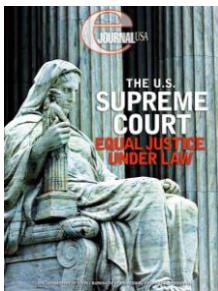




AMERICAN INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER Ankara, Turkey

E-Documents October 2009 – Issue 3

■ Electronic Journals – all e-journals



The U.S. Supreme Court: Equal Justice Under Law

As an institution, the Supreme Court commands respect, legitimacy, and prestige both in the United States and abroad. The October 2009 edition of eJournal USA describes many aspects of the U.S. Supreme Court. Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. and Solicitor General Elena Kagan present their introductions and contributions by legal scholars and journalists focus on the elements of judicial decision making and independence of the justices. Four Court officials and a former Supreme Court law clerk also describe their jobs.

■ IIP Publications – all publications



■ Ask America

Ask America allow foreign audiences to interact with American citizens on wide range of topics using a chat tool over the Internet. U.S. government and private sector subject experts, academics, journalists, and everyday citizens are brought on as guests to do webchats on USINFO. You may visit the [Ask America HomePage](#) to see upcoming ones, and read the transcripts of the previous webchats.

■ Podcasts

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<p>■ Videos http://www.america.gov/multimedia/video.html?videoid=1498976413 Video files on foreign policy, U.S. politics, American life, democracy, science and health.</p> <p>■ Videos on Youtube videos are also divided up into playlists (Diversity / Green Economy / Young America / Democracy and Elections) to make the list a little easier to navigate. And all our videos are copyright-free, so no problems with distribution. http://www.youtube.com/amicagov</p>	<p>■ Communities http://www.america.gov/communities.html Blogs at America.gov offers readers a place to discuss designated topics with experts from the United States and around the world, and to share their comments and reactions with the broader Internet public. Social Networks of America.gov goes where the conversation is. Follow us on your favorite social networking sites.</p>
<p>JOIN AMERICA.GOV ONLINE COMMUNITIES</p> <p> FACEBOOK  TWITTER  YouTube  Flickr</p> <p>■ GOVFRESH IS A LIVE FEED OF OFFICIAL NEWS FROM U.S. GOVERNMENT TWITTER, YOUTUBE, RSS, FACEBOOK, FLICKR ACCOUNTS AND MORE, ALL IN ONE PLACE.</p>	<p>■ Article Alert Article Alert is a free aggregation and digest service that links readers to interesting and informative periodical literature (magazine and other journal articles) on a variety of topics including (1) American Life, (2) Economy, (3) Global Challenges, and (4) International Relations. We also offer (5) Top Ten Lists and Other Cool Stuff. We hyperlink to the original texts and supply a short “teaser.” There’s a lot of great reading on the web and not enough time to find it all. We can help! http://www.america.gov/publications/article-alert.html</p>

SIGNIFICANT E-DOCUMENTS

ABORTION WORLDWIDE: A DECADE OF UNEVEN PROGRESS. Guttmacher Institute. October 13, 2009.

Increases in global contraceptive use have contributed to a decrease in the number of unintended pregnancies and, in turn, a decline in the number of abortions, which fell from an estimated 45.5 million procedures in 1995 to 41.6 million in 2003. While both the developed and the developing world experienced these positive trends, developed regions saw the greatest progress. Within the developing world, improvement varied widely, with Africa lagging behind other regions, according to the report.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

Full Text:

<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/AWWfullreport.pdf> [PDF format, 68 pages].

CHARTING THE FUTURE COURSE OF INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AT THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE. Federal Trade Commission and U.S. Department of Justice. October 2009.

On February 6, 2008, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice (DOJ) held a public workshop on technical assistance programs that help foreign jurisdictions to develop their laws and policies on competition and consumer protection. The workshop brought together an impressive array of panelists, including officials from the competition authorities of Hungary, Italy, and Peru, leading academics in the antitrust field, private practitioners, and international organizations such as the OECD and the World Bank. The report summarizes these and other key findings of the workshop.
<http://www.usdoj.gov/atr/public/reports/250908.pdf> [PDF format, 10 pages].

PROMOTING SAVINGS AS A TOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. New America Foundation. Jamie M. Zimmerman and Shweta S. Banerjee. October 2009.

Scholars, policymakers, and practitioners of microfinance are increasingly turning their focus toward devising and offering effective and accessible savings services for the poor. Not only have experts argued that demand for savings services greatly exceeds that of microcredit, but many also contend that savings-led programs and products, with a focus on building assets, may be more effective than credit in providing a pathway out of poverty, according to the report. [Note: contains copyrighted material].
<http://www.newamerica.net/files/Matched%20Savings%20Issue%20Brief%20FINAL.pdf> [PDF format, 12 pages].

WHY CHINA MAY STUMBLE. Council on Foreign Relations. Steven Dunaway. October 13, 2009.

China's continued impressive growth is by no means assured, writes the author. Without basic changes to its economic model, including rule of law reforms, it could face considerable struggles, he says. [Note: contains copyrighted material].
http://www.cfr.org/publication/20384/why_china_may_stumble.html?breadcrumb=%2Fpublication%2Fby_type%2Fregion_issue_brief [HTML format, various paging].

CASE STUDY ON AID EFFECTIVENESS IN TAJIKISTAN. Brookings Institution. Rustam Aminjanov et al. October 14, 2009.

The case study aims at presenting Tajikistan's perspective of, experiences with, and challenges to foreign aid. The objective of the study is to raise awareness about different dimensions of aid fragmentation, volatility and associated costs to help define the way to better coordinate official development assistance and private aid flows in Tajikistan.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].
http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2009/10_aid_tajikistan_aminjanov/10_aid_tajikistan_aminjanov.pdf [PDF format, 85 pages].

KOSOVO: STRPCE, A MODEL SERB ENCLAVE? International Crisis Group. October 15, 2009.

Local elections on 15 November provide a key opportunity for Kosovo Serbs to choose their own representatives and push forward on decentralization, if they do not listen to Belgrade's calls to boycott, says the report. The report focuses on the Štrpce municipality, one of southern Kosovo's largest Serb enclaves, to demonstrate how Serb communities can protect their interests within Kosovo's constitutional order. Belgrade, Pristina and the international community should encourage voting and thereafter equip the municipal government with the expanded powers and resources it needs.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/europe/balkans/b56_kosovo___strpce__a_model_serb_enclave.pdf [PDF format, 16 pages].

TOWARDS BETTER SCHOOLS AND MORE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING IN ITALY. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Romina Boarini. Web posted October 15, 2009.

Compulsory school education in Italy produces poor results in terms of 15 year olds' performance on PISA tests, compared with other OECD countries, despite a relatively high level of expenditure. While the influence of social background is smaller than in many OECD countries, it is largely transmitted through a kind of self segregation resulting from family choices among the different types of upper secondary school.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

[http://www.oecd.org/olis/2009doc.nsf/LinkTo/NT0000698A/\\$FILE/JT03271587.PDF](http://www.oecd.org/olis/2009doc.nsf/LinkTo/NT0000698A/$FILE/JT03271587.PDF) [PDF format, 64 pages].

GLOBAL CRISIS: BANGLADESH BUCKS THE TRENDS. YaleGlobal. Zafar Sobhan. October 14, 2009.

A year ago as the world financial system teetered on the edge of collapse after many Wall Street giants failed, there was widespread concern about the impact of its tsunami effect on the world's developing countries so dependent on the U.S. market. But not only have China, India and other major developing countries survived and prospered, even poorer countries like Bangladesh have come out virtually unscathed. The author discusses the reasons behind it.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/global-crisis-bangladesh-bucks-trend> [HTML format, various paging].

AIMING HIGHER: RESULTS FROM A STATE SCOREBOARD ON HEALTH SYSTEM PERFORMANCE, 2009. The Commonwealth Fund. October 8, 2009.

The cost and quality of health care, as well as access to care and health outcomes, continue to vary widely among states, according to the report. Across states, health insurance coverage for adults declined, health care costs rose, and quality improved in areas where outcomes were reported to the public. According to the report, the continuing and growing disparities in state performance point to the urgent need for comprehensive national health system reform. [Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://www.commonwealthfund.org/Content/Publications/Fund-Reports/2009/Oct/2009-State-Scorecard.aspx> [HTML format with links].

BREAKING THE IMMIGRATION STALEMATE. Brookings Institution. William Galston. October 2009.

The Obama administration has committed itself to immigration reform. Yet despite all the shortcomings of current policy, threats to the rule of law, exploitation of vulnerable newcomers, real and perceived competition with Americans for jobs and public resources, reasonable compromise on immigration will be exceedingly difficult. The divide between elite and public opinion on this issue remains deep and wide. It is a critical factor in the lack of trust that pervades today's political culture, says the report. [Note: contains copyrighted material].

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2009/1006_immigration_roundtable/1006_immigration_roundtable.pdf [PDF format, 36 pages].

CLEAN AIR ACT: MERCURY CONTROL TECHNOLOGIES AT COAL-FIRED POWER PLANTS HAVE ACHIEVED SUBSTANTIAL EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS. U.S. Government Accountability Office. October 8, 2009.

The 491 U.S. coal-fired power plants are the largest unregulated industrial source of mercury emissions nationwide, annually emitting about 48 tons of mercury--a toxic element that poses health threats, including neurological disorders in children. GAO finds that commercial deployments and 50 DOE and industry tests of sorbent injection systems have achieved, on average, 90 percent reductions in mercury emissions. These systems are being used on 25 boilers at 14 coal-fired plants, enabling them to meet state or other mercury emission requirements—generally 80 percent to 90 percent reductions.
<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d1047.pdf> [PDF format, 47 pages].

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS OUTREACH INITIATIVES: REPORT ON OUTREACH TO LARGE DEPOSITORY INSTITUTIONS. U.S. Department of Treasury. October 2009.

The report lays out valuable information about Bank Secrecy Act (BSA) practices and procedures among large depository institutions. The report is based on information garnered from Financial Crimes Enforcement Network's (FinCEN) outreach to large depository institutions conducted over the past year.

http://www.fincen.gov/news_room/rp/reports/pdf/Bank_Report.pdf [PDF format, 36 pages].
Item#10AD118 MSP Theme: 4F Geo: USA

GETTING WITH THE PROGRAM: COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS NEED ACCESS TO FEDERAL LOANS. Project on Student Debt. October 2009.

The report finds that nearly one in 10 community college students in the U.S. can't get a federal loan if they need one because their schools choose not to participate in the federal loan programs. While many community college students can and should avoid borrowing, those who need to borrow should have access to the safest, most affordable option: federal student loans. [Note: contains copyrighted material].

http://projectonstudentdebt.org/files/pub/getting_with_the_program.pdf [PDF format, 10 pages].

GROWING U.S. TRADE IN GREEN TECHNOLOGY. American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. Steven F. Hayward. October 7, 2009.

The two main issues that should be considered when assessing the prospects for increased export potential for American energy technology are the actual dynamics of the present market environment and the cross-cutting factors that will come to bear on how trade flows will unfold in the real world, according to the testimony. [Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://www.aei.org/docLib/10709%20Hayward%20Testimony.pdf> [PDF format, 4 pages].

H1N1 CASES ON THE RISE NATIONWIDE - EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS ADVISE PUBLIC WHEN TO SEEK EMERGENCY CARE. American College of Emergency Physicians. October 12, 2009.

As the nation begins what could become a widespread H1N1 flu outbreak, a poll by the American College of Emergency Physicians finds nearly 90 percent of more than 1,000 emergency physicians responding to a poll expressed concerns about their emergency department's ability to care for additional patients. [Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://www.acep.org/pressroom.aspx?id=46838> [HTML format, various paging].
<http://www.acep.org/pressroom.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&id=46816&fid=3496&Mo=No&taxid=118019> H1N1 Fact Sheet [HTML format, various paging].

INCOME AND POVERTY AMONG OLDER AMERICANS IN 2008. Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress. Patrick Purcell. October 2, 2009.

In 2008, the median income of individuals aged 65 and older was \$18,208 but incomes varied widely around this average. One-fourth of Americans 65 and older had incomes of less than \$11,139 in 2008, while another one-fourth had incomes of \$33,677 or more. Older Americans receive income from a variety of sources, including earnings, pensions, personal savings, and public programs such as Social Security and Supplemental Security Income. Although the overall rate of poverty among older Americans is relatively low, it remains high for women, minorities, the less-educated, and people over age 80.

http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RL32697_20091002.pdf [PDF format, 30 pages].

LATINOS AND EDUCATION: EXPLAINING THE ATTAINMENT GAP. Pew Hispanic Center. Mark Hugo Lopez. October 2009.

Nearly nine-in-ten (89%) Latino young adults¹ say that a college education is important for success in life, yet only about half that number (48%) say that they themselves plan to get a college degree, according to the national survey of Latinos. The biggest reason for the gap between the high value Latinos place on education and their more modest aspirations to finish college appears to come from financial pressure to support a family, the survey finds.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1368/latinos-education-explaining-the-attainment-gap> [HTML format, various paging].

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD: MATHEMATICS 2009. National Center for Education Statistics. October 14, 2009.

Close to 170,000 fourth-graders and over 160,000 eighth-graders participated in the mathematics assessments. These students were assessed in five mathematical content areas: number properties and operations; measurement; geometry; data analysis, statistics, and probability; and algebra.

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2009/2010451.pdf> [PDF format, 68 pages].

THE PROSPECTS FOR NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND. Economic Policy Institute. Richard Rothstein. October 13, 2009.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has called for a speedy re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), branded the "No Child Left Behind" law (NCLB) by the Bush administration. After expiring in 2007, NCLB has hung on with annual temporary extensions; its provisions are now so controversial that no Congressional majority has been able to coalesce around a proposal for modification. But "re-authorization can't wait," Duncan said recently, and he has pledged to get Congress to enact a new education law in 2010.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://www.epi.org/publications/entry/pm149/> [HTML format, various paging].

REPORT TO CONGRESS: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DIESEL EMISSIONS REDUCTION PROGRAM. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. October 14, 2009.

The report to Congress details the health, environmental and economic benefits of the agency's Diesel Emission Reduction Program. The program, funded at \$50 million last year, allowed EPA to fund the purchase or retrofitting of 14,000 diesel-powered vehicles and pieces of equipment, preventing respiratory illnesses and saving money in communities nationwide.

<http://www.epa.gov/otaq/diesel/documents/420r09006.pdf> [PDF format, 60 pages].

THE STATE OF CITY LEADERSHIP FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES. National League of Cities and Institute for Youth, Education, & Families. Julie Bosland and Michael Karpman. October 2009.

America's children and families, and the cities and towns in which they live, are under intense pressure as the decade draws to a close. Even before the current recession began, new solutions were urgently needed to address a host of pressing challenges: deepening financial insecurity; violence-plagued neighborhoods; a childhood obesity epidemic; an enduring educational achievement gap; high dropout rates; and low youth employment rates. Fortunately, mayors and other city leaders throughout the country are making important progress, pursuing promising ideas and developing bold, breakthrough solutions.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

http://www.nlc.org/ASSETS/E263FE71C1534FFA8CE583D83B386F65/IYEF_State_of_City_Leadership_9-09.pdf [PDF format, 146 pages].

THE STATES OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE. Pew Research Center. October 15, 2009.

On the national level, the Census Bureau survey showed that a shrinking share of Americans are married with 52% of males ages 15 and older and 48% of females ages 15 and older. The proportion of Americans who are currently married has been diminishing for decades and is lower than it has been in at least half a century. The age range used in standard Census tabulations dates back to the days when more people married as young teenagers. Among Americans 18 and older, the proportion currently married, but not separated, is 55% for men and 50% for women. [Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1380/marriage-and-divorce-by-state?src=prc-latest&proj=peoplepress> [HTML format, various paging].

ARTICLES

DEMOCRACY AND GLOBAL ISSUES

BIOTECH'S PLANS TO SUSTAIN AGRICULTURE (Scientific American magazine, October 2009)

Popular sentiment may call for more organic methods, but the agricultural industry sees biotechnology as a crucial part of farming's future. By 2050 or so, agriculture will need to produce about 50 percent more food than it now does because of the expanding population. Traditional crops and farming methods could not sustain that much productivity. In this panel discussion, representatives from the agricultural industry defend genetically modified crops as one of several tools that should be used to help farmers in developing countries become more productive.

Currently available online at <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=biotechs-plan-to-sustain-agriculture>

Brainard, Curtis; Russell, Cristine THE NEW ENERGY BEAT (Columbia Journalism Review, September/October 2009)

Climate change and energy issue reporting behooves journalists to collaborate within the newsroom and with news outlets to deepen expertise and resources to better explain these critical, complex topics. Varied regional concerns and new technologies increase the need for a broad knowledge base that allows for delving beyond the pronouncements of politicians or industry lobbyists. Covering energy well means giving a comprehensive “big picture” that can both inform and influence the public and policy makers. Available online at http://www.cjr.org/feature/the_new_energy_beat.php

Crossette, Barbara US-UN TIES STILL STRAINED (The Nation, October 2, 2009)

The Obama administration’s efforts to mend ties with the United Nations suffered with the UN’s firing of Peter Galbraith, the American diplomat appointed deputy special UN envoy to Afghanistan in March. The UN said he was fired “in the best interests” of the Afghan mission, but Galbraith had been berating Afghan and UN officials over what he saw as an inadequate response to the messy and fraud-plagued August 20 elections. He told BBC his being sacked “sends a terrible signal when the UN removes an official because he was concerned about fraud in an UN-sponsored and funded election.” Currently available online at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20091019/crossette>

Cunningham, Brent TAKE A STAND: HOW JOURNALISM CAN REGAIN ITS RELEVANCE (Columbia Journalism Review, September/October 2009)

Journalism in America has been damaged by its abdication of an adversarial role in public discourse. Instead, it “mostly amplifies the agendas of others—the prominent and powerful,” maintains the author. He examines the changing dynamic of the news media and questions whether it has the ability to moderate public conversation and introduce new angles and ideas on national issues. Calling press objectivity “a trap” that lessens journalism’s beneficial impact, he says the press needs to be on the side of the people and become a platform for establishing a public agenda. Available online at http://www.cjr.org/feature/take_a_stand.php

Garçon, Nathalie; Goldman, Michel BOOSTING VACCINES: THE POWER OF ADJUVANTS (Scientific American, October 2009)

Modern insights into the immune system have sparked interest in adding ingredients that can supercharge old vaccines and make entirely new ones possible. Vaccines are extremely effective at preventing disease, but they could work better for more people and against a wider variety of illnesses. Advances in immunology have revealed how new classes of adjuvants -- ingredients that stimulate immune responses to vaccines -- can allow vaccine designers to target specific populations and pathogens. Currently available online at <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=boosting-vaccine-power> [

Smith, Julian A HUMAN RIGHTS BREAKTHROUGH IN GUATEMALA (Smithsonian, October 2009)

A chance discovery of some 80 million pages of police documents in Guatemala City may reveal the fate of an estimated 200,000 people who disappeared in that country’s civil war, which lasted from 1960 to 1996. Helping sort through the paper evidence is Biotech, a California-based nonprofit organization, which has developed database software and statistical analysis techniques that have assisted human rights activists from Sierra Leone to Sri Lanka. Working with an annual budget of \$2 million donated by European countries, researchers and technicians

have digitized the documents that have been found in Guatemala. The evidence collected so far implicates Guatemala's National Police force in disappearances and assassinations. But uncovering such evidence remains dangerous. In March, Sergio Morales, the Guatemalan government's human rights ombudsman, released the first official report on the police archives project; shortly after, his wife was kidnapped and tortured. The question about what to do with future findings remains open, but work at the archive is expected to continue. The databases have been made available to Guatemalan citizens and human rights groups everywhere. Currently available online at <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/Digs-Paper-Trail.html>

ECONOMIC SECURITY

EUREKA MOMENTS: HOW A LUXURY ITEM BECAME A TOOL OF GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT (Economist, September 24, 2009)

Mobile phones, now affordable to the vast majority of people around the world, have become the single most transformative tool for development, according to Jeffrey Sachs of the Columbia University's Earth Institute. In Africa, "mobile money" now means financial transactions can be carried out easily even in remote areas. Mobile phones play a huge role in micro businesses, which make up 50 to 60 percent of business globally, and as much as 90 percent in Africa. Small businesses can more efficiently negotiate with suppliers and reduce the overhead of running their small enterprises. There is also some evidence that mobile phones can be used to root out corruption; the article cites the example of an official in Pakistan overseeing land transfers, who randomly called the mobile numbers of buyers and sellers to find out if they had been asked to pay bribes. Currently available online at http://www.economist.com/specialreports/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14483872

Yunus, Muhammad ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR A WORLD IN CRISIS (World Policy Journal, vol. 26, no. 2, Summer 2009, pp. 5-12)

Yunus, founder of Bangladesh's Grameen Bank, notes that the optimism about global prosperity that prevailed at the beginning of the millennium has been soured by the financial collapse that began in 2008. He predicts that we are in the beginning stages of a long and painful period, in which the combined effects of the intertwined financial, food, energy and environmental crises will have a disproportionate effect on the world's poorest people. Capitalism is in crisis, says Yunus, because the basic purpose of the financial system and credit markets have been fundamentally distorted by the obsession with paper profits instead of serving human needs. He argues that capitalism is a "half-built structure" -- most efforts have been focused on the profit-making framework of the free-market system that was conceived by Adam Smith 250 years ago, yet we have paid little attention to Smith's equally-important writings on the moral dimension. Yunus believes that the current economic crisis offers an unparalleled opportunity to reintroduce the disregarded aspects of Adam Smith's message by developing what Yunus calls "social businesses", whose primary function is not to make profits, but to promote the public welfare. Online link to PDF full text available at <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/toc/wopj/26/2>

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Trenin, Dmitri NATO AND RUSSIA: PARTNERSHIP OR PERIL? (Current History, vol. 108, no. 720, October 2009, pp. 299-303)

Trenin, director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, notes that, twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the major piece of unfinished post-Cold War business is Russia's absence from a European security framework. This affects not just Russia, but its neighbors, such as Ukraine and Georgia, as seen by the August 2008 conflict in the Caucasus. Trenin says it is unlikely that Russia will join the U.S.-led NATO alliance in the foreseeable future, so the only option is to pursue the long and difficult path toward a security community that would include NATO members and non-members. He emphasizes that "it is important that the Russians do not feel that a common front of Western allies is ganging up on them," and making them feel that they are "equals among equals" would do a lot to promote security in Europe. Trenin notes that the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), founded in 2002, has been underused as a vehicle for Western-Russian security interaction; he advocates expanding the NRC's agenda, turning it into an "all-weather operation" to handle the inevitable disagreements. An expanded NRC mandate could prove beneficial in missile defense, conventional arms control and anti-drug cooperation in Afghanistan. Online link to PDF full text available at <http://www.currenthistory.com/>

Van Niekerk, Phillip AFRICA'S LEADERSHIP VACUUM (Current History, vol. 108, no. 718, May 2009, pp. 232-234)

The author, managing director of the Good Governance Group, notes that the departure from office of South Africa President Thabo Mbeki and Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo is a "step backward" from establishing a new group of leaders in Africa who can tackle corruption and conflict and promote democracy and development. This vacuum is putting at risk many of the gains Africa has made over the past decade, says the author, noting that several coups in recent months have met with tepid response. Van Niekerk notes that the only real contender for pan-African leadership is Libya's Moammar Qaddafi, who has enormous clout, but is widely seen as an eccentric with a dubious agenda, such as his far-fetched proposal for a United States of Africa. Incoming South African President Jacob Zuma may be able to make more progress in Zimbabwe than his predecessor, says the author, noting that Zuma greatly dislikes the excesses of the Mugabe regime. Although the situation may appear gloomy, says Van Niekerk, there is some cause for optimism, noting that there are new leaders emerging, though usually one or two removes from power. Online link to PDF full text available at <http://www.currenthistory.com/>

U.S. SOCIETY & VALUES

Fischer, Karin AMERICA FALLING: LONGTIME DOMINANCE IN EDUCATION ERODES (Chronicle of Higher Education, Vol. 56, No. 7, October 9, 2009, pp. A1, A21-A23)

The U.S. is still the top choice of international students; but by many measures, U.S. preeminence in education is eroding. As evidence of this erosion, Fischer cites the low percentage of Americans graduating with majors in engineering, the declining percentage of highly-qualified, low-income students who go to college and continuing rounds of budget cuts. Many who start doctoral programs fail to finish, especially women and minorities; more than half of the doctorates awarded by U.S. institutions went to foreign students. "I'm worried we won't realize what's at stake until it's too late," says Charles Vest, former president of MIT. The current economic and fiscal crisis has put U.S. public higher education in a more precarious situation because federal and state requirements have often put such programs as Medicaid and elementary and secondary education off-limits for budget-cutting purposes, leaving higher education to take the brunt of the cuts, as in California. Some experts are calling for a larger federal role and long-term strategic planning; others are leery of an enlarged federal role and call instead for a national discussion of education. The U.S. system was never designed to educate most Americans, says Patrick Callan, president of the National Center for Public Policy and

Higher Education; "We're still stuck on having the best high-education system of the 20th century, when it's almost a decade into the 21st century."

Heinberg, Richard OUR EVANESCENT CULTURE AND THE AWESOME DUTY OF LIBRARIANS (Energy Bulletin, October 7, 2009)

How secure is our civilization's accumulated knowledge? Educator and author Heinberg notes that earlier civilizations over the millennia have disappeared, having given insufficient thought to how their societies' achievements would be preserved. Although the sheer volume of modern cultural materials is unprecedented, in many ways our modern heritage is uniquely vulnerable, and large swaths of it are at risk of being swept away at astonishing speed. The problem, notes Heinberg, is digitization -- not just that storage formats become obsolete, but that the entire cultural enterprise depends on electricity: "digitization represents a huge bet on society's ability to keep the lights on forever." The real threats to modern information are systemic vulnerabilities, such as aging infrastructure and declining supplies of fossil fuels to power the electric grid. He says that the message is clear: don't let books die, and promote skills-based education to keep the practical and performing arts alive. Available online at <http://www.energybulletin.net/node/50315>

Masterson, Kathryn ISLAMIC SCHOLARS PLAN FOR AMERICA'S FIRST MUSLIM COLLEGE (Chronicle of Higher Education, Vol. 56, No. 5, September 25, 2009, pp. A1, A17-A20)

In fall 2010, Zaytuna College hopes to open in Berkeley, California as the first accredited Muslim college in the U.S. For the first time, Muslim college students will have the option of studying Islam in the U.S. from a mainstream Muslim tradition rather than from a secular perspective. The institute, founded in 1996 to promote understanding between different faiths and cultures, started a pilot seminary program in 2004 that graduated five students last year. Zaytuna's founders, Sheik Hamza Yusuf and Imam Zaid Shakir, see an urgent need to educate new leaders for the estimated 2,200 mosques and 500 Islamic elementary and secondary schools in the U.S. They also plan to operate their college at a level comparable to the best religious seminaries and general institutions of higher education, and will seek accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. They have been raising money at house parties around the country, but still need another \$5 million to open the college on schedule in 2010. At the annual conference of the Islamic Society of North America this summer, the two drew enthusiastic SRO crowds and support. They pledged not to accept money from foreign governments but to do most of their fundraising in the U.S. If they do not meet their fund-raising goals, they plan to open anyway but on a smaller scale. "For us to really take our proper place in the mosaic of the country and make a contribution, we're going to need to produce our own scholars," Shakir said.

If you have any questions or want to reach the full text, please contact the American Information Resource Center at 312-4577277.
