

program that produces better health, education, and welfare for the abject poor? Hall says there is evidence that the grants have been used in some areas to buy votes. Some economists believe that increases in the minimum wage do a better job of reducing poverty. Others think that the \$545 million transferred every month to the mothers in poor families might be more usefully invested by the government in measures to improve health and education and to prepare people for better jobs. Federal spending on basic sanitation and housing fell in real terms by 46 percent between 2002 and 2004.

The Bolsa Família program also may draw families away from “formal” work—which might render them ineligible for the grants—toward the informal sector of the economy, where income is less regular but easier to hide. That sector has grown dramatically in recent years, and was expanding before the family grants were widespread. In São Paulo, the nation’s largest city, the informal sector doubled in size to 51 percent of the local economy between 1991 and 2004. In 1995, regular paychecks produced about 90 percent of household income in Brazil, but by 2004 the figure had fallen to 48 percent.

Even so, both the public and the politicians have ignored the academic grumbling about the overwhelmingly popular family grants. The program is likely to grow, Hall predicts. Researchers say that 60 percent of the eligible population has yet to be touched by the Bolsa Família.

## OTHER NATIONS

## Catch and Release

**THE SOURCE:** “Fighting Pirates: The Pen and the Sword” by James Kraska and Brian Wilson, in *World Policy Journal*, Winter 2008–09.

CRIMINAL GANGS OPERATING out of a failed state with a population the size of greater Chicago captured at least 97 ships, kidnapped 600 seamen, and raised insurance rates in the Gulf of Aden last year from about \$500 to as much as \$20,000 for a single trip. But the solution to piracy off the coast of Somalia, according to U.S. Navy lawyers James Kraska and Brian Wilson, isn’t simply sending in a few more warships. It is nearly impossible to police 2.5 million square miles of ocean. What is needed is not only the sword but the pen—better communications, faster legal responses, and improved treaties.

The typical vessel attacked by Somali pirates is registered in one nation (such as Greece), owned by a corporation in another nation (such as South Korea), and operated by a crew hailing from other places (such as the Philippines and Pakistan), and it is transporting cargo owned by corporations based in the United States and elsewhere. Chances are that the protective vessel that foils the attack will be from yet another country (such as India or Denmark), or be manned by a private military security contractor (such as Blackwater, based in North Carolina). The multiple jurisdictions blur the lines of legal responsibility for bringing suspected pirates to justice.

National interests are so entangled that some countries have adopted what is derisively called a “catch and release” policy. Last September, the Danish Navy dropped off 10 captured pirates on a beach because jurisdiction was unclear and Somalia lacked the ability to prosecute them. In 2006, the U.S. Navy blew up a fishing vessel after the pirates piloting it fired on two U.S. warships. When the fishing craft caught fire, U.S. seamen had to rescue 12 Somalis, five of them wounded, provide the men with medical treatment, and hold them aboard ships without functional brig facilities for several months before the U.S. government decided not to prosecute them and set them free.

The long-term answer to regional piracy, write Kraska and Wilson, is the establishment of law and order in Somalia, which has been without a functioning government since 1991. In the meantime, piracy must be fought by “coordination, not kinetic action aimed at sinking pirate mother ships and destroying coastal havens.” Shipping nations must develop agreements to temporarily detain suspected pirates, make victims and witnesses available, and sort out where a case will be prosecuted—before incidents occur. Under the auspices of the United Nations, warships can now go in “hot pursuit” of pirates into Somali territorial waters, to deny them a safe haven while they await payment of ransom for their prizes.

Like cities that fail to erect stop lights at dangerous intersections until someone is killed, the world’s maritime nations have generally

moved lethargically or not at all until tragedy occurs. The Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation was signed three years after Leon Klinghoffer, a wheelchair-using American vacationing on the Italian cruise ship *Achille Lauro*, was shoved overboard by terrorists. After the 2001 World Trade Center attacks, 90 nations agreed to adhere to rules designed to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction on the seas. New international protocols have been written to establish a legal framework for criminalizing the maritime transport of terrorists or weapons of mass destruction at sea, but they have been ratified only by Comoros, the Cook Islands, Estonia, Fiji, Spain, Switzerland, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Vanuatu.

International maritime officials point to the successful resolution of a 2006 piracy case as proof that obstacles can be overcome. When an Indian dhow was overtaken in international waters by Somali pirates armed with grenades and assault rifles, USS *Churchill*,



Eight men captured in January after allegedly trying to hijack a cargo ship in the Gulf of Aden are transferred to a French ship before being handed over to authorities in the dysfunctional Somali state.

which was in the vicinity, seized control of the pirates' vessel and detained the pirates. Kenya eventually stepped forward, tried the malefactors in court, and convicted and sentenced them to seven years in prison. After Kraska and Wilson wrote their article, the United States, Britain, and Kenya signed legal agreements under which Kenya will try a "limited" number of cases in its courts. The first 16

alleged pirates to be covered by the agreement were captured in mid-February.

But other than Kenya—which itself is wary that its courts will become overwhelmed—most of Somalia's neighbors in the Horn of Africa lack sufficient lawyers, judges, confinement facilities, and even basic office supplies to handle piracy prosecutions. Without an effective system of punishment, there is little to deter unem-

## EXCERPT

### The Tongue-Tied West

*Today, in most of the capitals of once-Christian Europe, there are more Muslims attending services in mosques on Fridays than Christians at worship on Sundays. In some ways, the pluralism of the West is a blessing, even an advantage—and yet its profoundest historical weakness lies in its own divided spirit. The*

*ultimate issue between Islam and the West is not military force. It is the depth of intellect and engagement. In matters of the spirit, we seem always to become tongue-tied, as if lacking in spirited confidence. We do not insist on presenting better arguments in recognition of the inalienable rights to human liberty that our totalitarian opponents deny. Mere secular force will not do when the fundamental battle is spiritual.*

—MICHAEL NOVAK, twice U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, and scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, in *AEI Newsletter* (Jan. 2009)

ployed Somali fishermen, as well as politically and financially motivated buccaneers, from seizing ships for ransoms that can run to millions of dollars. The resulting piracy not only impinges on freedom of the seas but undermines basic economic development and the rule of law in one of the poorest areas in the world.

## OTHER NATIONS

## Breaking the Chinese Mold

**THE SOURCE:** “Chinese Political Attitudes and Values in Comparative Context: Cautionary Remarks on Cultural Attributions” by Steve Chan, in *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, Dec. 2008.

IF THERE IS ANYTHING AMERICANS know for sure about the Chinese, it is this: They are nationalistic, authoritarian, conformist, and deferential. They also follow the ancient Confucian tradition of filial piety, place great store in maintaining “face,” and manifest the Middle Kingdom syndrome of belief in Chinese moral and cultural superiority. Such traits go a long way toward explaining why the Communist Party remains in power while communism has succumbed almost everywhere else, and why growing national wealth has failed to trigger popular pressure for democratic rule.

But nearly every one of these presumptions is wrong. The World Values Survey, in which citizens in more than 80 countries responded to questions about culture and values, showed that between 1990 and 2000, Chinese people expressed the opposite of conventional wisdom on

many of the most important issues of the day, writes Steve Chan, a political scientist at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Hypernationalism? Only 26 percent of Chinese said they were proud of their nationality, compared with 72 percent of Americans. Authoritarianism? A total of 19 percent of Chinese said that it would be good to have a “strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections,” compared with 30 percent of Americans. Conformity? Three-quarters of the Chinese found independence an important quality for children to learn in the home, compared with 61 percent of Americans. Deference? Fifteen percent of Chinese stressed obedience as an important attribute, compared with 32 percent of those surveyed in the United States. Filial piety? More than 60 percent of Chinese said it is important to make parents proud, compared with 83 percent of Americans.

The World Values Survey does not inquire directly about the importance of not losing face, but surely this concern is akin to worry in many parts of America about being disrespected, or “dissed.” The survey also doesn’t ask about the Middle Kingdom syndrome, but it is hard to believe that the average Chinese thinks the nation morally and culturally superior when only slightly more than one in four indicated pride in country, Chan says. Chinese people, according to the survey, actually thought slightly more highly of democracy than Americans, perhaps, Chan says, because of their “lack of experience” with it.

Some stereotypes did turn out to be true. Chinese parents were two

and a half times more likely than Americans to consider it important that their children learn thrift. Chinese respondents were almost totally irreligious, yet they indicated vastly less tolerance of homosexuality, prostitution, abortion, divorce, and euthanasia than people polled in the United States. They also had more traditional views about women, with more than a third believing that women need to have children to be fulfilled compared with 15 percent in America, and half saying that men make better leaders, compared with 23 percent in the United States.

How can the conventional wisdom be so wildly out of sync with the expressed views of the people in question? Chan wondered if the findings were wrong, and compared them with those for similar cultures (China to Taiwan, and the United States to Canada). He found that the Canadian responses corresponded “generally” to the American ones. And he noted that the Taiwanese survey results also undercut stereotypes. He discounted the possibility that the Chinese respondents felt strong pressure to give “politically correct” answers to some of the questions, because nine out of 10 said that democracy is the best form of government—hardly a response likely to please Chinese authorities.

Chan thinks that differences between East and West were exaggerated in the beginning and have lessened over time. Political culture changes, Chan emphasizes, and it fails to account for the influence of environmental factors. Using cultural proclivities to explain contemporary events may be a mistake—even if we judge the proclivities correctly.