

## THE VIEW FROM SOUTH LAWN

The *Journal of Politics & Society* was founded at Columbia University in 1989 to provide an open forum for independent thinking and thought-provoking undergraduate scholarship. Seventeen years later, we are proud to say that this year is no exception.

We believe we must strike a balance between freedom of speech and the values of tolerance and respect to which we aspire. Arriving at a state of equilibrium that appropriately pays heed to all of these ideals can be complex. Perhaps it is because intolerance and disrespect instigate long-lasting and terrifying consequences, or perhaps it is because restrained speech can prevent us from fully engaging in public discourse, but consequentially we can no longer ignore the obligation to enhance our understanding of the world that surrounds us.

We need only turn to the “Cartoon Controversy,” ignited by the publication of a series of disrespectful cartoons of Muhammad in a Danish newspaper, to see just how easy it is to overstep the bounds of propriety. As editors, it is our duty to provide a public forum to discuss popular *and* unpopular ideas. Yet, we also have the responsibility to wisely use the written word, by bridging the gaps that divide us and by promoting values that can unite us. While we cannot shy away from free expression, we also must not abuse it.

As a way of initiating an open dialogue on some of the perennial challenges of our time—successful sustainable development, human and global security, and international peace—we are honored to publish articles by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, 1997 Nobel Laureate Jody Williams, and United Nations General Assembly President Jan Eliasson. Annan, Williams, and Eliasson are leaders in the effort to reform the United Nations. Despite their impact on our ideals and beliefs, we have chosen to publish a paper that calls into question some of the very things they stand for. Our decision is not meant to instigate violence or hatred; rather, we have published an *unpopular* idea in order to

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open an intellectual space in which you, the reader, can explore the moral and pragmatic dynamics at play in today's international community.

The article, written by Molissa Farber, is a provocative analysis of the use of violence to suppress protest movements, challenging the assumption that states should always try to control nonviolent protest movements through nonviolent means. Other papers also explore contentious issues, as Steven Melzer examines the debate surrounding the public funding of 'offensive art' in the United States. Exploring another highly sensitive issue, in light of the race riots that broke out in France last fall, Noora Lori attempts to challenge the widespread belief of the failure of French model of assimilation, arguing that the assimilation policies were never adequately applied to the North African population.

Also in this year's Journal, Molly Lewis tests the microeconomic first mover advantage theory to understand the difference in foreign direct investment in Lesotho and Swaziland, while Matthew Knowles explores the rarely examined phenomenon of "jury questioning," arguing that allowing jurors to ask questions of witnesses during a trial leads to better-reasoned judgments. Additionally, the Helvidius Group is pleased to present the 2006 McVickar Essay by Daniel Weeks. Weeks presents a novel plan for campaign finance reform, offering a balanced, scholarly view of a debate that has become all-too-politicized. In an election year, his proposal of a public-private hybrid "Citizen Match" financing system provides a fresh and timely approach to U.S. electoral politics.

As outgoing Editor-in-Chief, I am proud to have served with the Helvidius Group for three years. During that time, I have been excited by the growth that we, as a team, have been able to achieve. I leave the Journal, however, even more excited by its potential and hoping that this and future volumes of the Journal will continue to foster independent intellectual thought in this nation and throughout the world.

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