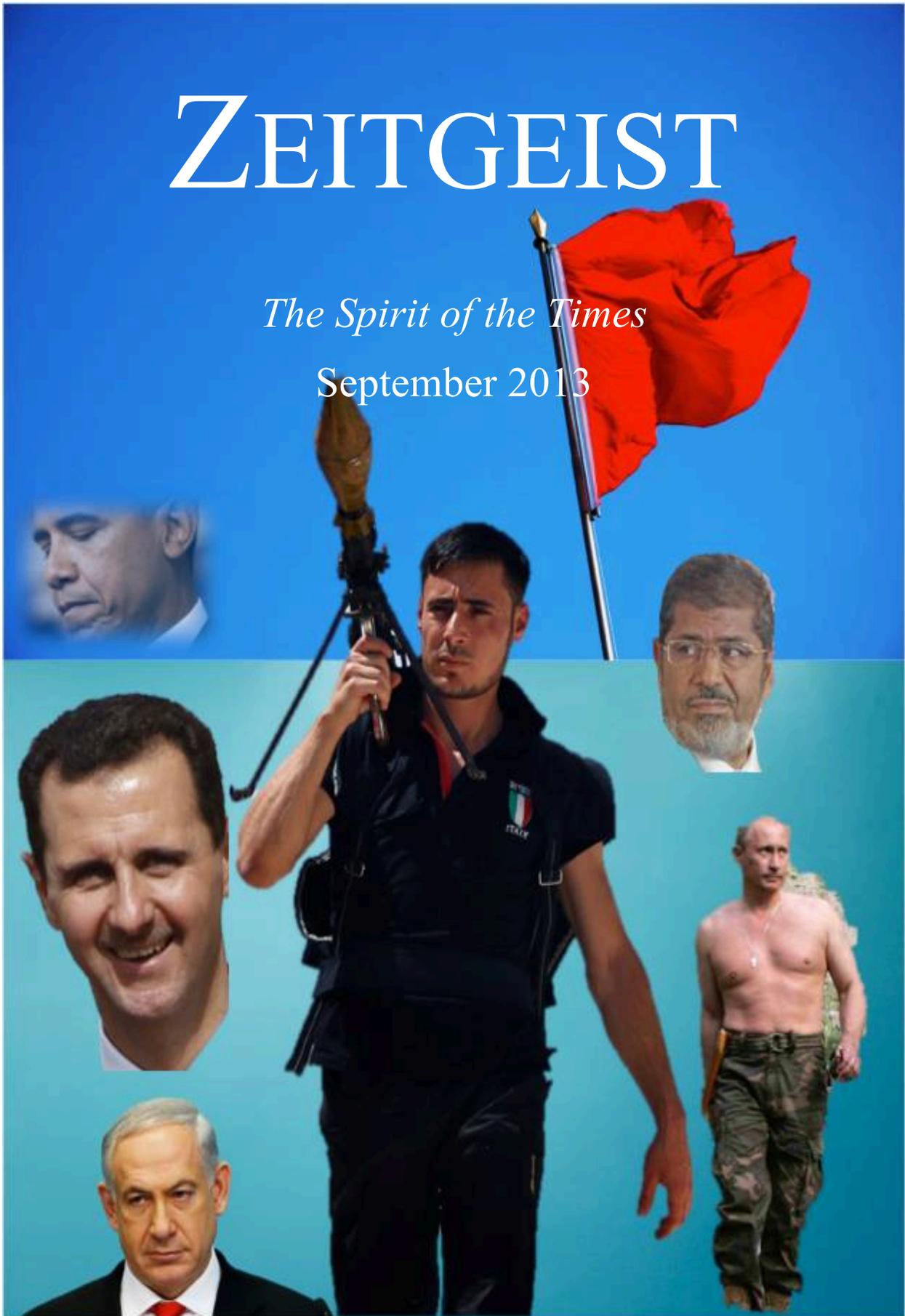


ZEITGEIST

The Spirit of the Times

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About the Club

In a matter of years, our generation will be the status quo. We will be running the businesses and casting the votes and contributing to the culture that will serve to identify our country for decades to come. As such, it is our duty to cultivate a devotion to political curiosity and vigilance so that we can shape this future in the most well-informed manner we possibly can. The Political Awareness Club is a part of that cultivation, providing an environment for students to discuss and debate what is going on in the world and develop their own unique perspective they can carry with them into the adult world. We meet on Thursday afternoons in Mr. Szabs's room (B407). All are welcome to attend.

Note: The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and are in no way intended to reflect those of Fairfield Prep as an institution.

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Will Clyne '14

Immigration

The immigration system in the United States of America is broken. The only question is how to fix it and what to fix. On July 27th, a bipartisan piece of legislation was passed overwhelmingly in the United States Senate, with a 68 to 32 vote. Despite this decisive victory in the upper chamber of Congress, the House of Representatives has not even held a vote on immigration during the 113th Congress.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office analyzed the immigration reform bill in June when they came to the conclusion that, if made into law, this bill would reduce the deficit, between the years of 2013 and 2024, by about 197 billion dollars. This report inspired Senators Bob Corker and John Hoeven to write an amendment spending about 38 billion on border security. Many people believed that with the help of this amendment, the immigration reform bill would gain Republican support and have a legitimate chance at passing the House of Representatives. The amount of funds that Hoeven-Corker amendment moved towards border security was unprecedented, with one Republican, Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, describing it as a “militarization of the border.” Despite this, every single one of the 32 nay votes in the Senate were Republicans and every Republican leader in the Senate opposed it.

After the considerable victory in the Senate, many people thought that the House
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of Representatives would be pressured to take action; however, they chose to sit idly by, making excuses as to why they would not make an attempt to fix something so clearly broken. This bill denotes 38 billion dollars to border security and still reduces the United States annual deficit and seems to lean to the right, which begs the question; why do so many Republicans oppose it? A bill that reduces the yearly deficit, increases national security, and stops the government from obstructing people at the lowest rung of the socioeconomic ladder from pursuing the American Dream seems to be exactly what the Republican party’s values used to be. The reason Republicans, in my opinion, voted against this bill was not because it would be worse for the immigration system; they simply believe it would be worse for them. They fear the thought of 12 million potentially new voters, voters who would most likely align themselves with the Democratic Party. The party that has supported them, instead of vilifying them, reached out to them, instead of pushed them aside and disparaged them, and most of all supported legislation to help them. That is the reason Republicans vote against this reform, and that is the reason they will continue to support anti-immigration legislation.

Today, immigration reform is dead. Without the Speaker putting the bill to a vote on the House floor, and with virtually zero Republican support in the House there

is no chance that the 113th Congress of the United States gets something effective done on immigration. There are 12 million undocumented immigrants, and this inaction by Congress does not only hurt them, it hurts the citizens of our country as well. If a citizen of this country is looking for a job, there is a chance they will be passed up on because undocumented immigrants are willing to work for worse pay and worse benefits. In addition to this, if an undocumented immigrant crashes into an American's car the undocumented immigrant will be forced to flee the scene due to a lack of registration and insurance. This hit and run type situation is all too common and causes all too many problems for American citizens. This inaction on border security is particularly troubling. If the border remains insecure, the Mexican-American border remains a key place for people wishing to inflict harm on Americans to cross. Inaction at the Mexican-American border is inaction in regards to the safety and national security of the American people.

The 113th Congress has done a disservice to the American people as well as the 12 million people who continue to live in the depths and shadows of our country. Looking to the future, the odds that Republicans are suddenly swayed to support reform is slim, considering their growing radical wing, and the odds that the Democrats retain the Senate and win the House in 2014 is slim to none. This does not bode well for the ever-growing population of undocumented immigrants in our country
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and it does not bode well for those who are going to be forced to compete in the work place with undocumented immigrants. Despite Congress' hopes, this problem will not solve itself, lots of men and women need to work, long and hard, to find an answer. This answer will not come easily, and people will always be vehemently opposed to it, but this does not mean people should shy away from the challenge. Marco Rubio, Republican Senator from Florida, did not shy away from it, he knew he would lose support from many people in his party and could potentially damage his brand so irreversibly that he would be completely incapable of winning a Republican primary, but he faced this problem anyway. And in my opinion, the final product, the Gang of 8 immigration reform bill was a testament to his willingness to not only work hard, but also to reach across the aisle when it seems like no one else in his party is willing to do so.



Egypt: Knowing What They Don't Want **Dan Donahue '14**

Egypt's failed attempt at democracy spoke volumes about the capacity of nations like Egypt to run a true democracy, as well as the capacity of the people to accept their government. Clearly, true democracy cannot exist when your "President" is corrupt. President Morsy was profiting from his position, as well as giving unfair business advantages to his fellow members of the Muslim Brotherhood. This was far from democracy; Morsy had absolute power, which did in fact corrupt absolutely.

Additionally, the failed attempt shed light on the citizens of Egypt. The good news is, they understand when and how to rebel against an oppressive government. While their rebellions did get violent and many an altercation arose with the military,



they stood their ground and fought for what they believed in. They have a good understanding of what they do not want. Unfortunately, their understanding of what they *do* want is very ambiguous. Not only are they unsure of what they desire in their government, they also don't know how to structure and attain any sustainable, fair system of government. So yes, although the Morsy regime was corrupt, the replacements for him are few and far between, as the military is basically the only option as of now. The Egyptian people are really stuck between a rock and a hard place.

The bottom line is that there simply is no solution in Egypt. Without a viable, accessible option to replace a flawed and corrupted government, the perpetual cycle of failure will repeat itself to no end. The citizens of Egypt will be relentless in their search for a fitting government, and it seems that the government will continue to falter.

Why So Syria-us? Austin Cantwell '14

Most people worldwide are aware that the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad recently unleashed a deadly chemical called sarin gas onto innocent civilians in Damascus. This unleashing of chemical warfare crossed President Obama's so-called "red line" when, if crossed, the U.S. would intervene. Obama decided to bring the debate into Congress and the House and Senate have both been discussing the pros and cons of U.S. engaging in militaristic interaction. Some people wonder why we take it upon ourselves to fight the Syrian civil war, and that is why some don't want us to intervene. Others cannot support the U.S. in further military operations in the Middle East. So why are so many people, including our government, so serious on intervening in Syria?

As Chuck Hagel and John Kerry said in the House's Foreign Affairs Council meeting, we do not want to intervene to take down the Assad regime. Everyone is aware that our planned attacks will certainly damage the regime's military, but that is not the purpose. Our purpose is to uphold a world wide international standard that chemical warfare will not be tolerated. This is not America's standard; in fact, the Chemical Weapons Convention had 189 countries agree not to use chemical weapons. If no one attacks al-Assad for what his regime did, there is no saying how many other countries will follow their lead

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and think it is acceptable to use these weapons of mass destruction without any consequences. Another thing our government leaders hope our show of force will help is the tension with North Korea and Iran. So far Obama has been full of talk, while Iran and North Korea, minus a few U.N. sanctions, have not been punished for nuclear weapon programs. This is an important decision for America; if we decide to engage in action it shows our allies we will be there in their defense and stand up for people who can't defend themselves. If we do not, it will show that we won't punish terrorist acts, and who knows where that will lead. We must engage in some form of military action against the al-Assad regime as a sign of our power as the world's forefront leader in democracy and justice.

Trayvon Martin

Brendan Bernard '14

Not long ago the Trayvon Martin incident had shocked America and inspired a dialogue about race relations in our country. There has been a vigorous debate over the race issue and Florida's "Stand Your Ground" laws. We all know that Mr. Zimmerman was acquitted based upon the circumstantial nature of the situation; but, the main problem that I saw with the verdict was that the man got off completely free and exonerated, when he could have at least been charged with manslaughter. It only would seem fair to the family, as Trayvon was not carrying a weapon.

The main problem that must be dealt with now is the aftermath of the trial, and some believe the best way to understand everything is through the lens of race. I disagree. The best way, in my opinion, to look at the situation is to take race out of the equation. A boy was shot and killed and he did not have a weapon. The problem with our society is that because Mr. Zimmerman looked white and Trayvon was black, people think that Trayvon's death was a racially motivated issue.

Now, even when race is taken out of the equation there are the problems of Mr. Zimmerman disobeying an order from the police not to follow Trayvon, or to even confront him. Another problem with his actions was the fact that he did not necessarily need to have a gun (although the law permitted him). He was just the neighborhood watchman, not an armed security officer. As a member of the

neighborhood watch, Mr. Zimmerman is supposed to keep watch over the neighborhood by observing and reporting issues, not necessarily engaging unless a crime is in the act. What is evident is that it appears that Mr. Zimmerman may have taken his job as a neighborhood watchman too far and became a vigilante.

The question that remains unanswered is of self-defense on the part of whom; it is a fact that Mr. Zimmerman had a pistol on his person, stalked and approached Trayvon, and yet Trayvon was found to have not possessed any weapon of the sort. It is a possibility that Mr. Zimmerman could have pulled out a gun on Trayvon and the boy could have tried to defend himself. Trayvon could have tried to attack Mr. Zimmerman (without a weapon) but that is a stretch. For all we know, the boy may have tried to run away and then was shot because Zimmerman did not want to be accused of trying to commit a crime against Trayvon and then made up a story of struggle in self-defense. Obviously, this is an intricate issue and one without any good outcomes.

Most importantly, the "Stand Your Ground" law still exists, and it is likely that something of this nature could happen again. We must be prepared to endure this all over again until some kind of law is passed that protects victims instead of shooters.

Jesus vs. Obama

Sergio Cruz '14

Foreword

The writings below seemed necessary to write after I expressed my Pro-Obama views and was in turn judged by my Catholic friends. They argued that I was taking a political stance that precluded my Catholic faith. One devout Catholic at my school even went so far as to call me a "contradiction". It was after seeing a Facebook post by Catholic performer Jackie Francois that claimed Catholics would "go to jail" for their faith, that I really began to think. I hoped to find a course of thought that would allow someone to be a good member of government but also a good member of a religion. The following is those thoughts, and I hope that my thoughts will be acknowledged as fair. Thank you, enjoy and apply.

The Philosophy

Besides family, humans should only subject themselves to two legitimate spheres of community: state and religion. These two spheres can exist in two forms: reasonable and unreasonable. A reasonable sphere is best defined as one that receives benefits from individual members and provides some services: protection, institutions, etc. An unreasonable sphere is constituted by its invasion of the rights of its members and/or the other sphere's operation. It is a human's duty to pursue the two spheres that they believe to be the most reasonable. In the event that state should become

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unreasonable, it is also a human's duty to null allegiance to that law and to endeavor to repeal it. If a reasonable opposition is presented and ignored, allegiance may be nullified. These rules also apply to religion. After either allegiance to either religion or state is compromised, a new sphere may be pursued.

Real World Connections

To most efficaciously apply the above philosophy to the real world, I shall use the state and religion to which I am currently subjected: The Roman Catholic Church and the United States of America. Recently, the Catholic Church has urged its followers to make certain political decisions based on the Catechism. Three major issues are: gay marriage, contraceptives, and abortion.

The R-74 bill centered in Washington State is just one of many efforts to legalize same-sex marriage. This bill gives religious ministers the ability to prohibit a homosexual marriage from being consecrated in their place of worship. However, gay couples can still be legally married. This is an example of a law that would allow both spheres to coexist, remain reasonable, and permit members of the conflicting spheres to remain good members. Not having gay marriage would violate the American law that "all men are created equal" while enforcement of this law on opposing religious groups would violate freedom of religion. No Catholic person would be forced to witness a gay marriage in their place of worship so they could remain

true to their faith. However, if an earnest opposition were made to repeal such a law, this movement would clearly be counterintuitive to American ideals of freedom.

The idea of contraceptives being administered by the US government (without considering fiscal issues or those of government spending) is in its essence a service that satisfies a demand of (even if some) of the members of the government sphere. Once again, no Catholic would be forced to use contraceptives and arguments against them fall short when you consider that many contraceptives have other uses besides preventing pregnancy (condoms are sometimes used to protect against STDs and birth control can be used to regulate menstrual cycles). It is impossible to determine the true motive behind a person's use of contraceptives. Protests against contraceptives can still be organized by the Catholic Church to promote their thoughts on the moral wrong of contraceptives.

Probably the most controversial of the three topics discussed in this writing is abortion. In this instance, some argue a legalization of abortion would violate the American law that all people are entitled to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness". Many argue that when a zygote (a fermented egg) is created in a laboratory, it is simply an experiment and the organism is not a living thing that can be considered human. This idea is never applied to the womb because we all know that in the conditions of the womb, a human will be born. Many people argue that rape or incest can

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rationalize for abortion when such incidents account for less than 1% of abortions. We can see that the United States is intruding on the rights of its citizens making it unreasonable. However, with abortion being overshadowed by debt and foreign relations, it is a marginal issue in the scope of the American government. Until pro-life activists make notable opposition to abortion, it is likely to remain legal.

Year 3000: A Communist Future?

John Clark '14

To start off, I feel that it is necessary for me to emphasize the fact that I am not a communist, but that I am merely have a scholarly fascination with contemporary Marxist theory, which I studied over the summer. Therefore, for a better perspective, I will argue from the point of view of a communist in this article. In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, people around the west lost confidence in capitalism. This became evident with the rise of the occupy movement in 2011. Meanwhile, people across the Middle East finally began to express their dissatisfaction with their respective autocrats during the Arab Spring. Many people went into these protests as simply anti-capitalists, clad in Guy Fawkes masks, but emerged as communists or anarchists. The two are essentially the same. Thus began the revived movement toward communism, arisen naturally from the current state of affairs. Therefore, it is important to understand this movement, because communist scholars from across the west have been meeting quite publicly to discuss how to best take advantage of the situation. This article is too lengthy to be fit into one edition of *Zeitgeist*, so I will split it into two segments. This first segment aims to disassociate communism with what the world saw in the 20th century, redefine communism for the 21st century reader, then demonstrate how communism might actually be an interesting and liberating experiment for you.

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It is necessary to distinguish communism from the tragic twentieth century socialist states first. Those who first attempted to implement communism doomed their operation by deviating from Marx's proscription. They treated communism like "a state of affairs which is to be established" rather than as "an ideal to which reality will have to adjust itself." Their mistake was their active effort to institute communism rather than deciding to simply allow reality to adjust itself to communism. The conditions of the communist movement are meant to result from premises in existence, but Lenin and Trotsky, who set the standard for proletarian politics, impatiently manufactured a movement rather than allow one to naturally arise. Russia did not have a large enough proletariat to produce a natural communist movement, an observation Marx himself had made. What resulted from this rash decision was a totalitarian state wielding its power by killing its citizens. Such was the outcome of all the twentieth century socialist states, as they have come to be called in retrospect. Thus, it can be said that socialism is worse than capitalism.

Many contemporary Marxists, in their desire not to repeat the past, believe that the problem that kept the socialist states from withering into communism, which was never reached, was the institution of the Leninist vanguard. The Leninist vanguard was the use of intellectuals to lead these countries instead of a dictatorship of the proletariat. This is the point at which massacre and the failure of the experiment become inevitable. The very premise of the

Leninist vanguard was that the proletariat could not be trusted to handle the transition to socialism and then communism. This distrust turned into fear, and fear motivated the Stalinist purges and terrors, the killing fields of the Khmer Rouge, the suppression of the Tiananmen Square protests, and other atrocities associated with the socialist states. An exact death toll brought by the tyranny of these states will never be certain, although the certainly trustworthy John Birch Society holds that the death toll stands at 110,000,000 for the twentieth century. I ask, "Who's up for round two?"

In order to understand the movement to revive communism, it is also necessary to understand what communism truly is. Marx chose his words poorly when he said that communism could be summed up as "the abolition of private property." This is a broad definition, for it leaves public property as an option. It would have been better if he said that communism was the abolition of property in any form and the affirmation of 'the common'. The common is the status material will have in the communist society. The perfect example of the common is information. The Internet, for all who have access to it, is a well of nearly infinite knowledge. This information is a common: it is not property because everybody can use it and there is no state to regulate its use. The idea of the common is the essence of communism, because this is how all commodities will function in a communist society. It is precisely this fact that negates claims that communism is impossible because of greed. Property is the

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context in which selfishness breeds greed. In the context of the common, selfishness creates liberty, and everybody loves liberty.

It is also necessary to understand that in a communist society there is no state. In this regard, communism is merely an offshoot of anarchism. The anarchic dimension of communism has been so consistently underemphasized that many communists, especially in the United States call themselves anarcho-communists in order to emphasize this point. In the United States, this is found more often because CPUSA advocates socialism, not communism. With no capitalism and no state, communism abolishes the roots of all oppression and exploitation.

Oppression at the hands of the state exists in the reality that you have to obey somebody else's rules. The basis of the anti-statist view is that no governing entity has the right to tell us our rights, and therefore there is no reason for government other than oppression. This is why we call the state the 'repressive apparatus'. This applies to everybody. Exploitation by capitalism in its simplest form is the exchange of money for goods. You should not have to give anything to get something, and this too applies to everyone, from the poor children in sub-Saharan Africa to Donald Trump. This is becoming a serious threat to even Americans with the threat of privatization. Everybody on earth is oppressed by the state and exploited by capitalism; therefore, we call the existence of oppression and exploitation of every human being "the current state of affairs." The communist hypothesis is that if

we abolish the current state of affairs, then emancipated humanity will be free to do whatever it likes. This can only be successful in the future when technology can sustain us without human labor. Only capitalist investment and production will be able to create a global self-operating infrastructure that provides all necessities to the human race.

All oppression is channeled amplified and perpetrated by the state. In a democracy, the people become extremely divided because whenever somebody experiences oppression, it is because their fellow citizens consider it justice. One example would be gays living in states that have not passed gay marriage. Their fellow citizens explicitly use the state as a tool of oppression to deny their peers, their fellow human beings, the right to pursuit happiness together. In a communist society, however, we would “have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” Also consider you’re the experiences of people across the globe- from Venezuela to Africa to Russia, to Iran to China, to North Korea and countless other countries- who are forbidden even the most basic of human rights, and how they must strive for liberty.

A more accidental form of oppression by the state is present in your association with the state. For example, President Woodrow Wilson’s propaganda campaign during World War I demonized Germans to the point that angry Americans at home turned their animosity against German immigrants. At the height of this madness, an innocent

German immigrant was lynched. In WWII, as all history students know, we interned about 110,000 citizens of Japanese ancestry, also due to their racial association with our enemies. During the Red Scare, we crushed the Communist Party of the United States of America, due to suspicions originating from their ideological association with the socialist states. Since 2000, immigrants from the Middle East have suffered the racial associations with their homelands across the sea, especially those who had immigrated from President Bush’s infamous Axis of Evil. This began immediately after the September 11 attacks with the infamous and baseless rumor that Middle Eastern taxi drivers knew ahead of time not to go downtown because of the attacks.

Racial and ideological minorities are not the only victims of oppression by state sponsored propaganda. The United States has earned a terrible reputation across most of the world. Our own legacies of imperialism have made our innocent civilians targets of terrorist-state propaganda and attacks. Terrorist groups are not countries, but they have hierarchies, and therefore it can be said that terrorists receive all their orders through a government structure of sorts. The incredibly authoritarian socialist governments of Venezuela and Cuba constantly remind Latin America of the United States’ oppressive imperialist past through the constant propaganda streamed through the news station “TeleSur.” Propaganda creates animosity, and animosity is oppression.

Economic examples are as prevalent as social examples, and apply more broadly and extensively. One of the greatest and often underappreciated movements in the United States' history was the struggle of organized labor. The most recent episode in this movement is the implementation of "right to work laws," which weaken unions by removing the requirement for workers to join unions upon receiving a job. Either businesses and their sponsored interest groups fiercely lobby for these laws, or state governments implement them on their own to prevent unemployment from rising by getting businesses to stay in or come to the state. Thus, businesses exponentially worsen their exploitation of the workingman.

Brand name clothing is another source of economic exploitation because, through treacherous marketing strategies, convince teenagers and young adults that social worth is intrinsically linked to the clothing the business sells. This is the nightmarish product of Marx's classic idea of commodity fetishism. Commodity fetishism is the association of a commodity's economic value with an objective property that distinguishes it as being superior similar products. Fifty-dollar t-shirts from brand name companies are more popular than the five-dollar shirts I get at Target because they have been tied to social status. As Macklemore elegantly said in his rap "Thrift Shop," "Fifty dollars for a t-shirt... I call that getting tricked by a business."

An example of economic exploitation in the third world is not necessary for any prep student.

If you take one thing from this article, it should be a realization that too you are a proletarian, socially oppressed through the state and economically exploited by capitalism. There have been many different plans laid out in the past few years for what approach we must take in the implementation of communism. In the second part of this article, in the next edition of *Zeitgeist*, I will describe the most prominent plan for implementation of communism.



Australia and Norwegian Elections

Ryan Brickner '14

Over the weekend and into Monday, two traditionally liberal nations, Australia and Norway, went to the polls and emerged with new leaders for their respective countries. Oddly enough, the winner in both was the opposition conservative coalition. The Labor Party and its coalition were defeated the first time in at least 2 decades in Norway and a decade in Australia.

Tony Abbott, the Australian elect, was once a Catholic seminarian who retains many of those same views. A strong conservative, he is an opponent of abortions (“safe, legal, and rare”) as well as embryonic stem cell research and euthanasia. Much like an American conservative, Abbott also holds views skeptical of global warming and has a chauvinistic attitude. Why has a conservative come to power in a traditionally liberal Australia? Contributing factors include the unpopularity of the Labor Party after an economic downturn, even though they survived the original crash, the public’s turn against immigration, and especially an extremely unpopular carbon tax. Lower taxes, smaller government, and tough border controls have been the backbone of his campaign. Tougher border controls are the major part of his policy, as he has promised to stop the illegal immigrant boats that many people have growing wary of. Halfway around the world,

immigration played a key role in the Norwegian election also.

In Norway, the results of the election could almost be described as historic. Since World War II, 7 out of 27 Prime Ministers have been members of the Labor Party, and the Labor party has been in control for all but 16 years. Considering this, and Norway’s current position as one of the Scandinavia’s most socialist countries, being elected to the top post while supporting radical ideas like diversifying away from oil, privatization, and reducing taxes is almost unbelievable. The government is a coalition government, though, and one of the members will be the Progress Party. Their stances include an anti-tax stand, an anti-immigration stand, and plea for tougher law and order, all of which fly in the face of classic Norwegian stances. This party is somewhat infamous for Anders Breivik's one time membership after he committed one of the worst atrocities in recent memory. The center right coalition’s win is largely due to growing public fatigue with an economic slowdown, which many blame on the Labor Party’s wasting of a “once-in-a-lifetime” boom in oil to shore up social services and increase competitiveness, which is stagnating.

This past week, two strongly leftist countries rejected the ruling Labor Party to elect a right-of-center government. While this is surprising, a wider trend has seemingly emerged. Conservatives in Europe are in a strong position, with names such as David Cameron and Angela Merkel leading the way. After economic collapse,

conservative leaders came to power in Spain, Portugal, and Greece. The socialist elected in with this group, François Hollande of France, has overseen a disastrous start to his administration. His 75% tax plan has crumbled and the economy has faltered too, posting negative or zero growth for three straight quarters in 2013. This chain of events could merely mean an unhappy populace, or maybe, just maybe, signs are pointing towards a rebirth of conservatism in Europe, Australia, and Canada.

Another Middle East Crisis—Russian and Iranian Involvement in Syria **Connor Kasper '14**

Is World War III possible in the Middle East? A world war is unlikely, but with Russia and Iran joining in on the world's debate over Syria, a wide-scale conflict is certainly possible. A new coalition is forming between Syria and the two nations in opposition to the U.S.-led force consisting of France and a growing number of European countries that are seeking to bring down the Assad regime.

In the several weeks since the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime was discovered, the U.N. has been torn over whether or not to take action against Bashar al-Assad. The U.S. and those aligned with it in this conflict have been strongly favoring an attack against the Assad regime in retaliation to the recent use of chemical weapons. However, many U.N. members are hesitant to take action, fearing a prolonged
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involvement in the region and further conflict.

Russia and Iran have made their presence known on the world stage in regard to this issue. They have expressed their determination to stand behind Syria and threatened the U.S. and its allied nations with retaliatory attacks if they were to make a move against the Assad government. Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei stated that if the U.S. were to attack Syria, Iran would respond with an attack on Israel.

These complications have heightened international tensions and made wide-scale conflict in the Middle East a legitimate prospect. Israel has been preparing for attacks by Syria or Iran, distributing gas masks to citizens and readying its military assets. American naval vessels have moved into the eastern Mediterranean in preparation for a possible assault against Syrian military targets. In response, Russia has moved much of its navy closer to Syria, signaling its readiness to support Assad and even deploy a missile shield to protect the regime from U.S. attacks.

Furthermore, Russia has now been able to broker a deal with the Syrian government in which Assad would hand over the chemical weapons to Russia to be taken by the U.N. Russia is now the ones playing the role of peacemaker in this conflict, thereby attempting to exert more power and expand its interests in the region. Russian leader Vladimir Putin is currently seeking to advance his nation's position on the world stage by trying to gain favor with

and respect from powerful countries, and the conflict in Syria provided him a chance to both humiliate the United States and further his agenda. Iran has also been attempting to exert power and influence in the area in an effort to gain respect from other countries in the region and to instill fear in its enemies.

The United States has dug itself a deep hole in this situation because of the position it has taken on Syria's use of chemical weapons and its responses to each new complication in the civil war. Russia and Iran have noticed this and taken advantage of it, using it as an opportunity to push their own agendas and make the U.S. look shaky and uncertain in regard to foreign policy. It is time for our nation's leaders to step up and reassert America's position and influence on the world stage before other nations lose respect for us and what we stand for. President Obama, Secretary of State Kerry, and other U.S. dignitaries need to act wisely and decisively in response to this conflict in order to prevent the advancement of our international enemies, especially nations that support and sponsor terrorist networks.

Opinions on Syria

On August 21, 2013 the al-Assad regime unleashed a deadly Sarin Gas attack in Damascus, Syria. This attack is said to have killed 1,429 people including 426 children. At first it was questionable whether there were chemicals released or not, but the United States, Germany, France and other
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countries have confirmed there were chemical weapons used. After much call to action, Obama called upon Congress to put their stamp of approval and allow the U.S. to take military action up against the al-Assad regime.

What is your opinion on what the American military should do and what should the goals of this action be?

John Clark: I believe that we should strike Syria for the purpose of eliminating Assad's ability to use chemical weapons. This is the bare minimum the United States must do to sustain, or even regain, our credibility in the world. We made a vow to take action against anybody using chemical weapons. In my opinion, it is not too different from the 1986 bombing of Libya. In that instance, Reagan's purpose was to send the message that Gaddafi's support for Marxist militants in Europe was unacceptable. He did so by severely crippling Libya's military infrastructure, eliminating his nuclear and imperial ambitions. In addition, if we take out their chemical weapons supplies, the power to tear down the oppressive state of Bashar al-Assad will rightfully lay in the hands of the proletarians of Syria. I have two concerns, though. Assad has the same nature as the many indisputably evil dictators the United States has opposed in the past, so I predict that Assad will relocate a number of children to wherever we intend to strike then use their deaths as propaganda. Such is the treachery of all ruthless autocrats. Pope Francis has denounced the use of chemical weapons and all violent measures. If our only targets are weapons, can it really be

considered violent? Regardless, the time for peaceful solutions has come and past. This is a tragic affair and only despair awaits the people of Syria.

Nick Schuermann: I'm sick of fighting.

Will Clyne: We have a moral imperative as the United States of America to put a stop to the use of chemical weapons. If the UN won't act because of Russia and China, then we must. With hundreds of thousands of people already dead, we must act if we truly believe that we are the greatest country in the world then we should not only do something about the chemical weapons, but also adequately punish the man responsible for these atrocities, Bashar al-Assad.

Phill Lynch: I believe that first America should seek NATO support in an organized and limited strike designed to overthrow the murderous al-Assad regime. Whether or not Obama receives Congressional or NATO approval, America must act on our ban of chemical weapons. We must act, not out of servitude to a ban, but a duty to the people of Syria. After killing over 400 children and countless innocent citizens, al-Assad must be brought to justice. We cannot repeat our lack of action when dealing with Rwanda, as the foremost power in the world, the US has a duty to help a people oppressed by a slaughterous regime.

Dan Donahue: America finds itself in a lose-lose situation with regards to the actions it takes against the al-Assad regime. Without a doubt, Assad has crossed the metaphorical "red line", leaving thousands of innocent civilians dead. As

a country that prides itself on integrity, liberty, and democracy, we must take action against the heinous crimes against humanity committed by this oppressive regime. However, a quick strike won't fix the problem. While it may convince the regime to stop using chemical weapons (for now), it won't create any shifting of power in Syria's civil war. So, in order to fully solve the problem, the United States should go directly after al-Assad's regime. No ruler can remain in power for long when faced with the opposition of the masses, as shown by (now former) President Morsy of Egypt. By driving out Assad and his regime, not only is the chemical weaponry problem fixed, but Assad is kicked out of power as well. Obama has stated that his ultimate goal is regime change, and I agree. Although whatever action we take will be controversial and will be met with some form of opposition, action is still necessary, both for the integrity of the United States and for the people of Syria.

Sergio Cruz: US involvement in Syria is supported by two main concepts. The first is our ban on the use of chemical weapons. If we are to consider ourselves an honest nation that is "the home of the brave" we must act on al-Assad's use of a chemical weapon on the citizens of Syria. The second is our belief that America must defend the oppressed people of the world. Although this is honorable, the United Nations was founded so that all nations could "unite our strength to maintain international peace and security". Instead, the United States finds itself alone in policing this gross injustice and violation of human life. I believe that the United States should not act in Syria unaided by the UN

because it is neglecting one of its primary ends. As Obama expressed on Wednesday, "My credibility's not on the line. The international community's credibility is on the line".

Jack O'Connell: By getting involved in Syria, the United States is taking the moral and necessary course of action. This step, however, should be carried out with the message that it is not the sole job of America to be global policemen. All nations, each according to its capability, should involve itself in thwarting the al-Assad regime.

Liam O'Reilly: Obama said that he had decided the United States should take military action against Syrian government targets. Many Americans have different thoughts on the issue in mind as they have no interests in new military involvements after being in Afghanistan and Iraq for over a decade. There are far more benefits in simply staying away from involvement in Syria than there are in undertaking a military strike against the Syrian government. To name a few, U.S. military action will likely result in Syrian civilian deaths and the U.S. would be responsible. A lot of people forget that weakening Assad will allow for other terrorist networks to take control in Syria. With the U.S. being involved, this situation has the potential to become a fight against the U.S. rather than a fight against a Middle East leader. We can compare the situation that is happening in Syria to what happened in Iraq in that the evidence that is being used to prove that Assad used chemical weapons is not very credible. In Iraq with Saddam
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Hussein there was a similar scenario in regards to the weapons of mass destruction which was used to bring about military action in Iraq. Realistically, there could be an alliance in anti-Americanism which could then lead to a fortification in Syria's president.

Gun Control Phil Lynch '14

9 months after the events at Sandy Hook elementary school in Newtown, CT, gun control talks have taken a back seat to other issues. The past few months have included several incidents of violence; the trial of George Zimmerman, the accusations against Aaron Hernandez, the murder of an innocent baseball player, and now the murder of at least twelve in a Washington D.C. naval yard. The bottom line is that, while gun control may not currently be the centerpiece of American focus, this country and American society is increasingly jeopardized by a culture of increasing violence.

Several overwhelming issues face the American government today including conflict in Syria, economic recovery, and technology. These hot topics often take a front seat to Gun control and the overwhelming transgressions in the recent past. My tutor and Democratic Representative for the town of Westport, Jonathan Steinberg has dealt with gun control extensively for the past nine months. In the aftermath of Sandy Hook, Jonathan

would come over and forget about schoolwork for large chunks of time and devote his efforts to educating me about the issues facing the state government concerning gun control. Jonathan lectured me countless times on the powerful gun lobbyists backed by Connecticut-based gun companies such as PTR, Sturm, and Ruger & Company (NY Times), and the power they have among politicians. The result of the wide influence of gun companies was gridlock in Hartford for several weeks. Eventually, emotion and the voice of the people guided representatives to take action in enacting some of the tightest gun laws in the country. As of April, Connecticut has banned high-capacity magazines, expansion of an assault weapons ban, and more extensive background checks prior to purchase. Connecticut has taken the progressive stance on gun control mainly as an emotional response to the events in Newtown last December, however many states remain laissez-faire in regards to weapons laws.

Gun violence has played an increasing role in American society from Columbine, to Virginia Tech, to Chicago, to Newtown, and now to Washington D.C., and the bottom line is that something must be done to reduce this violence. Even after the devastating murder of 26 innocent people last year, most states have refused to change any law that would discourage the ownership of unnecessary killing machines such as assault weapons. According to the second amendment to the Constitution, all Americans have the right to bear arms for

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protection. There should be however limits to this right. There is no justification for a mass-killing machine such as an assault weapon, as this goes far beyond self-defense. Not only do I feel that every state in this country needs to apply more restrictive gun laws, but as a society, we must change our obsession with violence. Many of us are fixated today on violent video games that, in several cases, have inspired murder of innocent people. Today, Americans are faced with a serious problem. We must restrict what guns people own and how they obtain them, but still allow them to own guns. We must redirect our cultural fixation and glorification of violence, while also maintaining personal freedoms. Unless we as a country can universally apply stricter gun laws and change our culture of violence, there will be many more instances, as there was today in Washington, of mass-killing, the twenty-six innocent souls who died in Sandy Hook Elementary school last December will have died in vain.