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Current Events Update

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Does Experience Matter in a President?

Hillary Clinton and John McCain are arguing that Barack Obama is too green for the job. But history shows that among Presidents, experience doesn’t guarantee success.

By DAVID VON DREHLE

A story is often told at times like this—times when American voters are choosing among candidates richly seasoned with political experience and those who are less experienced but perhaps more exciting alternatives. Once upon a time, the torch was passed to a new generation of Americans, and a charismatic young President, gifted as a speechmaker but little tested as an executive, was finding his way through his first 100 days. On Day 85, he stumbled, and the result for John F. Kennedy was the disastrous Bay of Pigs. For scholars of the presidency, Kennedy’s failure to scuttle or fix the ill-conceived invasion of Cuba is a classic case of the insufficiency of charisma alone.

Barack Obama basks in comparisons to J.F.K., but this is one he’d rather avoid. Obama’s relatively light political résumé—eight years as an Illinois legislator and three years in the U.S. Senate—continues to be the focus of his rivals’ attacks. Hillary Clinton advertises her seven years in the Senate and two terms as First Lady, saying “I am ready to lead on Day One.” And the message has gotten through: by clear margins, voters rate her as the more experienced of the two candidates. The fact that this hasn’t stopped Obama’s momentum doesn’t mean he’s heard the last of it—not with John McCain, who has spent 26 years on Capitol Hill and is the likely Republican nominee. “I’m not the youngest candidate. But I am the most experienced,” says McCain. “I know how the world works.”

Obama’s credentials would be an issue in any election year. He would be sworn in at age 47, making him one of the youngest Presidents in history, and would arrive in the Oval Office with less executive experience than most of his predecessors. Depending on what your leanings are, you could compare his work history—lawyer, state legislator, Washington short-timer, orator—to Abraham Lincoln’s, or to a thousand forgotten figures in politicalgraveyard.com. The question of experience takes on added bite this year, though, because the next...
President will inherit a troubled and menacing satchel of problems. From the Iraq tightrope to the stumbling economy, from the China challenge to the health-care mess, from loose nukes to oil dependence to (some things never change) Cuba policy—the next President will be tossed a couple dozen flaming torches at the end of the inaugural parade, and it would be helpful to know that this person has juggled before.

But if one moral of the Bay of Pigs is “Beware of charisma” or “Timeworn trumps inexperience,” what do we make of the mistakes and miscalculations of deeply experienced leaders? Franklin D. Roosevelt’s failed court-packing scheme, for example, or Woodrow Wilson’s postwar foreign policy? For that matter, Kennedy would not have faced such a harsh early tutorial if the venerable warrior and statesman Dwight D. Eisenhower had not allowed the Cuba-invasion plan to be put in motion during the last of his eight years as President.

Wouldn’t it be nice if time on the job and tickets punched translated neatly into superior performance? Then finding great Presidents would be a simple matter of weighing résumés. But it has never worked that way, which is why Lincoln’s statue occupies a marble temple on the Mall in Washington, while his far more experienced rival William Seward has a little seat on a pedestal in New York City. “Experience never exists in isolation; it is always a factor that coexists with temperament, training, background, spiritual outlook and a host of other factors,” says presidential historian Richard Norton Smith. “Character is your magic word, it seems to me—not just what they’ve done but how they’ve done it and what they’ve learned from doing it.”

Was it Franklin Roosevelt’s experience as governor of New York that gave him the power to inspire in some of the nation’s darkest hours? Or was that gift a distillate of his dauntless battle with polio? All of life offers lessons in how to lead, inspire and endure. Richard Nixon served as a Congressman, Senator and Vice President; he watched from the front row as Eisenhower assembled one of the best-organized administrations in history. When Nixon’s turn came, though, his core character—insecure, insincere, conspiratorial—led him to create a White House doomed by its own dysfunction. Experience, in other words, gets its value from the person who has it.

When Americans pass over the best-credentialed candidates because their heart or their gut leads them elsewhere, they are only reflecting a visceral understanding that the presidency involves tests unlike all others. They are, perhaps, seeking the ineffable quality the writer Katherine Anne Porter had in mind when she defined experience as “the truth that finally overtakes you.” An ideal President is both ruthless and compassionate, visionary and pragmatic, cunning and honest, patient and bold, combining the eloquence of a psalmist with the timing of a jungle cat. Not exactly the sort of data you can find on a résumé.

**Questions**

1. What factors argue in favor of electing a President with extensive experience?
2. What are some counter-arguments against the belief that a strong President must be experienced?
Changing the Script

His independence, a liability in the GOP primaries, may be his biggest strength in November. How John McCain plans to win

By MICHAEL SCHERER

NEVER MIND ALL THOSE maps of red and blue America, a nation polarized between Democrat and Republican, city and country, with entire elections teetering on the last-minute decisions of a few Ohio soccer moms. Forget what you know about the inaccessible general-election candidate, hidden behind layers of Secret Service and stage-managed pomp. Scratch those notions of a Republican Party that sidles up to pharmaceutical companies and oil giants, never ruffling the paymasters’ feathers.

With much of the attention focused on the unprecedented photo finish of a woman and an African American in the Democratic primaries, it’s easy to underestimate how much a Republican challenger could change the political playing field. If John McCain has his way in the coming campaign, the party of Ronald Reagan will shift its priorities on key domestic issues ranging from global warming to the cheap importation of prescription drugs. Despite the pressures of a national campaign, the candidate will remain open to the public and press, continuing the regular town halls and reporter gabfests, often in traditionally Democratic bastions. And the campaign will attempt to make inroads with independent voters in states that the electoral map has long counted as beyond Republican reach.

Does this sound too good to be true? McCain is, as he often admits, a superstitious fellow who depends on talismans for good luck—the penny he carries in his pocket or that rubber band strapped around his left wrist.

Throughout the campaign, McCain has been busy attempting to convince his party and its conservative base that he is not to be feared. Witness his endorsement road show: Mitt Romney in Boston, George H.W. Bush in Houston and a bunch of big-name Republican representatives in Washington. These are the moves of a man still speaking to his party’s base.

In recent days, McCain met with his advisers at his ranch, near Sedona, Arizona, to plot a strategy that will keep alive what the campaign sees as its magic: the face-to-face charm that reinvigorated the 71-year-old candidate after his campaign imploded last summer.

It is a strategy calling for more bus tours and large group discussions with voters. It also calls for a concerted effort to court voters outside the Republican base—a Barack Obama-like gambit that is already seeping into McCain’s public rhetoric.

“I will not confine myself to the comfort of speaking only to those who agree with me,” he said after winning the Virginia, Maryland and District of Columbia primaries. “I will make my case to all the people.”

Nearly a week later, he was even more direct about his aims: “We’ll be competing everywhere, including the state of California.”

McCain plans to bring new cards to the table—his unconventional campaign style combined with a set of
issues that appeal to the political center. He wants to regulate greenhouse gases. He opposes drilling for oil in the Arctic, voted to fund stem-cell research and has a history of fighting against the corrosive influence of money in politics. He initially voted against the Bush tax cuts, which he now supports, saying at the time that they “mostly benefit the wealthy.” To this day, he does not favor an absolute repeal of the estate tax. Despite a full-blown rebellion in the Republican grass roots, he remains committed to providing a path to citizenship for most illegal immigrants in the U.S.

“We always thought that if he could survive a primary, he would be a phenomenal general-election candidate,” says John Weaver, McCain’s onetime political strategist, who broke with the campaign last summer. “The Democrats will be on the defensive if John runs the kind of campaign that I know he wants to run.”

The Democratic Party and its allies, of course, see the danger that lies ahead. Despite an enormous enthusiasm advantage that Democrats have enjoyed for a year, national head-to-head polls show Obama with only a single-digit lead over McCain; McCain and Clinton are tied. More important, McCain retains a favorable rating, according to USA Today/Gallup, that stands a full 13 points ahead of the Republican Party. Those close to him see a real shot at picking up longtime blue states on the West Coast (Oregon and Washington), the Midwest (Minnesota and Wisconsin) and New England (Maine and Connecticut).

So the Democratic Party has begun flooding reporters with a series of “myth buster” e-mails arguing that McCain is “pandering to the right wing,” “walking in lockstep with President Bush” and “embracing the ideology he once denounced.” At the same time, the liberal advocacy group Media Matters has been releasing broadsides against any journalist who dares describe the sometimes maverick McCain as a maverick.

At the heart of the coming debate with Democrats is the war in Iraq, for which McCain is the nation’s most public proponent outside the White House. Democrats, including Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, hope to focus the debate on the past, on the mistakes that have been made and the cost in blood and treasure, which most Americans disapprove of. McCain, on the other hand, is determined to focus the debate on what to do next, about which the Democratic candidates have remained remarkably vague beyond saying they want to promptly begin a drawdown in forces. “I believe I can convince the American people that after nearly four years of mishandling of the war, that we’re now doing the right thing and we’re succeeding,” McCain told ABC’s George Stephanopoulos.

But far more than on the issues, McCain’s fortunes will depend on his ability to preserve his aura of independence and his enthusiasm for the campaign trail. For him, the lessons of his campaign’s collapse and rebirth could not be clearer. If his personality gets lost in the process, as it did last spring, he is done. But if he can run as an individual, unafraid of jousting with reporters and voters, he may find he’s rewarded not just in votes but in his own satisfaction. “I love it,” he often says of campaigning. His close friend and adviser South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham puts it a different way. “The hard part,” Graham says, “will be getting him to stop campaigning.”

Questions

1. How does John McCain hope to convince voters outside the Republican Party to support him in the 2008 election?
2. What do Democrats anticipate will be the heart of the debate between them and McCain?
NOT LONG AFTER MICHELLE Robinson started getting serious about the tall, skinny law student she was dating, she asked her brother Craig, a former basketball star at Princeton and now the head coach at Brown, to hoop it up with him, one on one. “She had heard our father and me talk about how you can tell a lot about a person’s personality based on how they play,” says Craig, recalling his first game against Barack Obama. “Especially when they’re tired.”

The two men played then and have played whenever possible ever since. Especially on primary days, when campaigns go silent until the results come in, Obama slips away to a gym—though it tells you something about him that he usually doesn’t let anyone watch. On Tuesday, March 4, Team Obama found the Concord Athletic Club near the San Antonio airport, where he played five on five with aides and his Secret Service detail. He is captain, coach and referee all at once, signaling teammates to set up plays. A lefty, Obama keeps opponents off balance: fake right, then go left with a very quick crossover dribble and a finish to the basket with his left hand. His instinct is to play opponents very close—though nowadays, says Craig Robinson, “everybody’s being real careful not to give him a fat lip or something that would show up when he’s on TV.” After a couple of hours, having won three of four games, Obama wanted to keep playing. “Every once in a while,” he says, smiling, “this 46-year-old body pulls out some moves.”

But as he was tapping into his inner 19-year-old, Hillary Clinton was winning three states out of four on the charge that Obama just wasn’t man enough to protect the country from its enemies, foreign and domestic. In her mockery of Obama for his pretty speeches and airy promises, Clinton’s subtext was always clear: you may like the music, but this guy is nowhere near tough enough for this job. It was a charge made explicit by the Red Phone ad, whose very existence testified to her own toughness: I’m prepared to do anything, including hand John McCain a grenade, to win this thing. She played on the guilty conscience of the national press corps, recasting herself as the vilified victim and Obama as the bubble-wrapped ingenue.

But you don’t rise in Chicago politics or come this far this fast in a national race by being soft, naive or scared of a fight. What has distinguished Obama in this campaign is how hard he has battled without appearing to do so. The message that moves the crowds at his rallies is made possible by many layers of calculation underneath. His mild manner belies fierce self-control. The frequent self-mocking conceals a stubborn self-confidence. He not only plays hard; he plays to win, rubs it in sometimes if he does and takes losses hard. “He is,” says a friend who has known his share of strivers, “one of the most competitive people I’ve ever met.”

If Obama’s history is any guide, losses tend to speed him up, not slow him down. As an Illinois state senator in 2000, he took on the Cook County machine to challenge a sitting four-term Congressman and lost—a pre-emptive strike against the political establishment and a cocky signal that he wasn’t going to wait his turn.

In his memoir, Obama recalls a tactic he learned as a black teenager in a white world. “People were satisfied so long as you were courteous and smiled and made no sudden moves,” he writes. “They were more than satisfied; they were relieved—such a pleasant surprise
to find a well-mannered young black man who didn’t seem angry all the time.”

But as the Obama campaign unfolded in 2007, the charge wasn’t that he was too angry but that he wasn’t angry enough. His party’s more inflamed activists wanted a candidate who would burn bridges, not build them. If primaries are about winning the base, Obama’s accommodating approach could not have been more out of tune, and by last summer, he looked as if he might fizzle. Come September, he was trailing Clinton by about 2 to 1 in most surveys.

To the pros, the fix was obvious: “All of the experienced hands gave the same advice: ‘You gotta get down, get dirty, get tough,’” said one, who echoed them too. But Obama pushed back, more willing to fight his advisers than to fight his opponents. A heated showdown in Chicago, attended by a core group of only half a dozen or so, took place over Labor Day weekend. “But he wouldn’t do it,” says one of the attendees. “Against the advice, against the history ... It shows he understood his persona and the qualities that were implicit in it.” And he understood what he stood to lose if he changed his game. “If I gotta kneecap her,” he told them, “I’m not gonna go there.”

This wasn’t decency or chivalry at work; it was an understanding that the rationale for his campaign would fade if he became just another grubby politician—or an angry black man.

The politics of hope brought him a long way—including a first-place finish in the Iowa caucuses—but the calculations have changed. Obama will continue to tie Clinton to McCain and other Republicans for voting for the Iraq war and liken her experience to that of Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney. “I’m going to be interested in finding out what exactly she thinks makes her particularly well prepared, for example, on foreign policy,” he told Time on Wednesday. When her aides are asked, he notes, they cite, of all things, a speech, the one she gave on human rights in China in 1995. “Has she negotiated any treaties? When she traveled to these 80 countries, was she involved in policymaking? If so, what? My suspicion is that you’re not going to get a bunch of particularly impressive answers.”

We have a chance to bring the country together in a new majority...

—Barack Obama

Obama was born in America but raised on its outer boundaries, neither white nor black but both. He’s famed for his oratory, but watching him speak, you suspect he leaves about 30% of the emotion on the table. He repeats one mantra to his staff over and over during the insane days and nights of the campaign: “Stay cool. Stay focused. Don’t get distracted.”

Obama’s instincts are often liberal if you look at his votes and his plans, but he is careful not to sound like a liberal. His stump speech is dotted with the Morse code of the middle—assurances that he understands what it is about liberalism that makes nonliberals nervous. “We have a chance to bring the country together in a new majority to finally tackle problems that George Bush made far worse but that had festered long before George Bush ever took office,” he declares. He talks about the need to pay for better teachers but also about the responsibility of parents. He can be for “sensible” gun control, like reinstating the assault-weapons ban, but he can also tell Idaho voters, “I’ve got no intention of taking away people’s guns.” He says he’s against school vouchers but would consider anything that is proven to help kids. His promises of more money for college are often tied to mandatory national service.

Whatever the drawbacks of this long and brutal campaign season, Obama believes the exercise is a good one for picking a President. “Ultimately, the process reveals aspects of an individual’s character and judgment. If you think about past Presidents, probably those two things, along with vision, are the most important aspects of a presidency,” he says. “Do you know where you want to take the country? Do you have the judgment to figure out what’s important and what’s not? Do you have the character to withstand trials and tribulations and to bounce back from setbacks?” In the coming weeks, voters will form their own answers to all those questions.

Questions
1. How did experts advise Obama to counter Clinton’s 2-to-1 lead in early polls? How did Obama respond?
2. What three attributes does Obama consider most important in a President?
Ready To Rumble

Hillary Clinton has rescued her campaign by getting a lot rougher on Barack Obama. But Democrats worry: How much collateral damage will be done?

By KAREN TUMULTY and DAVID VON DREHLE

When it comes to politics, the Clinton philosophy is simple: It’s war, and wars are for winning. Bill put it this way, back in 1981: “When someone is beating you over the head with a hammer, don’t sit there and take it. Take out a meat cleaver and cut off their hand.”

With her presidential hopes at stake in Texas and Ohio, Hillary Clinton reached for the cleaver. Her campaign made good on its promise to throw “the kitchen sink” at Barack Obama, and that paid off with clear popular-vote victories in both states. What’s more, she said, “I’m just getting warmed up.”

Even for some of her supporters, those are ominous words. Democrats now face a reality they were hoping they might avoid: a knock-down, drag-out struggle between two strong candidates lasting at least seven more weeks and possibly all the way to the convention.

For months, the Democratic candidates, including Clinton, devoutly observed that any of them would be a better President than another Republican. But in leveling her charge that the first-term Illinois Senator would be unprepared in a national-security crisis, Clinton went so far as to compare him unfavorably with John McCain, the presumptive Republican nominee. “I have a lifetime of experience I will bring to the White House. I know Senator McCain has a lifetime of experience he will bring to the White House,” she told reporters the morning before the contests. “And Senator Obama has a speech he made in 2002”—a reference to Obama’s declaration against the Iraq invasion that she and McCain had voted to authorize. Obama has repeatedly referred to that speech as proof that his judgment is superior, even if his résumé is shorter.

At the same time, the Clinton campaign stepped up its attacks on the media, insisting that Obama has been receiving kid-glove treatment. The theme sank into the broad public consciousness when Saturday Night Live returned from the writers’ strike to make a recurring theme of the fawning press.

After years of battling the scandal machine that Hillary Clinton once called the “vast right-wing conspiracy,” she and her inner circle feel well prepared for this sort of fight. Students of the Clintons’ long career have noted that they do better in a scrape. Combat brings them to the balls of their feet; by contrast, they tend to spring leaks on calm seas. Clinton’s successful attacks broke Obama’s 12-win streak that had buoyed him through a month of victories, and her advisers now feel they have put a stick in the spokes of his momentum. “They thought they could kill us,” a Clinton campaign official crowed as the Ohio and Texas results were coming in. “They know time is their enemy; time is our friend.”
That's bold talk and could be true, though even inhabitants of the Amazonian jungle have probably concluded by now that the only certain thing in this race is uncertainty. If you look at a four-month graph of the campaign, you will see that up to now, time has been very, very good to Obama. He has turned a 20-plus-point deficit in the national polls into a dead heat, spoiled Clinton's plans to wrap things up by February 5 and ground his way through 43 primaries and caucuses to build a lead in pledged convention delegates that appears virtually impossible to close. As impressive as her wins in Ohio and Texas were, Clinton made up little ground in the delegate count, where she now trails 1,186 to 1,321, according to CNN.

It is hard to come up with a scenario in which either candidate can amass the 2,025 delegates needed to win without relying upon so-called superdelegates. These are the roughly 500 party leaders and elected officials who are automatically delegates to the party convention this summer in Denver, and they are free to support whichever candidate they wish. In a sense, the Pennsylvania primary, to be held on April 22, will be aimed directly at impressing them. Obama will get another chance to beat Clinton when all the chips are in the pot. For Clinton, it is another chance to demonstrate her appeal to the core Democratic constituencies that have favored her in this campaign: women, older voters, Hispanics and households earning under $50,000.

Her strategists argue that the general election will be a close-fought contest that may come down to Florida and Ohio, two states where the Clinton coalition has been strong—or, alternatively, to a cluster of smaller states that includes Arkansas, New Mexico and Nevada. In most of those states, they say, Clinton's supporters will matter more than Obama's appeal among upscale voters and African Americans. They are, in other words, willing to admit that her hard-fought primary campaign could cost the party African-American votes in November.

Clinton officials note that the political terrain in Pennsylvania is, like Ohio's, abundant with downscale voters who are feeling an economic pinch. And as in Ohio, she has the support of the Democratic governor and can draw on his ground organization, which can help to fill what has been a weakness in comparison to Obama's operation. If these factors once again add up to a big-state win, Clinton's team is sure to argue to the superdelegates that only she has the toughness necessary to survive the fall campaign and that Obama can't land the knockout punch. For a party still regretting the glass-jawed vulnerability of its 2004 nominee, John Kerry, this argument will likely pack some selling power.

Neither campaign releases its internal tallies of superdelegates, but since Super Tuesday, Obama has been cutting into Clinton's once formidable lead. The latest estimate by CNN suggests her edge is now only 238 to 199. “When you look at the numbers, this is a fistfight,” says a Clinton strategist. “It is going to be a much more rugged fight, because her lifeline is these uncommitted delegates, and they can be shaky sometimes.” Obama's team continues to push the case that the supers ought to follow the lead of the pledged delegates for the sake of party unity.

Like the people who are running her bid for the White House, Clinton is a pragmatist. “During this campaign, you're going to hear me talk a lot about the importance of balance,” she told voters in Iowa. “You know, our politics can get a little imbalanced sometimes. We move off to the left or off to the right, but eventually we find our way back to the center because Americans are problem solvers. We are not ideologues. Most people are just looking for sensible, commonsense solutions.”

It is precisely this sense of balance that some say Clinton has lost. “The Clinton campaign strategy is simply going to be to try to run a scorched-earth campaign,” says Obama campaign manager David Plouffe. “Which would be catastrophic for the party.”

It all comes down to one thing, as Hillary Clinton made clear in her last press conference before the Tuesday primaries: “Winning. Winning. Winning. Winning. That's my measurement of success,” she said. “Winning.”

Questions
1. What are superdelegates and what role do they play in the nominating process?
2. To what core Democratic constituencies does Hillary Clinton have strong appeal?
Analyzing the Issues

As the articles on Campaign 2008 on pages 2 through 9 make clear, there are significant differences—and some striking similarities—among Hillary Clinton, John McCain and Barack Obama in their approach to the key issues currently facing Americans. Use the worksheet below to take a closer look at where the candidates stand on these issues. To answer the questions on this worksheet, you may find it useful to supplement the articles in the Current Events Update with information from the candidates’ websites (URLs are listed below). If you need additional space for your answers, use the back of this sheet or another piece of paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hillary Clinton</th>
<th>John McCain</th>
<th>Barack Obama</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. Read through this candidate’s speeches and select one quote that you feel captures his or her political philosophy.

2. What are the key points in this candidate’s approach to addressing America’s healthcare crisis?

3. Did this candidate support the decision to go to war in Iraq?

4. What is this candidate’s stance on ending the war in Iraq?

5. Does this candidate favor caps on industrial emissions of global-warming gases?

6. Now choose an issue you are particularly interested in and compare the candidates’ positions. Name your issue here:

(If you need more space for your answers, please use the back of this page.)
A Time To Serve

In a changing society facing all manner of new challenges, volunteers are helping bind America together. Why the U.S. and the next President should make a new commitment to national service

By RICHARD STENGEL

As the Constitutional Convention of 1787 came to a close, after three and a half months of deliberation, a lady asked Dr. Franklin, "Well, Doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?" "A republic," replied the Doctor, "if you can keep it."

—Anecdote from The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787

A republic, if you can keep it. The founders were not at all optimistic about the future of the Republic. There had been only a handful of other republics in all of human history, and most were small and far away. The founders' pessimism, though, came not from history but from their knowledge of human nature. A republic, to survive, needed not only the consent of the governed but also their active participation. It was not a machine that would go of itself; free societies do not stay free without the involvement of their citizens.

Today the two central acts of democratic citizenship are voting and paying taxes. That’s basically it. The last time we demanded anything else from people was before the draft ended in 1973. Polls show that while confidence in our democracy and our government is near an all-time low, volunteerism and civic participation since the 1970s are near all-time highs. Political scientists are perplexed about this. If confidence is so low, why would people bother volunteering? The explanation is pretty simple. People, especially young people, think the government and the public sphere are broken, but they feel they can personally make a difference through community service.

Another reality the founders could not have possibly foreseen was that a country that originally enslaved African Americans would be a majority non-white nation by 2050. Robert Putnam, the famed Harvard political scientist who wrote about the decline of civic engagement in Bowling Alone, recently released a new study that showed the more diverse a community is, the less people care about and engage with that community. Diversity, in fact, seems to breed distrust and disengagement. The study lands in the midst of an intense immigration debate, but even if all immigration were to cease tomorrow, we would still be diverse whether we liked it or not. Yet the course of American history, Putnam writes, has always given way to “more encompassing identities” that create a “more larger sense of ‘we.’”

But at this moment in our history, 220 years after the Constitutional Convention, the way to get citizens involved in civic life, the way to create a common culture that will make a virtue of our diversity, the way to give us that more capacious sense of “we”—finally, the way to keep the Republic—is universal national service. No, not mandatory or compulsory service but service that is in our enlightened self-interest as a nation.

In 2006 more than 61 million Americans dedicated 8.1 billion hours to volunteerism. The nation’s volunteer rate has

BEST AND WORST

States with the BEST Volunteer Rates:
Utah ........................................ 45.9%
Nebraska .................................. 42.4%
Minnesota ................................. 40.4%
Alaska ........................................ 38.8%
Kansas ........................................ 38.3%

States with the WORST Volunteer Rates:
Nevada ...................................... 17.5%
New York ................................... 20.1%
Louisiana .................................... 21.2%
Florida ....................................... 21.8%
Mississippi ................................ 24.2%

TIME, SEPTEMBER 10, 2007
increased by more than 6 percentage points since 1989. Overall, 27% of Americans engage in civic life by volunteering. Dr. Franklin would be impressed. The service movement itself began to take off in the 1980s, and today there is a renaissance of dynamic altruistic organizations in the U.S., from Teach for America to City Year to Senior Corps, many of them under the umbrella of AmeriCorps.

So what would a plan for universal national service look like? It would be voluntary, not mandatory. Americans don’t like to be told what they have to do; many have argued that requiring service drains the gift of its virtue. It would be based on carrots, not sticks—“doing well by doing good,” as Benjamin Franklin, the true father of civic engagement, put it. The ideas here are a mixture of suggestions already made, revised versions of other proposals and a few new concepts:

1 Create a National-Service Baby Bond
Every time an American baby is born, the Federal Government would invest $5,000 in that child’s name in a 529-type fund—the kind many Americans are already using for college savings. At a rate of return of 7%—the historic return for equities—that money would total roughly $19,000 by the time that baby reaches age 20. That money could be accessed between the ages of 18 and 25 on one condition: that he or she commits to at least one year of national or military service.

2 Make National Service a Cabinet-Level Department
Right now, the Corporation for National and Community Service—created in 1993 to manage AmeriCorps, Senior Corps and Learn and Serve America—is a small, independent federal agency. Find a catchier name, streamline its responsibilities and bring it up to Cabinet level.

3 Expand Existing Programs
Since 1994, 500,000 people have gone through AmeriCorps programs tutoring and teaching in urban schools; managing after-school programs; cleaning up playgrounds, schools and parks; and caring for the elderly. AmeriCorps members earn a small stipend for their volunteering and receive education awards of up to $4,725 per year. But under this national-service proposal, the program would more than triple in size, from 75,000 members each year to approximately 250,000.

4 Create an Education Corps
The idea here is to create a group of tutors, teachers and volunteers who can help the 38% of fourth-graders who can’t read at a basic level. The members of the Education Corps would also lead after-school programs for the 14 million students—a quarter of all school-age kids—who do not have a supervised activity between 3 and 6 p.m. on schooldays. Studies show that students who spend no time in after-school programs are almost 50% more likely to have used drugs and 37% more likely to become teen parents than students who spend one to four hours a week in an extracurricular activity.

5 Institute a Summer of Service
For many teenagers, the summer between middle school and high school is an awkward time. Shirley Sagawa, an architect of the AmeriCorps legislation, is proposing a Summer of Service. One hundred thousand students would volunteer for organizations like City Year, a national volunteering program and think tank, or Citizen Schools, which organizes after-school activities for middle schoolers, and run summer programs for younger students in exchange for a $500 college scholarship.

At this moment in our history, 220 years after the Constitutional Convention, the way to get citizens involved in civic life is universal national service.
6 **Build a Health Corps**

There are nearly 7 million American children who are eligible for but not enrolled in government-sponsored health-insurance programs. Health Corps volunteers would assist the mostly low-income families of children in accessing available public insurance offerings like the Children’s Health Insurance Program. These volunteers could also act as nonmedical support staff such as caseworkers and community education specialists in underserved rural health clinics—which have less than three-quarters of the nonmedical staffing they need, according to Voices for National Service, a coalition of service organizations that advocates expanding federal service programs.

7 **Launch a Green Corps**

This would be a combination of F.D.R.’s Civilian Conservation Corps—which put 3 million “boys in the woods” to build the foundation of our modern park system—and a group that would improve national infrastructure and combat climate change. The Green Corps could reclaim polluted streams and blighted urban lots; repair and rehabilitate railroad lines, ports, schools and hospitals; and build energy-efficient green housing for elderly and low-income people.

8 **Recruit a Rapid-Response Reserve Corps**

The disarray and lack of a coordinated response to 9/11 and Katrina tell us there is a role volunteers can plan in responding quickly to disasters and emergencies. The new Rapid-Response Corps would consist of retired military and National Guard personnel as well as national- and community-service program alumni to focus on disaster preparedness and immediate response to local and national disasters. The program would initially train 50,000 members, who could be deployed for two-week periods in response to emergencies and serve under the guidance of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

9 **Start a National-Service Academy**

Conceived by two former Teach for America corps members, Chris Myers Asch and Shawn Raymond, the U.S. Public Service Academy would give undergraduates a four-year education in exchange for a five-year commitment to public service after they graduate. The idea is to provide a focused education for people who will serve in the public sector—either the federal, state or local government—and thereby create a new generation of civic leaders. Asch and Raymond were so dismayed by the government’s response to Katrina that they wanted to create a new generation of people who were idealistic about government.

10 **Create a Baby-Boomer Education Bond**

Just as AmeriCorps members receive scholarships, baby-boomer volunteers would be able to designate a scholarship of $1,000 for every 500 hours of community service they complete. The $1,000 would be deposited into an education savings account or a 529 fund to be used by the volunteer’s children or grandchildren or a student they designate.

So how much would all this cost? There are about 4 million babies born each year, and if each receives a $5,000 baby bond, that would be about $20 billion a year; that is, roughly two months of funding for the Iraq war and about half what the government spends per year on the federal prison system. The government would get $1 billion in dividends from the investment and would be able to cash in the bonds that people don’t use. At the same time, corporate America would need to play a critical role in a plan for universal national service.

Between 1944 and 1956, 8 million returning veterans received debt-free education, low-interest mortgages or small-business loans. The GI Bill helped assimilate those young men into a new postwar society and helped turn America into a middle-class nation. A new GI Bill for national service involving men and women, young and old, could help secure America for the future and turn every new generation into a Greatest Generation. The courageous souls who signed the Declaration of Independence pledged “our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.” The least we can do to keep the Republic is to pledge a little time.

**Questions**

1. What are the two central acts of democratic citizenship today?
2. Why are more young people volunteering at present than in the 1970s, 1980s or 1990s?
The Santa Ana winds begin cold, gathering power and mass in the high desert between Las Vegas and Los Angeles. Air pressure pushes the winds up and over the San Gabriel Mountains, westward toward the Pacific Ocean, until gravity takes hold. The air becomes compressed as it drops, growing hotter and dryer, stripping moisture from the ground, accelerating—sometimes past 100 miles per hour as it squeezes through Southern California’s many canyons.

The punishing gusts of the Santa Anas herald cursed weather, days and nights of devilish heat. Should a fire spark in the dry woodlands surrounding the region’s cities and suburbs, the winds become a flamethrower, spreading glowing embers half a mile or more. The Santa Anas have been midwife to the most destructive wildfires in California’s history, from the Great Fire of 1889 to the 2003 disaster that blackened nearly 700,000 acres of forest. Lifelong residents of the state know the Santa Anas and dread them. As Joan Didion has written, “The wind shows us how close to the edge we are.”

In later October, the people of Southern California came close to reaching that edge. “We’re in a state of shock right now,” says Dr. Zab Mosenifar, director of the Cedars-Sinai Women’s Guild Pulmonary Disease Institute in Los Angeles, who was preparing for an influx of smoke-inhalation victims at his hospital. “This is beyond thinking.” Beginning overnight on October 20, unusually fierce Santa Ana winds stoked fires that quickly burst into life throughout a dry, hot landscape. By midweek, more than 20 separate blazes formed pockets of fire running from the Mexican border north to Simi Valley outside Los Angeles. In many places, the heat and smoke were so intense that the 7,000 firefighters recruited from around the country could do little but watch. The flames consumed more than 400,000 acres, destroyed more than 2,000 houses and forced the temporary evacuation of nearly 1 million people—the biggest mass migration in the U.S. since Hurricane Katrina, and far more than were evacuated during the 2003 San Diego wildfires, previously considered California’s worst.

In San Diego County, site of the worst fires, people spent a few minutes gathering some mementos before abandoning their houses ahead of the flames, seeking refuge with relatives or friends or even in Qualcomm Stadium, which went from being the home of the San Diego Chargers to a temporary shelter for more than 20,000 refugees—stirring worrisome memories of the tens of thousands who swarmed to the Superdome in New Orleans two years ago. Hotels filled quickly, highways jammed and grocery-store shelves ran bare. Some residents learned of the danger through television coverage of the fire. The images of the flames they couldn’t yet see out their windows but knew were on the march only added to an atmosphere of terror. “Everyone is running around scared,” said Dr. Sanjana Chaturvedi, a San Diego resident who fled her home with her husband and two children. “No one knows what to do. There is no place to go. I have no place to go.”
Often the flames moved faster than the residents. When Jay Blankenbeckler went to bed the night of October 21 at his home in Rancho Bernardo, he could see smoke, but the fire still seemed far away. Upon awakening early the next morning and turning on the TV, he saw a newscaster reporting in front of a blaze—one that was less than half a mile from Blankenbeckler’s house. “It had already burned through an entire neighborhood,” he says. “That’s when I thought, ‘This is real.’”

The Government Steps In
State and federal officials did their best to calm the anxiety of refugees and of people who, at least for the time being, were still in their homes. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger was in full action-hero mode, traveling to the firefighters’ front lines, while President George W. Bush—chastened by Washington’s late response to Katrina—declared the region a “major disaster” and promptly dispatched Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, along with Army helicopters, troops and millions of dollars in federal aid. San Diego city officials even implemented a reverse 911 system with automated warning calls going to residents, urging them to evacuate. This early and aggressive emptying of the region—a hard-earned lesson of the 2003 fires, which left 20 people dead—likely saved Californians’ lives, if not their property. “The issue this time is not preparedness,” said San Diego City Council president Scott Peters. “It’s that the event is so overwhelming.”

The question is, why? Fires have always been with us and are one way nature cleans house, burning off dry vegetation and opening up old ground for new growth. So why have these natural events become natural disasters? Why do there seem to be more of them, and when they do strike, why are they ever more catastrophic?

Part of the reason Southern California has become such a dangerous place to live is that it’s such an attractive place to live. The migration of people drawn to the West by the region’s mountains, forests and proximity to the ocean has led to more and more new residents building houses on the shrinking borderlands between edge suburbs and untouched wilderness. More than 8.6 million Western homes have been built within 30 miles of national forest since 1982; in California, where the population has more than tripled since 1950, in excess of 50% of new housing has been built in a severe-fire zone.

Then, too, there’s climate change. As occurred after Hurricane Katrina, the question of what role global warming might have played in the disaster arose before the fires had even begun to die down. While environmental scientists are careful not to blame the droughts or heat waves of any one season on climate change, the overwhelming majority of climate models point to more of these extreme conditions in the already dry Southwest as the planet warms. A study led by researchers at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, California, and published in Science last year found that as temperatures increased in the West, which is now 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than it was in 1987, so did the length of the wildfire season and the size and duration of the average fire.

Raising the Risk
Even when we try to be smart about fires, we often just make things worse. For more than a century, the U.S. Forest Service—the federal agency responsible for combating wildfires—has pursued a policy of stamping out blazes wherever they occur and doing so all the more aggressively as population grows in the endangered regions. For those accustomed to living in urban areas, that makes sense—the job of a city fire department is to stop blazes before they damage property. But that’s not how things work in the great Western forests. Paradoxically, trying to put out every minor blaze may raise the risk for the occasional megafire since the forests are not permitted to do their important work of occasionally clearing out accumulated vegetation. This is a little like letting newspapers pile up in your kitchen: If a fire occurs, the place is primed to blow.

The situation was worsened by a relatively wet winter in 2004–05, which let trees and scrub grow densely, followed
Inside a Wildfire. Once sparked, these blazes create their own dynamic. Add hot wind, and disaster is inevitable

**HOW THEY START**
Wildfires result from a confluence of fuel, dryness and some kind of trigger. Each factor contributes to the severity of the blaze

**Fuel** means flammable solids—grass, pine needles, undergrowth, smaller trees and, unfortunately, houses—that, with oxygen, feed the fire

**Dryness** can be caused by short-term weather patterns with low humidity or by a lengthy drought. In California the Santa Ana winds help parch the landscape

**Triggers** can be as natural as a lightning strike, as innocent as a campfire or as sinister as an arsonist

**HOW THEY SPREAD**
1. Once a fire is burning, a column of smoke and heat can rise for miles in the atmosphere. The rising air creates a void below
2. Fresh air rushes in, bringing more oxygen to fuel the flames
3. This convection system creates and strengthens gale-force winds that can propel blowing embers as much as half a mile (0.8 km)

**PROTECTED FUEL**
Decades of fighting every forest fire have left many areas dangerously full of fuel—sticks, fallen timber and brush. Add rampant development and drought, and there’s little hope of containing a fire quickly

**SOIL INSULATION**
Soil is an excellent insulator that can protect tree roots from a fire’s heat, permitting regrowth to begin quickly. But a charred landscape is vulnerable to erosion

**TORNADO WINDS**
In rare cases, erratic winds within a wildfire create powerful minitornados that can shoot spirals of flame into the air and twist trees apart at their trunks
by extremely dry weather since, which turned the vegetation to still more fuel. In fact, this past year has seen the worst drought in Los Angeles’ recorded history. Adding to the tinder were those Santa Ana winds, which strike regularly in the autumn but rarely with the power that they had in October. “They usually come in small, medium and large,” says Bill Patzert, a climatologist with NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif. “These were Godzilla winds.”

The Outlook

Does all this mean that the only way to stop the cycle of catastrophic forest fires is to change the way Americans live in the West? Probably—but the transition will be painful. Population growth in the affected areas has implicitly been supported by federal policies that protect private homes even if they’re built in risky areas. This, in turn, has caused the Forest Service—which is supposed to perform a range of wilderness functions—to become largely a firefighting agency, devoting nearly half its budget to that one job. That has caught the eye of Congress, which wants spending to be brought under control.

The loss in recent years of several firefighters who died protecting homes has further caused Washington to rethink its policies. “So much development in California has followed the pioneering spirit,” says Jon Keeley, a research ecologist with the U.S. Geographical Survey. “But we’re reaching critical limits in growth, and people have to realize that they will lose certain freedoms if they want to be safe.”

Questions

1. What makes the Santa Ana winds a major factor in the spread and severity of wildfires in Southern California?
2. Why is it not smart to tamp out every little fire that crops up?
Six years after the fall of the Taliban, the girls of Afghanistan are still fighting for an education. Here’s what they need to get ahead in school

By ARYN BAVER / KAROKH DISTRICT, HERAT

NOTHING GIVES PRINCIPAL SURAYA SARWARY more pleasure than the sound of her second-grade girls reciting a new lesson out loud. Six years ago, that sound could have gotten her executed. The Taliban had outlawed education for girls, but a few brave teachers taught them in secret. Sarwary, now the principal of Karokh District Girls High School in Afghanistan’s Herat province, recalls gathering students secretly in her home and imparting lessons in whispers for fear that her neighbors might report her to the Taliban.

Karokh District Girls High School is one of the most successful in Herat. And in terms of girls’ education, Herat is the most successful province in Afghanistan. Even so, conditions are far from ideal. Sarwary’s tiny school doesn’t have enough classrooms: second-graders huddle in a ragged tent in the courtyard, where a torn strip of khaki canvas hangs between rusting metal struts, blocking many of the girls’ view of the blackboard. The fierce desert wind howls through the holes and threatens to tear the class’s one textbook from the students’ hands as they pass it around for reading lessons. There is no playground or running water. The toilet, a pit latrine located at the far corner of the school compound, serves 1,500 students. Only two of the 23 female teachers have graduated from high school. Half the second-grade students, ranging in age from 7 to 12, can read; the rest just recite from memory.

The shaky status of girls’ education belies one of the greatest hopes raised when the Taliban was toppled by U.S.-led forces in 2001: the liberation of Afghanistan’s women. Yes, they can now vote, they have a quarter of the seats in parliament, and they are legally allowed to find jobs outside the home. Foreign donors and nongovernmental organizations have expended a great deal of energy and capital on building women’s centers and conducting gender-awareness workshops. But more than six years since the fall of the Taliban, fewer than 30% of eligible girls are enrolled in schools, and the infrastructure is so poor that only a tiny fraction are likely to get the education they need to enjoy the fruits of emancipation.

The stakes for Afghan society are high. Every social and economic index shows that countries with a higher percentage of women with a high school education also have better overall health, a more functional democracy and increased economic performance. There’s another payoff that is especially important to Afghanistan: educated women are a strong defense against the extremism that still plagues Afghanistan, underscored by the January 14 bombing of a luxury hotel in Kabul, which killed eight. “Education is the factory that turns animals into human beings,” says Ghulam Hazrat Tanha, Herat’s director of education. “If women are educated, that means their children will be too. If the people of the world want to solve the hard problems in Afghanistan—kidnapping, beheadings, crime and even al-Qaeda—they should invest in [our] education.”

For girls in much of the country, education remains a dream no more attainable now than it was under the Taliban. In the past six years, 3,500 new schools have been built across the country, but fewer than half of them have buildings. Most are in tents, in the shade of trees or wherever open space can be made available. This has a direct bearing on the number of
girls enrolled: most Afghan families won’t allow their daughters to be where they may be seen by men. “Girls in this society have certain needs,” says Education Minister Hanif Atmar. “They cannot be in a tented school or in an open space with no sanitation facilities, so they simply do not go.” Competing demands for government money and more obvious problems such as a raging insurgency, poppy cultivation and widespread corruption leave education to nibble from the crumbs. Though Atmar has a five-year plan to improve education in Afghanistan, he can’t find enough money for his most pressing needs. He got only $282 million this year, $216 million short of his bare-bones operating budget. The first step to take in helping educate more girls, says Atmar, is to remove all other obstacles to girls’ going to school. That means constructing new buildings so classes aren’t held in the open. In the meantime, unconventional inducements can help. In a successful program in some rural areas, girls are given a free ration of oil and flour at the end of every month. This encourages their poor families to keep sending them to school. Increasing teachers’ salaries would convince more parents that their daughters should take up the profession. Teachers with high school diplomas earn $50 to $75 a month, a tiny return on investment for families whose daughters could be spending those 12 years at home weaving carpets, tending the fields or taking care of the household.

While struggling to build the new infrastructure, educators must also contend with Afghanistan’s old demons: the Taliban is making a comeback in several provinces and reimposing its rules. In little over a year, 130 schools have been burned, 105 students and teachers killed and 307 schools closed down because of security concerns. Many of those schools were for girls, and most of them were in the southern provinces, where a Taliban-driven insurgency has made it nearly impossible to secure the schools. And in June 2007, two gunmen on a motorcycle shot dead three female students coming out of high school in the central province of Logar, a 1 ½-hour drive from Kabul.

But if Afghanistan has any reason for hope, it is the sheer determination of the girls who do have a chance to go to school. Lida Ahmadyar, 12, whose sister was one of the girls killed in the Logar shooting, has started going back to school. Every day she walks past the spot where her sister died, but she clings to her dream of becoming a doctor. “I am afraid,” she says. “But I like school because I am learning something, and that will make me important. With education, I can save my country.” If enough of Afghanistan’s girls get the chance, they may do just that.

Questions
1. What are some ways in which a higher rate of high-school education for women benefits society?
2. Why is having a school housed in a tent or in the open under a tree a problem for girls in Afghanistan?
by Lisa Takeuchi Cullen

With its Chinese lettering and unremarkable name, the fast-food outlet in a Shanghai shopping mall looks like many others selling local fare. East Dawning is crowded with customers on this winter evening, and they’re sampling a menu that includes pork fried rice, marinated egg and plum juice. Stanley Yao, a restaurateur from Hong Kong who is opening a sushi joint nearby, dines here once a month. The food is “a little too oily,” he says, but he likes the soy-milk drinks, and “the prices, of course, are very reasonable.” (A meal of noodles, tea and custard dessert costs $4.) With eight storefronts around Shanghai, East Dawning could soon give China’s biggest fast feeder, KFC, a run for its money. Good thing for them they’re playing on the same team.

Starbucks has the gall to sling its lattes for coffee connoisseurs in Vienna, and Budweiser peddles its brew in Belgium. So why shouldn’t Yum Brands—the Louisville, Kentucky-based company that owns KFC, Pizza Hut, Taco Bell and more—sell dumplings in a fast-growing market where Chinese food is just called food? Yum’s iconoclastic CEO, David Novak, likens it to how Ray Kroc of McDonald’s brought hamburgers to America. “I asked, ‘What’s the hamburger in China?’” He says, “Obviously, it’s Chinese food.” Except Kroc was an American selling American food to Americans. Is this brilliant, or is Novak half-Kroc-ed?

Since it was spun off from PepsiCo in 1997, Yum has radically transformed its overseas business. With Americans stuffed on fast-food options and domestic sales growth a skinny 2% annually, companies like Yum must go global to give Wall Street what it craves. Ten years ago, Colonel Sanders was losing the global fast-food war to the Golden Arches. PepsiCo had spread its restaurant division too thin, planting capital-consuming, company-owned-and-operated stores in 32 countries instead of franchising them as it does in the U.S. A decade ago, stores overseas brought in less than 20% of profits; today it’s 50%. In 2006 the company earned $824 million in net income on total revenue of $9.6 billion.

KFC and Pizza Hut restaurants now number more than 12,000 in 110 countries outside China, says Graham Allan, president of Yum Restaurants International (YRI). And then there’s China, where Yum is so big that it has reported earnings separately since 2005. Profits from Yum’s restaurants in China, Thailand and Taiwan popped 37% in 2006, while all other international profits grew 11%, domestic a mere 3%. A KFC opened nearly every day in China last year, and KFCs and Pizza Huts now number more than 2,300. (McDonald’s has about 1,000 restaurants, not that Yum keeps track.) Sam Su, who runs Yum in China, projects 20,000 stores someday. “We’re nowhere close to saturation at all,” he says. “The sky is the limit.”

As millions of Chinese find their wealth swelling and their time shrinking, sit-down meals involving several generations no longer fit the needs of a hurried and harried middle class. “The lifestyle is changing,” says Su. “People are getting more urbanized and busy, with less time to cook at home.” KFC’s grab-and-go menu items were a novel solution, while Pizza Hut launched the concept of eating out at a casual restaurant with the whole family. KFC opened its first drive-through in 2002 just as China was becoming a car-owning culture. In 2001 Pizza Hut Home Service began introducing the idea of hot meals delivered to the door. That concept

When Eat Meets West
Can a Kentucky fast-food company bring Chinese food to China—and tacos to Mexico? Call it to the “glocalization” of cuisine

“I asked, ‘What’s the hamburger in China? Obviously, its Chinese food.’”

—David Novak, CEO of Yum Brands
may seem ironic to Americans, for whom Chinese food is the ultimate delivery meal.

Pizza and fried chicken are tasty treats, but they’re not staples in China like, say, noodles and dumplings—and that’s where Yum thinks it can really score. And if a Yank selling egg rolls to the Chinese seems a bit impractical, then Novak, 55, is the right man for the job. The CEO of Yum since 2000, he’s a plain-talking, cheerleading executive who boasts of never having attended business school. He’s given to goofy team-building tactics like passing out rubber chickens (and $100) to KFC managers whose stores are performing well. A former $7,200-a-year advertising copywriter, Novak took his marketing chops to PepsiCo in 1987. Though he suffered his biggest failure there—Crystal Pepsi, which he still contends was the right idea at the wrong time—he was handed the reins to the KFC and Pizza Hut units in 1996. He chronicled a childhood spent in 32 trailer parks and an otherwise unconventional path to the corner office in a 2007 book titled The Education of an Accidental CEO.

This time, Novak’s idea might be the right one at the right time. The menus at East Dawning restaurants don’t offer overtly American fare but still attract Chinese consumers because of the quality and service associated with an American brand. The formula developed by Yum’s other banners overseas—cheap food delivered in cheerful surroundings—has provided a welcome mat for the company. Diner Frank Li, a project engineer on a trip from Suzhou, says the restaurant’s link to KFC and Pizza Hut is a draw, not a drawback. “Those places are good quality,” he says. “You know what you’re going to get. They are a very professional company that must know what it’s doing, and I think the quality here shows that.”

The success of Yum in China hasn’t come without some controversy, however. Fast foods—even those that mimic local cuisines—represent a dramatic change in diet for many cultures. “When you offer high-calorie food to a thin population, they go from small to large very quickly and begin to develop signs of heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure at much lower weights,” says Marion Nestle, a New York University professor and the author of Food Politics. “You can expect to see these problems in India and China in very short order.”

For its part, Yum argues that it’s not exporting fatty foods so much as offering tasty options to the global public. “The answer to the nutrition issue is balance and exercise,” says Novak, pointing to a basketball tournament sponsored by KFC in China and a menu there that includes healthier alternatives like roasted chicken. In fact, the roasted menu items are such a hit in China that Yum executives are testing them out in the U.S. It’s an interesting twist: Yum is looking to the soaring international business to expand its appeal at home. What about bringing its Chinese-food chain to the U.S.? “Now that,” says Novak, “would be a Class A opportunity.” To put it another way, that’s thinking outside the sticky bun.■

Questions
1. Why is China’s middle class now finding fast food outlets appealing?
2. What are some drawbacks to covering China with fast-food outlets?

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**QUICK SERVICE**

East Dawning’s menu features local favorites on the cheap:

- Sweet-and-sour pork ribs ............19 yuan ($2.60)
- Fried eel .................................20 yuan ($2.75)
- Ground meat and chicken wings .... 19 yuan ($2.60)
- Spicy beef with noodles ..............20 yuan ($2.75)
- Crispy wok-fried chicken ............19 yuan ($2.60)
Two years ago, Francesco Rutelli, newly appointed as Italy’s Culture Minister, embarked on a campaign to demand the return of dozens of objects held by U.S. museums, ancient works that he said had been looted from archaeological digs in his country and smuggled out. In the months that followed, one museum after another went through something like the Elisabeth Kübler-Ross stages of accepting death. They resented, they denied, they negotiated. Finally, they came to terms.

Don’t think for a moment this is a problem just for a few museums in the U.S. either. Last fall Rutelli told Time that he planned to turn next “to European institutions, starting with Denmark, as well as Japan and other parts of the world. And it goes for [Italy] too. We have returned hundreds of stolen archaeological artifacts from Pakistan, Iran and Iraq.”

In this climate, the question of ownership of the past has taken on a real edge. "Source nations" like Italy, Greece, Egypt, Turkey and China—homes to the world’s ancient civilizations—think of antiquities as national property, essential to the construction of the modern nations’ identity. Which in part they are. The problem is whether that idea can accommodate the no less believable notion that the products of ancient civilizations are also the heritage of all humanity.

“Source nations” like Italy, Greece, Egypt, Turkey and China—homes to the world’s ancient civilizations—think of antiquities as national property, essential to the construction of the modern nations’ identity.

Unsurprisingly, having endured the Rutelli campaign, even museums that may have once played fast and loose have tightened their practices. But curators and museum directors complain that cultural-property laws prevent virtually anything from being exported lawfully, guaranteeing a continued black market even if museums don’t take part in it. And they’re exasperated by demands to return objects that entered their collections many years before the adoption of laws that bar their export.

Naturally, there’s a good measure of international payback here. For source nations, the idea of cultural property is a way to assert their sovereignty against those great powers that once picked through their treasures. It’s also a defense against the suction of the present-day free market, which could easily vacuum up whatever the colonial powers haven’t carted away.

Museum professionals have counterarguments. Some places—think of the Met, the Louvre or the National Gallery in London—are “universal museums,” worth cherishing precisely because they permanently display the works of many cultures side by side. Dimitrios Pandermalis knows all about the idea of the universal museum. He doesn’t think much of it. “A translation of the imperialism of the 19th century to the globalization of our times,” he says.

Who Owns History?

Nations want their looted art returned. Great museums want to keep the treasures they have amassed. Is there a right way to divide the past?
of the 20th century” is what he calls the concept, and his view counts. Pandermalis is president of the organization behind the New Acropolis Museum in Athens, conceived as a standing rebuke to the British Museum’s continued possession of the most passionately disputed cultural property of them all, the 5th century B.C. Elgin Marbles. Those are carvings taken from the Parthenon in the early 19th century at the direction of Lord Elgin, who was then British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. Together the Elgins constitute roughly half of the surviving figures from the Parthenon. Most of the rest remain in Athens.

The New Acropolis Museum is an ingenious part of the Greeks’ lengthy campaign to retrieve the marbles. It will display the Greek portions of the Parthenon frieze side by side with pale plaster copies of the portions in London, like empty chairs at a banquet table. Meanwhile, the Greeks have also proposed that the British Museum might simply lend them the Elgin Marbles for the official opening of the museum later this year. There’s just one problem. The British Museum insists that Greece must first recognize, formally, that the marbles are its property.

It isn’t just source nations like Greece that have it in for the museums. So do archaeologists, who complain that simply by providing a commercial market for ancient objects, museums and private collectors encourage looters who vandalize archaeological digs, removing the artifacts from surroundings that hold clues about the culture that made them. To most people, a Mesopotamian cult figure or a Maya stela, before it’s anything else, is a work of art. To an archaeologist, it’s first a crucial piece of a much larger puzzle, the puzzle that is history itself. Site destruction—and the consequent loss of knowledge—is a cultural disaster for everyone. But is prohibiting almost any lawful export the best way to protect sites?

Michael Kremer, a Harvard economics professor, and Tom Wilkening, a grad student at MIT, have an idea for a possible solution. They published a paper last year suggesting that source countries might, in effect, “lease” their treasures to the museums of richer nations on a temporary basis while retaining title to them. The cash produced by such a scheme could be used to beef up site security.

Meanwhile, Italy is demanding that the Getty Villa in Malibu, a museum devoted to the ancient Greeks, Etruscans and Romans, return one of the key works in its collection, an ancient Greek bronze, Victorious Youth. Stately and supple-looking, with his right hand upraised to place on his own brow a laurel wreath that disappeared long ago, he was discovered at sea by Italian fishermen in 1964 and purchased by the museum 13 years later for a reported $3.95 million. The Italians say the bronze was smuggled out of Italy. The Getty insists it was discovered in international waters before being taken to Italian soil. For good measure, the boy was never Italian to begin with. He was probably at sea, perhaps 2,000 years ago, because he was being carted away by the Romans from Greece. Has he found a permanent home at last? Perhaps, but it’s hard to look at his upraised hand without wondering if he’s getting ready to wave goodbye.

Questions
1. Why are nations with ancient cultures insisting that their historical artifacts be returned to them?
2. What counterarguments are museum directors putting forth so that they can keep looted artifacts?
Fight for the Top of the World

As global warming melts the Arctic ice, dreams of a short sea passage to Asia—and of the vast riches that lie beneath the surface of the ice—have been revived. Who will win the world’s new Great Game?

By JAMES GRAFF

At the end of August, a wisp of flame suddenly appeared in the Arctic twilight over the Barents Sea, bathing the low clouds over the Norwegian port of Hammerfest in a spectral orange glow. The first flare-off of natural gas from the Snohvit (Snow White in Norwegian) gas field, some 90 miles offshore, was a beacon of promise: After 25 years of false starts, planning and construction, the first Arctic industrial oil-and-gas operation outside of Alaska was up and running.

But in a place where the aurora borealis normally provides celestial beauty, Snow White’s luminous apparition also signals caution. What will a new era of exploitation bring to the Arctic, one of the earth’s last great uncharted regions? The vast area has long fascinated explorers, but it has just as long been the site of folly and exaggerated expectations. Over centuries, hundreds died in the doomed search for an ice-free Northwest Passage between Asia and Europe, many of them victims of ill-fated stabs at national and personal glory.

This summer, however, saw something new: for the first time in recorded history, the Northwest Passage was ice-free all the way from the Pacific to the Atlantic. The Arctic ice cap’s loss through melting this year was 10 times the recent annual average, amounting to an area greater than that of Texas and New Mexico combined (see graphic on pages 26 and 27). The Arctic has never been immune from politics; during the Cold War, U.S. and Soviet submarines navigated its frigid waters. But now that global warming has rendered the Arctic more accessible than ever—and yet at the same time more fragile—a new frenzy has broken out for control of the trade routes at the top of the world and the riches that nations hope and believe may lie beneath the ice. Just as 150 years ago, when Russia and Britain fought for control of central Asia, it is tempting to think that—not on the steppe or dusty mountains but in the icy wastes of the frozen north—a new Great Game is afoot.

Gas and Global Warming

Russia is at the thick of the new game. In an expedition that lacked nothing in patriotic bluster, a Russian-led team descended to the seabed on August 2 and planted a titanium Russian flag directly on the North Pole. In early September, Russian bombers launched cruise missiles during Arctic exercises. But it isn’t only the Russians who are staking their claims. On August 10, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper flew to Resolute, a hamlet of 250 souls on Cornwallis Island in the northern territory of Nunavut, and announced plans for an Arctic military training facility and a refurbished deep-water port on the Northwest Passage. Then Danish scientists set sail on an expedition to map the seabed north of Greenland, a Danish dependency, and—not to be outdone—the U.S. Coast Guard dispatched the cutter Healy on a similar mission north of Alaska. The flurry of activity has prompted the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to schedule hearings to push for U.S. ratification of the international treaty on the Law of the Sea, which came into force in 1994. Ratification of the treaty has long been opposed by conservatives, who consider it a shackles on U.S. sovereignty, but it now has the support of the Bush Administration, largely because its terms would allow Washington
to weigh in with its own claims in northern waters.

The current interest in the Arctic, in short, is a perfect storm seeded with political opportunism, national pride, military muscle flexing, high energy prices and the specialized details of international law. But the tale begins with global warming, which is transforming the Arctic. The ice cap, which floats atop much of the Arctic Ocean, is at least 25% smaller than it was 30 years ago. As the heat-reflecting ice that has made the Arctic the most inaccessible and uncharted part of the earth turns into water—which absorbs heat—the shrinkage is accelerating faster than climate models ever predicted. On August 28, satellite images analyzed by the University of Colorado’s National Snow and Ice Data Center revealed that the Arctic ice cap was already 10% smaller than at its previous record minimum, in September 2005—and it still had about a month of further melting to go. “If that’s not a tipping point, I’d hate to see what a tipping point is,” says Mark Serreze, the center’s senior research scientist. Trausti Valsson, a professor of environmental planning at the University of Iceland in Reykjavik, says Arctic warming has become a “self-propelling” process that could leave the Arctic Ocean ice-free in summers by 2040. Even in winter, says Valsson, ice coverage would amount only to what could form in a single season, meaning that “Arctic shipping, with specially built ships, will be easy in all areas during the whole year.”

While shippers will find it easy to adjust, the polar bears may not be able to. A recent study by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) predicts that shrinking sea ice will mean a two-thirds reduction in their population by midcentury. Not even strict adherence to the Kyoto accord on limiting greenhouse gases would stop an Arctic meltdown, which means the Arctic, like nowhere else on Earth, is a place where efforts to mitigate global warming have yielded to full-bore adaptation to its impact. That process is freighted with irony. With gas and oil prices near historic highs and with scant prospect of any decrease in world demand for energy, it is only prudent to get a sense of what resources lie below the newly accessible sea. But there is something paradoxical about seeking in the Arctic the very carbon fuels that are melting the northern ice. “The rush to exploit Arctic resources can only perpetuate the vicious cycle of human-induced climate change,” says Mike Townsley of Greenpeace International.

**Whose Ice Is It?**

With all the other Arctic nations making their plays, it would be too much to expect the U.S.—an Arctic state itself, thanks to Alaska—to stand idly by. The Coast Guard icebreaker now on its way back from plying the waters of the Chukchi Cap, north of the Bering Strait, has charted the sea floor with a multibeam echo sounder to delineate where Alaska’s continental shelf ends and the depths of the Arctic Ocean begin. But to press its case for extended territorial waters, as the other Arctic nations are doing, the U.S. needs to sign the convention. Some conservatives have always depicted the treaty as a no-win giveaway of U.S. sovereignty that would cast the evil shadow of “world government” over the high seas and that might, for example, bar the U.S. from stopping ships suspected of terrorist ties.

Given the Senate’s rules, opponents of the treaty have plenty of chances to use procedural dodges to kill it. But at hearings on the convention, Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Joseph Biden will be able to muster support for ratification not only from the Bush Administration and the military but also from groups as different as the American Petroleum Institute, whose members would like to exploit the Arctic, and the World Wildlife Fund, whose supporters would like to stop them from doing so. With such backing, supporters of the treaty are guardedly optimistic that this time it will be ratified. The convention is “critical to our national interests as a maritime power and as the world’s leading economy,” Biden told **Time**. “Its ratification is long overdue.”

**Questions**

1. What happened last summer in the Arctic for the first time in recorded history?
2. Why is the shrinkage of Arctic ice accelerating faster than climate models ever predicted?
Redrawing the Map. As the ice melts, countries race to claim potential riches

GOING, GOING ... GONE? The Arctic ice cap is shrinking faster than ever measured before and could disappear entirely by the middle of this century

Minimum extent of Arctic sea ice:

Treaty boundary
Countries have exclusive rights up to 200 nautical miles (230 miles, 370 km) from shore

Potential boundary
Countries can claim up to 350 nautical miles (403 miles, 648 km) if the area proves to be a direct extension of the continental shelf

Sources: NOAA; USGS; NASA; University Corporation for Atmospheric Research; National Snow and Ice Data Center; U.S. Arctic Research Commission

TIME Graphic by Joe Lertola and Jackson Dykman
REALIZING AN ANCIENT DREAM

For centuries, explorers sought an ice-free route to Asia. A thawed Arctic means shippers could cut transportation time dramatically.

GOING, GOING ... GONE?

The Arctic ice cap is shrinking faster than ever measured before and could disappear entirely by the middle of this century.

NEW CLAIM

Russia says it has geological evidence to prove that this vast area, which stretches all the way to the North Pole, is part of its continental structure.

NEW YORK CITY TO TOKYO

via Northwest Passage
8,700 miles (14,000 km)

via Panama Canal
11,300 miles (18,200 km)

LONDON TO TOKYO

via Northeast Passage
8,100 miles (13,000 km)

via Suez Canal
13,000 miles (20,900 km)
Interpreting Maps and Graphics

The maps and graphics accompanying The Fire This Time on pages 14 to 17 and Fight for the Top of the World on pages 24 to 27 are packed with information. But what does it all mean? Use the questions below to sharpen your skills in reading and interpreting graphics.

The Fire This Time

1. How do wildfires start?

2. In the context of a wildfire, define “fuel.”

3. True or false: Wildfires slow down when they come to mountainsides.

4. What gives fire retardant an orange color?

5. Why is Southern California so susceptible to wildfires?

6. What allows embers from wildfires to jump natural barriers such as rivers and valleys?

Fight for the Top of the World

7. Countries can claim exclusive rights for how many nautical miles from their shoreline?

8. True or false: It is 2,600 fewer miles to travel from New York City to Tokyo by way of the Northwest Passage.

9. Name three countries that border the Arctic.

10. What is the name of the gas field and pipeline owned by Norway?

11. What country established Nanisivik Naval Base?

12. True or false: By the year 2040, there will be less than half the ice in the Arctic than there was in 2005.
A Taste of Liberty In Troubled Gaza

A border wall with Egypt is breached, giving many Palestinians a brief taste of life without the Israeli blockade

By TIM MCGIRK

AMRAN LUBBAD LAY SLEEPLESS IN GAZA EARLY IN the morning of January 23. Lubbad, a darkly handsome Palestinian, was going to be united with Hiba, his fiancé in Egypt. He had treated himself to a sharp new haircut. The pair have been engaged for two years, but Israel and Egypt sealed off the border with Gaza in early 2006, and Hiba was trapped on the other side. At last, Lubbad had scraped together $1,500 to smuggle her through a sandy tunnel under the border fence.

It was a huge risk: tunnels at the Rafah crossing often cave in. At other times, Israel bombs the tunnels, which Hamas militants use for smuggling weapons into Gaza. So when Lubbad’s cell phone rang at 5 a.m., he feared the worst. But the news couldn’t have been better. “No need for the tunnel or your money,” a friend told him. “The wall is down. Exploded. Now your fiancé can walk across. Gaza is free.”

Free for now, that is. Gaza militants did breach the wall—and Lubbad met up with his fiancé, who returned with him to Gaza. But Egypt has begun repairing the holes in the wall, and the wild exodus from Gaza, which included more than one-fifth of the territory’s 1.5 million people, was just a brief respite from life under Israel’s blockade, which had been tightened on January 17 in response to rocket attacks from Gaza soil.

Still, the breach was a chance to complete all manner of desperate errands. A Gaza waiter named Maher Sheikha carried his 12-year-old son Femeh through the mob, balanced across the destroyed metal fence and then climbed through barbed-wire tangles. Femeh was dying of a blood disease, and the only chance of recovery was rushing him to a Cairo hospital.

The boy made it to Cairo; the family had friends who led them along Bedouin trails across the Sinai desert, past the roadblocks of Egyptian police, whose orders were to turn back any Palestinians fleeing Gaza. Others weren’t so lucky. Egyptian authorities stopped dozens of ailing Palestinians at the town of el-Arish because they lacked the proper visas. The patients remain there, camped in mosques and in the doorways of el-Arish, tended by relatives who are pleading with Egyptian riot police to let them pass.

For most Gazans, though, shopping was the key. I saw a poor woman haggle over a single bulb of garlic as though it were a Manhattan town house. Goats and camels, prized for their meat, were on many shopping lists. So were commercial goods. On the Gaza side, an unemployed mason with nine kids was hoisting bags of cement off an Egyptian flatbed truck. The Israelis had banned the import of cement, so all construction had stopped. But with the opening, the price of a sack of cement fell from $60 to $12, he told me, so he was happily back at work.

A shopping spree may have lessened Gaza’s crisis, but many say the long-term solution rests with Israel. Chris Gunness, a spokesman for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which feeds as many as 850,000 impoverished Gazans, says, “A few holes in the wall don’t relieve Israel of its obligations. We can’t have a situation where Gaza continues to hover on the brink of catastrophe.” Israel, for its part, continues to blame Hamas—and the constant threat of rocket attacks against Israeli civilians—for the blockade.

Questions
1. How many people left Gaza following the breach of the border wall?
2. How does Israel explain its decision to enact the Gaza blockade?
Is Facebook Overrated?

The cool kid on the Web has everyone’s attention, but the social-networking site still needs profits to match its promise

By ANITA HAMILTON

Whether you realize it or not, social networking is something you do every day. Each time you tell a friend about a good movie, bore a neighbor with pictures from a birthday party or catch up on gossip at work, you are reaching out to people you know to share ideas, experiences and information. The genius of social-networking websites such as MySpace and Facebook lies in their ability to capture the essence of these informal exchanges and distill them online into an expanding matrix of searchable, linked Web pages.

Nearly half the people who went online in the U.S. in October 2007—83 million, according to the research firm comScore Media Metrix—visited MySpace or Facebook, making social networking one of the most popular activities on the Web. MySpace has the clear lead, with a U.S. audience of 72 million—more than twice that of Facebook’s—and 2007 profits estimated at $200 million.

Although Facebook is expected to earn just $30 million, the three-year-old site is getting all the buzz. One reason: Microsoft recently bought a mere 1.6% of the company for $240 million, an investment that values Facebook at $15 billion, which is in the ballpark of Gap and Xerox. That’s far smaller than Google, valued at about $200 billion, but both Facebook and MySpace think they are made of the same game-changing stuff. Like Google, they want to change the way you live and work online. And like Google and practically everyone else on the Internet, they are betting that advertising will make them, and their investors, unimaginably wealthy along the way.

Founded by Harvard dropout Mark Zuckerberg, now 23, Facebook was originally a way for college students to keep tabs on who was dating whom. It has evolved since then into a social network: an open book on its members’ lives, welcoming just about anyone.

Facebook's inclusiveness has broadened its popular appeal, but the alchemy of the Web is converting eyeballs to dollars via the “click-throughs” that advertisers crave—and the social nets are still searching for the magic formula. Members of both Facebook and its chief rival, MySpace, spend on average about 3 1/2 hours a month clicking around on each site, but they get so caught up in checking out their friends’ pages and updating their own that they are less likely to click through to the ads. What’s more, Facebook may not be able to keep up the momentum of its rapid-fire growth because social-networking aficionados are notoriously fickle. Remember Friendster?

Social networks are a lot like nightclubs, and Friendster was the place to be in 2004 and 2005, before MySpace came along and stole its mojo. In short, Friendster got boring.

So Facebook and MySpace are trying to morph from a place for flirting and gossip into one-stop entertainment destinations. “MySpace is your starting point to the Internet,” says CEO Chris DeWolfe, who recently rolled out features that let MySpace members play casual games like online poker and watch mini-videos of TV shows from the 1980s like Fantasy Island and Diff'rent Strokes. Facebook has gone even further. In August it sent out an open invitation to software developers to create applications that could go inside the site. So far, the company has attracted about 150 and is planning to announce more applications early next year.

Nearly half the people who went online in the U.S. in October visited MySpace or Facebook, making social networking one of the most popular activities on the Web.
developers to devise new widgets. Three months later, Facebook has some 7,000 free add-on applications that let members do everything from monitor their stock portfolios to map anyplace they’ve ever visited to text friends’ phones via the site.

Every one of those applications represents one more aspect of your life that can live on Facebook, and the more you can do there, the more important and valuable the site becomes. (And, as MySpace recently discovered, the more tempting it is to hackers.) Search engines help you find things, but everything they choose from is public. A social network affords something more: access to the personal lives and tastes of the people in your circle, or at least as much as they’re willing to share. For that reason, explains Chamath Palihiapitiya, Facebook’s vice president of product marketing, “I see Facebook as becoming more essential than search.”

Will advertisers see it that way too? In early November, both Facebook and MySpace announced new schemes that would allow advertisers to more closely target messages. The idea is that if ads are made more relevant, more people will click on them, which in turn will boost the fees the sites can charge for them. MySpace’s new “hypertargeting” strategy scans profile pages for keywords and sells ads against them. If you say you love burritos, for example, a banner ad for Mexican food might appear at the top of your page.

Facebook, on the other hand, involves its members more intimately in the process. The site gives members the option of sending an update to their friends with every purchase they make online—an extension of the news feed that tracks all the other things Facebook members do. If you choose to tell your friends about the DVD box set you just bought online, for example, your friends will also get a small ad right beneath that update. Advertisers can specify, on the basis of demographic data selected from a user’s profile, exactly which members they want to view the ad.

All of this has the creepy prospect of turning your life into one big direct-mail campaign. But Facebook’s Zuckerberg sees the new model as just another form of word-of-mouth. “Nothing influences people more than a recommendation from a friend,” he says. To allay privacy concerns, Facebook makes sharing your shopping habits optional, but it’s betting that for the bare-it-all generation growing up on social networks, broadcasting what you buy will seem as natural as posting the details of a bitter breakup—or what you ate for breakfast.

But is Facebook really worth $15 billion? If it goes public sometime next year, as is widely expected, potential investors need to ask, “How big can Facebook grow?” says Internet analyst Bob Peck of Bear Stearns, who pegged Facebook’s value at $6 billion in August. “You want to buy low expectations,” says David Trainer, president of the business-valuation firm New Constructs.

Google went public amid widespread skepticism, but Facebook has been anointed by its boosters as the next Google, despite MySpace’s bigger audience and deeper pockets. As is always the case with the Web, some investors are going to make epic amounts of money. Others won’t. ■

Questions
1. How does Facebook make most of its money?
2. What new plan has Facebook devised to target advertising more effectively to its members?
Young Athletes, Big Injuries

Kids suffer when coaches and parents pile on too much training. Here's why

By KATE STICHLFIELD

It ought to be hard to take the fun out of play, but if you're an overambitious parent or coach with a young athlete in your charge, you may have managed to do it. Weekly sessions of intensive muscle-strengthening, grueling push-up regimens and long intervals on fast-paced treadmills are becoming common for grade-school kids. Elite training centers that promise to give young athletes an edge during the off-season have been popping up since 2000, especially in affluent sections of New England and the Midwest.

To sports-medicine professionals, that's a worrying trend. Hard-core training can do kids more harm than good—particularly if they're under 12. As more children are pushed beyond their physical limits, sports injuries once reserved largely for the pros are turning up among young athletes.

A young body that's worked too hard can suffer in a lot of ways, but it's the bones that take the worst pounding. Activities like skating uphill on a Plexiglas surface, which allows skaters to strengthen their strides, or doing the explosive muscle-building movements known as plyometrics can wreak havoc on the skeletal system, particularly the epiphyseal plate, or growth plate, which is essential in bone development—a process that is not complete until the late teens.

Harming a plate can affect the way the bones grow. “I saw one kid who was asked to do multiple plyometric jumps through the pain, and he pulled a growth plate off his knee,” says Dr. Jordan Metzl of the American College of Sports Medicine's youth sports committee.

There are other problems as well. Tommy John ligament surgery, an elbow procedure named after the Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher who was the first to undergo it, used to be limited to players in their 20s and older, but it is now performed on kids as young as 12—not surprising if they started pitching excessively at age 8 or 9. Similarly, stress fractures in the backs of middle-school football and soccer players have nearly doubled over the past decade as a result of overtraining.

No one is saying that kids shouldn't play sports or even that they shouldn't train. But “you shouldn't be training a 9- to-12-year-old to be a superstar,” says Dr. Michael Bergeron of the Medical College of Georgia. “You should be thinking down the road so they can be that superstar at 18.” That's what some training centers are now aiming to do. At BlueStreak Sports Training in Connecticut, coaches assess each athlete's risk for knee injury, paying particular attention to girls, who are six times as likely as boys to injure their knees for a number of reasons, including basic anatomy, muscle strength and hormonal differences. The most vulnerable athletes are then required to wear a bracelet while training as a warning to coaches to take it slow.

But the biggest adjustment will have to be a psychological one: persuading coaches with unrealistic performance standards and parents with the means to pay an average of $900 for a six-week training session that they must back off and put the health of the child first. “Sports used to be this wonderful even playing field,” says Regan McMahon, a writer for the San Francisco Chronicle who has covered the professionalization of youth sports. “Now it's the rich kids who make the team. It's the upper-middle-class parents who can afford all of these supplemental programs.”

In fairness to the grownups, the kids themselves need to relax too. “I'm a kid who stays focused and works hard,” says Connor Humphrey, an earnest 14-year-old football and lacrosse player in New Canaan, Connecticut. “I have goals for the future. I want to play lacrosse at Duke.” That dream is commendable, but while pushing young bodies to the limit may mean more time in the game, it can just as easily mean a lifetime on the bench.

Questions
1. What kinds of training can harm growth plates?
2. How has overtraining affected the number of stress fractures among middle-school athletes?
Sparking a Protest

China’s crackdown on dissent has led activists to protest the running of the Olympic torch

By DAVID VON DREHLE

The traditional global relay carrying the Olympic torch to the site of the Games is supposed to convey the inextinguishable vigor of the Olympic spirit. But the Chinese are finding it instead a symbolic disaster. The running of the torch in London in early April was marred by attempts by human rights protesters to extinguish its fire. In Paris the ceremony became an outright farce: security officials doused the flame twice in the face of demonstrations to block its progress, and wound up driving it to the end-of-day handoff ceremony at Charléty Stadium on the edge of the city when the tormented relay was canceled at mid-course. As the torch moves on to San Francisco and Buenos Aires before heading back to Africa and Asia, the organizers of this summer’s Beijing Games are facing a grim prospect: that the protests denouncing China’s human rights record in Tibet and elsewhere could mount as the torch continues its 85,000-mile, 20-nation voyage.

More than 3,000 French police and security forces formed what was touted as a “hermetic bubble” to protect torch carriers from any intrusion, but the relay came under immediate pressure from well-organized protesters. Just minutes after the 17-mile relay began at the Eiffel Tower, demonstrators carrying Tibetan flags and chanting anti-Chinese slogans moved in so tightly around the torch that officials took it into a bus for protection. Its flame was ultimately extinguished at least twice for what French officials called “technical reasons.” Efforts by police to back activists away from the Olympic cortege at times became violent, as did clashes between protesters and pro-China spectators. An unknown number of people were arrested for disrupting the Paris relay; 37 were taken into custody on similar charges in London.

The relay was eventually cut short, as the flame couldn’t hold up against the determination of the demonstrators drawn to it. Hundreds of other activists gathered at the Trocadero esplanade across from the Eiffel Tower to show their support for the Tibetan people during a day of events that was to wrap up with concerts in the evening. Activists in Paris, like their peers in London the previous day, turned an event intended to highlight China’s growing political and economic skill into a police-harnessed reflection of how China treats dissent.

“The Chinese have made sure that for a few hours, Paris will look like Tiananmen Square,” noted Robert Menard, head of the Reporters Without Frontiers group, before the Paris protests he helped organize. “I think it’s shameful.”

The raucous London and Paris legs appear to have surprised Chinese officials. French popular concern over human rights conditions in China took root only following the brutal suppression of unrest in Tibet last month. Images of that violence prepared the ground for groups like Reporters Without Frontiers, which have called on the French government to use the Beijing Games as a lever to pressure China to increase civil liberties and press freedom. It was in the wake of that spreading disquiet in France that President Nicolas Sarkozy became the first Western leader to suggest he might consider a boycott of the opening ceremonies to protest China’s stance on human rights and Tibet. The Beijing Olympic torch show, it seems, is only just heating up.

Questions
1. Why are activists protesting the running of the Olympic torch?
2. Who is the first Western leader to state that his country might boycott the Beijing Olympics?
Bracing for a Recession

Consumers drive the U.S. economy. But we’re maxed out on our debt, and strapped banks will pinch lending. That could spell recession.

By JUSTIN FOX

It’s the day after Thanksgiving at Aventura Mall, north of Miami, and David Weinberg is worrying about the economy. “People are underestimating the downturn in the housing market in Florida and are spending based on home equity,” says the accountant from nearby Pembroke Pines, Florida. “We have not seen the worst of it yet.” In light of these looming troubles, Weinberg, at the mall with his wife and two young kids, says he’d like to rein in his family’s spending. “But,” he adds, “I’m not always in control.”

Meet today’s American consumer. Sure, he’s worried. Apart from a brief blip after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the University of Michigan’s much watched Index of Consumer Sentiment hasn’t been this low since 1992. But buying stuff is what we Americans do. The last outright decline in consumer spending came in 1991, and that was shallow and short-lived.

Short-term retail optimism brings no cheer to the economy’s wise men, who talk mainly of an imminent downturn. “The odds now favor a U.S. recession,” writes former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers in a newspaper column. “I’d put the number at about a 75% chance,” says investing guru Jack Bogle on TV. “We are becoming more certain that the recession is either here or no more than two quarters away,” warns Merrill Lynch economist David Rosenberg in a note to clients.

Talk is cheap, and economists and laymen alike have a strikingly poor record of predicting recessions. But there are good reasons to be concerned that the economy is weakening. They involve struggling banks, the collapsing housing market, the changeable stock market, oil prices, the weak dollar and lots of nervous investors in far-off lands. All of which relate back to the financial condition of the people swarming the nation’s malls.

Since the early 1980s, with the exception of that brief downturn during the recession of 1990-91, consumer spending in the U.S. has risen every quarter. Over that period, our pocketbooks have come to commandeer an ever greater portion of the economy, from 62% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1981 to 70% now. Spending by U.S. consumers accounts for 19% of global economic activity.

This activity has been increasingly fueled by debt. In 1983 household debt equaled 55% of income in the U.S.; now it’s above 114% (and above 136% of after-tax disposable income). The middle class—households earning roughly between $20,000 and $100,000 annually—had a debt-to-income ratio of 141% in 2004, according to New York University (NYU) economist Edward Wolff. And he figures it’s even higher today. In the third quarter of 2005, the national savings rate (personal income minus spending) went negative for the first time since the Great Depression, and it has bounced back only slightly since.

It’s not necessarily a bad thing to borrow money, and it’s hard to say what the right debt ratio or savings rate might be. But Americans can’t keep running up bigger and bigger debts forever. At some point we have to pay them back or default.

Worrywarts have been saying such things since the mid-1980s without much to show for it. But something changed after 2001, when what had been a long and in retrospect moderate rise in indebtedness exploded into a spectacular binge in mortgage and home-equity

“I see the risk of a credit crunch leading to a generalized meltdown of the financial system.”

—Nouriel Roubini, Economics Professor at New York University
lending. It started with super-low interest rates that kept consumer spending rising even as the tech boom of the late 1990s collapsed. But before long, the mortgage boom took on a life of its own, with ever bigger and weirder loans handed out to people who would be able to pay them back only if they won the lottery or the price of their house kept rising.

Hyman Minsky, an academic economist who died in relative obscurity in 1996 but is now the talk of Wall Street, had a colorful phrase to describe such people: “Ponzi borrowers,” he called them, after the early 20th century pyramid-scheme perpetrator Charles Ponzi. Minsky argued that once banks got so sloppy that they handed out Ponzi loans, a financial crisis was inevitable.

Sure enough, house prices stopped rising in 2006, and now banks and brokerages are taking huge write-downs tied to the mortgage-backed instruments that kept the Ponzi-loan machine oiled. Economists are furiously debating whether we’re on the brink of a full-fledged “Minsky moment,” in which lending shrinks sharply across the board. Nouriel Roubini, an NYU economist and a widely read forecaster, got a lot of attention in November by professing to see risk of “generalized meltdown of the financial system of a severity and magnitude like we have never observed before.” That sounds bad. But even if the damage is restricted to U.S. mortgage markets, a $2 trillion reduction in the supply of loans could still result, estimates Goldman Sachs economist Jan Hatzius.

That’s about 14% of GDP, more than enough to bring on a recession—semiofficially defined by the National Bureau of Economic Research as “a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months.” Will it, though? The equation must factor in global demand for U.S. exports, the path of the dollar, the price of oil and other influences that make it more or less impossible to solve. What seems clear is that the borrow-and-spend era has come to an end, or at the very least a prolonged pause.

Questions
1. What are some of the reasons economists think the U.S. might be entering a recession?
2. What percentage of the world’s economic activity does spending by the U.S. account for?
Current Events In Review

Test your knowledge of stories covered in the Current Events Update by answering the following multiple-choice questions.

____ 1. The percentage of U.S. household debt compared to average income is:
   a. 57%       b. 75%     c. 96%     d. 114%

____ 2. The presidential candidate who won the Democratic caucuses in Iowa is:
   a. Hillary Clinton     c. John Edwards
   b. Joseph Biden        d. Barack Obama

____ 3. The U.S. President who had served as a general during World War II but who had no political experience when elected was:
   a. Harry S Truman       c. Dwight Eisenhower
   b. Richard Nixon        d. Lyndon Johnson

____ 4. Yum Brands was spun off from:
   a. Coca-Cola           c. PepsiCo
   b. Kentucky Fried Chicken   d. Nestle

____ 5. The percentage of U.S. fourth-graders who can’t read at a basic level is:
   a. 25%     b. 38%     c. 45%     d. 52%

____ 6. A recent study found that as average temperatures have risen in the western U.S., so too has the length of the wildfire season as well as:
   a. the number of states wildfires occur in
   b. the size and duration of the average wildfire
   c. temperature of the average wildfire
   d. the number of deaths from wildfires

____ 7. The average number of hours per month that Facebook and MySpace members spend on the sites is:
   a. 3.5       b. 8       c. 15.5     d. 24

____ 8. The state whose population has more than tripled since 1950 is:

____ 9. The organization founded as a result of Walter Mondale’s losing 1984 presidential campaign is:
   a. Centrist Democrats for America
   b. The Democratic National Committee
   c. The Democratic Leadership Council
   d. The ACLU

____ 10. The most public proponent of the war in Iraq, outside the White House, is:
   a. John McCain   c. Barack Obama
   b. Hillary Clinton    d. Al Gore

____ 11. Economically booming nation where a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant opened every day last year.

____ 12. The Snohvit natural gas field is being developed by this nation.


____ 14. An expedition from this nation descended to the seabed in August 2007 and planted a titanium flag on the North Pole.

____ 15. This country’s cultural minister has demanded the return of dozens of objects held by museums in the U.S. and abroad.


____ 18. Suppression of unrest here has led to calls for a boycott of the upcoming Olympics.

____ 19. Stephen Harper is the Prime Minister of this nation.


Match each of the locations below with the description at right. Write the letter of the correct country in the space provided. (Note: Not all answers will be used.)

A. Afghanistan
B. Canada
C. China
D. Cuba
E. Egypt
F. Greece
G. Italy
H. Norway
I. Russia
J. Singapore
K. Tibet
L. United States

____ 1. Economically booming nation where a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant opened every day last year.

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Answers

Does Experience Matter in a President? (pages 2 and 3)
1. The next President will inherit a range of major problems, including the war in Iraq, the stumbling economy, competition from China, the health-care mess, and global warming.
2. Many Presidents with extensive experience have had failed or weak presidencies; Richard Nixon is one example. Some people argue that character and judgment are more important traits in a President than experience.

Changing the Script (pages 4 and 5)
1. By moving away from traditional Republican policies and focusing on issues ranging from global warming to the cheap importation of prescription drugs.
2. The war in Iraq.

He’s Got Game (pages 6 and 7)
1. Pundits urged Obama to “get down, get dirty, get tough.” But Obama refused to follow this advice or to engage in personal attacks on his opponents.
2. Character, judgment and vision.

Ready To Rumble (pages 8 and 9)
1. Superdelegates are the roughly 800 Democratic Party leaders and elected officials who are automatically delegates to the party convention this summer in Denver. They are free to support whichever candidate they wish. Since neither Clinton nor Obama is likely to finish the primary season with the 2,025 delegates needed to win the nomination, superdelegates are expected to play a key role in determining the nominee.
2. Clinton’s core constituencies include women, older voters, Hispanics and households earning under $50,000.

Analyzing the Issues (page 10)
1. Answers will vary.
2. Both Clinton and Obama want insurers to offer health insurance that matches the general level of coverage available to members of Congress. Clinton wants universal coverage for all Americans with individual mandates; Obama calls for universal coverage of children with decreased costs. McCain favors shifting more control over health insurance and healthcare decisions to patients rather than expanding the government role.
3. Clinton: Yes; Obama: No; McCain: Yes.
4. Both Clinton and Obama want to end the war and bring troops home within 12 to 16 months. McCain has not set a date for withdrawal of troops and has been a strong supporter of the Bush Administration’s “surge” policy.
5. Clinton: Yes; McCain: Yes; Obama: Yes.
6. Answers will vary depending on issue selected.

A Time to Serve (pages 11–13)
1. Voting and paying taxes.
2. They think the government and public sphere are broken but feel they can personally make a difference through community service.

The Fire This Time (pages 14–17)
1. If a fire breaks out, the winds become a flamethrower, spreading burning embers half a mile or more.
2. Putting out small fires raises the risk of megafires since the forests are not permitted to do their important work of occasionally clearing out accumulated vegetation.

The Girl Gap (pages 18 and 19)
1. A higher rate of education for women correlates with better overall health, a more functional democracy and increased economic performance.
2. Most Afghan families won’t allow their daughters to be where they may be seen by men, so many parents forbid their girls from attending schools in the open or in tents.

When Eat Meets West (pages 20 and 21)
1. Their wealth is swelling and their time is shrinking.
2. It’s mostly high-calorie food for a thin population, which causes people to go from small to large very quickly and begin to develop signs of heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure at much higher weights.

Who Owns History? (pages 22 and 23)
1. They think of antiques as national property, essential to the construction of the modern nations’ identity.
2. Some museum directors think of their institutions as “universal museums” that display the works of many cultures side by side.

Fight for the Top of the World (pages 24–27)
1. The Northwest Passage was ice-free all the way from the Pacific to the Atlantic.
2. Ice reflects heat, while water absorbs heat. So the more ice that turns into water, the faster the process of melting becomes.

Interpreting Maps and Graphics (page 28)
1. From a confluence of fuel, dryness and some kind of trigger.
2. Fuel means flammable solids—such as wood or grass—and oxygen.
3. False
4. Iron oxide
5. It has unusually strong seasonal winds that roar through mountains and valleys packed with homes.
6. Because wildfires intensify winds, burning embers can be blown up to half a mile.
7. 200
8. True
9. The U.S., Canada, Russia, Norway, Greenland (Denmark)
10. Snohvit
11. Canada
12. True

A Taste of Liberty in Troubled Gaza (page 29)
1. At least 300,000 people—equivalent to more than a fifth of Gaza’s population of 1.5 million—left following the breach in the border wall.
2. Israel says the blockade is necessary as a response to Hamas, and to guard against rocket attacks on Israeli civilians.

Is Facebook Overrated? (pages 30 and 31)
1. Advertising revenue.
2. The site gives members the option of sending an update to their friends with every purchase they make online.

Young Athletes, Big Injuries (page 32)
1. Activities such as skating uphill on a Plexiglas surface or doing the muscle-building movements known as plyometrics can harm growth plates; this, in turn, can affect the way bones grow.
2. Over the past decade, stress fractures in the backs of middle-school football and soccer players have nearly doubled due to overtraining.

Sparking a Protest (page 33)
1. Human rights groups are protesting the running of the Olympic torch to draw attention to China’s brutal suppression of unrest in Tibet. The protesters hope to pressure China to increase civil liberties and freedom of the press.
2. Nicolas Sarkozy

Bracing for a Recession (pages 34 and 35)
1. Record levels of consumer debt, struggling banks, the collapsing housing market, the volatile stock market, oil prices, the weak dollar and lots of nervous investors in far-off lands.
2. 19%

Current Events in Review (page 36)
1. d
2. d
3. c
4. c
5. b
6. b
7. a
8. b
9. c
10. a
11. C
12. H
13. A
14. I
15. G
16. E
17. D
18. K
19. B
20. F