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Two - Party Dominance

The Donkeys and
Elephants Are
Here to Stay

by Elise LeCrone

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**America, in the Age of Drones:
Reconfiguring International Relations**

by Michael Trudeau & William Wagner

**One Against All:
Media Culture and Public Perception**

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Mission Statement of the Northeastern University Political Review

The Northeastern University Political Review seeks to be a nonpartisan platform for students to publish essays and articles of the highest possible caliber on contemporary domestic and international politics, as well as critical reviews of political media. The Political Review aspires to foster a culture of intelligent political discourse among interested individuals while promoting awareness of political issues in the campus community. The organization envisions itself as a place where students with a common interest in politics and world affairs may come together to discuss and develop their views and refine their opinions. The Political Review hopes to reflect the diversity of thought and spirit at Northeastern, including the dual ethic of academic and experiential education our school embodies.

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With the first edition of the new year, we decided to do something different. Our editors are an amazingly talented group of people, who are not only great at chasing down writers and producing great articles, but are smart to boot!

Our goal has always been to create a platform for intelligent and thoughtful discourse, and this time around we decided to include our editors in that discussion. With the election coming up in the fall, we wanted to know their thoughts on what the steps the next leader of the country should take.

We would love for the "Editor's Corner" to become a new launching pad for discussion. We encourage our readers to respond to this edition's answers and to ask our editors questions for the next. We might not be able to fix all of the problem in the world, but with more smart people and smart answers, we just get that much closer.

So stay tuned for more questions and more responses, and be sure to participate. And, as always, be heard.

Kaileigh Higgins
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Two-Party Dominance: The Donkeys and Elephants Are Here to Stay

As we enter this election year, the American public seems frustrated as ever with the constant, often inflammatory, conflict between Democrats and Republicans. We have all heard the disillusioned rhetoric, and probably thought something similar ourselves: the two-party system is broken, and Washington does not represent the interests of everyday Americans.

This sentiment leaves many exasperated citizens wanting change, desiring a system in which they are not forced to choose between only two options, neither of which represents their individual beliefs very well. To quote an ironic Jon Stewart in *America the Book: A Citizen's Guide to Democracy Inaction*, "The two-party system elegantly reflects the bi-chromatic rainbow

that is American political thought."

From this perspective, it would seem that third-party candidates would be a viable option for voters frustrated with the bipartisan system. Why, then, has a third party candidate never been elected president in the past century? Why are there only two United States senators, and zero representatives, who are not affiliated with one of the two major parties?

Thanks to the writings of a twentieth-century political scientist named Maurice Duverger, we can see precisely how this situation has come to be. It is not the result of a defect in the character of Americans or an attempt by the powers-that-be to maintain domination. Rather, America's two-party system is the logical outgrowth of our electoral

system.

In order to understand the mechanics of Duverger's ideas, referred to by political scientists as "Duverger's law," we first must understand the electoral system at work. The system used by the United States, and the cause of our two-party conundrum, is a single-member district plurality system (SMD-P). In such a system, a country is divided into districts that each have one representative in the national legislature. These representatives are elected in a "winner-take-all" fashion, in contrast to other systems that allocate votes in a proportional manner. This is where the term "SMD-P" comes from: "single-member district" indicates that the winner of the election is the sole representative of that particular district in the legislature; "plurality" is a term for the kind of system in which the candidate who garners more votes than any other candidate is the winner.

In such a situation, Duverger argues, a two-party system will arise because of "mechanical" and "psychological" factors. In terms of mechanics, the electoral system creates a disparity between the percentage of the vote that a third party receives and the number of legislative seats it gets as a result, since only the party with the largest percentage of votes in a particular district is awarded representation. Say, for example, that Party A, Party B, and Party

C have candidates running for election in every electoral district in the United States. Suppose that in each district, Party A wins 40% of the vote (a plurality), Party B wins 35%, and Party C wins 25%. With these results, Party A will be the elected representative in every district, and thus control the entire legislature. However, even though Party C has gotten 25% of the national vote, a substantial 75 million people in a nation of 300 million, they are not represented in the legislature at all.

In this way, an SMD-P system gives preferential treatment to plurality winners and no regard to runners-up when translating vote percentages into legislative seats. Duverger refers to this divide between the percentage of votes received and the number of seats received as "under-representation" of a third party. This "mechanical" aspect is part of the reason why, according to Duverger, an SMD-P system fosters bipolarity: third parties have no access to legislative representation unless they are able to actually place first in a particular district's contest.

The other piece of an SMD-P system that encourages two major parties is the "psychological" factor, or the way that voters weigh their choices when casting their ballots. Duverger asserts that when there is a third party vying for support against the two major parties, that third party is often seen as a "waste" of a vote. Voters realize that the third party's chances of winning are slim, and it is not likely to get the most votes in any

one district. Therefore, instead of "wasting" their vote on a party that will most likely not prevail, voters choose what they view as the lesser of two evils between the two major parties. This pattern of voter behavior is difficult for third parties to overcome, and it contributes to the establishment and endurance of a two-party system.

"The other piece of an SMD-P system that encourages two major parties is the 'psychological' factor, or the way that voters weigh their choices when casting their ballots."

The United States is a definite example of Duverger's law at work. It is an SMD-P system; the legislature is comprised of individuals who are the plurality winners in their individual districts. Additionally, while Duverger's law is most directly applicable to how the legislature in the United States is elected, the winner-take-all system of the Electoral College fosters the same effect in presidential elections. In most cases, the state is essentially a "district" in which the plurality winner receives all of the Electoral College votes for that state. Two states, Maine and Nebraska, are the only differences; both distribute their electoral votes proportionally among candidates.

Thus, in accordance with Duverger's findings, our two-party system is entrenched. Rarely throughout our history has a President been elected without the support of a major party. In the twentieth century, every President elected was either a Democrat or Republican. The mechanics of the system keep third parties down in congressional and presidential elections; compounding this problem is the pervasive idea that for many Americans, voting for a third party is a waste of their vote since that party is so unlikely to win.

In spite of the seeming intractability of the situation, however, third party candidates continue to run for seats in the legislature and for executive offices at all levels of government. For example, both the Libertarian Party and the Green Party have been fielding candidates in every presidential election since 1972 and 1996, respectively.

Additionally, the current election cycle has seen another faction emerge with an alternative way of selecting a candidate to challenge the Democrats and Republicans. The group, known as Americans Elect, is a purportedly non-partisan organization holding an online "primary" via their website. Their belief, in part, is that the domination of the two major parties marginalizes other voices, other individuals, and is undemocratic in the way that it does not fairly represent those who do not strongly identify with either party. Thus, their goal is to choose a candidate through their popular,



A race to leave the third-party contender in the dust.

Photo Courtesy of Hyokano via Flickr.

and supposedly more democratic, method of selection, as opposed to the primaries traditionally held by the two major parties.

Americans Elect's website states, "You have the power to help break gridlock and change politics as usual." Yet, the reality is that "politics as usual" is not a fluke of history or an unfortunate flaw of the particular individuals we have elected. Indeed, "politics as usual" is the natural, logical outgrowth of our winner-take-all electoral system.

In fairness to third parties, they often serve an important role in presidential contests by forcing the discourse to include

issues that may not otherwise have been discussed. The Green Party, for example, has likely contributed much to public awareness of environmental issues. These alternate voices still provide an outlet for those who do not fall neatly into one of the two major parties, and help better represent the ideological diversity of American political thought. When examined through the lens of Duverger's law, though, their chances for being elected to the legislature or the presidency remain grim.

For those Americans wishing for a change from the monopolistic control that the

Democratic and Republican parties yield in our government, the prospects are not good. There will always be third parties driven by ideology. There will always be dissenting voices in the national discourse because the reality is that human thought is not "bichromatic." Yet, without a major shift in party loyalty or a change to the nature of our electoral system, our government is likely to be run almost exclusively by these two parties for the foreseeable future.

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UK Energy Policy, Nuclear Optimism and the Future

The prospect and pursuit of long-term sustainable energy security has caused progressive anxiety among fossil fuel dependent countries as they come to grips with dwindling supplies and an unstable Middle East. Increases in the cost of uranium and fossil fuels, expanding populations, finite energy supplies, and the globally swelling demand for energy factor into a worldwide energy policy shift away from fossil fuels and towards alternative forms of energy. Many thought nuclear power would be the solution, but recent events at the Fukushima Daiichi plant in Japan, as well as concerns over the safety of nuclear materials, has forced many governments to reassess their nuclear ambitions.

The UK offers a case in point.

Between 2001 and 2008, the demand for nuclear power increased substantially because its 'green reputation' suggests a cleaner alternative to coal-fire plants and oil. In the past decade, it appears that the world energy market has encountered both the opportunity and the necessity for entering a nuclear renaissance. However, in March 2011, the combined effects of an earthquake and a tsunami caused a nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant in Japan. Due to the regularity of earthquakes in Japan, Fukushima was well prepared. "Reactors 4, 5, [and] 6 had been powered down earlier for scheduled servicing, and 1, 2, [and] 3 were successful-

ly shut down". But Fukushima was ill prepared to handle the earthquake's resulting tsunami. Less than an hour after the earthquake occurred, an enormous tsunami flooded Fukushima Daiichi. The resulting wave was almost double the height of the 17-foot sea wall, and Fukushima suffered a facility blackout, cooling system malfunction, and reactor meltdowns. The events at Fukushima produced uncertainty about whether or not nuclear safety could actually be managed. It was also the impetus behind the decisions of multiple countries to re-evaluate, suspend, or in some cases, terminate their commitments to nuclear energy. The International Energy Agency reduced by half its estimate of ad-

ditional gains in nuclear generating capacity by 2035 following the nuclear disaster in Japan.

In spite of these concerns, the UK has exhibited marked optimism with regard to nuclear energy. On September 9, 2011, a British Science Association poll reported that over 41 percent of people support nuclear energy in the UK. On October 13, 2011, Energy and Climate Secretary Chris Huhne declared that the UK would commence with plans to build eight new nuclear energy reactors by 2025. These will be the most recent nuclear power plants constructed in the UK in three decades. Despite the global shift away from nuclear energy since the Fukushima meltdown, the UK has not altered its plans to address the need for alternative energy resources. In light of the stark contrast between the energy policies of most countries and those of the UK, a question presents itself: Why, in the face of such mounting controversy and international opposition, did the UK not only retain, but bolster its commitment to nuclear energy?

After the Japanese nuclear disaster, many countries decided to re-evaluate their nuclear energy programs. The crisis could not have occurred at a worse time, as governments of many of the world's most vital economies had started to take action towards constructing nuclear energy facilities to meet rising demand. In April 2011, an analysis prepared by UBS predicted that close to 30 nuclear power stations worldwide would be taken offline due to the events



Ratcliffe Power Plant in the UK.
Photo Courtesy of Joshua Newman via Flickr.

that occurred at Fukushima. On March 21, Platts released a report that made serious inferences that the accident brought the speed and scale of planned nuclear expansions around the world into doubt. A Deutsche Bank report published shortly after the incident contended that the future would hold a preference for renewable, as opposed to nuclear, energy.

Months after what appeared to be a nuclear renaissance in the UK, Parliament decided to suspend any new developments in conjunction with its nuclear power program until the government reviewed the new reactor designs. In March of 2011, Secretary Huhne announced that the British government might revise its commitment to nuclear energy as a result of the nuclear disaster. In the next month, government plans for the new nuclear stations were put on hold so the Department of Energy and Climate could review the consequences of Fukushima. Huhne

requested that chief nuclear inspector, Mike Weightman, draft a thorough analysis on the ramifications of the events at Fukushima and what lessons the UK should take away from the accident. Huhne further specified in his request that Weightman publish an interim report in May 2011 and a separate finalized version in September 2011. In the interim report, Weightman asserted that the UK had no reason not to continue with its nuclear plans. In June 2011, the Government promulgated its continued support of nuclear energy, but stated that it would wait to make any official announcements on future plans until Weightman's final report had been released. However, the Office of Nuclear Regulation (ONR) did stipulate that the government would not subsidize the construction of any additional reactors, and that new development would be paid entirely by private interests. Therefore, energy companies with aspirations

to construct reactors at any of the new sites would have to compete for the right to do so. On October 12, after reviewing Weightman's final report and meeting with representatives, Secretary Huhne formally announced that Japan's nuclear power disaster would not stop the use of nuclear energy in the UK, and that the NuGeneration Consortium would continue as planned. "We [the UK]," Huhne asserted, "need nuclear energy!"

The UK's increasing reliance on nuclear energy, in the face of a global shift away from the technology, is related to its convenience as an investment and improvements made on the technology. In the past, the UK had been able to address the demand for energy with domestic natural resources such as oil, gas, and coal. However, domestic sources of fossil fuels are continuously decreasing and, as a result, have fostered a dependence on foreign energy at a time when global demand and prices are climbing. The economics behind nuclear energy, while controversial, assert that nuclear power plants provide low direct fuel costs. Additionally, proposals aimed at curtailing climate change, such as the carbon tax or carbon emissions trading scheme, are to the benefit of nuclear energy as opposed to other forms of energy. A recent study compared the costs of generating electricity from wind, nuclear and coal plant's in the UK, and found nuclear power to be the cheapest option.

While the UK government has decided not to provide subsidies for the nuclear energy

industry, it has provided other incentives to encourage investment, including the carbon floor plan and the Green Investment Bank (GIB). The government is committed to increasing the costs of emitting carbon, thus rewarding long-term investment in low-carbon technologies. The carbon floor plan represents a financial encumbrance on all carbon emitting UK businesses, and does not affect companies that operate outside the UK. Therefore, the carbon floor plan could pose a serious disadvantage to these

"Secretary Huhne formally announced that Japan's nuclear power disaster would not stop the use of nuclear energy in the UK... 'We [the UK]', Huhne asserted, 'need nuclear energy!'"

carbon emitting UK businesses in terms of market competition as they try to cope with increased prices and cheaper alternatives. The Green Investment Bank (GIB) is another government initiative that seeks to encourage private investment in a green UK economy. The combination of increasing costs for fossil fuels, positive government regulatory procedures, and additional government incentives for new stations have created a promising outlook for the future of the nuclear industry in the UK.

The Office for Nuclear Regulation is the administrative body charged with the oversight of the UK nuclear industry, and it has outlined mandatory regulations for the nuclear industry within its Safety Assessment Principles. As a result, the UK nuclear industry has acknowledged previous problems, made demonstrated improvements, and taken a leading role in the commitment to green technology. Technological improvements in the UK nuclear industry have also worked to address the issue of climate change. Compliance with the ONR Safety Assessment Principles includes numerous phases and appraisals to confirm that the reactors are mechanically sound and functionally safe. As climate change poses a new series of threats to the operation of the nuclear industry, new stoppages and safety mechanisms have been implemented to better address these risks.

In the last few years, there have been multiple endorsements from high ranking officials in and out of government that have factored into a nationwide improvement in the UK nuclear industry. Overall, the technological improvements to address concerns relating to safety, security, radiation, and proliferation have strengthened and upgraded the nuclear energy framework in the UK as whole. Risks have been reduced, and better management schemes have been promoted. The UK nuclear energy industry has retained the support of the general public and government because it has become attractive for private

investment, and because the industry has improved upon related, once riskier, technology. To date, a wide-range of mechanical and procedural improvements have been instituted and have resulted in marked progress towards addressing issues related to terror-

ism, radiation, nuclear proliferation, and reserve safety structures. Both domestic improvements and investments and progressive government policy have worked in combination to cultivate UK support from the general public and, if polls can be trusted to indicate

energy-future optimism, nuclear energy represents both necessity and possibility for UK citizens.

*Sean Comi
Political Science '13*

Symptoms of Cold Warfare Between Saudi Arabia and Iran Part 2 of 3

This is Part II in a three-part series that examines the historical foundations, current dynamics, and future prospects of the relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Part I provided a historical account of the relationship between the two countries and their people from 632 until the Iranian Revolution in 1979; Part II examines the relationship in the 30 years since.

Just as a new decade began, a war between Iran and Iraq erupted and gave the Saudi monarchy the opportunity to showcase their determination in holding the emerging Iranian Republic back. In 1980, the threat of an internal revolt from an Iraqi Shia majority long suppressed under Saddam Hussein's minority led Sunni government prompted the Iraqi dictator to direct an invasion of neighboring Iran. Though Hussein pointed to oil and border disputes as driving his decision to invade, what he really hoped to do was suppress the new Iranian Shia movement and thus the potential for a similar movement in Iraq. Over the course

of the war, Saudi Arabia supplied more than \$25 billion in support of Baghdad as it fought the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. The decision to do so was crucial as it showed indisputable hostility from Saudi Arabia towards Iran, and contributed to the death of half a million Iranians, permanently scarring the Saudi-Iranian relationship. Fearing the threat of a powerful Iran, Saudi Arabia advised other Arab governments to follow its example and support Iraq.

For much of the 1980s, the war was seen as a stalemate in which both sides suffered mounting casualties, but made no strategic gains in the process. The brutal August, 1988 destruction of an Iranian Kurdish village by Iraqi chemical weapons forced Iran's hand to the negotiating table, and Tehran accepted peace through a UN mandated cease-fire later that year. UN Security Council Resolution 598 officially ended the eight-year war, which killed 500,000 Iranians and 240,000 Iraqis.

In 1987, an incident occurred in the Saudi city of Mecca

that severely damaged already strained relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In July of that year, as the Iran-Iraq war was still being fought, Iranian radicals laid siege to the Grand Mosque of Mecca and killed 317 pilgrims and 85 security forces in the process. The Grand Mosque is widely believed to be the place where Mohammed received his first revelations, and is the most hallowed site in both Sunni and Shia Islam. The event caused global outrage as over 2,000 civilians were wounded and a large amount of damage was done to the mosque.

For much of the 1990s, relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia continued to deteriorate. Financially struggling after investing in the Iraqi war effort, Saudi Arabia and Iran engaged in further diplomatic disputes over oil prices and quotas as they sought to offset their respective war-debts. The Saudis encouraged gradual price and production increases, so as not to 'shock' their Western consumers, while Iran called for a more rapid escalation of quotas

and prices. A June 1996 bombing in the Saudi city of Dharhan killed 19 U.S. Air Force personnel, and placed further stress on Saudi-Iranian relations when the U.S. government immediately blamed Iran. However, President Clinton later recanted the FBI's pre-mature assessment as two very promising Iranian presidents emerged who were seen by the United States and Saudi Arabia as reformers and allies. Both presidents, Rafsanjani (1989-1997) and later Khatami (1997-2005), opened lines of communication between Tehran, Riyadh and Washington, and paved the way to the first official visits since pre-revolution diplomatic meetings. These meetings led to the May 1998 signing of the Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, an agreement that facilitated increased cooperation in economic, commercial, scientific, and technical fields, and was

later expanded to include larger regional issues as well. As tensions eased between the U.S. and Iran during this period, Saudi Arabia became more likely to cooperate with Tehran, with King Fahd going so far as to encourage other Persian Gulf countries to follow its lead in improving relations with Iran. On April 18, 2001, Iran's Interior Minister Abdol Vahed Mousavi-Lari signed the Saudi-Iranian Security Agreement with Prince Nayef in Tehran. Both countries had realized that they would gain from the proposed positive-sum situation, rather than continuing their unsuccessful efforts to maximize economic benefits by working independently. This time of confidence building between the countries was referred to as a "new honeymoon".

The 21st century has thus far revealed a world of skepticism and uncertainty between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Improved relations

quickly deteriorated following the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and have grown markedly worse as Iran has expanded its sphere of influence in the region and become increasingly estranged from the international community. With Saddam Hussein out of Iraq in 2003, the issue of which sect would lead the Muslim world, Sunni or Sh'ia, emerged as a significant regional issue and a source of contentious debate between the two countries. Iran has attempted to fill this void, but its hard-line ideology and almost blanket support of other Sh'ia organizations, combined with its nuclear activities and progressive global isolation, has led many to be skeptical of Tehran. Over the past decade, Saudi Arabia has attempted to play a more prominent role in the Muslim world, but lacks legitimacy in the eyes of many Arab publics because of its close ties with the U.S. and its undemocratic traditions. In the last ten-years, Iran has shifted most of its efforts towards expanding its sphere of influence and building an alliance network. Iran and Syria retain strong ties, Tehran has provided munitions and funds to Iraqi insurgents, and the Iranian Republic is closely tied to Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

As nuclear security continues to be a hot-button issue in global politics, Iran has displayed blatant disregard for the demands of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, despite its being a signatory. Instead, Iran continues to push for what many analysts believe is a nuclear weapon. If Iran is suc-

cessful, it is unlikely that it would ever use a nuclear weapon unless the direst circumstances presented themselves, such as invasion by an outside army, and, in the eyes of Iran's current leaders, a fully functioning nuclear deterrent would almost guarantee that such an event would never occur.

A number of countries have imposed round after round of crippling economic sanctions upon Iran without any signs of Iranian retreat. In fact, some believe that the sanctions are simply strengthening Iran's resolve. Amid increased economic sanctions, Iran has threatened to essentially close the Strait of Hormuz, through which 1/6th of the world's oil travels. Such a closure would be devastating to the economies of Saudi Arabia and the neighboring Gulf states. An inability to export petroleum, upon which the country's economy is dependent, could cripple the undiversified business sectors of Saudi Arabia and other countries in the region.

In 2009, Saudi Prince Faisal told U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton that even the most severe economic sanctions simply weren't enough to combat the threat of a nuclear Iran. In November 2011, Wikileaks released U.S. State Department cables that quoted Adel al-Jubeir, the Saudi ambassador to Washington and the target from last October's assassination plot, as recalling "the king's frequent exhortations to the U.S. to attack Iran and so put an end to its nuclear weapons program". Adel al-Jubeir was further quoted to say, "Although no longer in public of-

fice, Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal has caused a rush of controversy by demanding that the conservative Islamic kingdom 'look into all options we are given, including obtaining [nuclear] weapons ourselves' if Iran successfully completes its intentions to do so."

While immediate accusations by U.S. Attorney General, Eric Holder, placed blame on the Iranian government for Adel al-Jubeir's attempted assassination,

"The 21st century has thus far revealed a world of skepticism and uncertainty between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Improved relations quickly deteriorated following the U.S. invasion of Iraq..."

the plot symbolized much more than an isolated incident and has further damaged already fragile relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In early December, 2011, Saudi Arabia hosted talks with Iranian Intelligence Minister, Heydar Moslehi, aimed at clearing up "misunderstandings" about the alleged plot by exposing them as baseless and unfounded. Negotiations and talks continue and could suggest a more optimistic future, although one could argue that diplomacy is largely ceremonial, has been tried before and failed, and ultimately won't deter either state

in their quest for regional hegemony.

The \$1.5 million plot marks yet another turning point for the worse as simmering tensions between the two countries continue to flare up. Iranian support for Shi'a movements in Iraq and Bahrain, as well as its close ties with Syria, Hamas, and Hezbollah, continue though they may be undercut as fresh sanctions continue to bite. If successful in attaining nuclear weapons capabilities in the near future, Iran would possess a nuclear deterrent and could provide an umbrella to its proxy organizations, but in seeking such capabilities it is pitting itself against much more than just Saudi Arabia, and is giving the regional competitor a reason to develop its own nuclear capabilities as well.

Once familiar with an understanding of the diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran, it becomes increasingly clear that there is a strong correlation between past and present events. The sometimes-fiery tensions that seem to erupt out of nowhere are not isolated events, but rather follow a tradition of clashing ideologies. Without any formal "hot" warfare declared between the nations, Saudi Arabia and Iran are not technically at war in the global arena but instead exhibit clear signs of cold warfare.

*Harrison Ackerman
Political Science &
International Affairs '16*



*Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (left)
with Saudi King Abdullah (right).*

Photo Courtesy of historymike47 via Flickr.

America, in the Age of Drones: Reconfiguring International Relations

The recent loss of a United States RQ-170 Sentinel unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) to the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Pakistan's removal of a United States UAV base in its territory have brought the issue of remotely piloted drones to the forefront of international relations. New developments in drone capabilities, including longer flight distances, the ability to remotely control the aircraft, and the addition of precision weaponry have greatly increased drone visibility and thus increased the necessity for the international community to address the usage of drones. While the U.S. has been operating UAVs in foreign airspace for well over 50 years, it has yet to develop satisfactory international agreements governing their usage.

The U.S. first began

experimenting with UAVs during the Second World War by outfitting a variety of planes to respond to remote radio controls, and often packing them with explosives for suicide missions. These aircraft were rarely effective, and none went into major use. It was not until the mid-1990s, under President Clinton, that the U.S. first began using drones more effectively and in large numbers. During NATO operations over Bosnia, Kosovo and Serbia, UAVs with expanded capabilities were fielded to maintain surveillance of important targets, particularly air-defense systems. Drones such as the RQ-5 Hunter, RQ-7 Shadow, and the MQ-1 Predator had highly efficient engines which allowed them to loiter above targets for hours, while new imaging technology

allowed them to stream regular and infrared video directly to the screens of their operators. In early 2001, the U.S. Air Force (USAF) successfully experimented with launching precision-guided anti-tank missiles from the UAVs, a technique that has since become a cornerstone in the U.S. drone program. This combination of loiter time, visual capabilities, and armament eventually changed drones from passive reconnaissance vehicles into devastating offensive weapons. With the beginning of the War on Terror in September of 2001, UAVs became a key part of U.S. military and intelligence operations. Predator drones armed with anti-tank missiles were deployed to Afghanistan in large numbers, and have since been used to target senior al-Qaeda leaders and members of Taliban and Haqqani networks. While Predators primarily reconnoitered targets for USAF fighter jets, their offensive capabilities have also been put to use. During late 2001, Predators were used to fire Hellfire missiles in support of ground troops in Afghanistan and, in 2002, against al Qaeda personnel designated by the CIA in Yemen. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have seen the Predator used to fire hundreds of missiles in support of counterinsurgency operations and have signaled a transition from reconnaissance drone to attack

aircraft.

The ability of the Predator to circle over a target for up to 24 hours at a time has made it extremely useful for surveying suspected insurgents, as well as observing roads, base perimeters, and other areas insurgents might attempt to plant bombs or otherwise attack. More importantly, the aircraft does not have to land until they run out of fuel, whereas a manned aircraft is forced to land and change pilots several times per day. In fact, the pilots of the drones are rarely in the same country as the aircraft they operate; the USAF controls its Afghan and Pakistani drones from Nellis and Creech Air Force Bases in Nevada, using military satellites to broadcast signals from operators to drones around the world. Taking advantage of this capability, the CIA has used the Predator extensively for operations targeting Islamic militants in Pakistan and Yemen, such as the operation in Yemen where al Qaeda figurehead Anwar al-Awlaki was killed by Predator-fired missiles.

Currently, the USAF operates more than 250 Predators, as well as 47 Reapers, and plans to buy 350 more Reapers through fiscal year 2016. In addition, USAF operates dozens of larger aircrafts, including the RQ-4 Global Hawk and the RQ-170 Sentinel, for long-range surveillance. The U.S. Army also operates many Predators, while the Navy and Marine Corps operate small UAVs of several different types, resulting in a combined total of over 3,000 UAVs operated by the US military

as a whole. Compared to the pre-9/11 period, where the number of drones in the US inventory numbered dozens, this growth is explosive. However, even with these great successes, the Predator's replacement, the MQ-9 Reaper, is already being produced. With a maximum payload more than double the Predator's, the Reaper also includes laser and GPS guided bombs in addition to missiles. This rapid weaponization of drones has been paralleled by a major increase in drone usage by the U.S. military.

This rapid increase in UAV use is not limited to the U.S. military; NATO has adopted a Standardization Agreement on UAVs, with the United Kingdom and Italy adopting the Predator, and the European Aeronautic Defense and Space Company working on an armed stealth drone for the German and Spanish militaries. Non-NATO countries such as Russia, China and Israel also have advanced UAVs that rival U.S. designs, and Israel in particular has made widespread use of UAVs. The last decade has seen a worldwide increase in drone use and capabilities, but without the creation of corresponding political and legal guidelines.

From the perspective of United States Domestic Law, the statutory restrictions for the use of drones lie with the President. After the September 11th attacks, Congress passed a joint resolution entitled the 'Authorization for use of Military Force' (Public Law 107-40) that outlines, under the War Powers Act, how the

President can respond to threats. This short resolution states that;

“The President is authorized to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons.”

From an international perspective the actions of the United States are legal as well. In Security Council Resolution 2011, the yearly update to the Use of Force by International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) in Afghanistan, Article 2 states that it “Authorizes the member states participating in ISAF to take all necessary measures to fulfill its mandate.” These dual resolutions, both domestic and international, give the President of the United States extremely wide discretion as to the Use of Force in central Asia against those who would jeopardize global security. This broadly defined discretion has led to the violation of the sovereignty of nations to eliminate targets the United States sees as a threat.

In Pakistan alone since the Obama administration took office, it is estimated that 2,900 deaths have occurred as a result



An MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aerial vehicle taxis after landing at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, Nov. 10.

Photo Courtesy of U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. Erik Gudmundson.

of drone strikes. These strikes are known as ‘Targeted Killings’ and are defined as “The use of lethal force attributable to a subject of international law with the intent, premeditation and deliberation to kill individually selected persons who are not in the physical custody of those targeting them.” The decision to make a Targeted Killing is delegated to a commander who oversees the operation of the drones and in turn orders an operator to make the deadly shot. Currently these people in place ensure the highest level of discipline when using deadly force with drones, but there

are no legal ramifications in place for when mistakes are made, there is no accountability, and there is no congressional oversight.

The increased automation of the entire drone network also adds another legal dimension to the issue that must be addressed by a regulatory body either domestically or internationally. How long will it be before we see the world’s first drone versus drone combat? Is this a viable alternative to current conflict? If so, how do we determine a winner? These are the questions that lawmakers must be asking themselves when they approve defense spending

budgets with increased research and development for drone technology. In our lifetimes the technology that is created as a result of the technology being implemented today will be an intertwined part of our lives. The question we must all ask ourselves is to what extent do we want these drones to actually be a part of our lives, and how much control do we want to give up to them?

Michael Trudeau
International Affairs ‘12
William Wagner
History ‘12

The Last Mountain: Understanding the Toxic Side of Coal

At last year’s Sundance Film Festival, a movie premiered entitled *The Last Mountain*. At the time of writing *The Last Mountain* is available for streaming on Netflix - and it is a must watch for all of us. The film’s director, Bill Haney, previously directed and produced the documentary *A Life Among Whales*, which takes a look at one man’s lifelong passion for the wild. It has won numerous awards including a Silver Hugo and the Earthwatch Film Award. The title *The Last Mountain* refers to a fight between a local community and a coal mining company for the last great mountain in Appalachia, in the words of Bill Haney, it is “the uplifting story of the power of ordinary citizens to remake the future when they have determination and

courage to do so.” Fifty percent of our energy use is from the coal industry, which equates to sixteen pounds for every individual in the United States **per day**. We owe it to ourselves to watch this movie because it is about the impact and influence of the coal industry and the future of energy in our country.

The facts regarding the coal industry and their environmental track record speak for themselves. Between 2000 and 2006, Massey Energy (a major coal company in the Coal River Valley, and the focus of the movie) committed more than 60,000 environmental violations. In 2007 the federal EPA stepped in to collect on the fines associated with those violations but Massey was allowed to settle those violations with \$20 million,

less than 1% of what the violations call for. In the month after that, they ran up another 8,500 violations.

The movie does an excellent job of backing up their statements with footage. Don’t believe that coal companies literally back dump trucks up to the side of the mountain and drop all of their waste into streams below? Watch this movie. Don’t believe that heavy metals wind up in the water? Watch this movie. The externalities forced upon the communities of West Virginia that allow us to view coal as the cheapest option are sickening.

Sickening too is the coal industries efforts to fool us all into thinking they follow the rules. Mountain top removal usu-

ally ends with the coal company completing ‘reclamation’ on the land they have destroyed. Rocks are used as a soil substitute that allows nothing but grass to grow. Forests are wiped out. The heavy metals in streams do not go away. The silica that has been blasted into the air does not go away. The companies can even build stream substitutes (aka plumbing) that promotes poor drainage and flash flooding in the communities downstream.

Personally, one of the most frightening things the movie discusses is the 2.8 billion pounds of sludge that is produced by one coal plant, held back by a simple earth levee: radioactive and arsenic filled toxic waste behind a leaking dirt wall. In October 2000 (pictured above), one such impoundment broke in a spill that was twenty-eight times the size of the Exxon Valdez.

The cause to save Coal River Mountain found a champion in Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. who has devoted his life to helping the environmental cause. He is also pictured on the next page with Bill Raney, president of the West Virginia Coal Association which represents more than 90 percent of underground and surface coal mining production in the state of West Virginia. He is Chief Prosecuting Attorney for Hudson Riverkeeper, President for the Waterkeeper Alliance and Senior Attorney for the National Resources Defense Council. He speaks fondly of both his father and his uncle, and recalls a



Radioactive and arsenic filled toxic waste spill.

Photo Courtesy of 'The Last Mountain' Press Kit.

lifetime of environmental activities. The documentary highlights many charming Kennedy family moments, in particular when 10-year old RFK Jr. endearingly presents his uncle (JFK) with a pet salamander in the Oval Office. But even with his support it seems it will be an uphill battle to correct even a fraction of the damage the coal industry has caused.

The battle over mountain top removal comes down to 33 CFR Part 323: Permits for Discharge of Dredged or Fill Material into Waters of the United States. It is in this interpretation that stated prior to the Bush administration, “The term fill material means any material used for the primary purpose of replacing the aquatic area with dry land or of changing the bottom elevation of a water body.” When bush took office, he changed *primary purpose* to *effect*. It was a one-word change that legalized mountain top removal, but after the word change it was over. In the

movie, Joe Lovett, Senior Attorney for Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment, points out, “dumping garbage into a stream has the *effect* of creating dry land.” Given the documentary was released in 2010 it relegates extraordinarily little attention to what Obama is doing about it now. With the apparent ease that Cheney promoted the destruction of Appalachia, it seems a shame that Obama has not been able to do the same in reverse. Instead he has opted, through the EPA, to suspend all permitting of mountain top removal.

One criticism of this documentary is the demonstration of the coal industry workers. Yes, they interview many people who used to work for the coal companies but currently employees are cast in an unfair light. The concern over employment in areas with little other industry is valid. Does higher regulation of mountain top removal mean less jobs for

the area? This is not a question the documentary addresses, but one that is necessary to consider if we are to gain a better understanding of the complete picture. The labor perspective was addressed in passing, but only to explain that fall of the unions - not enough to consider the documentary balanced.

This is a truly excellent documentary, which tells a truly compelling story. The jaw dropping policy changes initiated by the Bush Administration, the shocking corruption of West Virginia's state government, and the hopeful promise that lies in wind energy all wrapped up in sweeping

panoramic landscapes and emotional testimony from people in the area. This movie is a must-watch for everyone.

*Noreen Leahy
Environmental Studies '13*



*Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and Bill Raney discussing the environment.
Photo Courtesy of 'The Last Mountain' Press Kit.*

One Against All: Media Culture and Public Perception

“[Qaddafi’s death] confirms Obama’s moves regarding foreign policy; he may have a tough time with domestic, but most of his decisions internationally have been spot on—from killing Bin Laden to now the complete fall of Libya without [America] getting entangled.” Media culture within the United States has become emboldened with the support of viewers and politicians, alike; technology aiding in

the circulation of information, from traditional print to digital multimedia. Readers have gained a voice—the ability to respond to the news as it is generated, as one New York Time’s reader remarked on Kareem Fahim’s article, Violent End to an Era as Qaddafi Dies in Libya, above. Yet what role does the media play in galvanizing support from the American public to rally against a fictitious enemy in the ‘War on Terror’?

From the fabricated digital death mask of Osama Bin Laden to the conflicting accounts of the recent killing of Qaddafi, the media culture has the ability to fake just about anything. So where does truth diverge from fiction when our culture thrives upon the “networks of information and falsehood”? American perception has become akin to celebrating the death of the ‘enemy’ as a war trophy, utilizing the media’s tendencies

as a façade to the genuine fears of the society—“Today our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature.” The American ‘tendency’ to sensationalize within the media sector has significantly exploited the atrocities of September 11, 2001—paving the way to a fissure in policy making. As the dust cleared in downtown New York City, the media feasted upon the immense feelings of loss and sorrow, as much of the American society grieved for their loved ones. Ambition trumped trepidation as immediate feelings of fear and anger deeply inseminated public perception; “They see themselves as martyrs to a cause...we regard them as monsters” remarked one reader to the New York Times.

Such grandiose generalization caused an entire population, based tersely upon appearance, to unite against that of another, instituting a stigmatized version of ‘us’ verse ‘them’. The notion that a ‘group’ that had taken so many American lives, could be considered American was preposterous in the immediate aftermath of the attacks—yet the scapegoating of American Muslims lay primarily within the fault of ignorance and the subsequent exploitation of such.

Religious intolerance felt within American sentiment has suppressed the cultural complexity that exists within the Middle East, blurring the reality that Western culture is, in fact, not so different from that of ‘other’—the Arab, the Muslim, the Jewish, the Islamist, or the Middle Eastern. In the days following the attacks

of 9/11, the approval ratings of then-President George W. Bush increased exponentially, jumping nearly 40%, to 90% approval in a period of ten days, the highest percentage rating during his presidency. The former President was able to successfully mold public perception through the use of the media, labeling all Muslims, regardless of location, devotion, or religiosity, as “enemies of freedom and democracy.”

In his address to the American people on September 12th, President Bush made the

“The authenticity of the perceived threat played perfectly into the waiting hands of the American media, exploiting the ease at which the public accepts, the media conveys and the state determines..”

fateful promise to bring the perpetrators to justice, pledging “we will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbored them.” With this pledge the American public created a stigmatized version of the villain for which all Muslims were persecuted. These politically induced misconceptions, driven by the media and warmly welcomed by popular sentiment, have come to dictate US foreign policy within

the Middle East.

During a CNN interview of Muhammad Atta, conducted after the 2005 London Underground bombings, the father of “one of history’s most infamous mass murders” remarked that there remains a “whole cadre of Muslim holy warriors who, like his son, were willing to wage a fifty-year struggle against the West.” The authenticity of the perceived threat played perfectly into the waiting hands of the American media, exploiting the ease at which the public accepts, the media conveys and the state determines.

At the onset of the Iraq war in 2001, the public was sold a “war of American self-defense,” later promoted to “a war for the liberation of all Iraqis from the tyrannical Saddam Hussein.” The government and the media encouraged Americans to believe that “...Iraqis thought of themselves as Iraqis first and only then as Kurd, Sunni Arab, or Shiite Arab”. Such preconceived ‘confusion’ of motives allowed the US to fund a bloodbath, amounting to a religious war, a mask for a war plausibly based upon ulterior motives, oil. The American public had been left believing they were paying for their security, as the war in the Middle East grew increasingly expensive, far surpassing previous estimates of \$200 billion by Lawrence Lindsey, a Bush financial advisor. Yet “... what did we buy for all of this?”—media exploitation at the hands of politicians has left the American citizenry standing as mere pawns in the face of a fabricated evil.



News headlines following the September 11th terrorist attacks
 Photo Courtesy of Ann Althouse via Flickr.

The stereotyping of such an evil has been reinforced by the continuous “news headlines often sensationalizing the potential for ‘homegrown terrorists’.” Americans have come to view Islam, Muslims, mosques and to that effect, anything contrary to the understood and familiar, as “associated with anti-American attitude or behavior.” We, as a society, are willing to sacrifice our children for a few days of fighting in Iraq “against enemies that don’t [truly] exist”, as Joseph Stiglitz phrased it, based purely upon the mass anti-Muslim mentality that the media is cultivating.

After the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, there was a significant spike in news articles identifying association with terrorism or Islamic extremism, two such themes that had scarcely been a blip on the national agenda prior to that infamous day. Yet, the staunch anti-Muslim beliefs

of a core group of conservative political activists, such as Pamela Geller, have been exaggerated within the mechanisms of the media, spreading their heresy into the homes of the American public. The Park51 Mosque, the proposed building of a mosque on the boundaries of Ground Zero, has served as an epicenter of division within American society, fueled by the colossal media coverage it attracted.

“...Building a shrine to the very ideology that inspired the terrorist attacks is an insult to the victims of 9/11” claims Pamela Geller on a national television broadcast by Fox News. Yet, the 2011 Muslim American Public Opinion Survey, polling over 1,400 Muslims living within the United States, shows that mosques are working against the media generated perceptions of the general public, acting as “institutions that facilitate integration into US society as opposed to having an

isolating effect.” With such a wide breath of survey statistics readily available to the public, why is it that negative preemption is able to dominate the proactive voice of moderate Muslims against extremism, supporting the cry to “stop the Islamism of America”?

Conflict—especially that perceived as between Western powers and Middle East, tyrannical rule and the spread of democracy—has become a contextual choice based upon a complex historical backdrop of a region commonly demonized by the US. Such contextualization of the Middle East—whether Iraq, Afghanistan, Tunisia, Egypt, or any other nation inhabiting the region—has brought about a necessity for individualized understanding of the cultures and society that occupy the land. Yet the image that the US media conveys to the people is that of commonality, a step from individualized contexts to a cohesive threat that projects all people as one.

Understanding is the key to forward mobility, an act “crucial for putting aside the West’s Islam Anxiety in favor of practical policymaking”. The American public’s deeply rooted negative impressions of Muslims, both home and abroad, have made political outreach within the Obama administration largely invisible. Ten years after the attacks, Muslim Americans continue to “confront suspicions and, in some cases, outright hatred.” Yet, even after his speech at Cairo University in which Obama “asked the Muslim world for a new beginning”,

Americans still consider the “image of a corpse as a data point”, an authentic symbol of American victory over the ‘enemy’.

As Juan Cole accurately acknowledges in his book, *Engaging the Muslim World*, “by abandoning the politics of distrust and fear, the new administration in Washington has the opportunity to repair America’s relations with the Muslim world...” Yet, acquiring the leverage to successfully alter American sentiment, such feelings that have become deeply rooted over the past decade, seems an implausible task. After all, the media acts merely as a tool of the

‘big wigs’ perched comfortably atop the power pyramid, exploiting the immense power the media sector and naiveté American people to foster their own interest.

We are a nation built upon tendency—from the tendency of fast food addiction and ‘biggie sizing’ to naïveté and generalizations, tendency masks the validity of American perception. The daily intake of mass information often blankets such reality, “...authenticity in the digital age [becoming] all about the feel of the image”, disrupting the credibility of the information at hand.

We, as a society, have grown to celebrate the demise of the ‘other’, regarding a publicized image of one Muslim, Islamist, or Arab’s death as ‘one less’; an ultimate increase in the security of our homeland. Yet, even within our own borders, we breed terrorists; one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter—all dependent upon the lens through which the American public is provided a view by way of the media.

Tess McCarthy
International Affairs ‘12

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The Iron Lady: Lloyd’s Thatcher Shows the Strength Necessary to Nead

The Iron Lady is a film that has been engineered to win Academy awards, but behind the artsy appeal, the glitz and the glamour lies a solid critique on the modus operandi of western political systems, wherein the events of Margaret Thatcher’s life echo our current political situation. Phyllida Lloyd’s film portrays Margaret Thatcher through a retrospective as she looks back on her life from the brink of senility. Through this lens Lloyd focuses a great deal on the personal aspects of Britain’s first female prime minister’s life, which can really be summed up in one word: meh. Regardless of the presence of politics and heavy themes in this film, it plays more like a personal memoir than a biopic of arguably the most power-

ful woman in decades. While presenting an occasional challenge to traditional forms of public administration and governance, Lloyd’s film is less probing than one would have imagined.

“Meryl Streep does a phenomenal job playing Margret Thatcher as an immensely strong leader.”

Thankfully, the film also covers Thatcher political life, which is powerful enough to carry the film. So, if you will allow me, I’ll just skip right over all the family troubles, memory loss, and

grief and cut right to the meatier issues: femininity in power, popularity & policy, and strength in a leader.

Margaret Thatcher’s rise to power can easily be viewed as simply a feminist victory. However, as portrayed in Lloyd’s interpretation there is a deeper rhetoric that runs counter to this idea. We are introduced to Thatcher’s political career through a scene wherein the senior members of the conservative party dismiss her as a grocer’s daughter. Whether this is a commentary on her sex, her social status, or both is indistinguishable, but it implants the idea of a patriarchal political society firmly in the viewer’s mind. Throughout the rest of the film we witness Thatcher overcome numerous ob-

stacles, but it is not that she overcame them that is worthy of note it is how. In one scene with her campaign managers, she is stripped of various bits of her personality in order to conform to a more masculine identity; her voice, her appearance, and her behavior. This process raises a question that has implications for the western political system. Though there are more women in political positions today, than during Margaret Thatcher's time, has the practice of adopting more masculine traits in order to achieve political success changed? Criticisms of Hillary Clinton's cold demeanor plagued her presidential run in 2008 and were by far the more benign complaints.

Once Thatcher is elected Prime Minister the focus shifts the dichotomy of pragmatism and idealism. Thatcher is shown to be a staunch conservative idealist that adamantly defends her policies so much so that, the tag-line "never compromise" is well earned. In her

battles with the Unions and the Labor party the rhetoric runs consistently along the lines of: I'm right and you're wrong, so we're going to do it my way. This aspect of the film echoes a larger relevance to the current political travails of President Obama. With a good deal of talk about "reaching across the aisle" spouted by mainstream political analysts as the accepted only way forward, Thatcher's successes through combative politics throws this assumption into question. That this combative posture was utilized in a system designed to foster coalition building and compromise, rather than our two-party system where one party always holds a majority is especially intriguing.

Meryl Streep does a phenomenal job playing Margaret Thatcher as an immensely strong leader. Whether it is combating militant Irish Republicans, rebuffing Argentine aggression, or bringing the axe down upon the

coal mine industry, the audience is given the feeling that Margaret Thatcher IS the British Government and that it is her will alone that accomplishes these tasks. Hyperbole or no, Lloyd's Thatcher shows the strength necessary to direct the Conservative party, push legislation through parliament, and eventually secure success. The film puts forward that the executive must be strong enough to work unilaterally and more importantly that they must maintain the unity of their party. Returning to the American system, the internal divisions within the Democratic Party have shown that President Obama lacks control. If Phyllida Lloyd's film is to be believed the candidates in this year's election will need to lead their respective parties not just in name alone if they want to lead effectively and satisfy the electorate.

Ross Donohue
Political Science &
International Affairs '13



Pass to see the film 'The Iron Lady'.
Photo Courtesy of Louise Haywood-Schiefer via Flickr.

Incident Blown Out of Proportion: A Deeper Look into U.S. Policy Abroad

As video recently surfaced showing four U.S. Marines urinating over the bodies of three deceased Taliban fighters, U.S. government officials became concerned that this could incite anti-American sentiment around the world. This public outcry made me realize just how flawed some American's outlook on the world really is. This fear is especially focused on Afghanistan and Pakistan, where U.S. relations have been dwindling as American forces begin their withdrawal from the area, wrapping up an effort to oust Taliban insurgency. The possibility of backlash on U.S. interests will remain so long as a significant military presence exists abroad. While this act certainly does not help American interests overseas, we at home ought to look at this from a different perspective. Our soldiers risk their lives every single day defending the freedoms that we take for granted. Many have paid the ultimate sacrifice while others return home knowing their lives will never again be the same.

Critics will argue that there are rules of engagement which must be abided by during times of war, as developed through the treaties signed at the Geneva Convention in 1949. The provisions established at the Geneva Convention were only ratified by independent states. Yet, it is important to understand that in our modern day War on terror, we

are not fighting against a sovereign state but rather guerilla fighters. We are not fighting a single entity. Therefore, it is extremely difficult for our troops to identify who is a threat to their safety versus who is merely an innocent civilian. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban have no incentive to recognize an international treaty.

While it definitely was not a wise decision for our marines to engage in such an act, even more so, to have it uploaded to YouTube, we need to understand the ways in which the Taliban

"...we cannot risk losing one of our soldiers who decides not to shoot at a group because some might not be involved with the insurgency."

treats our soldiers along with their utter disregard for human life. The soldiers unquestionably made a mistake but to go so far as to say it constitutes war crimes or a criminal act is absolutely insane. Those bodies were people from an organization that supports terrorists that attacked the American homeland and brutally murdered 2,996 American civilians while injuring over 6,000 more. The idea that we should show respect to deceased terrorists

while punishing those who protect us is utterly absurd.

At a time when hostility towards America is increasing all across the globe, it is important that we stand behind those willing to protect the values we stand for. If in fact, anti-American sentiment does increase because of our treatment of terrorists, it is likely among people that never supported us to begin with. Those who truly are innocent should want nothing to do with Taliban insurgency and therefore should be fully supportive of our efforts to remove them from Afghanistan and Pakistan. For far too long, the U.S. government has bought into the ploy of not engaging an insurgent when civilians could be harmed. While our goal clearly is not to destroy their society, we cannot risk losing one of our soldiers who decides not to shoot at a group because some might not be involved with the insurgency. If Taliban fighters did the same thing to our troops, they would be lauded as heroes. So before jumping to conclusions, think of what these men and women go through on a daily basis and do not denounce the actions of a select few without having experienced war firsthand.

Michael Fox
Political Science '13

What should be the top priority for the winner of the upcoming presidential election?

The next president will need to focus on the education system in the United States and how it has fallen short for thousands of school age children. Public education is supposed to be one of the great equalizers in this country; no matter who you are or where you come from you can get a high school diploma that is equal to any other student's. But this is not necessarily true. The high school graduation rate across the country is about 77 percent, less than most developed nations and that number falls considerably for inner-city schools. Many presidents have worked to reform education in America, most recently the No Child Left Behind Act signed by former President George W. Bush. President Obama has made it clear that education is a priority for his administration, and earlier this month offered relief from No Child Left Behind to states that meet certain criteria. As for the Republican candidates, their plans range from shutting down the Department of Education to demanding better quality of teachers to advocating for home schooling. If the next president starts 2013 by ignoring education problems, it will not be a problem for business, industry, government, and education now, it will be in 10 years when there are not enough qualified candidates to fill the jobs in those sectors.

- Allegra Harris
Deputy Opinion and Review Editor

The next President should begin the 2012-2016 term with a solid policy to firmly and sustainably combat income inequality. Other than the fact that the income gap is a problem ethically, economically, and socially, the general population needs concrete and substantial policy change to regain faith in the American political system. In 1976 the top one percent of American households earned 8.9 percent of the total domestic pre-tax income; the figure skyrocketed to 23.5 percent thirty years later. The 99 percent concept, the Occupy Movement, and overwhelming hard evidence show that a large number of Americans are struggling economically. The population has met obstacles to upward movement and is unhappy with their situation and their representation. A new strategy focused on investing in human capital, creating jobs, and reforming tax policy would be a huge win for a population so increasingly disillusioned with their government. Clearly, there are presidential candidates that could feasibly carry out such a program, and those that cannot or will not—but if income inequality is ignored outright, the new administration will be set up for failure.

- Sydney Gliserman
Deputy Domestic Editor

Whether or not one believes that the power of the United States is dwindling, there is no doubt that the US still exercises indisputable influence within the international arena. As such, the next president has a responsibility to make foreign policy a top priority. However, if the next president hopes to maintain the US's powerful reputation and leverage US interests internationally, he must first address some key domestic issues—namely, the US economy. With the release of optimistic jobs report, tentative economic recovery seems to be gaining momentum. While this is cause for hope, it should not be cause for a policy shift away from economic support efforts. Already, some politicians are using the recent jobs report as an excuse to call on the government to prematurely decrease support efforts and begin implementing greater austerity measures to reign in national debt. If the US is to regain economic stability and insure it retains the powerful image it promotes, the next president must not allow his focus to be diverted from efforts to stimulate the economy and promote job creation. While foreign policy should be important for the next president, job creation and economic stimulus must be a priority in the coming presidential term.

- Kelly Grant, Deputy International Editor

"It's the economy, stupid." As true as that phrase was 20 years ago, it is even more important in this year's election. With unemployment still at record highs, the world markets in turmoil, and uncertainty plaguing most sectors, it is a mystery why candidates are not focusing more on it. Sure, there have been some bones tossed towards the economy, such as failed candidate Herman Cain's 9-9-9 plan, but by and large it has been a smaller issue than it should have been. Candidates need to explain how they plan to get us out of this recession and back on the lines.

- Paul Hanley
Domestic Editor

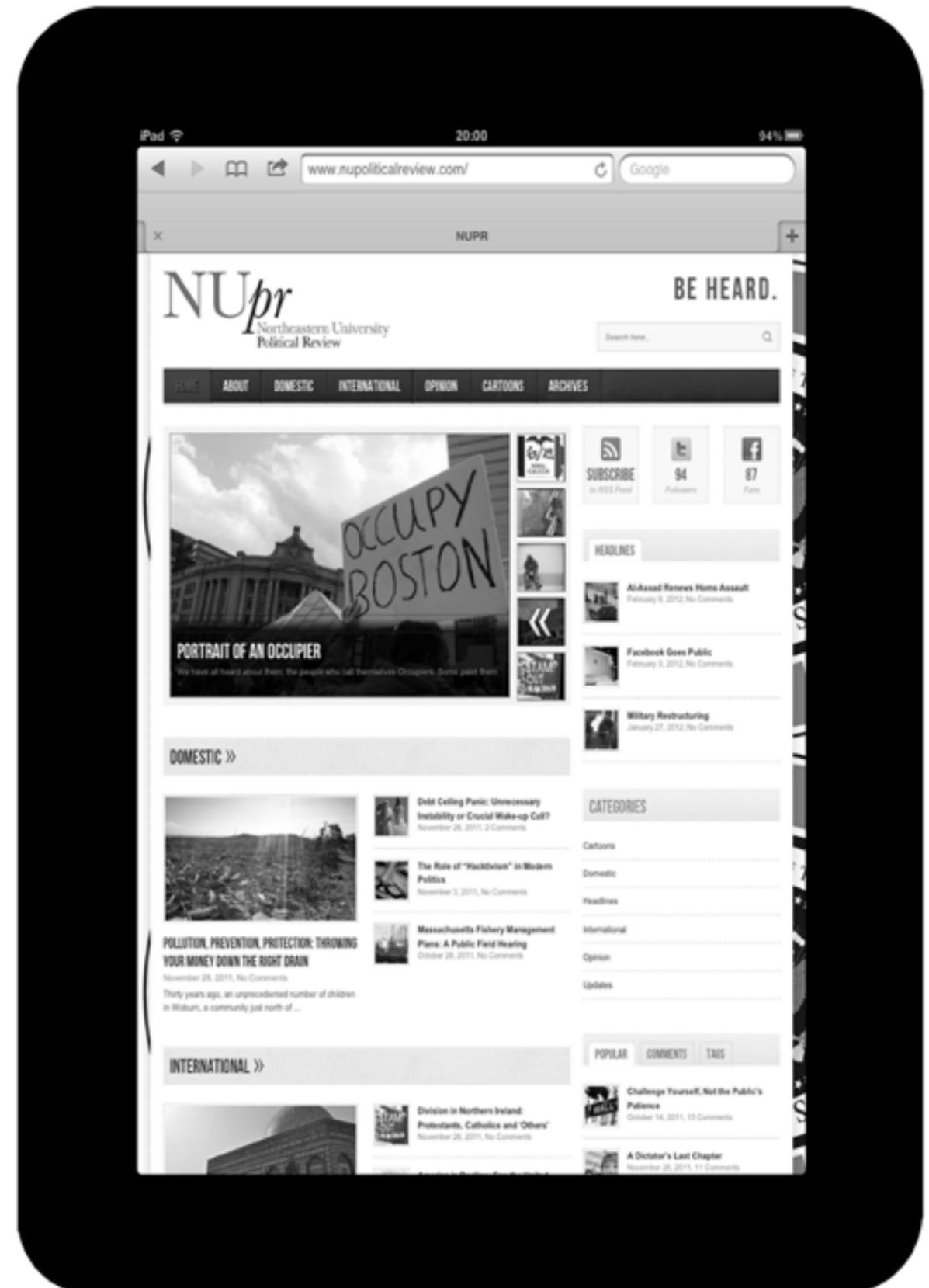
The most important issue for the president serving from 2012-2016 will be the dominance of US economic power in the world. The recovery is well under way and, while slow, progress will continue and unemployment will go down to more tolerable levels. As financial markets and economies continue to strengthen, the US has the opportunity to take advantage of difficulties other countries are facing. Across most the world, prices are going up and currencies are weakening, with the exception of the US. Manufacturing jobs from Japan and Europe and service jobs from countries such as India are already moving to the US. Sustaining this progress will be no easy task, but the tools the President has are expansive enough where there proper use could sustain American hegemony through the first half of the 21st century.

- Chris Turney
Opinion and Review Editor

The most important issue should be improving the United States' image abroad. Washington should continue to act in its own perceived interest in regards to issues that threaten its national security, but also focus on less costly but equally important token foreign policy initiatives that would aid in improving perceptions of the US abroad. First, our next president should immediately sign and ratify the International Criminal Court Statute, which was abrogated under President Bush. Secondly, they should undertake a concerted effort aimed at logistical planning for global disaster relief; the US efforts in Japan following their devastating earthquake and tsunami exemplifies the positives of such planning, while the failed Haiti relief mission begged the need for better contingency plans. Finally, our next president should greatly increase both the amount and effectiveness of US foreign aid. Increasing USAID's budget, both in terms of foreign assistance and domestic planning capacity, could mitigate some of its shortcomings and greatly improve foreign perceptions of the US.

- Dominic Contreras
International Editor

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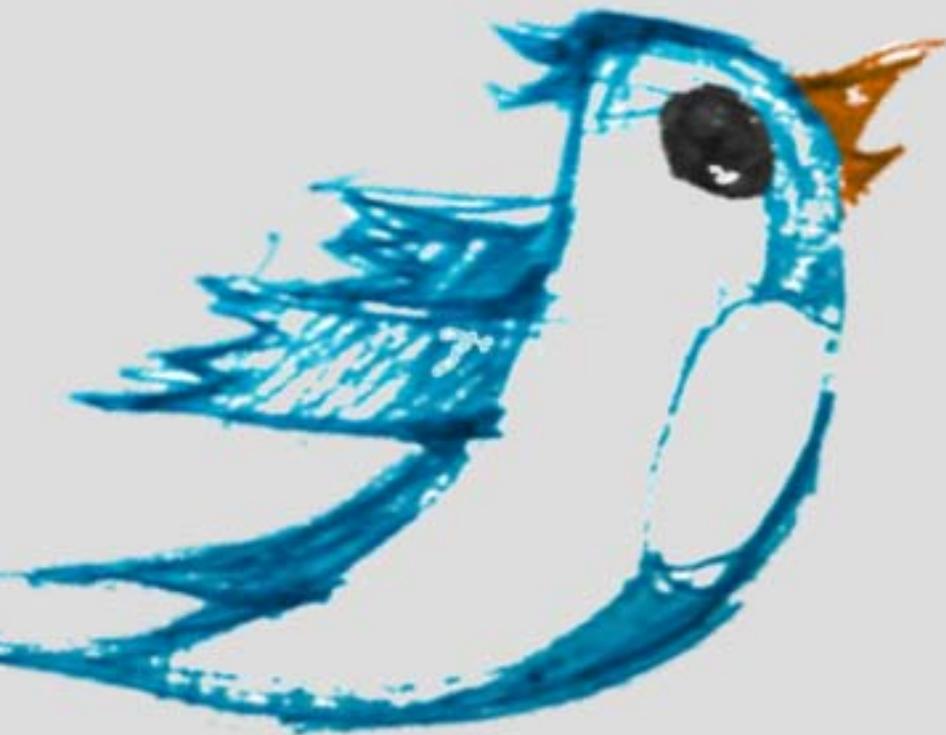
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