



The Political Voice

by Undergraduates for Undergraduates in the UF Department of Political Science
Volume 2, Issue 1 • Fall 2012

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The Political Voice

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Strife in the SENKAKU ISLANDS

by Dillon Clancy

Over the past several months, there have been a series of escalating clashes between Chinese and Japanese maritime vessels in the area near a small archipelago in the East China Sea. The islands, known to the Japanese as the Senkaku and the Chinese as the Diaoyu, are situated about one hundred miles northeast of Taiwan. They are uninhabited and remote, but have been the subject of a dispute between Beijing, Taipei and Tokyo for several decades. The dispute has escalated into a series of recent confrontations following the Japanese government’s purchase of some of the land, which had been privately owned. The waters near the islands are important fishing grounds and there is thought to be offshore oil and natural gas nearby. China, Japan and Taiwan are all major importers of Middle Eastern oil, so the possibility of there being exploitable oil reserves in the East China Sea has important strategic consequences. Also whoever owns that territory could stand to profit in both economic and security terms.

Japanese claims to the islands stem from before the First Sino-Japanese War, which occurred between 1894 and 1895. The Japanese claim to have surveyed the islands beginning in 1885, and formally placed a marker claiming them in 1895, near the conclusion of their war with China. They held the islands until World War II, when the United States took control of them during the Okinawa campaign in 1945. Japan formally admitted to American governance of the islands, along with the rest of the Ryukyu island chain in the 1952 Treaty of San Francisco. The United States administered the islands until 1972, when it returned them, along with Okinawa and other nearby islands, to Japanese administrative control as a part of the Okinawa Prefecture.

The islands are also claimed by both the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of China governments. The fact that the islands belong to Taiwan, is one of the few things the PRC and ROC governments appear to agree upon. Who rightfully owns Taiwan itself is, of course, another matter entirely. The Chinese claim that their ownership of the islands dates back to the Ming Dynasty, and that the islands were a part of their “maritime defense sphere” from that time until their war with Japan at the end of the nineteenth century. The Chinese claim that the islands should have been returned after the conclusion of World War II, along with the rest of the territory conquered by Imperial Japan in their two wars, but that the Nationalist government under Chiang Kai-Shek, in power on Taiwan at the time, did not raise the issue for fear of alienating the

United States, upon which they depended for support at the time.

In recent months there have been several clashes between both civilian and military vessels from China, Taiwan and Japan near the islands. There has not been any serious violence thus far, but the situation remains tense. Statements by both the Japanese and PRC governments in September of this year asserted their claim to absolute sovereignty over the islands. Meetings between Japanese and Chinese officials over the issue have failed to produce results.

This year’s flare up of the dispute has been accompanied by widespread anti-Japanese protests in China, resulting in what some have called the largest such protests since the two states normalized relations in 1972. There have also been a number of anti-Chinese demonstrations in Japan. These protests are fuelled by what Seton Hall University Professor Yinan He describes in an article for the Council on Foreign Relations’ Asia Unbound blog as “nationalist preaching” about the 1937 – 1945 war. Dr. He suggests that in China this rhetoric has been used in lieu of “tired communist ideology” to preserve the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party and in Japan as a means to win votes by assuaging lingering guilt over the war. The dispute

over the Senkaku/Daioyu islands has served as a lightning rod for this sentiment on both sides of the East China Sea, igniting nationalist passion in both countries. The Chinese Communist Party is undergoing a “leadership transition” this year, handing power over to a younger cadre of party officials.

China has been increasingly assertive in the past few years about its territorial claims in the South and East China Seas. This has led to tension not just with Japan, but also with Vietnam, Indonesia, the United States and others with an interest in the region.

The United States government has avoided taking an official position on the ownership of the islands, but has acknowledged that the islands are covered under the terms of the 1960 Mutual Cooperation and Security Treaty signed between Japan and the United States, which compels the U.S. to assist Japan in the event of an attack on its territory. This confrontation has served as the first real test of the Obama administration’s “pivot” toward a foreign policy more centered on East Asia, which has followed the end of the war in Iraq and the winding down of U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan. While admitting that the islands are covered under the terms of

Washington’s mutual defense treaty with Tokyo, U.S. officials have been hesitant to specify exactly what action the United States might take should the dispute escalate into an armed conflict. Honoring the treaty is important if the United States is to maintain credibility abroad as a nation that follows through on its commitments, but doing so in this case could jeopardize a trade relationship between the two largest national economies in the world and a diplomatic relationship that is already strained. Both Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta have visited the two countries in the past month, urging both sides to come to a peaceful diplomatic solution to the crisis. *



CONTROVERSY Surrounds Trial Of Feminist Punk Band

by Sasha Chopenko

Russian punk band, Pussy Riot, tried for protesting against government leadership.

In August, every news outlet in the world blew up with reports concerning the trial of a Russian feminist punk band provocatively named Pussy Riot. The two-week long trial ended on August 17 and led to the conviction of three band members for “hooliganism motivated by religious hatred or hostility.” The event which prompted the sentence, occurred on February 21, 2012.

Band members Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, 22, Maria Alyokhina, 24, and Yekaterina Samutsevich, 30, entered the Cathedral of Christ

the Savior, one of the largest and most important churches in the Russian Orthodox religion. The women began a “punk prayer” performance and started dancing, jumping and shouting, “Virgin Mary, become feminist! Virgin Mary, chase Putin away!”

Within a minute, church security removed the band from the premises.

The women were protesting the re-election of Vladimir Putin and using crude language to attack him and Patriarch Kirill I, the leader of the church.

They criticized the Patriarch and the Church for their involvement and support in Putin's re-election campaign.

This stunt was not the band's first performance since its formation in August of 2011. In fact the band made its first appearance in November 2011, on a Moscow subway and then continued to perform throughout the Russian capital. Each performance called for freedom and denounced the Kremlin with its pro-feminism and antigovernment lyrics. Some protests ended with the members briefly being detained, but it was the church performance that drew the attention of the media.

The majority of the Russian population is of the Orthodox faith, and many people were outraged by the actions of the band. The members were first detained without bail and without a set trial date, but unrest over the lengthy imprisonment caused the trial to formally begin on July 30. The reported poor treatment of the detained members and the possibility of a seven-year-long prison sentence caught the world's attention. Band members said their protest was of a political nature and they did not mean to offend the churchgoers. However, prosecutors insisted that the band was trying to incite "religious hatred."

Pussy Riot was sentenced to two years in prison, and the verdict caused much international outcry. Many international artists and prominent political activists, such as Madonna, Björk, Aung San Suu Kyi and others, have showed their support for the group. They urged the Russian government to "free Pussy Riot," and the phrase



became a popular slogan used in protests worldwide on the day of the trial.

Amnesty International called the members "prisoners of conscience" due to "the severity of the response of the Russian authorities." Many see the sentence as inhumane, and the trial as a way for the Russian government to suppress dissent against Putin's rule. Dmitri Medvedev, the president of Russia at the time of the event, was asked how he felt about the trial during a televised meeting with journalists. He refused to comment as a lawyer before the verdict was out. Medvedev didn't want his criticism of the court decision to be taken as a command like it had in the past. Instead he said, "As a churchgoer, the members got exactly what they expected – popularity." He later expressed his opinion that the sentence was too harsh and that the members should be released earlier. Pussy Riot is set to appeal on October 1. *

Election 2012

Un Civil POLITICS

by Victoria Dokken

At the forefront of the campaign spotlight, Florida has seen a constant stream of money poured into its television screens in the form of partisan advertisement. In a growing political trend, the ads are increasingly negative and aim to attack the other candidate. The importance of this issue is underscored in the use of attacking arguments by almost all members in both parties and most worrying the general public. The share of negativity has been sharply increasing since 2000 and has been rising since the 60s.

There are several commonly cited explanations for the rise in negativity in the political campaigns, ranging from increasing

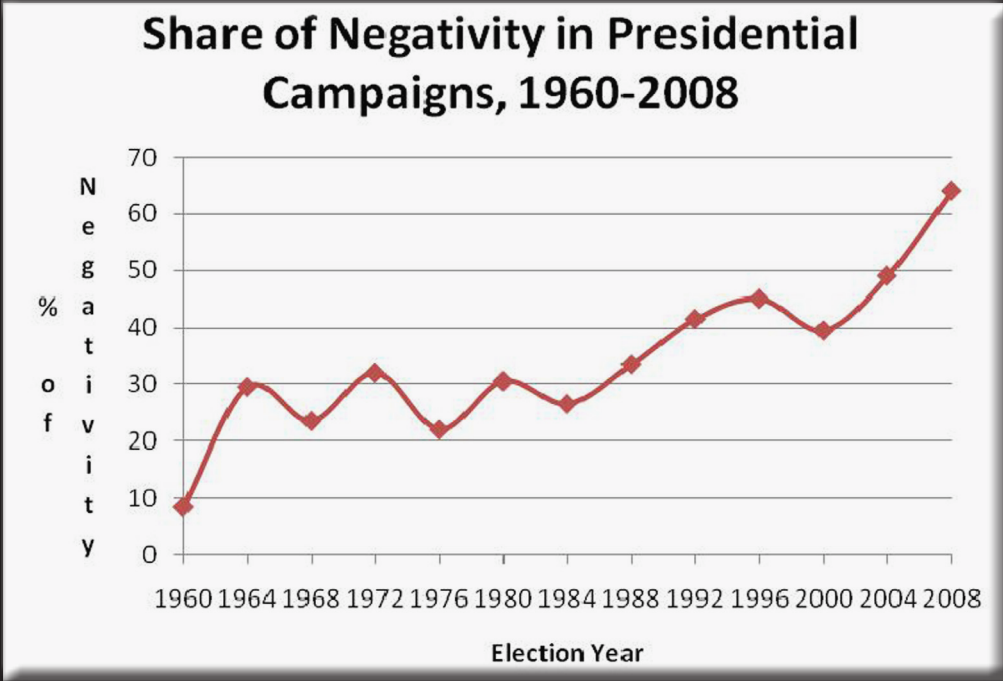
polarization in society, increasing inequality and increasing use of the media. Perhaps the best explanation for the increasing negativity is that the public has fallen into the trap. The most common attack ad aims to question the opponent's character with statements like "the same guy that has millions in tax havens like Bermuda and the Cayman Islands (Obama ad)," and "what does it say about a man's character (American's for Prosperity ad)."

The increasing amount of insults are only matched by the increase in fear mongering to "get out the vote." The use of phrases such as "(Ryan's plan) would end medicare as we know it" and Romney's threat that "we are heading toward another recession" are both proof of this trend. It almost makes one question if the new style of campaigning is aimed at an ignorant population which can't see through these dangerous, yet vague, accusations.

The truth is, negative

advertising has been proven to increase voter turnout and attract more voters for a certain candidate. It seems in opposition with many citizens' personal views for people who cite negative ads as a deterrent to politics as a whole. As Geeta Iyra, a political science freshman stated, "The problem is that we as a society have developed a paradigm for the norms of campaigning, and it has evolved to the point where it's okay to make negative comments and make false statements for the sake of campaigning."

The increase in information that both parties obtain concerning their advertising methods are partly to blame for this trend which is proven to work. Perhaps it is in a person's psychology to be affected more by hostile information. Let this pattern not deter us from basing our opinions on facts and policy decisions, but instead let's hope we've reached the peak of a bell curve of negativity, if only in political campaigning. *



Geer, John G. Share of Negativity in Presidential Campaigns. 2009. Chart. Vanderbilt University, Nashville. Web. 21 2012.

Election 2012:

Polls Post Convention/Pre Debates

by Brandon Scott



Every presidential election, news media outlets and eagerly waiting citizens constantly watch polls as Election Day approaches. Typically, the first major swing in polls that actually means something for the election occurs after the party conventions and before the debates. At this point people start becoming more certain whom they will vote for. With the party convention speeches, the numerous daily T.V. advertisements and the countless hours of media coverage, we begin to develop a more clear idea of what the Election Day results may be.

This year, we have seen a major swing since September 6, after the Democratic National Convention concluded. According to the website realclearpolitics.com, which averages different polls conducted for this race, Obama and Romney were tied on September 6. However, the last three weeks have resulted in some massive changes. With Romney constantly saying politically

poisoning things, and people enamored by the speeches at the DNC, Obama now has an average of a 4.1 percent lead in the polls.

Realclearpolitics.com also takes averages of polls taken in battleground states such as Ohio, Florida, North Carolina, Colorado, etc; these states are key in deciding the presidential election. As of September 28, 2012, Obama had at least a 3 percent lead in the following battleground states: Florida, Ohio, New Hampshire, Virginia,

Ohio, Colorado, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Nevada. Romney, however, only has a lead in one battleground state, which is Missouri, and the race for North Carolina is close.

From the polls, it seems that Obama might be running away with the election. With the debates still to come, as well as a plethora of political rallies, it will be interesting to see if Romney can make up any ground over the next six weeks leading up to Election Day. *

The Shadow of Voter Fraud

by Frances Chapman

Within the last few months leading up to the presidential election, legislation has passed within multiple states to combat voter fraud. In Pennsylvania, voters will now be required to present photo identification at the polls. In Florida, there will be more stringent requirements for groups interested in registering voters.

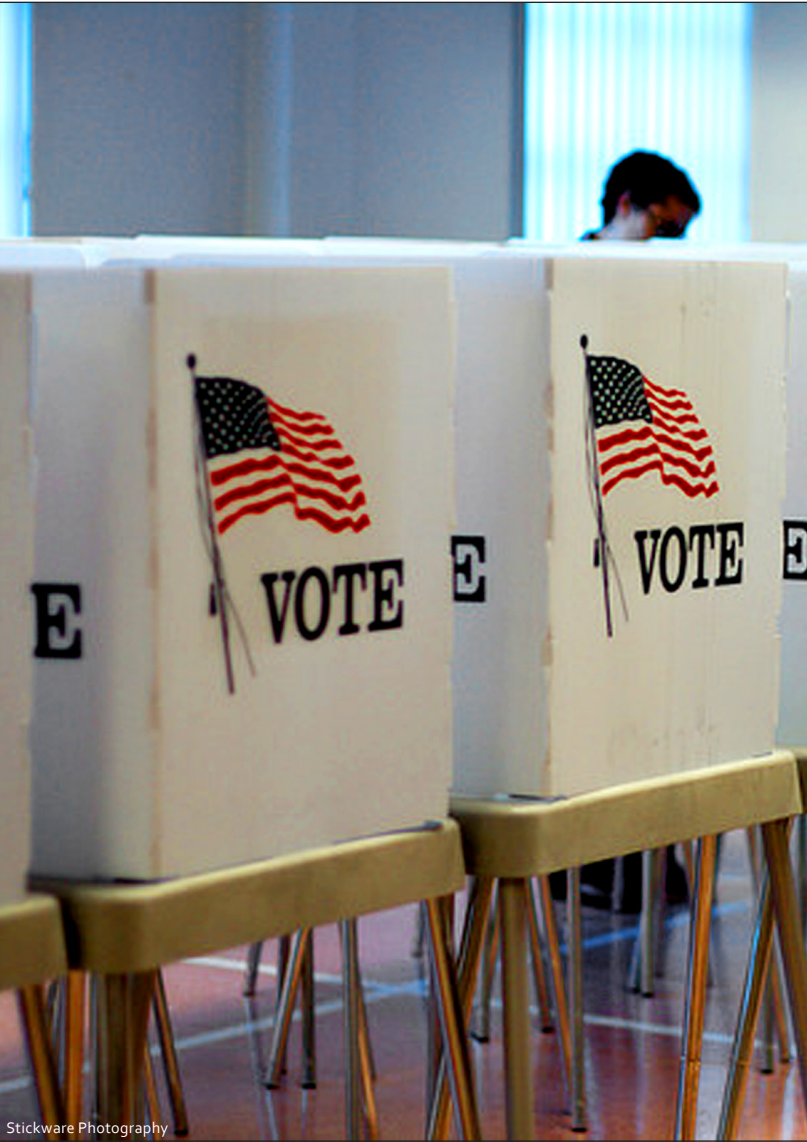
While these procedures would alter the ability of everyone within a state to vote, regardless of party affiliation, the recent legislation has largely been led by Republican policymakers. Throughout the nation, these politicians have championed the need to preserve the character of the voting process. According to *The Nation* magazine, Cleta Mitchell, the head of the Republican National Lawyers Association, said, “Because the purpose of voter identification, photo identification, is to ensure and protect the integrity of the election, whatever burden may exist is offset by the need to protect the integrity of the elections.” In Texas, after a recently rejected proposal to impose a photo identification law, Governor Rick Perry “criticized the judges and the Obama administration,” according to the *New York Times*. The article quoted Perry saying, “Today, federal judges subverted the will of the people of Texas and undermined our effort to ensure fair and accurate elections.”

However, Democratic politicians argue that protecting the constitutional process is not the intention of Republicans. Instead they wish to suppress the votes of certain demographics with the hope of succeeding in elections. For example, the previously mentioned failed Texas Senate Bill was cited by the court to advocate “strict, unforgiving burdens on the poor,” and be more detrimental to minority groups that are less likely to have proper photo identification, according to a National Public Radio article. An article written by the *Washington Post* showed that these minority groups tend to prefer Democratic candidates. Furthermore, Democrats have also pointed to the remarks of Pennsylvania House Majority Leader, Mike Turzai, in regard to the state’s voter identification law. Turzai said, “Voter ID, which is gonna allow Governor Romney to win the state of Pennsylvania, done.” Not only

do Democrats cite the results of this Republican push, but they also view its original intent of dismantling fraud as misguided. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, voter fraud occurred at a rate of 0.00004 percent in Ohio, in 2004, and 0.0009 percent in Washington, during the same year. Many people would deem these percentages small compared to the number of people who will have to adjust to new voter identification laws like the one in Pennsylvania.

Regardless of the partisan views of politicians, American voters will be greatly impacted by these new laws. According to George Mason University’s “United States Elections Project,” voter turnout has been between

55 to 60 percent in the past decade. New restrictions, however, can potentially make voting more challenging for many Americans. New voters seeking to register, impoverished citizens without means of obtaining proper identification and some elderly Americans who might struggle to procure necessary identification, could face difficulty voting within their states’. However, throughout this process, concerned citizens and special interest groups, such as the League of Women Voters, have continued to “push for voter registration and education with the intent to allow as many eligible Americans to exercise their civic duty as possible.” *



The West Wing Inspires Democracy in Myanmar

by Grace Kranstover



U.S Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently recalled a conversation she had with Myanmar’s lower house speaker during her historic visit to the Asian country last year. At an event honoring Myanmar’s Nobel Peace Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi, Mrs. Clinton revealed that the American political drama, The West Wing, had a resonating impact on the way the citizens of the country view democracy. She suggested that the United States’ politics are not the only major influences of democracy in the international arena.

The West Wing, based on the political processes of the U.S Federal government, revolves around fictional President Josiah Bartlet and his senior staff. The show aired its final episodes in 2006, back when Myanmar was still under oppressive military

rule and many citizens were political prisoners, including the honoree Aung San Suu Kyi. Recently, the state has begun to democratize by freeing many of its prisoners, creating peace with previously persecuted ethnic minorities and by holding free, though some would argue fraudulent, elections.

In this recent changing political climate, politicians and citizens alike have looked towards reruns of The West Wing to become more familiarized with the processes of democracy. In Mrs. Clinton’s conversation with the speaker of the lower house she was asked to help teach the country “how to be a democratic congress, a Parliament,” in addition to the seven seasons of the show, to which she replied, “I think we can do better than that, Mr. Speaker.”

Mali: A Land Divided

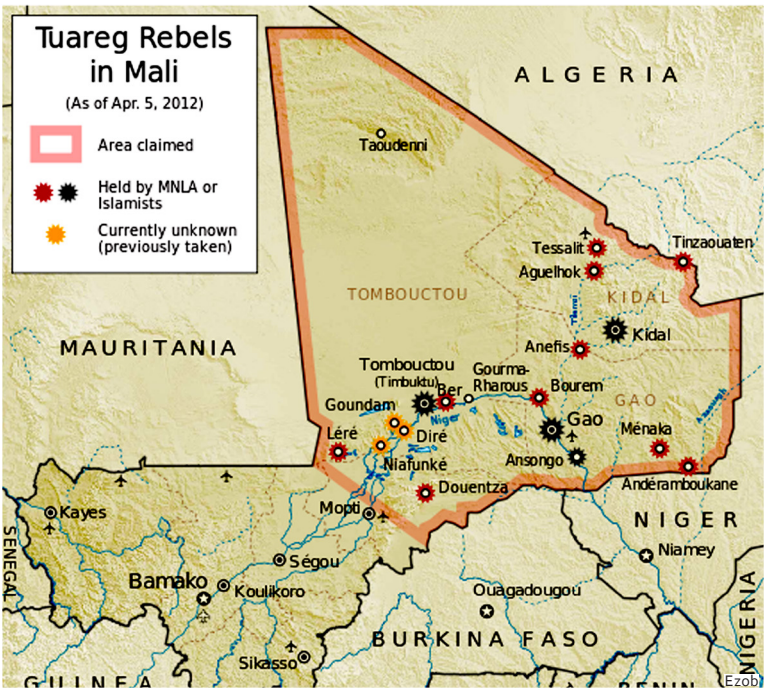
by Jeff Abalos

Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan and...Mali? The West African nation of Mali may be next on a growing list of locations in which the United States conducts its unconfirmed clandestine drone program. Why? Since March of 2012, a region the size of France in the northeastern part of the country has been under the control of a coalition comprised of ethnic Tuareg rebels and fighters affiliated with al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Since coming to power, AQIM has increasingly marginalized the Tuareg resistance and carved for itself an Islamist state amongst the Saharan sands. Landlocked, lightly populated and of marginal strategic significance compared to other hot-button issues, such as Iran and the Syrian Civil War, it seems unlikely that any large-scale foreign response will occur anytime soon. Even if outside assistance were offered, it seems unclear whether the Malian army, which has been in power in the southwestern part of the country since a March coup, would accept it.

The potential for cross-border tensions abound. According to the CIA World Factbook, the area under the control of AQIM has an approximately 4,300-kilometer border with the neighboring states of Algeria, Mauritania and Niger. As AQIM continues to consolidate its position in northeastern Mali, and extremist groups across the Maghreb flock to this newly declared safe haven, it will become increasingly difficult for the United States to remain on the sidelines. The United States will need to get involved as an area more autonomous and sovereign than the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan continues to persist in the middle of the Sahara. With a war-weary population that has endured eleven

years of constant warfare, it seems unlikely that the United States will make any substantial commitment of troops on the ground or anywhere for quite some time. It thus seems likely that the United States, if involved at all, will take advantage of its casualty-free drone program, still unacknowledged by the

executive branch, to harass the newly declared al-Qaida state. Only time can truly determine who will hold sway in the northeastern part of Mali, but the current situation seems unlikely to change; the world will have to live for the present with an AQIM-controlled state. *



BEHIND THE SECRET CURTAIN OF NORTH KOREA

by Heejin Ahn



A brief look at the night view of the Korean Peninsula on Google Earth will shed light on the striking difference between the two countries. While its affluent neighbor has developed into a full-fledged democracy and a high-tech capitalistic society, the north is cut off from the world. China realized its own shortcomings from having closed economic structure and went through a major transformation of economic liberalization that explains their prosperity today. North Korea remains the most secluded society in the world. How is the North Korean government able to survive amidst the pressure for reform? Following the Marxist-Leninist theory, Kim Il-sung, the founder of the country, set up in 1972 the principle called “Juche,” as the state ideology rooted in the idea of self-reliance. Since then, the country implemented the “military first” policy that guides the political and economic sphere in the country. According to U.S. Department of State, military expenditures count as a quarter of GNP. Until now the country has successfully been able to deter outsiders by threatening with nuclear

weapons. The government has effectively fought off the outside influences and controlled the population into intimidation and submission. However, the world we live in today is becoming more interconnected than before. As the border becomes permeable, some people gain access through the black market to pirated DVDs mostly from South Korea. With the death of Kim Jong-il, the sudden power shift made many hopeful for a positive change. The stake is high as the young and inexperienced leader Kim Jong-un has not yet

gained respect and trust from the people. The question remains “how will North Korea respond to outside changes and how it will deal with the reoccurring domestic economic problems?” North Korea is faced with a painstaking dilemma that could have worldwide consequences. Should it continue to use deterrence as its strategy or should it embrace neo-liberalism and lead the country to economic openness and growth? *



U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

FOUR YEARS AGO & NOW

by Jang Jaewon

In the foreign policies of presidents and presidential nominees there is as much speculation as analysis, which highlights the importance in accounting for all possibilities surrounding the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections. As such, several scenarios arise for analysis, namely between former President George W. Bush versus President Barack Obama, Obama versus presidential candidate Governor Mitt Romney, and Obama’s first term versus his second.

The Bush and Obama administrations held contradictory fundamental views on the role of the United States in an increasingly globalized 21st century, which shaped two divergent foreign policy approaches.

The Bush doctrine was born on September 11, 2001 out of fear of the threat of terrorism, the loss of a sense of complacency and the end of unchallenged U.S. superiority since the Cold War. The U.S. responded to its perception of power insecurity by projecting assertions of global hegemony in three aspects. It responded through unilateralism and U.S. sovereignty from international jurisdiction, as demonstrated by the rejection of the Kyoto Protocol and the withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty; second, with the protection of democratic values as a justification

for interventionism; and third, through preemptive militant elimination of all perceived threats to U.S. superiority by way of hard power tactics, such as with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. These policies, however forceful, ultimately backfired on the U.S. Rather than re-establishing hegemony, American exceptionalism emboldened our enemies and alienated our allies. Such headstrong policies were unpopular with many members of the international community, fostering mistrust from traditional U.S. allies. Furthermore, extremist Islamic opposition increased as U.S. actions radicalized moderate

Islamic factions and further justified jihad against Western aggressors. These actions perpetuated the belief—as Georgetown professor Michael Scheuer explains—that the U.S. was attacked on September 11 “for who we are and what we think rather than for what we do,” constructed a faulty premise of radicalism being representative of Islam, and sustained a fear of terrorism. Ultimately, Bush failed to fundamentally understand the nature of not only terrorism, but also international relations entirely.

Obama held a different understanding of the world from his predecessor. He

inherited a similar situation but faced the relative shift of power by championing: one, multilateralism, exemplified by his refusal to intervene in Libya and Syria without international solidarity; two, globalization, demonstrated by the ratification of dormant free trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia, and Panama; three, diplomacy over militancy; and four, his understanding that the U.S. is not diminishing in power but that other actor-nations are rising in relation to it. However, while Obama did recognize and respond to unprecedented global events, his policies were reactive, rather than proactive, in that these changes spurred a shift in policy rather than policy spurring change. Regardless, democratization and self-determination of the Middle East was achieved more successfully by watchful inaction of the Arab Spring than forceful coercion as exercised by the former administration. While this silent compliance may seem benign, the U.S. watched reluctantly as the oppressive and corrupt regimes it had supported for decades, such as those in Egypt and Jordan, were overthrown. To the U.S., the Arab Spring symbolized the harbinger of instability to a region where its interests were aligned with the status quo. However, due to the Arab Spring taking center stage on the international spotlight and because opposing the revolution would have been publicly hypocritical to its championing of democratic ideals, the U.S. yielded to the change despite the conflict to its interests. In short, Bush and Obama’s differing ideas on how to respond to the growingly obsolete “West and the rest” paradigm produced two remarkably different foreign policies, but Obama’s approach to the Middle East was shaped more so by the mass political upheaval of the Arab Spring.

In forecasting Obama’s potential second term, it can be tempting to apply sweeping generalizations about all second-term presidencies. However, more tangible predictions are reached through analysis of Party representation in the U.S. Congress and ongoing shifts in foreign policy. First, given the close presidential race, it is unlikely that the makeup of the 113th U.S. Congress will radically change. While Democrats will likely disrupt the Republicans’ House majority, the Senate will remain closely contested. This means that even if Obama did experience a new resolve, as neither House nor Senate is controlled by a Democratic majority, renewed liberal extremism—as Washington Post’s Jennifer Rubin predicts in Obama’s second term—will be thwarted by the same Congressional deadlock that is stifling the 112th session. Second, Obama’s next term can be viewed as an extension of foreign policies that are already under way. The president’s disagreements with Israeli leadership under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over Pakistan and Iran are well documented; due to Obama’s recognition and understanding of the Palestinians’ legitimate plight for sovereignty, it is likely that both sides will continue to struggle to compromise over a viable solution. On the other hand, the U.S. continue its strategic shift from the Middle East to East Asia and transfer security responsibilities from U.S. soldiers occupying Afghanistan and Iraq to their respective governments. This geopolitical shift to Asia points to the increasing likelihood that Obama will address the rising concerns about China and Russia highlighted by the fracturing of the global community on the resolution of the Syrian Civil War. Because of disagreement on the fundamental nature of national sovereignty and whether

a nation’s domestic concerns are subject to international jurisdiction, future conflict is inevitable. Furthermore, the recently enacted trio of free trade agreements suggests that the U.S. will look to compete with growing Chinese investments in Africa and South America through expansionist economic policies and regional integration of trade in order to obtain a larger stake in developing economies that possess significant upshot due to their wealth of natural resources. As a result, analysis of the foreseeable context of Obama’s second term concretely suggests a continuation of his ongoing policies.

However, there is the possibility that Romney will uphold his call for a return to Bush-era foreign policies. As Romney does not have much personal foreign

"despite the ... differences between Bush, Obama, and Romney ..., one [thing] remains the same—the idea of burying the consequences of past policies by denying guilt and demonizing the repercussions."

The polarity between Obama and Romney’s foreign policies stems less from actual differences and more from Romney attempting to distinguish himself from Obama by exaggerating his policy positions. As the Republican anti-Obama agenda makes it essential for any serious Republican presidential candidate, this strategy energizes the party’s base, potentially secures swing voters, and is a clear response to Romney’s weaknesses in the polls on national security and defense issues. If Romney were to secure the presidency, his exaggerations will moderate, much like how Obama scaled back his calls to

policy experience, he will depend heavily on traditional conservative advisors and experts from the Bush camp that espoused and still champion such positions, people that Colin Powell notes as “quite far to the right.” If his selection of advisors and vice president Paul Ryan is representative of his administration’s foreign policy, Romney ascent to the presidency will mark the return of hawkish neo-conservatism in the U.S., the regression of foreign relations worldwide, and the advancement of confrontational policies against China and Russia that may push them into the threats he believes they are. Already, he

has shown his tendency to obsess over shipbuilding and to ignore serious diplomacy, as demonstrated by his failure to account for the diplomatic and economic components of international relations when criticizing Obama’s lack of military involvement regarding the proposed strategic pivot to the Pacific. It is only be logical to assume this proclivity for confrontation over negotiation will be characteristic of Romney’s presidency.

Ultimately, it is difficult to project a president Romney’s actual foreign policies because his campaign centers on obscurities and generalities that oppose Obama’s approach but fails to provide any concrete and viable alternatives. With the economy on center stage, Romney may get away with such brazen ignorance of foreign policy in the presidential race, but will need to confront reality come November.

Ultimately, despite the extensive differences between Bush, Obama, and Romney’s foreign policies, one fundamental characteristic remains the same—the idea of burying the consequences of past policies by denying guilt and demonizing the repercussions. Iran serves as the best example. By overthrowing Mohammed Mosaddegh for nationalizing Iran’s oil industry, the U.S. created a climate of political instability in Iran that fostered the empowerment of its current theocratic dictatorship. If either Obama or Romney truly wishes to revert the U.S.’s legacy of neo-imperialism and remain faithful to the tenets of democracy, he must end the tradition of recklessly ignoring the multifaceted consequences foreign policy has on the

Healthcare or Warfare?

By Alexa Lipke

With the presidential election nearing, both camps rally around the heralded triumph of the Affordable Care Act or smite the “evil that is ObamaCare.” The Supreme Court’s summer decision supported the legality of the law as a tax, but does anyone really know what the new law will change? It seems that many people have made up their mind about the law and its implications without much factual information to support their claims. So let’s break down some commonly misconstrued myths surrounding this highly politicized law that have fueled the fire in this campaign season:

- President Obama has said that the “250 million Americans who already have health insurance,” will keep it, and the law will make it more affordable. Nothing ensures the promise Obama made because employers will have the right to drop or change their coverage, and many employers will do so with the increase in insurance alternatives. There is also no guarantee that coverage for these Americans will be cheaper.
- Although this amount is dependent upon income, the minimum tax will be \$695 per person and no more than \$2,085 per family in 2016. So when the candidates talk about raising taxes or lowering costs, these numbers are solely related to Americans who choose to opt out of the plan.
- It is true, however, that the law raises taxes for Americans, especially those with higher incomes. The healthcare law has a Medicare payroll tax of .9 percent on income over \$200,000 for individuals, or \$250,000 for couples, and a 3.8 percent tax on investment income for Americans in this bracket. According to the Joint Committee on Taxation,



about \$210.2 billion come from these taxes and is the largest source of revenue.

- Romney repeatedly states that the law will increase the government deficit by trillions. On the contrary, the bipartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that it will decrease the deficit by \$210 billion over the next 10 years, which amounts to about one half of one percent of our GDP.
- Obama overstated the benefits of young adults under 26, iterating that this provision “already helped 6 million young Americans.” According

to the Department of Health and Human Services, that number lies more closely to 3.1 million young adults that would be uninsured without the law. Obama used a survey from the Commonwealth Fund which told the LA times that the 6.6 million number included many who switched to their parents’ plan from other coverage.

Every statement made by the candidates is a weapon in a highly practiced arsenal. It is the duty of every American to find the facts before deciding whether or not they support the law. *

Horace Mann, the father of American public education, once wrote, “[a] human being is not attaining his full heights until he is educated.” The United States has been called “The land of opportunity” time and time again by many. Combining these two premises, one is left with the conclusion that people—regardless of origin—should reach their full potential in the United States without falling prey to unjust conditions due to their parents’ status. Children from undocumented parents pay a higher price, in some states, for education as they are billed “out-of-state tuition”. These children are labeled as “anchor babies” because to some, they are the sole reason why parents cannot be easily deported and the sole reason why they keep coming here. This notion is absurd due to the fact that illegal immigrants have notoriously worked the fields for decades often times for extremely low-pay. Logically, these immigrants will produce offspring. No one is at fault for the sequence of events, and if there were someone at fault, it certainly wouldn’t be the children.

Tuition is tough for many U.S citizens and if it weren’t for Bright Futures, Financial Aid, grants, and the like we would be

having a tough time holding our heads above the financial waters, I know I’d be. Why do some states, knowing this, quadruple the tuition of children who have lived their whole lives in the same state they wish to attend school? Surely one can easily surmise that children of undocumented parents aren’t living lavishly enough to pay tuition fourfold, as even in-state tuition can strangle the piggy bank of a family of that nature. It is almost as these “anchor babies” are set up for failure wherever they go. Thankfully, Florida isn’t one of those states, at least not anymore. Earlier this September, Florida Judge K. Michael Moore decided that it was wrong to virtually deny children that fall under this realm education. Judge Moore’s legal logic, for those interested, is that the children are the ones who work towards their degree. It is the children



whose names will appear on the diploma and consequently are entitled to the benefits of their hard-work; not their parents, cousins, and/or siblings (Charles Garcia, 2012). My personal belief is that these “anchor” babies—as they are disrespectfully called—are the ones who will elevate their families from tough economic and living situations to better circumstances. These “anchor” babies will provide a better future for their children, certainly better than theirs. We shouldn’t weigh them down with the term “anchor” as they are doing the quite opposite for themselves and their families. These “airplane” babies, as I see them, are uplifting their families, community, and friends while pursuing education. Stopping someone from following their dreams within “The Land of Opportunity” isn’t very opportune. Education isn’t for some us, as some would say, and they’d be right. Education is for all of us, if we want it. At the risk of sounding righteous, it is no secret that immigrants—legal or not—built this country and continue to sustain and endure it. Denying them some privilege for their children is nothing short of wrong. *

What Everybody Ought to Know About Political Transparency

by Adelina Vasileva

In the past couple of years, the doctrine of transparency has become quite popular amongst citizens of both democratic and nondemocratic countries around the world. It appeals not only because it satisfies the curiosity of finally learning information that was previously hidden from the public, but also

because it provides people with means to hold their government accountable for its actions. As Mark Fenster points out, citizens cannot evaluate their government’s performance or decide the future for government officials without having access to the government. However, the only way to gain accessibility,

other than joining it, is to become informed of its actions through transparency.

It is understandable why governments are not very eager to inform the public about every step they make, since presenting such information to the public implies trust in public opinion. This dilemma to trust public opinion comes from the fact that there is an invisible wall which separates citizens and the ones that govern them. Fenster said he believes that overcoming this separation is one of transparency’s goals.

Another reason why transparency has gained so many followers

in the twenty-first century is because of technology and its ability to make accessing information faster and simpler. Even though this doctrine has become popular in the last two hundred years, it actually originated in the eighteenth century. According to Sandrine Baume, transparency was born

involved in relations they lose their transparent quality. Kant views transparency in terms of publicity, which insures morality in politics because publicity allows for opposition. According to Bentham, “Nor is publicity less auspicious to the veracity of the witness, than to the probity of the judge.” Bentham’s quote

"organizations ... highlight[] patterns between ... data [which] reveals corruption, correlations between financial interests and public policy, [and] relationships between campaign donations and the distribution of legislative votes."

at this time because it “coincides with a questioning of and an objection to absolute authority” and the eighteenth century saw the collapse of monarchies and the emergence of representative governments. The three men that raised the question of transparency and publicity in the eighteenth century are Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, and Jeremy Bentham . Baume combines their ideas into the “six dimensions linked with the concept of transparency,” which are include the techico-legal dimension, the moral dimension, veracity or truthfulness, responsibility, honor and control. The first dimension has to do with legal systems and their publicity, so that all citizens are familiar with the law. Bentham focuses on this and his view of transparency of the law will insure that no government misuses its authority.

The second dimension is covered by Rousseau, Kant and Bentham. Rousseau believes that when personal interests become

means that publicity ensures the truthfulness of both the public and the government. Truthfulness is covered by all three, which is logical since most philosophers search for “the truth.” For Bentham, truthfulness coincides with the rejection of illusions and illusions can be prevented by clarity of expression, which causes him to approach social sciences in the same way he approaches natural sciences. Kant’s idea is quite similar, but he focuses on illusions with respect to the “true Constitution,” meaning England’s Constitution and its false pretenses that the country is a limited monarchy. Rousseau also links the pursuit for truth with morality. He believes the public is enlightened and always just. Bentham is the only one that addresses the dimension of responsibility. This is related to the moral sanctions that the public is supposed to impose on governments; for him this is the only remedy for poor governing.

Rousseau and Bentham both address honor as a dimension of transparency. Rousseau believes that a society with transparency depicts honor through its actions and discourages secrecy, which is the root of different vices. Bentham believes that honor and publicity are more linked to the individual than to society and they preserve one another. All three thinkers see transparency as means of control. Bentham sees publicity as power in itself, but also as a way for limiting it and keeping authority in check. Rousseau believes transparency is about the mutual control of citizens and their government, however this only works in small scale societies. Kant’s control through publicity is focused on the legitimacy of laws. In the 19th century, transparency took a different form with the opening of public libraries, archives and museums. Unlike in the 18th century, the public now possessed the tools with which to implement their doctrine of transparency. However, it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that transparency made a serious comeback. At that time, it was championed by the United States, especially President Woodrow Wilson. He urged for transparency in both domestic and international politics. “Government ought to be all outside and no inside,” he said. Then in the 14 points, point one proclaimed that “open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.” In the 21st century, there are organizations like Transparency International, the Sunlight Foundation, OpenSecrets.org and MAPLight.org that fight for transparency by highlighting patterns between already existing data. The data reveals corruption, correlations between financial interests and public policy, as well as relationships between campaign donations and the distribution of legislative votes. The government is not oblivious to such organizations and their followings so it tries to please them to some extent. For example President Obama created programs like data.gov, which is supposed to increase access to data created by the Executive Branch and the Open Government Directive which is supposed to force government departments to publish online greater volumes of information, that is supposed to be more easily understood by the public. Even after looking at the historical development of the doctrine of transparency it is hard to define it since as Clare Birchall points out “In a sense, it’s nothing at all merely the absence of concealment” but maybe some of it issues will bring final light to its essence. An inherent problem of the doctrine is that it does not have a mechanism to accommodate the individuals that wish to remain private because it automatically implies guilt onto ones who wish to keep their privacy. This unconscious forceful inclusion makes transparency more of an instrument of totalitarianism than one of democracy. Another one which is discussed by Clare Birchall is that even though transparency tries to promotes trust in order for it to truly work, the people have to trust the promise of transparency and the truthfulness of the procedures. Technology as well is both an advantage and a detriment to transparency because even though it allows for more information to be accessed by more people in “real time” , the actual technicalities of search engines and programs make some information more easily accessible than other which in theory hides that information defying the purpose of transparency. *

Experiences

Casual Lessons From Abroad

by Blake Giragos



One seems drawn to travel during the college years; at least I was. It seems as though, after emerging from the increasingly confined world that is one’s hometown, high school and pedantic part-time job, you happen upon the realization that this once new world, the University of Florida, is but a somewhat larger bowl in which to swim. Perhaps that is selfish, perhaps not. Regardless, it was in such questionable selfishness I decided to venture still outward. The trouble with just such a desire is its production of static expectations which quickly prompt one to learn the first lesson of studying abroad, to adjust. Unable to locate a program being both established enough and felicitous to my academic needs, I consented to relocating not to Germany, the historically fascinating, cultural powerhouse, but to Austria, a nearby land frequently mistaken for having kangaroos. This was a geographic discernment my family, appropriately enough, wouldn’t grasp until what seemed nearly to be my departure flight. You can only smile along. The outcome of this transatlantic adventure, obscure compared to those who chose London, Paris or Madrid, was outstandingly rewarding. Situated in Salzburg, Austria, the UF in Salzburg program contained all the necessary components to not only enjoy a hidden gem of natural beauty as an foreigner, but to gain real insight into the life of an Austrian. With an extended duration of thirteen weeks, home-stay arrangements, transferable college classes taught at the local Salzburg College (in English), and numerous escapades throughout the

country and neighboring Bavaria, the excitement set in immediately upon arrival. Exposed to everything from the religious tendencies to the nightlife of the nation, the decision to demand an expansion of my universe proved worthwhile. Passing through ornate cathedrals and festival grounds swirling with peoples from across the globe, one could not help but smile with the fun of feeling being beyond mere a codified student. Unbound by routine restrictions, I was international now; life was a blissful reverie. And yet, there exists a moment at which the whirlwind slows down and things change. I sense not everyone is pleased at this juncture because they have not equipped themselves to be so. You must adjust. At a certain point, sooner or later for some, the euphoria of festivals and photo shoots dies down. And despite the initial disappointment that thought may contain, a sense of pity is evoked in me for those who, for whatever reason, never arrive there. For it was at this metaphorical crossroads in my experience, and plausibly for other study abroad students as well, that I began to mature and build mental connections in the world of Salzburg, which was, actually, rather quiet. For in the pause from structured field trips and paper assignments, history actually emerges. The impact of walking through a nearly empty city square at the day’s twilight, not on a group trip but rather one’s independent return, and realizing quietly that Hitler the painter once loitered upon the same steps carries somewhat more gravitas than a hectic tour. And although it is beneficial to be guided through a concentration camp, no one needs to be told of the significances; you merely know. It is the unplanned and uncomfortable moments at which you grow during study abroad. They are what separate an opportunity to develop as a person from simply having taken a glorified vacation. Thus, it is with great sincerity I recommend enrolling in the longest program feasible for you, as this will increase your chances of empathizing with another people and that is not superficial. Embrace the unexpected, and often slower, moments when they arise. And, above all, be prepared to adjust your expectations. If everything was as you had imagined, there was too much you never began to know. *



The Political Voice

Volume 2, Issue 1 • Fall 2012

UF UNIVERSITY of
FLORIDA 
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