THE GLOBAL ISSUE

DAVID GARDNER ASKS IF CAPITALISM IS IN CRISIS /// CHARLES A KUPCHAN SAYS THE WEST MUST REALIZE THERE IS NO MONOPOLY ON LEGITIMATE FORMS OF GOVERNMENT /// CHRISTINA MARIA PASCHYN QATAR: ANATOMY OF A GLOBALIZED STATE /// SELMA DABBAGH FINDS POETRY AMID THE RUINS OF GAZA /// CRUCIAL MEDIATORS OF CULTURE RACHEL ASPDEN ON THE HIDDEN ART OF LITERARY TRANSLATION /// ALEC MACGILLIS JOURNALISTS LEARNED THE WRONG LESSONS FROM WATERGATE /// SULAK SIVARAKSA ON WHY SIMPLICITY AND HUMILITY MATTER
NOT FINDING WHAT YOU WANT IN ANY BOOKSTORES IS A GOOD REASON TO COMPLAIN. For Jinnanne Tabra, it was a good reason to open her own bookstore.

While still a business student at Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, Jinnanne Tabra realized that Arabs living outside the Middle East had very few options for buying Arab language literature. So shortly after graduation, she founded ARABOH.com, one of the first, and most successful, online bookstores dedicated to the Arabic language. Since then, CEO Middle East magazine named her as one of the “Top 30 under 30” and her company has become a vital resource for Arabs around the world.

Qatar Foundation is proud to support young leaders like Jinnanne Tabra. Together, we are making Qatar a center of knowledge that is helping the entire world move forward. Learn more about Jinnanne’s work and discover the people of Qatar Foundation at qfachievers.com.
As economies around the world continue to struggle with the knock-on effects of the Great Recession, it could not be timelier to examine the system that underpins our societies today and has connected countries, markets and cultures as never before – globalization.

In this second issue of Think, the quarterly international magazine dedicated to exploring leading trends, international affairs and thought leadership, our team of writers from around the world draw on a wealth of expertise and experience to consider the phenomenon.

They investigate how new globalization is, what effects it is having (with one arguing that it is leading to a crisis of legitimacy in capitalism itself), whether a new world order needs to embrace more diverse models, and how local traditions and cultures can not only survive but thrive in an era of instant media, when any act or thought can be transmitted to millions almost immediately.

With its myriad of nationalities, Qatar is a prime example of a globalized state – one in which locals are heavily outnumbered by expatriates, but where identity remains strong. Our own heritage is being preserved and celebrated, while Qatar Foundation’s establishment of branch campuses of internationally-renowned universities, its world class science and research institutions, and community development programs both at home and abroad, bring together a wide array of talented individuals to work on a common human goal – the furtherance of knowledge and understanding. These are goods in their own right, but they are also vital for us to meet the numerous challenges of the decades ahead – challenges that, ideally, a truly globalized world could try to meet as one.

One of the tremendous advantages of globalization has been the liberation of the realm of communication, enabling thought leaders across the continents to interact with hitherto unknown ease and speed. Many believe, however, that the model now needs to be repaired or recast for the 21st century. The opinions and analyses in Think are authoritative, but their aim is not to come to final conclusions – rather, it is to open minds and stimulate discussion. By providing a forum for the exchange of ideas, we hope that both Qatar and the international community will benefit.

Haya Khalifa Al Nassr
Director of Communication, Qatar Foundation
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Selma Dabbagh finds poetry, even amid the phosphorous and power cuts, at the Palestinian Literary Festival.

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Sulak Sivarakska says simplicity and humility may not get you very far – but nor will consumerism.
Nabila Randani is a journalist and broadcaster, and won the inaugural European Muslim Woman of Influence Award in 2010. When will that continent come to terms with its millions of Muslim citizens, she asks? Page 8.

Charles A Kupchan is Professor of International Relations at Georgetown University and served as a director on the National Security Council under the Clinton White House. How can we manage no one’s world, he writes. Page 32

Baroness Warnock is a former Mistress of Girton College, Cambridge, and Headmistress of Oxford High School for Girls. It is time to reaffirm the glories of education, she says on page 48.

George Dyson is a historian of technology and the author of Turing’s Cathedral – a “creation myth for the digital universe”. He pays tribute to the father of the computer in his centenary year. Page 38.

David Gardner is International Affairs Editor of the Financial Times. Global capitalism has come to be seen by many as a “donesday machine”, he writes. Can the system that underpins our way of life survive? Page 10.

Savita Apte is an art historian and a director of Art Dubai. Contemporary Arabic art used to be dismissed as “backward”, but a new generation of artists is creating exquisite, highly nuanced work, she says. Page 51.

Sulak Sivaraksa is the author of The Wisdom of Sustainability and winner of the 2011 Niwano Peace Prize. Have you found lasting happiness, become wiser, or developed compassion by buying things, he asks? Page 64.

Selma Dabbagh is a Palestinian-British lawyer and author whose first novel, Out of It, was recently published. Her Letter from Gaza is on page 62.

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Women rarely appear in narratives about the Arabian Gulf, and their contributions have remained largely unnoted. Given that it is the recent history of the region that has formed the primary interest of both foreign and local historians, it is easy to see how the past has been constructed from the perspective of the present.

It began to be regarded as folklore, to be placed in museums and studied in an attempt to preserve a “conventional” history that consolidated preconceived attitudes and conventions. In this construct, women were relegated to a private space, under the full custody of male relatives, their movements constrained, and their presence in the public sphere conceptualized as nonexistent. Their place was always in the home with other women, with no mixing with males beyond immediate relatives, such as husbands and brothers, and no traveling except with a mihrim (a man related to a woman within the degrees of kinship that make marriage between them impermissible).

But women were present in Arabia in a dynamic and effective fashion before Islam, at the time of the Prophet (PBUH), and the medieval period. They were priestesses, political leaders, warriors, merchants, waqf overseers, shepherds, intellectuals, teachers, midwives, vendors, dressmakers and petty-capitalists. There is in fact a very rich past to be researched, discovered and presented as a contribution to a greater understanding of the history of the Arab world, as well as that of Muslim women and of women everywhere.

Medieval Islamic poetry shows that communication between the sexes was natural, that it was normal for women to travel, that going on hajj or any other journey did not necessarily require a mihrim. Aisha, the Prophet’s beloved and revered wife, rode her camel into battle against the Caliphate, and even as late as the 17th century, women were not only cheering their men on with tambourines but also wielding swords, knowing that they rode to their deaths. Historically, far from being mere recipients of knowledge, women intellectuals were shaykat (religious authorities), muftiyat (juris-consultants), faqihat (exegetes), and were thinkers in their own rights, producing books and fatwas (legal opinions) and acting as teachers to illustrious ulama (religious scholars).

The picture of a “womanless” Gulf that the observer encounters in contemporary pictures, whether of weddings or other ceremonies, is a sign of the growth of a new elitism and the construction of cultural differences rather than a sign of historical continuity. While strict gender segregation existed and continues to exist in certain classes of societies in

**WOMEN’S HISTORY HAS BEEN A VICTIM OF PARADIGMS DISMISSEND THEM FROM THE PUBLIC SPACE, PARADIGMS UPON WHICH THE CONTEMPORARY LIFE OF WOMEN CONTINUES TO BE FORMED**

BY AMIRA EL-AZHARY SONBOL

**RECLAIMING THE HISTORY OF GULF WOMEN**
the region, the overall role of women has been extensive in very important ways, both at home and beyond it.

Women’s history has been a victim of paradigms dismissing them from the public space, paradigms upon which the contemporary life of women continues to be formed. It is essential that this historical image be deconstructed, for the true story of Gulf women dates back to before the third millennium BCE. It is no surprise that we see women playing a very important role in the promotion of progress in the region today, but it is time that their past participation and contributions are also given due recognition.

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However, acquired far greater resonance and significance, as it was held in tribute to the 19 people who had died in a fire at the Villagio shopping mall four days earlier. News of the tragedy, which claimed the lives of 13 children, went around the world, but was felt most keenly in a city where everyone, Qatari or expatriate, was familiar with the Venetian-themed mall or, more poignantly, knew or had some connection to the nursery where the blaze claimed its young victims.

Tickets, which were free, were snapped up instantly. No wonder, as the power and solemnity of the music could not have been more appropriate. Shostakovich managed to remain in favor with the Soviet regime – just – but endured terrifying persecution and the constant threat of incarceration or death while Stalin was in power. A performance of his works in the 1930s was billed thus in one newspaper: “Today there will be a concert by Enemy of the People Shostakovich.” Fear and oppression, but also the will to survive, can be found throughout his compositions, making them fitting and profound aural landscapes for the listener to contemplate, experience and express grief, while still emerging with the optimism and courage necessary to accept destinies we cannot know or control.

Those who dismiss musical high culture because they see it as self-indulgent and entirely lacking in any materialistic utilitarian value miss the point: it can give voice to the mystery of the human condition in ways that can never be put into words.

As Duke Ellington mused about one of the jazz forms of which he was a leading exponent: “The blues ain’t nothin’ but a cold gray day, and all night long it stays that way… the blues is a one-way ticket from your love to nowhere; the blues ain’t nothin’ but a black crepe veil ready to wear.” The bald fact is that “the blues” is a 12 bar musical structure that is repeated as often as required; but the Duke described the greater truth. Or as the Russian writer Ilya Ehrenburg commented, in reference to another of Shostakovich’s symphonies: “Music has a great advantage: without saying anything, it can say everything.”

At a time when arts budgets are being decimated in recession-hit countries, and while past spending

IN DEFENSE OF HIGH ART

By Sholto Byrnes

On 1 June a concert was held at the Katara Cultural Village Opera House in Doha. It was always going to be a special evening: the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra was to perform under the baton of the Grammy Award-nominated conductor, Alastair Willis, and the program included not only Shostakovich’s 10th Symphony, but also the world premiere of the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra by the Lebanese composer Abdalla El Masri. The concert, however, acquired far greater resonance and significance, as it was held in tribute to the 19 people who had died in a fire at the Villagio shopping mall four days earlier. News of the tragedy, which claimed the lives of 13 children, went around the world, but was felt most keenly in a city where everyone, Qatari or expatriate, was familiar with the Venetian-themed mall or, more poignantly, knew or had some connection to the nursery where the blaze claimed its young victims.

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on new institutions is being condemned as extravagant and wasteful (particularly in Spain, where the recently built City of Culture in Santiago de Compostela was described by a local socialist politician as “a cemetery for money”), it is more important than ever to remember the value of high culture and to make what is often a difficult defense of the intangible, the seemingly amorphous and the monetarily unquantifiable. For we are aware instinctively – wordlessly, even – of the importance of the liberal arts.

I once asked the philosopher Alan Ryan, then Warden of New College, Oxford, how he thought they fit on an economist’s cost-benefit analysis. “Roughly speaking,” he said, “it fits in on the bit that says, ‘This is what makes life worth having.’ And if they say, ‘How much worth having?’, one says, ‘Worth having at all.’”

Sholto Byrnes is Editor of Think. His cultural criticism and commentary has featured in numerous British publications and on BBC television and radio, and he was a judge for the inaugural Paul Hamlyn Foundation Awards for Composers.

**KNACK OF THE SALE**

**BY PHILIP DELVES BROUGHTON**

So much in business is evanescent. Companies rise and fall, relationships outlive their purpose and technology makes everything obsolete. Yet travel the world, and you will always find a marketplace, whether it’s in the ancient town squares of Europe or the souqs of the Middle East – permanent structures where people come to buy and sell.

The Medina in the Moroccan city of Tangiers is such a place, and at a bend of the Rue Les Almouhades is number 66, the commercial home of Abdel Majid Rais El Fenni, or Majid for short, its greatest salesman. Surrounding Majid’s store are shops all selling the same ceramic bowls, cigarette lighters, souvenir Fez hats and fake silver daggers, tagine dishes and models of camels. The owners sit outside badgering the tourists to come in. The smarter ones have cut deals with the tour guides to bring in their groups. But this is a high volume, low margin business. You may sell a lot of lighters, but by the time you’ve paid 40 percent to the guide, there isn’t much left for you.

Majid’s is a different operation. His store, he says, “is my kingdom, where I can be myself”. Along the walls are cabinets, lit from inside, displaying ornate silverware, coral and amber beads from all across North and Saharan Africa. There is a tiled fountain at the center of the main floor, surrounded by stacks of colorful blankets and rugs, silk shirts and dresses and beautifully inlaid wooden mirrors and glass lamps. There are two more stories, all clean, whitewashed, tiled and decorated with carpets and furniture, leading up to a roof garden with a view over the Medina. Majid’s visitors’ book contains the signatures of Yves Saint Laurent and Jacques Chirac, but he has also sold to rock stars and upscale hoteliers the world over. If you’re rich and you want a North African feel to your home, you come to him.

Majid is a small man with a soft, unlined face, like the inside of a calf-skin purse. His eyes are nearly black, and damp, like olives bobbing in a stew. He tends to wear matching outfits: black pants, black shirt, black waistcoat, and a circular black velvet cap, like an upturned soup bowl, one day, the same in dark green the next. Around his neck he sports a chunk of amber, the size of a ping pong ball, on a leather string, which he fondles with his left hand as he talks.

Majid comes from a long line of traders and the lessons he learned from them are no different from those taught in the most modern global businesses: Listen to your customer, build relationships, become an expert, don’t take rejection personally, and never be afraid to ask for money.

“My uncle used to say that in business, you need three things,” he told me one day in his store. “The age of Noah, hundreds of years. The money of Suleyman, who dressed his slaves in gold. And the
Europe’s Veil of Fear

By Nabila Ramdani

Some 15 million Muslims will be celebrating Eid Al Fitr across the European Union (EU) this August, but most will be only too aware that, despite the proud history of Islam in countries from Austria to the United Kingdom, resentment against those practicing the religion is growing. This can be seen in every major EU state, where fears about immigration and “alien” cultures are coming to dominate mainstream political discussion.

The minority extremism is chillingly high-profile. Norwegian mass murderer Anders Breivik mostly chose teenagers from his own country to slaughter, but his motivation for killing 77 people in July 2011 included deep-seated Islamophobia. A central tenet of the 33-year-old’s “manifesto” involved deporting all Muslims from Europe by the year 2083 so as to “preserve Christianity”. Breivik also spoke of his admiration for far-right politicians like Gert Wilders of the Netherlands, who sums up his view of one million of his countrymen thus: “I don’t hate Muslims, I hate Islam.”

And there is no doubt that Wilders is part of an increasingly mainstream movement, which uses horror stories to stir up hatred.

Just look at the situation in France, where the far-right National Front gained nearly a fifth of the popular vote in the first round of this year’s presidential election. The party’s new leader, Marine Le Pen, styles herself as a more respectable chief than her father, but playing on fears about Muslims lies at the heart of her vision for France. Her prejudices have been ably reinforced by recent government measures including the burqa ban, and onsloughts on everything from halal meat to Muslims praying in the street because of a lack of space in mosques.

Ex-President Nicolas Sarkozy stepped up his anti-Muslim rhetoric in a desperate attempt to hang on to power earlier this year, but it was not enough to save him from becoming France’s first one-term head of state for three decades. Yet even François Hollande, the socialist who replaced Sarkozy, seems reluctant to address the growing Islamophobia in his country. He refuses, for example, to reverse measures like the burqa ban. Hollande says he will not tolerate halal meat in canteens or the occasional women-only swimming sessions in public pools, which some Muslims would like.

The widespread discrimination Muslims suffer in everything from housing to employment is clearly well down Hollande’s list of priorities, with many fearing that it will increase as the negative social effects of economic austerity measures become apparent.

It all makes for a grim picture in a country which is home to the biggest Muslim community in Western Europe, at some six million. And France is representative of trends in other countries, where restrictions are being placed on everything from Islamic dress to the building of mosques. These are, of course, religious issues.

But as more and more EU citizens feel their basic rights are being denied, the problems will increasingly become intensely divisive and political.

Nabila Ramdani is a journalist and academic who won the inaugural 2010 European Muslim Woman of Influence Award. A Fellow of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, she chaired its International Youth Conference in Doha in December 2011.
IT IS A SYSTEM THAT HAS BROUGHT GREAT BENEFITS TO HUMANITY, BUT IS CAPITALISM IN CRISIS? \[10\] WE LOOK AT QATAR, ANATOMY OF A GLOBALIZED STATE \[10\], THE SLOW FOOD MOVEMENT AND THEIR UNITED FRONT OF GASTRONOMY \[21\], AND WHILE SOME SEE IT AS A NEW PHENOMENON, ONE WRITER SAYS GLOBALIZATION? IT’S AS OLD AS HISTORY ITSELF \[24\]. OTHERS ARGUE FOR A MORE DIVERSE VERSION OF THE MODEL, SUCH AS MALAYSIA’S DR MAHATHIR – THE MAN WHO SAID NO TO THE WEST \[28\]. SO TOO DOES ONE FORMER WHITE HOUSE OFFICIAL. OUR FORMIDABLE TASK, HE WRITES, IS MANAGING NO ONE’S WORLD \[32\].
During Ireland’s bitterly fought referendum on the new fiscal compact for the eurozone in May, the party leading opposition to the new treaty, the republicans of Sinn Fein, argued that rejection would return Irish sovereignty from the European Union by ditching the austerity imposed on Irish taxpayers by euro-elites in order to salvage European banks. This was a *cri de coeur* against the European Union’s (EU) particular form of globalization from the re-emerging voice of Irish nationalism, whose Gaelic name translates as “ourselves alone”.

Sinn Fein came to life leading the struggle for Ireland’s independence from Britain just as the last great wave of globalization, marked by the dramatic expansion of world trade in the second half of the 19th century, was buried by the Great War of 1914-18.

Modern globalization, which, in addition to a vast expansion in world trade and cross-border investment, has been accompanied by the digital revolution in communications and the tentacular spread of international finance, started after World War II, but is above all a phenomenon of the past three decades. Forced to carbon-date its beginning, a suitable moment might be in 1978 when the Chinese Communist leader Deng Xiaoping is said to have observed: “China has been poor for too long; to get rich is glorious.” While Deng’s remarks may have been apocryphal, his opening up of China to turn it into a powerhouse economy was real enough.

China’s integration into the global economy from 1979 was followed a decade later by the other lumbering Asian giant, India, which started to shake off the ‘License Raj’ of state socialist autarchy and slowly open up its economy. The end of the Cold War did not, as we have seen, bring the End of History, but it did look as though open markets and free trade had become unstoppable forces, from Eastern Europe to South East Asia, from Central Asia to sub-Saharan Africa.

The phenomenon brought with it the complacent orthodoxy that globalization would be a reciprocal deal for First and Third Worlds alike. The availability of vast, new and cheap workforces in the East and South would provide inexpensive goods to the West and, thereby, conquer inflation and raise...
already relatively high living standards. Such
economic dynamism in emerging markets
would also raise their generally low living
standards, and open new markets for Western
companies. The Western firms, in turn, would
move up the value chain to produce higher-
end goods and services, the lower value stuff
having migrated to lower income producers.
There is a good deal of validity to this
formula, in the same way that clichés depend
on the kernel of truth at their core. There were
and are benefits on both sides.

STAGGERING FIGURES
More people have been raised out of poverty
in the past three decades than at any time in
history. The absolute numbers involved make
this statement incontestable.

According to a World Bank report this
February, in 1981 there were 835 million
Chinese living on less than $1.25 a day in real
money. By 2008 that number had dropped to
173 million. In South Asia the proportion of
the population living on less than $1.25 a day
dropped over the same period from 61 percent
to 36 percent, even though the absolute
numbers of those in poverty remained
more or less the same because of much
greater population growth than in China.
Proportionally similar reductions occurred in
Latin America, the Middle East and North
Africa and across the rest of East Asia.

There is understandable controversy about
all such figures and how they are calculated,
not to mention claims that they prove that the
United Nations has met its first Millennium
Development Goal – to halve extreme poverty
between 1990 and 2015 – five years early.

High-profile campaigners such as the
Indian writer Arundhati Roy are not wrong
when they point to the forces of globalization
“ripping through people’s lives”. Capitalist
development tends inherently to be uneven
and to engender social – and in Third World
countries, often physical – dislocation.

In a country such as India, moreover, such
developments pale beside the enormity of its
problems, which include: endemic corruption;
a feckless political class; rural poverty;
chaotic urbanization and overpopulation;
and, perhaps most of all, a caste system that
condemns roughly one in four Indians to a life
of degradation.

But raising many hundreds of millions of
people out of destitution is still a remarkable
achievement. Globalization must surely be
reckoned as one of the more liberating
“movements” in human history.

Yet that is increasingly not how things
are seen in the developed world, where
globalization is coming to be regarded as a
doomsday machine destroying Western jobs
and prosperity.

There was a time when, if you mentioned
anti-globalization, the images conjured up
would be of anti-capitalist protesters being
tear-gassed at international summits in
Genoa or Seattle. True, many anti-globalists
campaigned against what they saw as First
World consumer comfort coming at the
expense of sweatshop conditions in the Third
World. The irony was that these banners
were usually unfurled in the West, whereas
in developing countries people mostly just
wanted the work.
SHifting Debate
Now, in the heat of the economic and financial crisis gripping the developed world, the debate is shifting. The question asked is whether globalization – and, above all, highly mobile and under-regulated finance capital – is the sworn enemy of the Western middle classes.

Inchoate mass movements such as Spain’s indignados and Occupy Wall Street are predominantly middle class and disproportionately made up of the young. No wonder. In Spain unemployment is shockingly high, at one in four, but more than 50 percent of young Spaniards are without a job.

No one can seriously deny that something has gone profoundly wrong with globalization. Economists identify three main areas of dysfunctionality, and banking and finance feature in each of them.

First is the problem of “global imbalances”. The rise of China, India and other emerging states has tended to generate huge trade and current account surpluses for their economies. These mirror similarly huge deficits in Western countries, notably in the US, which in effect is able to finance its ballooning national debt because China and other surplus countries, such as the Gulf oil producers, are willing to buy its bonds. Inside the EU, a regional microcosm of globalization as well as the biggest market in the world, currently worth $18 trillion, the situation is the same, with Germany generating vast surpluses, matched by deficits in many of its partner states. The exporting prowess of both China and Germany depends in important part on artificially low exchange rates. China deliberately maintains an undervalued renminbi. For Germany, the old Deutsche mark would be a much stronger currency than the present euro, which gives German exporters an extra edge.

While global, and in the EU case, regional, economic governance has proved unable to wind down these destabilizing imbalances – much less persuade China and Germany that mercantilism is a dead end – the problem is compounded by the behavior of the banks.

In an era of cheap and plentiful credit, and with trillions of dollars in need of recycling, many banks indulged in reckless behavior. In some countries this took the form of old-fashioned real estate binges. But another feature of this era of collective inebriation was the meteoric rise of derivatives, exotic and poorly understood financial products designed to hedge against market risk, but which instead triggered the present crisis.

The practice of packaging up US subprime mortgages with other asset classes and then selling the mixed product internationally was only the most egregiously irresponsible use of derivatives.

Their defenders, such as Alan Greenspan, long-time chairman of the US Federal Reserve, believed derivatives enabled investors making leveraged bets to spread risk and insulate the financial system. Yet Warren Buffett, the legendary American investor, warned that derivatives were “financial weapons of mass destruction” capable of blowing up the entire system as long ago as 2003, by which point derivatives contracts had reached a global total of $140 trillion.

A second problem of globalization mercilessly highlighted by the present crisis is in Europe. The EU and its forebears have always been an unwieldy hybrid of pooled supranational power, in areas such as trade, competition and environment policy, and intergovernmental co-operation, for example in foreign policy and defense. This construct seemed to muddle along reasonably well, albeit slowly, until the creation of the euro.

The eurozone imported a version of this hybrid into the realm of finance – with what we now know to be potentially cataclysmic results. A common currency was created between 17 members with structurally varied economies of different competitive strength, but without a fiscal union to support it. It was not just that there was no common or federal budget. There was no common financial regulator, and no common deposits insurance
GLOBALIZATION
ON THE BRINK

or resolution regime for failed banks. While cross-border banking and financial flows were at the heart of the model, whatever bad loans washed up on the shores of, say, Ireland, in the form of reckless bets by German, French and British banks, they had to be dealt with by the national authorities – even though these amounted to about three times the total output of the Irish economy.

CASE STUDY
The most spectacular example of the asymmetric consequences of the cross-border banking frenzy was Iceland. By the time its economy imploded in the wake of the Lehman collapse in 2008, its bankers had built up a balance sheet of 10 times gross domestic product, attaining a tiny North Atlantic nation of 320,000 people to a sort of giant hedge fund.

Again, in this microcosm of globalization, and with the cheap and easy credit available, of course surplus states such as Germany were going to shovel money into deficit countries. That was how they were able to keep selling them BMWs. Although the Berlin consensus is that the solution to this problem is fiscal austerity, Greece aside, the first problem is imbalances and the second is in banks, which recycled vast surpluses in what governments led them to believe was a risk-free environment. In logic, as in fact, for banks to have borrowed fecklessly, other banks must have lent to them recklessly. Thus the structure of German banking – where many publicly-owned regional Landesbanks bet heavily on everything from Irish property developers to US subprime bonds – looks eerily similar to that of Spanish banking, where the regional cajas, or savings banks, have been hollowed out by Spain’s real estate boom and bust.

The design flaw at the heart of the euro is not just a problem for the weaker “peripheral” countries: Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain. This is not just about the frightening spread of “contagion” within the eurozone, with the markets playing poker while the politicians play chess. In a globalized world, the problems of the eurozone are damaging to the global economy, as the US is now finding.

A third feature of globalization is the growth of inequity within the developed world, often called the problem of the “squeezed middle”. While the incomes of the great mass of Western – and especially American – working people have stagnated or even fallen back in real terms, the earnings of those at the top have exploded. This was long disguised because salary-men and women around the world had access to seemingly unlimited amounts of cheap loans, which is now a big part of the problem. In the UK and the US, the top-earning one percent of the population has doubled its slice of the national pie during the boom years of globalization – and that shows little sign of change during the bust. Hence the slogan of the Occupy movement: “We are the 99 percent.”

This is a problem at multiple levels. It raises the question of whether the globalized model of capitalism can continue to create enough jobs at worthwhile rates of pay, or is in fact a machine of immiseration. Once again, the bankers

A TALE OF TWO STATES

The tiny Grand Duchy of Luxembourg often gets an unfair press, as a sort of giant but dodgy bank, running a tax evasion business at the cost of its bigger neighbors in France and Germany. But Luxembourg is a pioneer, not a parasite, with a history of identifying niches and then piling into them with great success.

It was a pioneer of integrated, quality steel-making that, 100 years on, now sees what was formerly its Arbed company absorbed into Arcelor Mittal, the leading international steel giant headquartered in Luxembourg – not just for tax reasons but because of its constantly updated steel heritage. Luxembourg identified early the opportunities in satellite television and is still a major European provider. It was also, from the 1970s onward, a pioneer of the euro-bonds market, which was what really turned it into a recognized banking center.

When it comes to Lebanon, it is a rather different story. All too often, and all too tragically, it doesn’t work at all. But when it does, it is a revelation: a country that survives on its wits. Banking and services are its specialties, going back in history to when it operated as go-between to the civilizations emerging along the banks of the Nile and between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. One of its major assets, invaluable for a nation making a living as an intermediary, is its diaspora, four times as numerous as the population of the country. The Lebanese economy is not really susceptible to conventional economic analysis; it is not even comprehensible until you realize that the geographical state of Lebanon is, economically speaking, one of the bigger islands in a far-flung Lebanese archipelago, stretching from Abidjan to Sydney, from Toronto to São Paolo, into the banks of Paris and the bond-dealing rooms of London and New York, all made possible by globalization.
are front and center here. For dangerously high numbers of people, it is a moral affront that those they hold responsible for the crisis continue to profit from it. The legitimacy of the capitalist system is in the balance. The surprise bestseller at this year’s annual book fair in Madrid was a punchily illustrated reissue of The Communist Manifesto – throughout the high growth years little more than a resource for postmodern irony.

Nor can the current orthodoxy that banks guilty of casino-grade gambles should be furnished with unlimited sovereign guarantees underwritten by citizens’ taxes survive much longer. Too many people now see this as not only morally repugnant but economically dubious.

**Good Tales to Tell**
But if world and EU leaders can co-ordinate sufficiently to get the governance issues of globalization sorted out – a very big if – then its transformative capacity can resume its work. This is not just the story of giant countries such as India, China and Brazil. Small to medium-sized countries have a good tale to tell too.

Globalization has worked well for medium-sized economies that have gone to seed but picked themselves up, such as the UK. London is proof of this. Three decades ago it was a rather stand-off-ish and self-regarding capital of a somewhat provincial country, an Atlantic island with an imperial hangover. The food was appalling, the service worse, and foreigners were seen as somewhat suspect. Now, London is a sparkling cosmopolis with an alphabet soup of languages, prized for its culture and cuisine and not just because it is Europe’s dominant financial center.

Turkey is another striking example. Ten years ago the country was mired in its worst financial crisis since 1945. But over the past decade it has tripled the size of its economy and doubled per capita income. Ankara’s attempts to join the EU may have stalled, and its political attention may be wandering along neo-Ottoman paths toward an effervescent Middle East. But Turkey’s economic integration with Europe advances exponentially. There are now 14,000 European companies in Turkey, many of which transfer the technology the country needs to realize its vaulting ambitions.

The Gulf, too, is providing case-studies of small and nimble countries grasping the opportunities of globalization to play in the international market-place, including the arena of ideas. The states of Abu Dhabi, Qatar or Dubai can be propelled at dizzying speed by the vision or whim of their rulers. In a world without globalization, they would probably just be hydrocarbons producers recycling petrodollars. Instead, they can channel their natural resources endowments into new banks of technology, skills and learning, and richly exploit being at the intersection not just of the East and the West but the North and the South.

They, more than most, have a stake in globalization vigorously surviving the contained economic depression the world still seems unable to shake off – but so does everyone. If globalization is in crisis, a solution must be found. There is no way back to a fragmented world – unless we wish to welcome famine, disease, war and impoverishment into the bargain.
ANATOMY OF A GLOBALIZED STATE

QATAR HAS GONE FROM SLEEPY BACKWATER TO BOASTING THE WORLD’S HIGHEST GDP PER CAPITA IN A SINGLE GENERATION. CAN THE COUNTRY RETAIN ITS CULTURE IN THE FACE OF SUCH RAPID GROWTH? AND HOW MUCH OF THAT CULTURE IS ITSELF A PRODUCT OF EARLIER PHASES OF INTERACTION AND MIGRATION?

In the Art Center at the Katara Cultural Village in Doha, a picture of a Qatari woman clutching a Coca-Cola cup hangs prominently in the rear gallery. The woman, dressed in a traditional black abaya, cuts a striking image against the endless blue sky behind her. Her lips and fingernails have been painted to match the American soft drink’s bright red logo, and her windswept chestnut hair flows out elegantly from underneath her veil as she peers into the distance, as if trying to see what changes the future will bring to her and her country. But as the cup in her hand indicates, the changes are already there.

“The Coke is the big obvious globalization element,” says Christto Sanz, 27, the Puerto Rican-born artist. His photograph is part of Unparallelled Objectives, an exhibition exploring the Arabian Gulf’s constantly changing societies.

Written by Christina Maria Paschyn
The cup is just one manifestation of the Western consumerist products ubiquitous in Qatar, where women wear black abayas, just as in the photograph, but frequently with jeans underneath and Louis Vuitton bags in their hands; where American fast food chains and coffee shops are found on nearly every street corner; and where high rises and skyscrapers dominate the skyline.

“So much has changed in Qatar. Everything has become bigger – the shops, the houses, the whole of Doha,” says Mohammed Abdulasis, a 65-year-old Qatari who spends much of his free time in Souq Waqif, Doha’s historic bazaar. As a young man, Abdulasis would come here to buy spices and handicrafts imported from Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. He would sip coffee as he watched people haggle over the price of birds, sheep and wool. Today the sheep are gone and the birds sit in cages next to those housing rabbits, hamsters and kittens. Most of the “traditional” merchandise, Abdulasis says, is now made in China. The souq has been updated and refurbished and now houses dozens of souvenir stalls alongside cafés serving Lebanese, Iraqi, Malay, French and Italian cuisine.

“Before, the souq was smaller. People would buy their stuff and leave,” says Abdulasis. “Now people come from all over the world to see how Doha is growing and developing.”

Since the discovery of oil in the 1930s and full independence in 1971 (the country had previously been a British protectorate), Qatar, a peninsula of 11,437 square kilometers on the western shores of the Arabian Gulf, has experienced rapid development and unprecedented wealth. Qatar has the highest GDP per capita in the world and its growth rate was 19.4 percent in 2010. Large oil and natural gas reserves may have triggered the fast expansion of the country’s economy, but an examination of Qatar’s population reveals another pillar of its sustained success: a majority migrant and expatriate workforce.

This has long been the case, but from 2005 to 2009, Qatar experienced an unprecedented rise in population as the country entered a new development phase. The transformation of Doha into a modern metropolis led to a colossal demand for foreign workers, whose number jumped from 706,033 to 1,409,313, while the overall population reached nearly 1.7 million in 2010 – of which less than 300,000 were Qatari nationals.

CO-EXISTING NATIONALITIES

Today Doha’s residential areas are home to an array of co-existing nationalities, many of which have been brought together indirectly by income level rather than by a shared cultural heritage.

Visibly ethnic neighborhoods, however, exist as well. Doha’s Najma and Msheireb areas, for instance, are often described as Little Bangladeshes or mini Indias because of the thousands of South Asian workers who live there.

“I am really happy to live in Najma,” says Abdul Hakim, a 50-year-old Pakistani who migrated to Doha 32 years ago. “Everybody knows about Najma – it is a very famous South Asian neighborhood and the chance of finding work here if you are an Asian is really high.”

Given the large number of South Asians in the country, particularly Indians, who comprise the largest foreign group at 450,000, such ethnic “villages” may seem inevitable. Their tangible impact, however, is anything but. Some academics such as Geoff Harkness, a sociologist and Visiting Assistant Professor in Liberal Arts at Northwestern University in Qatar, question whether the country’s predominantly semiskilled and low-wage South Asian population has truly affected and altered Qatari society and culture.

“That population in some ways is invisible. You would think that this place would be like Delhi, but it’s not because these people are not the ones designing the buildings and putting the art in the museums.”

The most obvious effect of many of Qatar’s ethnic groups has come in the form of additional aisles at supermarkets labeled “Filipino” or “Indian” food, clusters of family-run ethnic restaurants or convenience stores, and the establishment of a few...
nationality-based elementary and high schools.

There are two reasons for this lack of major cultural influence by recent migrant groups, according to Dr Mahjoob Zweiri, a historian of the Middle East and the Head of Humanities at Qatar University. “One is the nature of the immigration. People know that they are going for one purpose – money. They are expected to work and send that money to build their families’ futures. Second, the nature of the local society does not offer the opportunity for any one migrant or class group to influence too much because, as a migrant laborer, you need to match the culture and traditions.”

The West’s influence, on the other hand, is much more obvious.

“You can see that in the number of women who have entered education and the workforce,” Harkness says. “But you can also see it in terms of the sort of art and cultural products being produced here.” Examples include the establishment of Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra and the galleries that frequently showcase international artists such as the French-American sculptor Louise Bourgeois and the Japanese artist Takashi Murakami.

That is not to say that the various non-Westerners who have lived in Qatar over the years have not left a cultural imprint on the native society. In particular, experts say, the influence of South Asians is to be found throughout the Gulf; but it stems back to the 18th and 19th centuries.

“Most of the impact of India, Pakistan and South Asia took place during the British East India Company period, when they brought a bureaucratic class from India here to open up the routes of the Gulf to India to export their economic products,” says Mazhar Al Zoby, Assistant Professor of International Affairs at Qatar University. “Economically the Gulf was not only dominated, but centrally controlled by India. The Gulf rupee, primarily based on the Indian rupee, was in circulation until 1966 in Qatar, and it was only after it was devalued that it was dropped.”

But India’s centuries-old economic influence extends beyond the Gulf’s former currency. “Just look at the trade boats, their size, the wood.” The material must have come from the tropical parts of India, he says. “We have no sorts of trees of that size.”

The Indian subcontinent has also profoundly influenced the region’s culinary traditions. “This is obvious with foods like majboos and biryani,” says Al Zoby. “You look at the Mediterranean cuisine and Gulf cuisine and they are totally different.”

Vani Saraswathi, 38, a media professional who emigrated from India 13 years ago, agrees. She says her native land’s subtle impact on Qatari culture is evident if you know where to look. “For instance, Qatari karak, which means strong tea, is actually Indian. But I don’t call it chai, I say karak because for me it’s a Qatari drink. We don’t have it this way in India anymore – this amount of sugar and this strong. Even the...
language – Arabic spoken by Qataris is highly influenced by Urdu compared to the Arabic spoken by Egyptians.”

Intermarriages between Indians and Gulf natives were also common during the British Raj and continued well into the 20th century. As Al Zoby puts it: “Post-oil economic conditions have intensified a process that started a long time ago.”

**DIVERSIFYING ECONOMY**

Nevertheless, rapid economic development has allowed Qatar to attempt to diversify rapidly from a carbon to a knowledge-based economy, perhaps best represented by the establishment of six American university branch campuses at Qatar Foundation’s Education City. The goal: to recruit more highly skilled Western and Arab expats who will in turn better educate and train Qataris to assume leadership roles in the public and private spheres.

Despite the benefits expats have brought and continue to bring, for some Qataris the sea of foreign workers – the BBC estimates that some 20 immigrants arrive in the country per hour – is overwhelming. Qatar’s migrant population is mostly male, which has resulted in a major gender imbalance – men now represent 76 percent of Qatar’s total population. Last year the Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning ordered the removal of thousands of low-income single male workers living in residential areas to Doha’s Industrial Zone after several local families complained about “lack of respect from expatriate bachelors for local values and traditions” and “menaces to the Qatari way of life”.

Northwestern’s Harkness says he can understand the government’s point of view. “In my class, my students and I have debated many times the policy of ‘family day’ (days when single men are banned from entering many of the local malls and parks).

“In the United States it would be illegal. But a lot of my female students talk about how they used to go to malls and these guys would stare at them. It’s not just this top-down thing where it’s racist and we’re going to segregate these guys.”

Um Hussein, a 70-year-old Qatari woman, says the presence of large numbers of foreigners, especially men, can be intimidating if not downright inconvenient.

“Life was better and simpler back when I was young,” she says. A Qatari whose family lived in tents as they traveled throughout the country, she settled in Doha when she received a Qatari passport 28 years ago.

“When I was young, we could visit our neighbors, and because we knew everyone so well, we didn’t have to wear an abaya to visit their homes. But now if I want to go out, I have to cover up for modesty purposes because there are too many foreign men around. We also get annoyed because of how crowded it is and we don’t see as many locals as we used to before.”

**‘A PROBLEM OF POPULATION’**

A recent survey by the Permanent Population Committee (PPC) found that the “overwhelming majority” of young Qataris believe that “Qatar has a problem of population”. A “vast majority” of them also agree that an “increased reliance on servants and over-recruitment of expatriates” is putting the country’s culture at “risk” and that “preserving the culture of community and identity is more important than urbanization”.

Local entrepreneur Mohamed Jaidah, 30, says some Qataris’ negative attitudes about foreign workers stem from economic as well as cultural concerns.

“There are two sides to the story,” says Jaidah, founder of the Doha-based media company Firefly Communications. “There are a lot of Qataris who look at it as a cultural thing, but there are also a lot of people who see it as expats taking jobs and therefore not giving opportunities to Qatars. It comes back to the question: Do we currently have the people with the expertise to fill the required jobs?”

But if the PPC’s findings are accurate and anxieties about foreigners are prevalent among Qatari youth, they are not echoed by students at Qatar University. “No, there are definitely not too many foreigners,” says Fatima Al Naemi, 23, who is studying for a bachelor’s degree in social work. “Foreigners are good for Qatar because Qatar is becoming famous.”

Maha Al Hajri, who is currently enrolled in the university’s Foundation Program, agrees. She says the growing number of female expat professionals working in Doha has inspired Qatari women to expand their own career and education prospects. “I want to keep studying and do something to help my country,” Maha
GLOBALIZATION

CASE STUDY: QATAR

says. “Women should be something in Qatar, and the women are becoming stronger. It’s a very good change. Even when I get married, if my husband tells me to stop working, I won’t listen. Before my mother had to stop working when she got married, but now not anymore.”

As for warnings that Qatari culture may be eroded, the students do not seem too concerned. “We will not be afraid of losing our traditions because the leadership here has put in our mind that tradition in Qatar is the first thing,” Fatima says.

What she means is the Qatari government has repeatedly emphasized that preserving the country’s Arab-Islamic heritage and culture is key. This is stated in both the National Development Strategy and the Qatar National Vision 2030. The government is also aware of the need to better integrate foreign workers, particularly ahead of the 2022 World Cup. Initiatives include developing strategies to recruit and retain more highly skilled expats to balance the number of unskilled migrant workers in the country; the construction of an entertainment complex for workers living in the Industrial Zone; and the proposed establishment of labor unions to protect workers’ rights.

“We’re taking what’s good from the West, but keeping our identity and keeping all the good from this region – our traditions, values and religion,” says Natra Saeed Abdulla, a Qatari businesswoman who owns the Doha Montessori & British School, which educates students from 88 countries. “You really need people to work here and to stay here,” she says. “Yes, a lot of things are happening to preserve the culture, but that doesn’t mean both groups cannot be part of the community.”

DOHA COMMUNITY

A new, more integrated community is already beginning to take shape in Doha, says Vani Saraswathi, primarily because the city’s globalized cultural institutions are flourishing. “Before everything was very nationality-based. The Indians did their own thing, the British did their own, and the Qataris did their own thing. Now when you go to an event at the Qatar National Convention Centre or Katara, it’s not those communities, it’s a Doha community going there.”

Mohamed Jaidah concurs. “We are a work in progress. It’s very difficult to come today and say this is what Qatar is. Three years down the line, Qatar is going to be slightly different from what it is now,” he says. “But I think it’s going to be a very interesting mesh of different backgrounds and communities. I don’t believe you will see these groupings of different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds. You won’t have a Little India on the right and a Filipino town on the left – it’s going to be really well diversified.”

Back at the Katara Art Center, Sanz, a new arrival to Doha himself, ponders his photograph of a man wearing a t-shirt displaying the Puerto Rican flag. Like the image of the Qatari woman holding a Coke cup, the man is dressed in clothing representative of his ethnic background. But if the former represents Qataris’ acceptance of globalization, the latter signifies globalization’s entry into the country in the form of the migrant worker.

“This guy is coming to the Middle East and he is looking for the future,” Sanz says. “And he is bringing his story and his culture to Qatar.”

WE’RE TAKING WHAT’S GOOD FROM THE WEST, BUT KEEPING OUR IDENTITY AND KEEPING ALL THE GOOD FROM THIS REGION – OUR TRADITIONS, VALUES AND RELIGION

THE AUTHOR

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THINK MAGAZINE
Twenty-six years ago, McDonald’s opened a branch in front of the Spanish Steps, one of the most beautiful corners of Rome, and in the mind of a young journalist and restaurant critic called Carlo Petrini, something snapped.

Italy has for centuries taken quiet pride in the excellence and distinctiveness of its food. Unlike the cuisine of France, it is not famous for its elaborate sauces or time-consuming recipes devised by the chefs of the aristocracy. Italian dishes tend to be quick and easy to make, depending for their excellence on the creativity and imagination of the cook and, above all, on the quality of the ingredients. It is no accident that the most famous are

**THE UNITED FRONT OF GASTRONOMY**

**FROM CORNISH PILCHARD FISHERMEN TO NEPALESE BEEKEEPERS, THE SLOW FOOD MOVEMENT BRINGS TOGETHER ALL WHO WISH TO SAVE AND CELEBRATE CULINARY TRADITIONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD. FAST LIFE, THEY SAY, IS FOR FOOLS**

**WRITTEN BY PETER POPHAM**

Vendor at the Slow Food Movement’s Salone del Gusto with his locally produced food
spaghetti and pizza, both prepared in just a few minutes. Italian food is, par excellence, the food of the people. So with the arrival of the American burger franchise in his capital, Petrini realized that this great tradition was under threat. If ordinary Italians could be persuaded to turn their backs on their cheap, simple yet wonderful dishes, Italy and its cuisine, he believed, were in deep trouble.

Out of this sense of real and present danger was born an organization called Slow Food, which has far outgrown its roots, becoming a genuinely global movement with branches across Europe, Africa, Asia, Australasia and the Americas. It brings together people with wildly different lifestyles and vastly different preoccupations, from pastoral nomads in Mongolia to wealthy European gourmets, from Cornish pilchard fishermen to Nepalese beekeepers. People who grow, cook and love to eat good food all find a common home in the Slow Food movement.

The object of Petrini’s alarm was not McDonald’s itself but everything it represented: the industrialization of the food supply, with heavy reliance on fertilizers and pesticides; the reduction of ingredients and menus to a few completely standardized items, from Rome to Rio and from Qatar to Quebec; and the seduction of customers, not by flavor and nutritional quality but by speed, quantity, and coarse flavors that induce greed.

While I was researching this article, a news item caught my attention: a woman in her 40s who had been tucking into a “Double Bypass Burger” at a Las Vegas restaurant called the Heart Attack Grill was rushed to hospital after collapsing mid-bite – the same fate that had struck another diner there a few weeks back. For many Americans, it was no more than a mildly embarrassing example of their way of life. Exported around the world, that sort of thing was, for Petrini, the death of civilization itself.

Until then his passion had been discovering obscure trattorias in the Italian countryside and writing them up for newspapers. But now he started organizing, and at the Opera Comique in Paris on 9 November 1989, delegates from 15 countries applauded the Slow Food Manifesto, written by Petrini and a poet and journalist called Folco Portinari. “Our century,” the manifesto declared, “first invented the machine, and then took it as its life model. We are enslaved by speed and have all succumbed to the same insidious virus: Fast Life, which disrupts our habits, pervades the privacy of our homes and forces us to eat Fast Foods… A firm defense of material pleasure is the only way to oppose the universal folly of Fast Life.”

The unique character of the organization he founded, and over which he still presides, is that it offered gourmets a network of information about exquisite but endangered restaurants, farmers and producers a way to share their knowhow and their strategies of resistance to agribusiness, and food lovers a banner around which to unite.

**WE ARE ENSLAVED BY SPEED AND HAVE ALL SUCCUMBED TO THE SAME INSIDIOUS VIRUS:**
**FAST LIFE, WHICH DISRUPTS OUR HABITS, PERVADES THE PRIVACY OF OUR HOMES AND FORCES US TO EAT FAST FOODS**
thought of as two different things. The history of food means economy, trade, techniques of production, how to respond to the needs of the hungry, the agricultural economy. If I talk about gastronomy, on the other hand, I talk about pleasure. ‘This division is a profound mistake.’ Gastronomy has become thought of merely as ‘the self-indulgence of the rich’.

‘In fact it is everything that concerns how man feeds himself: agriculture, food processing, economy, nutrition, the pleasure of eating.’ This holistic vision explains the multifarious manifestations of Slow Food that will be on display in the city of Turin, not far from Bra, this October. The most celebrated event is the Salone del Gusto, ‘the Drawing-room of Taste’, which has taken over a huge exhibition hall on alternate years since 1996. Bringing together champion producers, chefs and restaurateurs from all over the world, in 2010 there were 910 stands and more than 400 events. Temporary restaurants offered couscous from Morocco, sushi from Japan, creole cuisine from Guadeloupe. ‘Taste workshops instructed the curious about the subterranean rabbits of Ischia, donkey salami and horsemeat prosciutto, while in the evening those who had not yet eaten their fill went on to expand their culinary horizons (along with their stomachs) at ‘Slow Food Dinner Dates’ in Turin’s best restaurants.

**PURITANICAL ATTITUDE**

It sounds like pure gluttony. But for Petrini the puritanical attitude to dining is part of the problem. ‘What is the difference between the classical ecological movements and Slow Food?’ he asked me rhetorically. ‘It’s exactly this: we don’t intend to renounce pleasure. To take pleasure in food is neither a matter of elitism nor slobbishness. Pleasure is a right and a part of human nature. The rich and the poor experience pleasure in exactly the same way. And eating is one element of pleasure.’

Petrini has also for several years been organizing Terra Madre, ‘Mother Earth’, a gathering of farmers, fruit-growers, fishers, shepherds, many of them poor and illiterate, brought at Slow Food’s expense from 150 countries. The first was held in Turin in 2004 and was closed to the public: it was essentially a forum for the defenders of the world’s traditional food-producing systems to come together and share their experiences of how to hang on to their skills and specialties in the face of a rapidly industrializing world that values these less and less.

Subsequent events were open to the public, and this year Terra Madre will merge with Salone del Gusto to emphasize that the enjoyment and responsibility for the survival of healthy and delicious fare are inextricably linked. One recent major initiative is the ‘Thousand Gardens in Africa’, intended to address the continent’s chronic food crisis in ways that do not impose the type of solutions favored by the World Bank: huge loans, chemical-based agriculture systems, and crops grown for export.

‘Planting a food garden may seem like an insignificant gesture when faced with the complexity and gravity of the problems facing Africa,’ says Slow Food’s Paola Nano. “But if a thousand are planted in two dozen countries, and if networks of farmers, agronomists, students and cooks spring up around each one, then these small projects can each point the way toward a sustainable future that responds to the needs of local communities.”

The gardens range from Moroccan oases to the arid lands of Mali, from Kenya’s highlands to Uganda’s forests. The workers will produce their own seeds – Slow Food has always been fiercely opposed to GM crops – grow traditional crops, and use natural methods to fertilize the soil and combat pests and weeds. “The gardens will involve young people,” says Nano, “but will be based on the wisdom of older generations. They will be open-air classrooms, where local food traditions will be learned and experiences and knowledge shared.”

In 2004 Petrini’s boldest idea yet came to fruition in his home town: the world’s first ever University of Gastronomic Sciences. Today it is well established, and students flock to immerse themselves in every aspect from the anthropology of eating to the principles of food technology. “We didn’t set up this university to teach people how to become more moronic,” says Petrini. “Our task here is to reclaim the concept of gastronomy in all its multi-disciplinary richness.”

At the Salone del Gusto in 2008, Petrini told a packed hall: “When I started Slow Food, kind people slapped me on the back and said, ‘You’ve found a brilliant niche.’ But a niche is the last thing we want to be. Quality food should be a universal right.”

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**THE AUTHOR**

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When cultures and nations see a significant date on the horizon, they tend to hunt for phrases and ideas that encapsulate the mood of the age. Toward the end of a decade or of a century social and political commentators, therefore, step up to the mark with judgments that are meant to define a time of change. And at the end of a millennium of recorded time the conclusions can be particularly grandiose and all-encompassing.

This was a role once performed by priests and scribes whose learning equipped them to disclose contemporary meaning as well as to prophesize the shape of things to come. In the civilizations of ancient Mesopotamia, during the second millennium BCE, scholars dissected the livers of freshly slaughtered animals and offered their prognostications about the future on the basis of the organs’ shape, odor and texture.

When the end of the first millennium CE hove into view in the Europe of the 990s, both the learned and the populace at large fell prey to dark and apocalyptic imaginings.

During the 1890s a more secular ambience, mostly in France and England, delighted in the artistic cult of “decadence” as if intuiting that the fabled stability of the 19th century world order was about to be torn asunder.
And a hundred years later a new class of scribes – the economists and journalists – were busying themselves with another phenomenon that seemed to typify the contemporary zeitgeist: globalization.

The free movement of goods and capital across continents and nations liberated from protectionist tariffs; a workforce that, if suitably educated and motivated, was increasingly able to transfer its skills and move from one country to another; the integration of cultures that were once merely local within a more capacious international milieu: these features of globalization qualified it for a role as late-20th century civilization’s defining attribute. This was an age of monumental public architecture commissioned to celebrate the arrival of the year 2000, and the globe’s great cities are not short of buildings whose self-confidence alerts us to the arrival of an interconnected world.

In the spring of 1989 the glass and steel pyramid that occupies the Cour Napoleon of the Louvre, and which now serves as the museum’s official entrance, came into public use, and that edifice – designed by IM Pei, who was also responsible for the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha – encapsulates many of globalization’s leading ideas.

Pei himself, born in Canton, China, and educated in the United States, is a figure whose biography straddles the continents, and his architectural practice has borrowed from
The revolution of 1789 was an undeniably global event since its effects, both good and ill, traversed the world. It led to a new agenda in human rights while also inaugurating modern terrorism as a result of the revolutionaries’ endorsement of violence as a matter of state policy. This latest pyramid occupies a place of particular importance in the commemoration of 1789 since it was Napoleon Bonaparte who brought the revolution to Egypt.

His campaign in Egypt and Syria (1798-1801) trampled over two regions that had become part of the Ottoman Empire and, although his military offensive ended in failure, it was also a magnificent episode in the history of East-West cultural contacts. The expedition’s engineers were usefully employed in designing roads to be marched on by the army and in devising plans for a canal in Suez, but the botanists, geologists and mathematicians, along with the historians, linguists and archaeologists, set to work on an exhaustive catalogue of Egyptian civilization, both ancient and modern, under the auspices of the Institut d’Egypte, a foundation established under Napoleon’s patronage.

The magnificent 20-volume Description de l’Egypte was the product of their labors and, published between 1809 and 1829, it was the...
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Confucius in China and other thinkers in India were embarking on similar investigations at about the same time; it is not at all implausible that these similar trains of thought were being followed in different continents and countries because of the land routes and the sea lanes that linked East and West. Those channels of communication were developed for trading purposes, and ideas often travel by the same routes as goods and cargoes. The spread of Islam from the Arabian Peninsula through Egypt and Syria to Persia from the seventh century CE onward is another example of the same phenomenon, since the faith was diffused along trading routes long since used by merchants.

In the early 21st century we are impressed by the speed of our telecommunication systems. That rapidity has facilitated the integration of world financial markets, and instantaneous flows of capital are the basis of our kind of globalization. But it was the late nineteenth century that saw the emergence for the first time of a progressively more integrated world economy, since the trading systems established by European empires drew the Asian and African colonies into a global web of economic activity.

Patterns of imperial power have been the dominant fact in the history of globalization at both a cultural and an economic level, and those who were intimidated, conquered or otherwise subdued had to accept an inferior status. This was globalization imposed on unequal terms and the psychological impact on those who had been colonized could be very long term.

Resentment vies with admiration in the portrayal of Iskandar offered by the Persian national poet Firdausi in his epic Shahnama, which was completed in around 1010 CE, almost 13 centuries after Alexander the Great’s conquest of the Persian Empire. But the kind of globalization that captured the millennial imagination of the 1990s was a very different affair from previous examples of the same phenomenon. The age of the great empires was over and those nations and states that competed with each other in a global market now did so on the basis of a greater equality. Globalization may well be an ancient theme but it is also one that evolves; and that capacity to progress explains why it has become the dominant motif of the contemporary world.
THE MAN WHO SAID NO TO THE WEST

HE PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN WHAT HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS MALAYSIA'S ECONOMIC MIRACLE, BUT FORMER PRIME MINISTER DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD REMAINS A DIVISIVE CHARACTER IN PART, HE SAYS, FOR DARING TO STAND UP FOR A DIFFERENT IDEA OF WHAT A GLOBALIZED WORLD COULD BE.

At Asian and developing world governmental meetings in the 1980s and 90s, a diminutive man with a fondness for dark glasses and safari suits would regularly dominate proceedings to an extent that neither his stature nor the size of his country would have suggested.

But Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of the 27 million-strong nation of Malaysia from 1981 to 2003, was always in the news. Hailed by the *Far Eastern Economic Review* as a “New Voice for the Third World” for his brilliant use of platforms provided by the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Commonwealth, his career was lauded as “truly remarkable” when he stepped down by Karl D Jackson, White House Senior Director for Asian Affairs under the first President Bush. The Nobel Prize-winning economists Paul Krugman and Joseph Stiglitz were both admirers. “Malaysia’s success should be studied both by those looking for economic prosperity and those seeking to understand how people live together, not just with tolerance, but with respect,” wrote Stiglitz in 2007, looking back over the five decades since independence, the latter half of which had been dominated by Dr Mahathir.

Such praise was all the more notable given that the other reason that Dr Mahathir made the headlines so often was his bracingly intemperate rhetoric aimed at the West. Britain was jolted out of its paternalistic embrace of its former colony a mere three months after he took office, when he announced that his government had a new policy: “Buy British Last.” A few years
later he remonstrated with Australian MPs critical of his human rights record in typically forthright style: “When Australia was at the stage of Malaysia’s present development,” he wrote, “you solved your Aborigines problem by simply shooting them.” Even in retirement, the attacks on Western leaders have not ceased: last November the Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Tribunal set up by the former prime minister found George W Bush and Tony Blair guilty of “crimes against peace” over the Iraq war and recommended that they be charged with genocide at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Small wonder that in his volume in the Giants of Asia series, the American academic Tom Plate repeatedly referred to him as “Malaysia’s Dr No”.

It was not that Dr Mahathir had a crude, knee-jerk opposition to the West, as maintained by critics such as the BBC’s World Affairs Editor John Simpson, who once labeled him “a kind of successful Asian Robert Mugabe”. Annual two-way trade with the US was part of what Stiglitz calls Malaysia’s economic “miracle” – it increased under his period of office and now stands at $40 billion – while Dr Mahathir professed himself to have been “in awe of Americans” as a young man and as prime minister signed a secret defense treaty with President Reagan. His view was that while the age of empire may have passed, developing nations still had to undergo a “decolonization of the mind”; and that a globalized world should not mean accepting dominance by “white Caucasians” – by which he meant Europeans and countries colonized by them, such as America, Australia and New Zealand.

“They have this high and mighty attitude towards us,” Dr Mahathir told me when I interviewed him in his office in the Petronas Twin Towers in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur. “They are critical of me, critical of Malaysia. They run me down and say, ‘Oh, he’s a dictator.’”

Many have indeed been very critical. Dr Mahathir stands accused of being an impatient, vindictive authoritarian, of emasculating the judiciary, stifling freedom of expression, locking up his opponents, leaving the country’s institutions of state hollowed out and allowing a culture of cronyism and corruption to flourish. When hosting the Asia Pacific Economic Forum in 1998 he even suffered the indignity of being publicly rebuked by then US Vice President Al Gore over the trial of his former deputy, Anwar Ibrahim – legal proceedings that Gore later described as a “mockery”. Dr Mahathir refuses to accept that there is substance to these charges, but any assessment of his domestic legacy would have to be mixed at best, and he remains a highly controversial – some would say divisive – figure at home. On the international stage, however, his record is more clear cut.

Sitting almost motionless in a black Nehru suit behind his semi-circular desk, with its panorama of the modern city that owes so much to him, the former premier, now 87, elaborated on his view that countries have varying values and therefore appropriate forms of governance. “You place so much value on individuals’ rights that you forget that the majority also have their right.” Western notions of freedom, he said, should not be imposed elsewhere. “We have to be sensitive, to respect the tradition of the country. I often tell the story of how in a suburban community in America, very conservative, somebody decided to put up a cinema to show pornography. The community objected, but the court said that there was nothing in law to prevent it.” To Mahathir, that was proof of the madness of Western-style liberty which, in his eyes, is legally tilted far too much toward the individual rather than the community. “We would think that the rights of these people not to have their children become immoral were far greater than that of one person to make money.”

The distinction was particular, but reflected Dr Mahathir’s unwavering belief that there are “strong and well-grounded Asian values which contribute to Asian customs and traditions” that result in different cultures and polities from those of the “white Caucasians”.

Because he “speaks his mind” about this, however, he said: “I get the feeling that the
reaction is, ‘We must hammer him.’”

Dr Mahathir made clear that there would be no “toadying to the powerful” as soon as he took office. Informed by the American ambassador that arrangements were underway for him to meet President Reagan in Washington, and that it was a great honor for an appointment to be made so swiftly, Mahathir let the envoy know that he had no intention of visiting the US any time soon. “Not surprisingly, I did not see the ambassador again after that,” he noted drily in his memoirs, *A Doctor In The House*, published last year. Not that he was sorry. “Had I gone,” he wrote, “I would have been just another Third World leader going to beg for aid. I was not going to ask for anything. If we had no money, we would simply cut our spending. I wanted to show the great and powerful nations that as far as I was concerned, Malaysia did not care about their size or importance.” His countrymen had to demonstrate that they “had self-esteem.”

**On the economic** front this manifested itself by not seeking to emulate any Western approach to industrialization, but in a new policy that took Japan as a model instead. “Look East” was announced, in typically thumb-nosing fashion, in 1982 just as Britain’s Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, had arrived in Malaysia to mend ties with its former colony. That end was not achieved until the following year when the UK Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, honored Dr Mahathir with a grand “peace meal” in her official Downing Street residence. In the words of Dr Mahathir’s biographer, the former *Asian Wall Street Journal* Editor Barry Wain: “She showed the deference that made the difference.”

Both examples illustrate Mahathir’s trademark combination of principle – he insisted he be treated with respect – and pragmatism. For both produced results: in the latter case, a new attitude from London that commercial contracts in Malaysia were not Britain’s for the taking (and British investment shot up once friendly relations were resumed); and in the former, when Mahathir finally did go to Washington in 1984, he met the very top tier at the White House and came away with a security treaty that not only benefited both sides, but was kept quiet, thus allowing the Malaysian leader to continue to claim that his country “was aligned with no one.”

Sometimes the sheer provocation of Dr Mahathir’s comments obscured the real point. When, in 1986, the Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke condemned as “barbaric” the hanging in Malaysia of two of his countrymen who had been found guilty of drug-trafficking, Dr Mahathir was quick to respond. “The Australians,” he said, “are descendants of convicts.” His message was that no one had the right to interfere *de haut en bas* with Malaysia’s judicial process, especially on a basis of assumed superiority. Westerners, he thinks, “assert that all values are universal and their values are the universal ones”.

A different conception of the world and our mutual responsibilities was necessary, he argued, declaring before the UN that Antarctica should belong to all, not just the developed nations that had claimed great tracts of the continent; and putting words into action during the wars after the break-up of Yugoslavia when he covertly supplied Bosnian Muslims with Russian missiles during the
Serb-perpetrated atrocities that the rest of the continent appeared to have no appetite to stop.

**Few politicians** have come up with as biting a critique of the devastation that has followed Western insistence that its way is the only way. On liberal democracy, for instance, he has written:

>“Europeans are forever trying to improve things… In the governance of nations Europeans would be initially enthusiastic with the system they had in place. However, disenchantment sets in sooner or later and they then start designing a new one to replace it. When they adopt the new system they would insist it is the best, the most perfect. They would not only practice the system but would want everyone else to do the same. Currently they believe that democracy, the free market and a borderless world will create heaven on earth. They invade countries and kill people in order that democracy and its accompaniments be accepted by all. But already they are seeing disaster in their own countries as free markets wreak havoc on their finances. In time, we can expect them to introduce a new system and woe betide anyone or any country that refuses to accept their latest brilliant idea.”

The high point of Dr Mahathir’s career was his defiance of the International Monetary Fund’s free-market austerity prescriptions during the Asian financial crisis that began in 1997: he introduced capital controls and kept interest rates low, earning the admiration of Stiglitz, who was then the World Bank’s chief economist, and ensuring that Malaysia was spared the economic collapse and high unemployment that afflicted neighboring nations. But to Dr Mahathir success was not the only reward. After bailing out a state, he believed, “the IMF claimed the right to manage the country’s economy as it saw fit”. To Dr Mahathir, he had also saved his country’s very independence.

The low point, at least in terms of public relations, came just before he stood down as premier in 2003, when his address to the 56-nation Organization of the Islamic Conference in Kuala Lumpur included the observation that “today the Jews rule the world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them”. It did not matter that Dr Mahathir was, as ever, being pragmatic rather than ideological, nor that the greater part of his address was concerned with condemning Muslims who became preoccupied with minor matters “such as whether tight trousers and peak caps were Islamic”; instead, he enjoined his listeners, their duty was “to disprove the perception of Islam as a religion of backwardness and terror”, and urged them to “win hearts and minds”. The speech was greeted with a standing ovation, and Afghan President Hamid Karzai was among those who praised it afterwards. “Dr Mahathir spoke of the inhibitions within the Islamic world and that those inhibitions must go away, and I entirely agree with that,” he said.

In Western capitals, however, it earned instant criticism and accusations of anti-Semitism. This he has always denied – “I have friends who are Jews,” he told me; and they even include the financier George Soros, despite Dr Mahathir having infamously called him a “moron” during the Asian crisis. Barry Wain’s biography, *Malaysian Maverick*, is frequently unsympathetic – “all the bad things I did throughout my 22 years, nothing good at all”, as Dr Mahathir said to me – but Wain effectively clears him of the anti-Semitism charge: “Almost no one who knew him well or observed him at close quarters for any length of time believed he was anti-Semitic.”

Some will never be convinced of that, and it is sure to feature as one of many strikes against him when the obituaries come to be written. The years of “speaking his mind” have taken a toll on Dr Mahathir’s reputation in Europe and North America, where the sharpness of his tongue rather than his many and considerable achievements have formed the common impression of him. Others, however, will concur with the view of Nelson Mandela. “Your prime minister is a very tall man,” the former South African president once told a Malaysian academic, Lim Kok Wing. “Not really,” replied Lim who, like Dr Mahathir, is rather short in physical stature. “I mean your prime minister is a very tall leader,” said Mandela. That is how he will be remembered in developing countries – as a man who dared stand up for differing and localized visions of what a globalized world might be. And if that meant that he frequently had to say “no” to the West, then so be it.
The world is on the cusp of a global turn – the center of gravity is shifting as power diffuses from the West to the rising rest. Contrary to conventional wisdom, however, the next world will not belong to China, Asia, or anyone else. As power diffuses and ideological diversity increases, no country, region, or political model will dominate. For the first time in history, a globalized and interdependent world will be without a geopolitical anchor.

This coming global turn has considerable potential to bring with it geopolitical peril. It is for this reason that the West and the rising rest must address with urgency how to peacefully manage the transition. Although Western hegemony is in its waning days, it still provides a significant level of global stability. Teamwork between the United States and the European Union continues to represent the world’s most important partnership. The EU’s aggregate wealth rivals America’s, and the US economy will remain number one into the next decade. The American military will maintain its primacy well beyond then, and Washington’s diplomatic clout will be second to none for the foreseeable future.

Nonetheless, the stability afforded by Western predominance will slip away in step with its material and ideological primacy. Accordingly, the West must work with emerging powers to take advantage of the current window of opportunity to map out the rules that will govern the next world. Otherwise, multipolarity coupled with ideological dissensus will ensure balance-of-power competition and unfettered jockeying for power, position, and prestige. It is far preferable to arrive at a new rules-based order by design rather than head toward a new anarchy by default.

The goal should be to forge a consensus among major states about the foundational principles of the next world. The West will have to be ready for compromise; the rules must be acceptable to powers that adhere to very different conceptions of what constitutes a just and acceptable order. The political diversity that will characterize the next world suggests that aiming low and crafting a rules-based order that endures is wiser than aiming high and coming away empty-handed. What is
needed is a set of principles on which the West and the rising rest can find common ground.

**DEFINING LEGITIMACY**

How the international community defines political legitimacy is a good starting place. Under American leadership, the West has propagated a conception of order that equates political legitimacy with liberal democracy. If a new rules-based order is to emerge, the West will have to embrace political diversity rather than insist that liberal democracy is the only legitimate form of government. To be sure, non-democracies currently have their say in global institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the G-20. But even as the West does business with autocracies in these and other settings, it also de-legitimates them in word and action.

The US leads the charge on this front. In his second inaugural address, George W. Bush said: “America’s vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one… So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture.”

Although of different political stripes, Barack Obama told the UN General Assembly in 2010: “Experience shows us that history is on the side of liberty; that the strongest foundation for human progress lies in open economies, open societies, and open governments. To put it simply, democracy, more than any other form of government, delivers for our citizens.” Obama also made clear his commitment to democracy promotion in outlining the US response to the Arab Spring: “The United States supports a set of universal rights. And these rights include free speech, the freedom of peaceful assembly, the freedom of religion, equality for men and women under the rule of law, and the right to choose your own leaders… Our support for these principles is not a secondary interest… it is a top priority that must be translated into concrete actions, and supported by all of the diplomatic, economic and strategic tools at our disposal.”

Europe generally shares this outlook. Catherine Ashton, the EU’s foreign policy chief, declared in 2010: “Democracy, human rights, security, governance and sustainable development are intrinsically linked. Democratic principles have their roots in universal norms and values.” Such statements affirm Robert Kagan’s observation that elites in the West “have operated on the ideological conviction that liberal democracy is the only legitimate form of government and that other forms of government are not only illegitimate but transitory”.

**THE WEST WILL HAVE TO BE READY FOR COMPROMISE; THE RULES MUST BE ACCEPTABLE TO POWERS THAT ADHERE TO VERY DIFFERENT CONCEPTIONS OF WHAT CONSTITUTES A JUST ORDER**

This stance is consistent with values deeply held among the Atlantic democracies. But the equation of legitimacy with democracy undermines the West’s influence among emerging powers. Even countries like Brazil and India, both of which are stable democracies, tend to view the West’s obsession with democracy promotion as little more than uninvited meddling in the affairs of others. The backlash is, of course, considerably harsher in autocracies such as China and Russia, which regularly warn the US and the EU to stay out of the domestic affairs of other countries. In Russian President Vladimir Putin’s words, “We are all perfectly aware of the realities of domestic political life. I do not think it is really necessary to explain anything to anybody. We are not going to interfere in domestic politics, just as we do not think that they should prevent practical relations… from developing. Domestic politics are domestic politics.”

For the West to speak out against political repression and overt violations of the rule of law is not only warranted but obligatory. But to predicate constructive relations with rising powers on their readiness to embrace a Western notion of legitimacy is another matter altogether. Senator John McCain is off course...
in insisting that “it is the democracies of the world that will provide the pillars upon which we can and must build an enduring peace”.

On the contrary, only if the West works co-operatively with all regimes willing to reciprocate – democracies and non-democracies alike – will it be able to build an enduring peace. Terrorism, nuclear proliferation, climate change, energy security, water and food security, financial crisis – these challenges are global in nature and can be effectively addressed only in partnership with a wide array of countries.

It makes little sense for the West to denigrate and ostracize regimes whose co-operation it needs to fashion a secure new order; the stakes are too high. Western countries only harm their own interests when they label as illegitimate governments that are not liberal democracies. Recognizing the next world’s inevitable political diversity and, thereby, consolidating co-operation with rising powers of diverse regime type is far more sensible than insisting on the universality of Western conceptions of legitimacy – and alienating potential partners. The West and the rising rest must arrive at a new, more inclusive notion of legitimacy if they are to agree on an ideological foundation for the next world.

As a starting point, responsible governance, rather than liberal democracy, should be adopted as the standard for determining which states are legitimate and in good standing – and thus stakeholders in the next order. Put simply, a state would be in good international standing if it is dedicated to improving the lives of its citizens and enables them to pursue their aspirations in a manner broadly consistent with their preferences. States that fall short of this standard would be those that aim primarily to extract resources from their citizens, wantonly expose them to widespread privation and disease, or carry out or enable the systematic persecution or physical abuse of minorities. Beyond these strict prohibitions, however, societies should have considerable latitude in how they organize their institutions of government and go about meeting the needs of their citizens. As long as they are committed to improving the welfare and dignity of their people, states should enjoy the rights of good standing.

It is true that equating good standing with responsible governance would be to acknowledge the legitimacy of states that do not adhere to Western conceptions of rights and liberties. But the globe’s inescapable political diversity necessitates this; different kinds of polities take different
approaches to furthering the material and emotional needs of their peoples. In liberal states, citizens pursue their aspirations individually and privately. Other types of polities – China, Russia, the United Arab Emirates, and Singapore, for example – put less emphasis on individual liberties in favor of a more collective approach to promoting the welfare of their citizens. Peoples with communitarian political cultures or a long history of deprivation may prefer a state-led brand of governance to a laissez-faire one that risks exposing them to political strife and poverty. Muslim societies may view a separated mosque and state as alien, and deem a fusion of the sacred and secular as not only acceptable, but obligatory. In patrimonial cultures, loyalty to tribe, clan, and family regularly take precedence over individual rights. To acknowledge that different kinds of polities can practice different forms of responsible governance is to respect diversity. In contrast, to compel other societies to embrace a certain form of government would be to impose a type of un-freedom.

Clearing the way for a more inclusive global order entails recognizing that there is no single form of responsible government; the West does not have a monopoly on the political institutions and practices that enable countries to promote the welfare of their citizens. As long as other countries adhere to reasonable standards of governance, the West should respect their political choices as a matter of national discretion and as a reflection of the intrinsic diversity of political life.

These same standards should also apply to the conduct of foreign policy. States in good standing must safeguard not only the welfare of their own citizens, but also those of other countries. They must respect the sovereignty and political preferences of other states in good standing, and they must refrain from actions that compromise the security and well-being of other states and their citizens. Countries that commit aggression or engage in prohibited actions, such as systematically sponsoring terrorism or exporting weapons of mass destruction, should not be considered in good standing and should be denied the rights enjoyed by responsible states.

WIDENING THE CIRCLE
Consistently abiding by these standards for inclusion – in rhetoric as well as in policy – would increase the number of stakeholders in the international system. It would also allow for the clear demarcation of those states that do not deserve such rights, and therefore facilitate the de-legitimation and isolation of the world’s most dangerous actors. The West’s willingness to embrace a more inclusive conception of legitimacy – one based on responsible governance rather than democracy – would help widen the circle of nations ready to stand against countries that are predatory toward their own citizens and threatening toward the international community.

So too would this recasting of the notion of legitimacy encourage the United States to moderate its overzealous promotion of democracy. Washington should continue to encourage democratic transitions through example and incentive, but rushing to the ballot box in places like Bosnia, Iraq, and Afghanistan has done more harm than good. In societies that lack experience with constitutional rule, expedited transitions to democracy often produce civil war. In immature democracies, winners usually take all, leading to the majority’s exploitation and persecution of the minority. It is worth keeping in mind that the West’s own transition to democracy was long and bloody. Promoting responsible and responsive governance promises to yield better results than insisting on a hurried transition to democracy.

This redefinition of international legitimacy does not violate Western values, but instead draws heavily on the West’s own experience. Compromise, tolerance, and pluralism were all vital to the West’s rise. Along the way, regimes of differing types lived side-by-side, more often than not respecting each other’s political, religious, and ideological choices. The West has long celebrated and benefited from pluralism at home, and should do the same in approaching the rest of the world.

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CLIMATE CATASTROPHE

I read J.J. Robinson’s excellent piece on the Maldives (‘On the Environmental Front Line’) with great interest. The article explains how former President [Mohamed] Nasheed was able to turn his low-lying island nation into an international poster child on the issue of climate change and rising sea levels. Nasheed aimed to bridge the differences between the West and the developing world. His message was that positive change is possible, a position backed up by his plan for the Maldives to become carbon neutral by 2020.

Sadly, on 7 February Nasheed was ousted in a police coup and the Maldives’ ability to lobby on climate issues has been left in tatters. Nasheed so often pointed out during his time in office: to have effective environmental policies, you first need to have a robust democracy.

Paul Roberts
Communications advisor to Mohamed Nasheed, former President of the Maldives
Argelès-sur-Mer, France

RATIONAL RUMINATIONS

I write from a society whose public discourse has been dragged down to the level where we all expect the response to a question asked of a politician on television will not be an answer but a piece of inane drivel.

Tom Raggett
Hong Kong

GREENER ALTERNATIVES

It is shocking that the inhabitants of Male, the Maldives’ capital, produce more waste per head than here in Hong Kong (which is bad enough at 2.7 kg per person per day), and that resorts can produce three times that amount. A reduce, reuse, recycle approach is gaining traction here, and I would hope that similar educational campaigns could be of value for the visitors to and inhabitants of the Maldives. A more radical option would be to create new land, given that it is at a premium, and install a modern and relatively green incinerator with far fewer emissions than from the simple burning of rubbish that it appears they are doing at the moment.

Tom Raggett
Hong Kong

You may take that ill-tempered report of mine to be proof that the first edition of *Think* did indeed demonstrate that some rational expectations are fulfilled, in particular that some names of new publications are true to their contents. Congratulations from not-too-far from Tottenham High Street, the original setting for those London riots (AN Wilson, ‘State of Decay’).

Ted Honderich
Grote Professor Emeritus Philosophy of Mind & Logic
University College London, Great Britain

FAMILY VALUES

I agree with Richard G Wilkins (‘How the World Lost Its Way’) on the importance of the family, but what shape that unit should take and what roles each individual member should play is the debate. I don’t believe that the family today is “norm-free”, as he argues. It is more that different family members are often unable to live up to traditional norms because so much has changed in all societies around the world. Yes, the family is in crisis: but going back to some romantic ideal is not the answer.

Zainah Anwar
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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WRITE TO US
“THE DIGITAL UNIVERSE IS CURRENTLY EXPANDING BY MORE THAN TWO TRILLION TRANSISTORS PER SECOND [A MEASURE OF THE PROLIFERATION OF TURING MACHINES] AND FIVE TRILLION BITS OF STORAGE CAPACITY PER SECOND [A MEASURE OF THE AMOUNT OF TAPE NOW BEING USED].” P38

“I BELIEVE THAT WE MUST BE CAREFUL NOT TO BE TRAPPED BY POLITICIANS INTO THINKING OF EDUCATION AS SOMETHING TO BE UNDERTAKEN MERELY FOR THE SAKE OF ITS ECONOMIC BENEFITS ALONE. P48

“WATERGATE TRANSFORMED AMERICAN JOURNALISM FOR THE BETTER BY DRAWING INTO THE PROFESSION SWARMS OF TALENTED YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WOULD HAVE FOUND IT TOO FUSTY FOR THEIR TASTES BEFORE ROBERT REDFORD AND DUSTIN HOFFMAN INFUSED IT WITH A GRITTY SORT OF GLAMOR.” P43
How was digital computing transformed, in a single human generation, from a mathematical abstraction to one of the dominant forces in our world? If any one individual can be singled out for a leading role in launching the digital revolution, it is Alan Turing, whose centenary is being celebrated this year.

Twenty-four years old, Turing boarded the Cunard White Star Liner Berengaria bound for New York from England on September 23, 1936. His mother, Sara, accompanied him to Southampton to say farewell, carrying his prized possession, a heavy brass sextant in a wooden case, from the train to the ship.

"Of all the ungainly things to hold," she remembered in her biography of her son, "commend me to an old-fashioned sextant case." Turing’s arrival in Princeton was followed, five days later, by the proofs of his On Computable Numbers, with an Application to the Entscheidungsproblem. As surely as his sextant – a device used for centuries by astronomers and navigators – symbolized the age of analog computing, so these 35 pages, published in the Proceedings of the London Mathematical Society, would symbolize the age of digital codes and digital machines.

The history of digital computing can be divided into an Old Testament whose prophets, led by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), supplied the logic, and a New Testament whose seers, headed by John von Neumann (1903–1957), built the machines.

Alan Turing (1912–1954) bridged these two worlds with his invention of what soon became known as the Universal Turing Machine. Turing’s theoretical construct – a machine that could be encoded as a number and, by decoding such numbers (now termed software), could duplicate the behavior of any other machine – broke the distinction between numbers that mean things and numbers that do things. The world would never be
the same. Everything from an iPhone to the internet – and all the code now proliferating in between – is based on Turing’s idea.

Alan Mathison Turing was born at Warrington Lodge, London, on 23 June, 1912, to Julius Mathison Turing, who worked for the Indian Civil Service, and Ethel Sara Turing (née Stoney), whose family included George Johnstone Stoney, famous for introducing the concept of the electron 20 years in advance of its being named in 1894.

“Alan was interested in figures – not with any mathematical association – before he could read,” said his mother, who added that in 1915, at the age of three, “as one of the wooden sailors in his toy boat had got broken he planted the arms and legs in the garden, confident that they would grow.”

He was inventive from the start. “For his Christmas present, 1924, we set him up with crucibles, retorts, chemicals, etc, purchased from a French chemist,” she noted. He was nicknamed “the alchemist” at boarding school. “He spends a great deal of time in investigations in advanced mathematics to the neglect of his elementary work,” his housemaster at Sherborne reported in 1927, adding, “I don’t care to find him boiling heaven knows what witches’ brew by the aid of two guttering candles on a naked windowsill.”

DECISION PROBLEM
As a math student at King’s College, Cambridge, Turing was drawn to digital computing through David Hilbert’s Entscheidungsproblem – the “decision problem” of whether any precisely mechanical procedure can distinguish between provable and disprovable statements within a given system in a finite amount of time.

“Mechanical procedure” had to be formally defined. Turing began with the informal idea of a computer – in 1935, a human being equipped with pencil and paper – and substituted unambiguous components until nothing but a formal definition remained. Turing’s Logical Computing Machine consisted of a black box (as simple as a typewriter or as complicated as a human being) able to read and write a finite alphabet of symbols to and from a finite but unbounded length of paper tape – and capable of changing its own “m-configuration”, or “state of mind”.

“The machine is supplied with a ‘tape’ [and] at any moment there is just one square… which is ‘in the machine,’” Turing said.

“However, by altering its m-configuration the machine can effectively remember some of the symbols which it has ‘seen.’” The Turing Machine, strictly following step-by-step instructions that are either stored internally or acquired as needed by reading them from the tape, can do nothing more complicated at any given moment than read one symbol, erase one symbol, write one symbol, or move one square to the right or one square to the left.

Turing assumed discreteness of time and discreetness of state of mind. In his universe, time exists not as a continuum but as a sequence of changes of state. A finite number of states are possible at any given time. “If we admitted an infinity of states of mind, some
of them will be ‘arbitrarily close’ and will be confused,” he said.

The Turing machine thus embodies the relationship between an array of symbols in space and a sequence of events in time. Complex symbols can be represented by strings of simpler symbols, the limit being the binary distinction between two symbols – say the presence or absence of a hole in a paper tape, or a zero and a one. These bits of information can take two different forms: patterns of variation in space transmitted without variation across time, which we term memory; or patterns of variation in time transmitted without variation across space, which we term code. A Turing machine executes transformations between these two species of bits – structure and sequence – according to definite rules.

**UNIVERSAL MACHINE**

Turing took only 11 pages to arrive at what he termed a Universal Machine. “It is possible to invent a single machine which can be used to compute any computable sequence,” he announced. The Universal Machine, if provided with a suitably encoded description of some other machine, executes this description to produce equivalent results. By establishing certain limits to the powers of the Universal Machine, Turing was able to prove the existence of “uncomputable” numbers, and, in consequence, the unsolvability of the Entscheidungsproblem. One of the more important implications of this result is that there can be no systematic way to tell, simply by looking at a code, what that code will do. This is what makes the digital universe so interesting, and why we are likely to be celebrating Alan Turing still in another 100 years.

Turing returned to England in July 1938, where the outbreak of World War II and the introduction of machine-encrypted telecommunications, especially between the German high command and the U-boat fleet, sparked a demand for his ideas. Sequestered at the Foreign Office’s Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley Park, Turing and his colleagues succeeded in deciphering intercepted enemy communications rapidly enough to turn the tide of war, despite repeated strengthening of the encryption algorithms and frequent changes in the keys.

Starting with a crude server farm of electromechanical “bombe” (each capable of emulating 36 different suspected Enigma machine configurations at a time), the Bletchley Park effort led directly to the development of the Colossus, a sophisticated if special purpose electronic digital computer, constructed under the direction of Thomas Flowers of the Post Office’s Telecommunications Research Establishment, that used the programmable “state of mind” of a 1,500-vacuum-tube internal memory to search for clues within coded sequences stored on punched paper tape and scanned at photoelectric speed.

Colossus, swiftly replicated, contributed directly to the development of modern computers, even though the Official Secrets Act kept the details embargoed for more than 30 years. With the end of the war the push for more powerful computers shifted from cryptanalysis to the design of nuclear weapons, and the Americans, who declassified their own wartime computer, the ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator And Computer) in February 1946, took the lead.

At the heart of all the post-war computing projects, however, was Turing’s seminal idea. The group led by John von Neumann at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton was especially influenced by Turing’s work. “It was no coincidence that the stored program computer came to fruition about 10 years after… Turing set the framework for this kind of thinking,” said Julian Bigelow, von Neumann’s chief engineer, who was urged to read On Computable Numbers upon his
arrived in Princeton. “The fact that there is a universal machine to imitate all other machines... was understood by von Neumann and a few other people. And when he understood it, he knew what we could do.”

Turing’s model was one-dimensional: a string of symbols encoded on a tape. Von Neumann’s implementation was two-dimensional: the random-access address matrix underlying most computers in use today.

Despite the power of Turing’s model and the success of von Neumann’s implementation, both pioneers would be astonished to see that the way computers work has remained fundamentally unchanged since 1946.

The entire internet can still be viewed as a multitude of Universal Turing Machines sharing a common, unbounded tape. Only the speed and scale has changed. The digital universe is currently expanding by more than two trillion transistors per second (a measure of the proliferation of Turing machines) and five trillion bits of storage capacity per second (a measure of the amount of tape now being used).

**THE ENTIRE INTERNET CAN STILL BE VIEWED AS A MULTITUDE OF UNIVERSAL TURING MACHINES SHARING A COMMON, UNBOUNDED TAPE**

**PREMATURE DEATH**

Alan Turing died of cyanide poisoning in 1954, in the midst of wondering whether machines could learn to think, and about how molecules were able to self-organize and reproduce. His life was cut short just as the digital computers he had envisioned became freely available, and just as the mechanism underlying the translation between sequence and structure in biology was revealed.

Nature – as James Watson, Francis Crick, and Rosalind Franklin elucidated with their discovery of the structure of DNA in 1953 – had been forced to develop digital coding as a means of error correction in the transmission of analog organisms from one generation to the next. The digital revolution has turned this inside out. Human beings are increasingly serving as the means of error correction in the transmission of digital codes, rather than the other way around. Alan Turing was way ahead in thinking about this.

“If a machine is expected to be infallible, it cannot also be intelligent,” he observed in 1947, arguing that machines could only acquire genuine intelligence the same way we do, by learning from mistakes. In 1949, while helping to design the Manchester Mark 1 (prototype for the Ferranti Mark 1, the first stored-program electronic digital computer to be sold commercially), Turing included a random-number generator, allowing the computer to make guesses, act intuitively, and do things like explore a prohibitively large search space by means of a random walk.

Much earlier, almost immediately upon his arrival in Princeton, he had begun thinking about how to transcend the limits of strictly deterministic computation, and began exploring the possibility of what he termed “Oracle” or “O-machines”. These models, if vastly simplified, are closer to the way intelligence really works: logical sequences are followed for a certain number of steps, with intuition bridging the gaps in between.

As Turing’s centenary approaches, we are surrounded by the fruition of his ideas. An internet search engine, for instance, is a very large, finite-state, deterministic machine, except at those junctures where people, individually and collectively, make non-deterministic choices as to which results are selected as meaningful and given a click.

These choices are then immediately incorporated into the state of the deterministic machine, which grows ever so incrementally more knowledgeable with every click. This is what Turing described as a learning machine. Every time an individual searches for something, and finds an answer, this leaves a faint, lingering trace as to where (and what) some fragment of meaning is.

The boundaries between information and meaning, and between ingenuity and intuition, have yet to receive the attention that Alan Turing believed they deserved. “We have been trying to see how far it is possible to eliminate intuition, and leave only ingenuity,” he wrote while in Princeton in 1938. “We do not mind how much ingenuity is required, and therefore assume it to be available in unlimited supply.”

Thanks to Turing’s followers, now it is.
WOODWARD AND BERNSTEIN’S INVESTIGATIONS BROUGHT DOWN AN AMERICAN PRESIDENT AND TRANSFORMED JOURNALISM. BUT 40 YEARS ON, THE OBSESSIVE HUNT FOR SCANDAL RISKS WEARINESS AND CYNICISM IN THE READER, WHILE REAL INJUSTICE IS GOING UNREPORTED.

WRITTEN BY ALEC MACGILLIS
This is supposed to be a season of commemoration for the heroes of Watergate, the scandal that brought down an American president, Richard Milhous Nixon, and in so doing transformed journalism. To mark the 40th anniversary of the event that led to the conspiracy's unraveling – the break-in at the Democratic National Committee's office at the Watergate complex in Washington – there are panel discussions galore, including at least one featuring the Washington Post reporters who broke the story, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.

But this celebration has been crashed by an unwelcome guest. In early May, a young journalist by the name of Jeff Himmelman came out with a book, Yours In Truth, that posits that Woodward and Bernstein were less than forthright about their sources and had exaggerated some of the more Hollywood-friendly elements of their reporting, such as furtive meetings in a parking garage with their primary source, “Deep Throat”; and the signal they would use to call those meetings, a flower pot on a windowsill.

Himmelman is an unlikely accuser: he has worked as a research assistant to Woodward, who in turn recommended him to Ben Bradlee, the legendary former Post editor who oversaw the Watergate coverage. And it was in going through Bradlee’s files to research a possible book about him that Himmelman came across what he believed were clues at odds with Woodward and Bernstein’s account. Woodward is now in a state of uproar, accusing his former assistant of betrayal with a vehemence that has raised eyebrows around Washington.

Whether Himmelman is onto something or not, his attempted debunking ought to serve as an opportunity for us journalists to reassess the Watergate legend and the impact it has had on our business and the way we cover politics and government, which has not been altogether positive.

Watergate transformed American journalism for the better by drawing into the profession swarms of talented young people who would have found it too fusty for their tastes before Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman infused it with a gritty sort of glamor in the film version of Woodward and Bernstein’s book, All the President’s Men. And the scandal helped jolt the press out of an unhealthy coziness that had too often characterized the relationship with the powerful individuals it was supposed to be covering. But four decades on, Watergate’s legacy also lives on in a journalism establishment that is so fixated on uncovering the next epic scandal that it too often loses a sense of perspective, misses the real stories under its nose and greatly exacerbates cynicism toward government.

It’s not that reporters weren’t scandal-hungry before. With their roots in London’s Fleet Street, American newshounds had a nose for a good conspiracy going all the way back to colonial times. Particularly fertile were the glory days of sensationalistic “yellow journalism” in the late 19th and early 20th century, bookended by revelations of President Grover Cleveland’s illegitimate child and the Teapot Dome scandal under President Warren Harding, which involved oil companies paying off a cabinet secretary.

For any true reporter, a good scandal is as intoxicating as it gets; and I’ll be the first to...
admit this, having caught the high several times, most notably on the story that won me my advancement in 2005 from the Baltimore Sun to the Washington Post, the discovery that the superintendent of a large school system had, at great taxpayer expense, cut a secret deal with a software vendor he was in a relationship with.

That story led to a federal investigation and a six-year prison sentence (since reduced by two years) for the superintendent, and offered further proof, if any were needed, that the potential malfeasance of those in authority knows few bounds.

But that story was instructive in another sense. It grew out of reporting I was doing at the time, on education. I wasn’t looking for a scandal; I was reporting on issues that mattered to my newspaper’s readers, and the discovery emerged from that. Too often post-Watergate reporting has taken the opposite approach. Eager to snare another big target, many newsrooms set up “investigative teams”, delegating some of their best reporters to the task of hunting big game, who then do not have to bother with covering an actual daily beat.

Sometimes, this approach works; beat reporters who come across something that merits a closer look can pass it on to the veteran hands on the “I-team”, albeit not without some resentment. Too often, though, the I-team approach has a distorting effect. To justify their privileged existence, the I-teamers inflate the scale of the misdeeds they uncover. If your whole job is to find big stories, and if you’re given weeks and months to do those stories, what you end up with better be good – even if it isn’t.

In Washington, the hunt for the next big scandal has become a kind of semantic joke, the affixing of the suffix “-gate” on to any story, however fleeting, that smacks of controversy. But the overall effect of this approach to journalism – reporters hunting for scandal, rather than doing rigorous daily reporting that may or may not lead to a scandal – is anything but amusing.

Sometimes the lasso drags in an actual wildebeest, such as the Iran-Contra scandal of the 1980s, in which Reagan Administration officials secretly sold arms to Iran to fund the Contras in Nicaragua (a plot, it should be noted, that was first reported by a Lebanese magazine, Al Shira'a). More often, though, the catch ends up being little more than a prairie dog dressed up with fake horns and fangs; but the extent of that costume does not become apparent until after a year or two of overwrought coverage and even more overwrought congressional hearings.

In the Clinton administration, the most overhyped scandal (of many) was Whitewater, involving a failed land deal in Arkansas. The coverage began with breathless stories by veteran investigative reporters in the New York Times, and reached full flower with an entire book of Whitewater-related editorials by the conservative editors of the Wall Street Journal. But its payoff was farcical: the independent counsel appointed to investigate Whitewater ended up chasing after Clinton’s paramour Monica Lewinsky.

In the George W Bush years, we had the “Valerie Plame affair”, the outing of a CIA agent whose husband had called into question Bush’s claims about Iraqi attempts to get nuclear material from Niger. Much ink was spilled, a grand jury was convened and a Bush loyalist was sentenced to 30 months in prison. But the stakes were exaggerated throughout. Plame, the closest thing the scandal had to a victim, came through the whole affair with a movie deal for her memoir and invitations to every hot party in town.

The hunt for a scandal amid an absence of actual misdeeds has never been so conspicuous, though, as during the first three years of the Obama administration. Say what one will about the current US president, he has managed, so far, to preside over a remarkably scandal-free operation –
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Think Magazine

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Sometimes the Lasso Drags in an Actual Wildebeest, Such as the Iran-Contra Scandal of the 1980s, in Which Reagan Administration Officials Secretly Sold Arms to Iran to Fund the Contras in Nicaragua

MEDIA

Lee Hamilton (L), Chairman of the House select committee probing the Iran-Contra affair, confers with Dick Cheney, Vice Chairman of the committee, as public hearings into the affair begin.

a reflection, perhaps, of his famously low tolerance for any sort of drama, or less charitably, the characteristic of an administration too busy trying (and only partly succeeding) to extricate the country from a recession to be getting itself into any extracurricular trouble.

But that has not kept the press and the opposition from feverishly trying to weave a scandal out of humble thread. They have done their best with the recent revelation that a handful of Secret Service agents on an advance trip to Colombia consorted with prostitutes, and with the disclosure that managers in the General Services Administration, the federal department that oversees government buildings and purchases, enjoyed an over-the-top convention in Las Vegas.

The story that has been freighted with the most hope by the scandal-mongers is that of Solyndra. Using an energy-loan program begun under the Bush administration and expanded as part of the 2009 economic stimulus package, the Obama administration extended a $535 million loan guarantee to a California company seeking to produce solar panels through unusual thin-film technology. It failed miserably, in large part because the price of conventional solar panels it was competing with plummeted unexpectedly.

Solyndra finally went bankrupt in 2011, laying off 1,100 employees.

It was a fiasco of the sort that is not uncommon in cutting-edge technology ventures, and there is a valid debate to be had about whether government ought to be involved in investing in such start-ups. But the media and the opposition were not content to label Solyndra a fiasco. No, it was a scandal.

Led by the I-team at my former employer, the Post, the Washington press wrote dozens upon dozens of articles about Solyndra, egged on by congressional Republicans who sprang to the battlements with their own investigation. The overriding theme of this “scandal” was that the Obama administration had sunk millions into the company for “political” reasons.
Never mind that by investing so much the administration was, in fact, risking a politically unpopular failure of exactly the kind that occurred. Nor that reporters and investigators have come up with no smoking gun proving that the company, as was often insinuated, received support because one of its backers is a big Democratic campaign contributor. The Solyndra saga is now forever enshrined as a “scandal”, an appellation that conservative groups have been more than happy to adopt when attacking Obama.

THE HIDDEN COST

One might ask: what, really, is the cost of such a scandal-hungry media, other than filling the airwaves with tiresome allegations and counter-allegations that can easily be tuned out? Well, for starters, there is the cost of precisely that tune-out. The more eagerly the media slaps the “scandal” frame on the news of government and politics, the more reason average citizens have to grow either wearied of the hyperbole (if they don’t believe the scandal talk) or cynical about corruption in high places (if they do).

Along with this comes the cry-wolf effect – constantly hyping the merest kerfuffles desensitizes the public to true scandals when they do occur.

Most important from the perspective of the journalism profession is what we are leaving uncovered by chasing the ghosts of Watergate-style glory. For one thing, we end up being overly focused on the inner workings of the White House, on the assumption that the biggest scandals will take root where the power runs deepest. This is an understandable inclination, but it leaves under-scrutinized vast swaths of the government, from Congress to the judiciary to the federal bureaucracy.

It also gives citizens a false impression of how the US government works. It inflates the public perception of the White House’s power, which only leads to more voter discontent when it fails to deliver in the face of underappreciated obstacles. (As it happens, the journalist perhaps most responsible for this exaltation of the executive branch is Bob Woodward, who, with his insider books about each successive administration, has turned himself into a sort of court scribe for the imperially-imagined White House.)

Worst of all, though, is that in constantly seeking to find the next big scandal we often miss the real one. It may not have a neat start, middle and end like Watergate with its break-in, investigation and resignation. It may not have a fixed set of characters. It may just be an ongoing condition or state of affairs that is scandalous in the sense of the injustice it represents, even if it lacks the framework of a defined, willed conspiracy.

Consider, for example, the hugely expanded role in American elections of unlimited sums of money from undisclosed donors, the result of recent court rulings and pathetically lax regulation. There is not necessarily a single person or cabal engineering this shift, but it is reshaping American politics to an extent that even many of the cognoscenti have not yet begun to grasp fully. A few journalists are homing in on this, but barely more than were chasing the chimera of Solyndra. The irony is that if the rise of undisclosed money is allowed to continue unchecked, we may return soon to a circumstance quite like that which prevailed in the early 1970s, before the post-Nixon reforms that sought to rid politics of secret money.

So in that sense, perhaps journalists are indeed doing their best to create a new Watergate for themselves to cover: by not adequately documenting the spread of a scandal-friendly environment, they are increasing the odds that, one day soon, they will get their own true mega-scandal. The only real question: who will play them in the movie?
When the Committee of Inquiry into Special Educational Needs was set up in Britain in the early 1970s, legislation had only recently been introduced to give all children, whatever their abilities or disabilities, the right to education. The task of the committee, which I chaired, was to persuade the government that it was worth spending money on a new system that would include all children, even those hitherto deemed ineducable, within a common enterprise and with shared goals. And so we had to set about defining those goals. We specified three, all interlinked: independence, understanding and pleasure.

**GLORIES OF TIME FOR REFLECTION**

When the Committee of Inquiry into Special Educational Needs was set up in Britain in the early 1970s, legislation had only recently been introduced to give all children, whatever their abilities or disabilities, the right to education. The task of the committee, which I chaired, was to persuade the government that it was worth spending money on a new system that would include all children, even those hitherto deemed ineducable, within a common enterprise and with shared goals. And so we had to set about defining those goals. We specified three, all interlinked: independence, understanding and pleasure.

**GLORIES OF EDUCATION:**

**TIME FOR REFLECTION**

**PHILOSOPHERS AND EDUCATIONALISTS ARGUE THAT IT IS NOTHING LESS THAN THE MEANS TO AN ECONOMIC END.**

**HERE, ONE OF EUROPE’S MOST EMINENT PHILOSOPHERS AND EDUCATIONALISTS ARGUES THAT IT IS FAR MORE THAN THAT.**

**STRUGGLES TO RECOVER FROM RECESSION, THERE IS A DANGER**

**THAT THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE CAN BE SEEN AS MERELY THE MEANS TO AN ECONOMIC END.**

**THAT WOULD INCLUDE ALL CHILDREN, EVEN THOSE HITHERTO DEEMED INEDUCABLE, WITHIN A COMMON ENTERPRISE AND WITH SHARED GOALS.**

**AND SO WE HAD TO SET ABOUT DEFINING THOSE GOALS. WE SPECIFIED THREE, ALL INTERLINKED: INDEPENDENCE, UNDERSTANDING AND PLEASURE.**

**THINK MAGAZINE**
I remember having some difficulty in getting my colleagues to accept pleasure as a goal. Surely ministers would not think it right to expend vast resources on such a pursuit? But in the end I was allowed to have my way.

We conceived of education as a long road on which all would start a journey that would last their whole lives. The goals would never be entirely reached but would move ever ahead, out of sight over the next hill. There can never be a stage when one can say that there is no more independent thought or free action to be achieved; never a time when one can say one understands everything; never a moment when pleasure in the world may not be deepened by new experience.

The travelers will differ in the obstacles they have to overcome to make progress. Some will need more help.
and others will never progress very far; but even for them every step is worthwhile as they gain a little more confidence, a little more understanding of the world and a little more pleasure in it.

I believe it is time that we thought about these goals again and reasserted our faith in them. For there is a danger that when resources are scarce, as they are in those countries most seriously affected by the recent Great Recession, we may only forget that everyone is entitled to education, but that it is intrinsically valuable to those who receive it, and not only as a means to an economic end. Let us examine the goals in turn.

Children, as they grow up, are expected to become more independent, to do things for themselves that used to be done for them, to make their own choices, and to learn by experience that choices have consequences. Education allows people to make informed decisions, to assess evidence for themselves rather than accepting what they are told without question. Even the most severely mentally incapacitated child can, with infinite patience, be taught to signal that he prefers one food over another, that he would rather listen to the radio than play with a toy. For him, tiny though this step is, it is a break away from complete dependence and passivity to a small taste of freedom.

And, of course, freedom is linked to understanding. If we are to understand the world we must refuse to be taken in, we must learn to distinguish legend from history, science from superstition, blind prejudice from rational belief. As one progresses along the road of education one can gradually decide what it is one wants to know, what will make the world not only manageable but intelligible; one can learn to reject the false and search for the true. Without education we are bound within a narrow prison of preconceived opinion and received wisdom. Education is the developing of the imagination that enables us to see the way out. This is equally true of those who study history, languages, and literature as of those who pursue the natural sciences. The uneducated person has no knowledge of even the possibilities of research, whether scientific or historical.

The pursuit of pleasure follows from these other goals. To exercise the imagination is itself a unique kind of joy, that of feeling that there is no end, that there are infinite possibilities. But there is more to the pleasure than this. Humans are social beings, and we live necessarily in communities. What distinguishes us from other social beings with whom we share many of our genes is that we have developed language. The subtlety, variety and breadth it allows us is itself an enormous source of pleasure, and one that education, and that alone, allows us constantly to explore and seek to perfect. The difference between the educated and the uneducated can above all be seen in the success or failure of communication.

Perhaps it is relevant to refer here to the past plight of women, who have often been the most educationally deprived, and still are in the world as a whole. But where progress has been made in allowing women access to learning, the effect has been remarkable.

And so I believe that we must be careful not to be trapped by politicians into thinking of education as something to be undertaken merely for the sake of its economic benefits alone. Like health, education is good both intrinsically and instrumentally; both for its own sake and for the sake of its consequences. It is therefore our duty, linked as we necessarily are one to another, to do all we can to ensure that no one is deprived of such a good. We really are all in it together. 

THE AUTHOR

Baroness Warnock is a former Mistress of Girton College, Cambridge, and Headmistress of Oxford High School for Girls. A member of the House of Lords since 1985, she has chaired and sat on numerous royal and parliamentary inquiries. Her many books include The Intelligent Person’s Guide to Ethics and Dishonest to God: On Keeping Religion Out of Politics.
Creative Foment

Arabic contemporary art used to be dismissed as “backward”, but a survey of one regional prize reveals a new generation of artists in demand around the world and exhibited in its most prestigious museums.
If the self-immolation that set off the Arab Spring demonstrated beyond doubt the truism that one individual can instigate sweeping changes, in the world of Arab art it has been the singular passion of Arif Naqvi, founder of the Abraaj Capital Art Prize, (ACAP) whose winners exhibit annually at Art Dubai, to advocate for a change in the perception of Arab art and artists.

As recently as 25 years ago, the majority worked in relative isolation. The Arab world had a less developed pictorial tradition than many of its neighbors; its visual culture was lauded through architecture, tapestry and design rather than painting. Consequently its art was categorized by international cultural commentators as “backward”. The past decade, however, has witnessed a considerable shift in the practice and approach of artists from the region. A keen collector, Naqvi wanted to unleash this new potential. He established ACAP, which is open to artists from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia, as an international platform, committed to aesthetic excellence and integrity, dedicated to building audiences and promoting accessibility and, most importantly, providing financial backing – uniquely, the prize rewards and funds proposals rather than already completed works.

Since its inception in 2008, ACAP has turned the spotlight on a number of contemporary Arab artists, celebrating their histories, validating their differences, underlining the multiple loci of creative excellence in the region and situating them within a broader geographical and cultural context. ACAP winners have been invited to participate in a number of important international exhibitions, including Documenta this year in Kassel, Germany, the Venice Biennale 2011 and, a few months earlier, Manifesta, in Spain. Their works have been acquired by a number of influential international museums, including the Tate in London, Centre Pompidou, Paris, and New York’s Museum of Modern Art.

ACAP does not define Arab art, but a survey of its winning works does exemplify some salient features. It is not confined to specific media or formats, nor is it tempered by limited subject matter, although it is often seen as a visualization of a rich oral tradition. It includes the work of artists living and working in the Arab world as well as its diaspora, and although it is informed by its Islamic antecedents, it is essentially a relatively recent phenomenon. It was in the 1990s that Arab artists, invigorated by the immediacy of global communications, began to deviate

Concrete Block by Abdulnasser Gharem

WRITTEN BY SAVITA APTE
from painting and sculpture and venture into photography, video and installation art. These forays into newer media were often out of sync with the existing art communities; it took a few years before galleries began to exhibit such work and longer still for audiences to realign themselves to the “difficult” new work.

In spite of this lag, the local and regional art movement has evolved substantially in a very short period. Doha, Sharjah and Dubai have become new cultural capitals where high-profile museum projects, biennales and art fairs have been catalysts for greater creative foment. In addition art publications, exhibitions, workshops and debates have contributed to better communication between and the creation of a network among the disparate Arab artists.

As many of the region’s conflicts are ongoing, there is an expectation, most especially from audiences in the West, that contemporary Arab art must be political; that it must be reactive, gender-focused and highlight obsession and neglect. Although these are all concerns that surface with regularity and are treated sensitively, they are by no means its raison d’être.

Zoulikha Bouabdellah’s 2009 project for ACAP was a monumental installation, Walk on the Sky, Pisces. It depicted the 76 stars in the constellation of Pisces as they appear in the month of March. A system of light-emitting diodes encased in an aluminum ceiling was used to create the network of stars, which in turn was reflected on a polished stainless steel floor. Viewers were urged to experience the work by walking on this surface, to feel subsumed by the constellation and accept an inverted view of the world where the sky was underfoot.

Zoulikha was born in Moscow, where her parents were graduate students in documentary film and art history. When the family moved back to their native Algiers she spent a lot of time at the Musee National des Beaux Arts d’Alger, where her mother was the director until 1994, when they were forced to flee to Paris. Zoulikha then trained at the Ecole Nationale Superieure d’Arts de Paris Cergy.

Her work can be read in different ways and some can and do situate it in reactive politics. But it is more than blatant political comment, being informed by a number of sources, including Ptolemy’s second-century astronomical treatise, *Almagest*, and the story of the legendary glass floor erected in front of King Solomon’s throne that the Queen of Sheba was led to believe was water. The weaving together of Islamic and Biblical sources, of science and belief, all speak to the complexity that is inherent in so many Arab works of art. The predominant motif, however, the polygon star, is the cornerstone of geometric configuration in Islamic art and easily recognizable across the region.

Unlike Zoulikha, who still spends a significant portion of her time in Paris, most contemporary Arab artists are nurtured in a vibrant local scene. The Egyptian artist Hala Elkoussy may have studied at Goldsmith’s College, London, in the 1990s, but she lives and works in Cairo, the city that is the inspiration for almost all of her work.

Hala’s epic piece, *Myths & Legends Room – The Mural*, refers not to those stories of the ancient civilizations of Egypt but to those of its 21st century capital. These are depicted in a tight narrative photomontage where historical fact, rumor, religious beliefs and tradition are inextricably woven together with urban myth and legend. They illustrate the making of a revolution. Hala compiles old photographs, original drawings and illustrations and manipulates custom-staged photographs and computer-generated graphics and design to communicate the complex entity that is contemporary Cairo. The 10mx4m work draws on the political propaganda and edicts that are
liberally plastered around the city, as well as commemorative wall paintings of historical victories, to indicate the prevalent levels of dissatisfaction.

Other elements produce dissonant combinations: a stamp from 1961 picturing the Cairo Tower, built under President Nasser and for 10 years the tallest building in Africa; the 10th century pious man Saii Al Bahr, said to have cried so much that the banks of the Nile flooded, shown weeping in front of a street sign that bears his name; cartoons by the political caricaturist Walid Taher; heroic war scenes from Egypt’s recent history; and the Black Soldier, who dominates the mural with his prosthetic hoof and fishing net weapon, a character long the stuff of admonitory bedtime tales told by Egyptian mothers, but who here is also conflated with the anti-hero of a short story by the celebrated late writer Yusuf Idris.

The sense of experimentation has crystallized in recent months into a sharp voice communicating the tensions in the region and the longing for a better future. In recent years, Arab art has been permeated by regional and global exchanges that have both inspired and influenced it significantly. As a result the new visual forms – photography, video and installation – have proliferated.

For Iraqi artist Jananne Al Ani, born in 1966, this translates into a long-term visual excavation of motives and propaganda. Jananne’s 2011 work, Shadow Sites II, references the act of searching for outlines of archaeological features that remain undetected at ground level. Jananne chose to capture Nabatean sites in Jordan, at Khirbat El Moreigah, the Roman fort of Humayma and the remains of Ottoman trenches from the First World War around Ma’an, all of which can only be seen through aerial reconnaissance. Then, the landscape itself yields the poignant signs of survival and loss. Jananne draws parallels between this latency in the landscape and the disappearance of “the body in the contested and highly charged landscapes of the Middle East”.

Jananne drew inspiration from the forensic anthropologist Margaret Cox, whose investigations into allegations of genocide in the Balkans, Rwanda and Iraq involved analyzing the soil – areas concealing mass graves were often places of flourishing flora and fauna. But Jananne was also influenced by photographs of the First Gulf War in 1991, when all the military images showed the site of the war as a desert, depopulated and merely cartographic. “This project was a direct response to the military’s use of digital technology and satellite navigation,” she says. Jananne deliberately recreated the vantage point of such missions in her atmospheric series of still photographs. As a result, she also archived relatively recent natural and man-made marks on the landscape, such as those created by farming, mining and military training. Above all it was Jean Baudrillard’s 1995 essay The Gulf War Did Not Take Place, which particularly motivated her. Baudrillard wrote that the conflict was a scripted media event, a “virtual” war; Jananne was at pains to show the reality.

Jananne is part of a growing diaspora of Arab artists whose works are firmly situated in a region they no longer inhabit. Some move between a European and a Middle Eastern home, affording them a nuanced and hybrid
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sensibility – a combination of a native and an adopted culture. They are able to observe and represent their own societies both from the outside looking in and from the inside looking out.

The authenticity and subjectivity of personal experience is the starting point for Taysir Batniji. Many of his projects use Palestine as the point of departure, as he constantly tries to find corollaries between his life as an artist and the present situation in his homeland. His works are constructed on one of two matrixes: displacement and disappearance. The latter echoes consistently through his oeuvre and is most evident in his exhibit at Art Dubai earlier this year.

To My Brother is a deeply personal work that involved Batniji revisiting the photographs of his brother’s wedding in Gaza in 1985. Two years later he was killed in the intifada. Batniji chose 60 photographs and translated them into hand-drawn, inkless etchings on paper. Each image evokes both a joyous and a searingly painful memory. It represents not only his personal loss but is also a subtle reflection of a national tragedy: the disappearance of vital male lives from virtually every home in Palestine.

As recently as 10 years ago, conservative Arab families would have discouraged their children from choosing art as a profession, guiding their offspring into professions such as medicine or finance. However, the record-breaking prices – with works fetching tens of thousands of dollars, and some up to the high hundreds of thousands – achieved at recent auctions appear to have gained respectability for art-making today.

While the ACAP winners have garnered international institutional attention and critical acclaim (apart from the Centre Pompidou, Tate and MOMA there are also requests to include works in forthcoming exhibitions in Vancouver, Tokyo and Rome), they are also actively sought after by private collectors, both in the region and internationally. Unlike other emerging art markets where auction houses have led the way, disseminating information, creating transparency and setting benchmark prices, contemporary Arab art is nurtured by a growing network of regionally-based galleries, such as The Third Line in Dubai and Doha, Sfeir-Semler in Beirut and Hamburg, Athr in Jeddah, and Townhouse in Cairo. But those with an international profile such as Continua, whose spaces are in San Gimignano, Le Moulin and Beijing, and Vienna’s Galerie Krinzinger, are also signing up Arab artists.

In a bid to show their support for change in the Middle East, a number of international institutions have rushed to include Arab art within the context of their exhibitions. Some detractors have deemed this “culturally convenient but art historically questionable”. Perhaps it is contemporary politics that have rendered the art of the region more relevant and more accessible; continuous live coverage of events unfolding in Cairo, for example, infiltrated every living room in the world, while social networking, tmblrs, twitters and blogs have allowed hitherto unknown voices to be heard.

Arab art reflects, collates and distills these historic shifts in exquisitely crafted, highly nuanced visual forms. The result is as diverse and dynamic as the lands that are described as Arab and reveals a rich heritage and a complex contemporary culture.

The Author

Savita Apte is an art historian specializing in South Asian Modern and Contemporary art. A director of Art Dubai, she is Chair of the ACAP selection committee and sits on the advisory board of the Sovereign Art Foundation.
The Hidden Art of Translation

Without literary translators we would enjoy only a fraction of the world’s great novels. But they are underpaid, overlooked and threatened by publishing’s retreat to the safety of the bestseller. What is the future for these crucial mediators of culture?

“They walked along with birds over their heads,” says the Egyptian writer Ahmed Mourad of two shy would-be lovers in his thriller *Vertigo*. Despite its Hitchcockian title, the hero, Ahmed, and his beloved, Ghada, are not fleeing murderous avian pursuers, but trudging in despondent silence – the Arabic expression means that they are almost quiet enough to lull birds into perching on them. An English version might run, “They walked along, not uttering a single word” or “Tongue-tied, they walked along”; *Vertigo’s* translator, Robin Moger, chose: “They walked along, the silence hanging heavily over them.”

**Written by Rachel Aspden**
Such quirks of idiom are just one of the puzzles faced by literary translators. As well as unveling the mechanics of by-the-book grammar and meaning, they must navigate an ocean of nuance that encompasses everything from politics to pop, history to humor.

“Translation is not a matter of words only: it is a matter of making intelligible a whole culture,” wrote Anthony Burgess, who put his own knowledge of nine languages to use in the Russian-inflected “nadsat” slang of *A Clockwork Orange*.

Perhaps the most famous illustration of this insight are the “untranslatable” words said to capture an essential quality of a people: Spanish *duende*; Portuguese *saudade*; Russian *toska*, which Vladimir Nabokov defined as shading from spiritual anguish through vague restlessness to *ennui*; and Czech *lítost*, of which Milan Kundera remarked that he found it “difficult to imagine how anyone can understand the human soul” without this sense of “the torment created by the sudden realization of one’s own misery”. It’s in wresting such slippery concepts into foreign words and mindsets that the real genius of translation lies – allowing readers everywhere access to fictional worlds from Pierre Bezukhov’s Moscow to Lisbeth Salander’s Stockholm.

But despite the skill and subtlety of their work, literary translators are overlooked by publishers and audiences alike. Pay is far lower than for technical and commercial translation: the UK-based Translators Association may recommend minimum rates of £87 (approximately $135) per 1,000 words, but publishers rarely comply.

**Recognition is in** even shorter supply: with names often absent from title pages and rarely mentioned by reviewers, few readers could name the person who gave an intelligible voice to their favorite characters from *War and Peace* or *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.

“Translated literature has a smaller market and readership,” says Defeng Li, who teaches English-Chinese translation at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London and chairs the institution’s Centre for Translation Studies. “A translator cannot live by this skill alone – that’s why most translations are done as an additional job. For instance, a university professor might take on a literary translation project. But translation is not credited as proper research, which discourages academics from undertaking it.”

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The consequences for foreign-language literature in English-speaking countries are bleak. Only two to three percent of titles published in the UK and US each year are translations, compared to 10-15 percent in France and Germany and 20-30 percent in smaller European countries. Of that total, an even lower proportion are literary works – and the numbers are shrinking as recession sees subsidies vanish and publishers withdraw to the safety of guaranteed bestsellers. The problem is compounded by the Anglophone world’s notorious monolingualism. Edith Grossman,
the acclaimed translator of Cervantes, Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa, describes the result as a “new kind of iron curtain we have constructed around ourselves”. In an age of globalization, English is at risk of editing out the rest of the world.

But the situation is far from hopeless, especially for emerging source languages such as Chinese and Arabic. The rate of translation from Arabic to English has soared since 2001, with 29 literary translations published in the UK in 2009, up from single-figure totals in the 1990s. There are still hurdles to overcome: Arabic texts are plagued by poor editing and professional training for translators has been underfunded and inadequate. The vicissitudes of regional politics, however, mean that UK and US publishers are increasingly willing to take a chance on novels, memoirs and even poetry from the Arab world.

The surge of interest has benefited not only writers but translators such as Raphael Cohen, who began his career at the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram Weekly in the 1990s. His most recent translation is of a quartet of books by the Algerian writer Ahlam Mostaghanemi, a glamorous novelist little-known in the West but described by Forbes magazine (and her 400,000 Facebook fans) as “the world’s most successful Arabic writer”.

When starting on a new project such as Ahlam’s literary self-help book, The Art of Forgetting, Cohen reads the Arabic text twice, then creates a rough English draft (“Normally much more quickly than I would like, owing to deadlines,” he says). As he works, he highlights issues in the text and notes questions for the author. He then lays the draft aside for a few weeks before reading it through against the Arabic source, and revising the English version a further two or three times. Even for experienced translators, reference works are vital. Cohen draws on a range of tools from classic Arabic lexicons to online dictionaries, university text resources and the “essential” Google and Wikipedia.

More important than even the best dictionaries, however, is the investment of “slow” time needed not simply to learn a language but to absorb its culture and literature. On one level, a translation may take three to four months – on another, the skills it demands take decades to develop. “I’ve been lucky enough to have studied Arabic for 25 years and to have lived in Egypt for 10 years. Even so, I recognize huge gaps in my cultural literacy,” says Cohen. “Those brought up and educated in Arabic have a tremendous advantage here. Where things are more difficult for them is in the process of creating an English text, which requires both talent and a feeling for literature in English. This also usually takes a lifetime to acquire.”

The results, in this case, are happy: Cohen’s translations have been well-received and he feels “honored” by the responsibility of introducing Ahlam to a new readership. But the three-way marriage of author, translator and publisher is not always so harmonious. In 2007, Penguin published an English version of the Saudi writer Rajaa Alsanea’s bestseller Girls of Riyadh, translated by Marilyn Booth.

“The poetry was the one kind of writing on the Taliban website that didn’t pass through some kind of committee. It offers the most unmediated glimpse into the world of the Taliban that a Western audience has ever had.”

ALEX STRICK VAN LINSCHOTEN
“Translation studies have traditionally been strongly Eurocentric. Some parts of the world continue to be oblivious to the rich and substantially different traditions of translation outside Europe and North America. The scholarship of Arab translators, for instance, was once legendary.”

AMAL AL MALKI

The window offered by the rewritten Girls of Riyadh, Booth hinted, was thoroughly distorted, implying that the original text had been homogenized and Americanized until it reflected little but the received ideas of its readers. The spat underlined the fact that translation – from choice of text to how it is interpreted and marketed – can reinforce rather than redress an imbalance in power between two languages and cultures.

For some, attempts to close that gap can be unwelcome. In May 2012, Hurst & Co published Poetry of the Taliban, a translated collection of verse that had been released on the movement’s official website and circulated on cassette tapes and mobile phones. The anthology’s appearance sparked a minor controversy, with a former commander of British forces in Afghanistan, Colonel Richard Kemp, describing the poetry as “self-justifying propaganda” by “fascist, murdering thugs”. But far from echoing the Taliban’s political communiques, the verses encompass love lyrics, pastoral odes and references to Persian myth and epic. “Evening the twilight arrives slowly with its lap full of red flowers/Pink rays are spreading over the blush of sky/Everyone becomes a spectator of this scene for a few hours/The sweet moments of sweet life pass very fast,” writes one poet, Abdul Hai Mutma’in – romantic sentiments as unexpected as the anthology’s revelation that the Taliban leader Mullah Omar loves music and keeps a stack of CDs in his SUV.

“The poetry was the one kind of writing on the Taliban website that didn’t pass through some kind of committee,” says Alex Strick van Linschoten, one of the anthology’s editors. “It offers the most unmediated glimpse into the world of the Taliban that a Western audience has ever had.” Van Linschoten, who runs an Afghan media monitoring service with his fellow editor Felix Kuehn, is a passionate advocate of the importance of fluency in Dari or Pashtu for Westerners in Afghanistan – a position not shared by the US and UK, who after more than a decade of conflict have only a handful of trained interpreters and translators between them. But he insists the poetry should be valued for human, rather than narrowly political, reasons. “Whatever happens with the Afghanistan situation,” he says, “it’s the wider cultural and emotional expressions from it that will endure.”

The Translational and Interpreting Institute (TII), which opens in September, is a Qatar Foundation initiative. It will offer a Master’s in Translation Studies, and a Master’s in Conference Interpreting and a Master’s in Audiovisual Translation in 2013. TII will contribute to capacity building in the areas of scholarly research and translator training, and qualify a trained cadre of high-level professionals in the region.

tii.qa
Even allowing for the role of foreign editors and publishers, projects such as Poetry of the Taliban hint at the beginning of an “answering back” to the West in its own language. In September 2012, Qatar’s Hamad bin Khalifa University will launch a Translation and Interpreting Institute to stimulate a renaissance in Arab translation. The center is headed by Amal Al Malki, a Qatari literature professor who is determined to shake up the linguistic status quo. “Translation studies have traditionally been strongly Eurocentric,” says Amal. “Some parts of the world continue to be oblivious to the rich and substantially different traditions of translation outside Europe and North America. The scholarship of Arab translators, for instance, was once legendary.”

The center aims to emulate exceptional recent work from the region such as the Egyptian translator Amira Nowaira’s version of Ali Bader’s The Tobacco Keeper – the story of an Iraqi journalist hired to write the biography of a composer who successively lived as an Iraqi Jew, an Iranian Shia and a Sunni Muslim. For Amira, a professor of English at Alexandria University, translating this novel of shifting identities threw differences between Arabic and English into particularly sharp relief.

Where English sentences are clearly defined, she explains, strings of Arabic sentences may be linked together with commas or “and”. This grammatical divergence has profound implications. “It gives a sense of fluidity to the Arabic text that Arab readers expect and are familiar with, but it can also create ambiguities and indeterminate meanings,” says Amira. “While an Arabic reader may not find it annoying to read a text that is in some ways indeterminate, a translator is required to make a decision as to what the text actually means.”

She quotes a passage from The Tobacco Keeper as an example:

“For me the distinction between the tobacconist and the shadow writer is clear. Regarding the tobacconist, as Fernando Pessoa has said, two creatures co-exist in the soul of each one of us. The first is real, appearing in our visions and dreams, while the second is false, appearing in our external image, discourses, actions and writings. The shadow writer, in contrast, is a kind of negation, an abstraction. He represents a form of colonial discourse that is based on appropriation and rejection.”

“The original Arabic text is couched in evocative, vague language,” says Amira. “If translated literally, ‘negation’ might have been translated as ‘negativity’, ‘absence’ or ‘exclusion.’” Capturing such nuances, she says, is like walking on a tightrope, trying to keep your balance and avoid tilting too far toward one side.

While some translators fear the increasing reach of English may erode appreciation of such subtleties, others hope it could actually enrich the interface between different languages and literatures. “I’m one of many Qataris using a foreign language and creating a hybrid medium of communication that represents us – and still holds a great deal of appreciation for our native language, traditions and culture,” says Amal, who holds a PhD in comparative literature from the University of London. In this new environment, she sees her institute as a step toward securing for the unsung heroes of the literary world the acknowledgement they deserve. “Translators and interpreters are our mediators,” she says. “It’s crucial that they start realizing their importance in bridging different cultures.”
Like most foreigners visiting Gaza now, I travel with a mission and as part of a delegation. This year, what is probably the most controversial literary gathering in the world, the Palestinian Festival of Literature, is composed mainly of Egyptian writers, bloggers, musicians and filmmakers who have recently been absorbed in their own revolution. As a British Palestinian who writes in English, I am in the minority.

Revolutionary or not, Egyptian or not, all of us arrive in Gaza from Cairo with preconceptions and aching backsides after a sixteen-and-a-half hour journey. Even VIP treatment cannot spare us from four hours of sitting on hard chairs in the hateful space that is the Rafah border crossing.

By the time we get to Gaza it is dark, and after we pass a shelled-out building that reassures us that we are in the right place, we travel along the coast of the most populated strip of land on the planet. On that slow, meditative, evening drive, I thought that we must be in the only part of Gaza that is uninhabited. But I realize when we pass down the same road days later that there are heavily populated villages, refugee camps and towns all along this route.

The air, land and sea blockade, together with the bombing of the main power plant, means that there is almost no fuel or electricity in Gaza, which is why most signs of human habitation were blacked out.

Without that, the night took on the depth of the desert sky, the moon above the sea was full, a broad tree with outstretched open boughs stood over the haphazard mounds and glinting tomb plaques of an unwalled graveyard. I was overcome with wonder at the sense of ancient beauty. It was as though we had crept into a
secret garden or a forbidden city. Gaza felt, momentarily, very cozy.

But the night flatters and deceives. When I see the same graveyard later on in daylight, it is a desolate place: the tree deflated, under-watered and dusty, while blue plastic bags worry at bumps that represent hurried, unanticipated deaths – of which there are far too many to deal with properly.

I breakfast on the fifth-floor balcony overlooking the sea before everyone else gets up. A group of boys cartwheel along the beach, the clumsy ones trying to follow the vertical pirouettes of their leader. On the other side of a hotel housing busy aid workers with jeeps, laptops, briefcases and water bottles, a group of men come to work each morning, in a place where there is no work. I speculate that their work is to watch others. They step out of cars wearing suits, gripping plastic carrier bags at the neck, stand up when they greet each other and then gather at a table under a dilapidated pagoda in the abandoned garden of a restaurant. They have pieces of A4 paper that they pass from one to the other, and then they sit.

I wonder if theirs is the future for the cartwheelers. We fill our days with talking and observing. “Watch! Photograph! Witness our tragedy!” a green-eyed man with a dust-clad face shouts at us from an open-backed truck as we walk along bullet-hole-ridden buildings in Rafah on the way to the tunnels. I turn heads by walking around the Islamic University with an uncovered one, accompanied by a professor who points to new laboratories constructed after the previous ones were bombed during the Israeli assault of 2008/9. “Every time they flew over us, or the pilot got bored, they dropped a bomb. Four times it happened. Maybe five, six.” “Anyone killed?” “Yes,” I say, “I do,” although this feels feeble as I probably don’t know it, nor do I ever want to know it, nor should any one have to ever know it in the way that this young population does. As I nod solemnly, the girls around me giggle, probably at my hair.

The students in Gaza are as students in an ideal world on reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah is strung up. At Al Aqsa University the power goes off every 10 minutes and poetry is read by the light of a mobile phone.

We have a battle of mobiles on our closing night. Plainclothes security – said not to be Hamas by Hamas, and to be Hamas by everyone else – grab a phone from a girl in the audience and yell at us that if we film security we will be shut down. We shout. A cry comes from the poet Tariq Hamdan that seems larger than him, “You do this for Palestine?” and it cracks my heart, as security record us with their mobiles in revenge. We try to continue, but get shut down anyway.

The unexpected nature and swiftness of the trajectory we have been on: concert/calm – petty/puerile hassling – potentially extremely dangerous situation is deeply unsettling. But everyone else is obviously harder than I. The girls start discussing blogging competitions with me as soon as we get back to the hotel. We continue with our playing and poetry reading on the top floor. “Let’s be constructive,” they say as we try to find out where the girl whose phone was snatched has gone. She comes back later (phone returned) to hang out and listen with the rest of us.

Security waits downstairs.

Selma Dabbagh’s novel, Out of It, set between Gaza, London and the Gulf, was published by Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Press (BQFP) and Bloomsbury UK in December 2011. The US edition is due out this month.
S

ulak Sivaraksa is one of Asia’s leading thinkers and was awarded the Niwano Peace Prize 2011 in recognition of his “lifetime of dedicated service and unflagging commitment to a new understanding of peace, democracy and development”. The Bangkok based author of The Wisdom of Sustainability, Sivaraksa also won the Right Livelihood Award, known as “the alternative Nobel”, in 1995.

One must wonder why the on-going economic crisis has not given pause to the world’s leaders and ruling elite to reconsider the ills of capitalism – or, more precisely, the aggressive, if not coercive, promotion of free market fundamentalism.

Under the current capitalist ethos, tolerance for socioeconomic diversity and alternative models of development is low to the point of being nonexistent. Global economics is seen as the only future, and value in the market place has replaced traditional morals and ethics.

Refusing to accept this rationale is taken as a sign of weakness, naivety, and inferiority. It is argued that we are today at the highest mark of human development and civilization. This sentiment prevents peoples pursuing other aspirations and from thinking about alternative ways to improve or maintain their livelihood and traditions.

It is sad that the global economy does not cherish a diversity of ideas, cultures, aspirations, and views – only a diversity of products. Ways of life worldwide increasingly dance to the same tune of consumer culture, which insists that ultimate happiness can be achieved by the never-ending consumption of goods and services. This oppressive environment is like a tightening noose that will squeeze the life out of meaningful freedom, democracy and human rights.

I encourage people worldwide, especially the ones who are propagating or are indoctrinated by capitalist triumphalism and consumerism, to look at the life of the spiritual leaders in their own traditions. Many wise men of the past cultivated two important qualities that were the foundation for their spiritual illumination – simplicity and humility.

You might counter that simplicity and humility will not get you very far in the market place. You are probably correct. But what are we here on Earth for? Are we here to find peace and cultivate wisdom, or to simply be a cog in the machine of free market fundamentalism? Have you found lasting happiness, become wiser, or developed compassion by buying things? Neither have I.

Why are we chasing after happiness and never finding it? Because we are not aware of ourselves. A net of our own anger, greed, and delusion ensnares us. Personal anger manifests as worldwide militarism; personal greed runs rampant in the name of capitalism and the free market; and delusion is expressed as the mass media and advertisements, which convince you that you need something outside of yourself to be content.

Yet, when we begin to develop simplicity in our life, and humility toward others and the environment, we begin to break free of that oppressive net, to see the interconnectedness between ourselves and the environment around us, and to discover the wisdom in caring for each other, how not to abuse the earth’s resources, and find respect for others’ cultures, traditions, and beliefs.

Restructuring political and economic institutions cannot, in themselves, bring about this liberation. I am convinced personal transformation is the starting place. Peace can prevail in a society only when individuals in that society are at peace. When greed, hatred and ignorance govern our personal affairs, they will also be present in our society’s institutions. True contentment and real security in the world depends on each of us working on ourselves.”

THINK MAGAZINE
AS AN ASSISTANT PROFESSOR of English at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar, Robin Fetherston has helped build a culture of literacy for her students. In 2003, she founded Qatar Foundation’s first institution-wide reading program, which continues to grow more popular every year. Thanks to the success of her pioneering efforts, reading clubs have since been established. They, in turn, have opened up a literary dialogue that has given students a forum in which to express and discuss ideas that may otherwise have gone unheard.

Qatar Foundation is proud to be home to leaders like Robin Fetherston. Together, we are making Qatar a center of knowledge that is helping the entire world move forward. Learn more about Robin’s work and discover the people of Qatar Foundation at qfachievers.com.
WHILE MOST RESIDENTS OF QATAR ARE BUSY AVOIDING THE SUN, Hashim Al-Sada is busy inventing ways to harness it.

INSPIRED BY A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT GLOBAL WARMING, Hashim Al-Sada began work on a self-initiated and self-financed research and development project. Three years later, his work in the field of portable solar energy technology has received multiple international awards and recognition, and has attracted the attention of many leading corporations, governments and academic institutions. Even as he broadens the scope of his research, he also sets aside time to work as a summer science camp supervisor to help mentor and encourage the region’s next generation of scientists.

Qatar Foundation is proud to be home to leaders like Hashim Al-Sada. Together, we are making Qatar a center of knowledge that is helping the entire world move forward. Learn more about Hashim’s work and discover the people of Qatar Foundation at qf.achievers.com.