NON-STATE ACTORS
This issue of SIPA News is devoted to examining a wide variety of non-state actors and their impact on local, national, and transnational society throughout the world.

“Non-state actors” are nongovernmental organizations that participate in the public arena but do so with goals, policies, structures, and leaders that are not directly determined by governments. They are almost always “political” in the broad sense that they seek to substitute for or supplement public policies they deem ineffective, challenge and reshape policies they wish to change, or make use of publicly defined spaces to promote a cause or secure a benefit. Non-state actors include local NGOs and international corporations, trade unions and trade associations, banks that are too big to fail, and opposition groups too small to survive. Non-state actors do not exist in a stateless vacuum. Their activities are often regulated, encouraged, or suppressed by the power of governments. Taken together, nonetheless, they constitute an emerging global civil society of immense complexity and influence.

Governments ignore the rise of this new global civil society at their peril. Ethan Wilkes argues that WikiLeaks and other organizations with similar goals have “undermined the sovereign authority of states,” forcing them to become more transparent to their citizens. Anne Nelson and Lily Hindy examine aspects of the “Arab spring” of 2011 when authoritarian governments fell to citizens aided by new forms of communication. NGOs in locations as diverse as New York City, Singapore, and Bangalore are improving public education, protecting migrant workers, and increasing voter participation. NGOs lobby governments and partner with them, protect the environment by criticizing or teaming up with large corporations, and help to defend union members from violence. All of these activities and more can be found in this issue, but a truly global list of such organizations would run in the millions. Never before in human history have so many people in so many places become so engaged in public affairs outside the control and supervision of governments.

SIPA graduates now number more than 18,000 in 153 countries. They are among the most active members of our global civil society. The class of 2011 will join a network of alumni working to analyze problems, find solutions, and implement them in nearly every corner of the globe. SIPA’s Alumni Council, created in 2007, is now expanding to reach out and engage SIPA graduates wherever they may be. Led by council chair Roger Baumann, who received the Columbia Alumni Medal at the 2010 University Commencement, the council increased its executive committee membership from 10 to 16 and created a larger council of more than 40 members.

Meanwhile, SIPA has made students the top priority in its 2010–15 Strategic Plan. We have moved ahead rapidly to increase fellowship funding (up 50 percent in four years), raise support for internships and workshops, and enhance all aspects of student life at the School. In our first-ever Student Satisfaction Survey, we learned a lot about what students like most (quality of teaching, academic rigor) and least (library chairs—now replaced). Nearly 725 students graduated in 2011—new SIPA alumni newly empowered to serve the global public interest.

John H. Coatsworth
Dean
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Cover photo by Elliott D. Woods/Redux
The future study of international politics will likely mark the bookends of history with the Treaty of Westphalia and WikiLeaks. Signed in 1648, the Treaty ended three decades of war in Europe and introduced the concept of nation-state sovereignty. This respect for the sovereign authority of states within their own borders has been, in principle, the basis on which the modern international system existed for the last three centuries. But on November 28, 2010, WikiLeaks began the release of 250,000 classified diplomatic cables, firing the first shots in what will surely be a drawn-out war to bring this Westphalian order down.
To be sure, the erosion of nation-state sovereignty is nothing new. Since the establishment of the Dutch East India Company in 1602, the world’s first multinational corporation, powerful non-state actors have competed with the power of the state in the modern international system. In the 21st century, the wherewithal of Fortune 500 firms often exceeds the capabilities of many countries. Nongovernmental organizations provide services where the state is either unwilling or unable to do so, and supranational entities—the European Union in particular—preach doctrines of mutual interference in each other’s affairs.

Some of these entities become so powerful that they resemble states within a state or states above the state, in the case of the European Union and other supranational bodies. What they represent is a gradual and (generally) legitimate secession of authority from the state to a diverse group of other actors. In some more recent cases, namely the Islamist paragovernments of Hamas and Hezbollah, they have even become the state.

While WikiLeaks may fashion itself as an organization akin to other traditional non-state actors—a “global defense of sources and press freedoms, circa now,” as its homepage reads—what it actually represents is a more serious challenge to nation-state sovereignty. Similar to international capital flows and transnational terrorism, whistleblowing à la WikiLeaks is less an example of authority gradually assumed from the state than a sudden violation of sovereignty, which occurs unpredictably and whose impact is both immediate and profound.

The strength of WikiLeaks is also different from traditional non-state actors like Exxon, the New York Times, or Greenpeace. Rather than the political and financial resources of influence it wields as an organization, WikiLeaks finds its strength in the appeal of its idea and the power of its example. This is because the WikiLeaks model is easily replicable, as the launch of OpenLeaks suggests.

In this sense, WikiLeaks is less significant as a traditional non-state actor than as the technological platform for non-state action. Destroying WikiLeaks as an actor does not prevent the action of whistleblowing via a similar platform, any more than a defeat of Al Qaeda or the bankruptcy of Goldman Sachs will halt transnational terrorism or international capital flows, respectively. If the profusion of peer-to-peer file sharing software in the wake of the music industry’s take down of Napster serves as a guide, a forced closure of WikiLeaks could lead to an increased number of similar web-sites that are more secure, more anonymous, and even harder to take offline.

Herein lies the true challenge that the WikiLeaks platform poses to the Westphalian order: any official with a modicum of access and an axe to grind can randomly, without warning, upend the state. Where there is a disconnect between words and deeds, these officials will be more likely to come forward and, in the words of Carne Ross, a former UK diplomat, “keep fuel in the WikiLeak’s tank and those others like it.” At stake is the government’s monopoly on the right to distribute its own information. What WikiLeaks affirmed in firing the first shots this past November was that this monopoly could be easily broken.

The gravity of the moment was not lost on policymakers. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared the WikiLeaks disclosures “an attack on the international community.” Congressman Peter King called on the Department of State to designate WikiLeaks a foreign terrorist organization and on the Department of Justice to prosecute Julian Assange under the Espionage Act. Former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee made clear that “anything less than execution is too kind a penalty” for the source of the leaks.

And yet as these remarks affirm, along with the cacophony of other press statements from cabinet officials, members of Congress, and commentators, the state’s response to a flagrant violation of its sovereignty was ineffectual and dated. It is not possible to litigate against the ideas underpinning WikiLeaks. Expending efforts on proving the culpability of WikiLeaks as an organization or Julian Assange as its founder will not stop additional disclosures, retrieve missing data, or plug further leaks.

For the state, this is a new WikiLeakable world in which the Westphalian rules no longer apply. No matter how secure the servers, how rigorous the clearance processes, or how thorough the legislation, access to WikiLeaks or similar platforms greatly magnifies the vulnerability of classified information to individual interests at the expense of the sovereign authority of states. With WikiLeaks’ war on Westphalia comes the reality of forced transparency, and it is a reality the state is going to have to learn to live with.

Ethan Wilkes is a first-year MIA student concentrating in International Finance and Economic Policy. Ethan is currently co-editor in chief of SIPA’s news and opinion site The Morningside Post.
Awakening India’s Young Voters

A corporation partners with a nonprofit to "wake up" the urban electorate.

By Jasmine Shah
A young man goes around distributing free cups of tea outside a crowded movie theatre, repeatedly asking, “Why are you asleep?” When an irritated teen corrects him: “I am not sleeping, okay?” the man responds with a statement that stuns not only her but the millions of Indians watching this television commercial. “On election day, if you are not voting, then you are asleep. And if you fall asleep, how will the nation wake up?”

This popular commercial served as a rallying call for the Jaago Re! (Hindi for “Wake Up”) One Billion Votes campaign that caught the imagination of many Indians in the run-up to the 2009 parliamentary elections. An independent nonpartisan initiative, Jaago Re! facilitated voter registration in addition to spreading awareness through a highly visible mass media campaign. It eventually enrolled more than 620,000 young voters from 37 cities, making it India’s most successful voter registration campaign for the 2009 parliamentary elections. Before coming to SIPA, I worked as the national coordinator of this campaign at Janaagraha Center for Citizenship and Democracy, a Bangalore-based nonprofit organization.

Besides its immediate popularity, the campaign was remarkable for another reason, too. It was the outcome of a collaboration between a private corporation, Tata Tea Ltd., and a nonprofit organization, Janaagraha. This partnership of two non-state actors joining forces to champion a public cause successfully challenged the widely held resentment that exists between the private sector and nonprofit organizations in India.

India is the largest democracy in the world, with one of the youngest demographics. With 714 million voters, a third of whom are between 18 and 30 years of age, India’s democracy is evolving in interesting yet perplexing ways. Urban India is a perfect example. Here, politics is viewed as a messy business full of corrupt politicians conversant only with the language of caste-based politics. At the same time, the rapid economic growth that urban India witnessed over the past two decades has created a burgeoning breed of young, educated, and middle-class citizens who are either unwilling or unable to relate to politics as usual.

Voter turnout in urban India has consistently been 10 to 15 percent lower than the turnout in rural areas, an ironic situation, given the huge gap in literacy and income levels between urban and rural India. The issue receives sporadic attention from Indian media pundits and politicians. Both tend to dismiss this anomaly, attributing it to the laziness and cynicism of urban voters. Rejecting this hypothesis, Janaagraha, a nonprofit working to improve urban governance in India, launched the Jaago Re! One Billion Votes campaign in September 2008 to address key factors that were inhibiting urban youth from participating in elections.

“Only nine percent of the total youth population voted in the 2004 election. We thought this was a dangerous trend and tried to look at ways of reversing it,” says Swati Ramanathan, co-founder of Janaagraha, in an interview published in the Mint in April 2009. “The youth have two basic concerns about voting. One, that all politicians are the same, and they do not know whom to vote for. Two, they find the entire process of registration difficult and opaque. We decided to start with the latter and make it simple and convenient for the youth to register.” The campaign created India’s first online voter registration engine, which allowed for filling out an application in five minutes with the help of an interactive GIS application.

However, Janaagraha realized it would need to attract funding to execute this campaign on short notice, given the proximity of the 2009 elections. Uncharacteristically, it did not seek grants from foundations or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) departments but instead approached the marketing department of Tata Tea. This decision was prompted by the need to involve a professional branding team in campaign implementation and to create a mutually beneficial proposition for both of the organizations.

The choice to partner with Tata Tea wasn’t too difficult. For more than a century, Tata has been the most respected and trusted corporate brand in India. Moreover, in 2007, Tata Tea, India’s largest tea brand, launched a hit ad campaign where a tea-drinking youth asked a politician for his qualifications to run for office. The head of Tata Tea marketing, Sushant Dash, said, “The ad campaign was launched in 2007 to make the Tata Tea brand move away from the physical and mental rejuvenation space to a social awakening space.” In partnering with Janaagraha for the 2009 national elections, Tata Tea saw an opportunity to further its brand message of social awakening.

The campaign was an immediate hit with Indian youth, resulting in more than a thousand new volunteers. “The cumbersome process to register [for voting], and the lack of information, put us off, but Jaago Re! struck a chord, because it seemed so simple, yet powerful,” said Gundeep Singh, 27, a financial analyst based in Mumbai. After registering, he signed on to reach out to his contacts in the corporate world for further support. Over eight months, the website www.jaagore.com registered more than 1.5 million hits and facilitated online voter registration for nearly 620,000 young voters. However, compared to 714 million voters in India, the campaign still had a lot of work to do.

The campaign founders insist the true success of their effort was stirring the civic consciousness of the youth. According to a survey carried out by AC Nielsen and Outlook in April 2009, 54 percent of youth in Bangalore and 61 percent in Mumbai confirmed that campaigns like Jaago Re! had an impact on them.

The campaign was well received by India’s federal electoral body as well. Endorsing the campaign in a 2009 interview with Indian Express, Dr. S. Y. Quraishi, the current chief election commissioner of India, said, “This time, people are talking about turnouts because there has been a culture of consciousness raised through campaigns such as… Jaago Re! It generated a consciousness in which not voting attracted a sense of shame and embarrassment. The message went home.”

The corporate-NGO partnership was central to the success of Jaago Re! One Billion Votes. In all likelihood, without Tata Tea’s funding, Janaagraha would have launched this voting campaign only in Bangalore and with much less promotion. Putting it on a national scale would have taken years. Similarly, Tata Tea wouldn’t have managed to execute the technology and grassroots outreach that made the campaign immensely popular.

In a world where real change requires considerable effort and non-state actors frequently struggle to be heard, strategic partnerships are a powerful way for such institutions to stand up and be counted.

Jasmine Shab is a first-year MPA student at SIPA concentrating in Urban and Social Policy. She previously worked with Janaagraha in India and was the national coordinator of the Jaago Re! One Billion Votes campaign.
Por todos ellos
Sí a la Vida

Auri Sará
Bernardo Jaramillo

Jaime Pardo
Sí al Vio
On an April night eleven years ago, Luz Ortiz took the bus home from the local university after wrapping up a union meeting. It was 10:30 p.m., and the streets of Cali, Colombia, were quiet, dark. When she stepped off the bus, someone called out her name. Ortiz turned, expecting to see a friend or neighbor.

But the call was a distraction. In a matter of seconds she was pushed from the poorly lit street into a white, four-door sedan that had pulled up beside her.

Ortiz’s kidnappers, two men, shoved her onto the floor in the back of the car. One of the men reached over from the passenger seat, pointing a gun at her head as they drove out of town.

Ortiz worked as a sindicalista, which translates as trade union worker but in Colombia signifies something closer to a human rights advocate. Colombia is the most dangerous place in the world for trade unionists, said Jeff Vogt, AFL-CIO global economic specialist. “For a long time Colombia had more union workers assassinated annually than every other country in the world combined.”
Union workers in Colombia are often associated with far-left political ideals, and government officials have openly accused them of working with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). The perceived association between union workers and guerrilla groups has served as an excuse for paramilitaries, in conjunction with large corporations and, at times, local government, to target trade unionists and union leaders.

Alvaro Uribe, the former Colombian president who served two terms from 2002 to 2010, is well known for improving the Colombian economy and reducing rampant violence. His administration claimed to have demobilized more than 35,000 paramilitary fighters and eradicated paramilitary organizations from the country as of 2006. However, there are new groups emerging that are inflicting violence in Colombia and that are just as brutal as the demobilized paramilitary groups, according to Claudia Lopez of the Colombian NGO Nuevo Arco Iris. "The new criminal gangs are on the offensive and are targeting community and social leaders, just as paramilitaries did before them," Lopez said during a May 2010 panel discussion at Columbia University on Colombian security.

Uribe implemented the Democratic Security Policy—a strategy to reinstate the rule of law in Colombia and protect the population from ongoing violence—and received more than $7 billion from the United States in military and antidrug support since 2001 under Plan Colombia. During his tenure, Uribe doubled the size of the military and tripled the country’s defense budget, according to Adam Isacson of the Washington Office on Latin America in a 2010 Washington Times interview. It is undeniable Uribe’s policies led to the most dramatic decline in violence nationwide in decades: between 2003 and 2009 the country’s murder rate was cut in half and kidnappings dropped by 90 percent. But Uribe’s successful legacy of improving safety and security is blemished by scandals—which continue to arise even though he has left office—related to corruption and human rights abuses.

The attack on Luz Ortiz reflects what experts describe as the Colombian government’s history of stifling criticism and dissent. “There is a systematic effort to limit democratic activity in Colombia,” said Mary Roland, professor of history at Hunter College in New York. If the government suggests individuals or groups have undermined the country’s stability, paramilitary groups and their successors stand ready to inflict vigilante justice. “There needs to be a forum for criticism without ramifications or long-term consequences. These are huge limits on civil society,” Roland told the audience at Columbia University.

A decade after Ortiz's kidnapping, union workers in Colombia still face terrifying repercussions for their organizing efforts. Colombia has been in conflict since 1948, when a civil war between conservative landowners, the Catholic Church, and liberals began. Since 1963, Colombia has documented 71,100 fatalities and 4.5 million internally displaced people.

After midnight on that April night in 2000, one of Ortiz’s kidnappers got out of the car and pulled her from the vehicle. Scared for her life, Ortiz couldn’t stop shaking. But they let her go. As the door closed behind her, Ortiz’s kidnappers yelled, “We’re going to leave you alone tonight, but stay quiet! We're watching you.” The men drove off, leaving her alone on the roadside.

“I don’t know why they let me go. I don’t know why they didn’t kill me,” Ortiz said.

In 1980, approximately 35 percent of the Colombian working population was unionized; however, today only nine percent are actively engaged in union work, said Hernan Posada, a former Colombian union leader now living in New York. "The population of union workers is being destroyed, erased from the maps," Posada said.

If Ortiz had reported her kidnapping to the police, it would have only made matters worse—because of the model and color of the kidnappers’ car, she suspected they were associated with the local armed forces. Instead, she called on the leadership within her union, Sindicato de Empleados Publicos, to help register an anonymous complaint. “I knew people who had registered complaints with the local police, and they were murdered,” Ortiz said. “I never could have gone on my own, and it wasn’t until at least two months later when I was already in the United States that my complaint came up for review.”

Many union workers are relocated within Colombia, others simply given a new cell phone number or bulletproof vest. Ortiz received a plane ticket and $200 from the government.

Even though there is overwhelming evidence of collaboration between the police and paramilitary successor groups at the local level, the Colombian government often turns a blind eye. “There is a lack of attention by the Colombian government,” said José Miguel Vivanco, director of the Americas Division at Human Rights Watch. “But it’s easy to see why. If the government acknowledges that paramilitary groups still exist, the administration is acknowledging that their demobilization campaign didn’t work.”

Despite the earlier assassinations or disappearances of friends and colleagues, the murder of her 17-year-old brother, and the near kidnappings of her preschool-aged daughters, Ortiz decided to flee Colombia as a political refugee only after her kidnapping in 2000.

More than 2,706 trade unionists have been murdered since 1986, when the Colombian Confederation of Workers (CLT) first began collecting data. A union protection program, which was a cooperative effort between numerous Colombian ministries and law enforcement agencies, was set up in Colombia in the late nineties. Between 2001 and 2009, this program helped protect 4,492 trade unionists, according to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Ortiz left Colombia through this program and received political asylum in the United States in 2002.

Protection by the Colombian government doesn’t turn out so well for everyone. Many union workers are relocated within Colombia, others simply given a new cell phone number or bulletproof vest. Ortiz received a plane ticket and $200 from the government.

When she first agreed to an interview for this story, Ortiz didn’t share her phone number until two hours before our appointment. She insisted on meeting on a busy street corner in Brooklyn. She was accompanied by her friend, the activist...
Hernan Posada, an unexpected addition to the interview. Though Ortiz fled Colombia a decade ago, she still suffers debilitating posttraumatic stress and is unable to hold down a job. She volunteers with recent Latin American immigrants to the United States and sees a psychiatrist regularly. Ortiz is not alone in her struggle to recover from kidnappings, attempted assassinations, and threats. Posada, the leader of a bankers’ union in Colombia, was the victim of three attempted murders and finally fled the country in 1998.

Many human rights observers are concerned about the continuing violence toward union workers and local employees of Colombia’s mining industry, as well as the legacy of Uribe policies such as the Justice and Peace Law, which was passed in 2005 in an effort to disarm paramilitaries. The law allows former paramilitaries the benefit of a maximum eight-year prison sentence if they contribute to the discovery of truth, justice, and reparations for victims. Though many paramilitaries have admitted to murdering union workers and other citizens, few have been convicted of their crimes.

“The law has been an utter failure,” the AFL-CIO’s Vogt said. Paramilitaries are often tried in absentia, which means the perpetrators are still at large. An estimated 52,000 crimes against humanity have been admitted by nearly 4,500 demobilized paramilitaries, according to BBC Mundo. However, as of February 2011, Colombian prosecutors have won only three convictions.

Many demobilized paramilitaries are now joining paramilitary successor groups or teaming up with drug traffickers, according to Human Rights Watch. The paramilitary successor groups continue to target social leaders and union workers.

Wendy Luers, who started the Foundation for a Civil Society, explained there is a lack of job training for demobilized paramilitaries, and high levels of fear amongst local business leaders deter them from hiring those who have completed the demobilization process. “So they are turning back to what they know,” Luers said in an interview in New York in 2010. “They are picking up their guns and going back into the mountains, and this will continue until a well-rounded demobilization process is in place.”

Ortiz said she is rarely on the phone with family or friends in Colombia. “There aren’t many people left to talk to,” she explained. “Many have moved. Many more have been assassinated. In Colombia, I know very few [people].”

More than 600 union workers were assassinated during President Uribe’s eight-year administration. “Though the government claims paramilitary groups no longer exist, the same types of abuse, murder, threats, and intimidation continue toward social and community leaders,” said Vivanco of Human Rights Watch.

According to Posada, “People in the U.S., Europe, and around the globe need to understand the character of violence people live through in Colombia. We’re not here to pursue the American Dream. I’m lucky to be alive, yes, but I’ve been uprooted and expelled from my country.”

“When you count the different stories, you remember that what has happened to one person in Colombia, has happened to all of us,” Posada said.

Whitney Eulich will graduate in May 2011 with a Master of International Affairs, her studies focus on human rights, journalism, and conflict resolution. Whitney spent the summer of 2010 working as an oral historian and researcher for the Historic Memory Group, a part of Colombia’s National Commission for Reparations and Reconciliation, based in Bogotá and San Carlos, Colombia. She can be contacted at weulich@gmail.com.
TWITTER REVOLUTIONS?
Old and New Media in the Middle East and North Africa

BY ANNE NELSON
In 2003 I wrote a paper called “The News Media in the Arena of Human Rights.” From today’s vantage point, it’s nothing short of astonishing that at the time, such an article would focus on print and broadcast media and that social media was not yet a contender. Mark Zuckerberg launched TheFacebook.com in 2004, YouTube appeared in 2005, and Twitter didn’t emerge until 2006.

What followed was undoubtedly the most accelerated revolution in communications in human history. As of this writing, YouTube claims an audience of nearly 500 million and Facebook boasts more than 500 million active users, 70 percent of them outside the United States. Twitter, celebrating its fifth birthday, is approaching 200 million users, who post some 140 million tweets a day.

We have various mechanisms to measure the market impact of digital media and can count unique visitors, YouTube views, and Facebook and Twitter accounts. But it is far more difficult to evaluate the social impact. The events of winter 2011 in Egypt placed social media squarely in the international spotlight and promoted the notion of the “Twitter Revolution” in Tahrir Square. As always, the revolution had a backstory. The regime of Hosni Mubarak had been generating opposition for years through its stifling of expression and the brutal actions of its security forces. In April 2008, there was a series of strikes by textile workers protesting soaring food prices. The strikes themselves were familiar, but what was new was the appearance of support from educated, urban young people, who used Facebook to organize their own protests.

Once again, the security forces reacted violently. Young “Facebook activists” were arrested and frequently tortured, sometimes in the attempt to access their online accounts to use against them. Media analyst Evgeny Morozov has presented powerful arguments concerning the downside of social media in the political sphere, with many cases of how repressive regimes can subvert such channels to their own purposes. But it is not a one-sided match: in Egypt, protesters retaliated by recording secret cell phone videos of police torture and posting them on YouTube. For several years leading up to the Tahrir protests, the videos were disseminated through online platforms such as the Witness Hub, eroding the police’s traditional walls of secrecy and impunity, and compounding the publicly available evidence against the regime.

Egyptian police proved incapable of countering the forces of history. Popular opposition to Mubarak grew, and the media, in all their forms, played a decisive part in the events that led to his downfall. But how do we parse the various roles of the media? Undoubtedly, Twitter was extremely influential. But according to a study posted on the social media news site Mashable in early 2011, there were only 14,462 Twitter users registered for Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen combined.

The lion’s share of the study’s recorded Twitter users were based in Egypt, but in a country of more than 80 million, that figure is not high. Egypt’s Facebook population is much larger, estimated at about five million, a fifth of whom access it on mobile platforms. Facebook was undoubtedly a formidable organizing tool for young, urban protesters for several years leading up to Tahrir Square. (Not surprisingly, Egypt’s Facebook and Twitter populations grew rapidly in response to the government’s attempts to shut them down.)

But sometimes the effect of novelty is to distract us from the obvious. This is particularly the case in the field of media development, where the trajectories of communications technologies play out in very different fashions in different parts of the world.

In “The Financial Viability of Media in Emerging and Developing Markets,” a spring 2011 report by the World Association of Newspapers (WAN-IFRA), we found that the most stunning communications development in Egypt lay in the introduction of cell phones. Remarkably, Egypt’s 80 million people have acquired 82 million mobile telephones over the last decade, compared with only 600,000 landlines. The headline here is that Egyptians are now able to complete point-to-point communications conveniently for the first time in history. In terms of social organization and protest movements, this is surely at least as noteworthy as 14,000 Twitter users.

Another major factor in Egypt was the Al Jazeera satellite news network, whose bureau and reporters had suffered years of assaults by Mubarak’s forces. Al Jazeera’s broadcasts televised government attacks on Tahrir Square protesters to both a wide Egyptian audience and a pan-Arab public sphere, playing a major role in shaping public opinion. One should also not discount the legacy media, which still carry considerable weight and authority. Resiste reporters for Al Ahram, Egypt’s newspaper of record, used the Tahrir Square protests to gradually reveal their true opposition to the government, as did prominent figures from state television. Their impact was not limited to conveying information; they also carried great symbolic weight. The WAN-IFRA research demonstrated that, unlike the sophisticated measures available for digital platforms, there is virtually no market data available for Egyptian print media, regarding either circulation or revenues. Al Ahram’s circulation is believed to be upwards of a million, with a substantial pass-along rate of somewhere around three to five readers. But, unsurprisingly, the influence of media that is both traditional and unmeasured is often overlooked.

One of the most interesting subjects for future research will be the role of hybrid media. In Egypt, as in China, Vietnam, and other countries, some of the most daring official journalism takes place in the English-language online editions of the official dailies. Al Ahram’s online English-language edition challenged the Mubarak regime far earlier than the Arabic print editions, just as China’s People’s Daily Online in English has broken investigative stories that are beyond the reach of the paper. Citizen journalism that is promulgated on blogs and social media can spread news and ideas through the population, but without curation and branding, the public doesn’t always know how to evaluate them.

Egypt has given us a new model of political combustion, in which long-simmering frustrations provided the heat, social media added tinder, and mass media spread the blaze. And there is at least one more significant dimension to consider regarding Twitter. Quite apart from its role in informing Egyptians of developments in their own country, it brought a real-time depiction of events to the West. Concerned Americans and Europeans had a window on Tahrir Square. This window unmistakably showed peaceful protesters seeking human rights and freedom of expression, under ongoing physical attack by a regime that had long been a strategic ally of the United States. In previous cases, Western governments have often acted to support their allies, regardless of their abuses or expressions of popular will. It may be that Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube’s most important roles in Egypt were not as local organizing tools, but as mechanisms to project local events to the rest of the world. There is undoubtedly still an important place for traditional journalism, but reporting is often thwarted by censorship and intimidation. In such cases, social media are enabling citizens, as non-state actors, to counter the blinding forces of propaganda as never before.

Anne Nelson has taught at Columbia since 1995, and lectures and publishes extensively on international media issues. She was a 2005 Guggenheim Fellow for her book Red Orchestra and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.
It was 1996, the beginning of the digital revolution. An early technology adopter, I was one of the first in my circle of friends and colleagues to have an e-mail address. I not only had an e-mail address, I also knew how to install memory in my computer—so I was definitely considered a techie (the technology has since surpassed my skills and I no longer hold this status). As a result of my early abilities, a teacher friend asked me to help his Lower East Side public school purchase a computer lab. I met with him and the school principal and was quite surprised by what I discovered—a school with outdated computers (and few of them), no Internet access or wires, and, more importantly, no one in the building assigned to manage the technology, let alone focus on what to do with it.
I quickly became the school’s go-to person for anything “computer” and began to think about how I might recruit my friends to do for other schools what I was doing for this one. I was daunted by the prospect of starting something on my own, so I reached out to local nonprofits I thought might be interested in incorporating technology into their mission. Everyone I met agreed there was a dire need to bring the industrial age schools into the digital age, but no one seemed to want to take it on.

As luck would have it, I found some like-minded people in the local and growing tech sector, and together we founded the nonprofit MOUSE (www.mouse.org), a youth development organization providing student-powered technical support solutions for public schools (the program is now in more than 300 schools across New York and other U.S. cities and in 50 countries worldwide via a partnership with Microsoft). And thus began my 15-year journey navigating the massive New York City public school system—first as a volunteer, then as a nonprofit entrepreneur and executive director, and now as the parent of a third grader who attends our local public school.

I learned an important lesson early on: schools must be allowed to determine their own needs. One cannot push anything into or at schools—a program, free stuff, ideas. It simply does not work. The best way to support schools is to get teachers the resources they need, when they need them.

There are literally thousands of nonprofits that touch NYC schools on a daily basis. With 1.1 million students—one in every 300 Americans is a current NYC public school student—it’s no wonder everyone is trying to help. But the important question is, what is really working? Teachers are quite astute as to what programs they want and don’t want. No nonprofit is going to be successful unless teachers want it there. And that goes not just for teachers, but the principal too. If your program is not aligned with school goals, your organization is just taking up space. I figured this out myself in the early days of running MOUSE. I assumed, as many nonprofits do, that every school in the city would want my program. It became clear to me what the gaps were, and I was going to deliver.

I found out the hard way—and many thousands of grant dollars later—that schools have to want your program so badly they are willing to go out of their way to get it. If you offer a program too easily, schools might take it just because it’s there and because it’s free. In order to be successful, it is key to have schools apply for your program. The application process itself cuts out at least 50 percent of potential school partners. Further, if you charge for services, you will attract only the schools that truly see you as a priority. This doesn’t mean putting the entire financial burden on the schools: simply charge schools something—just enough so that they will have some skin in the game.

MOUSE and many organizations that work with large numbers of schools charge for their programs. MOUSE’s fee is $1,000 per year. This does not cover the cost of the program (MOUSE raises five times that amount per school), but the $1,000 fee means that the school is a committed partner. Enthusiasm and effort go a long way toward successful nonprofit school programs.

Nonprofits are able to raise money from world-renowned foundations and Fortune 100 corporations and, incredibly, without consent from the NYC Department of Education (DOE). While you certainly have to prove there is need for your program in order to get money, I don’t recall ever filling out a grant application that asked for a concrete list of schools that had agreed to host my program should funding be provided. And certainly no school or DOE signature was required. The assumption is, if you have a great program, you should get money. But perhaps it is the schools that should be applying for the funding to bring the nonprofits to them.

Times have changed significantly since I left as executive director of MOUSE in 2003, and raising money has gotten a lot harder. Funders want to see performance data, impact measurement metrics, and return on investment calculations. I am fairly certain that going forward, organizations will not raise another dime for their school-based program unless they have specific, reliable evaluation mechanisms. It is a profound challenge: how can you tell if your program is the one raising attendance rates or increasing test scores relative to any number of other factors? The organizations that figure out how to track and measure effectively are the ones that are ultimately going to succeed.

Collaboration is not common among nonprofits, though it is beginning to happen more and more. Competition for funding tends to get in the way of nonprofit partnerships. However, when nonprofits do team up, not only do funders like it, but also, the value-added in terms of programing and student outcomes can be exponential. Under its current executive director, Carole Wacey, MOUSE is working in partnership with a variety of organizations, from the nonprofits Computers for Youth and Teaching Matters, to the City University of New York (CUNY), Australian United States Services in Education (AUSSIE), Time Warner, and Cablevision. This collaboration also has the backing of the NYC Departments of Education and Technology and Telecommunications, the U.S. Department of Commerce, and 72 NYC public schools. The program, called New York Connected Learning, is an “innovative solution to increase use of broadband technology and enhance educational outcomes for NYC public school students in the highest need communities across the city,” according to the MOUSE website. The initiative provides desktop computers to the students’ homes (Computers for Youth), coaching for teachers (Teaching Matters and AUSSIE), technical support (MOUSE and CUNY), and discounted broadband (Time Warner and Cablevision). What makes this successful is that each organization focuses on doing what it does best while supporting the others and building upon their skills and experience.

The New York City school system is making a conscious effort to foster collaborations and smart partnerships like this and understands the need to consider more carefully how the system interacts with nonprofits and other resource providers. Gregg Betheil, the executive director of the Office of School Programs and Partnerships at the NYC Department of Education, says that one of the challenges nonprofits face is that in spite of trying to do the right thing, impact students’ lives, raise achievement, and ‘fix’ what is wrong, very few organizations have a sense of how they fit into the larger picture. Betheil is beginning to address this by better articulating the DOE’s goals, objectives, and priorities, both from a systemic and individual school level. Nonprofits can then be more aware of how they are addressing gaps and, at the same time, supporting broader, long-term goals.

It appears that the closer you are to the system or to individual schools, the greater chance you are going to have at success. I am hopeful that as funding gets tighter, as the DOE makes the most of its nonprofit resources, and as nonprofits begin to work together, we are going to see some significant accomplishments. It simply has to happen. As both a practitioner and a parent, I am more determined than ever to make it work.

Sarah M. Holloway, MPA ’03, is a lecturer at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs.
 Months before the 2008 presidential election, Senator Barack Obama was the guest speaker at the Cuban Independence Day Luncheon hosted by the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) in Miami, Florida, the center of the Cuban exile community. CANF cofounder and president Dr. Francisco Hernandez opened the event by saying, “When the time arrives to pass the torch to a new generation of patriotic Cuban Americans, we know it will remain firm and radiant in their hands.”

This passing of the torch is already well under way.

For 30 years, CANF has been the premier generator of U.S.-Cuba policy recommendations, exercising its influence from the Reagan to the Obama White House. Until recently, CANF’s major policy objective was to isolate Cuba economically, politically, and socially in an effort to fatally weaken the Castro regime and pave the way for democracy on the island.

But with the death of cofounder Jorge Mas Canosa and the ascendance of his son Jorge Mas Santos as chairman of the organization, CANF has adopted a new approach to democratizing Cuba, largely by engaging and supporting Cubans on the island, especially dissidents.

President Obama has already translated CANF recommendations into policy. The United States now allows unlimited travel and remittances to Cuba by Cuban Americans and increased opportunities for non-Cuban U.S. citizens to visit the island for nontouristic purposes.

The new policy approach reflects the views of younger Cuban Americans, who want a more proactive role in democratizing Cuba. They don’t want simply to wait for a half-century-old embargo to yield results. And because they have grown up in a world with fast access to information and increasing social networking capacity, these Cuban Americans want to communicate with and politically empower island Cubans through technology.

“My generation realizes it’s up to us to act or nothing will happen,” says Daniel Lafuente, 23, CANF’s director of media and government relations. But Lafuente’s experience with Cuban politics differs greatly from that of his predecessors.

The first wave of Cuban exiles reaching Miami after the 1959 Cuban Revolution included people who had experienced the expropriation of their homes and businesses, incarceration, and the loss of loved ones, all at the hands of the Castro regime.

The new Cuban government became enemy number one. Hernandez and Mas Canosa were among the many exiles who joined forces with the CIA to overthrow the Castro regime during the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. After the Bay of Pigs defeat, the armed struggle continued in various forms. Some exiles even executed terror attacks against Cuban targets.

Over time, the fight turned to lobbying for the isolation of Cuba.

Many of the first generation of exiles continue to support a hard line against Cuba. When CANF began to moderate its tone, 20 members left to start their own organization, one that would stay faithful to the original position. Still others are aging and dying, gradually ceding power to their children and grandchildren, who have a more people-focused approach to U.S.-Cuba policy.

Lafuente explains the change in policy in demographic terms: “Youth don’t like political polarization. The shift in policy reflects the shift of the Cuban American population. The younger generations are [now] the bulk of the Cuban American population.”

Born in Miami and raised there by his Cuban mother, Lafuente began to understand the political nature of his family’s exile while in high school and started to work with CANF. He continued to do so at the University of Pennsylvania and is now the national director of the University Council of the Cuban American National Foundation (UC-CANF), whose major objective is to promote interaction between college students in the United States and Cuba.

“The youth here in the U.S. and there in Cuba are more aligned than any groups in exile, or there [in Cuba],” Lafuente says.

When speaking of CANF’s work and the potential for democracy in Cuba, Lafuente’s tone exudes optimism. His grandfather, on the other hand, has grown apathetic about Cuba. He was a businessman when Castro’s troops triumphantly marched on Havana. A short while later, he was arrested and imprisoned, escaping only because someone he knew opened his cell and said, “Run,” which he did with his family to Miami.

After decades at an impasse, Lafuente’s grandfather has come to believe that nothing can make a difference for Cuba. Lafuente says, “Whenever I’ve asked about going to Cuba, or even when I said I wanted to get involved with CANF, my granddad urged me to seek other interests or occupations.”

CANF president and former hardliner Hernandez understands how radical the shift in policy is for first-generation exiles. He spent two years in a Cuban prison for his involvement in the Bay of Pigs invasion.

“People who have suffered tremendously are unable to separate the regime from the Cuban people,” he explains. Justifying his new position,
he continues, “We [CANF] have the same stance toward the Castro regime [as before], but have a different stance with the Cuban people.”

Embedded in CANF’s blog site is a video in which the Damas de Blanco (Ladies in White), a group of female relatives of political prisoners, speaks to the organization from Havana.

“We would like to thank the Cuban American National Foundation, which has supported us since the beginning. . . . They send medicine and other types of aid,” says the woman on the video, surrounded by her peers in white. The recording ends with a choral chant: “Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!”

CANF’s change in policy coincides with changes in Cuban-American sentiment about U.S.-Cuba relations that go beyond travel and remittances, according to a poll conducted over a period of 17 years by Florida International University’s (FIU) Cuban Research Institute.

The last such survey of Cuban Americans was conducted in 2008. Expressing their disillusion with U.S. policy towards Cuba, when asked if they favor or oppose continuing the embargo, 55 percent of respondents said they oppose doing so. This marks the first time that a majority of respondents answered in the negative. When the question was first asked in 1991, only 13.4 percent of respondents were opposed to the embargo.

Because FIU categorizes respondents by age, whether or not they were born in Cuba, and the year they left Cuba, one can draw two conclusions about the change in sentiment over the years: second- and third-generation Cuban Americans hold views different from those of their parents and grandparents; and, more recent arrivals from Cuba, those who have lived under the isolating effects of the embargo, also hold views that differ from those of the first wave of exiles.

While CANF continues to support the embargo, it is open to the prospect of trade between U.S. firms and Cuban entrepreneurs. Hernandez perceives this scenario as unlikely, however, saying, “The Cuban government doesn’t want to negotiate anything that would involve giving up any power over the people.”

Lafuente sees a generational shift in Cuba paralleling Miami’s that will prove a challenge to the Cuban government. “The youth in Cuba do not have the revolutionary spirit. They don’t buy into that. They pick up on rights not given.”

Although CANF has no control over the extent to which the Cuban government permits its citizens to challenge state policy, CANF does believe the safety of dissidents is increased if their voices reach a global audience. Lafuente says that young Cubans are aware their government is preventing them from accessing the Internet. CANF sees this as an opportunity and allots most of its resources to supporting Cuban dissident bloggers. Increased travel to Cuba means that electronic equipment can reach bloggers. Increased remittances mean bloggers can afford hourly Internet prices that rival monthly Cuban salaries.

CANF’s goal of a democratic Cuba has not changed, but its preferred path of getting there has. The shift from isolating Cuba to supporting the Cuban people bridges a nation divided for a half century by geography as much as by ideology.

But this shift would not have been possible had it not been for the voices and will of second- and third-generation Cuban Americans, who believe that empowering island Cubans is an important step toward Cuban democracy.

Christopher Reeve is a Master of International Affairs candidate in the class of 2012, concentrating in Economic and Political Development and specializing in International Media, Advocacy, and Communications. Prior to attending SIPA, he was the special education coordinator at the Bronx Leadership Academy High School. Originally from Miami, he developed an interest in the relations between the United States and Latin American and Caribbean countries. He has been to Cuba twice to visit his family.
Singapore's NGOs Provide a Lifeline for Migrant Workers

BY ANDREW BILLO

“My second employer did this to me,” says one Filipino woman in an interview posted on the website “Maid in Singapore.” She rolls up her sleeve to reveal a series of scars on her left arm. “She ironed my hands, so I ran away.” A second domestic worker chokes away tears, as she recounts being raped by the brother of her employment agent. “I want to share with the agent what happened, but I can’t feel any trust,” she says. “I don’t trust Singaporeans any more or anyone in Singapore.”

Stories like these have drawn the concern of a small but dedicated group of NGO workers and private citizens in Singapore, a prim city-state that is geographically only four times larger than Washington, D.C. They advocate for the protection of the 856,000 low- and semiskilled migrants in Singapore, providing critical services and raising awareness to fill the void created by the government’s laissez-faire approach to social welfare.

In the midst of the country’s government-subsidized apartment blocks, manicured lawns, and flower-lined streets, a dark reality persists for the thousands of workers who contribute to Singapore’s annual growth, which was reported at 14.5 percent in 2010. They take jobs as maids, nannies, construction workers, and in shipping, but stories of abuse, withheld pay, confiscation of passports, and salary deductions are the norm rather than the exception for the country’s most disadvantaged employment sector.

The Singapore government is suspicious of NGOs working on migration issues, largely as a result of the “Marxist Conspiracy” of 1987, when 22 civil society members working to improve the lives of migrants were arrested under the country’s Internal Security Act. At the time, the nongovernmental sector had “lobbied for higher wages, social security benefits, job security, and employment conditions for all foreign workers,” writes Nicola Piper of Singapore’s Asia Research Institute. This explained the “reluctance” of civil society organizations to intervene on behalf of migrants until 1995, when the controversial execution of a Filipina maid accused of murder once again brought attention to foreign workers.

Still, a few small NGOs manage to provide critical support to Singapore’s largely South and Southeast Asian migrant worker population. One such NGO is Transient Workers Count Too, or TWC2, whose office is located in a cramped space above a shopping center catering largely to Thai migrants. Inside, five TWC2 staff members are busy answering phone calls from distressed foreigners, primarily men in the construction and shipping sectors. John Gee, a British national who has lived in Singapore for more than a decade, oversees the operation that has assisted thousands of workers since its founding in 2003.

“The primary issue faced by low-skilled workers is that they essentially go unpaid for their first eight or nine months in the country, as they pay off fees owed to agencies,” Gee said. “There is a power disparity between the employer and the employee. The employer has the right to send an employee home at any time, and there is little the employee can do to contest such a decision.” This makes it difficult for migrants to argue about wage levels, arbitrary deductions, or timely payment.

While Gee said the Singapore government has slowly made improvements in the protection of low-skilled migrant workers in the last eight years, the services provided by organizations like TWC2 provide a critical safety net for out-of-work migrants, especially those with cases pending against Singaporean employers. “Nongovernmental organizations provide hotline support, including one of our partner organizations that runs a 24-hour service. We also have a partnership with two restaurants in order to serve about 400 free meals per day,” said Gee. “Without these meals and the support from NGOs, some migrants wouldn’t be able to remain in the country while courts process their claims,” he added.

In spite of state control of nearly all aspects of Singapore’s media, Internet blogs and film have provided outlets for Singaporeans to voice their concerns. The 2009 TV documentary Migrant Dreams, produced by Singaporean Lynn Lee and permanent resident James Leong, follows a migrant worker, Mohammed Ismail, from Bangladesh to Singapore. Ismail’s story is typical: having paid
$7,000 to agencies in his home country for the opportunity to work in Singapore's shipping sector, he was optimistic that he would soon pay down his debt and remit funds to support his wife and daughter. Instead, Ismail found himself working without pay for several months, and forced to live in shipping containers with 200 other migrants, each facing salary deductions of $100 per month to cover the cost of their “accommodations.”

A spate of maids falling to their deaths from apartment buildings further provoked the ire of Singapore's NGOs, who suggested that the lack of mandatory “rest days” for domestic workers was the primary cause of the suicides. A representative of Singapore’s Ministry of Manpower (MoM), the agency responsible for regulating migrant workers in the country, responded in the Straits Times.

“Based on MoM interviews with foreign domestic workers (FDWs) last year, FDWs in general were satisfied with working in Singapore,” wrote MoM’s Farah Abdul Rahim. “In fact, all local residents have rest days. Yet, the suicide rate per 100,000 local residents is higher than that for FDWs.” The Singapore government is quick to downplay the exploitative treatment of migrant workers within the country, and indeed a scan of local print media reveals that many Singaporeans are more concerned with the rising costs of hiring a maid than with their mistreatment.

The situation faced by foreign workers in Singapore has not escaped criticism from NGOs abroad either. The Hong Kong–based NGO China Labor Bulletin, which works specifically with Chinese migrants, raised its concerns in a 2011 report. In Singapore, writes the report’s author, Aris Chan, migrant workers “are welcome when there is a need, but should leave when their services are no longer required. They are, simply put, hired on sufferance.”

But not all Singaporeans share this viewpoint. It may be that civil society, in spite of government apathy, can make the greatest difference in improving the lives of migrant workers. As the producers of the film Migrant Dreams say in their blog, “Yes, we live on a tiny island. Yes, land is scarce. Yes, maids are here to work, not have a holiday. Yes, yes, yes. But shouldn’t we treat the people who take care of our homes, cook our meals, and look after our kids a little better?”

In the meantime, any improvements are likely to be incremental. With vast disparities in wealth across the Asian region, significantly poorer countries will continue to welcome the remittances sent from overseas, in spite of the risks faced by their nationals while abroad. The demand for cheap labor, coupled with strong demand for employment opportunities among migrant populations, means that employers, laborers, and governments are unlikely to insist on greater protective measures. It will, therefore, remain incumbent upon civil society organizations and private citizens to insist on the treatment of foreign nationals as human beings, rather than an expendable, temporary, labor force.

Andrew Billo, class of 2011, is completing master’s degrees in International Affairs and Public Policy from SIPA and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore. Since 2004, he has worked in Southeast Asia, as well as the Middle East, on a range of migration challenges. He may be contacted at asbillo@gmail.com
A Comedy Troupe Calls for Change in Burma

By Stephen Gray
Photography by Vincent de Groot
Lu Maw is in pain. A toothache has robbed him of food, sleep and sanity; only a health professional can bring relief. Summoning the last of his strength he escapes across the Burmese border to Thailand, hoping that there he’ll find the treatment he desperately needs. Finally Lu Maw finds a clinic. The dentist is perplexed. “Why have you come this far?” he asks. “Surely they have dentists in Burma.”

“Sure they do,” replies Lu Maw, his face stretching to a grin. “But in Burma we’re not allowed to open our mouths.”

The audience gathered in Lu Maw’s living room erupts into laughter. Relaxed, smiling, and carefree, it’s hard to believe that he could be killed for telling these jokes in Burma, also known as Myanmar. On this evening six or seven tourists line a bench meters from the small raised platform that serves as his stage. It’s a small group, but crammed as we are between the marionettes that line the walls and the larger-than-life presence bursting from the stage, it feels like the room is packed.

Lu Maw belongs to the Mustache Brothers, a comedy troupe that performs a blend of standup comedy and political satire for tourist audiences in Mandalay, Burma’s second city. With his brother Par Par Lay and cousin Lu Zaw, Lu Maw takes to the stage in a colorful silk costume adorned with small bells that jingle as he leaps around the stage. You’d be forgiven for thinking they were younger than their 60 odd years. Their wispy grey moustaches are so long that they appear to trail behind them as they move.
The performance this evening shifts between singing, slapstick skits, and stand-up comedy routines, each sprinkled with liberal doses of politics and a call for change. Such sentiment can easily lead to a lengthy prison term in Burma, but the brothers have little fear about being provocative. “You have no democracy in the United States,” says Lu Maw. The audience pauses, not sure whether to laugh or not. “You wait four years before electing a new president. Even Thailand is more democratic than you,” he continues. “They’ve had five new prime ministers in four years!”

Unfortunately for the Brothers, their authoritarian leaders don’t share their sense of humor. For the past decade, the group has been blacklisted by the ruling military regime—the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)—because of their anti-government, prochange message. After three generations of touring the country and performing on stage, the family has had its license revoked and is now consigned to performing in its own home.

A powerful narrative of injustice drives the Mustache Brothers’ humor. “In every house there’s no light, no 24-hour electricity,” says Lu Maw. “There’s no education for the children. The country has many natural resources...gas, gemstones, teak wood, even opium. Where does all the money go?”

This is a country in which there are no independent newspapers, and even song lyrics must pass a censorship board. Those who do speak out can expect a violent backlash. During the 1988 and 2007 uprisings, the military junta killed thousands of Burmese, including hundreds of the monks who led the 2007 protests.

The Brothers have also paid heftily for speaking out. In 1996, the comedy troupe performed a show for 2,000 guests on the grounds of democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi’s home. On that occasion Lu Maw stayed home, “holding the fort...keeping the home fires burning,” he says, proud of his idiomatic English. Par Par Lay joins us as Lu Maw and I talk. He doesn’t speak English but seems to understand what we are talking about.

Two days after the show, soldiers came and arrested Par Par Lay and their cousin, Lu Zaw. “Trumped-up charges,” says Lu Maw. “I began to wonder who the real actors were,” he adds, joking as if he weren’t talking about a trial in which his relatives were tortured, sentenced, and imprisoned before he could even say goodbye.

Par Par Lay’s eyes look to the floor as Lu Maw describes how Lu Zaw and Par Par Lay were forced to work in shackles and chains for 12 hours a day, digging up gemstones in the mines of Kachin State. Lu Maw describes how, numb from a combination of exhaustion, disease, and malnutrition, one or two inmates died each week.

Despite the adversity, comedy lived on in prison for his brother and cousin. “They used to joke with the guards,” says Lu Maw. “How can we dig up lots of gemstones,” they would say, “if you only feed us dirty rice water?”

International pressure from U.S. and British comedians helped win their release after five years. It wasn’t long before they were spreading their message once more, albeit from the confines of their living room. Asked how they keep from getting caught, Lu Maw responds that they must know who is in their audience at all times. At the slightest hint that a potential informant is watching, the Mustache Brothers drop the politics in favor of a politically correct version of their show.

So far it’s worked. Lu Maw later admits that international attention also stops the authorities from locking them up again.

If it’s so risky, why do they do it? “Tourists are our Trojan horse,” explains Lu Maw. The tourists who visit Burma provide one of the few means of telling their story to the outside world. “We can’t fight the government by ourselves” Lu Maw pleads, a rare moment of solemnity crossing his face. “We need your help.”

Stephen Gray will graduate from SIPA in May with a Master of International Affairs. His studies specialize in conflict resolution, an interest that has led him to a range of countries affected by conflict in the last decade, including Burma in 2009. He hopes to begin work in mediation and/or peace and conflict research soon and can be reached at gray.stephen@gmail.com
THE ROLE OF MULTINATIONALS IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

By Rebecca Burton

The cup of Starbucks coffee that wakes you up in the morning is just the sort of thing that keeps Jim Hanna up at night. Hanna, the director of Environmental Impact at Starbucks, has been tasked with making all the company’s cups reusable or recyclable by 2015. “From our customers’ standpoint, the cup is our No. 1 environmental liability,” said Hanna in an October 2010 interview with *Fast Company*. “Customers have this great experience of interacting with store partners and the beverage. Then, when they’re finished, they say, ‘Now what do I do with my cup?’”

Hanna has organized annual Cup Summits over the past two years to tackle this question, bringing together competitors like Dunkin’ Donuts and McDonalds. They are joining forces to change the way we deal with one-use beverage containers. But the cup is just one element of Starbucks’ efforts to be sustainable. Eighty-one percent of the coffee Starbucks purchased in 2009 was certified as grown in a way that protects water quality, preserves biodiversity, and reduces agrochemical use.

On the world stage of environmental conservation, where activists, nonprofits, and multilateral organizations vie for the limelight, large multinationals—including large food and beverage companies—are entering into the arena to steal the show. In agribusiness and food production, industry leaders are ramping up efforts to go green. They know that pursuing sustainability in the supply chain is now vital for their public image. And in a world where resources are becoming scarce, it is even more important for their long-term growth. As multinational corporations focus on boosting the bottom line, their changing strategies for sourcing are improving environmental outcomes on a global scale.

“Two billion times a day somebody, somewhere, uses a Unilever brand,” claims Unilever in its recently released Sustainable Living Plan. With a consumer base comprising a third of the world’s population, the company—whose products range from Skippy’s Peanut Butter to Dove Soap—has the potential to affect economies and environments across the globe. Unilever’s vice president of Brand Building Foods, Michael Faherty, spoke about sustainable sourcing in the food industry at Columbia Business School’s 2010 Social Enterprise Conference last October. The company conducts half of its business outside Western Europe and the United States. “We are trying to grow our business in areas where we need to grow our sustainable sourcing,” said Faherty. “In our developed areas, all those consumers are wondering about the raw ingredients that we are sourcing from the developing world.”

Consumer demand for ethical production is pushing companies to consider the environmental impact of their goods, Faherty explained. In fact, a 2008 *Wall Street Journal* study found that consumers were willing to pay $9.71 for a pound of coffee that had been ethically sourced, versus $8.31 for coffee with no sourcing information. They were willing to pay only $5.89 for coffee from a company with a bad reputation.

Unilever’s response to consumer demand for ethically produced goods has brought prestige to the company. It is ranked as a “Supersector Leader” in the Food and Beverage Sector of the Dow Jones Sustainability Index for 2010–2011, which tracks 2,500 sustainability-driven companies worldwide. Many investors view sustainability measures as a proxy for good management and the ability to plan for long-term growth. Measures of environmental, social, and governance practices—known as ESG factors—are increasingly used to aid investment decisions.

Some companies also view their prominence in the corporate world as a way to engage in the sustainability discussion and influence the entire food and beverage sector. John Reid, vice president of Corporate Social Responsibility for Coca Cola, spoke to a group of students at Columbia Business School in February, stating, “At the end of the day, people want a unified response.” Coca Cola’s leadership in making their bottles fully recyclable elicited a movement across the sector to follow suit. Currently, there is a “reset of consumer values,” Reid explains. Understandably, multinational companies are resetting their values to mirror this movement.

Whether driven by customer demand, profit motive, or a belief in sustainability for its own merit, food and beverage corporations are making waves in environmental protection that are unprecedented. A new trend of responsible consumption is emerging. While some see this term as an oxymoron, certain corporations are making it a possibility. Thanks to changes in the way food is grown and improved options for disposal of its packaging, consumers can now order a “Tall” at Starbucks while making an equally sizeable impact on environmental stewardship.

Rebecca Burton is a second-year Master of International Affairs student concentrating in Economic and Political Development with a focus on Sustainable Development. She is inspired by the role multinationals play in environmental protection through responsible sourcing efforts. She has been working as an intern for The Tiffany & Co. Foundation since October 2010 to advance its strategic philanthropy.
BUSINESS AND THE STATE:
A New University Challenges the Status Quo in Russia

By Paul W. Thurman

I
n a country like Russia, where creating big businesses without the formal or informal intervention of the state is tough, attempts are being made to build a world-class educational institution with limited state involvement. Furthermore, this establishment seeks to groom business leaders and entrepreneurs who will change how the outside world views Russian businesses.

The Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO was established as a form of public-private partnership in 2006 but with all private funding, pushing the envelope of what’s possible in the post-Communist state. Led by one of Russia’s biggest investment bankers, Ruben Vardanyan, the initiative brought together entrepreneurs from major Russian and international companies.

Vardanyan had a dream—to build the world’s best business training academy—and he did it in a very nontraditional way. Most Master of Business Administration (MBA) schools start with degree-granting programs, then create derivative Executive MBA curricula for working managers, and finally develop nondegree high-end Executive Education offerings for high-flying (and high-paying) companies and their senior leaders. Central to the resourcing of such programs is organic support from other university schools, departments, and funding sources. Much in the way the School of International and Public Affairs began as a collection of faculty and offerings from political science, economics, business, and the like, so, too, do many business programs.

Vardanyan built SKOLKOVO in precisely the opposite way. Instead, Vardanyan, who invested millions of his own money in the SKOLKOVO venture—along with funds and resources from several other individual and corporate investors—
started with executive education. He recruited faculty from top business schools from around the world (including the author of this article) to teach leading Russian executives and senior managers key tools, strategies, and techniques critical for business success beyond the more classic, Soviet-era, state-run enterprises. After these executives had bought into the SKOLKOVO idea—with many of them subsequently investing in the school and sending other, more junior leaders and managers there for further training—Vardanyan began offering something that, until then, was not available to many Russians: an Executive MBA (EMBA) degree. This degree was offered in weekend and night sessions so participants could still work full time and stay focused on their careers.

Finally, in the fall of 2009, after offering several successful executive education programs and admitting two groups of EMBA, Vardanyan and his now-global team of administrators, faculty coordinators, and program directors were ready to offer the staple of the business education market: a classic, full-time MBA degree.

However, to offer such diverse, expensive programs required capital needs beyond those of the school’s founders. And in Russia, that meant support from the state, even if through thinly veiled “private” concerns. All along, Vardanyan had Russian Federation president Dmitry Medvedev as chair of the school’s International Advisory Board. Although largely ceremonial, this key leadership position was critical to getting an extensive, long-term line of credit from Russia’s largest private bank, Sberbank, which had formerly been the Soviet Union’s central, state-owned bank. Approval from this bank for such a large, long-term line of credit could only come with the blessing of the Duma—and, in fact, the Russian president himself. The Coordination Council—comprising representatives of the key private funders of the school—sets the strategy, monitors operations, and provides ongoing funding and credit, if needed, for the school to expand. However, most of the membership slots of this Council are held by near-oligarchs who benefited greatly from Russia’s privatization of state-run industries in the mid-1990s.

These private funders and creditors of the SKOLKOVO “project,” as it is often referred to, are largely former state actors themselves, with the power and influence to support the creation and construction of a brand-new campus in the Moscow region. It should be no wonder, then, that when President Medvedev had to select a place to locate his new state-run “innovation city” concept, he chose the area next to the new Moscow School of Management and adjacent to the dream, now realized, of Ruben Vardanyan. The new city, akin to California’s Silicon Valley, was also named Skolkovo, and President Medvedev hopes it will attract high-tech talent, industry, and business investment to Russia in order to diversify its natural resource-intensive economy. It should come as no surprise that when dignitaries visit the SKOLKOVO area—former California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger came in 2010, Vice President Joe Biden and former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited in March 2011—they see both the school and the innovative city area as though they were one.

Innovation—and creating a city around it—seems to have paid off for Vardanyan and his private investors. But in the end, successful execution and implementation of the SKOLKOVO project—whether as an innovative business school or as the Russian version of Silicon Valley—required more than what private leaders could muster. Indeed, in most countries, new universities are rarely strict, non-state actors, since they rely, at least in part, on some government funding, approval, and/or oversight. Thus, although we now see a glimpse into the possible, more private future of graduate business education in Russia—and how both state and private support can help stimulate it—we cannot escape the fact that the state played a critical role in Vardanyan’s dream.

It is an interesting postscript that as Vardanyan stepped down from the presidency of the school, he announced that he would like to refocus the SKOLKOVO project, to move away from degree-granting programs and return to the idea of fostering an innovation community, where dreamers like himself can come to discuss ideas, experiment with new business models, and test new concepts in a learning laboratory environment that is mostly free from profit and performance pressures. Thus, although the initial SKOLKOVO thrust—to create a world-class business academy—has been in effect for five years, the school project now seems to be morphing into the more state-focused, innovation city concept, one that the current academic deans of the school question and protest. We can only hope that Vardanyan’s original dream and vision will be more than just a passing phase or step in the project that is—and that will become—SKOLKOVO.

Paul W. Thurman is a clinical professor and lecturer in Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs and Mailman School of Public Health. After graduating with an MBA from Columbia, he spent five years on the Columbia Business School faculty before joining SIPA and Mailman in 2004. In 2009, Thurman took a leave of absence to join the Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO as a director in its full-time MBA program. In addition to admitting and managing its inaugural MBA class, he coordinated all aspects of students’ project work with corporate clients in Russia, China, India, and the United States.
Egypt’s Youth on the Frontlines of the Revolution

BY LILY HINDY

The revolution in Egypt this year, which toppled a 30-year-old regime that for almost two decades effectively quashed all opposition in the country, was largely fueled in its early days by a loose coalition of passionate, angry, and surprisingly well-organized Egyptian youths.

Abdelrahman Ismail, a 22-year-old student at the American University in Cairo, said in an interview that the youths “had reached the boiling point. We felt we were going to explode.” With youth unemployment hovering near 30 percent over the past decade, increasing police brutality, torture of regular citizens—not just political dissidents—and blatant government corruption, dissatisfaction among the younger generation had reached an unbearable level.

Armed with little more than their Facebook accounts, blogs, and cell phones, Ismail and his peers, members of a handful of youth movements, managed to galvanize the disaffected masses and inspire thousands to take to the streets of Egypt on January 25, 2011.
Yusuf Bagato, 21, center, and comrades use laptops to post video they shot earlier in the day of the protests in Tahrir Square in Cairo on Feb. 8, 2011. Young Egyptians collected pictures, videos, and voices of the protesters in the square and then published their material on social media sites such as Facebook.
The initial demonstrations gathered momentum at a rate many youth movement members did not foresee when they first publicized plans for what they called a "Day of Rage." They garnered a strong foundation of supporters on the Internet early on, and a "Day of Rage" Facebook page created by the April 6 Youth Movement in the days leading up to the January 25 protests attracted nearly 100,000 followers. The April 6 Youth Movement started as an Egyptian Facebook group in 2008, supporting workers in the northern industrial town of Mahalla al-Kubra who were at the forefront of a national strike on April 6 of that year. The movement mostly comprises young, well-educated Egyptians, with 30-year-old civil engineer Ahmed Maher at its helm.

Another extremely popular Facebook page dedicated to the memory of 28-year-old Khaled Said, an Egyptian man who was beaten to death by police officers in Alexandria in June 2010, also published details about the January 25 protests. Said’s tragic death at the hands of the security forces, which gained notoriety after photos of his broken and bloodied face surfaced on the Internet, touched a nerve with many Egyptians. The page was created by a young Google executive named Wael Ghonim, who was later detained for 12 days during the protests.

Though the youth groups were mainly Internet based and seemingly ephemeral in nature, they took a somewhat different approach to organizing the January 25 protests. In an interview with the Saudi-owned newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat, Maher described the intricate planning process:

"I established this 'operations room' around 15 days before the beginning of the protests, and we would meet daily to discuss routine details, including assessing the reach of our calls to protest with regard to Internet websites, looking at the data and information that was being provided to citizens, and studying innovative mechanisms of protesting that aimed to overcome the methods that the state security services always used to preempt demonstrations and protests," he said.

For example, two days before the demonstrations, the April 6 Youth Movement came up with a new approach in which they split activists into two separate groups. Each group was made up of 30 to 50 activists who were sent to central areas and public squares to incite protest. "Only the leader of each group would be informed of the precise location of where the protests were scheduled to begin," explained Maher. The leader would then meet his group just prior to the protest and guide it to the main rendezvous point.

After the initial January 25 protest, the revolution seemed to take on a life of its own. Demonstrations continued to rage for 18 days before President Hosni Mubarak stepped down on February 11. The April 6 Youth Movement remained involved, as did other youth groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood Youth and supporters of opposition leader Mohammed ElBaradei, as well as independent bloggers. But no one appeared to be choreographing the revolution after January 25.

Abdelrahman Ismail, who camped out in Cairo’s Tahrir Square, the center of the protests, said that after January 25, "you couldn't feel anyone controlling the situation." He noted that protesters were still communicating and relying heavily on social networks to get the story out to the media, with hundreds of bloggers in the square glued to their laptops and people sending messages on Twitter, but the youth movements were no longer trying to direct the people.

Experts say the January 25 protests were able to gain momentum for a number of reasons. Thanassis Cambanis, a journalist and SIPA adjunct professor who traveled to Egypt in early February to cover the protests, said, "the youth groups provided a framework that wouldn't have mattered without all the other factors."

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Leaders in Public Service: Paul Volcker, WITNESS, and Mitchell Silber are SIPA’s 2011 Global Leaders

By Alex Burnett

At its eleventh annual Global Leadership Awards Dinner, SIPA honored a trio of guardians of the public interest: Paul Volcker, former Federal Reserve chairman; WITNESS, the international human rights organization; and alumnus Mitchell Silber, director of intelligence analysis for the New York Police Department. Chuck Todd, chief White House correspondent and political director for NBC News, served as master of ceremonies.

Presented annually, SIPA’s Global Leadership Awards honor individuals and organizations that, through work in public policy and administration, have made innovative or otherwise extraordinary contributions to the global public good. Honorees exemplify the values and qualities that SIPA seeks in our faculty and staff and strives to instill in our students, who enroll at SIPA in their desire to serve the public interest.

“Each year, SIPA’s Global Leadership awardees encourage and inspire our students as they confront a world full of problems to be solved,” said Dean John H. Coatsworth. “SIPA honors these extraordinary public servants and not-for-profit organization that have made unique and lasting contributions to protecting the international economy, our own security, and human rights everywhere.”

Volcker chaired the Federal Reserve under Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan and is widely credited with ending high levels of inflation in the United States. He also chaired President Obama’s Economic Recovery Advisory Board. He emphasized that SIPA’s mission—education for public service—needs support and attention.

“For all of the potential frustrations and limitations,” Volcker said, “work in the public sector can be a source of enormous satisfaction.”

New York City Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly introduced honoree Mitchell Silber, SIPA’s first award recipient for the outstanding work of an alumnus. WITNESS’ executive director Yvette J. Alberdingk Thijm was present to accept the award on behalf of her organization, while WITNESS co-founder, musician Peter Gabriel, accepted via video.

Two of SIPA’s remarkable students also addressed the audience.

Gohar Sedighi (MPA ’11) is specializing in Urban Policy and Management. She recounted her daring escape from Iran in the arms of her mother when she was just nine months old. She also credited the nation’s public school system for her success and is dedicating her work to improving education, especially for minorities and immigrants.

“I believe education is the big equalizer,” she said. “I will contribute to creating policies that will help other minorities like me have access to the American Dream.”

Joseph Katz (MPA ’11) is a major in the U.S. Army and served in Afghanistan and Iraq. He says his military experience reinforced his belief that “throughout the world, despite differences in where we are born, the language we speak, or which evil forces try to tear us apart, we share a bond that adversity only strengthens. People are good. And those of us blessed with good fortune have an unspoken duty to help those who aren’t.”

All proceeds from the evening support fellowship funding for SIPA students.

Alex Burnett is communications officer at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs.

Those are just a few of the topics explored by a lineup of leading policymakers who visited SIPA this spring.

A woman with the president’s ear, Samantha Power, delivered the Donald and Vera Blinken Lecture, titled “Obama, Human Rights, and the Lessons of the New Diplomacy,” on March 28. Power serves on the National Security Council and played a key role in President Barack Obama’s decision to engage the U.S. military in Libya. During questioning from students, Power defended that decision. The Blinken Lecture was co-sponsored by SIPA and the European Institute.

“What distinguished Libya was that there was an international mandate…which President Obama feels was very important to have,” said Power. “There was a coalition, including Arab states and some of our closest NATO allies, that was willing to share the burden of protecting civilians, and there was the potential for such a horrific scale.”

Women and power was a major topic during a discussion with Michelle Bachelet, executive director of UN Women and former president of Chile. Bachelet visited with students on March 2 in advance of International Women’s Day and took part in a question-and-answer session with Elisabeth Lindenmayer, director of SIPA’s United Nations Studies Program.

“It’s so important to put women in interesting, powerful positions,” said Bachelet. “Society learns that women can do it.”

Bachelet was the first woman president in Latin America and believes countries are falling short of targets to include women in politics. “When I was president of Chile, there had to be equal numbers of women and men in the government,” she said.

On February 25, a top officer with the U.S. Treasury said the nation’s investments made during the financial crisis in banks, automakers, and AIG still face risk, but the government may yet break even.

David Miller, chief investment officer for the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), addressed students in an Investcorp Lecture on International Finance and Business. In his remarks, he said one of the key lessons of the crisis is the need for decisive and massive force when faced with such overwhelming circumstances.

“If you are going to intervene, then your intervention must be of a size and scope that will literally move markets,” said Miller. “Such an approach will ultimately result in fewer resources deployed, much lower cost to taxpayers, and a far quicker recovery.”

One market the government is working mightily to influence is labor—trying to boost employment. On March 10, SIPA welcomed Keith Hall, commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which produces many of the employment reports that help guide policymakers in their decisions. Hall stressed the importance of strong data and pointed to a lack of data as an underlying cause of the financial crisis.

“If you had perfect data, you wouldn’t get yourself into mistakes,” he said. “There’s always a strong element of ‘missing data’ that lies behind recessions.”

In this instance, he said, the missing information revolved around subprime mortgages, which affected government decisions and homebuyers’ choices.

“It’s a handicap, not only for policymakers—it’s a handicap for people making their own decisions,” Hall said.

At the 14th David N. Dinkins Leadership and Public Policy Forum on April 11, top policymakers and labor representatives discussed the “Crisis in State Budgets.” In the wake of a narrowly averted government shutdown, U.S. Senator
Kirsten Gillibrand opened the forum by addressing her emergence into public service and the symbolic importance contained within federal and state budgets. “Budgets are moral documents,” Gillibrand said; “they’re about choices that we make, what our core values are, what we should care about.”

In addition to Senator Gillibrand’s address, expert panelists—including former New York governor David Patterson and president of the American Federation of Teachers, Randi Weingarten—discussed how the current economic climate affects budgetary decisions at a state level.

Carmen Reinhart, the Dennis Weatherstone Senior Fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, delivered a lecture entitled, “A Decade of Debt,” on April 14. The lecture, sponsored by SIPA’s Program in Economic Policy Management, explored the historical patterns of private and public debt and sought to apply historical lessons to the current global debt climate. Reinhart discussed “financial repression” as a tactic of facilitating sharp and rapid debt reduction and drew parallels between how financial repression was used in the mid-twentieth century and how governments might use it today.

On April 20, Nobel Peace Laureate Shirin Ebadi gave the Gabriel Silver Memorial Lecture, entitled, “Iran After the Revolution.” Ebadi has been a human rights activist for decades through her work as a judge, lawyer, writer, and founder of the Center for the Defense of Human Rights in Iran. Ebadi discussed her new book, The Golden Cage, an account of three brothers’ journey through the political landscape of revolutionary Iran. Speaking in Persian with a translator, she explained that the book is not being published in Iran because “censorship is present,” and any book published must apply for a government permit. “And, of course, a book that criticizes the government of Iran will not receive a permit,” Ebadi added. Ebadi was introduced by Hamid Dabashi, Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies at Columbia University. The Silver Lecture was co-sponsored by SIPA, the Middle East Institute, and the Institute for the Study of Human Rights.

Prominent economists Jacob A. Frenkel, chairman of JPMorgan Chase and CEO of the Group of Thirty; Joseph E. Stiglitz, University Professor and chair of Columbia University’s Committee on Global Thought; and Min Zhu, special advisor to the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, came together on April 28 to discuss “The Global Economy: Challenges and Prospects” as the 2011 Distinguished Speakers in International Finance and Economic Policy sponsored by SIPA’s International Finance and Economic Policy concentration and the APEC Study Center. Professor Merit E. Janow moderated the event.

Sara Ray is an administrative assistant in SIPA’s Office of Communications and External Relations.
Lisa Anderson came home to the halls of SIPA on March 21. And she brought quite a story with her.

Anderson, former dean of SIPA and now president of the American University in Cairo (AUC), spoke with students and faculty about the uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, and her view of the protests from AUC’s campus.

Anderson’s talk began as a political science lecture with a few descriptive anecdotes from her personal experience in Egypt. The main point of her talk was to seek patterns that expose aspects of the regimes’ breakdowns.

“Note that Ben Ali in Tunisia was exiled from the country,” said Anderson. “Mubarak was allowed to stay home. He is in internal exile at his palace in Sharm el-Sheikh. Gaddafi is most likely going to die. And that tells you something about the different regimes, revolutions, and reconstruction.”

The discussion became livelier when students stepped forward with their questions. Libya was on everyone’s minds.

Anderson’s concern is that the issue in Libya “is not going to be democracy building [as in Tunisia and Egypt] but state building. Is the very shape of the country going to change?”

She worried that the debate about changes will happen through conflict: “Gaddafi spent 40 years disorganizing people. That was by design—a constant revolution. Someone needs to organize people. Maybe that can be the Libyan people, but given how angry they are at each other...,” Anderson paused.

“Let us see if we can organize conversations to manage deep anger and resentment in the reconstruction,” she added.

A few questions drew Anderson back to Egypt. She talked about her own experience managing the university during the unexpected Internet blackout and the fighting just outside in Tahrir Square.

She also gave examples of changes that are already happening at AUC as a result of the revolution, the biggest being the rules concerning freedom of expression. While discussion of religion or politics was previously restricted, Anderson said there is now freedom on campus much like in American universities.

To her, this is an exciting moment: “If we do this right, if Egypt does it right, if AUC does it right ... It’s a wonderful opportunity,” she said. “This is how good ideas happen.”

Michelle Chahine, MIA ’12, is concentrating in Human Rights.
Art of being a member of SIPA's global community is that tragedy occurring anywhere in the world hits home. The hearts and minds of SIPA are with the people of Japan as they continue to recover from the earthquake and tsunami that devastated their nation and from the nuclear crisis that resulted.

SIPA had 53 Japanese students enrolled this year, and more than 450 alumni now live in Japan.

Unsure of the enormity of the disaster, 21 SIPA students chose to travel to Japan two days after the earthquake for a previously scheduled study trip. Once on the ground, they found themselves in the midst of aftershocks, power outages, transportation disruptions, and worries about radiation.

Jennifer Yoo (MPA '12) was one of them. Yoo wrote about her experience in Communiqué, SIPA’s student-run newspaper, saying, “If the strength of Japan’s infrastructure gave me the confidence to visit the country despite uncertainty, the resilience of its citizens inspired me.”

“Normalcy and orderliness prevailed over panic, even as the threat of nuclear meltdown mounted,” she added.

Barely three days later, as the situation worsened, the group’s Japanese hosts managed to secure flights for them out of Tokyo, and back to New York. “They tried to reassure us of our safety when the risks were unclear and worked all night to guarantee our safety in leaving the country,” said Yoo.

SIPA alumna Aiko Doden (MIA ’96) is a journalist with NHK television network in Japan. In addition to her on-air duties, Doden turned to Twitter to update citizens, and the world, on the recovery.

“In a vast openness where houses used to stand, one elderly victim confirms the death of her loved one, presses her palms together in a prayer, and in a quiet voice thanks the SDF troop that has recovered the body,” Doden tweeted on March 15.

Observing the performance of the Japanese media from Osaka, Japan, was Anya Schiffrin, director of SIPA’s International Media, Advocacy, and Communications specialization.

“There are the inevitable interviews with displaced people and experts in their offices,” blogged Schiffrin from Osaka. “But there are very few graphics or charts, no catchy logos, and certainly no dead or injured on the screen.”

Schiffrin and Professor Joseph Stiglitz arrived shortly after the earthquake, to attend a conference organized by Columbia’s Center on Japanese Economy and Business. The conference was canceled, giving Schiffrin a few hours before her return to contrast U.S. and Japanese media relations.

“Just as U.S. presidents take off their ties when they visit the troops,” she said, “Japanese officials appearing on television wear the blue uniforms of someone doing physical labor but with their logo of their ministry or office sewn on their pocket.”

One of Schiffrin’s students, Hiro Matsumoto (MPA ’11), scrutinized the coverage from New York. He noted that Japanese television coverage focused on saving lives.

“I think that is because the disaster-stricken areas were extremely large and a lot of sufferers were watching TV news,” he said.

U.S. news focused on the nuclear disaster, said Matsumoto, perhaps because radiation could have an impact on the rest of the world in a worst-case scenario.
Behind the Scenes at the UN

Sebastian Borchmeyer (MIA ’12) came to SIPA to study the United Nations. In March, he got an inside look.

Borchmeyer was one of 42 students who spent a “Day at the UN,” a new initiative sponsored by SIPA’s UN Studies Program. From the Security Council to UNICEF, students shadowed officials, observed meetings, and generally got a feel for life in the United Nations.

Borchmeyer was placed in the Middle East Division of the Department of Political Affairs, where he saw officials scrambling to respond to multiple crises in the region. In one meeting, he listened as a team of UN investigators described the civil war in Libya.

“It was a meeting with people who were on the ground, who had the chance to assess the situation there,” he said. “This was very interesting but very confidential.”

Annika Allman (MIA ’11) spent a day at UNICEF, the UN agency for children. She was surprised by the staff’s willingness to include her in meetings and show her around. Junior staffers gave her advice on how to apply for a job.

“They were just very, very welcoming, more than they had to be,” Allman said.

A “Day at the UN” is one of many ways that SIPA students connect with the United Nations. The UN Studies Program regularly organizes lunchtime conversations with UN ambassadors and interview sessions with SIPA alumni who work for the UN. Many SIPA students also complete internships and workshop projects for UN agencies.

Students shared impressions of their day at the UN in a panel discussion at SIPA on April 6. Several spoke of the evident passion and dedication of the UN staff. Others noted the fast-paced work environment, with officials managing multiple crises and many people traveling internationally.

One of the goals of the “Day at the UN” was for students to see the “human face” of the organization, according to Elisabeth Lindenmayer, director of SIPA’s UN Studies Program. UN staffers often see their work as a calling, rather than as a job, she said. People from throughout the world join the UN and become something of an international family.

Lindenmayer, a former UN assistant secretary-general, invited several UN officials to respond to the students’ observations during the April 6 discussion. She encouraged students to keep in touch with the contacts they made at the UN and noted how SIPA and the UN have a lot to offer each other.

“The philosophy of my program is really to bring synergy between the UN and SIPA,” she said.

Tim Shenk, MIA ’11, is concentrating in Human Rights. He is a program assistant in the Office of Communications and External Relations at SIPA and after graduating in May will be communications officer at Church World Service in New York.

SIPA Students Making a Difference in Solar Energy

Thanks to a 2009 SIPA study, New York City is moving forward with plans to install solar panels atop two closed landfills. The program, announced recently by Mayor Michael Bloomberg, could generate power for 50,000 homes and help the city reduce carbon gas emissions.

The parameters of the project were outlined through research conducted by SIPA professor Stephen Hammer and his students on the feasibility of installing solar panels atop closed landfills.

“We were commissioned by the Parks Department to undertake this analysis,” said Hammer, former director of the Urban Energy Project at the Center for Energy, Marine Transportation and Public Policy and now a consultant on urban energy and climate projects around the world. “They had heard about work previous classes had done for City Hall, looking at the viability of renewable power technologies around New York City.”

The SIPA study examined the feasibility of a large-scale solar installation at the old Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island, now being developed as Freshkills Park. In its study, the student team concluded that a 24-megawatt project was most practical, considering the geographic constraints of the site and Con Edison’s connection requirements.

Professor Hammer says the team had a fantastic blend of talents.

“It included an engineer who previously worked as a solar PV installer,” he said. “We had folks with Wall Street and management consulting experience, and students who had just returned from summer internships where they examined incentive programs to promote solar deployment around the United States.

The study was apparently convincing, says Professor Hammer, because the city is now moving forward with similar plans at two other facilities.
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SIPA alumnus Robert Kopech (MIA ’77), an adjunct assistant professor and a member of the School’s Advisory Board, has been appointed the first-ever group chief risk officer at the World Bank.

Kopech will lead the World Bank Group’s efforts to manage risk across more than 125 countries. The complex task involves identifying, anticipating, and parameterizing the risks, including those that Kopech calls “low probability, high severity events” that affect the World Bank’s work.

The ongoing political upheavals in North Africa provide just a few examples of the kinds of sweeping changes and challenges that Kopech hopes to help the World Bank better understand. Specific events like these are unpredictable, Kopech says, with tensions building over years or decades before something acts as a catalyst to set off a sudden, major shift that has a series of unanticipated consequences.

“From a risk management perspective, it’s a sequence of events that happen at the same time that potentially have both positive and negative outcomes,” Kopech says. “This kind of correlation is capable of being examined via scenario stress testing. The objective is not to predict the specific event, but to develop an understanding of how changes in such correlations and creditworthiness can affect the quality and resilience of subsets of the portfolio as well as the totality of it.”

For Kopech, the World Bank appointment builds upon a distinguished career in banking, risk management, and emerging markets. After earning a dual master’s degree from SIPA and Columbia Business School, Kopech began working as a sovereign lender for JP Morgan.

When Poland defaulted on its national debt in the mid-1980s, Kopech represented JP Morgan in negotiations to reschedule the country’s debt repayments. Subsequently, Mexico faced a similar crisis, and Kopech was asked to work on this problem as well, thus beginning a seven-year stint dealing with sovereign debt problems around the world.

“Between ’82 and ’89, I spent most of my life in negotiations with ministers of finance, central bank governors, people like that, trying to figure out how to reschedule things,” Kopech says.

After the Berlin Wall fell, Kopech built a corporate finance arm for JP Morgan in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. He went on to work for Oliver Wyman, Inc., creating an emerging markets practice and helping to build a corporate risk practice.

Kopech is now working with risk management officers at each of the World Bank’s three operating entities to identify and disseminate best practices. One challenge is evaluating risks in ways that are comparable from operation to operation, he says.

Kopech is a long-time supporter of SIPA and has endowed a fellowship to support students pursuing a dual degree from SIPA and Columbia Business School. For the past five years, Kopech has taught a spring course at SIPA, “The Role of the Local Financial Sector in Development.”

He advises students who are interested in the World Bank to research it carefully, as it is a large and complex organization that works in many fields related to poverty alleviation.

“It’s hard to name a global problem or issue that they haven’t got a finger in,” Kopech says.

SIPA Alumni Meet in Mongolia

Brett Olsher, MIA ’93, SIPA Advisory Board member and managing director, Goldman Sachs International Investment Banking Division, traveled to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on business with Goldman Sachs and took the opportunity to connect with SIPA alumni.

From left to right: Sainzaya Chimid, managing partner, Law Offices of C&G Partners; Bold Magvan, CEO, Tenger Financial Group; Brett Olsher; Achit Erdene Darambazar, president, Mongolia International Capital Corporation; Jigjid Unenbat, executive director, Corporate Governance Development Centre, also a former Central Bank governor; and Gerelegua Tserendagva, procurement specialist, The World Bank.
New Donors Support Student Fellowships and the Study of Africa

Vladimir Kuznetsov, MIA ’91, has established the Kuznetsov Fellowship Fund for Graduate Studies, which will provide endowed fellowships to students enrolled at SIPA. The gift will be matched on a one-to-one basis under the SIPA Challenge for Endowed Financial Aid, made possible by the late benefactor John Kluge’s $30 million contribution to SIPA. When asked about his gift, Mr. Kuznetsov said, “Twenty years ago I benefited tremendously from the generosity of other donors, whose support allowed a penniless student from the Soviet Union to attend SIPA and gain the experience of living and working in the fast-changing, multicultural, and tolerant world of Columbia University. After a year spent in New York, I came back much more prepared to confront the challenges of the political, economic, and cultural revolution in my country. I was and am still grateful for the opportunity, so it felt only appropriate that I, in turn, make the same opportunity available to a future generation of students.”

Mr. Kuznetsov is based in Zurich and is the chief investment officer of the Renova Group, a diversified industrial and investment holding company. Before joining Renova in 2001, Mr. Kuznetsov held management positions at Goldman Sachs and Salomon Brothers in Moscow and London. Mr. Kuznetsov graduated with a degree in economics from the State University of Moscow in 1984 and received an MIA from SIPA in 1991, where he was an International Fellow.

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—VLADIMIR KUZNETSOV, MIA ’91

Maria Teresa Vivas de Mata, MIA ’03, has created The Mata Family Fellowship, an endowed fund that will provide fellowships to graduate students enrolled at SIPA, with a strong preference for students in the International Fellows Program. Her gift coincides with the revitalization of the International Fellows Program, led by Professor Stephen Sestanovich. When asked about her support of SIPA and Professor Sestanovich, Ms. Vivas de Mata said: “My admiration for Ambassador Sestanovich derives from his rare ability to combine tough-minded pragmatism with the core awareness of a deep idealism that strives for the betterment of mankind. He embodies this dichotomy with the polish and cosmopolitan appeal of a career diplomat. SIPA simply changed my view of the world and gave me the necessary skill set to deal with the new international order.” Like the Kuznetsov gift, this fund will be matched one to one with funds from the SIPA Challenge for Endowed Financial Aid.

Originally from Venezuela, Ms. Vivas de Mata divides her time between Caracas and New York City and is the executive director of Diario El Universal. She received an MBA from Columbia Business School in 1993 and an MIA from SIPA in 2003, where she was also an International Fellow.

SIPA is thrilled to announce the creation of the Sainsbury Fund for Africa. A gift from Lord David Sainsbury, the fund will be used to support fellowships for residents of Africa or for students interested in studying Africa. The fund will also be used to support workshops, internships, and other activities associated with students and scholars interested in studying and researching Africa. African development has long been one of Lord Sainsbury’s enduring philanthropic interests, and his foundation, the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, has established charitable trusts in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Cameroon, with the objective of promoting economic development and income generation.

Lord Sainsbury lives in London with his wife, Lady Susie Sainsbury. He was educated at King’s College Cambridge and earned an MBA from Columbia Business School in 1971. He was named an honorary Fellow of the Royal Society and has received various honorary degrees as well as the Distinguished Leadership in Business Award from Columbia Business School. He was the UK government’s minister of science and innovation from 1998 to 2006.

CORRECTIONS

There was an error in the January 2011 issue of SIPA News in the piece entitled, “Development News: Giving Back in Honor of Mom,” by Tim Shenk. Anu Jayanti is no longer the global head of foreign exchange sales for Citi. She currently serves as a senior relationship manager within Citi’s Global Institutional Client Group.

The article, “In Cambodia, Development Pushes Ahead at the Expense of a Lake,” by Andrew Billo featured in the January 2011 edition of SIPA News incorrectly implies that World Bank funding was used for the filling of Boeung Kak Lake and development of the associated condominium project. In fact, World Bank funding was used for the Land Management and Administration Project, a titling project that resulted in the exclusion of lakeside residents from titling, making it easier for the Cambodian government to evict them.
Building Bridges across Continents One Event at a Time

By Daniela Francesca Coleman

It’s quite impressive to know that we have alumni around the world, living and working in 153 countries. Thanks to online technology, we can now easily reach out to them, irrespective of however remote a region they live in. In building relationships with our alumni community, there is nothing more personal than a face-to-face meeting. In addition to the numerous activities our Columbia Alumni Club Networks organized, in 2011, SIPA hosted events with SIPA alumni living in Tokyo, Beijing, Seoul, Paris, and Houston, as well as our regularly scheduled events in Washington, D.C., and New York City. We also held three high-level events in New York in April: the Eleventh Annual Global Leadership Awards Dinner, an International Fellows reception, and SIPA’s third Annual Alumni Day.

In January, Senior Associate Dean Troy Eggers visited Asia, with stops in Beijing, China (January 6), Tokyo, Japan (January 11), and Seoul, South Korea (January 13). Well-attended SIPA alumni receptions were held in each of these cities. Our alumni event in Tokyo, in particular, was attended by more than 100 alumni. In March, SIPA dean John H. Coatsworth met with alumni in Latin America, in Santiago, Chile (March 14), and São Paulo (March 15) and Rio de Janeiro (March 18), Brazil. In Santiago, Dean Coatsworth, along with Thomas J. Trebat, executive director of the Institute of Latin American Studies, discussed with alumni, “Is the United States in Decline? Lessons for Chile and Latin America”; in São Paolo, Dean Coatsworth and Professor Trebat lectured on “Brazil and the United States: Global Partners or Competitors?” In Rio de Janeiro, the Columbia Alumni Association (CAA) invited alumni to learn about the budding relationship between Columbia University and the City of Rio with Dean Coatsworth and Mark Wigley, dean of the Graduate School of Architecture.

On March 31, Columbia and SIPA alumni in Paris, France, were invited to a talk and reception with Kenneth Prewitt, Carnegie Professor of Public Affairs and vice president for Global Centers at Reid Hall to speak about “Imagining Columbia as a Global University.” On April 7, the CAA and SIPA held a cocktail and networking reception in Houston, Texas, hosted by the Columbia University Club of South Texas. Students from the SIPA Energy Association were also in attendance as part of a trip organized to Houston for employer outreach visits.

On April 15, at The Italian Academy, International Fellows were invited back to campus to hear a featured talk, “Revolution and Counter-Revolution in the Arab World,” by Dr. David Ottaway (IF ’63, MA ’68, PhD ’72), senior fellow.

Whether in New York City or São Paolo, Houston or Paris, Beijing or Santiago, SIPA looks forward to meeting you at one of our upcoming events.

Daniela Francesca Coleman is director of alumni affairs at SIPA.

ALUMNI DAY


PANEL DISCUSSIONS

“President Obama’s Future: A One-term President?”
Lecture by Dorian Warren, SIPA Assistant Professor; moderated by Jun Choi, MPA ’99, former mayor of Edison, New Jersey

“The Chinese Challenge: Myths and Realities”
Lecture by Merit E. Janow, SIPA Professor of Practice; moderated by Ned Cloonan, MIA ’77, vice president, External Relations, AIG (retired)

“Afghanistan: Is There an “End Game”?
Austin Long, SIPA Assistant Professor; Vikram Singh, MIA ’03, IF ’03, deputy special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, U.S. Department of State; and Cris Stephen, MIA ’99, IF ’99, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations

“Flashpoints: The Middle East”
Gary Sick, SIPA Adjunct Professor and Senior Research Scholar at Columbia’s Middle East Institute; and Jean-Pierre Filiu, Alliance Sciences Po, Visiting Professor at SIPA; moderated by David Ottaway (IF ’63, MA ’68, PhD ’72), Senior Fellow, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

The day concluded with a lunch with keynote speaker, alumna Susie Gharib, MIA ’74, who focused her remarks on the U.S. economy.
Class Notes Compiled by Denise Lee

1954
Cecile Brunswick, MIA
Cecile Brunswick exhibited her colorful abstract paintings at the Architectural Digest Home Design Show in New York City from March 17 to 20 at Pier 94. You can preview the art here: www.cecilebrunswicknyc.com

1978
George Worthington, MIA
George Marshall Worthington, an international marketing consultant, was recently appointed as president of the Columbia Club Chapter of Houston, Texas.

1982
Barnet Sherman, MPA
Barnet Sherman recently completed a shoot for a Toyota/NASCAR commercial. He is represented by Monarch Talent in Charlotte, North Carolina.

1983
Charles Santangelo, MPA
After three years assisting the U.S. Department of Homeland Security with its technology budget, Chuck Santangelo is on assignment with NASA, performing in a similar role. (Could he be the next passenger to Mars?)

1992
David Hausner, MIA, MPH
David Hausner writes, “I live in New Delhi, India, with my wife, Gita Pillai, and three children, Ravi (15), Arjun (12), and Uma (5). I am focusing mostly on HIV and AIDS and working for John Snow, Inc. (JSI) as the country director for the AIDSTAR-One Project in India. We have enjoyed exploring many parts of the world, learning new cultures, tasting various cuisines, and meeting many fascinating people. We are happy to welcome visitors.”

Luca Sergio, MIA
Luca Sergio writes, “I recently took the helm as CEO of Ethis Communications, a health care news, publishing, and multimedia house based in Manhattan and focused on ophthalmology and optometry. This follows a number of years leading sales and marketing teams in ophthalmic medical device companies.”

2003
Francesco Mancini, MIA, and Angela Mancini, MIA
Francesco and Angela Mancini are happy to announce the births of Sofia Grace and Nicholas Dale on February 17, 2011. The couple met during their time at SIPA.

2004
Eduardo Rivas, MIA
Eduardo Rivas was recently promoted to counsel to NBC Universal, located in Universal City, California. He writes, “I am currently working in television in Southern California. I am an in-house counsel attorney for NBC Universal, and I primarily work in television, drafting and negotiating above-the-line contracts for both cable and broadcast properties.”

Manav Sachdeva, MIA
Manav Sachdeva recently published a book of poetry—on spiritual love and ecstasy, called The Safis Garland. Since November 2007, Manav has been working with various UN entities (UNICEF, UNIFPA, UN Democracy Fund, UNDP, etc.) in New York, Malaysia, Lebanon, Kyrgyzstan, and Canada on preventing violence against women and children, and broadly on conflict issues. Manav met his wife, Nigora Sachdeva (currently in her second year at SIPA) while both were volunteering with the UN in Kosovo.

2005
Maha Hosain Aziz, MIA
Maha Hosain Aziz is a senior teaching fellow in South Asian politics at London's School of Oriental and African Studies. She recently published a column “Defusing South Asia’s Demographic Time Bomb” in BusinessWeek.

2007
Daniel McSweeney, MIA, IF
Daniel McSweeney serves as executive director of the SS United States Conservancy, a national preservation organization that recently purchased the historic ocean liner SS United States for redevelopment as a multipurpose stationary attraction. He also continues to serve in the Marine Corps Reserves as a regional plans officer at the International Affairs Branch, Headquarters Marine Corps.

2008
Jorge Cervantes, MPA
Jorge Cervantes is a senior consultant at Deloitte LLP. As part of the U.S. Strategy Development team, he works with leadership in executing specific projects that focus on the development of all aspects of the U.S. firm’s strategy as well as monitoring changes that can affect Deloitte businesses: the economy, competition, government, legislation, technology, and society. He is currently based in New York City.

Amaya Gorostiaga, MIA
After graduating from SIPA in 2008, Amaya Gorostiaga worked with the UN in both Sri Lanka and New York, focusing on gender and equality and women’s empowerment. Last year, she began working for BSR, a global network of social responsibility reporting, stakeholder engagement, and strategy with leadership in executing specific projects that focus on the development of all aspects of the U.S. firm’s strategy as well as monitoring changes that can affect Deloitte businesses: the economy, competition, government, legislation, technology, and society. He is currently based in New York City.

2009
Matthew Leatherman, MIA
Matthew Leatherman published “Leaner and Meaner: How to Cut the Pentagon’s Budget While Improving Its Performance” in the January–February issue of Foreign Affairs. Co-authored with Gordon Adams (PhD, Columbia), the essay prioritizes U.S. national security missions and identifies how these choices would help control defense spending as part of Washington’s increased focus on fiscal discipline. Adams and Leatherman also excerpted this strategic and budget plan on the International Herald Tribune’s op-ed page.

Sarah Tadlaoui, MIA
Sarah Tadlaoui writes, “I am currently working at the Externado University in Bogotá, Colombia, trying to create a type of capstone program for the undergraduate students. Since Colombia has a partnership with Externado, I am hoping that we can learn from SIPA in order to start the project in Colombia in the best conditions.”

2010
Mohini Datt, MIA
Mohini Datt has taken up a position in the World Bank as a trade policy analyst, in the International Trade Department, Poverty Reduction, and Economic Management.

Rebekah Heacock, MIA
In August 2010, Rebekah Heacock accepted a position as a project coordinator with the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University.

Justin Johnson, MIA
Justin Johnson is a Presidential Management Fellow (PMF) at the Office of the Secretary of Defense. This two-year fellowship gives Justin the opportunity to rotate through various organizations in the Department of Defense as well as external agencies such as the State Department or Department of the Treasury. Currently, Justin is serving as a foreign service officer at the U.S. Embassy in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Denise Lee is a second-year Master of Public Administration in Development Practice student.
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Managing Editor: JoAnn Crawford
Editors: Whitney Eulich, Marie O'Reilly

Contributing writers:
Andrew Billo, Alex Burnett, Rebecca Burton, Michelle Chahine, John H. Coatsworth, Daniela Francesca Coleman, Whitney Eulich, Stephen Gray, Lily Hindy, Sarah M. Holloway, Denise Lee, Anne Nelson, Sara Ray, Christopher Reeve, Jasmine Shah, Tim Shenk, Paul W. Thurman, Ethan Wilkes


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School of International and Public Affairs
Dean: John H. Coatsworth
Senior Associate Dean: Troy J. Eggers
Associate Deans: Patrick Bohan, Caroline Kay, Dan McIntyre, Shalini Mimani, and Elizabeth Wilner

Office of Communications and External Relations
Elizabeth Wilner, Associate Dean, Communications and External Relations
Alex Burnett, Communications Officer
JoAnn Crawford, Director of Publications and Special Events
Phoebe Ford, Web Specialist
Sara Ray, Administrative Assistant

Office of Alumni Affairs
Daniela Coleman, Director of Alumni Affairs

Office of Alumni and Development
Shalini Mimani, Associate Dean, Development
Samuel Boyer, Assistant Director of Development
Barbara Chan, Events and Stewardship Manager

Columbia University
Office of Communications and External Relations
420 West 118th Street
Fax: 212-854-8660
www.sipa.columbia.edu