



## INFOALERT JULY 2010

### DEMOCRACY AND GLOBAL ISSUES

**IA32** Guterl, Fred. **Leaf Power.** Discover, vol. 31, no. 5, June 2010, pp. 34-36

Innovative research is making our energy supply safer, cleaner, and much more secure. Scientists at Helios, a joint project of the University of California, Berkeley and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, are recreating the photosynthetic process and are trying to tweak it for better energy production. The search is on for more viable energy sources; Helios researchers want to build an artificial leaf that drips ethanol or some other alcohol derivative, which could be pumped directly into a fuel tank. The author notes that harvesting sunlight to replace petroleum is a tall order; with the world dependent upon fossil fuels, the trend toward global warming and greenhouse gases, the idea of using the sun to make a liquid fuel is growing more appealing in both economic and ecological terms. Read more about the scientists at Helios and their fascinating projects.

**IA33** Rich, Nathaniel. **For Whom The Cell Tolls** Harper's, vol. 320, no. 1920, May 2010, pp. 44-53

Starting with the case of a man whose doctor suspected cell phone use as a possible cause of a brain tumor, the author delves into the controversy of whether or not cell phone use is dangerous. Electromagnetic fields (EMFs) are emitted not only by cell phones, but by a plethora of technological devices, including Wi-Fi, electric power lines, radio, television, and X-rays; all of these sources may be harmful, according to recent reports. The author notes that mobile phones are a potentially significant issue, since the market for mobile phones has grown to over 4 billion people, over 60 percent of the world's population; the two primary growth areas have been in developing countries and children under eleven years of age. One of the author's sources gives him an EMF detector, which detects EMF fields in many unsuspecting locations. Rich notes that the long-term effects of mobile-phone EMFs is essentially unknown, as the latency period for brain tumors is measured in decades.

**IA34** Fox, Douglas. **The Insanity Virus.** Discover, vol. 31, no. 5, June 2010, pp. 58-64

Schizophrenia research in the last several years has uncovered some very unexpected results. For years the disease was believed to be the result of bad genes or bad parenting. The real culprit, says psychiatrist Fuller Torrey, director of the Stanley Medical Research Institute in Chevy Chase, Maryland, is a virus known as HERV-W, that is entwined in everyone's DNA and is triggered not by psychological factors but by infection, especially in newborns. Experiments and case studies point up research done by Torrey and others that the HERV-W virus is found in patients suffering from multiple sclerosis as well as schizophrenia. HERV-W is prevalent in 49 percent of people with

schizophrenia, but in only 4 percent of healthy people. With continued research and experimentation, more will become known about schizophrenia and MS, and some day both diseases may become less debilitating and perhaps even preventable.

## ECONOMIC SECURITY AND TRADE

**IA35** Davies, Iwan. **Does The Financial Crisis Threaten Democracy?** SAIS Review, vol. 30, no. 1, Winter-Spring 2010, pp. 165-173 PDF full text currently available at [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/sais\\_review/toc/sais.30.1.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/sais_review/toc/sais.30.1.html)

The author, at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, believes that as government stimulus packages taper off, there will be concerns on whether the world economy will enter a period of sustained recovery, or whether the wounds are deeper than anticipated. Should the crisis not abate quickly, governments already struggling under the weight of excessive spending and decreased revenues will have limited policy options. This will create challenges for governments in many developing countries where economic growth is a key source of political legitimacy. Could the current or future economic crises lead newer democracies back down the road to authoritarianism? Will growing authoritarian states, such as Iran, Russia or China, come under increasing pressure to democratize? The author seeks to answer these questions by exploring the economic effects of the financial crisis and the potential impacts on political stability in developing countries.

**IA36** Gertner, Jon **The Rise And Fall Of The G.D.P.** New York Times Magazine, May 16, 2010, pp. 60//71 Currently available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/16/magazine/16GDP-t.html>

Economists and even governments now claim there might be better ways to take measure of a country's health and happiness than its G.D.P. (gross domestic product), defined as the total value, or index, of a nation's output, income, or expenditure produced within its physical boundaries. By various measures, the United States alone accounts for 20 to 30 percent of world G.D.P. It has been a difficult few years for G.D.P. which has not only failed to capture the well-being of current society, but has also skewed global political objectives toward the single-minded pursuit of economic growth, and it has been actively challenged by a variety of world leaders, especially in Europe, and by a number of international groups, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

**IA37** Poole, William. **A Libertarian Perspective On The Financial Crisis And Financial Reform.** SAIS Review, vol. 30, no. 1, Winter-Spring 2010, pp. 17-26 PDF full text currently available at [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/sais\\_review/toc/sais.30.1.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/sais_review/toc/sais.30.1.html)

The author, a Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute and a scholar in residence at the University of Delaware, believes that the pre-crisis financial environment was close to a libertarian's ideal, although it might not have seemed so at the time. He notes that the basic function of sound government in a modern economy is important and that conditions must be put in place to reduce the risk of financial crisis. Two such rules would be a subordinated debt requirement for banks and the end of tax incentives for households and businesses to accumulate debt. Given current directions it will take painful future events to persuade Congress to adopt more market-friendly approaches. Poole notes that how these events will play out is highly uncertain, but that most surprises will unfortunately be unhappy ones.

## INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

**IA38** Ellis, William. **U.S. Intelligence At The Crossroads** Mediterranean Quarterly, vol. 21, no. 2, Spring 2010, pp. 1-11

The author, formerly with the Congressional Research Service, notes that the diffuse and opaque nature of the terrorist threat has fundamentally changed the way U.S. intelligence agencies operate. Because many more individuals could be potential objects of interest, intelligence agencies must look at or listen to everyone and everything. Much of the colossal amount of data collected in the past decade has not been properly analyzed; says Ellis, "the US intelligence community can see and hear almost everything, but apparently cannot make heads or tails of it." The push to reduce the size of the federal service during the Clinton and Bush administrations, and the fact that the intelligence agencies had fallen behind the private sector in technology, led to widespread privatization; some 70 percent of the \$75 billion spent annually on intelligence goes to contractors. Ellis discusses various problems with rampant privatization, such as cost overruns, overly ambitious or inappropriate projects, lack of oversight, political influence by contractors, and access to data on private U.S. citizens; he believes that intelligence is an inherently governmental function, and should not be contracted out.

**IA39** Goldsmith, Jack. **The New Vulnerability**. New Republic, vol. 241, no. 4885, June 24, 2010, pp. 21-28

Cyber thefts, attacks and espionage by criminal organizations and foreign states have been growing at an unprecedented rate, and while the problem is largely invisible to the general public, the government is alarmed. Goldsmith, who teaches at Harvard Law School and is a visiting fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, reviews former U.S. government counterterrorism official Richard Clarke's new book, *CYBER WAR: THE NEXT THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT*. The extraordinary complexity of computer systems and the insufficiently secure private-sector infrastructure is a huge vulnerability for a country heavily dependent on computer technology. Goldsmith takes issue with some of Clarke's conclusions, noting that, while Clarke may be right to worry about China preparing for cyber war, China's dependency on a functioning U.S. economy greatly reduces the credibility of that threat. Goldsmith views Clarke's proposal for an international cyber-arms control agreement as unrealistic, since any given country views its own cyber-snooping as benign, but not if done by an adversary, and origination of cyber attacks can be almost impossible to determine. While no catastrophic cyber event has yet occurred, Goldsmith notes that warnings by the man who repeatedly "cried wolf" about the looming terror threat before Sept. 11 should be heeded.

## US SOCIETY AND VALUES

**IA40** Madoff, Ray. **Dead Right.** Boston College Magazine, vol. 70, no. 2, Spring 2010, pp. 26-31 . Currently available online at

[http://bcm.bc.edu/issues/spring\\_2010/features/dead-right.html](http://bcm.bc.edu/issues/spring_2010/features/dead-right.html)

In America, the living aren't always in charge. In recent years, the right of publicity and copyright law have grown, providing posthumous protections never before seen. They are part of a trend in which Americans have been granted ever greater rights to control their property interests after death. In the seven weeks after Michael Jackson's death in June 2009, the star's estate reportedly earned \$100 million from a film deal, a commemorative coin, a line of school supplies, and a \$150 coffee-table book; the estate was expected to earn another \$100 million by the end of 2009. The author notes that U.S. law has evolved a split personality -- where reputation can be converted into property interests, the law grants greater rights to the deceased through their heirs; however, the deceased's estate has no rights to personal aspects of reputation such as defamation and privacy

**IA41** Rice, Andrew. **Putting A Price On Words.** New York Times Magazine, May 16, 2010, pp. 46-50, 52 Currently available online at

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/16/magazine/16Journalism-t.html>

When news is search-driven, audience-targeted and everywhere, what's a story worth? As more users pick up their information from the Internet and other services that make news available even as it is happening, several large media companies are in bankruptcy, and old-fashioned newspapers and magazines mourn the loss of readers and circulation, other news outlets are still trying to prove that journalism is still a profit-making enterprise. Besides the print publications that offer free access to their online content, enterprising new sites, like Associated Content and Demand Media, generate content that feeds Google appetites and brings in huge advertising revenues. However, no one seems to know how to value the product anymore.

**IA42** Goff, Steven. **World Cup 2010: American Fans Will Have Power In Numbers.** Washington Post, June 8, 2010 Currently available online at

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/07/AR2010060704456.html?hpid=artslot>

Americans are catching World Cup fever! As the world watches the World Cup this summer, the country with the largest number of fans in the stands (except for South Africa) will come not from traditional soccer strongholds but from the United States; U.S. residents purchased more than 130,000 out of 2.8 million tickets sold. The author notes that they are not necessarily coming to root for the U.S. team; given the broad ethnic makeup of the U.S., many fans will support teams from Mexico, Honduras or other Latin American countries. Goff notes that there is still a perception in the U.S. that soccer is still the sport of Spanish-speaking Americans; however, Americans of all backgrounds could be found in South Africa during the World Cup. Says Goff, the huge number of tickets sold says a lot about the growth in the popularity of the sport in the U.S.