

The Political Voice



by Undergraduates for Undergraduates in the UF Department of Political Science
Volume 3, Issue 1 • Spring 2013

UF | UNIVERSITY of
FLORIDA
Sponsored by Pi Sigma Alpha

Table Of Contents

1 Table Of Contents

3 Letter From The Editor

4 Letter From The President

Pi Sigma Alpha

5 Lake Wauburg Social
by Brandon Scott

Current Crises

6 Malian and France: the causation of extremism
by Mehek Mirchandani

7 Algerian hostage crisis
by Drake Castaneda

World Watch

8 An all-out action against America: the North Korean threat
by Andy Garcia

9 The new oil frontier
by Adelina Vasileva

10 Turkey and the Kurds
by Richard Vieira

11 Land in Limbo: the no-war, no-peace situation of Nagorno-Karabakh
by Ashley Inman

Public Policy

12 More guns on campuses
by Diego Sevillano

Experiences

13 Professor profile: Zachary Selden
by Abbie Schepps

14 The road to Armenia and decision for my future
by Mariam Grigoryan

The Political Voice

Kristen Morrell, Editor In Chief

Lauren Wilson & Alexia Fernandez, Art Directors/Designers

Editors

Public Policy: Darryl Arcales

Current Crises: Dillon Clancy

Experiences: Meghan Miller

PSA: Stephanie Quintao

World Watch: Richard Vieira, Jaewon Jang

Staff Writers

Drake Castaneda

Andy Garcia

Mariam Grigoryan

Ashley Inman

Mehek Mirchandani

Abbie Schepps

Diego Sevillano

Brandon Scott

Adelina Vasileva

Richard Vieira

Copy Editors

Cara Chiaramonte

Nathalie Dortonne

Alexia Fernandez

Tae Hong

Cover Illustration

Based on a Photo by

James Gordon

Department of Political Science

234 Anderson Hall

P.O. Box 117325

Gainesville, FL 32611

(352)392-0262

The Political Voice is sponsored by the
Beta Gamma chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha.



Letter From the Editor

Dear readers,

Welcome to the first issue of the semester! It has been a while since we published the last Political Voice, but we've been working hard to reorganize the publication so that it can be the best it can be. This semester, we have designated section editors, copy editors, staff writers and designers. I am so excited to now have journalism students on board the PV staff and I can't wait to see what we can accomplish together. Another new feature of the PV, is the Pi Sigma Alpha section. As many of you know, the PV is sponsored by PSA and many of our writers/readers are members of the organization. We thought it was important to keep you updated on PSA and the Political Science department in general. Unlike last semester, the PV will be published once every three weeks. Our goal is to give you great content and an enjoyable reading experience. The entire Political Voice staff has done a phenomenal job to put this issue together. We hope you enjoy this issue of the PV and look forward to reading the next.

Kristen Morrell
PV Editor and Chief



Letter From the President

Political Voice Readers,

The first issue of this semester marks a cornerstone in the Political Voice. This is the second semester of the reworked publication and I am ecstatic to show you some of our new developments as we work towards giving this institution a timely and politically aware body of work from some of the brightest undergraduate minds at UF. We have been working hard to cultivate a cohesive environment of writers, copy editors, and section editors that brings the current developments of the world and of our campus. I hope you take the opportunity here to delve into some deeply contentious issues facing the country, as well as look at the developments of the department and PSA. I am extremely proud of the effort put forward by the Political Voice staff and look forward to continuing a forum that covers the topics that political science students are grappling with on a daily basis. Like what you see and looking to get involved? If you are interested in becoming a contributing writer for our publication please email your résumé to psapoliticalvoice@gmail.com.

Best Reading!

Alexa Lipke

PSA President



Lake Wauburg Social

by Brandon Scott

We had a great turnout at our first social of spring 2013 at Lake Wauburg, where we had a wonderful afternoon eating, throwing the Frisbee, paddle boating and kayaking. The weather was perfect, which made the day that much more enjoyable! This first social was a great way for members to connect and get to know each other outside of the classroom and meetings. As the semester progresses, Pi Sigma Alpha will continue to have socials. We strongly urge you to come and get to know your peers.



List of Upcoming Events

February 27

Accent Speaker Bureau presents: Maya Angelou

PSA Bowling Social at the Reitz Union Game Room

March 2- March 9

Spring Break

March 11

CLAS Documentary Event

March 13

PSA 4th General Body Meeting (Applications Due)

April 10

PSA 5th General Body Meeting Executive Board Elections

April 17

PSA Spring Banquet

April 24

Classes End & Honors Theses due

April 27- April 30, May 1 to May 3

Final Exams

May 3- May 5

Commencement

Malian and France: The Causation of Extremism

by Mehek Mirchandani

Mali has been facing a myriad of political problems over the last year after a series of Islamic terror groups including al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Ansar Dine and Mujao took over in the northern region of the country. In January, France began military operations in Mali in an effort to try to resolve the situation and assist the country. The United States may play a role in supporting France in its endeavors in Mali, though it is unclear at the moment what that role might be.

Mali first ran into problems between January and April 2012 when the Mouvement National pour la Liberation de l'Azawad (MNLA), who were fighting for the rights of the Tuareg, a minority group in North Africa, attempted to overthrow the government in the north of the country.



According to India's "The Hindu," the Ansar Dine and Mujao have expanded their reach beyond the Tuareg minority group to include a number of other minority ethnic groups. The uprising in the North continued into the fall when the extremist groups there were using the area as a launching point for other terrorist attacks. In October, West African nations attempted to stage a military intervention; however, they have failed to do so thus far.

According to Al Jazeera, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a united group of French leaders and 15 African nations including Mali, Benin, Liberia, Niger and others gathered as recently as January 19 to discuss the deployment of African troops into the area to aid and bolster the pre-existing French troops in the region.

A military coup in Spring 2012 was launched by a group of Malian Army officers who were disgruntled by the government's handling of the crisis in the North. The last several months have taken a toll on the Malian people who are tired of their country being in turmoil; Mali had enjoyed decades of peace and democracy before this crisis.

The international concern now revolves around whether or not al-Qaeda will make Mali its new base and start attacking other nations. In addition, the human rights concerns are tremendous because these extremist groups are destroying ancient relics, stoning people to death in the streets and committing other atrocities. The country has welcomed the French intervention, and the MNLA has come out in support of its work in hopes of being able to stabilize the now war-torn country.

The current crisis in Mali can be traced back to

"The international concern now revolves around whether or not al-Qaeda will make Mali its new base and start attacking other nations."

Spring 2012 when NATO intervened in Libya and helped overthrow dictator Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi. The NATO intervention helped the rebel movement take its first steps toward a democratic Libya. However, by overthrowing Qaddafi, the entire region has been destabilized, Mali included. Qaddafi employed large numbers of foreign mercenaries in his attempt to preserve his rule. Now that the Qaddafi regime has fallen, those foreign fighters, including Malians, have returned home with military-grade weapons and training.

The work being done by the military of France at this time has been necessary, but it is incredibly risky. As recently as January 30, French troops have entered the city of Kidal, a longtime stronghold of Islamic extremism, only to find there was no resistance due to the rebels hiding in the mountainous northern region of the city. The problems faced by the region due to political instability are numerous, and it is the hope of the area's people that democracy is brought back to the country as soon as possible.

Algerian hostage crisis

by Drake Castaneda

On January 16, just days leading up to the second inauguration of US President Barack Obama, there was another event that attracted world attention. This event was a hostage crisis in the northern African nation of Algeria. At about 5:45 a.m., at a natural gas plant in the town of Tigantourine, located in the Sahara desert of eastern Algeria, two buses were leaving the housing compound of the plant when they met gunfire erupting out of the darkness.

These buses were transporting foreign workers for BP and Statoil of Norway who were working at the gas plant. The attackers were met with a forceful response from the workers' armed escorts. The attackers moved in, seized control of the compound and took all of the Algerian and foreign workers hostage.

After three days, Algerian troops launched a final assault resulting in the freeing of 650 Algerian workers and 100 foreign workers, but also in the deaths of 11 hostages during the final assault, according to a CNN report. At the time of the assault against the hostage takers, it is reported that the Algerian troops killed the last 11 militants at the plant. Thirty-seven hostages were killed in this horrific event, including three American citizens and individuals from the United Kingdom, Romania, the Philippines, Norway, Malaysia, Japan, Colombia and France.

The man who has taken responsibility for this attack is Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a commander for

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the North African Al-Qaeda affiliate. Belmokhtar called this a "blessed operation" and said, "We are ready to negotiate with the West and the Algerian government provided they stop their bombing of Mali Muslims."

It is believed and stated by Algerian authorities that Belmokhtar's and Al-Qaeda's motive was retribution against Algeria after they allowed France to utilize Algerian airspace in an offensive against a group of Islamic extremist militants in the neighboring nation of Mali.

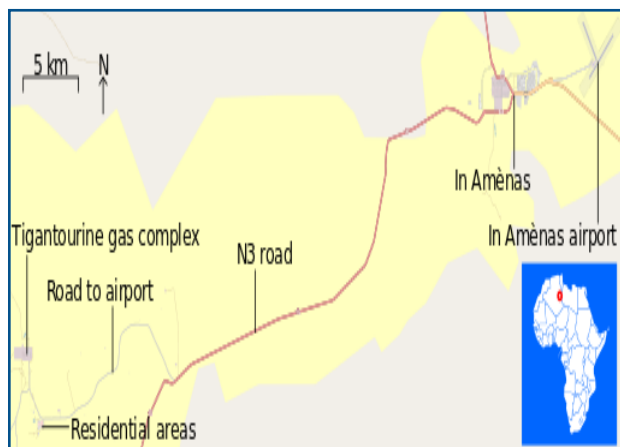
Looking beyond just the individual occurrence, this puts a large spotlight on the potential danger and instability of Northern Africa. AQIM has operated

out of Northern Africa for a number of years killing innocent civilians, taking hostages, collecting ransoms, and attempting to overthrow governments in order to reign supreme and impose their strict brand of Sharia law.

Luckily for Algeria, their government has had the upper hand in their dispute with these Islamic radicals due to its strength, stable government and ability to hold its own against these militants. This upper hand is important for Algeria in particular because it is the largest producer of natural gas on the African continent and a major supplier to Europe. This highlights the importance of a stable, secure Algeria with a government in place strong enough to hold its own against Al-Qaeda and other similar extremist militants.

President Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron have both made public statements condemning the actions of these Islamic militants, and they have pledged to work together more strongly with Algeria and other allies to avoid other similar tragedies. It is now very clear that no one can take the threat of these extremists lightly. These individuals need to be recognized as a legitimate threat with real potential to foster further unrest in this area

"The attackers moved in, seized control of the compound and took all of the Algerian and foreign workers hostage."



An all-out action against America: The North Korean Threat

by Andy Garcia

News of a potential nuclear threat from North Korea has sparked headlines around the country. CNN, ABC and Fox News debated the United States foreign policy towards the Korean peninsula and, in particular, if the nuclear threat caused an aggressive U.S. response. But, does North Korea present a real security threat and if so, what should the U.S. do about it?

The U.S.-Korean conflict dates back to the Cold War and has its roots in the colonial distribution of the Korean Peninsula by the Soviet Union. Bilateral relations between Korea and the U.S. have deteriorated since Kim Il-Sung took control of the territory north of the 38th parallel that divides the peninsula in half.

This is not the first time that North Korea has launched a long-range rocket test. The first test was conducted in 2006 and resulted in the famous six-party talks, which delivered a proposal for North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons in exchange for foreign aid. President Bush told North Korea that if the country stopped plans of nuclear activity then the U.S. would ease sanctions and remove its name from the blacklist of countries that support terrorism. Diplomatic engagements, however, have proven unfruitful when negotiating with the capital of North Korea, Pyongyang. Pyongyang's nuclear obsession is partially justified with more than 37,000 American troops stationed 30 miles away from the country's border and its past bloody history with "the American Empire." The U.S.'s efforts to ease unilateral sanctions or engage in discussions is likely to fail to persuade the North Koreans to give up its nuclear ambitions.

The U.S. has two options on the North Korean issue. The first option is to drop the harsh rhetoric and reduce the number of troops, who are perceived as a threat by the North, stationed in the demilitarized zone. This possibility means giving the North the benefit of the doubt and hoping for the best, which is that the North will not invade the South as it had done before. This choice is unrealistic as the South Korean leadership is likely not to support an action that will undermine their security. The second option is to win China's favor and continue multilateral sanctions against North

Korea, which China voted in favor of last week for the first time in history. This second choice will likely fail to bring down the regime but will prevent Pyongyang from developing a ballistic missile with warhead capabilities. It is up to the U.S. administration and the U.S. Department of State to choose the policy that will save the world from a nuclear conflict.

The North Korean issue will last as long as Communism remains the dominant ideology of the country's elite. U.S.-North Korean relations are projected to remain tense due to the nations' tumultuous history and U.S.'s role in shaping it. North Korea sees America as its archenemy and we should consider the country our enemy too. The conflict between North Korea and the U.S. reminds us that the epoch of the Cold War is not over and a nuclear threat to humanity remains imminent.



The New Oil Frontier

by Adelina Vasileva

East Africa, its Great Lakes region in particular, is about to become the new oil frontier. According to Joshua Keating from Foreign Policy Magazine, the region around the lakes can contain as much as 6 billion barrels of crude oil. To put this in perspective, the US Energy Department estimates that there are about 10.4 billion barrels of crude oil in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This begs the question of why governments and corporations are exploring such an unstable and underdeveloped region. The director of Vanco Energy, Gene Van Dyke, provides a very good explanation – the success rate of exploration in West Africa has been 50%, while in the rest of the world it is only about 10%. This gives oil companies great hope for East Africa's reserves. The region is also an attractive oil drilling location because the oil reserves are located in grabens, blocks of land that have been depressed between two faults. What this means for oil exploration is that the areas where the oil is located have identical properties. If oil is found in just one of the areas, there is a great likelihood that exploration of the other areas would be successful as well.

The Great Lakes region sounds like an extremely attractive prospect, however there are a myriad of problems that go along with it. The area where the oil reserves are located is mostly rural and underdeveloped. Right now there is only one route for oil coming into the country – from Kenya's port of Mombasa to Uganda. From Uganda it is distributed to Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. This route is highly unreliable, especially in times of instability in Kenya or Uganda. Using this route would put oil companies at the mercy of Kenyan and Ugandan governments, which have proven to be unreliable. The oil companies can build a pipeline which would be a complex venture since it will have to pass through several countries.

Another problem is that some of

the oil reserves reside in national parks and United Nations Heritage sites. Oil drilling has always grabbed the attention of environmental groups, but drilling in protected regions with fragile ecosystems is sure to cause an uproar. The extent to which objections to drilling will impede the process depends on which organizations get involved and the amount of attention these objections receive from the international community.

The companies involved, Heritage Oil in particular, can become another issue. It currently owns two blocks in the Great Lakes region and it has been linked to controversial exploration tactics. In his book *Black Canada*, Alain Denault suggests that Heritage's founder has purposely supported ethnic tensions in the regions where his company was working in order to win oil contracts. Denault focuses on the Heritage's experience in Angola

"The US Energy Department estimates that there are about 10.4 billion barrels of crude oil in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge."

with the hiring of anti-apartheid fighters to fight on the side of the MPLA.

Perhaps the biggest problem for oil companies will be the shared ownership of the lakes where the reservoirs are located. The lakes can have anywhere from two to four states owners. This is a great obstacle because the future of the oil exploration depends on the relations among the particular states. Due to the long standing rivalries and bitter history among states, those relations are unlikely to change.

Currently the Democratic Republic of Congo shares the ownership of almost all the lakes and surrounding regions (with the exception of Lake Victoria.) This includes Lake Albert, one of the most promising sites, which is shared

with Uganda. The relationship between the two has been tense for many years and considering that Uganda has invaded the DRC numerous times and brought about the Second Congo War, tension is understandable. The situation with Lake Tanganyika is more favorable even though it is owned by four different countries – Burundi, Tanzania, Zambia and the DRC – the DRC's relationship with the other three is more stable and friendlier. The case with Burundi is complicated since Burundi did not fight against the DRC, but let Uganda pass into its territory. Burundi also fought part of its own civil war on DRC soil. The DRC does not hold a grudge, however, since it is a weak state and has become one of the poorest in the region.

So what will oil drilling bring to the region? There are two extreme pathways that the future can take – improvement of state economies, infrastructure and stability in the region or refueling of old or new conflicts over resources that will cause great instability. Improvement of the socioeconomic standard of living in the region is much needed, since according to the Pole Institute only about ten percent of the people in the region have access to electricity. The advent of oil companies and the building of pipelines and oil refineries could bring jobs and higher income for many of the inhabitants. Improving the standard of living in these countries could possibly alleviate ethnic tensions. However, there have been situations where the natives usually end up being exploited by either the companies or local warlords and their standard of living barely improves.

The other extreme would be for the countries in the Great Lakes region to fall under the resource curse. This curse is defined by one or a combination of Michael Ross' five scenarios to be fulfilled in the future. The first option is for the policymakers to fail to look into the long-term prospect because they become blinded by the immediate benefits of the natural resource. Another scenario would

be a certain class becoming more powerful due to their connection to the natural resource and dominating the country. State institutions could also deteriorate and lose power because of their great focus on the natural resource. State owned companies are likely to mismanage the resource, or the state will not be able to properly deal with property rights enforcement. This is a more likely outcome than the complete reformation of the region's economic situation, however a middle ground scenario with elements from both extremes seems as a more realistic prediction.

A single natural resource is not enough to bring stability to a region with so much conflict and poverty. On the other hand, it seems unlikely that after the genocide in Rwanda that caused an

estimated 937,000 deaths, the international community would let things in the region get out of hand. In the end the exporting of crude and/or refined oil from east Africa to the rest of the world has a long way

"...the future of the oil exploration depends on the relations among the particular states."

to go. Nevertheless as we use up more and more of the oil in other regions the problems of Africa will sooner rather than later come knocking at our door. A push for stabilizing the region and improving the relations between the countries could

alleviate the oil drilling problems that will arise in the future.

Working towards extremely low oil dependency and almost complete reliance on renewable energy can be the perfect solution. However this sector of the world economy is not growing quickly enough in order to meet the East African oil deadline. Even countries that are forerunners of the renewable energy movement exhibit inadequate growth rates. According to the Institute for Energy Research, in 2012 only 9.3 percent of the energy the US consumed was from renewable energy sources. This is only a 2.3 percent increase from the value that the US Energy Information Administration gave in 2006. If the consumption of renewable energy maintains the same growth rate, oil from the Great Lakes region will come much sooner than end of worldwide dependence on oil.



TURKEY AND THE KURDS

by Richard Vieira

It is often said that those who lost the most from the drawing of a new Middle Eastern map were the Kurdish people.

The Middle East, after World War I, was arbitrarily divided up into numerous states. These newly established Middle Eastern states would not, however, be tailored to religion or ethnicity but rather to the preferences of the victors in London and Paris.

Of the diverse peoples scattered throughout the Middle East, many suffered the implications of these political lines while others prospered. As a result, the Kurds are the largest population of people without a home. According to the New York Times, over 20 million Kurds are scattered among the mountains connecting Turkey, Iraq and Iran. For decades, the regimes of these countries have witnessed the plight of the Kurdish people and have approached them in oppressive ways. According to a 2007 BBC news report, Saddam Hussein launched a brutal genocidal operation in Iraq known as "Anfal," killing over 100,000 Kurds. Turkey has also sought to silence the Kurdish opposition within its own borders in the past. In a recent article published by Human Rights Watch, Turkey was heavily criticized for abusing its "overly broad antiterrorism laws" in attempts to oppress the Kurdish people.

However, things are quickly changing in the Middle East. In Iraq, the Kurdish regional government grows stronger and looks to benefit off of its vast oil reserves. In Turkey, a foreign policy article published in January reports that peace talks have been initiated between the Turkish government and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) led by

the imprisoned Abdullah Ocalan. In exchange for the freedom of Ocalan, Turkey hopes that the PKK will disarm and begin to integrate into Turkish society. However optimistic the people of Kurdistan may be, there are definitely obstacles before them that stretch far beyond the borders of the Middle East. Earlier this month the Washington Post reported that three Kurdish activists, including one of the founding members of the PKK, were assassinated in Paris. Though it remains unknown who was behind the assassinations, the murders pose a threat to peace talks between the two parties. Some believe that it would be wise for the Turks to establish peace with the Kurdish people given the present context of the Middle East. David Hirst of The Guardian argues that, "an independent Kurdistan could be a source of abundant and reliable oil supplies, a stable ally and buffer against a hostile Iraq and Iran," since both nations are mostly comprised of and governed by Shi'ite Muslims. However, the U.S State Department still classifies the PKK as a terrorist organization and a civil war in Syria has produced factions of Kurds committed to antagonizing Turkey. If the assassinations of the activists in Paris were indeed a product of Turkish aggression, this could be yet another obstacle to peace. With a proxy war being fought against Shi'ite Muslims in Iran and Iraq and an Alawite minority in Syria, a unified Kurdish opposition could be another headache for American policy makers.

Land in Limbo:

The situation of Nagorno-Karabakh

by Ashley Inman

A young girl gazes emptily at her tattered, dirt-smeared clothes.

Her stomach growls, begging for the food that will not come.

Forced out of her home, she and her family live in a one-room shack made of mud and brushwood, where they survive on hope.

More than one million displaced persons face this scenario as a result of the 1988-1994 Nagorno-Karabakh War. During the conflict, Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-dominated region of Azerbaijan located in the southern Caucasus, voted to join Armenia. Severe violence followed: Azeris were expelled, and monoethnic areas formed as Armenian forces occupied Azerbaijan's territory, triggering years of intense battle, more than 30,000 lost lives, one million displaced people and massively depleted economies before a Russian-brokered cease-fire.

Presently, the lack of war does not equal peace. The Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, which declared itself independent in 1992, is recognized only as a de facto government. Azerbaijan and

Armenia remain teetering on the brink of war, and constant dire threats from the former result in frequent skirmishes along the border. Thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) live in miserable conditions -- according to BBC News, it is the 7th-highest per capita displacement in the international community.

Most people have never heard of Nagorno-Karabakh. As much of the world remains apathetic, the IDPs continue to live in squalor. The prospect of another war looms, and assuaging the tension seems impossible. Because Nagorno-Karabakh is diminutive, remote and lacks natural resources, it simmers in relative anonymity; the ethics involved are not enough to incentivize international support and recognition. However, the international community may change its stance as another war approaches as an unforeseen factor -- oil -- could change dynamics completely.

The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline runs through Azerbaijan. As the only pipeline in the former USSR that does not penetrate Russia, the BTC Pipeline supplies over one million oil barrels a day, provides 1 percent of the global oil demand and earns Azerbaijan about one billion USD monthly, according to Russian news source RIA Novosti. The likelihood of another war has led Azerbaijan to use its oil revenue to quadruple the size of its military since 2004.

However, the main export pipeline run through Georgia adjacent to the Armenian border, making it increasingly vulnerable to Armenian attack. As resumption of hostilities

impends, the BTC pipeline looks to be the first hostage the Armenians will take. The supply of oil in the present political and economic climate lacks elasticity, and thus at the most modest estimates, a 1 percent diminishment in global oil supply correlates to a 5 percent increase in gas prices, not including speculation.

The international community must hasten peace talks. Unfortunately, diplomatic efforts from the Prague Process to the Minsk Group has resulted in little progress. Armenia supports the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh, while Azerbaijan wants to preserve its territory and calls for the withdrawal of Armenian troops in Azerbaijan territory. This sharp dichotomy of opinions has swayed international alliances as neighboring states and potential allies are forced to pick a side.

A feasible solution comes with strategies for implementation and a simultaneous, rather than phased, initiative. An enclave of Armenians cannot live inside of ethnically differing Azerbaijan; borders must be changed in the least disturbing way possible. The solution should be to exchange Megri, a southern portion of Armenia, with western Nakhichevan, leaving Nagorno-Karabakh independent and giving Azerbaijan's Lachin Corridor to Armenia. Removing all Armenian troops from Azerbaijan will occur simultaneously, with international peacekeepers overseeing the process. The result is appeasement for all sides: Armenia maintains its paramount border with Iran, Turkey and Azerbaijan still do not share a border and the Armenian troops are removed from Azerbaijan.

Greatest of all, Nagorno-Karabakh is free: free to determine itself, free to explore the independence it has desired for so many years, and free to allow its IDPs to return home.



More Guns on Campuses?

by Diego Sevillano

State and national level of lawmakers are increasing their attempts to pass legislation that makes it easier for people to carry concealed weapons on college campuses. Conservative lawmakers continue to resist anti-gun legislation, which has gained momentum with the recent mass shootings. Forty-nine out of fifty states have concealed weapons laws. Twenty-one states, including Florida, Georgia, New Mexico and Texas have banned concealed weapons on college campuses. In another 23 states, the decision to ban guns is made at the discretion of the individual college or university. New Mexico Sen. Sue Wilson Beffort wants to pass legislations that permit college employees to carry handguns on school property. Police and security personnel are permitted to carry concealed weapons on New Mexico campuses.

Texas lawmakers, similar to New Mexico lawmakers, are in favor of looser gun laws on college campuses. Both U.S. Rep. Bill Flores and Sen. Charles Schwertner said that the pressing issues are personal protection and the constitutional right to bear arms. Georgia has placed the gun debate on college

campuses center stage due to outspoken students who are in favor of this type of legislation. Students rallied outside the Georgia House of Representatives in support of this bill that would enable them to carry guns. A local Georgia TV station, WMAZ-TV, interviewed two Georgia Tech students about their feelings on concealed weapons. "It's a good idea in terms of protection," said one," said one of the students interviewed for WMAZ-TV. "But, the kids would have to be trained with the weapon." Although there is support for legislation that allows students to carry concealed weapons on campus, the reactions remain mixed. Mikhail Calvillo, a senior at the University of Florida, said guns on campus would not provide a sense of security for students on campus. "It might scare us so much that we want to carry a gun," Calvillo said.

The push for gun-control laws has spurred from mass shootings like the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre in Connecticut that killed 26 children and adults. President Barack Obama unveiled a series of 23 executive orders related to gun control including a ban on assault weapons,

limiting high-capacity magazines and requiring universal background checks for purchasing guns. One Obama's 23 executive orders involves the development of model emergency response plans. According to Campus Safety Magazine, one in four college police departments are not prepared to handle a shooter, while 46 percent of campus public safety departments are understaffed. Obama's efforts to keep gun violence on college campuses at a minimum do not include an actual ban of guns. The president's plans have sparked responses from university presidents across the country. Emerson College President Lee Pelton sent out a letter to 900 colleagues asking for their support in pleading with Obama and the action he should take on this matter.

The National Rifle Association, a vocal critic of Obama's gun control efforts, argued against President Obama's measure and advocated for more armed guards in all schools. The NRA said that laws that prohibit concealed handguns on college campuses leave students and faculty vulnerable to criminals. Wayne LaPierre, the NRA executive vice president, said, "The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun." Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy called LaPierre's statements were the most revolting, tone-deaf statements he has ever seen.

It is certain that the debate over guns on college campuses will remain controversial. The main arena for resolving this problem are at the state and national levels, where lawmakers and leaders will have to reach an agreement on what is best for the safety of college students. As long as America's gun culture prevails, lawmakers and citizens can expect an on-going debate over the possession of concealed weapons.



The Road to Armenia

by Mariam Grigoryan

This past summer, my family and I revisited the country of Armenia after 16 long years.

Armenia is the birthplace of my entire family and the home of my first language. Before our vacation, my parents explained to my brother and I that we were going to see things that we have never seen before, that our trip would give us a new perspective on life.

Traveling outside the airport, it was hard not to notice that there was very little infrastructure and the roads consisted of rocks and dirt – my eyes were opened to the shocking revelation that the majority of the population lives below the poverty line and suffers at the hands of a corrupt government controlled entirely by Russia.

The majority of companies and businesses on the streets were Russian and nearly no major Armenian businesses existed. The entire area is void of American corporations, not even a McDonald's!

Residents were either extremely wealthy people or extremely poor; most of my family that lives in Armenia resides outside the capital city on farms. For them, running water and electricity are difficult to come by.

My parents' old college friends, however, lived on the other side of the spectrum -- they all own major companies outside the country. They live in the capital city, which is the only area of the country that is well-developed. Once you have money in Armenia, you can do anything: you can pay your way through school to make sure you graduate, and you do not have to follow any of the laws because you can pay off one of the officials.

For example, my father got pulled over for speeding multiple times. Every time, he handed the officer 10 dollars and was let go. My father has always told me stories of his childhood. When he would fail a class or get into trouble at school, my grandparents would go to the school and pay the teachers to let him pass.

People who lack ability and education run the country and have immense power because of the size of their wallets. This

is one of the many reasons Armenia will never be run efficiently. There is no sense of community when the wealthy can go off doing as they please with no regard for what is better for the country as a whole while the poor have to suffer day-to-day knowing that they will most likely never rise above poverty.

It is situations like this that motivate me to pursue higher education. I have always known that I wanted to study political science and go to law school, but after visiting Armenia I realized instead that I want to make a change in the world and in this country. I have decided that becoming an ambassador to Armenia would make a greater difference. If I someday have that opportunity, I could be the reason Armenia gains improved relations with the United States, Europe and other industrialized nations. I want Armenia to receive recognition from other nations and increase travel and trade between Armenia and the U.S. As ambassador, I would promote national interests, maintain diplomacy, organize visits and support resolutions between the two countries.

With the U.S. backing Armenia, it has the potential to grow and succeed as a country. My political science education would help me achieve this goal and my overall goal of making a change in the world. By improving foreign relations between Armenia and the U.S., I would help improve the lives of all the people living in the country. Armenia can be restored to the country I know it has the potential to be as long as it has proper representation and proper governmental officials running it. I want to make a change in the world and I have the potential to do that by educating myself and by studying political science. It is only one small nation, but it means so much to me and to my family. Even though I am just one small person, I can have as much of an influence on this nation as it has had on my family and me.

Professor profile: Zachary Selden

by Abbie Schepps

It is one thing to teach what you learn, but it is another to teach what you live. Zachary Selden, a University of Florida professor and international relations specialist, does just that. New to the teaching game, Selden came to UF in 2007. As an associate professor, he works on individual and personal research.

After graduating from the University of California, Los Angeles with a Ph.D in political science, Selden went straight into the workforce. He specialized in chemical and biological weapons at the non-profit Business Executives for National Security, working with businesses and government on the type of technology that could be useful in either sector. In 1999, Selden went to work with the Congressional Budget Office, which entailed more long-term projects on researching the expansion of NATO and the effects of economic sanctions on Iran. In 2003, Selden took his life to Brussels, Belgium, where he worked for the NATO parliamentary assembly as the director of the defense and security committee and met with heads of state in such countries as Estonia, Australia and Kazakhstan. Four years later, after some years at UF, he would return to the NATO assembly to become its Deputy Secretary General for policy. In 2010, returned to UF.

I have taken two classes with Selden and find his teaching method of using history as a base for learning international relations very helpful. I find the theory aspect of international relations to be a little intimidating, as it can be a hard thing to grasp. However, Selden makes the subject matter interesting -- he employs real life examples to make the material more understandable.

He has written a book entitled "Economic Sanctions as Instruments of American Foreign Policy." Selden is currently doing research on the changing nature of the American alliance system with a specific focus on the US-India security relationship.

The Political Voice

Volume 3, Issue 1 • Spring 2013

