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Somali Piracy:

When Short-term Solutions Turn to Long-term Problems

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From the Editor:

This will be my last letter as Editor-in-Chief, and having participated in this publication's founding and growth it feels necessary to reflect on the journal's progress and development and what it has meant to me. In the second part of this letter, I will address some problems in current affairs.

William Butler Yeats begins his poem "Politics" with a quotation from Thomas Mann: "In our time the destiny of man presents its meanings in political terms." As a freshman deciding whether to study political science or history, this line came to mind just as I made up my mind to go with the former rather than the latter. It came to mind again as I sat up late one night conspiring with my sophomore roommate hoping to build a political journal for students at Northeastern.

The idea to create the Political Review was hatched in Davenport A by myself and Matthew Cournoyer, now a 2011 Truman Scholar, in the spring semester 2009. The work of getting together staff began that fall and resulted in the first issue of the review that winter. The grand vision was something political science students could write, read, hold in their hands, and argue over intelligently.

At the end of my time as an undergraduate I am satisfied with my involvement in the Political Review. The Political Review has been a success and I believe those who have participated in it would agree. Adding to that satisfaction is the news that the publication is set to carry on as an independent media group here at Northeastern University, the result of struggle particularly on the part of our president-elect Noreen Leahy and outgoing president Gwen Connors.

Looking off campus, there are a number of developments worth covering, particularly the ongoing civil war in Libya, the political crisis in Ivory Coast, and the revolutions taking place elsewhere. In North America the focus has been on Egypt and to a lesser extent Bahrain and Tunisia. Yet this winter and spring have seen a climate of dissent in many other places. The Middle East, with its draconian and gerontocratic regimes, is not the only place where socio-economic change and political ossification have led to demands for substantive change. Protests have seen new life even in advanced democracies. The occurrence of mass revolt in so many parts of the world has emboldened disparate movements with youths in Tahrir Square rooting for teachers in Madison, Wisconsin and vice versa. The global financial crisis has turned the fortunes of many in the west and beyond, particularly as governments reduce social services and entitlements in the face of austerity; price increases have made life more difficult for the vulnerable all around the world; and of course a sense of alienation from formal political institutions felt by many of the world's citizens. One should expect more of this in the months ahead, as the fundamental questions raised by these uprisings remain unanswered.

In many of the "revolutions" that have taken place, the focus has been on overthrowing specific leaders rather than whole systems - the very thing that can produce repressive and corrupt leaders. The Egyptians, who triumphantly did away with their dictator in a few weeks, are now ruled by a military council that has attempted to ban protests by trade unionists and others. In Tunisia, protesters have continued to demand concessions from their interim government, winning them the sometimes violent wrath of supporters of that country's former dictator's political party. Disagreements among opposition parties over ideology and other chasms have led to a drawn out struggle that leaves open the possibility for exploitation by the former regime elite. In Ivory Coast, a defiant dictator, Laurent Gbagbo, who refused to step down after he lost a re-election bid by almost ten percent last November, was arrested in April after months of popular unrest. In Libya, a country whose ruthless leaders have made public their intention to spill their people's blood for the sake of power, have entered a protracted civil war and provoked intervention by the UN Security Council and NATO. None of these stories are finished.

In all these instances there are important moral questions for people living in democracies and thinking about politics and its consequences: What is to be done? This writer does not pretend to know. Even if the political questions discussed in this and other issues of the Political Review appear remote they retain value. The Political Review looks at reading and writing as political acts. Taking possession of knowledge and holding on to ignorance are both political decisions and students have agency over their preferences in this regard. Articles scribbled in a campus journal have more to do with their authors than with the world at large. They express interest, intent, and even solidarity. It is easy to be distracted by the apolitical. This goes back to the poem mentioned in the second paragraph, which asks: "How can I, that girl standing there/My attention fix/On Roman or on Russia/Or on Spanish politics?" The Political Review answered this question in two parts: through struggle and brilliantly colored magazine covers.

Khalid Lum, '11

Editor-in-Chief

Northeastern University Political Review

The Price of Being Gay: The Constitutionality of DOMA

In a letter to the Speaker of the House, President Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder signaled that the White House would no longer defend the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act. In doing so the president took a proactive step for the equal rights of gay men and women across this country. This move is largely symbolic, as the Speaker of the House of Representatives, John Boehner (R-OH), has already assured that the House general counsel will argue in favor of the law in court. Still, the Obama administration's action brings forth an important question, is the Defense of Marriage Act constitutional?

Clearly the issue of gay marriage itself is a contentious one where differing opinions are rarely able to find common ground. However, as the Defense of Marriage Act has shown over the last decade, there are legal and constitutional pitfalls for legislating against gay marriage. Of all provisions within the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), section 3 is the most controversial, as well as the one the Obama is specifically not defending. Section 3 claims, "In determining the meaning of any Act of Congress, or of any ruling, regulation, or interpretation of the various administrative bureaus and agencies of the United States, the word 'marriage' means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word 'spouse' refers only to a person of the opposite sex

who is a husband or a wife." This portion prevents federal statutes from applying to gay couples and also creates the basis for claims that the law is unconstitutional.

DOMA creates two separate federal classifications of marriage within states that allow gay marriages. According to the General Accounting Office, there are 1,138 federal provisions which provide benefits, rights, and privileges on the basis of marriage. A few examples of these provisions are estate tax exemptions, social security survivor benefits, and federal employer provided health coverage for an employee's spouse. Even if a state recognizes the legal status of same-sex marriages, these benefits are withheld from those marriages under the Defense of Marriage Act. Such separate classifications create discrimination within the federal tax code that come into conflict with the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment. This clause states, "No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States... nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." DOMA denies same-sex couples equal protection in the economic realm.

An example of the inequality suffered by same-sex couples under DOMA is in gifting money or property to a spouse. Normally, gifts between spouses are non-taxable events, including in cases of inheritance. As couples who are

not federally recognized as married, a gay couple's interspousal money transfers are taxed in the same manner as a loan or gift between un-married individuals.

This same issue is common in cases of estate transfers from the deceased spouse to their survivor. Even with extremely large estates totaling in the billion dollar range, there is no estate tax incurred on a hetero-sexual spouse. However, an estate passed to a surviving spouse in a gay marriage is subject to taxation. This brings up a clear fault in the law when subjected to constitutional scrutiny. Given two different married couples, a straight one and a gay one, with the exact same financial records, passing the exact same amounts down to their surviving spouse, only one will be subjected to taxation. Such inequality in taxation brings some question to the nature of equal protection under the law for the same-sex couple.

Social security spousal survivor benefits show another fault in DOMA, again on the basis of equality under the law. In a heterosexual marriage, a widowed spouse is able to get 100% of their deceased spouse's benefits. However, the Social Security Administration only provides this benefit toward couples under the federal definition of marriage, thus in the case of same-sex marriage there is no entitlement to such survivor benefits. This problem played a role in the Massachusetts district court case of *Gill v. Office of*

Personnel Management (OPM), as partial reasoning for the lawsuit by three of the plaintiffs. One plaintiff, Herb Burtis, was forced to forego about \$700 in monthly benefits that he would be entitled to had his marriage been federally recognized. Inability to access funds that a widowed spouse is entitled to places an unequal and undue burden on gay families.

The Federal Employee Health Benefit Program (FEHB) normally provides for both a federal employee and their spouse. As with other programs, the FEHB does not provide that same spousal coverage to federal employees mar-

ried to someone of the same sex. Having the option of joining onto a spouse's federal insurance policy would force the uninsured spouse to seek either a job which provides health insurance or a private insurance policy. A piece in the New York Times estimates that over a thirty year period under these circumstances, a gay family will pay almost \$21,200 more for health insurance than a heterosexual family with the same financial standing. This added cost arises from the fact that the homosexual spouse is not able to receive the same federal health insurance benefit as a heterosexual one. Yet again, it

is a case of the federal government discriminating against the gay family through a means of economic exclusion.

The Defense of Marriage Act's third section is unconstitutional by the measure of the equal protection clause, which is the basis for the Department of Justice's recent decision to discontinue defense of the law in the courts. While the White House cannot discontinue the federal govern-

ment's enforcement of the law, it does reserve the right to decide which laws it will defend in the judicial system. Currently there are three separate cases that are challenging the constitutionality of DOMA: *Pedersen v. OPM* in Connecticut, *Windsor v. United States* in New York, and *Gill v. OPM* in Massachusetts. That is not to say that these cases will go without a governmentally provided defense, as the House of Representatives, after the bipartisan legal advisory group (consisting of Republicans Eric Cantor, John Boehner, and Kevin McCarthy and Democrats Nancy Pelosi and Steny Hoyer) voted 3-2 in favor of defending the case.

While it will have no effect on the Defense of Marriage Act as it currently stands, the Obama administration's move shows a profound view of constitutional equality. Current legal practices provide for federally mandated discrimination against same-sex couples whose marriage is respected by their state, but not by their nation. Through DOMA, the United States Government creates two separate classes of marriage, putting the same-sex class at an undue disadvantage. The Defense of Marriage Act creates a governmental bias against gay couples in the guise of "protecting marriage," when it is really creating an unequal environment for gay men and women trying to gain legal recognition of their love for a partner.

- Robert Cohen,
Political Science '15

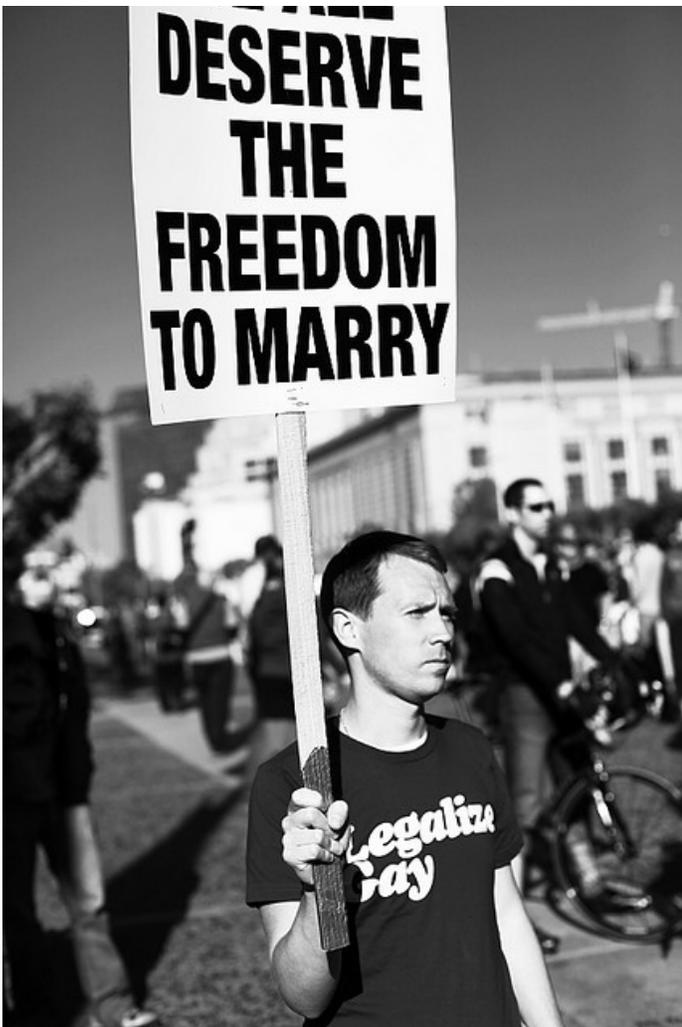


Photo Courtesy of Kuchingboy via Flickr.

Death Row: Trusting a Broken System

On March 9, 2011, Governor Pat Quinn signed legislation effectively abolishing the death penalty in the state of Illinois, making it the 16th state without the death penalty. The next day, on March 10, 2011, Johnnie Ray Baston was executed in the state of Ohio for aggravated murder. He was the 9th person to be put to death this year.

Numbers ten and eleven followed shortly after. However, the cost of execution remains staggeringly high compared to life in prison, innocent people are still being put to death, and states are still trying to find the most effective and least painful methods of execution. The system is broken. These problems must be addressed, especially if the United States is to continue to defend its use of the death penalty on the international stage.

Since the death penalty was reinstated in the 1970s, 1,240 men and three women have been put to death in thirty-five states. While the majority of deaths in the past two decades have been by lethal injection, states still put convicts to death using electrocution and firing squads, and used gas chambers and hanging until the late 1990s. Throughout that time individuals have continued to fight the constitutionality of the death penalty. Since 1976, only two states, New Mexico and now Illinois, which had originally allowed for the death penalty, have since changed their laws.

For ten years, from 1967 to 1977, a moratorium was placed

on death penalties as cases were brought to the courts addressing its constitutionality. While arguments based on the Fourteenth Amendment, guaranteeing due process, were thrown out, those that argued the Eighth Amendment, which talks about cruel and unusual punishment, had more staying power.

On June 29, 1972 the United States Supreme Court ruled that the existing death penalty statutes found in forty states were unconstitutional under the Eighth Amendment. The court found in *Furman v. Georgia* that the standard for “cruel and unusual punishment” is if the sentence is too severe for the crime, if it is arbitrary, if the sentence offends society’s sense of justice or if the sentence is not more effect than a less severe punishment. The ruling commuted 629 death row inmates around the country and effectively suspended the death penalty until new valid statutes could be put in place.

States began passing statutes allowing for discretionary guidelines for judges and juries deciding on capital punishment. The Supreme Court upheld these guidelines in 1976 in *Gregg v. Georgia* while approving other procedural reforms. These included bifurcated trials, where one jury decides guilt and the other determines sentencing, automatic review of convictions and sentencing by the appellate courts, and proportionality review, which allows the appellate courts to compare the sentencing between similar cases. In

the 1980s further restrictions were placed on the death penalty including banning it as a sentence for the mentally challenged and juveniles.

Surprisingly in the most recent case of abolishment, cruel and unusual punishment was not the lead cause to strike the statute from the law books. Congressmen from Illinois looked at the cost savings they would incur from not having to pay for lengthy trials. Fifteen people sat on death row when Governor Quinn signed the bill. Death row inmates’ legal fees for the mandatory appeals process can easily add up to millions of dollars, while the average cost of a prisoner’s needs for twenty years is roughly one \$1 million. “We have spent over \$100 million of taxpayer money defending and prosecuting death row cases. The death penalty does not make our society safer, I believe. It has been an ineffective and expensive use of our scarce resources,” said Illinois Republican Senator Dan Duffy. Several studies have taken place in states across the country comparing the cost of putting someone to death versus giving them a life sentence. In 2008, when California’s death row had 670 occupants, it was estimated that they cost the state \$90,000 more per inmate per year or an extra \$63.3 million. If the system was reformed to give greater assurance of a fair process, the price tag shoots to \$232.7 million per year. In the same year, a Maryland study determined that an average

capital-eligible case cost the state \$1.1 million dollars; however that same case, when the death penalty was sought and won cost the state \$3 million, \$1.9 million more than a life sentence. The reason for high cost is specialized lawyers, required appeals processes and the sheer length of time that these cases can remain in the court systems.

Congressmen also cited the imperfection of the system. The fear remains that innocent people may still be put to death, even with the advanced technology and DNA testing available.

“We’re here because we’ve seen countless examples of the fact that

the system has failed,” said Illinois Democratic Senator Toi Hutchinson. “This question is not about the people who we know did it. It’s about the people who were convicted who didn’t. It’s about our system of justice is actually predicated upon the protection of the innocent and executing one innocent person is too high a price to pay.” The Death Penalty Information Center (DPIC) has compiled and continues to maintain a list of innocence following strict guidelines. The list includes only former death row inmates who have been acquitted of all charges that put them on death row, had all of the charges dismissed by the prosecution, or have been granted a pardon based on evidence of innocence. Going back to 1973, this list includes 124 cases. To battle these cases, it has been suggested that two commis-

sions be created to try and foresee and prevent these mistakes. One would look at the cases that were overturned and see how and where the trial went wrong in originally convicting them. The second would study the cases of those currently on death row and explore the possibility of their innocence. However, the easiest solution to both of these problems lies in the statutes themselves. Under a proposed “golden rule” in Massachusetts, then-Governor Mitt Romney pushed for a death penalty statute

“Since the death penalty was reinstated in the 1970s, 1,240 men and three women have been put to death in thirty-five states.”

that stated that “defendants would only be eligible for a death sentence if the jury believed they were guilty beyond any doubt and the conviction was obtained through the use of scientific evidence.” While clearly no system can ever be perfect, this would greatly cut down on the number of death penalty convictions, thus cutting costs for states overall and greatly diminishing the chances of an innocent man being put to death.

The actual act itself must also be limited to methods proven to be quick and painless. Ohio’s use of barbiturate pentobarbital in their recent execution has refocused attention on the discontinuation of sodium thiopental and the three drug lethal injection. Unlike past methods, the new method only requires one drug. A lethal dose acts as it does for animal euthanasia causing

unconsciousness then respiratory and cardiac arrest. The entire process takes seconds and is said to be painless. Ohio switched to the one drug method after the failed execution of Romell Broom in September of 2009 when his veins failed to allow the injection of the drugs. They attempted for two hours before a stay was issued. Broom’s fate has yet to be determined and the case has returned to the courts over the cruel and unusual nature of his attempted execution. While many have criticized Ohio’s use of

this untested drug, the success of the execution speaks for itself. So far there have been 12 exe-

cutions using the one-drug method and they have all worked without complication and so states that still allow for death by electrocution, gas chamber, hanging and firing squad should rethink their statutes allowing for these methods and place extreme limitations on their use.

In a legal system where the protection of innocence is more important than the prosecution of guilt and our forefathers wrote into our Bill of Rights a protection against cruel and unusual punishment, it is imperative that the legal system works to keep these ideals as a guiding light in how laws are written and executed.

*- Christina Petrucci,
Political Science &
Journalism ‘11*

A Judge's Neutrality: Recusal in the Supreme Court

Impartiality and equality in the eyes of the law are the cornerstones of the American justice system. In fact, when Cass Gilbert designed the Supreme Court Building in Washington D.C. he etched "Equal Justice Under Law" into the western façade of the building, highlighting the importance of this guiding principle. Ensuring the impartiality of judges is a key aspect of safeguarding this important American ideal.

Recent cases in which Supreme Court justices have refused to recuse themselves when a bias was perceived has led some legal scholars to question the extent to which equality exists in our nation's highest court. Under the current judicial disqualification system, when there may be a conflict of interest, it is up to the individual justices to determine their ability to hear a case without prejudice. By human nature, the justices are likely to give themselves the benefit of the doubt and hear the case. In order to create a more perfect system and move us closer to our guiding principles, Congress must implement a system for judicial disqualification for the Supreme Court that removes the justice in question from the decision making process.

The Supreme Court itself has determined that there is a problem with allowing judges to determine whether or not they should recuse themselves. In *Caperton v. A. T. Massey Coal Co.* the Court determined that the failure of West Virginia Supreme Court Justice Brent



Photo Courtesy of Phil Roeder via Flickr.

Benjamin to recuse himself constituted an error in due process. Justice Benjamin had been elected to the West Virginia Supreme Court due to the support of an executive that worked for one of the litigants, A. T. Massey Coal Co. The executive had been thoroughly involved in the campaign and provided a significant amount of the funding. Despite his obvious and egregious conflict of interest, Justice Benjamin refused to remove himself from the case. Though the US Supreme Court found Justice Benjamin's conduct created an error in due process, they could not agree upon a set of objective standards for recusal. With the diverse legal opinions that exist on the court, it is unlikely five Justices would ever be able to agree on such a standard. Congress is going to have to act if the judicial disqualification process is to be reformed.

Congress has attempted to implement such a reform in the past. They passed 28 U.S.C. 455(a) which states, "Any justice, judge, or magistrate judge of the United States shall disqualify himself in any proceeding in which his impartiality might reasonably be questioned." This law set the subjective standard that exists today. Though the 'objective observer' standard rests on good principle, it fails to take the determination of impartiality out of the hands of the individual Justices. The weakness of this measure was demonstrated by Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia when he denied a recusal request in *Cheney v. United States District Court for the District of Columbia*. While the case was pending, Scalia went on a hunting trip with Vice President Cheney. Scalia flew down on the Vice President's jet, ate meals with the Vice

President, and was even in the same hunting party. The abundance of opportunities for ex-parte communication led many observers of the court to question Scalia's ability to hear the case without prejudice. Scalia denied a motion that would have removed him from the case despite public outrage. Scalia demonstrated

the weakness of 28 U.S.C. 455(a) and the need for a new system to be put into place.

One way Congress can achieve this goal is to pass

Rep. Chris Murphy's judicial transparency bill. Rep. Murphy developed the bill after learning about secretive special interest conferences that were attended by Supreme Court Justices. The bill would require the Supreme Court to develop a system that gives litigants the ability to request a ruling from the entire Court or a panel of the Court on potential conflicts of interest of individual justices. The primary benefit of this system is that it removes the Justice from determining their own impartiality but the decision remains in the Supreme Court, ensuring separation of powers and the independence of the Judiciary branch is protected.

Another way opportunity for reformed would be to establish objective standards for Supreme Court recusal. This can be easily accomplished by Congress if they extend the ethics rules that currently apply to US circuit and dis-

trict Judges to the Supreme Court justices. These rules are codified in the Judicial Conference's Code of Conduct for United States Judges. They provide guidance for federal judges on how to conduct themselves in a legal and ethical manner. There are even clauses in the code which describe situations in

“The primary benefit of this system is that it removes the Justice from determining their own impartiality but the decision remains in the Supreme Court, ensuring separation of powers and the independence of the Judiciary branch is protected.”

which Judges must recuse themselves. Since the laws are clear and specific, the law has already determined the decision of eligibility. Though there is still some room for interpretation, the majority of conflict of interest motions can be decided through a clear reading of the law. If these rules were applied to the Supreme Court, the Justices would not be able to so easily dismiss their conflicts of interest.

Those who argue against recusal reform for the Supreme Court contest that any measure put into place would dramatically increase the amount of recusals, crippling the Court's ability to function as intended. Since there are only nine Judges in the world that are eligible to hear cases in the Supreme Court, a recusal means that a vote is absent and the decision is left to the remaining eight Justices. Though a significant increase in recusals would undoubtedly alter

the dynamics of the Court, an increase of this magnitude is unlikely given the current Justices' attitudes towards recusal. Also, only one percent of Supreme Court cases over the past eighteen years have resulted in a divided Court due to a Justice's recusal. Even if the Court were to be deadlocked,

the decision of the lower court stands so Justice is still served. An impartial decision from a Circuit Court would better serve Justice than a tainted

decision from the Supreme Court.

A recent poll showed that only 32 percent of Americans have confidence in the Justice system. This decline can be traced back to recent highly publicized cases in which Supreme Court justices refused to recuse themselves despite perceived conflicts of interest. The American people are fearful that we are moving away from “Equal Justice Under Law” instead of towards it. To reverse this trend, Congress should pass Rep. Murphy's bill or extend existing ethics laws to apply to Supreme Court Justices. In order to revitalize the integrity of the Supreme Court Congress must act to install reforms that remove Justices whose impartiality has been called into question.

- Thomas Shepard,
Political Science '13

Somali Piracy:

When Short-term Solutions Turn to Long-term Problems

Kidnappings and hijackings off the coast of Somalia have been the topic of sensationalist media attention over the last few years. When Americans Jean and Scott Adam, Phyllis Macay, and Bob Riggle were killed this past February in a Somali hijacking, most saw a one-dimensional report of a crime committed by a barbaric people. The situation is generally typecast as a problem necessitating a simple solution of naval intervention. A closer look into these instances, however, shows the historic intricacies of the problems in the Horn of Africa that have caused the Somali people to become desperate, thus turning to piracy as one of only few viable options. These attacks generally occur around the Gulf of Aden due to the geo-strategic importance of the area, as it is an entry and exit point for shipping routes to and from the Suez Canal. The world at large is attacking the problem the wrong way. The current military strategy is compounding the problem, as it lacks historic or long-term insight. The international community must envision new solutions for Somalia and the Gulf of Aden to affect lasting stability.

Plagued by nearly 200 years of oppression and civil war, Somalia today is a failing state ruled by strong men and militias. Lawlessness in Somalia has allowed global corporations to dump their toxic, medical, and nuclear waste off the coast entirely unchecked. For nearly a decade this semi-le-

gal dumping persisted until a tsunami hit in December of 2004 and washed untold amounts of toxic waste onto the shores of Somalia. The toxic waste saturated the shoreline and destroyed any economic production Somalia might have had, including its fishing industry. Enraged, the Somali people decided to fight back against the world that denigrated them.

In an interview, Sugule Ali, a pirate leader, stated, "We don't consider ourselves sea bandits. We consider sea bandits [to be] those who illegally fish and ... dump waste in our seas and carry weapons in our seas." The fishermen, who were driven out of business by war and pollution, have turned to vigilantism to protect their waters. Their livelihood was threatened and no one came to their aid.

These Somali vigilantes captured vessels in the Gulf. The lack of strategy devolved the situation into violence and kidnapping. Not knowing how to handle the crisis, nations and corporations gave in to the demands of the ex-fishermen, now pirates, with a cash ransom. For example, the South Korean Buhan's Samho Shipping Company paid hijackers \$9 million to return their personnel and goods. In a wealth-less, polluted, war-torn nation, any source of income is celebrated and the opportunity is exploited. The frequency and sheer audacity of the Somali pirate attacks grew as word spread on how to achieve a quick income.

The Military powers respond-

ed only after an American ship, the Maersk-Alabama, was attacked. This sparked the United States to expand its 'War on Terror' to encompass patrolling the waters of Somalia with a naval task force to intercept suspected pirates. Later NATO, the European Union and China started patrolling the Gulf of Aden with missions called Ocean Shield and ATALATA. According to these missions, if NATO flotillas capture a suspected pirate they are, more often than not, handed off to the African Union for judiciary punishment. The threat of jail or even death does not deter piracy in the region; the threat still persists and it is on the rise.

An article published by *The Economist* outlining the piracy situation cited the United Nations' estimate that Indian Ocean piracy costs the world between \$5 billion and \$7 billion annually. The frequency of attack is at an all-time high. In January 2011 alone thirty-three vessels were taken hostage – equating to more than one per day. The hijacking tactics used are also becoming more sophisticated. Initially attacks were conducted close to the shore. Now that better ships have been hijacked for use, and Somalis have used ransom funds for better armaments, the pirates have become bolder.

Their tactic today is to use a larger 'Mother Ship' in the open ocean, from which they send smaller boats in to attack. These Mother Ships have been known to operate as far south as the Sey-



Photo Courtesy of Lance Cpl. Megan E. Sindelar, U.S. Marine Corp via Wikimedia Commons

chelles, and as far west as the Maldives. This tactic gives the pirates the ability to get in, take hostages, and get out before the rescue force can arrive. As a result of this effective tactic the pirates' demands increase. If history teaches us anything, things will get worse before they get better this year.

The powers that be are combating the problem the wrong way. Nearly one tenth of the world shipping travels through the Gulf of Aden, so the world has a vested interest in seeing that shipments make it through safely. The short-term fix of a naval task force patrolling the waters is not deterring the economically desperate Somalis and is dodging the real problem. If the international community

seeks to save the lives of innocent mariners and pirates alike, serious decisions need to be made. First, the United Nations needs to pass resolutions discouraging ransom payment to the pirates. The African Union, European Union, Arab League and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization should also pass similar guidelines. This is another short-term fix but it is appropriate. Second, in order to save on escalating insurance premiums and to save the lives of its citizens, the G20 needs to establish a coordinated environmental cleanup of the region.

It is safe to assume that the containers holding the toxic waste have no country-specific designers. However, it is appropriate for

the clean up to be a coordinated G20 operation because they are the only states in an economic position to do so, even in the current economic climate. The economic losses that will occur if shippers refuse to use the Suez and Gulf of Aden as a transit route will be staggering, for all the industrialized nations. If the Saudi government decides to stop shipping oil through the Gulf of Aden, the price of gasoline has the potential to reach astronomical prices in the West to account for the added shipping costs of travel around the Cape of Good Hope. The economic implications would be devastating. That being said, the military missions now in place should re-evaluate their mission to patrol for

pirates but also ensure that toxic dumping practices do not continue.

The situation in Somalia gets worse every year for its people and the world at large. Throwing a small armada off the coast will not solve the problem no more than the payment of ransoms. No one could have seen that a short-term solution like dumping toxic

waste could spark a wave of international piracy a decade later. Short-term fixes only beget more problems. A sustained, systematic commitment by the industrialized nations must transpire in order to solve the problem. If a long-term plan does not come to light now, maritime piracy has the potential to escalate and spi-

ral out of control and infect other economically disparaged regions. Global maritime security, economic prosperity, and the lives of countless individuals are at stake.

- Michael Trudeau,
International Affairs '12

Feeding the People: What Has Lead to the Global Food Crisis?

Rising global food prices do not only threaten the lives of individuals but threaten the political stability of entire regions. High food prices have been cited as one factor behind the current instability in Africa and the Middle East, and a spike in food prices this year risks the potential of even more widespread problems. In February, food prices reached all time highs, according to the FAO Food Price Index, who cited price hikes in every category of food except for sugar. In the fall of 2010, news outlets

sounded alarm bells that we were dangerously close to a food crisis. Now that prices have surpassed the previous food price records set in 2008, we are most certainly at the threshold of a crisis again. Understanding the causes of the global food crisis is the first step in combating it. This article will examine three short-to-medium term factors that have been cited as the leading causes of the 2011 food crisis.

Although climate change is projected to cause food shortages in the future, the current short-

ages are caused by particularly bad weather patterns. Russia's wheat crop was destroyed by an unusually dry season, and bouts of wildfires and drought had an enormous impact on the amount of wheat and grain that could be harvested. As a result, Russia had to import around three million metric tons of feed grain last year.

Furthermore, high temperatures and excessive rain caused an unusually small crop in the American Corn Belt at the end of last year, the impact of which will bleed into this year. Corn, which is used in almost all American foodstuffs including animal feed for the nation's meat industry, has a major impact on food prices. This means that corn prices are not only reflected in corn products, but in dairy and meat products as well. With less to feed the animals, farmers may only have the capacity to raise smaller herds.

Weather anomalies in Brazil, China, Pakistan, and Australia have also contributed to rising food prices, putting farmers in particularly tough situations. One Bangladeshi farmer interviewed



Photo Courtesy of Mario Vercelloti via Flickr.

by Oxfam in 2009 said, "...temperature and weather do not seem right for what we have been doing traditionally. I do not know how to cope with the problems."

Although bad weather may have been the catalyst for snowballing food prices, food policy has made matters significantly worse. Exceptions to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (part of the treaty of the WTO) may be made in cases in which temporary relief is necessitated by a short supply of basic necessities.

Unfortunately, the definitions of "temporary" and "short supply" remain vague within the agreement, and

thus countries have begun to hoard their supplies, causing a subsequent artificial price hike.

These international agreements are so vague that the use of export bans in India has become commonplace. Although India is expected to harvest 83 million tons of grain for the 2010-2011 year, which is a relatively good yield for the country, the bans are like to continue for the fourth consecutive year. In December of 2010, an export ban on onions was also put in place. Furthermore, Russia compounded the issue of soaring grain prices when they imposed export bans following their dry season in August of 2010. This was particularly troubling, as 11% of world exports come from Russia. Although the bans were slated to end by December of 2010, they

have now been extended to mid-2011, or perhaps even after that. One journalist even linked the Russian export ban directly to the crisis of rising food prices in Egypt, where nearly half of the wheat supply is imported from Russia.

Finally, this year's rising food prices are heavily impacted by high fuel prices. Since farming equipment relies on oil, farmers need to devote more money to raise the same amount of crops. In addition, the cost of transporting food has skyrocketed. When oil prices rise,

and farmers are between a rock and a hard place when they are forced to choose between fuel types; this dichotomy highlights how there are no easy choices when dealing with globally connected markets.

The reasons for high food prices today are generally due to short-term issues, but global food security is an issue that will have far-reaching consequences for the foreseeable future. Today's tough prices are caused by weather; tomorrow's may be due to long-term changes in climate. Trade

bans are making matters worse, but the greed of nations will never be a thing of the past.

Oil prices are volatile, exacerbated by current circumstances in the Middle East, but supplies are limited and will only become tighter.

There are no clear options for food in the global markets, but it is clear that governments need to invest in long-term agro research. The Green Revolution, (a series of technological advancements in agriculture made between the 1940s and the 1970s) made exponentially larger yields possible, and only happened as a result of publicly funded research. Food supply must be at the forefront of governments' and citizens' minds to foster food stability in the long run.

“Although bad weather may have been the catalyst for snowballing food prices, food policy has made matters significantly worse.”

the amount of money required to fill up the tanks of vehicles transporting the food rises accordingly. Moreover, oil is a main ingredient in many of the chemicals used on factory farms like pesticides and fertilizer. Oil prices are now at a two and a half year high, and food prices are beholden to them.

Not only are food prices linked directly to oil via production costs, but as oil prices skyrocket governments will be further incentivized to use biofuels, which take away from food supply. Only 8% of fuel used in the US for vehicles is biofuel, but 40% of corn crops are monopolized by their production. If all of the maize that goes into biofuels were diverted into food stock, *The Economist* estimates that corn supply could rise by 14%. Therefore, governments

- Gwendolyn Connors,
Political Science '12

The Myth of the Muslim Woman: The False Narrative of Salvation

On November 17, 2001, Laura Bush made an appeal to the American people to support the war in Afghanistan. In her speech, no link was made between the military operation in Afghanistan and the September 11th attacks. Instead, she called upon the American people to support an operation that would encompass the salvation of Afghan women, “to kick off a world-wide effort to focus on the brutality against women and children by the al-Qaeda terrorist network and the regime it supports in Afghanistan, the Taliban.” Called “women of cover,” by former president George W. Bush, Muslim women are rendered static victims in a discourse of transnational feminism that has been deployed to justify military intervention in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

Today Western media actively produces a picture of Muslim women as passive victims of their circumstances in need of saving. When we dig beyond the learned narrative of the Muslim woman, and cast away learned tropes, we find agential characters who value their societies and religion. The real narrative of the Muslim woman is more nuanced and self-determined than we are led to believe. Three centuries of deliberate Western discourse on these women obfuscates this reality from the gaze of the Western eye. A look ‘beyond the veil’ shows just how culturally, economically and politically destructive the false narrative of the Muslim woman has been.

An appeal to support a war to save a foreign country’s ‘women and children’ is by no means a new rallying call. Leila Ahmed, an influential Egyptian feminist wrote the classic 1992 text *Women and Gender in Islam*, in which she dubs the term, “colonial feminism.” In discourses of colonial feminism, imperial Britain showed a serious concern for Muslim women rhetorically, mobilizing the veil as a symbol of their oppression. This discourse made the colonial interventions more palatable and valid to those at home. Though employing the rhetoric of salvation, British occupiers did little to support women’s education or development in the colonies and were insistently against women’s suffrage at home.

Resonating with similar themes to the narratives that validated colonialism, the Afghan woman has become a cause *célèbre* in the United States in the last decade. Even though the Taliban imposed harsh and abusive restrictions on women as early as 1994, it was not until a media trend showcasing Afghan women wearing the *burqa*, a Taliban-mandated garment that covered them from head to toe, that public outrage ensued. The Islamic practice of veiling has functioned as the main symbol of women’s oppression in Western narratives. The veil has been cast once again as a specter of oppression, a device that “the terrorists would like to impose on us,” as Laura Bush put it in her

2001 address to the nation. The fact that women in pre-Taliban Afghanistan willingly wore the *burqa* as a culturally relevant sign of their modesty and self-worth is way-sided in the discourse.

This is not to say that there is no room for humanitarian discourse or action in internationalism. Remembering scholar Roland Barthes’ argument for “progressive humanism,” humanitarian discourse must shift to a framework that “not only acknowledges human suffering but also narrative authority, historical agency, and political memory,” in order to espouse truly progressive discourse. That discourse is void in mass media’s rendering of the Muslim woman. The symptom of engaging with the historic discourse of the victimized Muslim woman is not just a misguided public. This discourse has heavily obfuscated pertinent political realities from the eye of the public, and has side tracked a necessary global discourse on the real problems and threats facing women in Afghanistan and beyond.

In a cornerstone text on the production of the Muslim woman in Western media entitled, *Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?* Lila Abu-Lughod addresses the ethics of launching a war in the name of salvation. She insists “the tendencies to plaster neat cultural icons like the Muslim woman over messy historical and political dynamics” perpetuate global problems and misunderstandings

as it blurs political realities with a guise of Western superiority and a “necessitated” use of violence. The positioning of women in the forefront of the discourse on Afghanistan renders the historic and political context of the country illegible, including the reality that the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan was due in part to the Soviet and American intervention in the region during the Cold War.

Abu-Lughod does not advocate for the passivity implied by some cultural relativist discourses, but argues that cultural relativism is a more constructive alternative to ethnocentrism. She asks that we not only look toward the salvation of women in Afghanistan from the Taliban, but salvation too from a global imperialist order that perpetuates inequity and economic domination. She calls too for a simultaneous reevaluation of thought, in which we open

our scope of discourse to allow for the idea that women in other parts of the world may have different desires or conceptions of social justice than our own. For instance, she notes, once Afghan women were “liberated” from the Taliban, they did not cast off their veil.

Saba Mahmood, a professor at the University of Chicago, uncovers the magnitude of devastation wrought in Afghanistan due to the US-Soviet proxy war in the 1980s and the present US operation. Discourse on this reality, she states, is illegitimately neutralized and set-aside by the discourse of salvation. Mahmood cites several feminist campaigns in the US that work to advocate for the emancipation of suffering Afghan women. These campaigns, however, do not contain discourses linking the present plight of Afghan women to US Cold War-era support for Afghan religious militias in the 1980s.

Funding went to Afghanistan during the Cold War to assist Afghanistan in combating Soviet militias, a mission that the US and Saudi Arabia tasked as essential to combating Communism. During the campaign, an estimated 75% of US aid was funneled to extreme religious militias, thus marginalizing secular forces in the country. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, whose group received as much as 50% of American aid, was known for throwing acid on the faces of women who refused to veil. When questioned on the matter, a US agent in Pakistan retorted, “Fanatics fight better.” Furthermore, a leak in arms delivery between the US and the Afghani Mujahedeen went unchecked as “a necessary cost of a covert operation,” thus allowing small arms to be sold in markets and arming radical groups who exercised violence on non-combatants. Some Afghans and

Taliban leaders have posited questions about why the West was not more concerned about the plight of women then. Because of the mainstream humanitarian discourse, many in the West are lead to believe that the plight of women in Afghanistan is entirely due to the policy of the Taliban. Today, the reality is blurred. Afghanistan, a country already



Photo Courtesy of Afghanistan Matters via Flickr.

suffering from bouts of severe drought, has a compounded food crisis because US bombing made food delivery too treacherous. Discourse fades on the mounting civilian casualties of the war or the legacy of a reckless distribution of small arms. The crusade to save Afghanistan's women overshadowed the ills of historic American military might in the country. The discourse of salvation has blurred reprehensible political realities from the world's vision. It distracts the global citizen from

the idea that the plight of Afghan women has largely been an effect of decades of militarization, armament, intervention, and ethnic violence, much of which took place at the hands of the United States.

A closer look at Muslim women shows a heterogeneous body of women who act and advocate for themselves based on their own ideals and values. It reveals a body of women who need to be released from their role as pawns of the West more than they need a crusade for salvation. As protests

and a call for emancipation sweep the Arab world this year, the voices of Muslim women have broken through the barrier of false narratives and have shown the force and dynamism of the Muslim woman. A departure from these stereotypes is essential to a discourse that will truly liberate not only Muslim women but also all people who are victims of historically entrenched global inequity today.

- Sarah Sheffer,
International Affairs '11

Comic Relief:



- Andonis Marden, *International Affairs & Political Science '13*

The Right to Connect: Universal Internet Access

In the United States, one often sends so many text messages, accepts (or rejects) so many Facebook “friend requests,” and reads so many tweets that social media can feel banal. Whether at home, in class, at work, or in transit, North Americans are constantly connected. However, the boundaries of the Internet and communication are no longer restricted solely for social purposes, nor have they been for quite some time. The last two decades have seen the Internet emerge as a medium to voice public dissent. Yet, autocratic regimes are quickly realizing the use of the Internet by political opposition has the power to effectively weaken or even bring about the upheaval of their governments. Now, the question remains as to whether the right to Internet will be protected in order to provide oppressed people freedom, or if it will continue to be manipulated by authoritarian governments.

Most recently, the significant number of protests in the Middle East and North Africa has added a new dynamic to global Internet communication. During the 2009 elections in Iran, the government repressed traditional forms of media and attempted to corrupt election results behind closed doors. In response, the Iranian population utilized the Internet as an alternative medium through which they could voice their disagreement to the world. In this year alone we have seen the brazen behavior of the Egyptian and Tunisian govern-

ments to completely block Internet access in order to impede the organization of political opposition and silence objectionable behavior. Moreover, many countries such as China, Iran and Tunisia have been known to use the Internet for economic and innovative design purposes, yet employ strict surveillance for personal uses. Draconian limits are placed on what content citizens can access, transmit via cell phones and post on the Internet, in order to suppress political dissent and allegations of corrupt governments. Cuba has gone so far as to create a limited national intranet system, which allows Cubans to narrowly access a national e-mail system, Cuban encyclopedia, and only those websites that endorse the government.

The United States has made clear their position on government crackdowns on political criticism via Internet technology. President Obama maintains the position that access to the Internet and social networks are a universal value, comparable to free speech. In recent weeks, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has mapped out the Internet Freedom Agenda, stating it would be in the best interest of all nations to open up Internet access. Clinton opined, “The rights of individuals to express their views freely, petition their leaders, worship according to their beliefs—these rights are universal, whether they are exercised in a public square or on an individual blog. The freedoms to assemble

and associate also apply in cyberspace.” Nations around the world are clearly in agreement: as early as 2000 Estonia explicitly declared the “right to connect” a human right. France followed soon after with the same pronouncement; in the past year Finland passed legislation that guarantees each citizen a broadband connection. While Clinton recognizes the Internet can provide a forum for hateful ideas and offensive material, she emphasizes the multitude of benefits it can provide in the areas of economic, political, and social discussions. The principle challenge, she emphasizes, is finding equilibrium between liberty and security in terms of Internet regulation; “Without security, liberty is fragile. Without liberty, security is oppressive.” Of primary importance in her statements are the condemnation of those governments that have repressed the right of their citizens to access the Internet in a worthwhile manner, and consequently impinging upon their natural rights.

Clinton’s words are all fine and well, but can only be viewed as contradictory when the most the United States could do in the face of Egypt’s Internet outage was to condemn Hosni Mubarak’s actions and demand a reopening of servers. Mubarak’s blatant disregard for American demands clearly illustrates the flaws in maintaining a purely diplomatic approach to protecting this universal right. Clinton’s plan generated interest

and allocated funding to implement tools which would allow public activists to override Internet censorship in areas where their online rights are repressed.

In truth, the U.S. military already has the capability to force connectivity in countries where it has been blocked. The Air Force's EC-130J aircraft, essentially airborne radio and television stations, have the ability to fly over a bandwidth-denied area and override the local connection it to broadcast its own signal – thus restoring bandwidth access. Additionally, private companies have created programs for the Army that affix cellular pods to the bottom of drones, unmanned aerial vehicles, creating a several-kilometer-wide radius of 3G wireless network coverage. While many are still classified, these instruments have the ability to add an air of legitimacy to the United States' demands for universal Internet access. In the case of Egypt, use of these tools to enable Egyptian citizens to connect could be seen as a humanitarian act on the part of the United States, as the two nations have long been allies, thus allying the U.S. government with the Egyptian people. Though the apprehensiveness of the government to use them is legitimate, as they would inevitably be seen as an act of "cyber warfare" in certain circumstances, the continued infringement on civil rights cannot be ignored.

Despite the fact that the United States has tried to extend its diplomatic hand in opening all methods of internet and

communications to citizens of the world, oppressive regimes will do little until an actual threat is produced. A threat, in this instance, of a nation such as the United States using technological and/or military capabilities to provide Internet to people whose governments deny them of that right. It is imperative to proceed with caution, especially with new terms floating around such as "cyber attack" and "cyber war". There is an undeniable need for a more aggressive position.

Internet capabilities will not be widely available to everyone until the United States packs more punch behind its demand that foreign governments consider the right to the Internet an undeniable human right. This concept is not a farfetched idea, in fact, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states that, "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold

opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Despite the ever-changing nature of our world, it remains quite clear that all citizens of the world are entitled to the "right to connect". The refusal of governments to provide their citizens with unrestricted access to the Internet is a violation of the freedom of expression, a violation of human rights warranting a global response to protect it, by imposing Internet connectivity if necessary. Without this dynamic, Clinton's statements calling for an Internet culture in symmetry with, "liberty and security, transparency and confidentiality, and freedom and tolerance" is little more than a muted whine by the United States, in desperate need of some teeth.

- Rupal Desai,
International Affairs '11



Photo Courtesy of Neil Parekh via Flickr.

Film Review: *We Are Egypt*

Three months ago, the political conflict in Egypt appeared on people's radars. The social and political turmoil that erupted in January 2011 was unexpected to say the least, and took its rightful place on the front page of every major media outlet around the world. Hearts went out to the struggling nation. Every outcry was recorded, trends were monitored and the entire world was on the edge of its seat, watching a revolution unfold before their eyes.

However, what was going on before this breaking point? What was the state of Egypt before this took place? What caused them to succeed in their 2011 protests? For Lillie Paquette, an independent filmmaker, the story that had become the world's talking point had been hers for the last fifteen months. An entire year before Egyptian protesters appeared on the global stage, Paquette was there, documenting the situation without knowing what was to come. She captured footage at a time when no one else thought to, thus encapsulating a human story of the rumbles of Egypt's discontent. Her film, *We Are Egypt*, retells the stories and events of people who fought for political representation before the Tahrir Square revolution even began.

Paquette, a Northeastern alumna, studied Political Science

and International Affairs. She traveled to Egypt for the first time through the Dialogue of Civilizations program in Cairo. She began her professional career in Washington, DC, working at a non-

“An entire year before Egyptian protesters appeared on the global stage, Paquette was there...”

profit organization. After several years, Paquette wondered if she could make a greater impact. With her passion for Middle Eastern and North African studies, she went back to school and received her master's in Global Studies at the Fletcher School, where she concentrated on issues of equality and democratization in the Middle East.

Paquette decided to reconcile her passion for Egypt, and close the gap between academic and activist. Setting out to raise awareness about the long-standing internal political conflict in Egypt, Paquette returned to the country to document the situation through film. What started out as an unclear project turned into a year-long journey, following Egypt's activists, citizens, protesters, and government officials. Paquette witnessed a complex political and social situation and a frustrated yearning for political representation among the Egyptian people. The political repression Paquette bore witness to was all the more hopeless due to decades of US fis-

cal and military support for the long-entrenched Mubarak dictatorship. Paquette realized that she could use her film to communicate with those at home about Egyptian's political experiences and the symptoms of American support for the regime.

As of now, the film is still in its beginning stages of production. The rough cut screened at Northeastern University on March 8th was an early draft of what will undergo a post-production phase as requests for Paquette's priceless footage pile in. The film offers an in-depth look at the past fifteen months of political and social unrest in Egypt, presented in such a way that American citizens and policymakers can understand the complexities of the political climate in Egypt. Paquette seeks to bring her unique vision of Egypt to the eyes of Americans across the country.

Paquette gives a perspective that cannot be illustrated by many others because she so diligently gathered information on the ground before the protests caught the mass media's eye. The film first takes the audience through a bit of history; discussing the Mubarak dictatorship and the United States' support for the regime. It then goes into interviews with opposition leaders, representing a wide array of opposition parties. Paquette even engages in dialogue with rep-

representatives from the Mubarak governments' ruling National Democratic Party (NDP). Paquette asks those in her film about their feelings on the Mubarak dictatorship and the actions taken by the United States. In now uncanny shots, she asks them about their predictions for the future of their



Photo Courtesy of Floris Van Cauwelaert via Flickr.

country. The opinions vary on the topic of foreign policy and the role the United States. One Egyptian woman says she wants to see more aggressively pro-democratic policy from the US, merging rhetoric with reality, while another wishes the US would stop intervening.

Egypt's November 2010 Parliamentary elections were greatly anticipated by every one of Paquette's interviewees. It is accepted widely that past elections were rigged, and candidates from opposition parties were often cheated out of a victory through manipulated ballots or rendered powerless in meaningless government positions to give the guise of democratic representation. Public resentment toward the government had risen in the previous few years. People mobilized against the Mubarak regime after vicious government crackdowns stifled the youth-led "6th of April" protest movement in 2009. Further, the death of Khaled Said, a young man ruthlessly murdered by two police

officers while in police custody in the summer of 2010, further provoked public outrage over years of unchecked police brutality.

With such a discouraging history, it seems almost unfathomable that opposition parties retained hope for yet another election. From the beginning of the film the audience can see that Egyptian activists and opposition groups have never stopped fighting. This is what is most unique about the film. After watching the story unfold, it is not difficult to believe Egypt had the spirit to lead a revolution. The political culture and spirit Lillie Paquette discovered in Egypt was demonstrated to the entire world this January and February of 2011 with the uprising and ultimate victory of the Egyptian protesters. The world witnessed the Egyptian struggle, watching with inspiration as protestors cheered when Mubarak stepped down.

This is what makes Lillie Paquette's story invaluable. It is a story that Lillie Paquette has the rare ability to tell and one that

must be shown to the world. Paquette was there before the revolution, during the revolution, and continues to document the situation after the fall of Mubarak. She saw the Egyptians fight one rigged election, saw them hurt during anti-government protests, and watched the public resent-

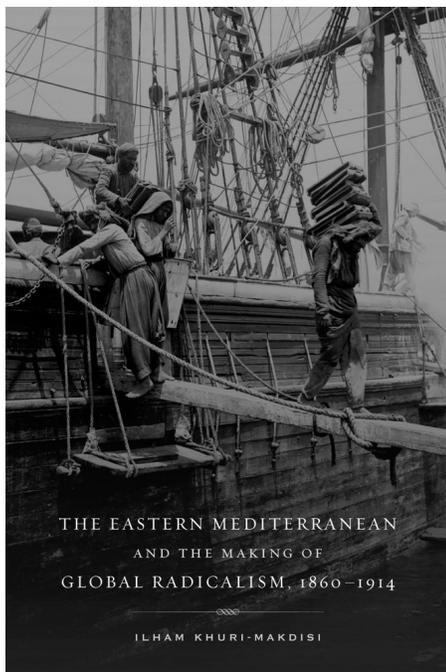
ment for its central government climb higher and higher. However, through all of this she also saw their unwavering optimism. She saw Egyptians continue to have faith that their efforts would someday yield victory. The piece manages to accurately portray the spirit and vitality of the Egyptian people, and gives an explanation for the success of the revolution

One of the greatest lines of the film, which encapsulates the inimitability of the film, comes from the great Egyptian actor Omar Sharif, who says, "Egyptians will hope forever, they will go on hoping. Even if half the population dies they will continue to hope." The struggle for democratization in Egypt has only just begun and as a filmmaker, Lillie Paquette plans to go back to Egypt to continue her project just as the Egyptian people continue theirs.

- Julia Marks,
Political Science '15

Rereading *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914*:

The Mobilization of Radical Ideologies in the Arab World



Northeastern University's own Ilham Khuri Makdisi published the groundbreaking work *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914* last April, less than a year before the international community rested its gaze on the rapid ideological revolution and protest movement that has swept the region in the last few months. Rereading Khuri-Makdisi's work in light of the recent mobilization of thought and action in the Middle East and North Africa illuminates trends by which people are motivated to promote alternative social and global visions.

Analogies between this recent Arab revolution and the fall of the Soviet Bloc in 1989 or the Iranian Revolution in 1979 are prevalent in media, however often these analyses fall short of drawing fruitful conclusions. Khuri-Makdisi's revival of the *Nahda* period (Arab Renaissance) affords the reader another point of comparison in which one can draw conclusions about the platforms though which global ideologies spread, and the circumstances that instigate profound ideological shifts.

Khuri-Makdisi's work serves as an atlas of socialist and anarchistic movements in the Middle East from 1860-1914, with particular focus on how these "radical" movements were expressed and mobilized by intellectuals, workers, artists, writers and migrants in Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria. The book demonstrates how radical groups developed through exchange with global networks of

global production. The work offers a fresh perspective on late Ottoman social and intellectual history and challenges Eurocentric narratives about radical social movements. It departs from the narrative in which Middle Eastern 'radical' thought is principally Islamic in nature, uncovering a more nuanced ideological production and context for the region, rehabilitating an era that has been largely under-examined in the scholarship on the period.

Parallels between the cultivation of thought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the present trends are abundant. Khuri-Makdisi's work showcases intellectuals who rallied to reconceptualize world order through a vision of social justice, largely within socialist or anarchistic frameworks. Calls for political representation, constitutional government, freedom of speech and freedom from the colonialist yoke

"These practices illuminate the importance of the public sphere in the spread of ideas, also aiding today's activists in their work through the use of burgeoning social media platforms..."

socialists and anarchists, situating these local movements in their global context and thus redefining the period of the Arab *Nahda* as a

resounded; echoing today's revolutionary goals. Non-Western actors found the confidence to reconstruct their social worlds by synthesizing and adapting swiftly globalizing ideologies.

The book's period of focus was marked largely by a swell

in population and urbanization, compounded by a wave in which global communication and information networks swelled with the development of global economies, the construction of the Suez Canal, and the presence of foreign imperial powers. Ideas were spread through the cultivation of new media networks: pamphlets, articles, telegraphs, postal services, literary salons, and the theater; all

nascent spaces for the exchange of ideologies. These practices illuminate the importance of the public sphere in the spread of ideas, also aiding today's activists in their work through the use of burgeoning social media platforms, the Internet, and the unprecedented dissemination of information in the WikiLeaks release.

Khuri-Makdisi cites this period of globalization beginning in the late nineteenth century as a point where an urban middle class grew in congruence with the spread of education in urban centers. This increase in education acted as one of the stimuli for the blossoming of radical thought in the period under study, as raised

expectations for employment were unmatched by labor market realities. Higher expectations for employment due to an increase in education among Arab youth incited recent radicalization, as told by the story of Mohamad Bouazizi, the Tunisian man who turned to self-

“...social movements. It departs from the narrative in which Middle Eastern ‘radical’ thought is principally Islamic in nature, uncovering a more nuanced ideological production ...”

immolation to express his frustration as an unemployed university graduate last December. People then and now became increasingly aware of the inequity of the international economic system, working toward a movement of mass politics and calling for political representation, while realizing the state cannot protect its people from the injustice of international capitalism. Khuri-Makdisi cites the spread of migrant labor as a cathartic mechanism for this growth in radicalism in the late-nineteenth century, but noted in a lecture at Northeastern University in March 2011 that no such release exists as readily in today's world order.

The narrative ends with the

beginning of World War I which comprehensively reworked global social order, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean where the fall of the Ottoman Empire marked the formation of new Arab states, more extensive controls on mobility, and the birth of “Arab Nationalism,” which became one of the dominant ideologies in the region in the early post World War II period. Due to recent popular shifts in the re-

gion's political and ideological focuses, the possibility exists that the early twenty-first century may give way to a similar period of massive restructuring in the regional order.

As a new vision of social order blossoms, due in part to the same factors that allowed for a similar frothing of new and radical ideologies in the late nineteenth century, one can hope that future historians will be as thorough as Khuri-Makdisi in charting this exciting new ideological revival.

- Sarah Sheffer,
International Affairs '11

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Correction:

Last issue we stated that Franklin Pierce vetoed a bill designating public lands for use for the benefit of indigent insane persons in 1894. The article should have stated that this veto was issued on May 3, 1854.

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"Independence is a really cool thing as you can be a bit more bold,
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Special thanks to Prof. David A. Rochefort and Prof. John Portz.

Special thanks to Joe Higgins for the new NUPR logo.

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