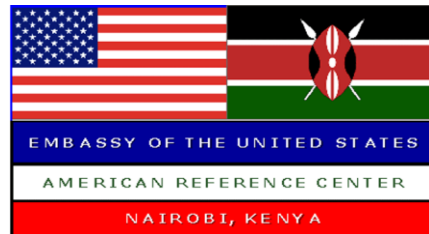




Public Affairs Section
United States Embassy Nairobi



INFOALERT OCTOBER 2009 DEMOCRACY AND GLOBAL ISSUES

IA89 Woofenden, Ian. **Appropriate Technology For The Developing World.** Home Power. No. 133, October/November 2009, pp. 80-85

The author, a wind-energy consultant and Costa Rica coordinator for Solar Energy International, writes that, properly executed, renewable-energy technologies in the developing world can provide for sustainability and a higher quality of life, and enable developing-world communities to "avoid some of the poor development choices we in the 'prematurely developed' world have made." Woofenden explores technologies that work best in many countries, such as solar cooking, which reduces the pressure on natural resources and time and effort spent gathering firewood; solar electricity, which can reliably power lights, schools and medical clinics without having to purchase candles or kerosene; methane biodigesters, for the microbial breakdown of manure into cooking gas; hydroelectricity, making use of running stream water to generate power; and solar water heating and purification. He writes that his own field, wind energy, is not always the best technology to use in many rural locations in developing countries, due to the lack of suitable sites and the greater need for regular maintenance and repair. The article includes online and print resources for further information.

IA90 Kavulla, Travis. **Aids Relief And Moral Myopia.** New Atlantis No. 24, Spring 2009 Currently available online at <http://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/aids-relief-and-moral-myopia>

The author, a Phillips Foundation journalism fellow and former Gates Scholar in African history at Cambridge, writes that Western aid organizations, which have pursued a mechanical approach to AIDS relief in Africa, emphasizing condom use and antiretroviral drugs, have had only mixed results in reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS. What Western groups ignore, says Kavulla, is the social dimension, that Africans are "wont to view this disease ... as a moral calamity." He notes that belief in the supernatural, that spiritual forces can be summoned to cause harm or bring good, is still very much alive in African life; these old beliefs have found form in evangelical Christianity, in particular Pentecostalism, which has been spreading rapidly throughout sub-Saharan Africa for years. Any successful

effort to combat AIDS, writes Kavulla, will have to enlist the authority of the evangelical preachers and their large congregations. He notes that there is a precedent for such an effort -- in the 1930s, a religious fervor known as the Holy Spirit Movement sprung up in East and Central Africa, in response to a syphilis epidemic resulting from social upheaval in the early years of colonialism. The movement railed against sex outside the bounds of marriage, linking moral concerns to social concerns to great effect. Such a change is possible again, notes Kavulla, but the Western donor community "must stop imposing its own agenda on Africa ... the sooner [it] reorients its policies to fit African realities, the better."

ECONOMIC SECURITY AND TRADE

IA91 Mihm, Stephen. **Why Capitalism Fails.** Boston Globe. September 13, 2009 Currently available online at

http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/articles/2009/09/13/why_capitalism_fails/?page=full

The author, professor of history at the University of Georgia, notes that a hitherto obscure economist named Hyman Minsky, who died over a decade ago, has become recognized as the most prescient thinker about the current financial crisis. Minsky, who spent the latter part of his career in isolation and was little-known at the time of his death, argued that modern finance is inherently unstable, creating the conditions for its own downfall. Mihm notes that Minsky believed that the work of renowned economist John Maynard Keynes amounted to an admission that capitalism, far from tending toward equilibrium, was prone to collapse. Minsky was not a fatalist, though -- he believed that it was possible to craft solutions that would ameliorate the worst effects of an economic crisis. He advocated for a "bubble-up" approach, in which money would be given to the poor and unskilled, and government would provide minimum-wage guarantees, an approach that Mihm concedes would not be very palatable today.

IA92 Kornell, Sam. **Big Step Forward Lost In Shuffle.** Miller-McCune September 16, 2009 Currently available online at <http://www.miller-mccune.com/news/big-step-forward-lost-in-shuffle-1476>

The author notes that a "momentous bit of news slipped by more or less unnoticed, lost in the general hullabaloo over health care and the apparent deterioration of civil discourse sweeping the country" -- the unveiling of the Obama administration's plan to compel the U.S. automakers to increase the fuel-efficiency of new vehicles to over 35 miles per gallon by the year 2016. The plan, which would be enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency, would raise the efficiency standards by 5 percent a year. In view of the new evidence coming to light about climate change and looming future declines in global oil production, the author notes that "any serious national effort to increase fuel efficiency is a welcome development", and that the new emissions standards, which will probably go into effect next year, "represent the most impressive step to reduce fossil fuel emissions in the history of American politics."

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

IA93 Mullen, Michael G. **Strategic Communication: Getting Back To Basics.** Joint Forces Quarterly no. 55, Fourth Quarter 2009, pp. 2-4 Available online at http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/jfq_pages/editions/i55/1.pdf

Adm. Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, writes that in the world of communication, "the lines between strategic, operational, and tactical are blurred beyond distinction . . . we have walked away from the original intent." He notes that our biggest problem is credibility, because the U.S. has not invested the time and resources to build trust or deliver on promises. In Afghanistan, the Taliban have become effective at governance, and in doing so, they erode the legitimacy of the Afghan government. He says that strategic communication problems are really "policy and execution problems -- Each time we fail to live up to our values or don't follow up on a promise, we look more and more like the arrogant Americans the enemy claims we are." The irony, says Mullen, is that we know better, and have only to look at our past -- the post-World War II Marshall Plan did not need a "strat comm" plan or public opinion poll to rebuild Europe. Mullen is an avowed fan of Greg Mortenson, the author of *Three Cups of Tea*, who has built schools for girls in the Panjshir Valley of Pakistan. Mullen writes that we "must also be better listeners -- the Muslim community is a world we don't fully -- and don't always attempt to -- understand."

IA94 Slawter, Bruce. **Pay To Play.** American Interest. September-October 2009 Available online at <http://the-american-interest.com/article-bd.cfm?piece=660>

The U.S. commercial nuclear power industry has languished for years, notes the author, a result of huge cost overruns on plants built in the 1970s and 1980s, and of notable accidents such as those at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. The decline of expertise and research in the U.S. nuclear power industry is now translating into erosion of our ability to influence nonproliferation internationally, notes Slawter, as other countries, notably France, Japan, Russia and now China surpass the U.S. in certain areas of reactor development. Slawter notes that what is emerging is a "pay-to-play" arrangement -- in order to be recognized as a nuclear authority, countries have to invest in their own nuclear technology. He notes that President Obama has become increasingly pragmatic with respect to nuclear power, which will put him at odds with many of his Democratic supporters. In order to maintain the U.S. lead in safety and nonproliferation, Slawter writes that the Obama administration should redouble its efforts in conjunction with France and Japan to develop new-generation reactors, conduct further research into closing the nuclear fuel cycle, and strengthen existing international frameworks, and provide a global fuel repository, so that countries aspiring to nuclear energy do not develop a nuclear fuel cycle on their own.

US SOCIETY AND VALUES

IA95 Moyer, Steve. **What If?** Humanities vol. 30, no. 4, July/August 2009, pp. 32-36 Currently available online at <http://neh.gov/news/humanities/2009-07/WhatIf.html>

The author believes that it is difficult to take in all the ways that reading is changing in response to new technology. Bob Stein, co-director and founder of the Institute for the Future of the Book, is exploring how the digital revolution is transforming the way we read. One of Stein's recent projects was a kind of online book club in which seven women engaged in a close reading of Doris Lessing's *THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK*, then commented online in the margins of the electronic book, by means of an open-source software called CommentPress. Moyer explores the changes in the book in the past thirty years, noting that there have been more advances in the evolution of the book than there had been in the past five centuries.

IA96 van Gelder, Sarah. **Parker Palmer: Know Yourself, Change Your World** Yes! Magazine, Fall 2009 Currently available online at <http://cms.yesmagazine.org/issues/learn-as-you-go/know-yourself-change-your-world/>

In this interview, educator and author Parker Palmer notes that most of us lack an understanding of our inner lives; reflection, which should be the fourth "R" of education, is not taught in schools. Parker says that "every line of work is deepened by bringing all of our human capacities to bear on whatever we are doing, and that includes our inner sensibilities as well as our externally oriented knowledge and skill." Schools are often not a place that promotes personal development, a chief reason why fifty percent of teachers are gone within five years, due to burnout. Parker notes that people who become aware of their inner life also become aware of the disparity between their integrity and the manner in which institutions around them operate. He cites Wall Street and the financial crisis as a prime example of an environment in which few insiders were brave enough to speak out about what was happening. While the courage of individual whistle-blowers is important, real institutional change happens when groups of like-minded people come together and lend each other support. Institutions can seem like an unassailable colossus, says Parker, but "we can call them back to some semblance of humanity by reinventing them, because we invented them in the first place."

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