

THE VIEW FROM SOUTH LAWN

Since our most recent issue in the fall, much of the uncertainty surrounding the headline issues that occupied both popular and academic discourse—economic growth and unemployment in the United States, high debt burdens and the risk of sovereign default in Europe, continued U.S. military presence in the Middle East, and the success of Chinese economic planning, among many others—has, in a cursory sense, been resolved. We know that real U.S. GDP growth accelerated through 2011 while unemployment fell, that the nations of the European Union are committed to preserving monetary unity through bailouts of severely indebted members and negotiated write-downs, that Iraq and Afghanistan will soon govern themselves without the presence of hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops, and that government policy seems to have slowed the Chinese economy without bringing it to a halt.

While the future of these and other global concerns is by no means clear, this is a moment for more focused, rigorous scholarship—a respite from breaking news flashes during which a deeper understanding of these problems can be developed. In its twenty-fourth year of publication, the *Journal of Politics & Society* continues to demonstrate the extent to which undergraduate students in the social sciences are able to participate in, and more importantly contribute to, dialogues that dive deep into issues of global importance.

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This edition of the *Journal of Politics & Society* begins with a guest essay by Marcos Troyjo, Director of the BRICLab at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. Troyjo looks to the development of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) nations over the past four decades to analyze various economic development models, particularly import substitution industrialization, trade-focused systems, and local-contentism. He maintains that local-contentism, in which companies make prod-

ucts with local, rather than imported, materials, parts, and human capital, should be an important, although not exclusive, part of the policy suites of BRIC countries.

Several of the undergraduate essays in this edition also take an historical perspective. Keith Jamieson challenges the traditional narrative of the British response to anti-Christian policies of Meiji Japan in the late nineteenth century. Jamieson holds that the tepid response of British diplomats and policy makers should be attributed to trade concerns and the overarching policy goal of a stable, pro-British Japanese government. Ramy Srour turns to more recent history, examining the evolution of Italy's attitude toward the supremacy of European Community (EC) law over national law. While Italy's Constitutional Court initially opposed the measure, by the mid-1980s the Court accepted the supremacy of EC law, and by the end of the decade the Italian parliament passed an act codifying the process of internalizing EC law. Srour's empirical analysis finds that changes in Italian attitudes toward EC can be attributed to changes in the national economy, particularly unemployment and inflation.

This edition also prominently features field work conducted by our featured authors. A group of six Columbia students investigated the responses of ethnically homogenous low-income neighborhoods in South Williamsburg, Brooklyn to gentrification, gathering information by interviewing residents and local leaders and attending public meetings. The authors find that their case study is not exclusively an example of grassroots resistance or the use of corrupt political machines, but rather a combination of both. Thousands of miles away, Emil Graesholm explores the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the Kibera slum in southwestern Nairobi, Kenya. Interestingly, these technologies are being used to both integrate people into formal political processes while at the same time allowing for the creation of informal governance structures. The issue of socio-political change in urban slums is of the utmost importance to their one billion inhabitants worldwide.

Our authors have also used quantitative methods in this edi-

tion to analyze the racial component of public opinion of American health care reform and the rural bias of Brazil's Bolsa Família poverty alleviation program. In the former case, Lawrence Belcher finds that whites react more negatively to health legislation put forth by black politicians than to the same health legislation put forth by white legislators, illustrating that public opinion in the United States is not altogether colorblind. In the latter case, Sean Higgins finds that by failing to adjust for price differences in rural and urban geographic regions, the Bolsa Família program has been significantly more effective in reducing poverty in rural areas.

Finally, in our Peter and Katherine Tomassi Essay, Sophie Kramer attempts to explain the unusual patterns of sexual abuse committed by soldiers of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda. Forced marriages have replaced traditional manifestations of sexual violence within the LRA and Kramer theorizes that this distinctive feature offers valuable insights into the group's operations, the purpose of its violence, and its strategies for achieving its goals.

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As we near the end of our first year as a semi-annual publication, it is clear that the success of this transition has only been made possible by the tireless efforts of The Helvidius Group's members. Their professionalism and hard work is manifest on every page. There will never be a shortage of problems for society to address, but I am confident that the *Journal of Politics & Society* will continue to validate the role that undergraduate students should play in finding solutions for our most pressing issues.

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Editor in Chief

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