

New England Journal of Public Policy

Volume 15 | Issue 2

Article 2

3-21-2000

Editor's Note

Padraig O'Malley

University of Massachusetts Boston, padraig.omalley@umb.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umb.edu/nejpp>



Part of the [Public Policy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

O'Malley, Padraig (2000) "Editor's Note," *New England Journal of Public Policy*. Vol. 15: Iss. 2, Article 2.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.umb.edu/nejpp/vol15/iss2/2>

This Editor's Notes is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. It has been accepted for inclusion in New England Journal of Public Policy by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. For more information, please contact scholarworks@umb.edu.

Editor's Note

Padraig O'Malley

We are pleased to bring you the first issue of the *New England Journal of Public Policy* in the new century. We rejoice that at the stroke of midnight on December 31, 1999, the planet did not implode, meteors did not shower us with the debris of their displeasure with us earthlings, aircraft did not fall out of the sky, catastrophic convulsions in our ecosystems did not engulf us, telecommunication systems functioned with indifferent insouciance to the inner terrors of our crippled imaginations. The world, one minute after January 1, 2000, was yawningly the same as one minute before.

Whether normalcy was the result of saturating the heavens with prayer, the whim of a Divine Hand, an unexpected counterpoise to the exponentially driven hysteria generated by obsession with Y2K compliance, or simply the universe enjoying itself at our expense are matters for conjecture. Or a Ph.D. thesis. Given the prevailing winds of political correctness, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the merits of the two.

But before we abandon our ruminations on the twentieth century, we should perhaps try to give it a little perspective — there is always the remote possibility that we might yet heed the words of George Santayana that those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat its mistakes.

Essentially, when we divest it of the higher-standards-of-living stuff, *it was a century of slaughter*; unparalleled and without precedent in our known history. We perfected more ways of eliminating ourselves than we would ever have thought imaginable — beyond the wildest fantasies of science fiction, beyond our ability to control, and, most difficult to come to terms with, beyond our ability to comprehend. And because we cannot comprehend the obscene consequences of our own actions, we have learned to distance ourselves from them, to dull our senses, embrace the numbness of pervasive insensitivity, to see atrocity as video, the insatiable capacity for human prevarication as the perversity of the few, not as the collective product of the largely consciousnessless many. We have new ways to torture, debase, and extract every last vestige of humanity from our beings in order to prolong life so that we might erase it with more consummate sophistication. No obscenity evokes more than cursory outrage, no levels of disease more than perfunctory acknowledgment, no evil more than the calculus of its political consequences. We send “peacekeeping” armies into regions where genocide has become the first refuge of the normal. We send them with ironclad guarantees that none of their members will have to engage in any activity that might endanger their lives. We send them with the latest technologies at their immediate disposal, but with instructions that they are not to lift a finger to stop massacres taking place before their eyes. We have managed to transmogrify the word *peace* from a thing of hope into a thing of despair.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, one civilian was killed for every eight soldiers who died in war. By the end of the twentieth century that figure had changed utterly

Padraig O'Malley is a senior fellow at the John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs, University of Massachusetts Boston.

— the ratio is now nine civilian deaths for every soldier killed.¹ The planned killing of civilians has more strategic advantages than the planned killing of one's armed opponents. Weaponry is for use against the unarmed.

Some random figures: 8 million combatants killed in the First World War; 15 million combatants and between 20 million and 40 million civilians killed in the Second World War; another 35 million deaths are attributable to the nefarious experimentation in social engineering on a grandiose scale by Mao Tse-tung, plus another 10 million in conflict between the Kuomintang government under Chiang Kai-Shek and Mao's "liberation" movement. Stalin's contribution to the slaughter is in the region of 25 million people.

In the last fifty years, some 6 million people have been felled in the killing fields of Viet Nam, Cambodia, South America, Burma, Indonesia, Iraq and Iran, the Gulf War, the Russian conflicts, Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, making our collective contribution to the progress of "civilization" a more than disputatious proposition.²

Africa is the bellwether of the madness that has become the hallmark of our "humanity." As we go to press, there are wars in Angola, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Congo, Sudan, and the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo threatens to consume Central Africa, destabilize Namibia and Zimbabwe, and wreak immeasurable damage in the region. In the "new" Nigeria, religious and ethnic pogroms are proliferating, gathering that critical momentum which takes the control of events out of the realm of the rational and into the fathomless depths of the most disturbed recesses of our being. Liberia, Mozambique, and Uganda have only emerged from debilitating internal conflicts.

Since 1960, wars in more than thirty-two African countries have resulted in 7 million deaths and more than 9 million refugees. Half the world's displaced persons "reside" in Africa. By 1994, 21 million people had fled their homes because of violent conflict.³

In 64 countries, some 90 million land mines make the act of putting one foot in front of the other a hazardous undertaking. Of these mines, 20 million are buried in Africa. In Angola alone, 8 to 10 million mines lie in wait for the unsuspecting; in Mozambique, the estimate is 2 million.⁴

Nor does one need to "pick on" Africa as the only region in the world wracked by instability, disorder, and widening cracks in the social fissure. The recognition that we are a world with many "deeply divided" societies which are not amenable to resolution is beginning to resonate; indeed, efforts to contain conflicts often ensure only that they will continue in other forms — permutations of historical grievances incubate endless ways of perpetuating themselves.

Thus, you can draw a broad swath across the world: from Northern Ireland through Cyprus to Sri Lanka, with bits and pieces of the former Yugoslavia, Albania, rumps of Romania, Russia, the Commonwealth States, an amalgam of states with heterogeneous and immensely diverse religious and ethnic compositions that pass for sovereign entities; Syria; Iraq and Iran; Palestine and Israel; Iraq/Kuwait; Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Yemen, with intractable contradictions between the push to embrace the modern and the pull of the traditional; the Pacific Rim (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand); India and Pakistan, both wracked internally by intergroup violence and in a perpetual state of readiness for conflict with each other, exacerbated by the fact that they are armed with nuclear weapons; Korea; and China, with rumblings of dissent from undiluted ambitions to annex Taiwan.

In Latin America, one can cast a short net: Brazil simmers with class and ethnic divisions; Ecuador and Peru try to contain their differences, and beneath the facade of normalcy in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador serious tensions bubble.

So much for the global village and the “we’re all in it together” orthodoxy that eulogizes our common humanity in the face of our technological and economic interdependence. Perhaps it would be more accurate to describe ourselves as living in a world of “discontinuous change.” At the end of the century the world was more unstable than it was at the height of the Cold War. Integration and fragmentation intersected in ways that were — and continue to be — a recipe for social, economic, and political disequilibrium.

Adding to our disassociation with the new order of things, we seem unable to find a language that properly expresses the discontinuities that are its chief characteristics. Old labels no longer suffice to express new realities. The “Third World” coinage of the Cold War era is obsolete. The “West,” once the orthodox way of designating advanced economies, no longer has any meaning in that context since Japan is among them and the other Asian countries; until recently they were hailed as economic “tigers” in their own right, until the economic avalanches that smothered them in the wake of the global capital crisis of the late 1990s brought their seemingly self-sustaining booms to a screeching halt. Now we talk about poor countries and rich countries, the North/South divide, the “haves” and “have-nots,” about emerging markets that often find themselves submerged in the murky waters of unpredictable and immensely volatile capital flows. We talk about new roles for international institutions, redefining roles for the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, argue tediously the merits of structural adjustment programs even when the preponderance of evidence shows that they have been more harmful than beneficial to the countries they were supposed to help.

We embrace the concept of a U.S. hegemony that wants to create a new international paradigm — the exercise of power without the exercise of the responsibilities that accompany the exercise of that power, as if power were one more consumer commodity that can be bartered in the marketplace, purchased in credit card installments, payments being made in terms of interest, not principal or principle.

“Is the world a better place after the cold war?” asks Newton Kanhema, a fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government. Is the developing world getting a better deal in this new era?

On the contrary [he argues], it is getting a raw deal in which it seems to have been brutally short-changed. The debt issue provides a graphic example.

Between 1982 and 1990, total resource flows to developing countries amounted to \$927 billion. During the same period developing countries remitted in debt service alone \$1,345 billion to the creditor countries. Therefore the income/outflow difference between \$1,345 billion and \$927 billion is thus a much understated \$418 billion in the rich countries’ favor.

So, who is subsidizing whom. At the beginning of the 21st century, the countries of the developing world carried a debt of \$2 trillion and their annual repayment was \$306 billion, representing 33 percent of their GDP. Sub-Saharan countries are sacrificing even more, allocating 69 percent of their GDP to debt servicing.⁵

Welcome to the twenty-first century.

*

*

*

As usual, the essays in this issue of the journal cover a broad spectrum; all should be read within the context of the preceding observations.

In “Balkanizing the Balkans,” Paul Atwood places the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s Kosovo war in the context of the larger issue of NATO expansion. He contends that the question of ethnic cleansing in that province of Serbia was largely exploited by the United States, the creator and most powerful member of the alliance, to

break up the former Yugoslavia, to divide it, and to make it more manageable for Western interests. He further maintains that in the guise of stopping Serb repression, NATO seized an opportunity to build more bases throughout southeastern Europe, including those being constructed in NATO's newest member states — Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. These actions are, he believes, deeply threatening to Russia, positioned as it is in either the former USSR or in former Warsaw Pact nations. The aim of NATO expansion is seen as an effort to weaken Russia, especially in the vital oil-rich Caspian Sea basin, which is being contested for a pipeline to flow either to the west through Turkey and Azerbaijan or through Russia's Caucasus region. NATO expansion also worries China, which fears its largely Moslem, far western provinces will seek some measure of unity with the Moslem republics of the old Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. NATO expansion, far from bringing stability to Europe, is inherently destabilizing.

Atwood's article is provocative and challenging and will, I hope, elicit the debate it deserves.

James Jennings, in "Globalization and Race Hierarchy in the United States," addresses the impact of racial and ethnic divisions from a different perspective. His thesis is that national economies have become irreversibly globalized while racial and ethnic divisions continue to be a reality in many societies. He sets out three different scenarios in an attempt to explain the link between globalization and racial and ethnic relations: globalization limits national growth, thus contributing to increased racial and ethnic tensions; globalization does not affect racial and ethnic relations either positively or negatively; and globalization expands domestic economies, consequently helping to reduce racial and ethnic tensions within national borders. His article explores these scenarios and shows that globalization through immigration and movement of capital can mold the nature and contours of race relations in domestic societies.

On domestic issues, although I remind our readers that there no longer are such creatures as domestic issues, that the lessons one country/state/city learns in the course of policymaking and implementation have applications which supersede their use in their immediate environments. Mary Grant, in "Changing Populations, Rules, and Roles," examines what has been happening during the past ten years in public housing agencies across the country, which have been allowed greater discretion in the implementation of policies that affect public housing management. Discretion in public management, she points out, has the potential to be a slippery slope. While managers may have greater flexibility in responding to local need and making the best use of the limited resources available to public housing, the potential exists for risk of conflicting interpretation of policies, unclear program goals, and a conflict in roles. Grant examines these issues against the backdrop of mixed populations, namely, housing policies that enable low-income individuals with disabilities to become eligible for what has traditionally been considered housing for the elderly.

Three other articles wind up the issue.

Author Grace Walton, in "Black Women in Durham Politics, 1950–1996," puts her essay in a rather poignant context, describing it as an "article about black women by a black woman conceived to educate Americans about a different kind of history." It illustrates "the silent political struggles of black women" in Durham, North Carolina, and their gradual acceptance into American politics from 1950 to 1996. It demonstrates that black women's political activity underwent a transformation from grassroots politics to full electoral participation, which brought them to the forefront of Durham politics and that through both types of activity, the unique political consciousness of black women continues to have a great impact on the community's political institutions. But the message of the article has nothing to do with Durham. The message is universal— one with

which black women in South Africa, beginning the long process of empowering themselves after the abolition of apartheid, would readily empathize; indeed, that any woman of color from Durham to Lilongwe in Malawi to Freetown in Sierra Leone to Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo would readily embrace.

Joseph Murray provides us with a New England backdrop in his analysis of a unique program in “Nursing Homes to Medicaid Waiver Programs in Vermont.” He examines the differences between nursing home residents and those who were able to leave nursing homes with the help of the Medicaid Waiver Program in Vermont. Ninety individuals who reentered the community with the aid of such waivers were compared with a random sample of nursing home residents through the use of the Nursing Home Minimum Data Set. The researchers found divergence in four key areas: cognition, continence, treatment categories, and desire to return to the community. Typically, those who left nursing homes for the community were cognitively intact, had moderate continence, received rehabilitative or clinically complex treatments, and expressed a desire to return to the community. Contrary to the prevailing theory, no differences were found between groups in the ability to perform activities of daily living, except for toilet use. This report also found that community-based treatment under the Medicaid waiver was a cost-effective alternative to traditional nursing home care.

Finally, Dierdre Woody, in “Spirituality and Rehabilitation,” explores her experience as a legal intern during her summer 1999 employment at the Pennsylvania State Correctional Institute in Graterford. Her theme is the role of spirituality in rehabilitation processes in correctional settings. It pays special attention to the sources of faith and inner strength, the nature of spiritual guidance, the roles of values, beliefs, and moral commitments, and the effects of cultural, social, political, and economic forces.

*

*

*

Two footnotes to this issue. First, in our more recent publications, we have put increasing emphasis on how the global marketplace of ideas and information provide unique opportunities for a common sharing of experiences across national boundaries, indeed, across continents. In this regard, the John W. McCormack Center for Democracy and Development is playing an increasingly active role. With funding from USAID and USIA, we have brought whatever expertise we have acquired at the local, state, and national levels, drawing on veteran — and some not-so-veteran — practitioners of public policy to promote programs in decentralization and local democracy in Cameroon, Mali, Senegal, Namibia, Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa and Northern Ireland, and China.

Second, I visited Mozambique in the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Eline and the torrential rains that accompanied it. Mozambique is one of the poorest, if not the poorest country in the world with a per capita income of \$160. After sixteen years of a civil war, conspicuous for the savagery inflicted on the civilian population, Mozambique was slowly beginning to heal. The meager gains it has made in the last five years have been washed away in water: whatever infrastructure existed has collapsed, and Maputo itself is slowly sliding into the Indian Ocean. For a people who never had much hope, there is, for the foreseeable future, none. As I write, millions cling to trees, waiting for relief that will probably never come. Huge swaths of the country are simply inaccessible, leaving the people isolated, without water, food, and shelter. Only when you see young children washing themselves in raw sewage and carrying disease-drenched water home for drinking purposes does the enormity of our inequalities make you want to puke.

But having nothing to begin with, most have nothing to lose — only their lives, and when life is cheap, even that counts for a pittance.

Yet, even the worst off of the worst off greet you with a smile — dignity in the face of war and weather and disease. That we might learn something from them. ❀

Notes

1. Justice Richard Goldstone, member of the South African Constitutional Court, former chief prosecutor at the Rwandan and Bosnian War Tribunals, speaking to the National Association of Democratic Lawyers, Johannesburg, South Africa, February 20, 2000.
2. Data cited in "Frontiers of Freedom," Number 23, first quarter 2000, South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, South Africa.
3. Justin Maleweki, "Peacemaking in Africa," *South Africa Journal of International Affairs* 7, no. 1 (Summer 2000): 7–9.
4. *Ibid.*, 8.
5. "Mounting Inequality Is the Grim Harvest of Skewed World Economic Growth," *Sunday Independent* (South Africa), February 27, 2000.