

Letters from our readers

14 May 2011

On “*The killing of Bin Laden and the threat of a wider war*”

I’m trying to understand why the official account of what happened was not well coordinated. It seems that the different parties involved were not all briefed to the need of a coordinated response, or perhaps there were elements in each party that did not want such a mandated response.

For example, perhaps the Navy Seals did not like the idea of having to admit that they had to kill bin Laden as this signifies their weakness, so came out and told the truth regardless of consequences.

If this is indeed the reason, it is another sign of the power play that is happening within the ruling circles and splits within. It is then one more condition that Trotsky outlined as a condition necessary for a revolution.

Thushara
11 May 2011

It seems hardly credible the US acted without the knowledge and approval of the Pakistani government. The public complaints by the Pakistani government of the violation of their sovereignty is a smokescreen to placate its citizens. Likely both governments had known of Osama’s whereabouts for some time, perhaps several years. For purely political reasons the US decided to pull the trigger at this time.

Richard W
New Mexico, USA
11 May 2011

On “*Obama on 60 Minutes: A political assessment*”

During conversations, however much one guards oneself, occasionally words come out from mind and indicate one’s thinking. Obama said, “And so if it turns out that it’s a wealthy, you know, prince from Dubai who’s in this compound, and, you know, we’ve sent Special Forces in

we’ve got problems. So there were risks involved geographically in making the decision.” That means they went ahead even if it were a “prince from Dubai” that could be killed!

JP
India
12 May 2011

On “*The flooding in the US South*”

Thank you for this important and very powerfully written perspective. With every one of these disasters the cry of “well they should have known better than to have lived in a flood zone/earthquake-prone area, etc.,” has been raised. Never is it noted that without the farmers, dockworkers, and other people whose work brings food and other necessities to the rest of the country and world doing just that, we’d all be a lot worse off. Neither is it ever noted just how little these people make, where the profit goes, and what happens when the jobs dry up. “Just move” is not an option for so many reasons—lack of funds, lack of support in other areas, lack of jobs to move to in any event.

To say nothing of the fact that those loudest about “just move” also being the loudest about how we have to “strengthen our communities”—pick one, you can’t have both!

Moreover, the point about immediate work being available through a solid public works program is well taken—here we have the perfect solution to two dire problems: You have crumbling infrastructure, you have people ready able and willing to work. It is criminal that neither of these issues is addressed from the highest levels. Obama again shows where his allegiances lie—not with the workers and unemployed, no—“Let the free market sort it out!” Congress is no better—be they Tea-Partiers or “hard left” (Ha!) Democrats—none has suggested such a thing. Indeed, cuts, cuts, and more cuts is the order of the day!

Christie S
Oregon, USA

12 May 2011

On "Philippine president proposes to evict 500,000 slum residents from Manila"

This is a devastating and important report that vividly displays the cycle after cycle of cruel oppression by a train of so-called "reformers."

It is also quite nicely written, though obviously one gags at his own insertion of the word "nice" into any discussion regarding this constant ravage over an admirable people.

George W
California, USA
12 May 2011

On "Einstein's theory of gravity confirmed by NASA probe"

First, I'd like to say that this is a phenomenal article. I haven't had this much fun or felt this much excitement about current missions in a while. However, I do have a few comments.

"Surely it has already been accepted and needs no further confirmation." While GR has been accepted by the scientific community, two things need clarification.

First, one crucial aspect of general relativity has *not* been fully understood are gravity waves. These are a prediction of GR that come from the close proximity of two massive bodies, such as neutron stars or black holes that orbit each other. Gravity waves are literally waves of gravitational energy that bleed off into the surrounding spacetime, causing ripples that expand and contract the universe as they pass through. Evidence for the existence of gravity waves comes from the binary pulsar PSR B1913+16, which was discovered in 1974. It was predicted that the orbital periods would decay along the lines of emitted gravitational waves. The results are still today one of the strongest agreements of theory and experiment. However, they have not been directly observed, at least not yet.

Detecting gravity waves would also have a profound effect on cosmology, and astronomy as a whole. Currently, all observations of the universe are done using light, the electromagnetic force. If gravity waves could be detected, the entire universe could be understood through a second force, gravity. In particular, this has the potential to directly observe the universe before the creation of the CMB, with the possibility of directly detecting predicted phenomena like inflation.

Secondly, while GR is well understood, it should be clarified that gravity as a whole is not. With no quantum theory of gravity, and no current technology capable of reaching the energy scales needed, a full understanding of gravity is currently beyond humanity's grasp. It is an issue, as GR and quantum mechanics are both extremely well tested and used theories and yet give gibberish when used together.

"There is a widespread belief that science develops purely on the basis of individual genius. This distorted conception of scientific development was reinforced by the work of the sociologist Thomas Kuhn, who argued that science underwent periodic paradigmatic shifts as a result of the work of outstanding individuals who happen to develop new theories."

This was a great summary and refutation of Kuhn. I would only add that the basis of "individual genius" lay in the fact that certain lucky individuals were propped up by the masses of society such that they did not have to toil to survive, and were able to contemplate the world around them in peace. This is what gave rise to figures like Galileo and Newton. In a socialist society, in which no person wants for any basic need, such individuals would be the norm, not the exception.

Again, excellent article. It has made staying up to absurd hours of the night (or morning) worth it. Thank you.

Cheers!

Bryan D
13 May 2011



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