

AGORA

Palo Alto High School's foreign affairs magazine



The Cost of Our Allies

BY JESSICA FEINBERG
PAGE 18



On the Cover

The Obamas with President Paul Kagame of Rwanda during a goodwill visit. While Rwanda remains an ally of the United States, Kagame's dubious record regarding the Rwandan genocide is reason for the U.S. to reconsider its support of his administration.

>>See "United States Must Oust Unsavory Allies" by Jessica Feinberg on page 18

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From the Editors

We are proud to present the very latest issue of *Agora* magazine! This time, *Agora* turns its focus away from the military-related issues of the Middle East to examine some international humanitarian concerns. We look at how the United States props up brutal dictatorships around the world, the root of China's oppressiveness and the rape culture that pervades the Western world.

In other news, *Agora* is proud to welcome Maggie Zheng to the staff as a cartoonist.

Finally, we would like to thank the Palo Alto PTSA for their support of *Agora*.

Thank you very much for reading *Agora*, and have a great spring break!

Ben Hawthorne and Jessica Feinberg
Editors-in-Chief

Submit to Agora

We want to hear your opinion! As a student publication, we hope to publish articles representing the entire range of diverse political opinions from the student body. We welcome submissions from anyone interested in foreign affairs. *Agora* also welcomes student cartoons and drawings to supplement the licensed images in our magazine.

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Debate About Drones Needs to Focus on Real Issues



On March 6, Senator Rand Paul took the Senate floor and began talking. He held the floor for an epic 12 hours and 52 minutes, one of the longest filibusters in recent history. His topic was the Obama administration's drone policy, or, more accurately, the lack thereof. He was concerned over the fact that the administration has not been clear over whether it is legally allowed to kill American citizens without a trial. Though this sounds like a question that would be more expected in a society on the verge of totalitarianism, it is particularly relevant today, as the American government has in fact already killed four of its citizens using drones, though admittedly only one of these killings was intentional. The one intentional killing, which is the one of greatest concern, was of Anwar al-Aulaqi, an al-Qaeda cleric and writer who has been influential in recruiting people to join the cause of international terrorism. For instance, his magazine, which includes instructions on how to build and detonate car bombs, was found to have taught several insurgents how to build bombs.¹

Agora commends Dr. Paul for his courage and for bringing this important issue into the spotlight. His call for transparency is a necessary one, especially as the nation's war-making process has become hidden from the public.

However, we believe that much of his concern is misplaced. In his speech, Dr. Paul frequently worried about hypothetical situations. He brought up the hypothetical examples of the United States killing Jane Fonda in

1. Stewart, Scott. "Assessing Inspire Magazine's 10th Edition." STRATFOR. STRATFOR, 21 Mar. 2013. Web. 21 Mar. 2013.

The current debate surrounding drones is not grounded in reality. Focusing on unrealistic hypotheticals like bombing protesters distracts from important debates about the program's transparency and efficacy.

Vietnam, bombing the Kent State protesters and killing protesters at a café, the latter of which was mentioned an amazing 34 times in the speech. The problem with these examples is not just that they are fictional, but that they do not even resemble the current drone campaign.

While these hypotheticals concern the killing of protesters, al-Aulaqi is not a peaceful protestor. In addition to having inspired terrorism, he also helped plan the Fort Hood shooting, which claimed the lives of 13 soldiers, the attempted car bomb attack on Times Square in 2010 and the 2009 attempt to blow up an airliner over Detroit, among other attacks.² His clear link to al-Qaeda, an organization that is at war with the United States, made him an enemy combatant, very different from the protesters Dr. Paul worries about. The fact that al-Aulaqi was implicated in terrorism means that he posed a direct threat to the United States. There is also extensive legal and historical precedent for the government killing citizens of the United States who pose a direct threat to the people of the United States. On the legal side, courts have repeatedly ruled that police have the authority to ram a car that they are pursuing in a high-speed chase (which is often fatal to the target) if they determine that the pursued poses a threat to public safety.³ As for historical precedent, numerous American citizens who defected to the Confederacy during the Civil War were killed by Union troops in battle.⁴ The same line of reasoning used to justify police ramming vehicles in chases applies here: if someone poses a direct threat to the safety of the United States, then they should

2. Ross, Brian, and Lee Ferran. "How Anwar Al-Awlaki Inspired Terror From Across the Globe." ABC News. ABC News Network, 30 Sept. 2011. Web. 21 Mar. 2013.

3. Savage, Charlie, Scott Shane, and Mark Mazzetti. "How a U.S. Citizen Came to Be in America's Cross Hairs." New York Times 10 Mar. 2013: A1. Print.

4. "History Of The United States Of America, Part Four." History Of The United States Of America. International World History Project, n.d. Web. 21 Mar. 2013.

be eliminated, regardless of their citizenship.

Also of import is the fact that a very tiny fraction of drone victims, just 4 out of approximately 3,000 casualties, are American citizens.⁵ The current debate about the drone war ignores the fact that most ramifications of the drone campaign are not legal or constitutional, they are strategic. The primary impacts of the drone war have always been on al-Qaeda and America's relationship with Pakistan, not the Constitution. Yet neither of these issues have received much press.

The current debate about drones that Dr. Paul has sparked is absolutely necessary, and *Agora* encourages that it continue. The drone campaign, one of the central tenets of Obama's foreign policy, has gone ignored by the American media and public for too long, and it should be brought out of the shadows. However, the way in which it is being conducted is unproductive. Focusing on absurd and unrealistic hypotheticals like bombing protesters distracts from important debates about the program's transparency and efficacy.

Agora recommends that the full process by which the Administration selects targets for drone attacks be made public. The moral benefits of this, that it would help grant the Administration's drone policy legitimacy, should be clear. This would also hold political benefits for the President, since it would take the wind out of the sails of his left-wing critics. *Agora* also recommends that drone warfare be conducted only via the military, not through the CIA. Besides just adding more oversight to the program, since the military has more oversight built into it than the CIA does, this would reduce interagency conflict between the military and the CIA. Both of these steps would facilitate a more productive and useful debate about the drone campaign.

5. Currier, Cora. "Everything We Know So Far About Drone Strikes." Propublica. N.p., 5 Feb. 2013. Web. 21 Mar. 2013.

**Do you have any thoughts on something in this issue?
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6

Syria: Let It Be
by Jessica Feinberg

9

Falkland Islands: Don't Hold Your
Breath *by Chris Van Gelder*

22

The Biggest National Security Threat:
Debt *by Ben Hawthorne*

10 Rape Culture: Not Just India's Problem *by Esha Datta*

12 The New Japan *by Ben Hawthorne*

14 The Danger in the Pivot *by Sidhanth Venkatasubramanian*

20 Next Steps on Climate Change *by Will Robertson*

16 Chinese Human Rights Are Our Problem *by Alex Lu*

18 America Needs to Rethink its Alliances *by Jessica Feinberg*



Elizabeth Arrott/VOA

Let It Be.

The international community should limit involvement in post-Assad Syria to avoid jeopardizing its sustainability.

By Jessica Feinberg
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Due to the complexity of the nature of the current conflict in Syria, the international community must allow Syrians to attempt to form their own government before involving themselves in the post-Assad mechanisms of creating a new Syria. Though the stake the United States and other nations have in Syria is undeniable, the reality remains that Syria must have an opportunity to create a new government itself, or the global community risks facing another situation like Iraq, or establishing a government in Syria that grants more precedence to the international agenda than to the needs of the Syrian people.

In March 2011, the Arab Spring began to have serious influence in Syria. By April, popular demonstrations had become a nationwide protest movement against the four-decade rule of the Ba'ath Party, headed by President Bashar al-Assad. The Assad gov-

ernment ordered the Syrian Army to halt the uprising, using months of military siege and open fire on demonstrators to achieve this end. However, the Syrian opposition movement, which is composed primarily of civilian volunteers and defected soldiers, has unified into larger national groups. These groups are now fighting a civil war that has lasted two years and shows no sign of stopping. The UN has speculated that the war has taken 70,000 lives so far, and as of March 6 over one million refugees have fled the country, making it the third most displacing civil war in the past two decades.^{1,2} However, most journalists agree that Assad will eventually be defeated, and thus the question of what will be done with a post-Assad Syria is becoming

1. Fantz, Ashley. "Syria Death Toll Probably at 70,000, U.N. Human Rights Official Says." CNN. Cable News Network, 13 Feb. 2013. Web. 20 Mar. 2013.

2. "Daily Chart: Comparing Syria." The Economist. The Economist, 6 Mar. 2013. Web. 20 Mar. 2013.

ever more relevant in both Syria itself and in international politics.

There are two possibilities that the United States wants to avoid in a post-Assad Syria. First, the Assad government has admitted its possession of chemical weapons, though it has promised not to use them against its own people (although this promise should not be taken at face value, as the Assad regime does not recognize the opposition movement as a force of its own people, but rather a combination of armed terrorist groups and foreign mercenaries).³ According to Mike Rogers, Chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Intelligence, chemical weapons could threaten the entire region if not properly dealt with, especially if they were to proliferate into Lebanon or fall into the hands of radical

3. Golovnina, Maria. "Asma al-Assad: A Desert Rose Crushed by Syria's Strife." Reuters. Thomson Reuters, 19 Mar. 2012. Web. 20 Mar. 2013.

The father (center) of a Syrian general who was killed in the unrest in Damascus. Approximately 70,000 lives have been lost in the civil war so far, plus 1 million refugees have fled, according to the UN.

terrorist organizations.⁴ Another situation the United States wishes to avoid is radical, anti-American Islamist groups gaining control of post-Assad Syria, which would create a strong American enemy in the Middle East. Aside from country loyalty, however, the U.S. also wishes to avoid an Islamist takeover because of the fear that radical Islamist control

The Syrian opposition movement has already taken steps that show at least a healthy interest in promoting a stable government after Assad's regime ends.

over the government could lead to violent oppression of minority religions in Syria, of which there are several. Either of these two situations could cause instability in the entire Middle East, which is why the U.S. has taken many steps toward preventing them.

Thus far, the United States has engaged in numerous processes and economic efforts to support the Syrian opposition movement. The State Department and the Pentagon are both planning to help Syria "cope with a flood of refugees," as well as "help maintain basic health and municipal services, restart a shattered economy and avoid a security vacuum."⁵ Mindful of the mistakes made in Iraq following a rapid U.S. withdrawal from the country, both institutions are involved in multiple approaches to the political and humanitarian problems posed by a violent change in governance. The State Department currently has "cells" devoted to different aspects of post-Assad Syria, including cells for humanitarian issues, security problems, and the aspect of economic reconstruction. Similarly, the Pentagon has crisis action teams, which are created "whenever potential crises emerge," that focus on the countless situations that could arise once Assad's regime ends. The goals of the United States, as illustrated by these federal actions, include management of the flow of refugees through cooperation with NATO and regional allies, including Turkey, Jordan and Israel; the safeguarding of chemical weapons; a lack of harsh retaliation against the Syrian Army and a process for quick dismantlement of sanctions against Syria to avoid unnecessary causing unnecessary harm to civilians. The American government has already provided over \$25 million in direct assistance to the opposition, in the form of medical supplies and communication equipment, as well as

providing CIA officers to vet Syrian fighters receiving weapons from countries such as Qatar, Turkey and Saudi Arabia and a \$12 million increase in humanitarian aid through international organizations such as the World Food Program. The United States also demonstrated its support for the Syrian opposition coalition when it authorized an American

organization called the Syrian Support Group to raise money for the rebels, despite sanctions placed by the U.S. and other nations on Syria.⁶ On February 28 2013, Secretary of State John Kerry authorized the

use of \$60 million to fund local governance projects, including training police, purifying drinking water, repairing infrastructure and running local councils. The Obama administration is also considering providing security from air attacks to self-governing liberated areas of Syria, and has tacitly approved Saudi and Qatari provision of anti-aircraft missiles to the rebels in these regions.⁷ Clearly, the United States has a vested interest in main-

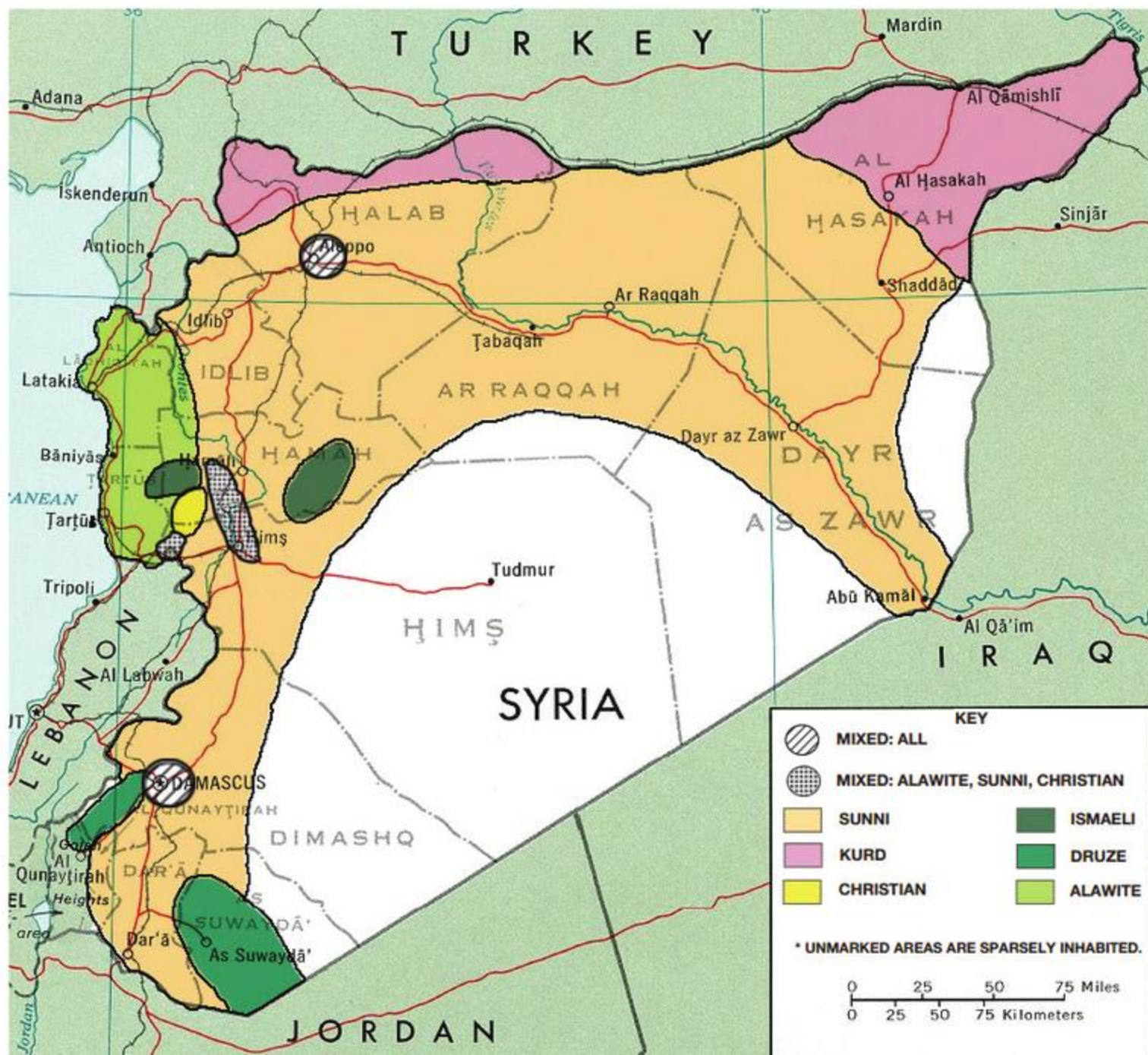
taining security in the Middle East and is willing to take action to see its interests gratified. However, the extent to which the United States should be involved in organizing and maintaining a post-Assad government remains a point of controversy among journalists and within the U.S. government itself.

The Syrian opposition movement has already taken steps that show a healthy interest in promoting a stable government after Assad's regime ends. Although some members of the Syrian opposition have expressed desire to assume Syria's seat in the UN General Assembly (as well as in the Arab League and Islamic Conference), the head of the opposition, Sheik Ahmad Moaz al-Khatib, successfully argued against such a move, citing the possibility that choosing an interim Prime Minister and cabinet could "fragment the opposition and increase internal chaos" within the opposition coalition. Instead, al-Khatib and his fellow leaders in the coalition want an "executive authority" to take the Arab League seat, a move which has been backed by the U.S., Britain, France and Germany. He has also made statements assuring the Syrian Army and the civil service that they will play a role in the post-Assad government.⁸ This is a relief to the United States, whose international policy-making bodies have declared

6. *ibid* 5
7. Ignatius, David. "Real Steps for a Post-Assad Syria." *Washington Post Opinions*. The Washington Post, 15 Mar. 2013. Web. 20 Mar. 2013.

8. *ibid* 7

Ethnic Groups in Syria



4 Gardner, Frank. "Syria Conflict: West Prepares for Post-Assad Uncertainty." *BBC News*. British Broadcasting Corporation, 22 Dec. 2012. Web. 20 Mar. 2013.

5 Myers, Steven L., and Thom Shankers. "State Department and Pentagon Plan for Post-Assad Syria." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 05 Aug 2012. Web. 20 Mar. 2013.



Scott Bobb/VOA

that the role of the Syrian Army in an interim and a post-Assad government will be a crucial factor in maintaining the stability of both Syria and the Middle East region itself.⁹ Furthermore, Brig. Gen. Salim Idriss, Commander of the Free Syrian Army (FSA), has developed a plan of outreach to Assad's military, offering amnesty to ranking officers that communicate willingness to cooperate via email or Skype, as the FSA needs skill and expertise more than vengeance. Though warning that those who fail to follow this outline will be prosecuted for war crimes, should Idriss' group gain power in the post-Assad Syria, Idriss has also stated that those who were "forced to obey the orders to kill" would be pardoned.¹⁰ Finally, the National Coalition for Syrian Opposition and Revolutionary Forces has declared its intention to cooperate with minority groups, which was a major factor in the U.S. decision to support the National Coalition.¹¹ These acknowledgements both reassure the international community of the viability of a post-Assad Syrian government headed by the National Coalition and hopefully inspire confidence in all Syrians that such a rule would be pragmatically optimal.

However, the path to a post-Assad government is still a dangerous trajectory. It is still under debate even within the Syrian National Coalition whether or not Syria should have a transitional government before the National Coalition or another group steps in to establish a more permanent system. According to David Ignatius of the *Washington Post*, it is also clear that post-Assad Syria will need "massive foreign economic or military assistance – probably including peacekeeping troops from the Arab League or even a NATO country such as Turkey" in order to prevent radical Islamist from establishing a

nation in the heart of the Middle East.¹² It thus seems obvious that international bodies should intervene in a post-Assad Syria. Unfortunately, the issue is not so black and white.

There are other religious groups to consider as well, which have an enormous stake in a post-Assad government and that have cause to fear the insurgency and the government it would establish, especially because the opposition movement is largely Sunni. The Alawites, who compose around 11 percent of the Syrian population, hold a large number of positions in the Army, security services and shabiha (a group of armed civilians who serve as Assad's henchmen) – and count Assad himself as one of their members.¹³ With a large portion of their members thus having bloodied their hands in the conflict, many Alawites fear that a new rule would not distinguish between "good" and "bad" Alawites and would simply punish the group indiscriminately. Things would be worse for the Alawites if the U.S. intervened after Assad falls because not only are they supported by American enemies Iran and Hezbollah, the shabiha are labeled as a terrorist organization by the U.S.. In the eyes of the Alawites, it is safe to assume they would be under serious threat from virtually any post-Assad government. Druze Syrians also fear the insurgency, as their religion is considered heretical by Sunnis, and some serve in the military (though some have joined the opposition movement, and anti-Ba'ath Party protests have occurred in numerous Druze towns). Furthermore, many Druze fear that they will be punished for their neutrality. The Kurds have a slightly different fear, but a legitimate one nonetheless – after Assad pulled his forces out of northern Syria, they formed an autonomous zone. They do not want to lose this area to a Sunni government, and they would like to create a state within a state (similar to what happened with the Kurds in

An unidentified Free Syrian Army soldier patrols in Aleppo among the rubble.

Iraq), but if foreign countries intervene, Turkey would almost certainly oppose this move, as Turkey is currently facing a Kurdish rebellion and borders Syria.¹⁴

For these reasons, it is inadvisable that international bodies and foreign countries attempt to insert themselves too vigorously into the post-Assad conflict that will inevitably envelop Syria. While all Syrians have a stake in the post-Assad government, and fighters of all ideologies have sacrificed for the opposition movement and thus feel entitled to a role in the government it puts forward, the international community as a whole has neither of these claims. Furthermore, U.S. involvement especially will not be welcome, for "as many insurgents see it, Washington, having stood by watching the carnage, [would] now presume it can decide which Syrian groups are legitimate and which are not," an attitude entirely unwelcome to a people that have sacrificed enormously for their right to a government that reflects their interests. The U.S. would also likely oppose Jabhat al-Nusra, an organization labeled as terrorists by the U.S., which would meet with outcry from Syrians who recognize that Jabhat al-Nusra has been one of the most effective forces of the anti-Assad movement.¹⁵ The international community must tread very carefully with the post-Assad situation, and the U.S. in particular should provide economic and humanitarian support while abstaining from involving themselves too closely in the conflict that is bound to follow the downfall of the Ba'ath regime. The Syrian people have proven their commitment to a better government through an incredibly long and taxing civil war; the international community must trust them to establish their own government and should only become involved if absolute chaos erupts or a radical Islamist group obtains power illegitimately.

9. *ibid* 4

10. *ibid* 7

11. Menon, Rajan. "What Will Post-Assad Syria Look Like?" *TheHuffingtonPost.com*. The Huffington Post, 16 Dec. 2012. Web. 20 Mar. 2013.

12. *ibid* 7

13. "Syria: International Religious Freedom Report." Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor: Syria. U.S. Department of State, 2006. Web. 20 Mar. 2013.

14. *ibid* 11

15. *ibid* 4

Don't Hold Your Breath

The Falkland Islands dispute is nowhere near being solved

By Chris Van Gelder
STAFF WRITER

In 1982, the Falkland Islands (known as the Islas Malvinas in Argentina), a small British colony just east of the southern tip of South America was invaded by Argentina, who had contested the British control of the islands for the approximately 150 years that the islands had been under British control.¹ The ensuing Falkland War was a massive public relations blunder by Argentina. This war, more than anything else, was a move to rally nationalist euphoria in a country that was going through a full blown economic collapse in order for the brutal military junta that ruled Argentina to stay in power. However, the war tarnished Argentina's already poor international reputation because the ill planned invasion by a weak and inexperienced military force eventually surrendered.²

Though the actual fighting lasted only 10 weeks, the diplomatic fallout is still being felt today. In 2008, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner was elected President of Argentina to replace her husband based on promises of rebuilding the economy and pushing harder for Argentine control of the Falklands. She chose her issues well: ever since the 70s the two promises which have been most well received by Argentinian voters are a stronger economy and control of the Falklands. Since the Argentine economy started to head south last year, which many attributed to the government cooking its books on inflation and growth statistics, limiting purchases of dollars and nationalizing foreign businesses in Argentina.³ A litany of strikes, protests, and in December, riots, has made it obvious that the people are not happy.⁴ It is thus natural that President Kirchner has decided that now is a good time to rally the nation around calls to negotiate over the Falklands. Since then, Argentina has been using just about every possible avenue to communicate its belief that it owns the Falklands. For instance, just before the Olympics an ad that showed Argentine Olympians training in the Falklands and said "to compete on British we train on Argentine

soil" aired on Argentine television.⁵ The gesture was, needless to say, not appreciated by the British.

However, the dispute goes far beyond diplomatic scuffles over TV ads. The fact that British cruises have stopped stopping in Argentina and Argentina has closed its ports to ships flying the Falkland Flag shows how serious the dispute has gotten.

The solution to this dispute must come from many places. The simple solution would be to give the islands to whoever occupied them first. However, even the simple solution is complicated. The Falklands were discovered by the British, claimed and settled by France, then claimed by Britain, transferred from France to Spain, and eventually transferred to Argentina after Argentina gained independence. Though this seems like it gives Argentina a claim to the islands, the story only gets more complicated. Britain has possessed the islands since 1833, and the Falklands remain distinctly British to this day.⁶

This year the Falklands held a referendum on who they want to be a part of. The results were 1,513 to 3 in favor of British owner-

5. "Argentinian Olympic Advert Depicts Falkland Islands as 'Argentine Soil' - Video" The Guardian. N.p., 3 May 2012. Web. 21 Mar. 2013.

6. *ibid* 1

ship of the islands. One could compare the situation in the Falklands to what happened with Hong Kong. However, Hong Kong was 95 percent Chinese while the Falklands are seven percent South American.⁷ These demographics mean that in the event of a transition from British to Argentinian ownership of the islands, the Falklands would be controlled by a minority.

Regardless of Argentina being first and closer, the U.K. has the distinct advantages of both of history and demographics. Because of the facts that the British have controlled the islands and that most Falkland Islanders support British ownership of the islands, the British are clearly on the right side of this dispute and should be recognized as such. Argentina will definitely contest this, but the fact is that despite their brief occupation of the islands during the Falklands War they haven't controlled the islands in the almost two centuries. Even though the legitimacy of Argentina's claim is shaky, it is likely that even if subjected to international pressure and economic sanctions, Argentina is as likely to surrender its claim to the islands as Iran is to give up its nuclear program. Indeed, Argentina has little regard for the rest of the world's opinion of its actions. The most important question is how the Western world should make Argentina, the losing side of this dispute, cooperate. Right now, it looks like nothing short of a change in the Argentine leadership to a more moderate leader would produce any real de-escalation of the dispute. In short, the Falklands Dispute is a problem that is not close to a solution.

7. "Hong Kong" CIA World Factbook. CIA, 15 Mar. 2013. Web. 21 Mar. 2013, *ibid* 1



A sign in Argentina reads "the Falklands belong to Argentina." The high frequency of these signs shows how strongly Argentina wants to control the Falkland Islands.

1. "Argentina History." History of Argentina. Lonely Planet, n.d. Web. 21 Mar. 2013.

"Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)." CIA World Factbook. CIA, 15 Nov 2012. Web. 21 Mar. 2013.

2. *ibid* 1

3. Gilbert, Jonathan. "In Argentina, Social Unrest but No Political Alternative to Kirchner." World Politics Review. N.p., 28 Nov. 2012. Web. 21 Mar. 2013.

4. "IMF Hits Argentina with First-ever Censure of a Country." The Telegraph [London] 1 Feb. 2013: n. pag. Print.

Rape Culture: Not Just India's Problem

The subjugation of women needs to be fixed in America

By Esha Datta
STAFF WRITER

On December 28, 2012, a female student who was gang-raped on a bus in New Delhi died of medical complications in a hospital in Singapore.¹ Only a few days later, on January 5, an Indian girl from Punjab committed suicide after being gang-raped.² The two tragedies remain a stark reminder that, despite the advancements women have made in society, extreme

1. "Delhi Gang-rape Victim Dies in Hospital in Singapore." BBC News. BBC, 29 Dec. 2012. Web. 23 Jan. 2013.

2. Singh, Harmeet Shah. "Indian Girl Commits Suicide over Alleged Gang Rape." CNN. Cable News Network, 04 Jan. 2013. Web. 23 Jan. 2013.

gender inequality and female oppression remain prevalent today.

But these two incidents did not go unnoticed. All over India, protesters have been calling for justice, greater focus on prosecuting rapists, social change, and even the death penalty as punishment for sexual assault. The public outrage is understandable. After all, reported rape cases in India have increased from 2,487 in 1971 to 24,206 in 2011.³ Many people have begun to recognize the need for sweeping changes in the way society and the

3. *ibid* 2

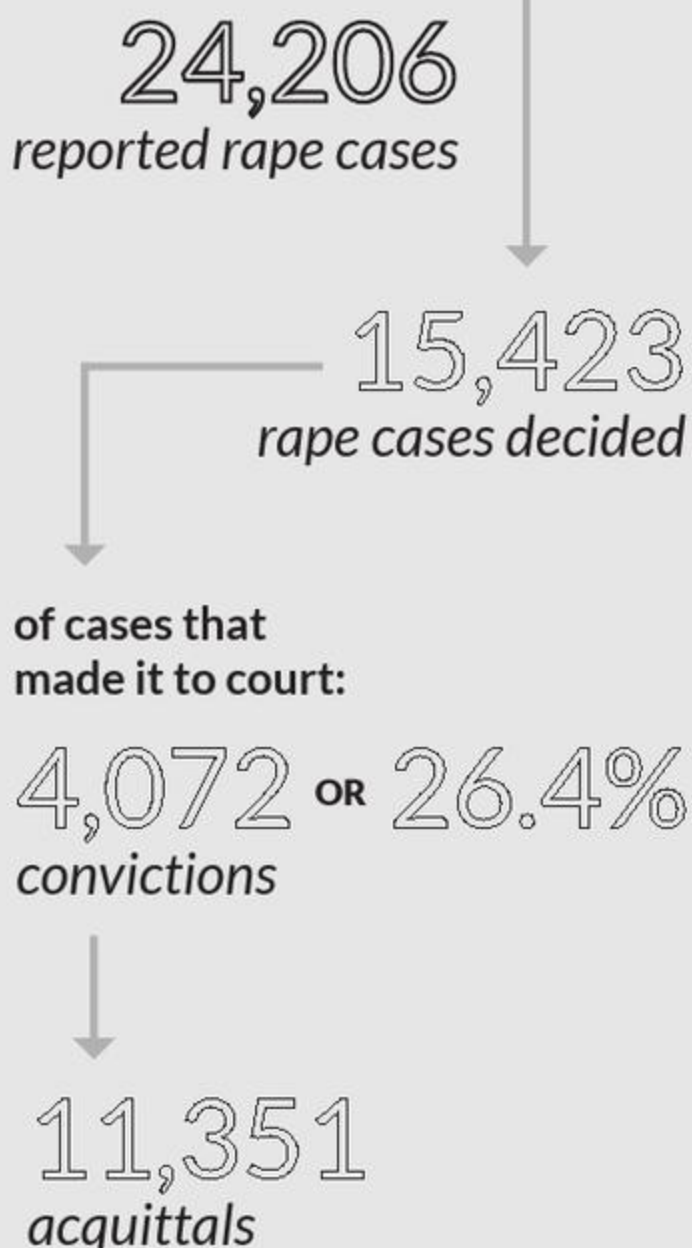
government address sexual assault. Further, these protests have not been limited to the Indian subcontinent. The American media has covered the tragedies in India, while activists worldwide have been working to inform people of sexual assault and gender inequality.

Unfortunately, international attention to India's rape problem has not helped the situation, because the issue is regarded as just that: India's problem. Many Western commentators have chosen to portray the gang-rapes as a result of the cultural insufficiencies of India itself. The media is quick to explain that sexual assault is the result of Indian men having no conception of gender equality and Indian women being weak, oppressed creatures who need strong Westerners to save them.

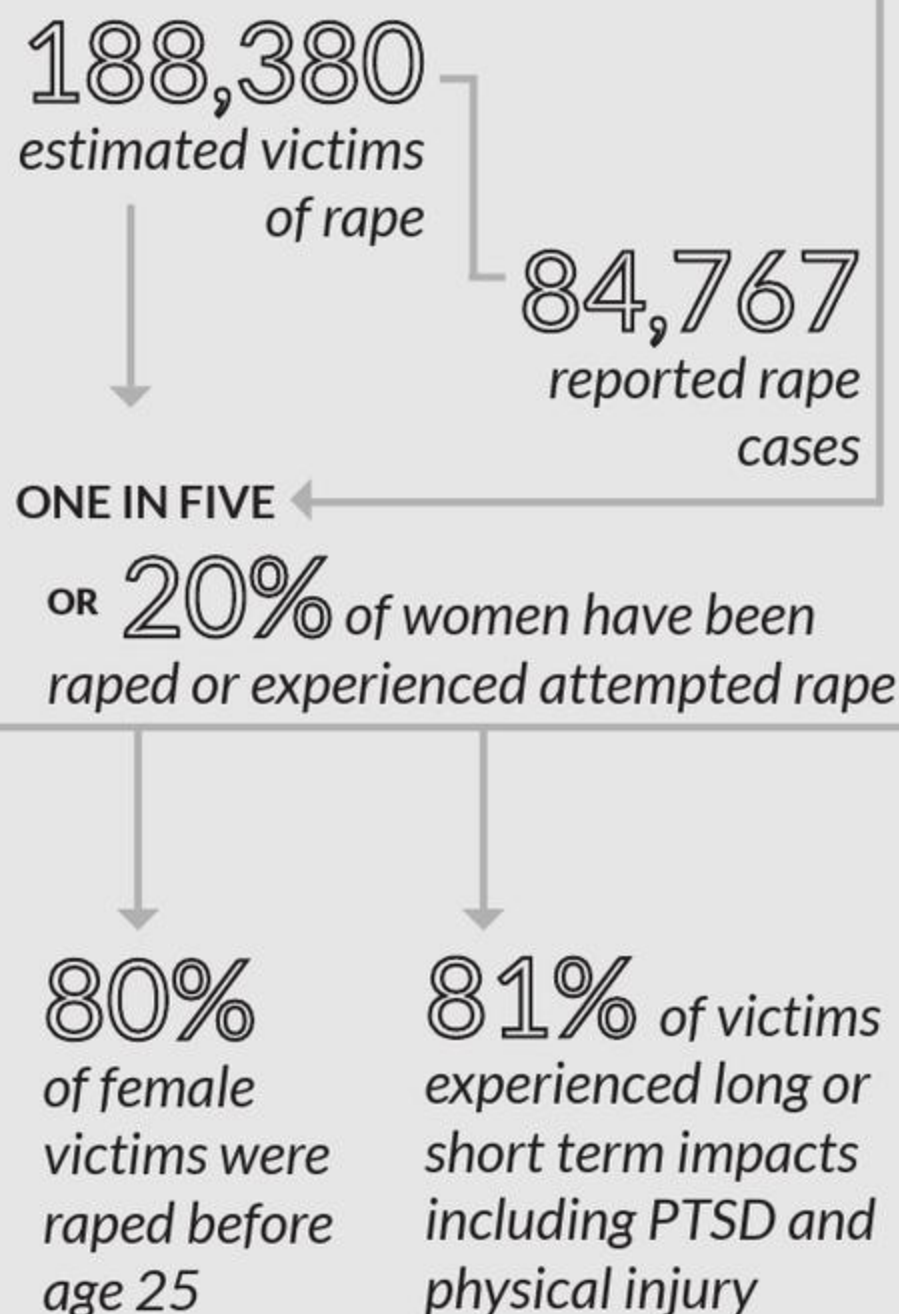
For example, an ABC News video reporting about the gang-rape in Delhi was quick to blame the high rates of sexual assault on "millions of migrants from the countryside who bring with them some archaic views about the treatment of women."⁴ After all, as residents of great First World, rape-free nations like America know, it's only backwards, uneducated Indians from the countryside who sexually assault women. A recent New York Times article went even further, explaining that the blame also falls upon "The foundational texts of Indian culture — the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, ancient Sanskrit epics" which "revolve around the communal outrage that results from insults to a good woman's modesty" and are the reason "female sexual virtue remains deeply embedded in the Indian psyche."⁵

This argument is particularly offensive, since it's clear that the article's author, one Gardiner Harris, has clearly never read the Ramayana or the Mahabharata. The problem is that neither of those religious texts has anything to do with the question of female modesty, nor do they in some way encourage an Indian obsession with womanly virtue. Moreover, the argument fails to address the fact that there are rapists from countries that don't have the Mahabharata or Ramayana to guide

In India in 2011:



In the United States in 2011:



4. Edwards, Michael. "ABC News." Delhi Rape Highlights Sexual Assault Views in India. 25 Jan. 2013. ABC News. ABC, 25 Jan. 2013. Web. 25 Jan. 2013.

5. Harris, Gardiner. "For Rape Victims in India, Police Are Often Part of the Problem." New York Times. N.p., 22 Jan. 2013. Web. 25 Jan. 2013.



them. Ancient Sanskrit epics obviously didn't give rapists in America, Europe, or any other "developed" nation the urge to sexually assault women. This article not only made a nonsensical argument, but also disparaged sacred Hindu texts, Indian culture, and the one billion followers of Hinduism.

Unfortunately, this portrayal of the East is not exclusive to the New Delhi incidents. When CBS reporter Lara Logan was sexually assaulted in Tahrir Square on the day Mubarak resigned, it was not her assailants who were criticized. Rather, all of Egypt's men were described as "animals" and "beasts."⁶ When cases of sexual assault overseas come to the attention of the American media, entire cultures are described as barbaric and underdeveloped.

These criticisms of developing countries perpetuate stereotypes that demonize entire nations. Western commentators commodify the tragic experiences of rape victims for the sake of their criticisms of India. The Americans who speak out against rape by criticizing Indian culture as a whole do not truly care about the sexual assault of women; they are concerned only with their need to be "white saviors", glorious Westerners who tirelessly work to "save" the oppressed Indian

In cases of reporting overseas sexual assault, the American media fails to realize that you can't fight sexism by invoking racism and call that progress.

as a cultural inadequacy while rapes in the U.S. are tragic, but isolated incidents. Unfortunately, that simply isn't true. In American, 20 percent of women will be sexually assaulted while in college.⁷ Meanwhile, in the U.S. military, a female soldier is more likely to be raped by a fellow soldier than to be killed by an enemy combatant.⁸ A recent study also showed that nearly 1 in 5 women surveyed reported that they have been raped or have experienced an attempted rape.⁹ But only eight percent of all sexual assault is even reported to authorities.¹⁰ And anyone who fol-

women from the brown devils of the East. Unfortunately, the American media doesn't realize that you can't fight sexism by invoking racism and call it progress.

And using India as a scapegoat for rape doesn't just harm the world's perception of one nation's culture. It also allows Western countries, especially America, to ignore their own problems with sexual assault. Rape in developing nations is seen

People protest for stricter rape laws in Hyderabad, India. The fact that protests like this one are common shows that India's culture is not responsible for rape in India.

lowed the last election can easily recall the victim-blaming statements made by various Republican politicians such as former U.S. Representative Todd Akin. Clearly, rape is not exclusively India's problem.

Statistics attest to the fact that sexual assault is not the product of one culture or group of people. Rape is present in almost every society, regardless of race, religion, or wealth. And this global problem has resulted from a universal acceptance of excusing sexual assault, victim-blaming and misogyny. The world has created a rape culture, one where one of the first questions asked to women who report sexual assault is "what were you wearing?" We advise women to wear "appropriate" clothing instead of teaching men not to rape. We excuse male behavior because "boys will be boys," but accuse women of "asking for it." Rape culture is an international issue; politicians in the U.S. claim that "some girls rape easy,"¹¹ while the Indian government fails to prosecute thousands of rapists every year. Rape is not a problem inherent to one nation, but to the entirety of the human race. Calling Indians barbaric won't stop rape, but fighting sexism globally will.

6. Mikdashi, Maya. "The Marriage of Sexism and Islamophobia; Re-Making the News on Egypt." *Jadaliyya*. Arab Studies Institute, 21 Feb. 2011. Web. 23 Jan. 2013.

7. Grant, Elaine. "Federal Effort Targets Sexual Assaults At Colleges." *NPR*. NPR, 05 Apr. 2011. Web. 23 Jan. 2013.

8. Broadbent, Lucy. "Rape in the US Military: America's Dirty Little Secret." *The Guardian*[London] 9 Dec. 2011: n. pag. Print.

9. Rabin, Roni G. "Nearly 1 in 5 Women in U.S. Survey Say They Have Been Sexually Assaulted." *New York Times* 14 Dec. 2011: A32. Print.

10. "Information About Sexual Violence - Sexual Assault Voices of Edmonton." *Sexual Assault Voices of Edmonton*.

Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton, n.d. Web. 26 Jan. 2013.

11. Marley, Patrick. "Rep. Roger Rivard Criticized for 'some Girls Rape Easy' Remark." *JS Online*. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 10 Oct. 2012. Web. 25 Jan. 2013.

The New Japan

Japan's new foreign policy gives them a bigger role in Asian politics and increases the risk of a crisis in East Asia

By Ben Hawthorne

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Despite being located in the heart of one of the wealthiest and most important regions on Earth, Japan has always been out of the foreign policy spotlight. Though vital to U.S. interests in Asia, Japan has never been embroiled in foreign crises, led by a radical leader, or done much to earn the attention of the American news media since WWII. However, that has all changed recently, as the new administration in Japan, coupled with a changing regional landscape, has dramatically altered the foreign policy of one of our strongest Asian allies.

Japan's new foreign policy direction stems largely from its new government, led by the Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe. Abe, a member of the right wing of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (which, despite the name, is a center-right party), is considered one of the most nationalistic man to take power in Japan since WWII. He is a frequent visitor to the Yasukuni Shrine, a memorial to those who fought for Imperial Japan in WWII, including 14 people who have been convicted of war crimes. In addition to making a special point to visit these people who were responsible for war crimes, Abe has made a point to defend them, claiming that the Allied War Crimes Tribunal is invalid. He has amplified his own beliefs by surrounding himself with what *The Economist* has described as a "cabinet of radical nationalists," who have joined him in calling for a reevaluation of Article 9 of Japan's constitution, which prohibits it from waging war or maintaining an army.¹ Abe's fierce nationalism, belief in a strong, dominant Japan and support for a more powerful military make him a Bush-era anachronism in the age of Obama.

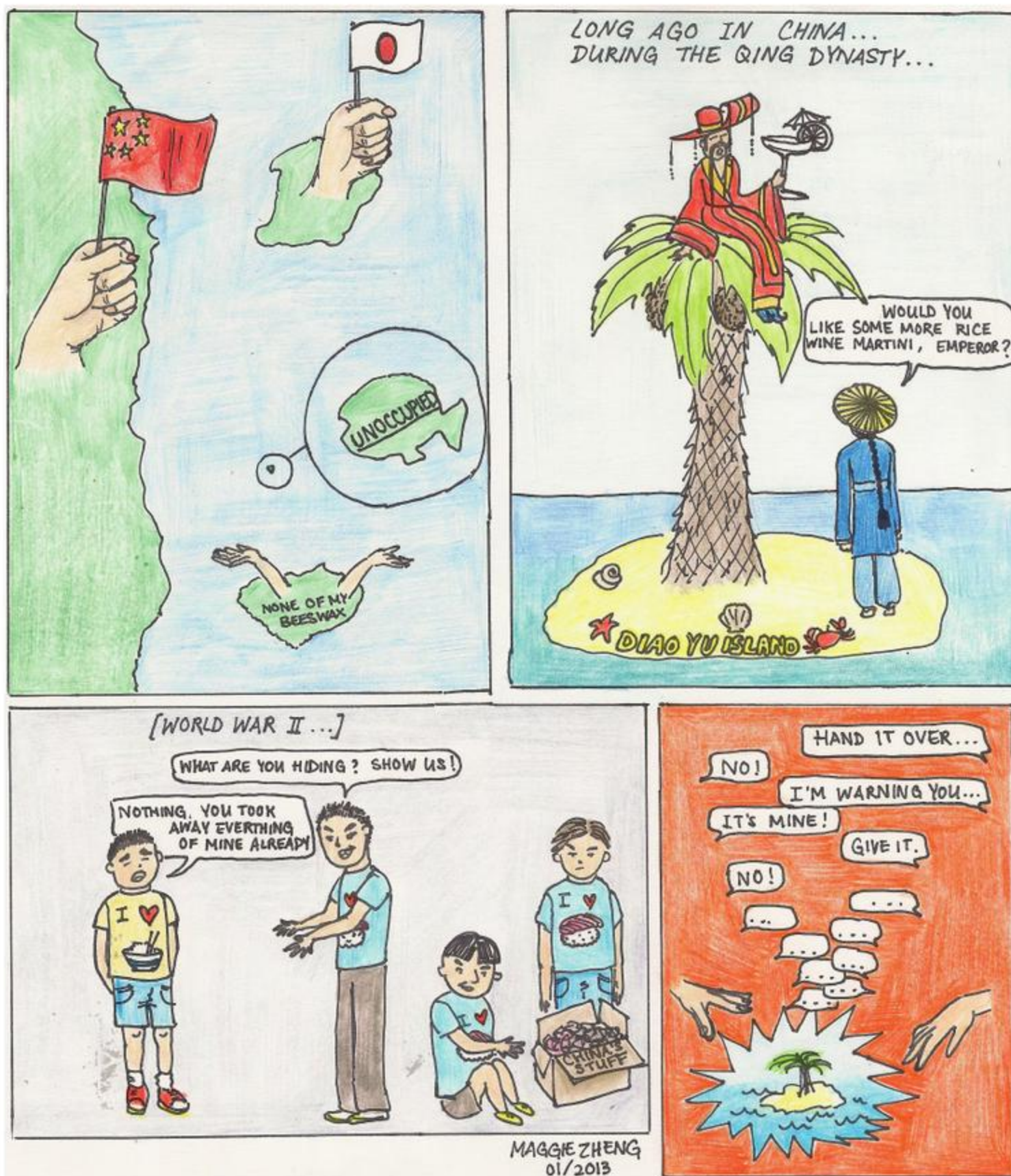
Abe's ideology has caused some waves in the international sphere. The Obama administration has been disconcerted by the Abe administration's strong, values based foreign policy, which conflicts with President Obama's more reserved and cautious approach to foreign policy.

Even more contentious is Abe's attempt to revise Japanese history. His campaign-trail suggestions that he may take back Japan's official apology to South Korea and China for the Japan's conquest of the two nations during WWII made a number of U.S. officials threaten to publicly shame and condemn

Abe if the suggestions continued.²

Japan's new direction in foreign policy is exemplified by its actions in the dispute over the Senkaku Islands (also known as the Diaoyutai Islands in Taiwan and the Diaoyu Islands in China). When Tokyo's former governor, far-right nationalist Shintaro Ishihara, attempted to buy the disputed islands from their owner, a Japanese citizen, the central Japanese government stepped in to buy the islands itself, an unprecedented move. The move was supposed to calm the situation by preventing the islands from falling into the control of Ishihara, whose nationalistic views may lead him to provoke, intentionally or not, a crisis with China. Unfortunately, it ended up inflaming tensions with the Chinese and provoking boycotts of Japanese goods and protests in China. Though portrayed as an overly nationalistic overreaction by the Western media, these protests are somewhat just-

2. Green, Michael J. "Shinzo Abe: Japan is Back." Foreign Policy. Washington Post, 25 Feb. 2013. Web. 13 Mar. 2013.



1. Caryl, Christian. "Handle With Care." Foreign Policy 21 Feb. 2013: n. pag. Web.

MAGGIE ZHENG
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tified, since the shift from private ownership of the islands to federal control represents a significant increase in Japan's control over the islands. Because the islands are now government property, Japan will also have to defend the islands more, increasing the risk of a confrontation between the Japanese Coast Guard and Chinese ships that could escalate into an armed conflict.

Meanwhile, the Japanese military is also expanding. Japan has purchased antiballistic missile technology, including both land and sea based interceptors and radars. The antiballistic missiles are ostensibly for the purpose of intercepting North Korean missiles, but many analysts have noted that they serve the additional purpose of protecting Japan against a Chinese missile attack. Because China's primary defense, and one of its major bargaining chips in regional negotiations and territory disputes, is its large arsenal of anti-shiping and land attack ballistic missiles, the Chinese government is very vocal about these purchases, complaining that they threaten regional stability and will cause a dangerous arms race.³ The Japanese military has additionally invested in upgrading its fighter plane fleet and purchasing two new helicopter carriers, which are large aircraft carrier-like ships that launch helicopters; they are used primarily for anti-submarine warfare but also serve as transports and can provide air support.

Of course, the expansion of Japan's military is a reaction to external threats (China's rise and North Korea's nuclear program), not a turn to militarism; Japanese society remains as peaceful as it has been for the duration of the postwar era (although the same cannot be said about its Prime Minister).

More noteworthy is the fact that Japan opened its first foreign military base since WWII, a base in Djibouti to combat piracy off the Horn of Africa, in 2011.⁴ Contrasting this action, which went largely unreported in the Japanese and international media, with the massive and passionate national debate in Japan over whether to enter the 1991 Gulf War shows that Japan is becoming more open to a larger international role.

Before we start breaking out the WWII propaganda again, it must be remembered that there are two large barriers to Japan reclaiming its former role as the dominant power in East Asia: the dismal state of the Japanese economy and Japan's demographics. These barriers mean that while Japan will soon play a larger role in East Asian politics,

3. Weitz, Richard. "China Steps Up Rhetoric against U.S. Missile Defense." *China Brief* 12.20 (2012): n. pag. Web. 11 Mar. 2013.

4. Werthiem, Eric. "World Navies in Review." *Proceedings* Mar. 2012: 36-41. Print.



it will likely never recover the international superpower status that it held in the 1980s or 1930s.

The economy is the more urgent problem. The Japanese economy was hit by the devastating popping of a real estate bubble and a stock market collapse in the 1990s, which plunged Japan into a two-decade long depression from which it has never fully re-

While the precise effects of Japan's new administration are unknown, one thing is certain: Japan's time out of the international spotlight is over.

covered. Japan was then hit hard by the Great Recession of 2008. Japan's economy is largely dependent on exports, so the plunge in consumer spending by the United States especially affected Japan. The economic crises were compounded by the massive destruction caused by the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown – the economic effects of which are still being felt.

Japan's demographic problem, while a less immediate problem than the economy, is also difficult to avoid. Japan's population is aging much faster than most other countries. This puts immense strain on Japan's pension system, which is already driving up Japan's deficit to the point where the government is running out of money and causing Japan's credit rating to fall. The increase in Japan's elderly population will also slow the econ-

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (seated at right) meets with former Vice President Dick Cheney in 2007. The foreign policy ideologies of these two men are very similar.

omy, since retired workers do not produce anything and must be supported by the rest of society, which is estimated to result in a drop of about 18 percent in average Japanese household wealth. Pension reform would help alleviate many of the fiscal effects of an aging population, although its unpopularity among the elderly makes it political suicide for any politician, and thus unlikely to happen anytime in the near future.⁵

Despite these challenges, Japan's economic vitality or aging population is not the central concern here. What is pushing Japan back onto the world stage is not the fact that Japan's military is stronger than it was previously, rather, Japan is different because of its change in leadership. Abe's nationalistic government has raised the probability that minor scuffles over disputed islands escalate into trade wars or even shooting wars. His hard-line attitude, particularly with regard to the military, will further increase pressure on China's new leadership and raise tensions even more in that volatile region. While the precise effects of Japan's new administration are not yet possible to ascertain, one thing remains certain: Japan's time out of the international spotlight is over.

5. Ezrati, Milton. "Japan's Aging Economics." *Foreign Affairs* 96.3 (1997): 96-104. Print.



Val Gempis/USAF

The Danger in the Pivot

Continuing to bolster the United States military and naval presence in the Asia Pacific Rim will derail American interests in the region

By Sidhanth Venkatasubramanian

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Over the course of three presidential elections, two wars and no shortage of political drama, few foreign issues have captivated the attention of the American media quite like China's meteoric rise to superpower status has. Although the political landscape today is very different from that of the 1950s, the overtones of growing paranoia over Beijing's hegemony are reminiscent of the Red Scare.

Contrary to what this growing discomfort with the East might imply, however, China's military is modernizing no faster than it was a decade ago,¹ and the rate of its economic growth has stagnated in recently due to an increase in corruption and the circulation of "black money" that has diluted its relative purchasing power (and by extension, the strength of its investments overseas). Despite the widespread belief that China was immune to the global recession of 2008, the financial exposure and liability offered by Beijing's investment portfolio in the United States culminated in the worst per capita income and GDP growth rate facing the country since the disastrous economic agenda advanced in Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward a half-century earlier.²

1. China's Military after the Sixteenth Party Congress: Long March to Eternity Wei-Chin Lee Journal of Asian and African Studies, October 2003, vol. 38, 4-5: pp. 416-446.

2. "China's Economy: Reflating the Dragon." The Economist. The Economist Newspaper Limited, 13 Nov. 2008. Web.

Thus, the sudden focus on China finds its roots not in a real change in the balance of power between China and the United States, but in a spike of diplomatic confidence and hostility across the board on the part of Beijing. As Kevin Spacey aptly terms the situation on HBO's political drama House of Cards, the problem lies not in dollars or nuclear weapons, but in the fact that "Peking has indicated a desire to call the shots instead of the West."

Such a shift in Chinese attitude has inevitably been on the horizon for quite some time, but has only recently stepped into the light through a variety of international incidents. In 2010, the Obama Administration authorized the sale of billions of dollars worth of arms to the Taiwanese military, a move which the Chinese government had previously attempted to block through the introduction of a referendum in the United Nations General Assembly. In the following hours, Chinese forums witnessed hundreds of millions of posts from 'netizens' across the country demanding action on the part of their government, culminating in Beijing's withdrawal from an ongoing security exchange with the Pentagon and trade restrictions with U.S. arms firms, which were the first sanctions levied on the United States by a G-20 country in decades.³

3. US - Taiwan Business Council. "Chinese Reactions to

A U.S. B-2 bomber prepares for a mission at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam. The relocation of U.S. forces to bases in Asia, including Andersen, is seen as provocative and threatening by the Chinese government.

Following the awarding of the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo, China vocally protested the perceived "tyranny" they saw driving the decision and placed substantial economic sanctions on Norway (the country that awards the Nobel Prizes). Although neither of these sanctions had a substantial impact on their respective targets, they sent a strong message to the West that China would demand a larger role in world affairs.

In a nutshell, the Bush and Obama administrations' approaches to China have entailed concerted efforts to reassert U.S. military supremacy in Asia, increase military cooperation in the Asia-Pacific rim and increase the size of the American fleets at naval bases in Korea, Japan and Guam.⁴ Washington thus moved to tilt the balance back in its favor with troop surges that, according to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, would serve to be a reminder of the American military presence in the region "for a long time."

But is there any substantial motivation for such an agenda? Despite the constant accusations from right-wing pundits that Obama's appeasement strategy towards Beijing is un-

Taiwan Arms Sales." Project 2049 Institute 8.3 (2012): n. pag. Web.

4. The Responsibility to Protect in the Asia-Pacific Region Alex J. Bellamy and Sara E. Davies Security Dialogue, December 2009, vol. 40, 6: pp. 547-574.

Rather than protecting American interests, our military agenda in Asia will only serve to decrease the stability of the region and increase the likelihood of future conflicts.

dermining American strategic interests in Asia, there is no concrete evidence to support these claims. All the Pentagon reports to this date have reported the contrary, including a landmark 2011 update on the state of Chinese military technology which concluded that around only 25 percent of China's armed forces utilized technology that were on par with the U.S. military's technology.⁵ With regard to the Chinese navy, the report concluded that just over half of China's naval forces are comparable in quality and strength with the outgoing generation of American naval technology. The only official statement from the Pentagon with the air of any substantial concern which lends any credence to the idea that China's military might is increasing is Admiral James Winnefield's 2011 address before the House of Representatives, a speech which many experts and think-tanks viewed as largely speculative and war-mongering.

Despite this reality, the past four presidents have all maintained a largely unnecessary force in East Asia. In the early 1990s, George H. W. Bush authorized the transfer of cutting edge anti-aircraft technology to bases in Japan and Guam, citing the rationale that the need to bolster American anti-aerial defense in the area far outweighed the risk that the increased proximity to Chinese intelligence could potentially let it fall prey to the People's Liberation Army of China (PLA) efforts to reverse-engineer Western technology that were dominant at the time.⁶ Since 2005, about 70 percent of the U.S. Navy has been deployed to Asian waters despite increasing threats to oil shipping in the Persian Gulf. The military agenda in Asia was not once mentioned as an area where the government budget could be reduced, even when funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were being brought into scrutiny in the early days of the recession.⁷

Although China's relationship with the United States following Nixon's rapprochement in 1972 has never been marked by intimate comfort between the two parties, American militarism in Asia has irrationally chipped away at the uneasy but stable mu-

tual respect that our diplomatic relations have evolved into, without any definitive goal in sight. Despite Obama's repeatedly stated goal to nurture a productive relationship with China, his administration has found itself messily entangled in more Asian territorial disputes than any of his predecessors, usually on the side opposing Beijing. For instance, Obama resumed military dialogues with Vietnam, despite our long-standing policy of avoiding relations with Vietnam because of the severe strain that they place on our much more fragile ties with China.

Such a willingness to involve the United States in petty ego battles in the Asia-Pacific Rim that are of little or no consequence to American interests in the region marked an unwelcome and ill-advised departure from the policies that had preserved Washington's relationship with Beijing in a state of mutual respect and disengagement and far overstepped the measures that would have needed to be taken in order to preserve American hegemony and strategic interests in the region. This has not gone unnoticed by the Chinese Politburo: China has quietly ended its support for facilitating dialogues between the West

and North Korea over the past two years and has withdrawn from talks with North Korea, in addition to increasing its aid to Pyongyang. China has also increased imports of Iranian oil, in opposition to American efforts to isolate and economically cripple Iran to punish it for its nuclear program.⁸

China has also taken steps to punish the countries that have been engaging in military dialogues with Washington against Beijing's wishes, seen in how the Chinese Navy has recently started to boldly assert itself in territorial disputes with Korea, Vietnam and Japan.⁹

Rather than protecting American interests, our military agenda in Asia will only serve to decrease the stability of the region and increase the likelihood of future conflicts. Furthermore, a fruitful relationship between the U.S. and China is undoubtedly better in the long run than the short-term gains that stem from the constant one-upmanship in the Pacific Ocean. American policy should not cross the hazy line from preservation to rash expansion of hegemony, as it broadcasts the image that Washington is unwilling to negotiate, which will have wide-reaching effects on crucial Chinese support for U.S. interests all around the world.

8. Water dragon? China, power shifts and soft balancing in the South Pacific Marc Lanteigne Political Science, June 2012; vol. 64, 1: pp. 21-38.

9. Japan and China: Negotiating a Perilous Course Rajaram Panda India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs, June 2012; vol. 68, 2: pp. 135-154.



Former Chinese President Hu Jintao and deceased North Korean leader Kim Jong-il shake hands. China's withdrawal from talks with North Korea was a response to the U.S. pivot to Asia.

5. Long Shot and Short Hit: China as a Military Power and Its Implications for the USA and Taiwan Wei-chin Lee Journal of Asian and African Studies, October 2008; vol. 43, 5: pp. 523-542.

6. China in Southeast Asia: The Search for a Chinese Model of International Relations Jabin T. Jacob China Report, August 2012; vol. 48, 3: pp. 317-326.

7. Bumiller, Elisabeth. "Words and Deeds Show Focus Of the American Military on Asia." The New York Times. The New York Times, 11 Nov. 2012. Web. 05 Mar. 2013.

Human Rights: Beyond Moral Goodness

The United States' substantial economic and security interests in China necessitate that we promote human rights in China

By Alex Lu

STAFF WRITER

When many Americans think of China, they compare it with the United States, and several topics quickly arise, including government censorship of the internet and the press, the growing Chinese economy and human rights abuses. The United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC) cannot be described as allies or enemies as relations between the two have fluctuated frequently. They were allies during WWII and enemies during the Korean War, for instance. However, after the official recognition of the PRC during the 1970s, the relationship between the U.S. and China has shown consistent improvement; recently, it has been described as the most important bilateral relationship of the 21st century.¹ However, at the same time, China's human rights abuses have consistently generated tensions with the United States. As China gains power and its economy grows rapidly, the human rights question will become more urgent: will human rights issues outweigh economic ones in the future of the Sino-American relationship? Respect for human rights and economic strength are not mutually exclusive in that an American push for greater respect for human rights will encourage innovation in China, thus allowing the Chinese economy to sustain its growth.

In order to best predict the effect of human rights on the Sino-American relationship, we must examine how the two countries developed their current human rights stances. On the one hand, U.S. citizens enjoy numerous inalienable rights, and the violation of those rights seems incredulous. In the Declaration of Independence, the Founders held that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, [and] that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." With the ratification of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights shortly thereafter, the U.S. established itself as a nation premised upon equality, granting rights to all its citizens.

On the other hand, relatively few people

know about Chinese history. Without contextualizing the formation of the PRC, the structure of the Chinese government and its limitations on the rights of its citizens seem absurd. Before the creation of the PRC, political and social disorder had raged in China for more than 100 years. The Qing Dynasty, still in power during the early 20th century, was afflicted with foreign imperialism, droughts and famine. These factors eventually sparked the Boxer Rebellion, during which an extensive anti-foreign movement took violent action against foreign soldiers, missionaries and

Improving human rights conditions can eliminate issues such as the sustainability of the Chinese economy's growth and the stability of the Communist Party's government.

Chinese Christians. The weak Qing Dynasty supported the rebellion, declared war against foreign powers in China and assisted the Boxers in a 55 day siege of the Legation Quarter, where foreigners and Chinese Christians took refuge. 20,000 troops from eight nations defeated the Chinese army, conquered Beijing, lifted the siege, and proceeded to plunder the area. Further civil unrest led to a coup d'état, replacing the Qing Dynasty with the Republic of China, controlled by the nationalist party. Under this new and unstable government, China deteriorated into a semi-feudal state governed by regional warlords. Though the nationalist party reunited China in 1927, it failed to stabilize the nation. A civil war erupted between the nationalist government and the Communist Party, which was closely followed by the Japanese invasion of China, which resulted in more than 20 million civilian deaths through the Japanese policy of "kill all, burn all, destroy all." Afterwards, civil war resumed, culminating in the formation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 with the Communist Party in control of the mainland. Two governments had

failed in 50 years; neither government was strong enough to protect the Chinese people, leading the Communist Party to focus on gaining enough power to protect them before increasing human rights.

Despite a significant increase in respect for human rights, China's stability means that it should revise its current policies and uphold its promise to dispense more rights. Since 1949, the PRC has adopted a number of constitutional revisions; the most recent changes in 1982 seems to guarantee freedom of speech, press, assembly, demonstration and religion, while retracting the right to strike, the right to air views fully and other rights crucial to protesting legally. Unfortunately, the constitution is poorly enforced, which means that most Chinese citizens cannot exercise their rights. Furthermore, the government can employ other articles in the State Constitution to legally control the exercise of basic human rights. The State Council Information Office (SCIO), speaking on behalf of the Chinese government, has published white papers explaining the Chinese government's perspective on human rights issues. Throughout these papers, SCIO explains the government's view that human rights in Chi-

na depend on the stability of the Chinese government, stating that, "Without national independence, there would be no guarantee for the people's lives... The Chinese

people had to win national independence before they could gain the right to subsistence."² In reality, people who are starving and dying are not overly worried about the existence of human rights. It follows from this position that, in the eyes of the government, many restrictions on human rights actually maximize human rights in the long term. Although China's human rights situation has significantly improved since the 1960s and 1970s, when speech against the government in even a relatively private circumstance could result in jailing or execution, the government must reconsider its anachronistic views. The risk of foreign attacks on Chinese sovereignty is greatly diminished by recent increases in both Chinese hard and soft power, in addition to the strength of the Chinese economy and its entanglement with other economies.

With the continued crackdown of the government on human rights, China seems more concerned with internal threats to its sovereignty. Yet, improving human rights conditions can eliminate issues such as the

1. Huang, Ying-Jia. "Ambassador Clark Randt on 'The Crucial Relationship'" USC US-China Institute. University of Southern California, 30 Apr. 2008. Web. 20 Jan. 2013.

2. China State Council. State Council Information Office. I. The Right to Subsistence. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Jan. 2013.



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sustainability of the Chinese economy's growth and the stability of the Communist Party's government. In fact, Hasan Torun and Cumhur Çiçekçi, members of the faculty of economics and administrative sciences at Turkey's Ege University, published a study in 2007 concluding that empirically, innovation consistently leads to economic growth,³ and that the massive spending of the U.S. and Japan towards innovation strongly impacts their positions as two of the largest economies. Following this logic, additional government funding for technological innovation would resolve the global issue of the slowing Chinese economy. However, Ai Weiwei, a Chinese artist and political activist, points out that Chinese government censorship prevents any creativity and technological innovation. Ai explains that censorship will put China "far behind in the world's competition in the coming decades... Everyone wants an iPhone, but it would be impossible to design an iPhone in China because it's not a product; it's an understanding of human nature."⁴ Tight restrictions, including bans on specific mention of Taiwan, Tibet and Mao's Cultural Revolution, leave journalists with two options: portray news events in a manner according to government specifications, or not at all. These limitations encourage conformity and inhibit the creative potential of the Chinese people. This hinders Chinese technological innovation because it

3. Torun, Hasan, and Cumhur Çiçekçi. *Innovation: Is the Engine for Economic Growth*. Publication. Izmir: Ege University, 2007. *Innovation: Is the Engine for Economic Growth?* Ciencia Y Tecnologia, June 2012. Web. 20 Jan. 2013.
4. *ibid* 2

eliminates new ideas and creative solutions to practical problems, regardless of the funding provided by the Chinese government. By cutting back on censorship and other restrictions on human rights, China can most effectively stimulate technological innovation, maintain its economic growth and adapt to a changing global environment.

The unique relationship between the U.S. and China makes fostering Chinese technological innovation an imperative for the United States. The two countries are the world's largest trading partners. September 2012 reports from the U.S. Census Bureau detailed \$78.8 billion in exports to China and \$311 billion imports from China.⁵ In addition, China is the largest foreign owner of U.S. debt. However, in response to China's recent economic downturn, Minxin Pei, an expert on governance of the PRC, argues for a new "China policy... [taking] an alternative strategy, one based on the assumption of declining Chinese strength and rising probability of an unexpected democratic transition in the coming two decades."⁶ Although October 2012 figures show that China has progressed into a recovery period, the possibility of a potential parallel to the fall of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Japanese economy still exists. Pei seems to advocate for the cutting of existing strong economic ties to minimize losses in the case of "an un-

5. "Top Trading Partners - Total Trade, Exports, Imports." Foreign Trade. United States Census Bureau, Nov. 2012. Web. 28 Jan. 2013.

6. Pei, Minxin. "Everything You Think You Know About China Is Wrong." *Foreign Policy*. The Foreign Policy Group, 29 Aug. 2012. Web. 28 Jan. 2013.

Falun Gong protestors oppose the arrest of Liu Jing, a schoolteacher arrested in China under questionable charges. This case is among many human rights abuses plaguing China.

expected democratic transition." Yet, if the U.S. instead ensured that China did not collapse, aggressive policy changes would not be necessary. By pushing for greater protection of human rights, the United States will not only help create a basis for the technological innovation China requires to sustain its economic growth, but also alleviate tension within China concerning more recent crackdowns on protesters.

The U.S. should assist China in reforming its social system to promote innovation through gradual decreases in censorship and the nurturing of public respect for creativity. Meanwhile, it is important to recall that respect for human rights is not a concept which can instantly be altered at the whim of the Chinese or U.S. government. The protesting mobs of China would prefer radical, instantaneous change, an overnight democracy. While these protesters may acclimate quickly to an entirely different environment, only gradual increases in human rights throughout the next ten years will avoid the eruption of turmoil. More open communication allows for development of individual identities, promoting innovation. A firm US stance coupled with a positive Chinese response will satisfy most human rights advocates and dissidents, increase respect for human rights and benefit the world with long-term economic stability.

United States Must Oust Unsavory Allies

When strategically viable, we should prioritize human rights

By Jessica Feinberg
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Having allies is key to maintaining a secure position in global politics, obtaining the resources needed to continue running the country, deterring and winning wars – in short, having allies is key to operating a country at an international level.

This does not, however, mean that the United States should attempt to ally itself with every country possible. The U.S. claims a commitment to international human rights, yet ignores blatant offenses even when the perpetrator is of little strategic importance. This irresponsible policy, especially regarding Uzbekistan, Cambodia and Rwanda must stop.

Uzbekistan

One of the most shocking countries that the United States is currently allied with is Uzbekistan. Located in Central Asia, the U.S. government believes that this country is imperative to maintaining stability and security in that region of the world.¹ This is not accurate. Uzbekistan is not key to maintaining stability and security, but to maintaining a steady flow of supplies to soldiers involved in campaigns in the Middle East – most notably Afghanistan – that the U.S. government has said are winding down.

The United States recognizes the humanitarian offenses committed by Uzbekistan, especially a lack of citizen input in governmental policy, minimal effort to bring justice to the perpetrators of the 2005 Andijan massacre (reports of the death toll range from 300 to 1,500, with a majority of the casualties occurring as the crowd attempted to flee

The United States claims a commitment to upholding international human rights, yet irresponsibly ignores blatant offenses even when the perpetrator is of little strategic value, internationally or domestically.

the plaza, and as the survivors of this attempt tried to escape and seek refuge in neighboring Kyrgyzstan)² and persecution of a variety of religious practices. The U.S. had banned military assistance for these reasons – but it is not a coincidence that this ban was lifted almost immediately following the interruption of NATO's supply routes in Pakistan. Recognizing the current strategic importance of Uzbekistan, it must be noted that U.S. troops are due to leave Afghanistan in 2014, and the ban on military sales will be reinstated soon before then (September 2013),³ under President Obama.

When both of these goals have been completed, the United States must rid itself of association with this country as soon as possible. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), "Uzbekistan's human rights record remains appalling." The criminal justice system is highly flawed – persecution of activists and journalists is not uncommon, and torture is an "endemic" practice.⁴

The United States should divorce itself

² *Preliminary Findings on the Events in Andijan, Uzbekistan, 13 May 2005*. Rep. Warsaw: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2005. Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 20 June 2005. Web. 6 Feb. 2013.

³ "U.S. Suspends Ban On Military Assistance To Uzbekistan." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*. N.p., 01 Feb. 2013. Web. 03 Feb. 2013.

⁴ "Human Rights in Uzbekistan." *hrw.org*. Human Rights Watch, 2013. Web. 03 Feb. 2013.

from such an egregious record of human rights abuses immediately, and absolutely must once the conflict in Afghanistan is terminated. With its strategic importance limited, Uzbekistan can no longer be considered of more help than hindrance to efforts by the United States to secure international human rights.

Cambodia

The United States also faces an issue of priorities in Cambodia. Though the State Department maintains that Cambodia is making efforts to better the human rights situation, including bringing "to justice those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law" during the Khmer Rouge regime, Human Rights Watch believes Cambodian officials are refusing to investigate many suspects.⁵ The major discrepancy between these two organizations is that the official U.S. stance is that the Cambodian government has investigated and prosecuted, whereas the HRW viewpoint is that while justice has been served to some, there were many more perpetrators of the violence and the Cambodian government has a duty to bring every person who participated to jus-

¹ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. "U.S. Relations With Uzbekistan." *state.gov*. U.S. Department of State, 16 Nov. 2012. Web. 03 Feb. 2013.

⁵ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. "U.S. Relations With Cambodia." *state.gov*. U.S. Department of State, 13 June 2012. Web. 03 Feb. 2013.



tice. As Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch, points out, “It would take a brave judge to defy the ruler of a de facto one party state,” and this particular ruler is a former Khmer Rouge member himself.⁶ Human Rights Watch also states that Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, who has been in office for over 27 years, has used violence and intimidation to maintain power. Furthermore, HRW claims the Cambodian government has used violence and criminal charges against environmental, labor and political activists, including the opposition party leader, who is currently exiled in France. Cambodia remains riddled with corruption and a lack of freedom of expression.⁷ Sen is reported to have said about opposition to his regime that “I not only weaken the opposition, I going to make them dead ... and if anyone is strong enough to try to hold a demonstration, I will beat all those dogs and put them in a cage.”⁸ This kind of blatant disregard for human dignity cannot be tolerated by the United States, especially as Cambodia is of little strategic importance – the only direct assistance it provides to the United States, according to the State Department, is its manufacturing output, especially in the garment sector. However, Cambodia is located in Southeast Asia, an arena in which the United States has become increasingly interested.⁹ It has been decades since the Cold War, when our alliance with Cambodia began, and the time has

6 Adams, Brad. “Khmer Rouge Trial Is Failing Cambodian Victims of Pol Pot’s Regime.” *The Guardian*. The Guardian, 23 Nov. 2011. Web. 6 Feb. 2013.

7 “Cambodia: Escalating Violence, Misuse of Courts.” *hrw.org*. Human Rights Watch, 1 Feb. 2013. Web. 03 Feb. 2013.

8 Adams, Brad. “10,000 Days of Hun Sen.” *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 01 June 2012. Web. 06 Feb. 2013.

9 *ibid* 4

come for the United States to rework this relationship. The United States should suspend governmental assistance to Cambodia until they improve their humanitarian situation – while this would send a very clear message to the Cambodian government, it would not severely harm the Cambodian people, as the U.S. currently supplies only around seven percent of the foreign aid that flows into Cambodia each year.¹⁰ With this reassurance, the United States must act to sever or alter its relationship with Cambodia until Cambodia complies with international human rights standards.

Rwanda

Another toxic relationship is between the United States and Rwanda. The State Department admits that its relationship with Rwanda, like its relationship with Cambodia, is not rooted in strategic importance. According to the State Department’s website on U.S.-Rwanda Relations, our economic interest in Rwanda is “modest,” and its greatest asset to the United States would likely be its proximity to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), if the U.S. felt a need to intervene in the Congo to prevent the human rights abuses there.¹¹ However, this would be counterintuitive, as there is substantial evidence that Rwanda militarily supported the M23 rebels that have committed “serious abuses” in the DRC. The evidence is so great that other countries, including the U.K., the Netherlands and Sweden, have already sus-

10 *Fact Sheet on Terms of Assistance of Foreign Concessional Loans to Cambodia*. Rep. NGO Forum on Cambodia, 3 June 2010. Web. 6 Feb. 2013.

11 Bureau of African Affairs. “U.S. Relations with Rwanda.” *state.gov*. U.S. Department of State, 13 June 2012. Web. 03 Feb. 2013.

pended aid.¹² Furthermore, opposition parties in Rwanda are “unable to operate” and multiple journalists have been imprisoned.¹³ Even more shockingly, Rwanda has been “intimidating” human rights groups and defenders operating in Rwanda, a behavior that “belies the authorities’ claims that they respect human rights,” according to Africa director of HRW Daniel Bekele.¹⁴ However, the United States remains illogically linked to this country. The United States must increase pressure on Rwanda to better its human rights situation through official condemnation and a suspension of foreign aid, and until then, must cut its losses and leave.

The United States cannot continue to associate itself with countries like Uzbekistan, Cambodia and Rwanda, and still claim to support human rights. None of these countries are of strategic importance to us, or will not be in the near future. The United States cannot allow its human rights record to be tainted by aid to these countries without serious conditions, and must review its list of allies with this in mind.

It is imperative that human rights be at the front of the United States’ global policy – while allowing factors such as military or economic importance to play into choosing allies, blatantly ignoring civil rights violations as in Uzbekistan, Cambodia and Rwanda is unacceptable.

12 Ford, Liz. “UK Withholds Aid to Rwanda in Light of Congo DRC Allegations.” *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 30 Nov. 2012. Web. 03 Feb. 2013.

13 “Human Rights in Rwanda.” *hrw.org*. Human Rights Watch, 2013. Web. 03 Feb. 2013.

14 “Rwanda: Stop Intimidating Regional Human Rights Groups.” *Human Rights Watch*. Human Rights Watch, 23 Aug. 2011. Web. 06 Feb. 2013.



Mark Olsen/Army National Guard

Climate Change: Now What?

Investment in alternative energy and international cooperation are necessary to stop climate change

By Will Robertson

STAFF WRITER

Climate change is here, and its effects may be more drastic than previously estimated.¹ In January 2012, 194 nations met in Doha, Qatar to discuss climate change. During the three previous climate summits, all that was achieved were pledges by rich countries to invest in developing green infrastructure in poorer nations by 2020 and an agreement to get a deal on climate change in 2015. The talks have told us only one thing: diplomatic and economic pressure from both the U.S. and China is crucial to seeing action on climate change.² China's government is better able to take action because it is unimpeded by the democratic process, and indeed many changes are coming from China – including a nationwide cap-and-trade system set to go into place in 2016. However, America is decidedly less progressive because of our hesitation to engage in climate change action.³

With atmospheric CO₂ levels higher than they have been at any time in the past 650,000 years have come some of the hottest years on record. The vast majority of scientists agree that global warming is real and is largely

caused by human activity.⁴ Considering the well-known greenhouse properties of CO₂, it is hard to understand why many continue to deny the impact humans have. However, many still attempt to justify their denial by pointing to the “natural cycles” of the Earth's climate. In 2007, however, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) did a study which disproved this popular notion.⁵ The premise of the study is that the only way we can describe the temperatures recorded in 20th century is if we take into account both natural forces and anthropogenic forces. Looking only at natural forces does not come close to describing the temperatures observed in the 20th century. This should be the end of the battle over climate change, but alas, the climate deniers have adopted an intellectual Bushido. They will not surrender. The deniers' weapon of last resort is the claim that the IPCC deliberately falsified data. So they set out to disprove climate change once and for all by pinning their hopes on Richard Muller, a professor at Berkeley and noted climate change denier. His research team worked independently of the government to determine whether anthropogenic climate change was real. They subjected the theories of climate change deniers to rigorous testing. What they found shocked Muller. This independent group got the same results as the

IPCC.⁶ This should have ended the debate.

So, what are the effects of climate change? Simply put, international catastrophe. Droughts will worsen and become more common, vast swathes of arable land will turn barren and New Orleans, the Netherlands, and large parts of Indonesia will be under water. Many scientists believe it is too late to save the North Pole glaciers, so we have no time to waste in tackling climate change.⁷

What can countries do?

Assume for a moment that the world governments have come together and collectively agreed to halt, or at least mitigate the effects of climate change. What can the world do? We must begin with an evaluation of the task before us. China and the United States lead the world in carbon emissions, with the developing world as a whole coming in third.⁸ So clearly, we would need to dramatically cut our use of fossil fuels. China and the U.S. must be willing to collaborate on creating a business environment that favors renewables and lower carbon footprints over coal-fired power plants. This should be done through strong incentives in domestic policy like carbon taxes and subsidies for alternative energy

1. Revkin, Andrew G. “Action Plans on CO₂ That Go Beyond ‘Woe Is Me, Shame on You’” *New York Times* [New York City] 22 Aug 2012: n. pag. Print.

2. “Global Emissions.” EPA. Environmental Protection Agency, n.d. Web. 13 Jan. 2013.

3. “Evidence.” Global Climate Change. NASA, n.d. Web. 13 Jan. 2013.

4. *ibid* 3

5. *ibid* 3

6. Muller, Richard A. “The Conversion of a Climate-Change Skeptic.” *New York Times* [New York] 28 July 2012: n. pag. Print.

7. Climate Change. Dir. Jesslyn Shields. Perf. Hank Green. Scishow, 2012.

8. *ibid* 2

along with direct government action.

Since the biggest producers of CO₂ are heavy industry and power plants,⁹ we must prioritize reducing emissions from these sources. Considering that many developing countries are so dependent on fossil fuels for boosting their economy, how can we cut emissions in such a way which would not hinder too greatly the rise of developing economies?¹⁰ In short, can we implement renewable resource power plants in a way that is more cost effective than burning fossil fuels? A glance at data compiled by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services shows that many types of renewables are cheaper than coal and natural gas. Picking apart where the costs come from, however, is less optimistic. Most of the costs associated with coal and natural gas are externalities i.e. health and environmental costs. So, at face-value, coal and natural gas are cheaper than renewable energy, so countries looking to increase energy output to meet demand are likely to use fossil fuels instead of green energy. International pressure from wealthy nations as well as positive incentives (like offering financial assistance) will be necessary to decrease developing nations' dependency on fossil fuels. Further, solar's costs are all associated with installing the facilities, as they cost next to nothing to maintain. The costs of solar can be reduced through subsidies, tax credits and additional research.

We can see this with Brazil's energy production. Brazil is, by many standards, a developing nation. Currently, they get 83 percent of their energy from renewable sources (mostly hydroelectric) and aim to cut their carbon emissions by 39 percent by 2020. Granted, they have much lower energy consumption per capita, but their plans to expand their use of renewable energy should compensate for the expected rise in consumption.¹¹

Unlike Brazil, however, many third world countries are very corrupt, which will make combating climate change in the developing world difficult. It does not matter how willing foreign governments are to combat climate change, or how much they spend if it is all siphoned off by the various kleptocracies of the developing world. The obvious solution would thus be to bypass the local governments and install the power plants by multinational companies or foreign governments.

Developing nations are an interesting group in terms of climate change. Although their emissions are relatively low, there is a reason they are referred to as developing. As they continue to get richer (as is the current trend)¹² their demand per capita will inevitably rise and industrialization will increase –

thus increasing carbon output. They are not an immediate problem, but if their growth continues, we must ensure that their increased energy demand is supplied by renewables. This means that future climate summits need to establish real, binding agreements by wealthier countries and companies to reduce the carbon footprint of developing nations in an economical way. Ensuring this through international pressure by the U.S. and China would not be difficult. However, this is assuming the U.S. and China recognize the threat.

American Action

Bill McKibben, a climate science professor at Berkeley, is currently engaged in hardcore grassroots campaigning on the issue of climate change. Of course, McKibben and his ally James Hansen are not the overly-optimistic hippies like environmentalists are often portrayed as. In fact, McKibben and Hansen have both written scientific papers which suggest that climate change is here and worse than we thought.¹³ Both have adopted policies of grassroots action to pressure Congress into action. Possibly the biggest victory of climate change activists was Obama's mention of climate change in his 2nd inaugural address, possibly setting the tone for debate.

Let's be clear about the American public's view of climate change. A study done by the Brookings Institute shows that many Americans are skeptical about the urgency of climate change, do not support carbon-cutting solutions like cap-and-trade or carbon taxes and that think that whether a person believes in climate change is determined by their political orientation. In addition, 45 percent of Americans think scientists deliberately ma-

13. *ibid* 13

nipulate climate data.¹⁴ In short, the public is not exactly eager to combat climate change.

It is clear that a different approach to the climate debate must be taken (short of improving science education, of course). Up until now, the debate over climate change has been negative. Andrew Revkin of the New York Times sums up the attitude from the left as "Woe is me, Shame on you." In essence, he argues that a crucial problem with the debate so far has been that it is mostly the left complaining about how the right is acting selfishly and how they do not see the impending destruction of the planet. The left is too reliant on scare tactics and shame and should use positive incentives instead.¹⁵

However, as he points out, there are better ways to go about getting people motivated. During the 2012 campaign, a big focus was on moving manufacturing jobs from China to the U.S. In other words, we can focus our rhetoric on the job-creating aspect of investing in green energy rather than on the scientific one. Creating jobs by subsidizing solar power and hydropower, creating a carbon tax to increase revenue and increasing tax credits (while decreasing loopholes) to renewable energy companies would be very proper, conservative, American answers to the problem. There must be significant pressure on Congress to take action, and shifting the debate into a form of economic stimulus which will help the economy and reduce carbon emissions is key to winning popular support.

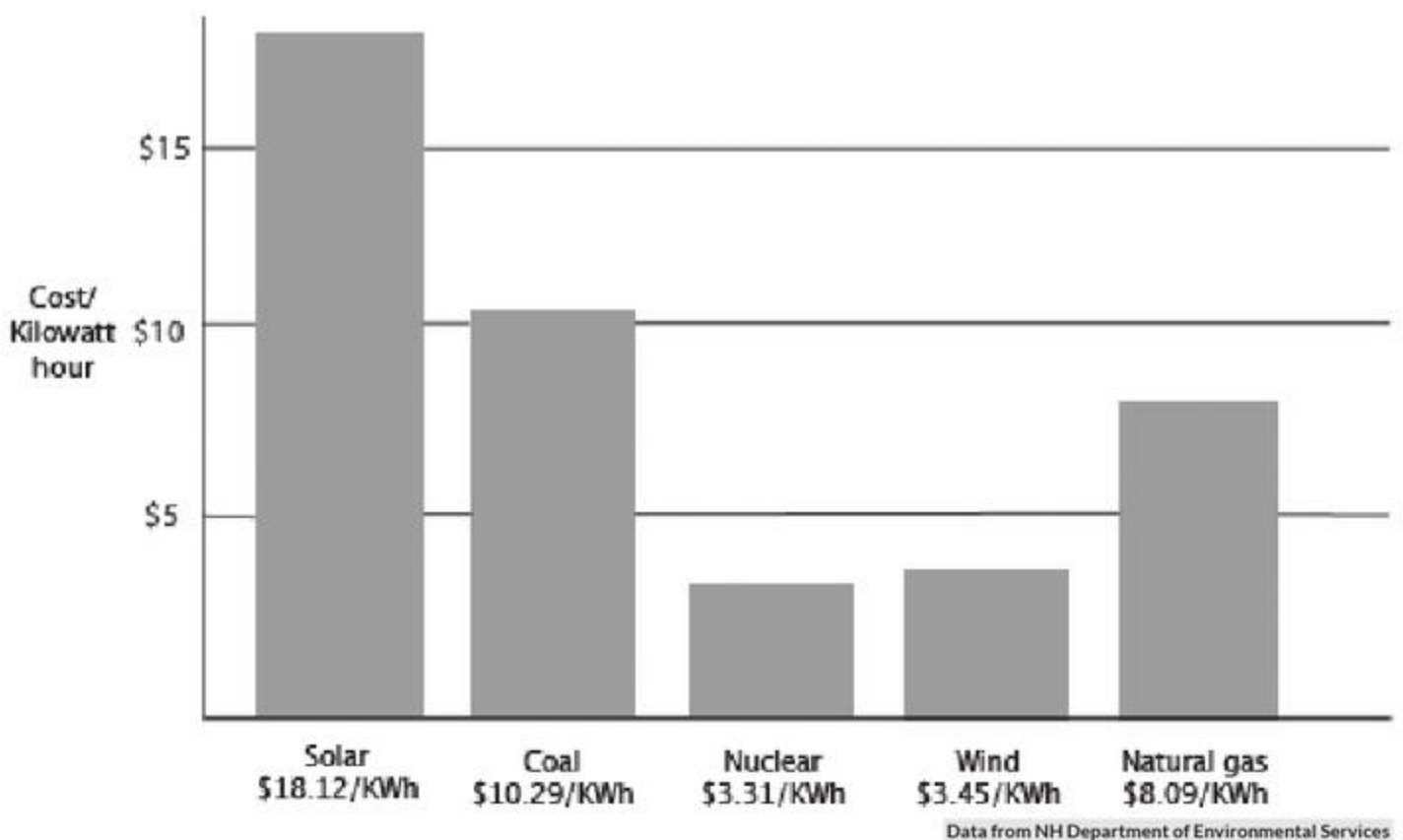
Action cannot come one tweet at a time. Petitioning alone will not help. America requires active demonstrations and protests.

14. "Figure SPM.4 - AR4 WGI Summary for Policymakers." Figure SPM.4 - AR4 WGI Summary for Policymakers. IPCC, 2007. Web. 13 Jan. 2013.

15. *ibid* 13

Electricity Costs by Energy Source

Including societal costs (externalities)



9. *ibid* 8

10. *ibid* 6

11. Energy Source Cost Comparisons. Concord: New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, 23 Feb. 2007. Pdf

12. Africa Fact Sheet: Main Economic Indicators. Rep. UN OSAA, 2009. Web. 25 Jan. 2013.

Debt: Our greatest national security threat

Responsibly curbing long-term debt is vital to ensuring U.S. strength

By Ben Hawthorne

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

When former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen stated that excessive debt is the most severe national security threat this country faces, he was not exaggerating. Debt constrains our foreign policy, weakens our military and makes us bound to the whims of our creditors, the ranks of whom include unfriendly nations such as China and Russia. It also hurts the economy, one of the main sources of American power, by forcing the government to raise taxes and cut spending to cover ever-rising interest payments.

It must be noted, however, that not all debt problems are the same. Debt crises can generally be divided into two categories: short and long term. Most of the panic surrounding the deficit in the media and Congress concerns short term debt, i.e. the idea that

debt is an immediate, pressing problem. Republican Congressman Paul Ryan summed up this belief in the immediacy of our debt problem when he declared that the debt is “threatening jobs [and] prosperity today.”¹ Fortunately, most fear about a pressing debt problem is hyperbole. The government’s borrowing costs, as measured by interest rates on T-bills, are functionally non-existent (indeed, the rates on short term Treasury Bonds are just a hair above zero percent). On some bonds, interest rates are negative, meaning that other people are paying us to take their money. These low rates have not risen in response to events that one would expect would raise our borrowing costs. For instance, interest rates fell after the U.S.’s credit rating was

1. Malloy, Simon. “Quoting Paul Ryan on the Debt.” *Media Matters for America*. N.p., 5 Sept. 2012. Web. 19 Mar. 2013.

downgraded and did not climb after the failure of the so-called Supercommittee.

However, the United States does have a long term debt crisis looming. While interest rates are low now, they will not remain that way for long because the global economy is picking up, making the U.S. a relatively less attractive option for foreign investors and because the Fed plans to raise interest rates by 2015. Further, the main drivers of our debt, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, which together take up 45 percent of the budget,² are getting more expensive. Longer lifespans and the aging of the boomer generation will cause Social Security expenditures to consume six percent of GDP and outstrip revenue by more than 20 percent (as compared with four percent in 2011), which will cause it to run out of money by 2033. Even before then, by 2031, the program will cost more than \$800 billion per year. Since the Social Security Administration is forbidden by law from borrowing money, Social Security’s lack of funds will force it to cut benefits, to the detriment of the millions of seniors who rely upon it to stay out of poverty.³

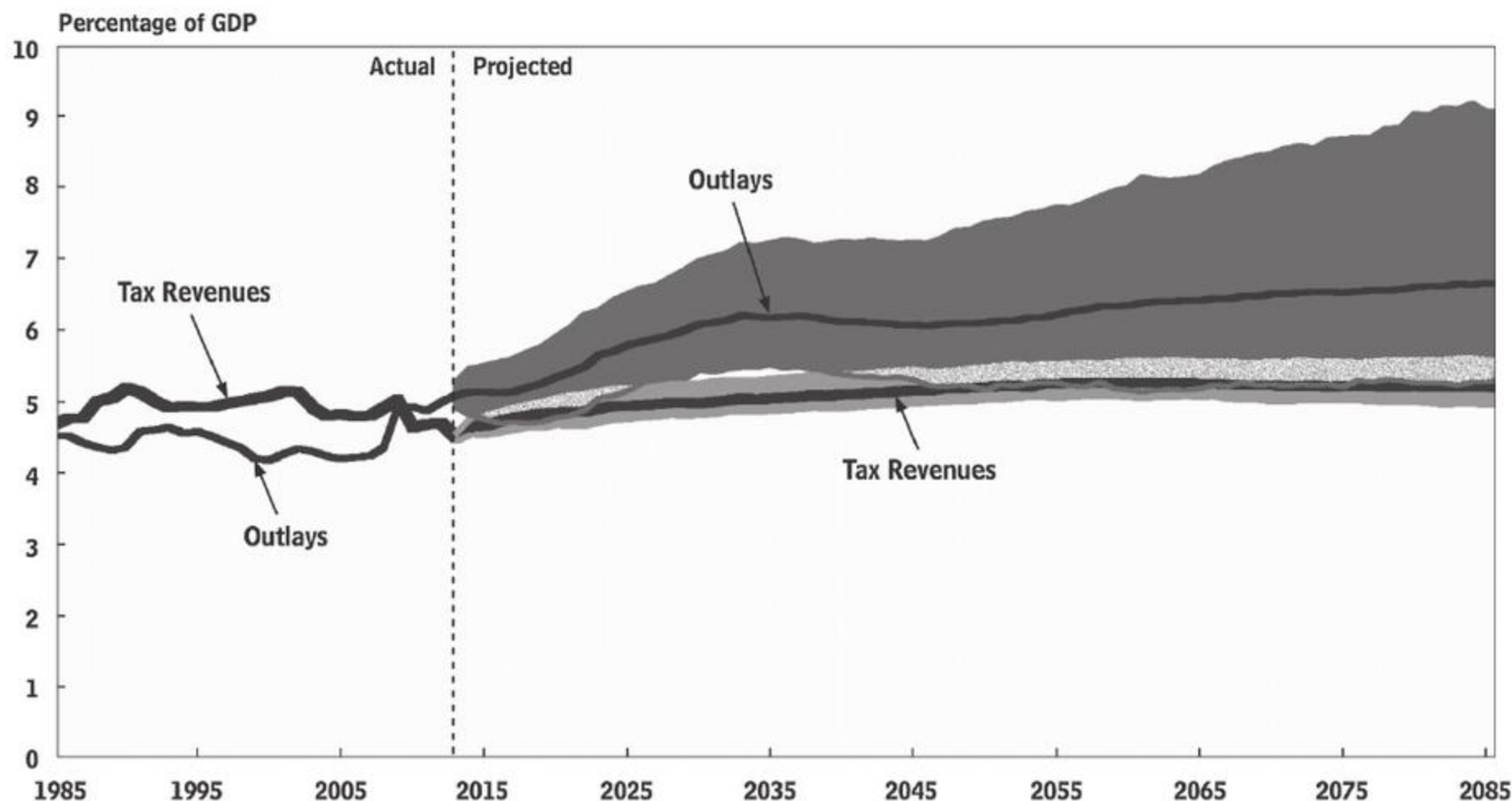
Meanwhile, rising healthcare costs, in addition to the aging of the baby boomer generation threaten the long-term solvency of Medicare. The Government Accountability

2. Understand the Sequester (Spoiler: It’s Bananas). Perf. John Green. N.p., 12 Mar. 2013. Web. 20 Mar. 2013.

3. United States. Congress of the United States. Congressional Budget Office. *The 2012 Long-Term Projections for Social Security: Additional Information*. N.p.: n.p., 2012. Print.

Historic & Projected Social Security Budget Growth, 1985-2085

The gap between Social Security expenses and revenue will only continue to grow, as seen in this chart. The shaded region represents the error in the projections, which increases with time.



Source: Congressional Budget Office

Office's (GAO) internal cost projection for Medicare shows that by 2047, Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security will consume the entire federal budget. After then, GAO's model breaks down because of the economic damage caused by the debt.⁴

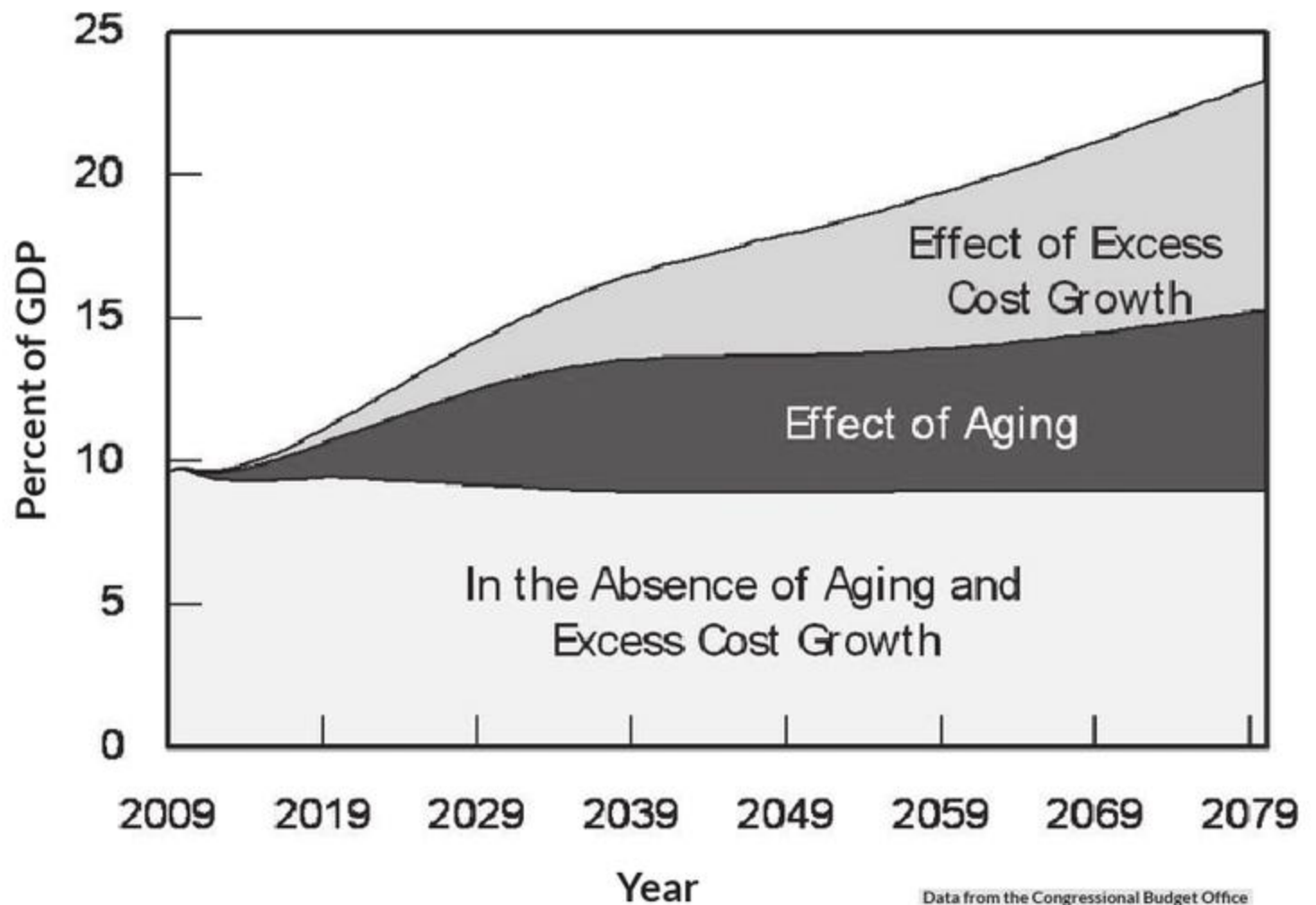
In the light of the real nature of our debt crisis, the approach that Congress and the President have taken to limit the debt is ridiculous. Creating an endless series of artificial crises by fiddling with the debt limit and setting up meaningless deadlines like the current sequestration is a misguided attempt to turn the long term crisis into a short term one. The regular panic caused by these recurring artificial debt crises only reduces trust in the government and roils the markets without producing any serious cuts in the debt. And the across the board approach to cutting the deficit taken by sequestration, in which all programs, including efficient and productive ones, have to be cut by a required amount, not only ignores the main causes of the debt but also causes unnecessary harm.

The reason for the current approach to our debt problem in fact has nothing to do with fixing the debt; it is all about politics. These recurring crises push the debt, a main Republican talking point, into the spotlight repeatedly in an attempt to prevent Americans from forgetting the Republican Party's claim of being the party of fiscal responsibility. The fact these debt crises are also only solvable by Congress makes them even more attractive, since they make it appear like Congress is doing something about the debt when they are really doing nothing but solving artificial crises created by Congress itself.

Congress instead needs to take a targeted approach to the debt that only cuts wasteful programs. Any solution to the debt problem must also raise government revenues.

One good place to start would be to raise taxes on wealthier Americans, both by raising their marginal rate and by limiting the loopholes they can exploit. This is a good first step not only because it would be effective, but also since a majority of Americans supports it, which makes it possible to become a reality. The value of deductions that people in the top two income tax brackets can take advantage of should be limited. Some deductions that disproportionately benefit those on top, such as the deductions for corporate jets or owning multiple mortgages, should be eliminated. Other taxes that primarily affect the wealthy, such as the estate tax and capital gains tax should be raised. These measures would help reduce income inequality, which has a myriad of economic benefits. They also make fiscal sense, since the wealthiest Americans control a disproportionate amount of wealth, so raising taxes on them garners much more revenue than raising taxes on

Projected Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid Budget Growth



other sectors of society. To give an idea of how much could be made up by increasing taxes on the wealthy, *The New York Times* estimates that eliminating tax breaks such as the excessively low tax rate on carried interest (one of the more common sources of income for the wealthy) and the fact that capital gains are not subject to the estate tax after death that benefit high-income taxpayers, would bring in \$1.1 trillion per year, more than the cost of Medicare and Medicaid combined.⁵

Reforms also need to be made to Social Security. One of the most obvious steps would be to raise the retirement age at which people qualify for Social Security and Medicare benefits. Average lifespans have risen much faster than the retirement age. Indeed, if workers had as many years from retirement until death today as they did when Social Security began, then the retirement age should be 73, not 65, as it is today. While a jump of eight years in the retirement age would be drastic, a more reasonable increase of two to five years is necessary. Though many claim that this would reduce benefits, that would only be true if workers continued to retire at the same age as they do now, which is unlikely, since people would have to work longer to maintain their standard of living.⁶ The upper-limit on income for those who pay payroll taxes, which finances Social Security, should also be raised. Currently, payroll taxes are regressive, meaning that they fall disproportionately on the poor while those who make more than \$113,700 pay nothing. This upper

limit should be removed, and all Americans should have to pay to support Social Security, which benefits all members of American society. According to the Congressional Budget Office, which calculates the official spending projections for Social Security, this would solve Social Security's fiscal problems completely. More importantly, it would be able to do so without reducing benefits, which avoids hurting the two-thirds of seniors who are dependent on the program to survive.⁷

Finally, changes need to be made to how Medicare and Medicaid spending is allocated. Medicare should not cover all procedures, particularly ones like plastic surgery. It should also try to incentivize cheaper preventive care instead of trying to treat problems after they occur (e.g. prioritizing weight loss programs to limit the number of costly coronary bypass surgeries performed). When multiple treatment options are available, Medicare providers should also be incentivized to give their patients the cheaper treatment. For instance, Medicare providers should offer inexpensive home testing kits for detecting colorectal cancer instead of defaulting to more expensive and dangerous colonoscopies.⁸

In short, the debt is, despite occasional claims to the contrary, a problem. It is a looming crisis that will stagnate the economy and constrict our foreign policy within the coming decades. We must thus act before it is too late to limit the growth of Social Security and Medicare spending while ensuring that we get enough revenue to cover our expenses.

4. Holan, Angie D. "Obama Says Medicare and Medicaid Are Largest Deficit Drivers. Yes, over the Long Term." *PolitiFact*. Tampa Bay Times, 25 June 2009. Web. 19 Mar. 2013.

5. The Editorial Board. "The Real Spending Problem." *New York Times* 16 Mar. 2013. SR.10. Print.

6. Sahadi, Jeanne. "The Red-hot Debate over Raising the Retirement Age." *CNNMoney*. Cable News Network, 02 Aug. 2010. Web. 19 Mar. 2013.

7. United States. Congress of the United States. Congressional Budget Office. *Social Security Policy Options*. N.p.: n.p., 2010. Print.

8. Landro, Laura. "A Push to Prevent Colorectal Cancer." *Wall Street Journal* 18 Oct. 2012: n. pag. Print.



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