

The Political Voice



by Undergraduates for Undergraduates in the UF Department of Political Science

Volume 2, Issue 2 • Fall 2012

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Letter From the Editor

Dear Readers,

Welcome to Volume two, Issue two of the Political Voice. As many of you know, Pi Sigma Alpha has published the Political Voice every semester since fall of 2010. This semester, however, we are trying something new. With so many well-informed students and critical thinkers, we decided the Political Voice could be a biweekly publication. Our goal is to provide students with more opportunities to write and new material for readers. In addition, we are progressing towards a style of writing that is somewhere between academic and journalistic. As a student who is both a political science and journalism major, I believe it is very important that we learn to write with clarity and conciseness while holding onto our analytical roots. We hope that you welcome the new features of the Political Voice and are as excited as we are about making it great!

Thanks,

Kristen Morrill

PSA Historian

Letter From the President

Political Voice Readers,

It brings me great honor to introduce this issue of the Political Voice. As some of the brightest and most dedicated undergraduate students of the University of Florida Political Science Department, we strive to make this publication one that encompasses its namesake; we want to give a voice to the issues that matter to us most. All too often the words of today's youth go unnoticed or are degraded to mere triviality. *The Political Voice* is an open forum meant to educate others and express our thoughts on history, government, international politics and even the college experience of a political science student. The purpose of this publication is to inform and to promote an engagement within our department, as well as with the study of political science as a whole. So find an article, inform yourself, learn something new and begin a journey with one of our wonderful writers from Pi Sigma Alpha.

Sincerely,

Alexa Cipke

PSA President

Briefing: Syria, Turkey, & NATO

by Jeff Abalos

The conflict in Syria is not going away. In September, Reuters reported that the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a British-based monitoring group, estimated that over 30,000 individuals have lost their lives in the fighting and countless more have been displaced internally and abroad. The potential for the conflict to spill over Syria's borders into neighboring states is more than mere conjecture. In August, spurts of factional violence broke out in Tripoli, Lebanon's second largest city, between pro and anti-Assad elements. To the North, tensions have been simmering on the Turkish-Syrian border ever since Syrian Army mortar shells killed five Turkish civilians in the border town of Akçakale earlier this month. In response, the Turkish military has conducted several cross-border artillery strikes into Syria but has so far restrained from escalating the conflict further. The situation on Syria's northern border poses a unique problem for the United States, which has so far remained aloof from the conflict officially except for harsh words, due to Turkey's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

What are the potential implications of Turkey's NATO membership for the United States in relation to the Syrian conflict? Under Clause V of the Washington Treaty, an "armed attack against one or more of them [NATO members] in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all" and thus member states must "assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area." With the shelling of Akçakale and the June downing of a Turkish fighter jet over the Mediterranean Sea by Syria, Turkey could more than amply argue its case that it is under attack if it so wished. That said, the words "such action as it [the member state] deems necessary" are crucial for interpreting how Clause V would be invoked in relation to Syria. The United States' NATO commitments do not mandate

boots on the ground and do not necessarily commit America to being the primary spender of blood and treasure if and when NATO comes into conflict with the Assad regime. Treaty signatories often have a way of reading exactly what they want into the words of the treaties they sign. This is truly the beauty of most well-crafted multilateral agreements, and Turkey would be foolish if it attempted to force NATO members, still heavily engaged in Afghanistan, into another conflict. With Russia and China stalling any efforts towards decisive action in the U.N. Security Council, NATO may be the only avenue open for multilateral intervention of any form though. Any action is, of course, dependent on the will and desire for intervention being present in the international community, which is something that is far from a certainty. Regardless of whether a military intervention occurs in Syria, it doesn't appear as if the bloodshed will abate anytime soon. *

WHY THE CONFLICT BETWEEN SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN MATTERS

by Adelina Vasileva

For the past month and a half, the media has focused its attention on the unraveling conflict between Sudan and the year-old country of South Sudan due to talks between the two countries' leaders held in Addis Ababa.

For the past month and a half, the media has focused its attention on the unraveling conflict between Sudan and the year-old country of South Sudan due to talks between the two countries' leaders held in Addis Ababa. For the past week, I have read hundreds of pages on the matter whose sources ranged from United Nations reports to scholarly articles, in an effort to understand the history of the conflict and present it in a straightforward manner. Only after summarizing the information in a few thousand words did I realize that I had been unsuccessful in writing an article describing the conflict and the two civil wars. There were just too

Sudan and South Sudan Oil Resources



many issues, too many factors and too many actors involved to write an article that explained the conflict in simple terms. I couldn't understand why I was doing so poorly when I had so much information at my fingertips. This was supposed to be simple where all I had to do was regurgitate the facts, yet I found it harder than writing about the purpose of politics in a political theory class. After a long while, it finally hit me that it wasn't clicking because I cared more about what happened than I did about why it mattered. In the end, everything I had read was just data put into words and the problem with that is, data doesn't make sense unless people figure out how it is relevant to their life.

Until about a year ago, the conflict between the North and the South of Sudan was a civil war based on the clashing of the two cultural and religious identities within the country, the struggle for non-domination of the South, and the control of scarce and highly valuable resources that greatly affect the economy. The civil war ended with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which was formally signed by both sides on January 5, 2005. It provided a ceasefire, resettlement of the refugees, the



USAID Photo/Jenn Warren

withdrawal of North Sudanese troops from the South, and most importantly a referendum to help the South, prior to January of 2011, to decide if the people want independence from or unity with the North. In the end, South Sudan became officially recognized by the United States as an independent country in July of 2011 and it seemed like everything was great. Unfortunately, this isn't the case. According to one of the reports from the United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA) from 2006, over two million civilians in the South were killed during the second civil war from 1983 to 2002, and over four million have been displaced, with five hundred thousand fleeing the country. The economy has also suffered from a decrease of foreign involvement in the country due to civil rights violations committed during the wars, the destruction of infrastructure due to fighting, as well as the redistribution of human capital from production to fighting.

This then brings me to my initial question of “why does all of this matter right now?” The short answer is because the conflict is not over. Instead, it has just taken a new form and become more complicated than before. Now the issue is not between two regions in the same country but between two countries. If the civil wars between the South Sudanese decentralized insurgency, and the almost equally disorganized North Sudanese government, the prospects for a similar war between the armies of two countries would be horrifying. Things become even scarier when you consider the fact that the conflict has become more complex since the secession of the South. Now there are issues over borders, the rights of Southerners left trapped in Sudan and vice-versa, oil from the fields in South Sudan getting processed in plants in Sudan and the ownership of regions like Abyei (which can become the new Kashmir). Such a war will not only have an influence on the

two countries, but also on the surrounding African states. It will result in an influx of refugees who put a strain on the economy, deplete already scarce resources, can carry diseases and there is a danger that the conflict can spill over the border creating unrest in the rest of the area. The conflict between Sudan and South Sudan will definitely reduce investments in both countries. In the short run, this could benefit surrounding countries. In the long run, it could decrease foreign investment in the region as a whole due to it being perceived as unstable. This will additionally affect the international community because an intervention will eventually be necessary. Whether through humanitarian or military efforts, this will cost a great amount of money to states not directly involved in the conflict. *



Pan-African News Wire

Election 2012

Firing Big Bird SESAME STREET Public Media in the United States

by Frances Chapman

"I` like` PBS. I` love` Big` Bird..."

But I`m not going to keep on spending money on things to borrow money from China to pay for." With these words spoken by Mitt Romney in the first presidential debate of the election cycle, the concept of "firing Big Bird" quickly fueled a heated exchange about the role of public media within American society. Supporters of President Obama quickly used social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook to paint Gov. Romney as unnecessarily cruel, while the official campaign also displayed the statement, "Save Big Bird! Vote Democratic" on their website, according to the Washington Post. On the campaign trail, Gov. Romney countered that President Obama was focusing on a trivial idea when more important issues were at stake. However, while both campaigns have focused on the ideological factors that determine their stances, little attention has been given to the precise role the government plays in public media.

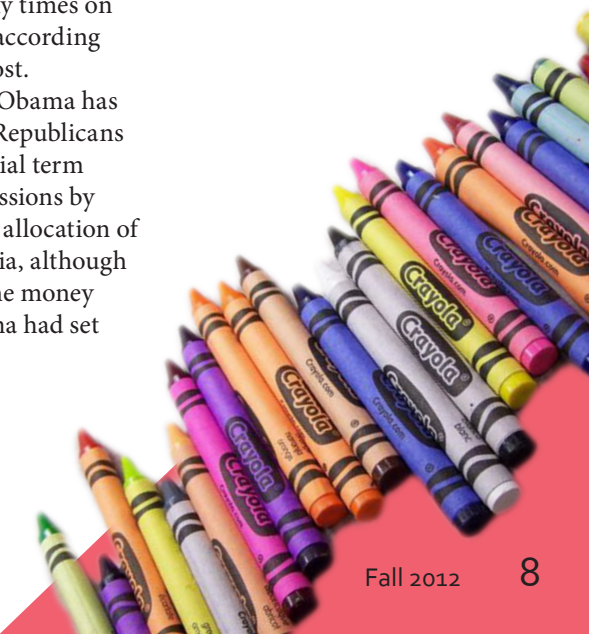
As a part of President Johnson's Great Society Program, the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 was signed into law with the purpose of encouraging "the growth and development of public radio and television broadcasting, including the use of such media for instructional, educational, and cultural purposes," according to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting website. This legislation established the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) as a nonprofit corporation, and led to the creation of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR), which are allocated funds by the CPB. According to the CPB, the majority of funding for these nonprofit groups comes from private donors, philanthropic organizations and membership fees. However, the next two years, 445 million dollars will be allocated to the CPB to be dispersed to PBS, NPR and other bodies, amounting to roughly .012 percent of the Federal Budget, according to propublica.org.

While the funding of public media is currently a divisive topic within the public discussion, at the time of the creation of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, Republicans and Democrats both supported the legislation passed it with 65 percent of the vote, according to govtrack.us. This provides a stark contrast to current legislation addressing public media, such as a recent House Bill in 2011 that banned all Federal funding of NPR (which at the time amounted to roughly 5 million dollars.) Only seven Republicans voted "no" on this piece of legislation and all present Democrats voted "no," according to the Washington Post.

The current election cycle has allowed this topic to, once again, be brought to the forefront of national debate as a means for the candidates to tout their proposed means of securing the country's future. Gov. Romney stated the original "Big Bird Comment" in reference to his plan to "stop the subsidy" he feels is given to PBS, as part of his plan for bolstering the economy. According to propublica.org, this highlights his desire to remove what he considers to be unessential government programs. President Obama, on the other hand, has focused more on painting Gov. Romney's methods as trivial and unnecessary. Simultaneously, President Obama is dismayed by Democrats who feel the issue has been raised too many times on the campaign trail, according to the Huffington Post. However, President Obama has compromised with Republicans during his presidential term and has made concessions by minimally reducing allocation of funds to public media, although it "retains most of the money that President Obama had set

aside for public television and radio stations," according to the Los Angeles Times.

Regardless of the approaches each candidate has taken to this issue, Sherrie Westin, executive vice president and chief marketing officer of Sesame Workshop, has stated that most of the program's funding is from philanthropic organizations. She also said that a complete reduction of public funds would not be "kill Big Bird," a point which has been seemingly misrepresented by both candidates. This might come as a relief to the millions of American children who enjoy Big Bird, Elmo and all of *Sesame Workshop's* familiar characters.*



Cuban- Americans Lagging Behind Since 2008: A Florida Election Issue

By *Andy García*

I came to the United States as a refugee in March 27, 2009, a month before my seventeenth birthday. I was born and raised in Havana, Cuba. Every year, the United States grants 24,000 visas to Cubans, who after arriving in America are allowed to stay as permanent residents and later on naturalize as United States citizens. Upon my arrival to the United States I went to live to the city of Hialeah, located in Miami-Dade County. Hialeah is one of the most populous cities in the state of Florida, with a population of 224,669 people, of which 75.12 percent are Cuban born. I remembered that when I came to America my mother did not have a car until after five and a half months from our arrival day. Due to that, I had to walk very early in the morning everyday to Hialeah High School and then come back at around two or six, depending on if I had afternoon classes to take that day. On my way to the school and on my way home, I encountered many political signs with bolded names desperately calling out for a vote. What always intrigued me was that every sign, without exception, had an elephant printed out on the lower right corner. At the time I was too busy learning English and figuring out how to survive in a foreign country, plus we did not have Internet or a computer at home, so I neglected my curiosity and went on with my life without knowing what the elephant meant. But of course, a resident of Hialeah was required to know what the elephant stands for. Soon, I learned that the elephant is the symbol of the Republican Party. According to the Center for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies, 76 percent of Cubans residing in Miami-Dade County, not only Hialeah, are strongly Republicans.

My family was not the exception to that rule. Since Hialeah and Miami-Dade as a whole is so politically homogeneous, not many people are pushed to question their party affiliation. However, here at the University of Florida I can see that my political affiliation is not shared by the majority, and for the first time I have felt confronted and challenged to defend my opinions in a more alien environment. In this article I want to clarify the myth that new generations of Cuban-Americans are forgetful about the Communist past in a totalitarian country and that our voting preferences are slowly moving towards a more centrist or leftist inclination. There is sufficient evidence proving that Cuban-

Americans remain a dominant, cohesive political force that stands with the Republican Party. Furthermore, I propose to look at other factors that are commonly neglected by many when trying to explain why Florida elected Obama over McCain in 2008, and why Obama may have a real chance to win Florida in this oncoming presidential election.

I think that before anybody goes any further on reading this article, you should ask yourself, why should I as a Floridian, care about the voting preferences of Cuban -Americans? To answer the question shortly, according to the Pew Hispanic Center, Cuban -Americans are the highest number of naturalized American citizens among all Hispanics in the United States (74 percent), surpassing Mexican

Americans by a margin of two percentage points. This is due to a relaxed immigration policy that essentially says no Cuban is ever illegal in the United States. In other words, it does not matter how a Cuban reaches America, either by sea on a raft, in an airplane or walking through the Mexican border. Once stepping onto US soil, the Attorney General of the United States grants Cubans a permanent residence card. The second thing you should know by now is that acquiring citizenship allows a person to vote and have a say in who is going to sit in the White House and Congress. Because of Florida's proximity to Cuba, most Cubans have settled in this beautiful sunshine state. (Only 90 miles away, it is faster to go from Havana to

Miami than from Havana to Santiago de Cuba). Cubans are the majority of the population in four counties in the state of Florida: Miami-Dade, Broward, Hillsborough and Palm Beach. But being a citizen alone does not guarantee that someone is going to exercise his or her rights and duties. However, as evidence shows, voting turnout among Cuban-Americans reaches 84 percent, which is impressively high, even when compared to European Americans. To have it resumed in one sentence, you should care because Cuban-Americans have determined presidential turnout in the state of Florida in the past.

So why are most Cuban-Americans Republicans? Those who are fomenting the myth that our community is slowly moving towards a centrist or leftist position are the same who answer this question with one sentence. They argue that we are Republicans because, in the year 1961, United States president Kennedy denied CIA assistance to ground invading forces during the Bay of Pigs invasion. In this incident, a large group of exiled freedom fighters attempted to depose Castro's regime. Political analysts and military strategists agreed that CIA support would have resulted in a defeat of Castro's forces. Despite having Kennedy's consent to invade Cuba, by the end of the invasion the president decided to back off from the plan and ordered the CIA not to support the exiled forces. The reason behind Kennedy's decision was very clear; not to damage the image of the United States before the international community because everyone knew that the US government was providing assistance to rebel exile organizations in south Florida. The Cuban-American community felt immensely betrayed. From that moment on, Cuban -Americans boycotted Democratic candidates in every successive presidential election. Those who support the myth discussed in this article advocate that the new generations do not share these memories. Instead we care more about other issues rather than reviving wounds from the past.

On the other hand, I argue that no Cuban-American ever voted based on revenge for Kennedy's inaction. Surveys conducted by the Cuban-American National Foundation indicate that those who have any knowledge of the Kennedy's incident, are Cuban- Americans sixty five years or older who arrived during the first immigration wave. Moreover, every expatriate community from communist countries have always identified more with the values promoted by the Republican Party. They support reduced government, strong military and free-market capitalism, even if this entails social and economic inequalities. For example, Korean Americans and Vietnamese Americans are mostly registered as Republicans. My personal experience has showed me that the reason why I, my family and friends feel attracted to Republican values has more to do with our experiences in a totalitarian country controlled by a supposedly "benevolent government" and our fears of the use of the word equality by politicians. Not too long ago, I was arguing with a friend of mine. I remember telling him that most Cuban-Americans I know believe inequality to be good, and instead of trying to get rid of it, we should only try to reduce it. Capitalism cannot exist without inequality, and after all, everything we are trying to do aims to preserve and enhance Capitalism in America, not to get rid of it or to replace it. The number one reason why Cubans leave Cuba



Café Versailles, a Cuban Café in Little Havana, is a popular spot frequented by presidential candidates during election time.

is because Socialism has quite simply failed.

As of today, there are four Cuban-American members of the United States House of Representative, two senators, the former chair of the Republican Party and also a former Florida senator, former secretary of Commerce, among other high ranking officials. All of them have one thing in common; they belong to the Republican Party. These groups of politicians form one of the most powerful ethnic lobbies in Congress. All Cuban -American politicians, most of who haven't been to Cuba, direct their careers toward securing a position of political power from which they can push for regime change in the island nation. The Chairperson of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs is Cuban- born representative

Ileana Ros-Lethinen. She basically tells Secretary of State Hillary Clinton what to say when talking about Cuba and how to keep Cuba in the list of countries that sponsor terrorism despite no factual evidence ever found by the Department of State in support of this accusation. Keeping Cuba in the list serves as an excuse for maintaining the trade embargo, which has been condemned by the United Nations General Assembly in many occasions. The last example I intend to show comes from senator Marco Rubio's tenure in Congress so far.

Continued on page 19.



Cuban-Americans rallying in downtown Miami. The sign reads, "To witness a crime and do nothing, is the same as committing the crime."



Cuban-American Senator Marco Rubio speaking to a crowd of Cuban Republicans in Hillsborough, FL.

Following the Money: U.S. Foreign Aid

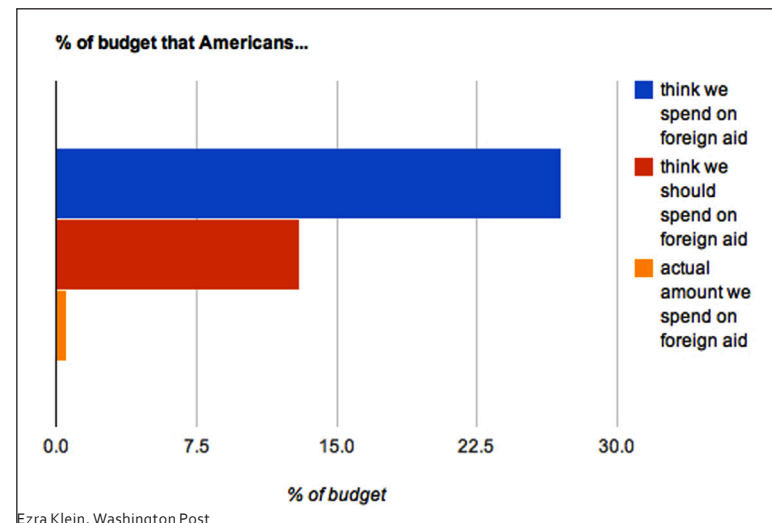
by Dillon Clancy



element of the U.S. government's approach to this, and foreign aid has been an integral part of that policy since the implementation of the Marshall Plan following World War II. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the primary instrument of U.S. foreign aid policy, describes their mission as "...furthering America's interests while improving lives in the developing world." Emphasis mine. This isn't meant to undermine the positive impact that American aid dollars have on the lives of millions of people across the developing world. However, I think it's important to make it clear that the United States Government gives aid money with the goal of fulfilling its purpose to protect the American people, not out of a sense of bleeding-heart altruism that ignores the reality of the problems we face at home.

The countries that receive the bulk of America's foreign

aid money are a reflection of this emphasis on advancing America's foreign policy goals. In FY2011 the top recipients of U.S. foreign aid were, in order from greatest to least: Israel, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Egypt. Those countries received 2.9 billion, 2.6 billion, 1.8 billion and 1.65 billion dollars respectively, accounting for nearly 30 percent of U.S. foreign aid spending in that year. The motivations behind giving aid to these nations are obvious. Achieving a stable Afghanistan and Pakistan have been perhaps the preeminent foreign policy goal of the last decade and ensuring a stable Middle East while ensuring the security of Israel has been U.S. policy for even longer. The remainder of the funds go to over one hundred nations scattered across South America, Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe to secure vital American interests, promote democracy and economic



Ezra Klein, Washington Post

In light of the economic troubles the United States is still experiencing in the wake of the Great Recession, many Americans are asking why the United States government spends so much money on development overseas rather than focusing on rebuilding at home.

First off: there is a significant amount of misunderstanding when it comes to how much money the U.S. government hands out in aid each year and what that aid is supposed to achieve. Here's a hint: it isn't that much, and it's not really about altruism.

A 2010 poll conducted by the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes asked its respondents, "What percentage of the federal budget goes to foreign aid?" The median response was about 25 percent. In reality, during fiscal year 2011 the U.S. government spent about 32 billion dollars on foreign aid. Thirty-two billion is not an insignificant sum, but it was less than 1 percent of the nearly 3.4 trillion-dollar-federal budget and a drop in the bucket compared to the 800 billion dollars spent on security or the approximately 1.15 trillion dollars that went to Social Security and Medicare in that year.

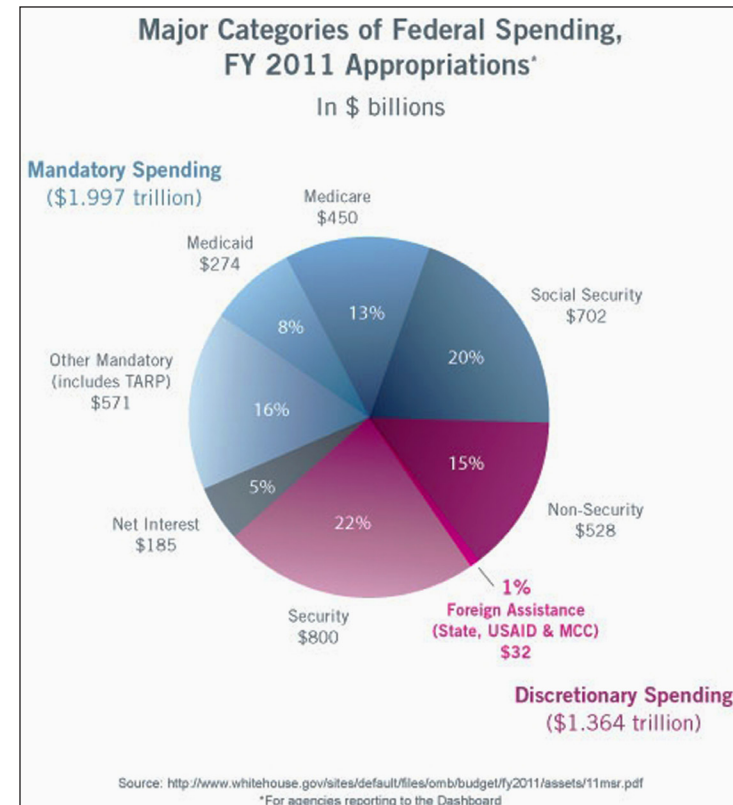
The ultimate purpose of any legitimate government is to ensure the security and prosperity of its citizens. Foreign policy is a key

development and relieve human suffering.

Foreign aid advances American foreign policy in a few ways. It has always been underpinned by the prevailing security interest of the day; during the Cold War the U.S. used its foreign aid as a tool to counter Soviet influence in the developing world, and in the post 9/11 era, it has been used to counter radical Islamic terrorism around the world and maintain the global American hegemony that has followed the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Related to the clear focus on national security is the use of foreign aid to advance and protect American economic security. Funds for projects in the developing world that build up those countries' economies result in the opening of new markets for U.S. trade, improving the U.S. economy and building positive relationships with those countries.

The most high-profile American foreign aid projects are the humanitarian missions that the U.S. engages in, such as the relief effort for Haiti following the 2010 earthquake. While few people would object to these missions on principle, and they are indeed cited as "the least contested purpose of aid by the American public and policymakers alike" by a 2009 Congressional Budget Office report on foreign aid, people should be aware that there is a serious policy goal behind these actions that goes beyond our concern for our fellow man. Power in the international system is not confined to military might. The most successful great powers are effective wielders of "soft power," an intangible feeling of goodwill and support from the international community. In an ever-increasingly interconnected global system, being able to marshal support for your policy goals and enlist the help of other nations in achieving them is highly valuable. Using the vast resources of the United States to help other people in need is both noble and supportive of the more tangible side of U.S. foreign policy. *



Source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2011/assets/f11mr.pdf>
*For agencies reporting to the Dashboard



by Frances Chapman

In late September, Egyptian citizens were horrified to find murals depicting revolutionary images and slogans from the Arab Spring whitewashed by the Egyptian government. These markers of Egypt's recent transition into Democracy were located near Tahrir Square, the site of protests toward the regime of Hosni Mubarak in early 2011, according to the British Broadcasting Corporation. However, as National Public Radio reports, artists flocked to the wall to display their disapproval of the actions of the government through repainting it. Artist Doaa Okasha said, "It's our history there. This wall explains a lot of what happened in the last months, and it's very important to us. They easily come and erase everything, and we don't accept that."

The images that Egyptian citizens were vigorously defending were demonstrations of their opposition to the government of Hosni Mubarak, toppled in early 2011. According to a National Public Radio interview with Egyptian novelist Alaa al-ASwany, many people in Egypt saw the potential

for the citizens to remain in their restricted state through Egypt's transition to democracy. They feared that remnants of Mubarak's regime, including the police force and corrupt judges, would never allow the people to have free and fair elections. However, Egyptians, in the ancient land of pharaohs, had their first countrywide election in May of 2012. According to National Public Radio, a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood said, "We feel like a bird that was trapped and it has been set free." In celebrating the election of Mohamed Morsi, Egyptians once again returned to Tahrir Square to celebrate their collective struggle for democracy and success.

Although Egypt has crossed a threshold in its transition away from autocracy, clear political divisions are still evident within the country. The role of the Army, a remnant of the Mubarak regime, was still pertinent within Egypt's government. Until August, they retained the right as the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) to exercise "legislative and executive powers including the ability to veto

any article in the drafting of the country's constitution," according to the British Broadcasting Corporation. This was recently overturned by President Morsi, demonstrating a clear show of power and his intent to restrict the past governing bodies of Egypt, according to an article by the BBC's Shaimaa Khalil.

However, Morsi has not met all expectations. He had hoped, within the first one hundred days, to make significant improvements in the country's problems, including food and water shortages. According to the BBC's Khalil, these situations have yet to reach satisfactory levels for the Egyptian people. Furthermore, while he recently pardoned the protestors of the Mubarak regime early this month, giving hundreds of Egyptians the possibility of escaping negative consequences for their actions from 2011, he later allowed supporters of the old Mubarak Regime to be released in a trial that left many Egyptians dissatisfied. These are the same people who engaged in the "Camel Battle," a violent incident between supporters and protesters of Mubarak. Due to this action, Egyptians will this time be planning a protest of Morsi and his actions within his first few months, according to the Associated Press.

From President Morsi's actions within the first portion of his term, it is evident that Egyptians are still dissatisfied with their government and are turning to public demonstrations to voice their complaints. While many Egyptians were appalled by the covering of their murals, the Egyptian government still recognizes what Tahrir Square symbolizes for its citizens. It is asking the public for its opinions on how to best commemorate the area, according to National Public Radio. Although Egyptians were unable to see all of their hopes for the new government become actualized, an Egyptian woman said to the National Public Radio, "There'll be some ups and downs, I believe. But it's definitely better than what we've been through for the past 30 years." Regardless of the pace of progress, it is evident that Tahrir Square will remain a symbol of what Egyptians have achieved, and how they hope to continue crafting a more successful nation. *

The UK's Growing Alienation: David Cameron May Veto EU Budget

By Melissa-Melody Marcan

British Prime Minister David Cameron did not exaggerate when he recently told the BBC, "[P]eople in Europe know I mean what I say. They know I'm capable of saying no." Mr. Cameron has given us a taste of this attitude last year when he vetoed the EU-wide treaty establishing a fiscal union. The treaty was devised to coordinate budget policies and to penalize states that violated these policies. However, Mr. Cameron's veto contributed to the fact that the fiscal compact is now only applicable to signatory states, not to the EU as a whole. Now Mr. Cameron is threatening to use his veto once again, this time against the EU's 2014-2020 budget.

The EU's new budget negotiations have begun, and according to the BBC, Mr. Cameron has made it clear that he would not hesitate to veto it if "massive increases" are proposed. In fact, Mr. Cameron is a strong advocate of two separate EU budgets. In a recent BBC interview, he said that "[T]here will come a time [...] where you're going to need to have two European budgets - one for the single currency, because they're going to have to support each other much more, and perhaps a wider budget for everybody else."

However, Mr. Cameron's readiness to veto the budget needs to be viewed in context. Not only does the UK contribute more to the EU budget than it gets out of it, but Cameron is also facing a



lot of pressure due to negative opinion polls and critics within his own party. According to the Tagesschau, a prominent German news source, Cameron is struggling with vehement EU critics within his own party. Adding to this is Great Britain's current recession. According to reports from the Tagesschau, Great Britain's general government deficit reached eight percent last year and will more than likely increase. The EU treaties, however, allow for a maximum government deficit of only three percent.

Overall, Great Britain seems to distance itself further

and further from the EU. After Mr. Cameron's veto last year, the Tagesschau reported that the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, a German Social-Democrat, expressed grave concerns over Great Britain's increasingly anti-EU stance. Schulz rightfully predicted that the anti-EU advocates would increase pressure on Cameron, which has become obvious with this current EU budget veto threat. Negotiations over the next few weeks will determine whether the crisis within the crisis can be contained. *

The Venezuelan Presidential Election

by Corrado Minardi

On October 7, presidential elections took place in Venezuela. In this occasion, incumbent president Hugo Chávez was running for reelection for the second consecutive time. Chávez was first elected president in 1998 and was re-elected in 2006. Since then, he has profoundly transformed Venezuela in an attempt to implement what he calls "21st Century Socialism." However, the real goals and meaning of this project are vaguely defined and are actually unknown to most Venezuelans. Moreover, in 2009, Chávez proposed a referendum to amend the constitution in order to grant consecutive and unlimited reelection to all publicly elected officials, which allowing him to run for reelection again this year.

Earlier this year, the opposition group, united under the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), had a primary election in order to select the opposition candidate who would run against Chávez in October. Henrique Capriles Radonski, governor of the state of Miranda, and one of the largest in Venezuela, won by a clear margin.

In the last years Chávez has been facing a lot of criticisms.

Most of the country undergoes daily blackouts which tend to last several hours. Also, the mounting inflation has reduced the purchasing power of Venezuelans, while basic products, such as milk, sugar or cooking oil have become increasingly scarce. According to the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, Venezuela's crime rates have soared, making the country one of the most dangerous in the world. Chávez's administration



has failed to address the severe housing deficit affecting millions of Venezuelans. Nevertheless, Chávez has full control of the resources of the state which he made use of in his campaign and were fundamental for his eventual success.

At the same time, the opposition put up a well assembled campaign based on the motto "Hay un Camino" (There is a way.) The campaign of Capriles made reaching remote parts of the country a priority. According to Capriles' campaign manager, Armando Briquet, he visited over 300 small towns, areas where Chávez normally wins, and in some cases even visited people house by house. This is a new way of campaigning, especially for the opposition, since they used to rely on the voters in big and medium sized cities, which is also where most of the campaigning would take place.

As the election approached, the feeling was that the race could go either way. Respected pollsters predicted a very close race with a possible difference of around three points. Nevertheless, what could be considered a war of numbers was also happening with heavily

biased pollsters on both sides, giving both candidates an extensive lead and contributing to build up public tension in Venezuela.

Nevertheless, the official results that came out on October 7, were very clear. According to the National Electoral Council, Chávez received a total of 8,136,964 votes, which equals to 55.25 percent of the votes, and Capriles got a total of 6,499,575 votes, or 44.13 percent. All of this with an impressive turnout of 80.67 percent. This means that Chávez won comfortably. However, the opposition showed significant progress. It reduced the 26 percent point gap, by which they lost the presidential election in 2006, to an eleven point difference. It is also important to mention, that the opposition accepted the results of the election without complaint. Some isolated groups staged small protests arguing that Chávez had committed fraud, but these claims were dismissed by the leaders of the opposition.

This electoral result can be interpreted in many ways. On one hand, it is clear that Chávez still enjoys widespread support, especially among people from the lower classes. However, we

have also seen an opposition whose political discourse has turned into an actual project for the country. We have seen their number of supporters increase continuously. However, one thing is clear; Chávez is looking ahead to six more years in the presidency. This period of time seems more than enough to allow him to consolidate his project for the country, since he already has control over the rest of the branches of government. On the other hand, the opposition has re-assembled under the leadership of Capriles, and the recent improvement of their electoral performance might leave them in a better position for the upcoming elections. The gubernatorial elections coming up on December 16, might give the opposition a chance to secure more political power in various regions, or it might be a chance for Chávez to recover some of the key states that now are now in control of the opposition. This will be an interesting occasion to see whether Chávez can translate his recent electoral victory into that of his gubernatorial candidates, or whether the opposition can overcome their recent defeat and stay united to achieve a much needed victory. *



Public Policy

SHOULD WE LOWER CORPORATE TAXES IN THE UNITED STATES?

By Brandon Scott

The current corporate tax rate in the United States is 35 percent. When comparing this tax rate to other countries of the developed world, the United States has the second highest corporate tax rate in the world. According to usdebtclock.org, as of October 11, 2012, the United States will have collected over 280 billion dollars in corporate tax revenue. This is a huge part of U.S. tax revenue every year and; if we are currently facing a debt crisis, why would we lower the corporate tax thus decreasing revenues? The answer to this question is very simple. Most U.S. corporations do not pay even close to the full 35 percent tax rate. Fareed Zakaria wrote in Time magazine that 115 of the companies in the S&P 500 paid less than 20 percent in tax over the last five years, and 39 companies paid less than 10 percent. All a 35 percent corporate tax rate does is scare away potential new corporations from beginning operations in the United States. When firms can set up operations in Ireland with a 12.5 percent tax rate without fancy accounting tricks, why would a company want to set up operations in the United States at a tax rate of 35 percent?

In the past, companies have been willing to open in the United States despite the tax rate for many reasons. The United States was a large source of skilled labor. Being a large consumer base attracted companies to the country to decrease shipping costs. With China providing more skilled laborers for lower prices, and shipping costs decreasing all over the world due to new technology, the United States is no longer an inherent attractive location for corporations to set up operations. For this reason we must create policies that attract corporations to the United States.

The Obama administration has proposed a decrease in the corporate tax rate to 28 percent, which would put the United States in the middle of the pack with regards to corporate tax rates in the developed world. This would be a good start, however, why not go lower? Why not make U.S. corporate tax rates one of the lowest in the developed world? A decrease in corporate tax rates would lead to more jobs, which would mean more revenue from income taxes, which make up the largest portion of tax revenues.

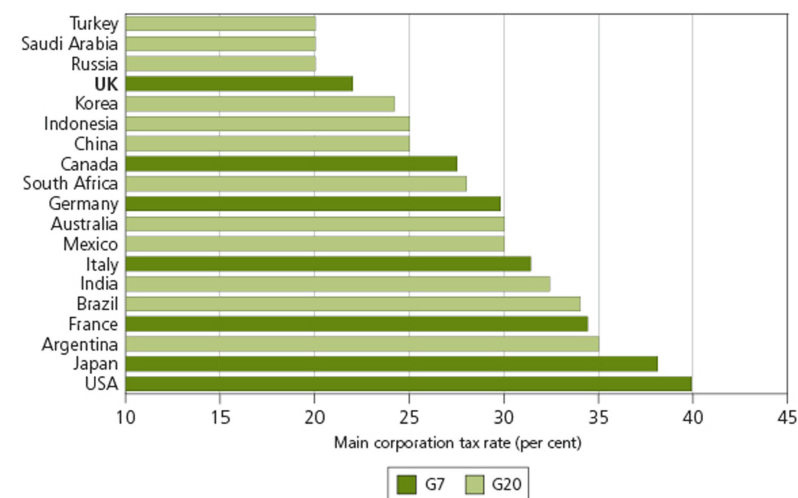
My proposal for corporate taxes varies by sector. For corporations that provide services, and financial corporations, the corporate tax rate would be between 20 to 25 percent. For industrial companies, technological companies and pharmaceutical companies, the corporate tax

rate would be between 15 to 20 percent. Why the differences? The companies in the 20 to 25 percent bracket would most likely have lower startup costs and are least likely to create a lot of new jobs. The companies in the 15 to 20 percent bracket have higher startup costs and have the potential to create many more new jobs. One of the catches though, with regard to this proposal, is that all exemptions and loopholes that corporations have used to skip out on paying full corporate tax in the past would be abolished.

It is becoming more evident that the U.S. lags behind other countries in the sciences and in math. Considering these are huge parts of the modern day economy, it is very important to invest in educations for these areas. The corporate tax could be incredibly low and companies would not begin operations in the U.S. if we didn't have the skilled labor necessary. Therefore it is imperative that we invest in education as well.

In conclusion, we face a crossroads in this country. We can no longer rely on corporations deciding to begin operations in the U.S. without incentivizing them. For this reason, I advocate we lower corporate tax rates. The added jobs, increase in GDP and the successive increases in tax revenues from other taxes that would result from a decrease in corporate taxes, would more than make up for any decrease in corporate tax revenue if there even was a decrease. *

BUDGET 2012: Main corporation tax rates in the G7 and G20 (2014 based on announced panes)



Source: International Bureau of Fiscal Documentation database and Deloitte Global Tax Rates 2012.

This chart was originally published in Budget 2012, available at www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/budget2012

UNDERMINING THE WAR ON WOMEN

by Victoria Dokken

The war on women has been a contentious topic in this election cycle. The validity of the “war” claim is only as true as the title itself. In the same way that the war on terror can never be defined therefore won, or the war on drugs will never be finished, the war on women is an abstract concept that masks the real issues. Calling this legislative battle, which is being fought throughout the country, an abstract title, inherently undermines the seriousness of policies being enacted or those attempting to be enacted. Undoubtedly, most attention has been focused on the abortion controversy. It seems that almost five decades after Roe vs. Wade legalized abortions throughout America, the issue has still not been settled. The GOP has voiced its viewpoint on numerous

occasions by saying that abortion should indefinitely be made illegal. This extreme stance isn’t supported by the select few of the radical right, but rather the Republican presidential and vice-presidential candidates.

The most ironic part of this “war” is that the weapon of the offense is religion and the idea that life begins at conception. While you can argue the moral aspects of abortion, it still comes down to the individual choice of each woman and her body, but more importantly her future.

One idea that is supported and promoted by VP candidate Paul Ryan, as well as other GOP politicians, is mandatory ultrasounds prior to receiving an abortion. If this is not invasion of privacy in every sense of the term, I do not know what is.

Another law that has already been enacted in several states is a mandatory wait period after consultation. Upon seeing a practitioner to discuss having an abortion, the woman has to wait an additional 72 hours before being able to have the procedure in the hope of convincing the woman otherwise.

What lies behind this aim of making abortions illegal is the defunding of Planned Parenthood and similar programs like Title X. Despite the fact that only three percent of Planned

Parenthood’s function is in the realm of administering regulated abortions, the defunding of this organization continues. Doing so means women have less access to cancer screening and prevention, STD testing, and contraceptive care/information. This defunding process has already begun in eight states.

Not to mention the attack on contraceptives being covered by insurance. From a mathematical standpoint, it appears that this would be a losing battle. More than 98 percent of fertile, active women in the US have used a contraceptive in their lifetime. The proposed GOP policy would allow employers, not religiously affiliated, to opt out of contraceptive coverage due to religious or moral obligations.

Without affordable contraceptives, the chance of a woman getting pregnant increases to 85 percent in a period of a year. Not forgetting that birth control is used to cure hormonal imbalances, menstrual problems, etc. Why anyone, let alone a political party, would attempt to limit civilian access to birth control, is astonishing.

Perhaps what is more astonishing is that the vast majority of politicians in favor of making abortions illegal and defunding Planned Parenthood are the same politicians that attempt to reduce food stamp coverage across the board along with cash assistance programs. Since many of the women who seek abortions fall into the same category of women who need this assistance, there seems to be no option available.

There have also been comments made from politicians on both sides of the aisle claiming they know what is best for women. These have even gone so far as to redefine rape, or question women’s role in said action. The ebb and flow of the debate reached a peak in August when Todd Akin, a Republican Senate nominee from Missouri, provoked international backlash from stating, “If it’s a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down.”

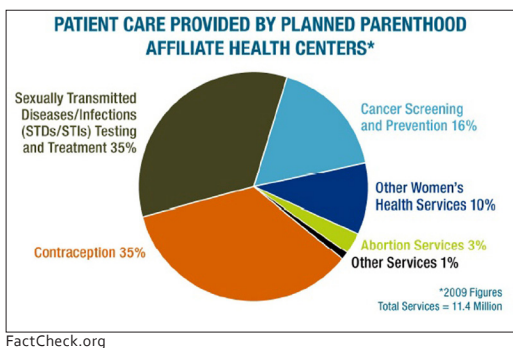
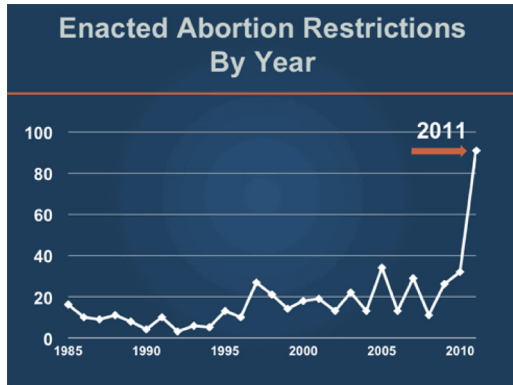
Beyond being a biologically unsound description of the female body, it is offensive to say the least. However, this comment has received more media attention than much of the aforementioned policies or policy reversals that may take place.

Did the feminist movement of the 1970s and 1980s have no effect at all? All of this legislation attempts to repeal progressive bills that give women the same freedom to their future and bodies as men have.

While many men and women continue to disregard this “war” as being a distraction from the real ills of society, like the economy and taxes, it makes one wonder what costs there are to pay for these “important issues.” In this sense we are only talking about the freedom to choose contraceptives, abortions, pregnancy or the ability to receive information about such topics, but this is freedom nonetheless.

This is not a war on women. These policies affect everyone from the teenagers who do not have resources available to make informed decisions to the children they bear. Just as these decisions affect choices that are made in the present, they also affect society’s future.

While there are attempts to undermine the importance of these legislative actions through vague language, such as the “war on women,” it must not be forgotten that the government should never be able to hold the ultimate judgment of a woman’s future over the future of society. *



Experiences



By Trevor Myers

Trevor served as a Foreign Affairs Intern in the Office of the Senior Advisor to the Secretary for Civil Society and Emerging Democracies at the U.S. Department of State.



In March 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet announced that the United States and Estonia would co-chair a Working Group within the Community of Democracies to promote a groundbreaking new effort to support leaders in emerging democracies (State.gov). On July 9, 2012, the LEND (Leaders Engaged in New Democracies) Network was officially launched in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, by the Secretary of State, the Estonian Foreign Minister, and other high-level officials during the Governing Council meeting of the Community of Democracies.

Led by the Secretary’s Senior Advisor, Dr. Tomica Tillemann, and a dedicated team of professionals, the Network brings together partners from Club de Madrid, the world’s largest forum of former democratic Heads of State and Government, and OpenText, a Canadian software company. Together they create an online platform that facilitates real-time information sharing between leaders in new and emerging democracies. The belief is that an exchange of personal experiences from leaders who have been through transitions before will assist those leaders in emerging democracies, as they work to build a solid foundation for long-lasting accountable institutions.

The LEND Network is a demand driven online platform that gives participants the opportunity to leverage the technology of Google tablets and the video conferencing abilities of Spontania

to initiate conversation on specific topics and invite others to contribute to a particular discussion. As winners of the Community of Democracies’ Democracy Partnership Challenge, Moldova and Tunisia are the first emerging democracies to participate in the Network. These two countries will voluntarily engage with leaders in countries like Poland, Romania, Mongolia, Slovakia, etc., countries that were successful in their transitions.

Within the platform, communities have been created based around key aspects of democracy: civil society, constitutional reform, media sector development, development policy, accountability mechanisms, education, human rights, justice sector reform, diplomacy, local governance, political party development, security sector reform, strengthening the legislature and government transparency. By leveraging online voice, video and text communication, along with ground breaking translation tools, the LEND Network addresses the cost and logistical barriers that have limited such efforts in the past (LEND Network One Pager).

When I started my internship in the Senior Advisor’s office in May, I had no idea

that I was coming in during such a historic and momentous period. Dr. Tillemann – an intelligent and hardworking scholar, husband, and father – did everything in his power to make me feel like a valuable member of the team. Working closely with the office’s policy coordinator, program analyst, office management specialist, public diplomacy officer and foreign affairs officer, I actively engaged in new and challenging tasks to help further the mission of the office. I also assisted with inviting participants and filtering content for the LEND Network.

After spending my summer interning in Washington, I am optimistic about the future of the LEND Network and the role that civil society will play in American Foreign Policy. As Secretary Clinton has reiterated time and time again, “I like to think of a healthy society as a three-legged stool. One leg must be open, accountable government that delivers results for its people. One must be a dynamic, competitive private sector that creates jobs and economic opportunity for people. And the third leg of the stool is civil society, people like all of you, who are working to improve the lives of your fellow citizens.” *

What I Learned From My Internship With a Local Campaign

by Ama Gyimah

Obama or Romney?

Everyone seems to be concerned with the presidential election, as they should be. TV ads, social media and the news remind us, especially as Floridians, that it is our duty to stay informed and go to the polls on November 6, to vote the right man in to lead our country as president. While all this goes on, people tend to lose sight of other important decisions that will be on the November 6 ballot, especially those pertaining to the local issues.

This summer, I was granted the gracious opportunity to work with the Andrew Morey (State House) campaign. Growing up seeing TV ads for presidential elections and campaigns, I had no idea what I was in for. When I thought of working for a campaign, I thought of phone banks and inputting data. Morey's campaign was more personal. He made it a point to knock on doors every day to talk to voters about the platform which he stands for. As an intern, I would also knock on the doors that Morey missed to talk to voters about the issues. It was quite disappointing to see the lack of young people that vote in local primary elections. Most of the people that I got the chance to meet were senior citizens. As a college student, it's pretty discouraging to think that mainly senior citizens are making

local decisions about what happens with funding for public education in Tallahassee.

During the summer, Morey also made it a point to not attempt to win voters by exploiting his family or personal life. Instead he was engaging with voters about the real issues that he would battle in Tallahassee.

Morey ended up winning that primary election against Aaron Bosshardt, and we truly believe it is because he was more personal. Many were confident that the Bosshardt campaign would win the election because it had more money. At the end it was calculated that Aaron

Bosshardt spent 8.52 dollars per vote and Andy spent 3.81 dollars per vote. I think it is safe to say that money is not everything when it comes to appealing to voters in a local election. Morey made sure to emphasize his urgent desire to make waterways better and to stand up for primary education and higher education funding within Dixie, Gilchrist and Alachua County. Although it is important to look into the presidential election this November, be sure to make a cautious and informed decision as to whom you vote for locally. It actually matters. *

I was jet lagged from over 40 hours of traveling, but happy to be in the country I came to love through my textbooks. I couldn't exactly answer the question I often got before my departure, "Well, what are you going to do there?" besides saying the generically boring response, "I will be taking a conversational Chinese class as well as a culture class." I truly had no expectations for the trip. I think my lack of expectations played an important role in the experiences that I had. It kept my mind open to the opportunities that I was presented (spending the night on a mountain that is one of the most sacred sites to the Taoist religion? Why not!). It also allowed me to experience China as it is, without any preconceived notions about what the country and my perception of it should be. After spending seven weeks there, however, I do not know if it would have been possible to prepare myself for the experience. There were more skyscrapers in the process of being constructed than the entire New York skyline could offer, in an area already teeming with high-rises. I found wide-eyed children adorably greeting you in English "Welcome to Chengdu!" and was met by complete strangers who, after ten minutes, prepared me a feast as my host family. It is simply impossible to predict everything that comes at you when you are not in the comfort of your own home. Chengdu is a city of millions of people, almost as populous as New York City, and yet I had never heard of it before the UF in Chengdu program. This realization was symbolic of my entire trip. I discovered a whole new world that I was unaware of before I studied abroad and I couldn't be happier



that I had the opportunity to experience it.

I took two classes while abroad: Conversational Chinese and Sichuan Culture. The conversational class was taught Monday through Friday by a teacher who insisted on only speaking Chinese. The Sichuan Culture class consisted of four

lectures and class trips to the Panda Research Base and Emei and LeShan Mountains, both important sites in Chinese culture. It goes without saying that I learned a lot in the classes, about both language and history. However, it was outside of the classroom that I learned the true character of the country. I

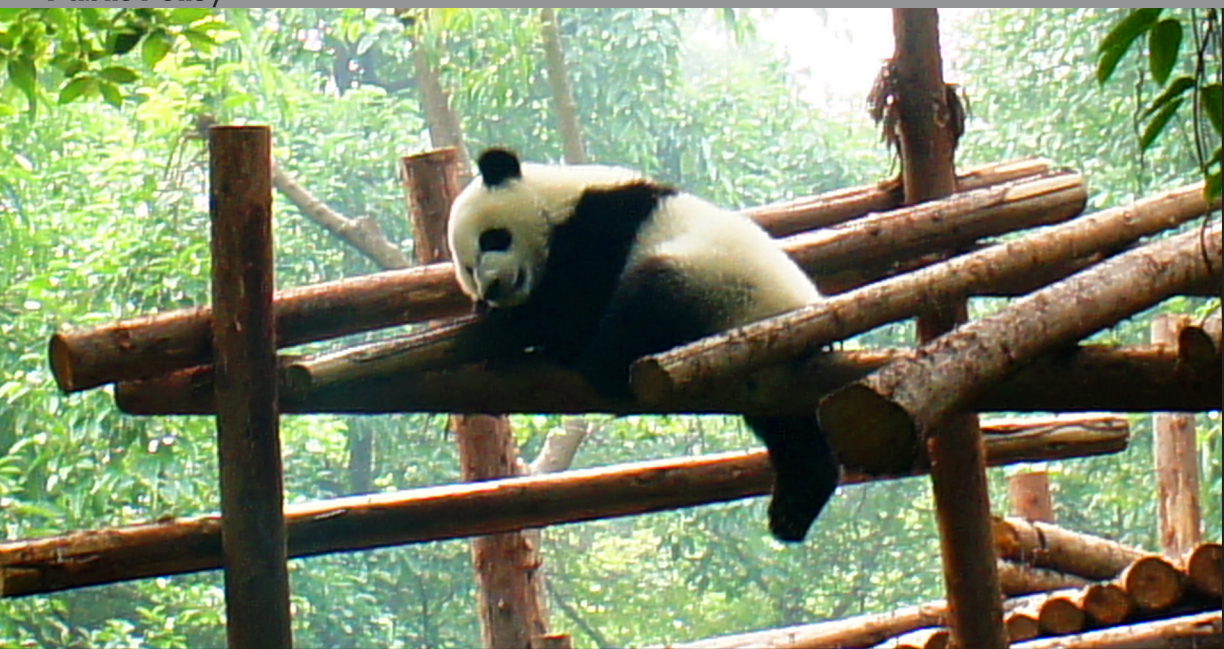
also knew that simply seeing the highly photographed sites would not be enough. Experiences from my previous travels, being ushered from Louvre to the Eiffel Tower in Paris did not lend much time to experience the Parisian life. The small cultural aspects and traditions that make up the nation and make it different from others can only be experienced by living in the country itself. The culture of eating and drinking tea, human relationships and the way of living itself is different from what I was used to. I

A Summer in Chengdu, China

by Alexandra Chopenko

Just over a year ago, all I had was a very vague idea about what China was. I knew the basic facts: a name of its leader, a very rough outline of the thousands of years of its history and its major landmarks. I had not dreamed of learning the language or seeing its world-renowned sights. A whirlwind of coincidences and decisions had me landing in Chengdu's Shuangliu International Airport on May 12, 2012.





realized that the only way to fully comprehend a country and its people is by immersing yourself, living as they live and seeing what they see. We went to karaoke, a popular spot for people of our age, lived in the dorms, did our homework in teahouses, ate late-night snacks at popular outside food stalls and went shopping with fellow Chinese students. We became friends with the waiters at the family-owned restaurant we frequented. On our own initiative, a group of us visited nearby cities and mountains and traveled to Beijing. I thought it was important to see both the countryside and the urban areas, the capital and provincial cities, the natural and man made wonders to see the diversity of the country. The anecdotes are never ending, but are all unforgettable experiences that have shaped not only my impression of China, but also my impression of the world itself. Despite the extensive traveling, a seven-week-stay is not enough to fully understand the expanse that is China. But I urge anyone and everyone not only to travel, but to truly experience a foreign country, see the world and enrich your life. *



Cuban-Americans Lagging Behind Continued

The senator was quick to secure the chair position in the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, thus putting the House and the Senate Foreign Affairs Committees in the hands of Cuban-Americans.

Another aspect linked to our party choice is religion; by far most Cubans are Catholics. However, most Hispanics are Catholics. I argue that since Cuba was the last Spanish colony in the Americas (1898), the population is more conservative and adheres more to strict Catholicism than other Hispanic populations living in the United States.

Why was president Obama victorious in the 2008 presidential race in Florida?

Quite simple because demographic patterns have dramatically changed in the state of Florida during these last ten years. The state of Florida has seen a growing number of Central American and mostly Puerto Rican immigrants move into the state. Historically, only Cubans were attracted to Florida, while most Puerto Ricans settled in New York. The last data available from the Bureau of Statistics reveals that by 2010, 4.5 percent of the population in the state was Puerto Rican. To put it in perspective, there are 847,550 Puerto Ricans living in Florida, mainly in the Orlando area, Daytona Beach and Tampa. On the other hand, there are 856,007 Cubans living in the state, mainly concentrated in the South and Miami. As you can see, there are only 8,457 more Cubans than Puerto Ricans. Contrary to Cubans, most Puerto Ricans are registered as Democrats. Obama won in Orange County, Orlando with 59 percent of the votes coming from Puerto Ricans. It will not be a surprise then, if the president wins Florida in November. Now, I can assure you that most Cubans are not voting for him.

In 2008, a slightly higher number of Cubans, mostly between the ages of 22 and 40 years old, voted democrat. Lets not forget that everyone in America at that time was disappointed with the leadership of Bush and the effects of the economic crises that hit our country. That does not take into account the influence of the Spanish media headed by Univision, which was extremely biased,

favoring Democrats and supporting the “hope” message coming from Obama’s campaign. Despite the media campaign in favor of the Democratic candidate, Cuban-Americans once more voted overwhelmingly for McCain, 63.9 percent overall and 42 percent in Miami-Dade County. The last data collected by the Institute of Cuba and Cuban-American Studies at the University of Miami reports that 58.6 percent of Cubans are registered as Republicans, 20.6 percent Independents and 20.9 percent as Democrats. Lastly, what I think is impressive is the numbers of votes President Bush got from Cuban-Americans during his re-election. Bush received 78 percent in the US and 52 percent in Florida.

What can we predict for the political future of Florida?

The advantages Republicans have received from Florida in the past may be at risk today. If demographic patterns in the state continue to favor Puerto Rican population growth, we will more likely see Florida painted with a new color representing the Democratic

Party on political maps. Cuban-American politicians are having more difficulty in getting re-elected, and the new ones may find it increasingly hard to win as Republicans. However, as I have successfully proven, Cuban-Americans, even the younger generations, remain mostly Republicans and Conservatives. Our community’s influence is demising, not because a larger number of us are switching ideologies, but because we have decreased in number when compared to other fast growing populations who are competing with us for political power. South Florida is still heavily Republican and it is going to take some time before the state of Florida dramatically changes its voting behavior. The turnout of this election in November may well depend on Cuban-American votes in South Florida and in the amount of Puerto Ricans casting their votes that day. We are all going to be watching the results closely and coming up with new hypothesis to explain the change. Meanwhile, Cuban-Americans, more united than ever, are ready to vote and imprint their mark in this beautiful state that we call home. *

The Political Voice



Volume 2, Issue 2 • Fall 2012

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