

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
International Affairs Society



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

I am proud to introduce you to *The Globe: World News from All Sides*. This journal is the only undergraduate journal at the George Washington University devoted solely to International Affairs. The Globe is an amazing opportunity for International Affairs Society members, as well as Elliot School students to be published. More than that it is an opportunity to open discussion, publish ideas and to think and write critically on world affairs.

For those of you who are new to the International Affairs Society, welcome! Writing an article for the Globe would be a great way to get involved in the organization and I am always accepting articles for submission. Returning members: welcome back! Put your academic papers to good use and submit them to the Globe and allow others to gain insight from your academic endeavors. One of *The Globe's* great strengths is that those who participate submit such a wide variety articles on a multitude of topics that *The Globe* becomes a great way to broaden your views and learn something new.

I hope all of you enjoy reading and writing for the Globe, it's going to be a great year!

Best,

Catherine Merino
Editor-In-Chief

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Zimbabwe: A Nation in Turmoil

By Joshua Lasky

Zimbabwe has been in a state of internal strife for most of its history since its independence from Britain in 1965. The civil war, which took place following their Universal Declaration of Independence, thoroughly devastated the newly formed nation. President Mugabe first entered the national spotlight as a leader in one of the rebel groups, the Zimbabwe African National Union. After Mugabe's victory in the first elections in 1980, affairs in Zimbabwe have steadily gone downhill. The nation of Zimbabwe has experienced some turbulent crises, both domestic and international, which have put the country in the precarious position it lies in today. Certainly the foremost of these issues is the battle for control of the government pitting Robert Mugabe, the authoritarian ruler of Zimbabwe since 1980, against his opponents in the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) who wish to see a transfer of power. Mugabe recently survived the most recent attempt by his opponents to force him out of the government. While the MDC was nearly successful in an election in which they managed to push the vote to a runoff, scare tactics and violence against MDC politicians forced Morgan Tsvangirai, Mugabe's opponent, out of the Presidential race. In one of the most publicized attacks, the wife of one of Tsvangirai's supporters, the Mayor of Harare, was brutally murdered by loyalists to Mugabe while he was traveling to another part of the country. Currently, negotiations between Mugabe's party and the opposition on a power-sharing agreement have stalled as President Mugabe continues to cement his place in power through the appointment of several loyalists to key government positions. Opposition members left the negotiations in protest of these moves while Mugabe has accused them of an unwillingness to negotiate. At this point, it seems likely that Mugabe will be able to serve the rest of his life in some capacity of power if more pressure is not applied against him from the United States and other international bodies.

In the news recently, reports from Zimbabwe have told of an economic crisis unparalleled in the 21st century. Record inflation, rivaling even that of

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post World War One Germany, has crippled the economy of Zimbabwe; stories of shopkeepers closing everyday at noon in order to reevaluate the prices of their store goods do not portray a healthy economic system. Recent attempts to solve the monetary crisis have often had unintended side effects such as when the government slashed ten zeroes off of their currency in order to simplify transactions. While this was well and good in itself, the drastic value change instantly revived the monetary worth of the old coins Zimbabwe used to mint before inflation had deemed them worthless. Following the rush of citizens to exchange their old coins for new bills, the government was forced to quickly print new money, feeding further into the inflation wracking the nation's economy. With an estimated 23 million percent inflation and nearly 80 percent unemployment life for Zimbabwe's citizens has become increasingly bleak. Another controversial element of Zimbabwe's economic policy has been the redistribution of land from white landowners to the native citizens of Zimbabwe. This issue has persisted since 2000; charges against Mugabe for rewarding his supporters with land from this redistribution have not as of yet been processed by legal authorities. With few answers from either Mugabe's advisors or opposition members, the economy of Zimbabwe is certainly in desperate times.

The American government's interest in Zimbabwe centers on reports of human rights abuses committed by the Mugabe government. Talk of sanctions against Zimbabwe has surfaced particularly after the election scandal this year. Attempts by Mugabe to revive the economy will be particularly difficult if it cannot get help from its neighbors or the United States. It seems likely, given the current political climate of Zimbabwe, that any economic recovery will be slow in coming until Mugabe leaves the office of President. There are also concerns from the international community regarding the sharp decline in health standards in Zimbabwe; the life expectancy of adults has dropped to 37 and 34 for males and females respectively (the lowest total in the world). This is in addition to the HIV/AIDS epidemic affecting the whole region as well as a growing food crisis as a result of the economic troubles having put the average citizen in great risk. Neighboring countries such as South Africa are also deeply concerned over the vast amount of refugees fleeing the destabilizing nation. To this point, approximately one quarter of Zimbabwe's population have fled the country, many of whom have resettled in South Africa. This is certainly a

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nation which requires international aid but, due to its turbulent political affairs, will not be likely to receive any in the near future.

Zimbabwe's political, economic, and social troubles are the underlying reasons for its dramatic fall to become one of Africa's best known failed states. Without critical reforms from the inside, it will be near impossible for Zimbabwe to advance at the same rate as its neighbors. Also, there will not be much of an opportunity for Zimbabwe to participate in the international community if its internal society remains in such a shattered state. The next year will be critical for supporters of change as Tsvangirai continues to fight for inclusion in the formation of a new government. If he succeeds, recovery is possible; if Mugabe retains power, expect more of the same policies from his first three decades in office.

Iraq – US Conference, Amman Jordan

By Bobby Fraser

I have Just returned from Amman, Jordan where I participated a groundbreaking conference in July 2008 entitled *The Youth Initiative for Progress In Iraq*. At this conference sixteen American students and sixteen Iraqi students ranging from ages sixteen to nineteen came together to discuss the current situation in Iraq. The conference was facilitated by international students from Li Po Chun United World College in Hong Kong, one of eleven international schools of its kind. The goals of the conference were to begin a dialog between the youth of Iraq and the US to discuss some ideas for development with Iraqis.

I heard accounts directly from the Iraqis of their own experiences living in Iraq. To them this war is not just a highlight on CNN.com or Reuters. Many of their largest everyday hardships come from things we, as Americans, take for granted. In Baghdad, for example, I was told that the state is only able provide two hours of electricity a day. The lack of generators extends this problem and many people simply do not have electricity. Of course there were stories much more horrific than the lack of energy in Baghdad.

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The sixteen Iraqis at the conference were exceptional people with the potential to be leaders in their country. Each and every one of them was taking a tremendous risk in their own lives to come and not only speak with a group of Americans, but to work with other people from different areas of Iraq. Iraqis from the Kurdish region of Iraq, Sunni and Shi'a Muslims as well as Christian Iraqis were represented at the conference. Even though these Iraqis were certainly willing to talk about progress in Iraq it was very clear that ethnic and religious lines run deep. Those from the Kurdish region were strongly pushing the idea of creating a Kurdish state (and some actually believe there already is one) while the Arab Iraqis were very offended with this rhetoric. Heated arguments ensued comments about "Kurdistan". This one difference dominated the conference: we never got to the tensions between the Sunnis and Shi'as. But as you can imagine: the divisions are present even in small comments or causal discussion.

We drafted a twelve-page declaration of intent to highlight the major problems we discovered through our discussions with the Iraqis. This declaration focused on five areas of the conference participants choosing: Reconciliation, Security, Infrastructure, Civil Society, and Education. We had to come to a total consensus to put a statement on the declaration. Deep discussion followed each one of the five topics with security being the most pressing. At times this was emotional but it was necessary for us to understand the situation through the eyes of an Iraqi citizen.

Once we finalized the declaration of intent we looked into different areas of development that we could work on in Iraq. Education took most of the focus of these projects. My specific development project is entitled *The Iraqi Leaders Scholarship Program*. The goal of this program is to finance two Iraqi students to come to college in the United States in cooperation with American universities in the Washington, D.C. area. Right now I am working with an Iraqi and another American participant. We anticipate that the first scholarship recipients will be able to attend school in the U.S. beginning in fall 2009. The obligation of the recipients is that they return to Iraq after competing their study to help lead in Iraqi society. With a degree from an American college or university an Iraqi will gain respect and be viewed as a leader within Iraq.

My attention to the news out of Iraq has changed since the conference. When I watch the news about a bombing in Kirkuk or Baghdad it catches my

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attention. I am still quite concerned for the safety of the Iraqis that came to the conference. I don't know how receptive their home communities will be to the conference. I do know that they were very proud of our collaborative dialog on the controversial situation. I am proud as well; they have reaffirmed my desires to work diplomatically, to continue to bring people together; not to change their identities or beliefs but to find common trust at a basic human level.

Limitations of NGOs within the UN System

By Barnett Koven

For the past four years I have worked for World Information Transfer (WIT) a non-governmental organization (NGO) in General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations (UN) dedicated to promoting health and environmental literacy. I served for three years as an intern and this past year as WIT's representative to the UN's Department of Public Information (the UN body charged with disseminating information derived from NGOs, governments and the UN Secretariat throughout the UN system and to civil society). Part of my responsibilities included attending relevant UN meetings and working as a liaison with various UN missions, The Secretariat and other NGOs as well as writing for and editing WIT's system wide publication, *The World Ecology Report*. During my tenure at WIT I have had the privilege of learning firsthand how multilateral diplomacy is carried out at the UN. I have also been able to observe the role of NGOs and other civil society actors.

WIT has been successful at advancing its agenda at the UN and within the Economic and Social Council primarily because its chair and founder Dr. Christine K. Durbak is a prominent member of the Ukrainian diplomatic community who, in addition to her duties at WIT, serves as an advisor to the Ukrainian Mission to the UN. WIT's influence at the UN is largely due to the perception that WIT is an extension of the Ukrainian Mission, rather than an NGO. WIT receives unfaltering support from the Ukrainian government and is closely backed by numerous other Eastern European Missions to the UN.

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For the past eighteen years WIT has held its annual conference on Health and the Environment at UNHQ which always includes significant participation by a large number of UN Missions many of which cosponsor WIT's Conference. Few other NGOs are offered the opportunity to hold any of their meetings at the UN and their meetings are rarely attended by high level diplomats. This general lack of respect within the UN system greatly hinders the work of many NGOs, whose efforts remain on the periphery.

Despite the appearance that NGOs are beginning to play a more significant role within the UN System, with 3,187 NGOs currently in consultative status with ECOSOC, in actuality the role of most NGOs is considerably limited. Of the 3,187 NGOs in consultative status less than 140 hold General Consultative Status, which affords significant privileges such as the ability "to place items on the agendas of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies" and to "attend meetings where they may submit written statements and make oral presentations to governments." In my four years of service at WIT I have never seen a NGO Representative make an oral presentation nor have I seen a NGO's written statement disseminated at an official meeting of ECOSOC. In my experience the majority of NGOs have only succeeded in informally disseminating information to members of the Secretariat and to Diplomats who unilaterally decide how the information will be used.

Working for WIT provided me with an opportunity to learn about the UN System and its interaction with civil society. I am, however, disheartened by the limited role civil society plays at the UN. Considering the nature of multilateral diplomacy, where a myriad of different state actors are all vying to advance their own national agendas, NGOs could have a positive effect creating consensus, in particular promoting policies that are not only agreeable to state actors but in fomenting a climate wherein individual states are motivated to look beyond individual motives in order to advance the interests of the global community. However, most NGOs, lacking in political backing and or other influential support remain on the sidelines within the UN system and have yet been unable to affect policies and implement their agendas.

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IAS Globetrotters

International Affairs is a discipline that requires a variety of different skills and benefits from a wide variety of experiences. With that in mind, many students of International Affairs choose to study abroad to enrich their knowledge of what they study. This year, we are several International Affairs Society members studying throughout the world. The experiences gained from living abroad are invaluable and furthering understanding of other cultures lends itself nicely to the practice of International Affairs. Some of our friends abroad this semester have agreed to write for the Globe and share with us their impressions, giving those of us in DC an insiders look into the lives of people on the other side of the world, right from our computers.

Alison Dieringer in he Yunnan Province, China

Ni hao everyone! For those of you who may not know me, I'm Alison Dieringer, a junior in the Elliot School and I will be spending the fall semester in China. I spent a couple months last summer teaching English in Beijing and in planning my study abroad experience I knew I wanted to go back to China but somewhere even more unique and different than the capital. (A definite challenge seeing as Beijing is pretty unique.) However, I found the SIT Yunnan Province Languages and Cultures program. This program was not on the list of GW approved programs, so fortunately it was approved in the petition process by the Study Abroad office. The program is based in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province, and is considered an "experiential learning" style program. Combining lots of travel, excursions, and classic classroom learning I am looking forward to traveling all over this southern province, improving my Mandarin Chinese, and seeing both the more traditional/rural areas of China (the rice paddies and straw hats) as well as the urban powerhouse that China showed the world in the summer Olympics.

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Jessica Thompson in Dakar, Senegal

Hello everyone! My name is Jessica Thompson and I am a junior in the Elliott School and a proud member of the IAS! Over the past two years I have come to love GW and all that Washington, DC has to offer, but I've decided to take this upcoming year to study abroad. I will be spending the fall semester in Dakar, Senegal and the spring semester in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Since high school I have wanted to study abroad in Africa. I have spent time in South Africa and Botswana on holiday and for years I've had a strong academic interest in the continent. Many of my classes at GW encouraged my fascination with Africa and I realized the best way to learn about the richness of an African society would be to go check it out for myself. I decided on Senegal for a couple of reasons; for one it is a francophone nation and I speak French, but would like to gain that extra bit of fluency, and Senegal is also a stable, democratic country that I hoped wouldn't freak my parents out too much (Luckily, I was right). I will be living with a host family, studying at the Suffolk University satellite campus, taking part in a community service internship, and hopefully traveling the country as much as possible. Next time I see you all I will have acquired some random skills- such as the ability to speak Wolof (the local language in Dakar)- but, I think I will also have a clearer understanding of some far and wonderful corners of this world. Good luck with the start of the semester!

Michael Imbergamo in Sevilla, Spain

Hola! My name is Mike, and this semester I am going to be studying in Sevilla, Spain. As a Spanish minor, I really wanted to improve my Spanish speaking skills, and as an avid sports fan, Spain seemed like a good fit for me. Location wise, Spain is pretty great since it's a part of Europe, but also so close to Africa, giving Spain a truly unique cultural experience. This semester will present new challenges, since I have chosen to do a homestay, and will be living with a Spanish family. I thought that this would really enrich my Spanish experience since I would get the chance to really immerse myself in the culture.

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