

# New England Journal of Public Policy

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Volume 27 | Issue 1

Article 2

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6-1-2015

## Editor's Note

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### Recommended Citation

O'Malley, Padraig (2015) "Editor's Note," *New England Journal of Public Policy*. Vol. 27: Iss. 1, Article 2.  
Available at: <https://scholarworks.umb.edu/nejpp/vol27/iss1/2>

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## Editor's Note

Padraig O'Malley

A question raised in this journal throughout the latter part of the 1990s, especially in the wake of the United States' disastrous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, was whether the American empire, the once-upon-a-time colossus that has bestrode the world stage since the end of World War II, is collapsing. While many on the liberal side of the debate would argue that it has been in decline since the Vietnam War ended ingloriously in the 1970s, others, most notably ideological neocons who never see why disaster should be an obstacle to seeking out opportunities for further disasters, strenuously argue the opposite. They attribute what they perceive as a diminished US influence in the global arena to creeping isolationism, myopic strategic thinking, and insufficient political will to stay the course, no matter what the consequences. That the triple set of misbegotten wars resulted in the deaths of 63,000 soldiers and 210,000 wounded<sup>1</sup> and left grieving families grappling to understand what precisely their loved ones had died for and cost the American taxpayer between \$4 trillion and \$6 trillion, with an estimated \$7 trillion interest due in 2053 on the borrowed money that financed the wars<sup>2</sup>—enough to have rebuilt the country's crumbling infrastructure several times over (63,000 bridges are in need of “urgent repair”), address abysmal inequities in education and restore it to the post of preeminence it once enjoyed, pour resources into programs designed to eliminate poverty, not alleviate it, and more—does not deter neocons from believing that the United States still rules and that only the feckless Obamas of the world, with little grasp of the byzantine ways of international skullduggery and with a naiveté bordering on outright ignorance, threaten its preeminence among nations.

Recently, the case for the United States' preeminence was made by the prominent leftist Tariq Ali, author of several important books on global politics, in “The New World Disorder,” in the *London Review of Books*.<sup>3</sup>

The United States is now unchallengeable militarily and it dominates global politics, even the politics of the countries it treats as its enemies. There hasn't been such an empire before, and it's unlikely that there will be one again. The United States is the site of the most remarkable economic development of recent times, the emergence on the West Coast of the IT revolution. Yet despite these advances in capitalist technology, the political structure of the United States has barely changed for a hundred and fifty years. It may be militarily, economically and even culturally in command—its soft power dominates the world—but there is as yet no sign of political change from within. Can this contradiction last?

There is ongoing debate around the world on the question of whether the American empire is in decline. And there is a vast literature of declinism, all arguing that this decline has begun and is irreversible. I see this as wishful thinking. The American empire has had setbacks—which empire doesn't? It had setbacks in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s: many thought the defeat it suffered in Vietnam in 1975 was definitive. It wasn't, and the United States hasn't suffered another setback on that scale since. But unless we know and understand how this empire functions globally, it's very difficult to propose any set of strategies to combat or contain it—or, as the realist theorists . . . demand, to make the United States dismantle its bases, get out of the rest of the world, and operate at a global

level only if it is actually threatened as a country. Many realists in the United States argue that such a withdrawal is necessary, but they are arguing from a position of weakness in the sense that setbacks which they regard as irreversible aren't. There are very few reversals from which imperial states can't recover. Some of the declinist arguments are simplistic—that, for example, all empires have eventually collapsed. This is of course true, but there are contingent reasons for those collapses, and at the present moment the United States remains unassailable: it exerts its soft power all over the world, including in the heartlands of its economic rivals; its hard power is still dominant, enabling it to occupy countries it sees as its enemies; and its ideological power is still overwhelming in Europe and beyond.

Ali's subsequent analysis of the broad sweep of historical developments since the end of the Cold War would not lead one to agree with his unequivocal statement regarding American invincibility, unless one equates invincibility with military power—US expenditure on armaments (\$618 billion in 2013) is greater than the combined expenditures of the next nine countries. This overwhelming advantage in weaponry, compounded by the global range of its military bases, is severely reduced, however, by the United States' ability to use it, the circumstances under which it could be used, its utility in widely varying combat situations, and the national unwillingness to put "boots on the ground." The wars in Ukraine and Syria and against ISIS are good examples of the political inelasticity that curbs military power. In conflict situations that are inherently nationalistic, interethnic, or religious, US military might is contained, a giant Gulliver, but the Lilliputians run rampant.

One lesson of the Arab Spring, so enthusiastically embraced by the Obama administration, is that if you encourage the overthrow of the established order, no matter how reprehensible, you should ensure there is some palatable political entity in place to fulfill the vacuum. In Egypt the only entity in place was the Muslim Brotherhood. When it began to adopt some of the practices of the Mubarak regime, the military overthrew it, ushering in the military-backed el Sisi regime, which is more repressive than either Mubarak or the Brotherhood. But there was never a question of their being a US intervention or any backing for the first elected government in Egypt's history. And in Syria, critics of the administration do not just assume but postulate as dogmatic fact that if the United States had backed the opposition to Bashar al-Assad, he would have been overthrown, and that as a result of its hesitancy, ISIS filled that vacuum and poses a grave threat to US security. The latter is not true, and neither is the former. ISIS has its roots in Iraq and the Sunni Awakening tribes left out to dry by al Maliki, who set out to remove Sunnis from positions of governance in Iraq after the United States departed. All such arguments that "had we intervened" are based on sets of suppositions that have no basis in fact. They are mere speculation, underscoring the degree to which serious political discourse has been sidelined. The least appreciated fact is most Sunnis reject Haider al Abadi's efforts to create a more inclusive polity. Given a choice between being ruled by a Shia majority and ISIS, increasing numbers are opting for the latter. Unpalatable facts are anathema to foreign policy discussions in the United States. Perceived threats to the country's national security interests are analyzed through partisan eyes; what passes as serious debate degenerates into jargon. What falls within the parameters of "national security interests" has become so amorphous that the phrase no longer has meaning, and hence, policy decisions are made in the context of a meaningless construct. But what should give pause is the growing consensus that Iraq was better off under Saddam Hussein.

The survival of empires does not depend on military invincibility, as both the Romans and Ottomans could attest. The genesis of demise is for the most part internal, not external. The Iraq war, financed by borrowing, has left the country with a huge external debt, over two trillion dollars in bonds owed to China and close to a trillion to Japan. More telling is the extent of internal polarization. Not just red states and blue states, but the emergence of two Americas, one prosperous and one riven with poverty and its accoutrements. Congressional gridlock has paralyzed governance. Its pernicious side effects have reached such a level that partisanship threatens to derail negotiations to reach a final settlement on Iran's denuclearization before the end of June. Rather than hand Obama a "victory," something he might claim as a historic legacy, Republicans, it seems, are intent on attaching such unprecedented conditions to the issue of verification and the lifting of sanctions that Iran will simply find them unacceptable.

The very real issues associated with verification must be satisfactorily addressed—these are, after all, negotiations between two sides where trust of the other is entirely absent. But to attach conditions to verification that are above and beyond what the P5+1 find acceptable and thus ensure that no agreement is reached is national foolhardiness. Here we are dealing not with genuine differences among reasonable men and women about how to handle a matter of major national security but with mean-spirited venality. Moreover, an agreement that is acceptable to other members of the P5+1 but is derailed by Congress will further undermine US stature. Congress's call for tougher sanctions to "force" Iran back to the table to "capitulate" to demands Congress lays down will not result in tougher sanctions. Their effectiveness is due to the P5+1 countries' working in concert; absent the willingness of other members of the P5+1 to impose—or maintain—further sanctions, the United States will act unilaterally, effectively ensuring that the impact of further sanctions will be marginal and, so far as actions are concerned, now playing alone and with a losing hand.

The other alternative, in such a situation, we are told, is war. Silly stuff. The Joint Chiefs are unanimous in their opinion that bombing Iran's nuclear sites would at best delay nuclearization by two or three years; there is little guarantee facilities deep underground, such as the Fordow uranium enrichment complex near the city of Qom, would even be touched, and war brings with it unintended consequences swarming like locusts in a region already roiling with Sunni/Shia sectarian war. War would not achieve the desired result. Moreover, war would unite the Iranian people and merely strengthen the country's resolve to attain nuclear capability. And what if the Saudis, who financed much of Pakistan's nuclear program over the past three decades, make good on their threat to acquire "off the shelf" atomic weapons from Pakistan? What about the risk that would pose to an all-out arms race in the Middle East, provoking Egypt and Turkey to follow suit?<sup>4</sup> No matter what the answers might be to such questions, US military might would not be a factor.

Obama perhaps may be best remembered as the president who realized that globalization has made the concept of a unipolar world with US primacy obsolete, that the threats now facing the country must be more rigorously defined in terms of whether they pose a threat to US national security and interests, which in turn begs the question, What precisely constitutes a threat to national security and how does the United States define national interests? To maintain its military "empire" the United States spends more than double the OECD average on defense as a percentage of GDP—the least on social spending. The results of such a disparity manifest themselves in a variety of socioeconomic indicators. No matter how liberals may howl, the day is nigh when entitlements will have to be reined in. Since January 2011, more than ten thousand baby boomers a day are turning sixty-five, establishing a pattern that will continue for the

next nineteen years. Only by rebalancing its priorities will the country find the resources to address oncoming challenges and redress present inequities. A military empire that finds itself sitting on the sidelines in most conflicts is one that has outlived its utility. It was created to meet a specific threat; the threat no longer exists. But, like all empires, it thrives on expansion, even though expansion yields diminishing returns. The examples cited earlier of Egypt crushing the Arab Spring, Syria crushing its own people and evolving into a civil war, the Iraqi state collapsing—and throw in Ukraine, Yemen, China’s growing assertiveness in the South China Sea, and efforts to broker peace between the Palestinians and Israelis—have had huge consequences for the societies in these countries, but there is nothing any amount of US firepower could do to change the outcomes. The lessons of history say any intervention by the United States would only worsen things and lead to no conclusive outcome and certainly not guarantee an outcome the United States desired, often not necessarily the best outcomes for the societies involved. There are too many players, each with its own agenda, each capable of mustering the armory needed to advance its agenda in its own backyard, all best left to work out their particular differences, none posing a threat to the United States. That large chunks of the planet are in a mess provides no rationale for the United States’ deciding that it has a divine mandate to straighten matters out. The internal threats the country faces are more in need of “straightening out” than the perceived external ones.

In every poll over the past ten years, a majority of respondents say the country is going in the wrong direction. With the wages of the average person flat for over three decades—the average wage today is about the same as in the mid 1970s—the American dream is becoming a whispering ghost. Among OECD countries the United States’ ranking on every indicator of social and economic well-being has fallen precipitously since 1980—from the upper tier of performers into the lowest quartile. Some examples: <sup>5</sup>

- In life expectancy for newborn girls, the United States ranks twenty-ninth among the thirty-four OECD countries; in 1980 it ranked thirteenth. In infant mortality, the United States ranks thirty-first in the OECD, that is, fourth worst after Mexico, Turkey, and the Slovak Republic; in child mortality, it ranks fifth worst in the OECD; in rates of low birth weight, it ranks sixth worst in the OECD.
- In the number of infants who die before age one, the United States ranks highest among OECD countries.
- The United States has the highest rate of child poverty among OECD countries—one in every five children lives in poverty.
- The Institute of Medicine of the National Academies reports: “On nearly all indicators of mortality, survival and life expectancy, the United States ranks at or near the bottom among high-income countries.”<sup>6</sup>
- The rate of teen births in the United States is over three times the OECD average. The rate of births among girls aged fifteen to nineteen in the United States is the highest in the developed world.
- More than one out of every four children in the United States lives with one parent, the largest percentage by far among industrial nations.
- The rate of incarceration in the United States is more than five times the rate of incarceration in most other rich democracies and more than three times the rate for the United States four decades ago. Between 1980 and 2008 the number of people

incarcerated in the United States more than quadrupled—from roughly 500,000 to 2.3 million people.

- The United States has 5 percent of the world’s population and 25 percent of the world’s prisoners.
- African Americans now constitute nearly 1 million of the total population of 2.3 million incarcerated in the United States.
- African Americans are incarcerated at nearly six times the rate of whites.
- Together, African American and Hispanics comprised 58 percent of all prisoners in the United States in 2008, even though African Americans and Hispanics make up approximately 25 percent of the US population.
- In 2001, one in six black men in the United States was or had been incarcerated. *If current trends continue, one in three black males born today can expect to spend time in prison during his lifetime.*<sup>7</sup>

When we further disaggregate data according to race and ethnicity, two startlingly different pictures emerge. US babies born to white, college-educated, married women survive at rates similar to those of their European counterparts. The babies who die young are the children of nonwhite, unmarried, and poor women. The number of African American infants who die is twice that of white infants. The United States has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality among OECD countries, but when the data is disaggregated, it shows that black women have a much higher risk of maternal death than white or Hispanic women. The maternal mortality rate for black women is almost four times the rate for white women.

Education is widening inequity, not closing it. College enrollment rates have stagnated for lower-income Americans. The achievement gap between rich and poor children seems to have been steadily expanding for the past fifty years.<sup>8</sup>

Educational achievement gaps among ethnic groups persist. While average reading scores of black and Hispanic/Latino students have slowly, though inconsistently, improved since 1975, wide gaps between these children and white children remain. The gap in reading scores between white and nonwhite students was wider in 2008 than in 1988—so much for measures for achieving equality in education.

Hispanic/Latino and black workers earn significantly less than white and Asian workers in the United States. Gender disparities are also very marked. On average, women earn one-third less than men. Asian men with a B.A. or higher earn 50 percent more than Hispanic/Latina women with the same level of education. Even when hours, occupation, parenthood, and other pay-associated factors are excluded, women still earn less than men. Racial and ethnic minorities and women also suffer most from minimum-wage and overtime-pay violations. More Hispanic/Latino and black people live in poverty when working. Around 10 percent of Hispanic/Latino and black workers live in poverty, compared with about 5 percent and 4 percent of white and Asian workers, respectively. The situation is worst for black working women, more than 11 percent of whom live below the poverty line.

The mortgage crisis had a disproportionate impact on black and Latino communities. Research indicates that unsustainable “subprime” mortgage loans were often targeted at the African American minority and elderly homeowners, irrespective of their credit scores. Around 50 percent of African Americans and Latino borrowers received such loans compared with just one in six whites. The collapse of these loans triggered the global economic crisis and has left

thousands of minority families and individuals in the United States facing foreclosure and loss of their homes.<sup>9</sup>

And still we find it necessary to babble on endlessly, one pundit after another abusing the airwaves and the op-ed pages with clichéd comments about why Baltimore burned while the real discussion should be why Baltimore was so slow to burn.

The United States ranks second in income disparity among OECD countries. The richest 10 percent of the population earns sixteen times more than the poorest 10 percent. There is a strong correlation between income inequality and poor economic and social rights outcomes in developed countries—the greater the level of income inequality, the worse a country tends to perform in terms of health, education, and other social indicators. The United States' comparatively poor human rights outcomes, despite high average income levels, can be attributed in part to its extreme income disparities. The same pattern has been observed among US states.

US social programs are relatively ineffective at reducing inequality. The United States has the second-lowest rate among OECD countries for reducing inequality in society, though public cash transfers from the state are meant to improve conditions and break intergenerational transmission of poverty. Inadequate investment in such programs, however, has rendered them ineffective in breaking the cycle of poverty.

The Social Progress Index measures the “capacity of a society to meet the basic human needs of its citizens, establish the building blocks that allow citizens and communities to enhance and sustain the quality of their lives, and create the conditions for all individuals to reach their full potential.”<sup>10</sup> The 2015 Index ranks the United States 16th among 133 countries.

Perhaps there is no better measure of the United States' decline than its reaction to the new China-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Even though the United States tried to dissuade other countries from joining because it saw the bank as a threat to institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, over which the United States exerts enormous sway, fifty-seven countries signed on as charter members, including some of the United States' closest allies. The bank will allow China to extend its influence by financing big infrastructure and development projects throughout Asia. Rather than seeing the bank as an inevitable consequence of the economic and financial clout of China—the second largest economy in the world and, thanks to the United States' foolish wars, holding trillions in US bonds, more than sufficient to make a down payment on a global bank—the United States tried to act as if the old order of finance still prevailed. Nor is the day far off when the renminbi will challenge the dollar as the world's sole medium of international exchange.

An empire that has a governance structure so dysfunctional that it cannot act in its own best interests is an empire that seems obdurately intent on hastening its own demise. The disparate empire is at odds with itself. The more pronounced the gridlock at the federal level, the more government is outsourced to the states; the more the states assert themselves and invoke states' rights, the greater the patchwork of policies—social, economic, and cultural—that emerge so that what is legal in one is illegal in another, what is hailed as progress in one is condemned as regressive and morally reprehensible in another, what is mandated in one as justice is delegitimized in another, what are promoted as progressive benefits in social welfare policy in one are slashed in another as contrary to instilling a work ethic and as pandering to freeloaders. One regards equitable progressive taxation as the foundation of good government, another equates taxation with damnation.

That is, perhaps, the best reason for hope. The silver lining in the dismal, if abstract, statistics I have sampled is that they portend such a dysfunctional future that the country's broken political system might finally be forced to come together to prevent it.

Of the several articles in this issue of the journal I will comment on two: Rajini Srikanth's "South African Solidarity with Palestinians: Motivations, Strategies, and Impact" and Lynne Tirrell's "Listen to What You Say': Rwanda's Postgenocide Language Policies."

Srikanth examines grassroots activism by South Africans for Palestinian self-determination. She discusses the historical legacy of anti-apartheid resistance as well as current economic and political realities within South Africa that have led to the emergence of a robust popular movement for Palestinian rights since 2005. Both South African civil society organizations and the ANC-led government have responded to the 2005 call by Palestinian civil society for a boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaign against the state of Israel. Srikanth discusses the different motivations of these two groups for participating in the BDS movement, presents the scope of BDS within South Africa, and analyzes its symbolic, economic, and political impact for South Africans and Palestinians in the near and long term. Finally, she addresses why South Africans consider themselves to be central participants in the Palestinian struggle.

In a recent article in the *New York Times*, Jennifer Medina and Tamar Lewin report that dozens of college students across the country are embracing resolutions calling for their colleges to divest from companies that enable what they perceive as mistreatment of Palestinians. Although no university have yet heeded such demands from students, "the effort to pressure Israel," they write, "appears to be gaining traction at campuses across the country and driving a wedge between many Jewish and minority students."<sup>11</sup> The issue is loaded with emotive and symbolic significance. Many American Jews were at the forefront of the BDS campaign against the apartheid government in South Africa in the 1980s, and today they find the equation of the Israel–Palestine conflict with apartheid abominable, complicating the debate with frequent accusations of anti-Semitism. Charges of anti-Semitism have a way of smothering honest and heartfelt criticism of Israel's policies in the West Bank, and in particular its military actions during the 2014 Gaza war that reduced much of Gaza to rubble and left over a hundred thousand homeless. Some, however, who call the loudest for BDS are anti-Semites, and there is little room to balance the tension between the two. Many might ask, "Why publish such an article?" Better to ask, "Why not?" Srikanth's is a scholarly work of research and penetrating analysis. As with all articles that are written to enlighten, it invites discussion that is reasoned and honest and holds close to the heart the tenets of academic discourse. For Palestinians, advocating BDS against Israel is a tool in the kit of options they have—and they do not have many; for Israeli Jews, BDS is an attempt to delegitimize the state of Israel, and therefore those who advocate it in the international community are perceived as being against the existence of the Israel itself. They cut no middle ground and bandy the word "anti-Semitic" with scarce regard for what might be legitimate criticism. No amount of argument will convince them that BDS can ever be justified; just as no amount of argument will convince supporters of BDS that it is not. The detritus of this conflict plays hell with scholarship.

Tirrell's "Listen to What You Say'" raises a host of questions. While acknowledging that freedom of expression is a basic human right, she says that few countries allow full expression; most have restrictions on speech they deem harmful. Following the genocide of the Tutsi, Rwanda passed a constitution (2003) and laws against hate speech and other forms of divisionist language (2008, 2013). Understanding how language shaped "recognition harms" that



constitute and fuel genocide also helps account for political decisions to limit “divisionist” discourse. “When we speak,” she writes “we make expressive commitments, which are commitments to the viability and value of ways of speaking.” Her article explores reasons a society would decide to say, “We don’t talk that way around here,” thus taking control of its own expressive commitments. Understanding the scope of the law in Rwanda promises to help clarify limits to hate speech and other forms of derogatory discourse (including images). Ultimately, the argument is that wherever recognition harms are a significant factor in social and political life, changing permissible expressive commitments is crucial to social and political repair.

Rwanda’s postgenocidal linguistic changes should be seen as an effort to foster social unity in response to the severe divisions deepened by anti-Tutsi hate speech spread in the early 1990s and the ensuing violence that wracked the nation. Tirrell’s article is provocative and raises many questions about what constitutes legitimate constraints on freedom of expression and whether that freedom is exigent on the particular context that prevails in a society. Much has been made in the past year after two self-described members of ISIS killed twelve people, including the editor and several staff members of the Paris satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* after the magazine published a highly controversial cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad. The guardians of free speech rose sphinx-like in defense of the inalienable right to free speech, ululating for the courage of the dead cartoonists; some 3.7 million gathered in shows of solidarity across France in tribute to those killed; in Paris an estimated 2 million walked the capital’s streets chanting, “Je suis Charlie.” At least forty world leaders linked arms to lead the proceedings. President François Hollande told the crowd, “Today, Paris is the capital of the world.” A special edition of the magazine sold sixty thousand copies in contrast to the meagerly three thousand copies that were the magazine’s usual weekly circulation; advocates of freedom of expression would not be intimidated: the right was absolute. The West stood in solidarity against the threat of Islamic extremism. (In the United States the media, ever cautious, did not print or show images of the cartoon; none was about to leave itself open to a random retaliation.)

But after the hullabaloo died down, others raised troubling questions for which there were no good answers. Had *Charlie Hebdo* mocked a Jew so disdainfully, charges of anti-Semitism would crackle the airwaves and public opprobrium would be overwhelming. Governments would weigh in with their own condemnations. Was there a boundary where offensiveness in the name of satire (Is satire something the mainstream public is tuned into, recognizes on sight?) crosses a red line and becomes laced with intimations of hate, even if not consciously designed to do so? Months later, Garry Trudeau, America’s most acclaimed cartoonist, said in a speech that “by attacking a powerless, disenfranchised minority with crude, vulgar drawings closer to graffiti than cartoons, Charlie wandered into the realm of hate speech.” In April, 145 writers were among the signatories on a letter protesting PEN American Center’s decision to honor *Charlie Hebdo* with its Freedom of Expression Courage Award, because the award, they say, seems to endorse drawings of the Prophet Muhammad and other images that “must be seen as being intended to cause further humiliation and suffering” among France’s embattled Muslims.

“It is clear and inarguable that the murder of a dozen people in the Charlie Hebdo offices is sickening and tragic,” the letter states. “What is neither clear nor inarguable is the decision to confer an award for courageous freedom of expression on Charlie Hebdo, or what criteria, exactly, were used to make that decision.” By honoring *Charlie Hebdo*, it continues, “PEN is not simply conveying support for freedom of expression, but also valorizing selectively offensive material that intensifies the anti-Islamic, anti-Maghreb, anti-Arab sentiments already prevalent in the Western world.”<sup>12</sup>

A month later Emmanuel Todd, the French demographer and historian, issued a broadside, declaring, “Millions of French people rushed into the streets to define the right to spit on the face of the weak as the priority need of their society.” As reported in the *Irish Times*, Todd describes “the much-vaunted ‘spirit of January 11’ as sham unity, ‘emotional, feverish hysteria,’ a ‘totalitarian flash.’” He refers to an “orgy of conformity” that “seized the French middle and upper middle classes, but further alienated the working class and minorities.” The real threat he says isn’t Islam but “this new religion of secular radicalism.”<sup>13</sup>

Of no less merit and most worthy of your attention are the articles by Anne Douglass et al., “Training Together: State Policy and Collective Participation in Early Educator Professional Development”; Christopher G. Hudson, “Churning in the Human Services: Nefarious Practice or Policy of ‘Creative Destruction’?”; Andrew Tarsy, “Urban Inspiration Can Come from Unlikely Sources: What Boston Can Learn from Cities in Transition Around the World”; Robert Weiner and Carlos Andres Aguilera Ariza, “War, the United Nations, and Peacekeeping”; and Shaun O’Connell, “Revised Emblems of Erin in Novels by John McGahern and Colum McCann.”

In all, a moveable feast.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Nese E. DeBruyne and Anne Leland, “American War and Military Operation Casualties: Lists and Statistics”, CRS Report to Congress, January 2015, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL32492.pdf>; Matthews S. Goldberg, “Updated Death and Injury Rates of U.S. Military Personnel during the Conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan,” Working Papers Series, Congressional Budget Office, Washington DC, December 2014, [https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/attachments/49837-Casualties\\_WorkingPaper-2014-08.pdf](https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/attachments/49837-Casualties_WorkingPaper-2014-08.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Cost figures not including war in Vietnam. Doug Gavel, “Linda Bilmes on the U.S. Engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan: ‘The Most Expensive Wars in U.S. History,’” Harvard Kennedy School, March 2013, <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/news-events/news/articles/bilmes-iraq-afghan-war-cost-wp>; Stephen Daggett, “Costs of Major U.S Wars,” CRS Report to Congress, July 2010, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/108054.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Tariq Ali, “The New World Disorder,” *London Review of Books*, April 9, 2015, 19–22.

<sup>4</sup> In March 2015, the Obama administration said it would continue to request the annual \$1.3 billion in military financing that the United States has provided in the past to Egypt, the second-largest recipient of US military support after Israel, “so that it is better positioned to address the shared challenges to U.S. and Egyptian interests in an unstable region.” The resumed aid, however, had little to do with possible Egyptian nuclear ambitions and everything to do with the threat the growing jihadi insurgency in the Sinai.

<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, data comes from recent OECD (Organization for Research and Community Development) reports and from “The United States of America,” Center for Economic and Social Rights, Fact Sheet 11, 2010. See Eduardo Porter, “Income Inequality Is Costing the U.S. on Social Issues,” *New York Times*, April 28 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/29/business/economy/income-inequality-is-costing-the-us-on-social-issues.html>.

<sup>6</sup> “U.S. Health in International Perspective: Shorter Lives, Poorer Health,” Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, January 2013, <https://www.iom.edu/Reports/2013/US-Health-in-International-Perspective-Shorter-Lives-Poorer-Health.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> “Criminal Justice Fact Sheet,” NAACP, accessed May 20, 2015, <http://www.naacp.org/pages/criminal-justice-fact-sheet>.

<sup>8</sup> Sean F. Riordan, “The Widening Academic Achievement Gap between the Rich and the Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations,” in *Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children’s Life Chances*, ed. Greg J. Duncan and Richard J. Murnane (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2011), <https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/reardon%20whither%20opportunity%20-%20chapter%205.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> “United States of America.”

<sup>10</sup> Michael Porter and Scott Stern, with Michael Green, “Social Progress Index 2015,” Social Progress Imperative.

<sup>11</sup> Jennifer Medina and Tamar Lewin, “Campus Debates on Israel Drive a Wedge between Jews and Minorities,” *New York Times*, May 9, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> “PEN Receives Letter from Members about Charlie Hebdo Award,” PEN America, May 5, 2015, <http://www.pen.org/blog/pen-receives-letter-members-about-charlie-hebdo-award>.

<sup>13</sup> Lara Marlowe, “Writer Takes Dim View of ‘Charlie Hebdo’ Protest,” *Irish Times*, May 19, 2015.