproportionate impact on males -- more than 80 percent of those who have lost jobs since November have been men. Three-fifths of college graduates in the United States are women. People are realizing that the aggressive, risk-seeking behavior of the "cult of macho" has proven to be destructive and unsustainable in a globalized world. The U.S. economic stimulus package is investing heavily in education, healthcare, and social services -- all fields dominated by women. How this changing situation unfolds will depend on how men react. They can choose to adapt to the changes or they can resist. Resistance is personified in Russia, which is still adjusting to the fall of Soviet Union, and where a higher percentage of working-age women are employed than in nearly any other country, but at only half the wages previously paid men for the same work. China is also trying to contain the damage caused by the loss of manufacturing jobs and to manage the threat posed by the country's massive male migrant population. Writes Salam, "the axis of global conflict in this century ... will be gender. We have no precedent for a world after the death of macho. But we can expect the transition to be wrenching, uneven, and possibly very violent."

IA84 Mousseau, Frederic. **Toward A Future Without Want.** World Policy Journal vol. 26, no. 2, Summer 2009, pp. 73-81 Currently available online at <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/wopj.2009.26.2.73>

With food riots, high food prices, increasing number of the world's hungry and declining food production in developing countries, the world has to change its agriculture and food policies drastically, says the author, a policy adviser for Oxfam Great Britain. He argues against strategies supported by many developed countries, such as genetically engineered crop varieties, a free-market approach to food production and distribution, and the World Bank's proposal to create a global food reserve. He writes that genetically modified crops have been largely irrelevant to most farmers in the developing world. Governmental support for and protection of farmers against market fluctuations, including floor prices for certain commodities, have in fact worked in Brazil and Indonesia. In his view, the food crisis should be addressed at the local, national and regional levels rather than through creation of a new global mechanism. Mousseau concludes that each nation must find the right combination of policies and interventions adapted to its specific context.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

IA85 Joffe, Josef. **The Default Power** (Foreign Affairs, vol. 88, no. 5, September-October 2009)

According to Joffe, co-editor of Die Zeit, predicting the demise of U.S. global dominance has been an intellectual sport for 50 years. Yet he argues that still no other country comes close to the United States' economic or military heft. Joffe doubts that China will eclipse the United States as a world power any time soon. "Alas, global standing is not measured by the low prices of nontradable goods, such as haircuts, bootlegged software, and government

services," he says. Export dependence hurts China both by risky reliance on foreign customers and risky denial of domestic welfare. Even if China avoids internal upheaval, Joffe says, it faces the problem of a rapidly aging population. He doubts that Europe will eclipse the United States -- Europe lacks the will to use armed force as required by a global power. And the United States, alone among contending powers, shows the enlightened self-interest that breeds foreign influence, he says.

IA86 Wilson, David (Maj.) **A Global Problem: Cyberspace Threats Demand An International Approach** (Armed Forces Journal, July 2009) Available online at <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2009/07/4062667/>

Cyberspace has changed the way people communicate forever, the author writes, but with that change comes a host of new problems including identity theft, computer viruses, the defacement of websites and network intrusions. He says cyberspace has become "an entity unto itself, not controlled by anyone, but affecting all in one form or another." Nations need to establish agreed-upon standards to help resolve problems plaguing cyberspace, including cybercrime. Wilson, who is chief of cyberlaw at the Army's U.S. Space and Missile Defense Command, advocates setting up an international organization comprised of cyber-faring nations to oversee the borderless domain of international cyberspace. Such an organization would promote collaboration by governments and industry on software and filtering standards needed to block viruses and create an international firewall. He also calls for the creation of an international cyberspace convention to monitor the health of cyberspace and to deal with problems. Within that context, the author says an international Computer Emergency Response Group must be created.

US SOCIETY AND VALUES

IA87 Brown, Charles L.; Yff, Belinda; Brown, Charles S. **Health Information On The Internet: Seeking The Gold Standard** Choice vol. 46, no. 12, August 2009, pp. 2239-2249

The "gold standard" refers to an assessment algorithm used to identify high-quality health-related sites. In medical lingo, it is also known as a criterion standard, a benchmark, of the best comparison tool currently available. Interest in health-related websites has existed since the beginning of the Internet, and they continue to escalate in the present economic climate, as more Americans experience loss of jobs and medical insurance and turn to online resources for health information. This bibliographical essay describes various health websites, beginning with the substantial amount of material available from the U.S. government, including the National Institutes of Health and the National Library of Medicine; associations and organizations, like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization; the American Medical Association; websites for medical, allied health and nursing students; and electronic resources and e-books for students and professionals. The most popular commercial consumer health site is WebMD, which provides authoritative, multidimensional health information services.

IA88 Pollan, Michael. **Out Of The Kitchen, Onto The Couch.** New York Times Magazine August 2, 2009, pp. 26-35, 44, 46-47

The author notes that the increasing popularity of cooking shows on television has coincided with a decrease in home cooking. The rise of cooking celebrities such as Julia Child, Alice Waters or Martha Stewart has been paralleled by the rise of fast food and home-meal replacements. The decline of home cooking has several causes -- women working outside

the home; food companies persuading Americans to let them do the cooking; and advances in technology that made it easier for them to do so. Cooking is no longer obligatory, and for many people that has been a blessing. Ironically, the year Julia Child went on the air, 1963, was the same year Betty Friedan published *THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE*, the book that taught millions of American women to regard housework and cooking as drudgery. Julia Child, the author notes, never referred to her viewers as "housewives" and never condescended to them; she tried to show that cooking, approached in the proper spirit, offered fulfillment and deserved attention.

Prepared by Catherine Muia, U.S. Embassy Nairobi American Reference Center – September 14, 2009