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INFO-ALERT brings to your attention a selection of abstracts of current articles and new materials from American publications on current political, economic, social issues and trends in the United States. These materials are available upon request from the **Information Resource Center**.

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POLITICS & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. **VOTING TECHNOLOGY: THE NOT-SO-SIMPLE ACT OF CASTING A BALLOT**

Richard G. Niemi, et al.

The Brookings Institution, March 21, 2008, 57 pages

Since the 2000 presidential election, the U.S. electoral system has implemented widespread reforms aimed at restoring voter confidence. Have new voting systems improved citizen satisfaction and trust in the voting process? The authors address important questions about whether Americans trust the voting systems they use on Election Day.

2. **INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION: AN EVENT HISTORY ANALYSIS**

Jay Ulfelder

Democratization, April 2008, 25 pages

In the past half-century, globalization and democratization have dramatically transformed human society. Many observers of international affairs argue that these two processes are interrelated. What remains unclear, however, is exactly where those connections lie and how strong they are. Which aspects of international integration contribute to the spread of democracy? This article examines the relationships between transitions to and from democracy and membership in major intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), ratification of key human rights treaties, and integration into the global economy while controlling for a variety of domestic factors.

3. **AMERICA'S PLACE IN THE ASIAN CENTURY**

Kishore Mahbubani

Current History, May 2008, 6 pages

Kishore Mahbubani, Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, argues that the United States is among the countries least prepared to handle the rise of East Asia, as only a few American policymakers seem aware that Western domination is over. Not only has East Asia progressed economically in recent decades, but countries in the region have also developed patterns of cooperation that have maintained peace and stability. The author suggests that the moment has come for a new U.S. policy toward East Asia and that this should be the top priority for the new U.S. President.

4. **THE CASE AGAINST THE WEST: AMERICA AND EUROPE IN THE ASIAN CENTURY**

Kishore Mahbubani

Foreign Affairs, May 1, 2008, 6 pages

The West is not welcoming Asia's progress, and its short-term interest in preserving its privileged position in various global institutions are trumping long-term Western interests in creating a more just and stable world order. The West has gone from being the world's problem solver to being its single biggest liability, writes Kishore Mahbubani, Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore.

5. **THE AGE OF NONPOLARITY**

Richard N. Haass

Foreign Affairs, May/June 2008, 13 pages

According to Richard Haass, the principal characteristic of 21st century international relations is turning out to be nonpolarity: a world dominated not by one or two or even several states, but rather by dozens of actors possessing and exercising various kinds of power. In his discussion about a newer world order, Richard Haass attempts to answer a number of important questions -- How does nonpolarity differ from other forms of international order? How and why did it materialize? What are its likely consequences? And how should the United States respond?

6. **WHAT TERRORISTS REALLY WANT: TERRORIST MOTIVES AND COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY**

Max Abrahms

International Security, Spring 2008, 28 pages

Max Abrahms, a doctoral candidate in political science at the University of California, Los Angeles, argues that the strategic model's premise -- the dominant paradigm in terrorism studies -- that terrorists are rational actors who attack civilians for political ends is empirically weak. He presents seven examples, based on the records of dozens of terrorist organizations from the late 1960s to the present, that cannot be reconciled with the model's underlying assumptions and suggests a reorientation of counterterrorism strategy to reflect what terrorists really want.

7. **A NEW REALISM: CRAFTING A U.S. FOREIGN POLICY FOR A NEW CENTURY**

Bill Richardson

Harvard International Review, Summer 2007, 6 pages

American foreign policy makers face many new challenges in the 21st century. Problems that were once national have now gone global. The author believes that the United States must formulate a foreign policy that adapts to this world of global challenges. As Americans fight new security challenges with old-fashioned, military methods America remains vulnerable to terrorism. Bill Richardson, governor of New Mexico and former U.S. Representative to the United Nations, identifies six trends that are transforming the world.

8. **HOW DEMOCRACIES GROW UP**

Richard P. Cincotta

Foreign Policy, March/April 2008, 3 pages

Does a country's age structure influence its political regime? Numerous studies have shown that populations with excessive numbers of young people invite a higher risk of political violence and civil strife than others. In other words, a country's chances for meaningful democracy increase as its population ages. In this article, Richard Cincotta, Consulting Demographer to the National Intelligence Council's Long Range Analysis Unit, examines the relationship between demography and the growth and stability of democracy.

9. **A DIME'S WORTH OF DIFFERENCE?**

Kirk Victor

National Journal, February 23, 2008, 9 pages

Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton have tried to highlight their differences on select issues, but an examination of their votes shows that they have strikingly similar records. The author compares the similarities and differences between the two U.S. Democratic presidential candidates, noting that the most striking difference is their style.

10. **USING AMERICAN POWER SMARTLY: ADVICE TO THE NEXT U.S. PRESIDENT**

Joseph S. Nye

Issues & Insights, February 2008, 21 pages

A successful foreign policy vision is one that combines inspiration with feasibility. However, it is not clear that the United States has got that combination right. Joseph Nye, Chairman of Pacific Forum CSIS, argues that a key skill for the next president -- whether Democrat or Republican -- will be contextual intelligence, or rather, an ability to understand the current context of American foreign policy and where America stands in the world. The author opines that the next president should learn from past lessons and exercise "smart power".

11. **THE ROAD TO RECOVERY**

Paul J. Saunders

The National Interest, January/February 2008, 5 pages

66% of Americans oppose the use of military force to achieve democratization. What do Americans define as their priorities, then? Paul Saunders, Executive Director of the Nixon Center, examines the advancement of U.S. foreign policy goals through preventing terrorism and nuclear proliferation.

ECONOMIC SECURITY AND TRADE

12. **ON RIGHTING TRADE: HUMAN RIGHTS, TRADE, AND THE 2008 ELECTIONS**

Susan Ariel Aaronson

World Policy Journal, Winter 2007/08, 10 pages

The relationship between trade and human rights is complex, and policymakers still struggle to create policies that balance both issues. Neither trade nor human rights has become a leading campaign issue for the 2008 presidential candidates. Susan Aaronson, Research Associate Professor of International Affairs at the Elliott School of International Affairs and the Graduate School of Business at George Washington University, examines the interplay of trade and human rights, along with the presidential candidates' views on these issues, and then offers her thoughts about the move toward a coherent trade policy for the United States.

13. **GLOBAL ECONOMIC PROSPECTS 2008/2009: HOPING FOR A GLOBAL SLOWDOWN AND A U.S. RECESSION**

Michael Mussa

Paper Presented at the Thirteenth Semiannual Meeting on Global Economic Prospects, April 3, 2008, 7 pages

Growth is slowing in major industrial countries, with the U.S. economy on the verge of recession. Other industrial countries will experience less of a slowdown, while most emerging-market economies are likely to maintain strong, though somewhat slower, growth. The author discusses growth prospects in industrial countries, especially the United States, and emerging-market countries, particularly in Asia.

14. **MEDDLING IN THE MARKETS: FOREIGN MANIPULATION**

Felix K. Chang and Jonathan Goldman
Parameters, Spring 2008, 17 pages

The article focuses on the threat of financial and commodity market manipulation in the United States and how its impact would be as destructive as any conventional attack. The author cites past incidents, including the Asian financial crisis in 1997-1998, which reveal how a crisis in confidence among foreign investors could spread from the markets to the wider economy, spreading panic on a global scale.

SOCIAL ISSUES & VALUES, EDUCATION & THE ARTS

15. **GREAT AMERICAN SCHOOLS: THE POWER OF CULTURE AND PASSION**

Louise Wilson
The Education Digest, February 2008, 6 pages

Children are curious and naturally passionate learners. So why do so many children dislike school -- the place society created to help them learn. Louise Wilson, Associate Professor of Education at Bethel University, St. Paul, examines two prominent conceptual frameworks in the educational philosophies of effective schools -- culture and passion.

16. **THE PUBLIC AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS: THE COPRODUCTION OF EDUCATION**

David Mathews
Phi Delta Kappan, April 2008, 5 pages

The public is losing its sense of ownership of its schools, which threatens democracy itself, writes David Mathews, President of the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, Dayton, Ohio. And as long as citizens are treated as mere consumers of education, the problem will not be solved.

17. **CONTINUITY AND CHANGE: IN THE PURSUIT OF A DEMOCRATIC PUBLIC MISSION FOR OUR SCHOOLS**

G. Thomas Bellamy and John I. Goodland
Phi Delta Kappan, April 2008, 7 pages

Thomas Bellamy and John Goodland, both Professors of Education at the University of Washington, argue that an essential mission of schools is to ensure that each new generation understands the principles and institutions that support democratic life. Schools require vigilant stewardship to serve this public purpose. Much of the work is local, but it depends on collaboration among education professionals, local public groups and policymakers.

18. **LEARNING FROM THE WORLD: ACHIEVING MORE BY DOING LESS**

Lawrence Baines
The Education Digest, January 2008, 4 pages

Throughout the United States, initiatives are being launched to extend the school day, increase homework, integrate technology, and add more high-stakes testing to today's education system. However, many countries around the world are employing a radically different approach: doing less. The article focuses on the educational differences between the United States and other countries in terms of school day length, homework load, educational technology, and schools and social change. The article provides information about the cross-cultural differences in education systems and statistical information about the variances in test scores.

19. **CONCLUSION: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND VISUAL CULTURE IN AMERICA**

David M. Sokol

The Journal of American Culture, March 2008, 4 pages

The concept of a U.S. national identity is reflected in the nation's visual culture. David Sokol, who has had a forty-year career as a professor of art history and a museum professional, highlights some printed words and images, posters, broadsides, fine arts and popular arts that reflect the history and social conditions in the country from the American Revolution to the present time.

20. **A SENSE OF ELSEWHERE**

Vartan Gregorian

American Libraries, November 2007, 4 pages

Vartan Gregorian, President of Carnegie Corporation of New York, salutes the power of libraries as "launching pads for the imagination," institutions that are most representative of an open society. Libraries contain a nation's heritage and the tools for learning and understanding -- a place where immigrants learn English and bridge the distances between their "old" country and their new adopted land. Today, American libraries have embraced technology and have inspired libraries around the world to follow suit. American libraries were the first to allow circulation of books and periodicals and to promote the openness of library collections, practices that proved successful overseas.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

21. **WEB BEATS PRINT**

Joe Strupp

Editor & Publisher, December 2007, 6 pages

Mainstream news outlets have embraced the Web log, making political blogs key features of campaign coverage. The author interviews political bloggers from the Los Angeles Times, the Reno Gazette-Journal, the Boston Globe, the Chicago Tribune and the Washington Post. Blogs provide more information sooner, but they are demanding work and the results are unpredictable. Blogs allow greater freedom and can give a local flavor. But writing at a fever pitch opens the doors to more editorial slips and errors. The author maintains that, thanks to blogs, candidates now receive unprecedented exposure.

22. **OUT OF PRINT**

Eric Alterman

The New Yorker, March 31, 2008, 11 pages

Newspapers are losing economic vitality, editorial quality, depth, personnel, and circulation. Given the evidence, few believe that newspapers in their current printed form can survive. Newspaper companies are losing advertisers, readers, and market value. The article discusses the life and death of the American newspaper and the influence of the Internet and technology on print media.

23. **IN YOUR FACEBOOK**

Kelly Wilson

American Journalism Review, February/March 2008, 2 pages

Social websites provide a way for people around the world to interact as they never could before. Journalists use them as means to contact others for ideas and get support on tough assignments or connect with editors for advice and job opportunities. The author surveys the views of various journalists to understand why more and more journalists are signing up for Facebook, a popular online social networking site.