



*Political Science*

*International Relations*



# Political Science and International Relations **Alumni Newsletter** July 2012

Warm greetings to Geneseo Political Science and International Relations alumni from the Department of PS/IR at Geneseo. This newsletter contains pictures and information on our April Senior/Honors dinner at the Big Tree Inn, an opinion article by Professor of Political Science Edward Drachman, bios on a number of our alumni, a description of a trip to Uganda by a current group of Geneseo students, and a short-article by yours truly on Presidential elections.

We hope you are doing well, and will remain in touch with us. We anticipate a busy year during 2012/2013. As you know, 2012 marks the 50th anniversary of the birth of the political science major at Geneseo, please consider attending our Birthday Party September 22nd (Homecoming weekend) from 2 to 4 at the Hunt Room in the College Union. We also plan to hold a number of alumni career panels for our current students this year, the Model U.N. Club and Political Affairs will remain active, and we plan to invite a number of speakers to campus. Much of this would not be possible without alumni support.

# Alumni Senior/Honors Dinner



On April 27th the department held its annual Senior/Honors Dinner at the Big Tree Inn. Approximately 60 undergraduates were in attendance, the faculty, and 6 alumni. In addition to Professor Koch's annual Top Ten Reasons to be a Political Science or International Relations Major, 25 students were inducted into Pi Sigma Alpha (the national honors society for Political Science), and 23 students were inducted into Sigma Iota Rho (the national honors society for International Relations). The award for Outstanding Senior in Political Science went to **Donna Hanrahan '12**. Donna is currently enrolled in the Bioethics program at Columbia University; she has also been accepted to Seton Hall Law School. **Elizabeth Barber '12** and **Audrey Stevens '12** were the recipients of the Award for Outstanding Senior in International Relations. **James Muller '12** was recognized for his exceptional work at the Monroe County District Attorney's office by receiving the award for Outstanding Internship. **Heather Bristol '12**, a major in both International Relations and Foreign Language

es, received the Rose Bachem Alent Award. The award for Legal Studies was given to **Johnson Lin '12**, who plans to attend Law School at either UCLA or the University of Virginia.

**Katie Becker '13** received the Ambassador Apartments award for Outstanding Student in International Relations with junior standing. Katie has studied both Spanish and Arabic, been involved in Model U.N., Geneseo Crew, College Senate, and Student Caucus; not to mention maintaining a 3.90 GPA and holding down a part-time job.

Three individuals were recognized for active involvement in Geneseo's Department of Political Science and International Relations. **Claire Bould '12** led the Political Affairs Club for the past year, was admitted to Phi Beta Kappa, and completed an Honors Thesis; **Eric Gomez '13** has been involved in the International Relations Club and the Welles Report (a student-run publication on, primarily, International Relations); **Julie Williams '12** provided tutoring, participated in mock trial, worked with the Red Cross, served as a classroom assistant, and completed an honors thesis.



Pictures from the Dinner







At Geneseo, **John McManus '94** was extraordinarily active and successful. After graduating from Geneseo, he continued on the same path--professionally successful and actively involved in his community.

John McManus received the award for "Outstanding Internship" for his work in the Monroe County Public Defender's Office, and was admitted to the National Honor Society for political science majors, Pi Sigma Alpha. He also completed an internship in the Livingston County District Attorney's Office. Outside of the Political Science Department, John worked as the sports director at WGSU, hosting a weekly sports call-in show and announcing Geneseo Knights ice hockey games. He also served as a staff writer for *The Lamron* and appeared as a sports panelist on GSTV.

Following graduation from Geneseo, John began law school studies at Albany Law School of Union University, graduating magna cum laude in 1997. While in law school, Mr. McManus was an Associate Editor of the *Albany Law Review*, the Director of the Albany Law School Moot

Court Board, and involved in the Justinian Society.

Mr. McManus began his legal career with Clifford Chance, an international law firm in New York City. From 2000-2002, he served as a confidential law clerk to the Honorable Victoria A. Graffeo, New York State Court of Appeals. John is now a member of the law firm of Harris Beach, practicing in its Albany office.

As part of the Energy and Telecommunications Industry Teams at Harris Beach, John advises clients on various legal and regulatory issues. For example, he represented a major public utility holding company before the New York State Public Service Commission in connection with the proposed acquisition of an international power generation company. With the Environmental Law Practice Group, John represents corporate and individual clients on a wide range of matters involving permitting, regulatory compliance, civil and administrative enforcement, and dispute resolution. For example, John was integral in securing the permit for the first commercial telecommunications tower to be approved under the New York State Adirondack Park Agency's "Policy on Agency Review of Proposals for New Telecommunications Towers and Other Tall Structures in the Adirondack Park."

Mr. McManus is a member of the New York State, Albany County, and Federal Communications Bar Associations. He is the co-author of "Inside the World of Residential Electricity Submetering," *New York Law Journal* (March 15, 2010); "The Impact of the Reform Act on U.S. Securities Litigation," *International Financial Law Review* (December 1999); and "Recent Developments Concerning Judicial Interpretation of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995," *SIA Compliance & Legal Division Seminar* (1998 and 1999). He has lectured on energy issues at the Business Council of New York State's Annual Environmental Conference, Power-Gen Competitive Power College, and the Annual Institute on Public Utility Law. John is a board member of the Town of Kinderhook Zoning Board of Appeals and a committeeperson with the Columbia County Republican Committee.

John has returned to Geneseo numerous times over the last several years to attend meetings of the Political Science Advisory Cabinet, the Department's annual Senior/Honors Dinner, and participated in a panel on careers following Geneseo. John also serves as a mentor at Albany Law School, and has enjoyed mentoring a number of recent Geneseo graduates attending Albany Law School.



For the past several years alumni support has allowed the department to bring a number of speakers to campus; we have also brought our successful alums back to campus to talk with our students about careers. **Sarah Sobieraj '93** combined both: she delivered an academic talk and discussed careers as well as her time at Geneseo with some of our students. Sarah is currently an Associate Professor of Sociology at Tufts University. She received tenure this past year. The title of her talk, delivered on April 4th, was "Covered: Activists, Journalists, and News in a Shifting Media Landscape." Sobieraj's research shows that activists' all-consuming media work fails to generate news coverage, undermines their ability to communicate with pedestrians, and damages the groups themselves. The talk examined why news coverage is so difficult to garner, and explored alternatives to media-centrism. The presentation closed with a discussion of the coverage of the Occupy Wall Street protests and the role of new media in activism today.

Sarah Sobieraj graduated from Geneseo in 1993, and after a year as a VISTA volunteer, enrolled in the Masters Degree program in sociology at American University,

then moved to the Ph.D. program at SUNY-Albany. She then became an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Towson University in Maryland, subsequently moving to Tufts University in Massachusetts.

Sarah Sobieraj is a specialist in media, politics, and culture. Her 2011 book, *Soundbitten: The Perils of Media-Centered Political Activism* offers an ethnographic portrait of fifty activist groups over the course of two presidential campaign cycles, revealing that while most groups equate political success with media success and channel their energies accordingly, their efforts fail to generate news coverage and come with unintended consequences. The book unravels the ways in which activists' all-consuming media work and unrelenting public relations approach undermine their ability to communicate with pedestrians, comes at the expense of other political activities, and perhaps most insidiously, damages the groups themselves. Professor Sobieraj's current major research project (a collaboration with political scientist Jeff Berry), examines the remarkable expansion of political opinion media, focusing on political blogs, talk radio, and cable news programming. She is an award-winning teacher, and her most recent publications can be found in *Political Communication*, *Social Problems*, *Sociological Theory*, *Sociological Inquiry*, *The Sociological Quarterly*, and *Social Science Quarterly*. In her free time she enjoys reading, listening to storytelling podcasts (such as *The Moth*, *This American Life*, and *StoryCorps*), talking politics, and eating cookies.

At Geneseo, Sarah played lacrosse, pledged Clio, served as an officer for Inter-Greek Council, and volunteered for Habitat for Humanity.





**John Hayden '68** lives in Towson, Maryland with Elly '70. John is a partner engaged in corporate and estate planning law matters at Whiteford, Taylor & Preston LLP. His employer for 39 years, after an Army stint and graduation from UB Law School, has offices in MD, DC, VA, DE and MI. John and Elly have a home at Loon Lake about a half hour from

Geneseo. Their son Patrick and his wife Noelle (Shiebler) are also Geneseo graduates with two children now living in Denver; as does their daughter Christine. David and his spouse and daughter live in Maryland. Never good at golf, John has been involved in education and education fundraising for many years serving on his Board of Education and as President of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education along with several education foundations serving pre-k to university communities.



**Dale Hartnett '70** lives in Geneseo and teaches Communication courses at The College at Brockport and at Monroe Community College. He organizes Brockport's annual Constitution Day celebration (an on-campus Naturalization ceremony) and an annual service learning trip to Memphis during which students work in an abandoned Black cemetery founded by former slaves in 1876.

Prior to spending all of his time on campus, Dale worked in broadcasting in the Rochester market for 37 years, most recently serving as Director of Research, Programming and Community Affairs at FoxRochester (WUHF). He holds an

MBA from Rochester Institute of Technology. Dale is married to Kathe Folts Hartnett '70. Their older son, Jeremy, is an Associate Professor of Classics at Wabash College in Indiana. Dan, their younger son, is an Assistant Professor of Spanish at Kenyon College in Ohio.

**Mark Rosenzweig '70** married Susan Friedman '69 shortly after graduating from Geneseo. They currently reside in Mount Vernon, New York. Sue and Mark have two daughters, both of whom completed graduate degrees; their older daughter is a Chaplain in the U.S. Navy. Sue retired as a Speech and Language Specialist from the White Plains School District after more than thirty years. Mark is currently in his twelfth year as an Assistant New York State Attorney General in the NYC Litigation Bureau, after spending many years in private practice following nearly nine years as a NYC Legal Aid Society Criminal Defense Attorney. In his "much too limited" spare time, Mark likes to cook, tries to play golf, gardens and attends theater.

Following graduation, **Roger Brown '71** spent three years in the military. After his discharge, he worked for Dun & Bradstreet for 20 years, leaving as a vice president. The balance of his career was spent with several mid-market and Fortune 500 companies going through significant change, including: a venture capital backed consolidator of small manufacturing facilities, an LBO, the financial turnaround of a financially troubled regional insurance company and others. He is married and has three children. Following retirement from corporate life, Roger became CEO of a YMCA experiencing financial difficulty and has been engaged in the successful turnaround of that facility. He says that Geneseo, and the Political Science Department in particular was a stimulating environment providing a platform to discuss/question issues facing political and non-political entities which provided the basis for a successful business career.

**Jim Cole '71** lives in Shawnee, Kansas, a suburb of Kansas City, Missouri, where he is the CEO for Country Club Trust Company, a subsidiary of a privately-owned community bank in Kansas City. After SUNY Geneseo, Jim graduated from Wake Forest University Law School in North Carolina. He practiced law in Winston-Salem, NC before beginning his trust career with Wachovia Bank while



still in Winston-Salem. Jim met his wife-to-be, Linda, while in law school, and in 1981, they moved to Kansas City. They have twin son and daughter, both now attending Washington University in St. Louis.



**Joseph Xavier Martin '71** is a freelance writer from Buffalo, New York. Martin has written and published short stories, a play, two novels and numerous essays. *Westward from Eire* is his first novel. *A Piece of The Banner* is his second. An illustrated collection of his short stories is now in production. After graduating from Geneseo, Martin returned to Buffalo for a career in public service. Chief of Staff to the

Mayor of Buffalo, Chief of Staff to a local Assemblyman, Erie County Commissioner of Parks & Erie County Director of Purchasing are a few of the positions he held.

**Ken Baldwin '82** currently resides in Southington Connecticut, and is a partner in the law firm Robinson & Cole LLP in Hartford. Ken and his wife, Kathleen have been married for 23 years and have three wonderful children, Ken Jr. age 20; Shane, age 17 and Katie age 14. After leaving Geneseo in 1982, Ken received his Master's degree in Public Administration at Stony Brook University and his law degree from Western New England University.

After Geneseo, **Jay S. Ovsiovitch '82** completed his Master's Degree at the American University, and his Ph.D. at the University of Nebraska. After teaching political science at Fort Hays State University, Jay pursued his JD at the University at Buffalo School of Law. A research and writing attorney with the Federal Public Defender's Office for the Western District of New York, Jay and his wife reside in Rochester, New York.

**Deb (Marsland) Teske '82** currently works as an Emergency Management Associate for the Mayo Clinic in

Rochester, MN. She retired as a Commander from the U.S. Navy in 2005. She is married with two children.

**Chuck DeWeese '91** currently resides in Burnt Hills, NY with his wife Kelly and three children. After graduation he received his Masters in Public Administration from SUNY Albany and became a Special Agent with the US Department of Transportation. He eventually became a Field Office Supervisor and Division Administrator. In 1997, Chuck took an appointment as the Assistant Commissioner for the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee where he continues to work. His education at Geneseo prepared him well for each of these positions. His oldest is graduating high school this year. He enjoys his boat and continues to coach and play soccer.

**Matt Hurlbutt '91** serves as Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at Greater Rochester Enterprise with responsibility for attracting new business to Rochester. In addition to managing organizational strategy, Matt works directly with corporate executives and national site selectors as they consider locations for investment and job creation. In 2001, Matt was named to the "40 under 40" list by the Rochester Business Journal, an award given to salute individuals with outstanding leadership and accomplishments for service in their jobs and the community at large. He is a member of Pi Alpha Alpha, the National Honor Society for Public Affairs and Administration. He holds a Master of Public Administration degree from the State University of New York College at Brockport. He and his family live in the Town of Greece, New York.



**Mark D. Kimberly '82** currently resides in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. He has worked for Kimberly-Clark Corporation since 1992, his current position is in Philadelphia as a Market Development Manager. Mark has

had several sales and marketing positions in NYC and Long Island with Kimberly-Clark. He previously worked for The Gunlocke Company after graduation as a District Sales Manager in Dallas, Texas. Mark has three children, from college age to 1st grade. On the weekends he is a drummer in a blues band with several Kimberly-Clark managers. Mark's fondest memory of Geneseo is preparing for Dr. Deutsch's classes.

**Leann Mary '10** is currently in law school at the University of Buffalo. She has interned at Erie County Family Court with the Honorable Judge Bailey for the past year. In May she started as an intern with the US Attorney's Office of Western NY.

**Jenny Nuber '02** has been in Washington, DC for the past 5 years and spent the last 2 years as Chief of Staff to Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan. She left Her Majesty in February to accept a position as Vice-President of Grassroots with kglobal a consulting company that provides communications and advocacy services in both the political and consumer world. She is finishing up a Master's in Political Science this year. She would love to connect with any fellow alums on LinkedIn.

**Schiller Christopher Joseph '04** is currently pursuing his MPA at NYU Wagner. He graduated from the Columbia University School of Social Work with a Master of Science. He previously worked at the legal aid society as a forensic social worker on behalf of court involved youth



and now works for a residential treatment center for adjudicated youth from family court. After he graduates, he plans to work on juvenile justice policy and child welfare policy.

**Jeff Beadnell '08** is currently working for KPMG doing international tax work. He graduated from New Eng-

land School of Law in Boston, and passed the New York and New Jersey bar exams last summer. Currently he works in Boston but plans to transition back to NYC in the future. Jeff says "Thank you to Geneseo and the wonderful professors for helping me get to this point."

**Justine Cheapé '11** recently finished a wonderful year of teaching English on Reunion Island, she moved to Ghana to direct women's development programs for a small fair-trade organization. She hopes to continue my education in gender and development within the next few years.



# Come to Geneseo on **September 22nd**

to celebrate the **50th birthday** of the political science major

There shall be a reception in the Hunt Room of the College Union, 2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. casual dress, beverages and birthday cake will be served. Current Political Science faculty and students will also be in attendance. **at SUNY Geneseo.**

Join **"The Official Geneseo PLSC/IR Students and Alums Group"** on

**facebook**

When you give to Geneseo please restrict your contribution to the Department of Political Science and International Relations.

## Politics

"If you want to study the social and political history of modern nations, study hell."

**Thomas Merton**

"All the president is, is a glorified public relations man who spends his time flattering, kissing, and kicking people to get them to do what they are supposed to do anyway."

**President Harry S. Truman**

"Democracy is being allowed to vote for the candidate you dislike least."

**Robert Byrne**

"I don't make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts."

**Will Rogers**

"The President has kept all the promises he intended to keep."

**George Stephanopolous**, advisor to President Clinton

"Democracy is a pathetic belief in the collective wisdom of individual ignorance."

**H.L. Mencken**

# Service Learning in Uganda



Allison Hoppe '13

Our first impression of Uganda was one of vibrant green forests and fields, rust red roads, and metal rooftops that glittered in the sunlight as we peered out the airplane's windows. Nine other Geneseo students and I were finally witnessing the first glimpse of where we would spend the next 8 weeks working as interns. We were placed in groups of three or four with local development organizations near Jinja, Uganda through the Group Engage program with the Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD). After months of planning, organizing, recruiting adventurous students and convincing hesitant parents, we were about to experience first-hand development fieldwork in Uganda.

We were given a warm welcome at the airport by Professor Grace and the FSD site team, and one of the first things that struck us (besides the heat) as we headed to the van waiting to take us to our hotel was the poster of President Museveni sporting his trademark wide-brimmed hat. When we later asked our host-families why he wore

that hat, they told us some variation of "he's the president so he can wear whatever hat he wants" or "it is his presidential hat." An additional Ugandan politics fun fact that we learned through experience is that here, a thumbs-up signifies support for Museveni and the NRM while the peace sign indicates support for the opposition movement. Once we were ushered onto the van, enormous bags and all, we met five students from Duke, Emory and UNC Chapel Hill who would undergo the same training and internships as us. Most of us, myself included, promptly fell asleep for most of the beautiful drive from Entebbe to Jinja.

For the next few days we stayed at the Bilkon Hotel in Jinja, recovering from jetlag and learning about FSD's approach to development and the basics of Ugandan culture and etiquette. Our time was spent learning how to assess a community and an organization's assets and needs, the process of planning and budgeting our projects, the importance of sustainable and local development, and extremely basic Luganda, the local language. The ten of



us can now greet men and women respectfully (“Musibye mutyanno, bassebo ne bannyabo?” or, “How was your day, gentlemen and ladies?”), use a few phrases about food, and introduce ourselves with varying degrees of success. During this orientation period we also began to familiarize ourselves with Jinja, the transportation and the food. Jinja is the second largest city in Uganda after Kampala, famous for the source of the Nile and for white water rafting. Even so, few buildings are more than one or two stories tall and it takes only about 10 minutes to walk from one end of town to the other. Transportation consists primarily of motorcycles called boda-bodas and taxi vans called matatus. Our first taste of Ugandan food was at a local restaurant, where we were served a plate of rice, matooke (a heavy mash of plantain), posho (a flavorless ground maize dish), yams, and a meat- or bean-based sauce that was met with varying levels of enthusiasm. While I do enjoy the food, the high volume of heavy starches, the shortage of spices, and the lack of variety (the same meal is served for dinner every day), has made all of us prone to getting mzungu, or white person, food in town at least once a week for the sake of our emotional well-being.

After the few days of training, our host families came to meet us and to pick us up. Dara Gell’13, a senior sociology major, and I were placed with the same family, and we were met by our host brother and driven to our new Ugandan home in Wanyange, about 20 minutes outside of Jinja. We live on a dirt road bordered with roadside stands, stick and mud homes, goats, chickens, and many young children who enjoy waving and shouting “Mzungu, bye bye! Biscuit!” at us everyday. Dara and I keep expecting the excitement of our presence to wear off, but even after four weeks they persist in asking for biscuits, despite the fact that none have been forthcoming. It has made us very curious what originally led Ugandan children to expect mzungus to walk around handing out cookies.

Andrew Perry’13, a senior international relations major, Dara, and I chose to work with Mukisa Savings And Credit Co-Operative (SACCO), a microfinance organization of just over one hundred members that works primarily with single, widowed, and HIV positive women, although they recently opened membership to include the general public. Mukisa is situated in Bugembe, a small town with dirt roads, small shops, and bustling plantain and charcoal markets







only a 15-minute coaster ride from Jinja and a short walk from our homes in Wanyange.

After a few days spent getting to know about Mukisa, asking an excessive number of questions, and meeting many of the influential members of the organization and the community, we began work on a project. Based on the feedback that we received from the members and the leadership of the organization, it seemed that the biggest challenge they faced was a shortage of capital – they simply needed more money. The SACCO needed it in order to have a larger capital base from which to distribute loans and the members needed it for financial security, to improve their quality of life and to be able to afford necessities such as medical expenses and school fees for their children. After consulting with the members, we eventually decided on an income-generating project based on raising poultry – essentially, a chicken loan. Members can apply either individually or in groups to receive 100 broiler chicks, two months worth of feed and vaccines, and access to

an on-call veterinarian. Every member is invited to attend training sessions on business strategy, marketing, book-keeping, and the fundamentals of raising and vaccinating broiler chickens. If they are approved for the loan, they will have 8 months to repay the initial value of the chicks, feed, vaccine and training with an interest rate of only 1%. Although the limitations of our seed fund only allow us to attempt this program with two groups or individuals the first time through, our hope, and the hope of the members of Mukisa SACCO, is that this program will be repeated again and again as the initial groups pay back their loans. Not only would this provide many members of the community, especially women, with opportunities to expand their own incomes but it should also slowly increase the capital base of the SACCO as a whole.

Our project is going well so far and has been met with a great deal of enthusiasm from members, with applications already beginning to come in. Just this past week we ordered 200 broiler chicks that will arrive in July, scheduled the business training, confirmed the training location



at a local health center, and signed a contract with a local poultry expert to provide feed, vaccinations and support to the loan recipients along with conducting one of the training sessions. Despite the initial success, there have certainly been some difficulties in the course of our work here. It was a serious challenge for us to adapt to “Africa time,” or widespread, chronic lateness. There are no firm handshakes in Uganda, and people feel very comfortable asking intensely personal questions about your religious beliefs, your marital status and your political opinions. One of the biggest challenges has been confronting the stereotypes and perceptions that many Ugandans have about white people. People in our SACCO have told us that simply our presence in the office provides them with an image of legitimacy that is good for business and attracting new members because many assume that we are wealthy benefactors or that we will know exactly how to improve the organization. We have done our best to assure them that we are simply students and that we are learning more from them than they are from us, but the reality of how many perceive us remains uncomfortable at times.

While there have undeniably been challenges, and

I cannot speak for the other students here, my own experience in Uganda has overwhelmingly been a positive one. I have been immersed in a foreign culture, exposed to a language that is completely new to me, adjusted to a calmer pace of life, but mostly I have had the opportunity to interact with and learn from incredible people during my time here. I have enjoyed discussing topics such as customs of marriage, Ugandan politics, and education with members of my host family. The chairwoman of Mukisa SACCO, Susan, has inspired and amazed me with her strength, optimism, and kindness despite facing incredible challenges. Her personal understanding and explanation of the difficulties confronting women in Uganda, especially HIV-positive women, was overwhelming and powerful. I have also learned a great deal from the other students participating in the program, and enjoy our weekends off of work when we explore Uganda together, a little bit at a time. Although our time here is only halfway through at this point, the days and weeks have been flying by, and I’m sure that before we know it we will all be back on an airplane, this time heading home, looking down at Uganda with a whole new perspective.



# It's Time to Help the Syrian People



The news coming out of Syria is horrific. Reports of massacres, atrocities, torture, beatings and other egregious human rights violations by President Bashar al-Assad's brutal regime clearly indicate that the situation in Syria is dire and escalating violence may soon spiral out of control. Over 10,000 Syrians have already perished in the sixteen-month uprising. Now is the time to consider not whether to intervene, but how and when.

The United States has been criticized for intervening unnecessarily in countries such as Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. But non-intervention can also be a mistake. President Bill Clinton has admitted that perhaps the greatest failure of his presidency was not intervening early on in the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

Outside intervention in Syria is surely very risky, with potentially dangerous domestic and geopolitical consequences. Intensified fighting has exacerbated sectarian, ethnic and political conflict that could explode into all-out civil war, spark a wider regional war, leave Syria a failed state and precipitate a horrific refugee crisis. The haunting spec-

ter of another Lebanon or Iraq looms. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has already been affected with the Damascus-based Hamas leadership reaching an agreement to work with the PLO and looking to relocate, perhaps to Qatar or Jordan. A more strained relationship between Syria and Shiite-dominated Hezbollah in Lebanon is also likely. The Syrian government has lost support from every neighbor except Iran, its strategic partner. Iran supplies Syria with significant economic, military and diplomatic aid and leans on Syria to exert influence in the region. Syria is also a proxy battleground between Saudi Arabia, self-styled champion of Sunni Muslims, and Iran, the major patron of Shiite Muslims. Islamist and al Qaeda elements reportedly are also involved in the Syrian maelstrom.

There is no time to waste through continued unproductive diplomacy or the imposition of tougher sanctions. The Arab League, long a feckless organization, cannot be counted on in any way. UN action has been ineffective, stymied by the vetoes of China and Russia. Moscow, long-time backer of the Assad regime, continues its diplomatic,



economic and military support for Damascus. In addition, NATO has stated repeatedly that it would not intervene militarily in Syria as it did in Libya because the Syrian situation is far more perilous with a much more uncertain outcome.

President Barack Obama must take the lead in securing partners to help the rebellious Syrian people. Thus far, he has focused on convening a "Friends of Syria" contact group of anti-Assad Western and Arab states designed to coordinate aid to mainly fragmented, independent and localized militias. But this response is far too cautious and limited. Bolder and potentially more effective options, all fraught with danger, must be considered. One is convincing loyal Syrian soldiers to turn against Assad and his Alawite supporters, though so far the military has shown no sign of cracking. Another is establishing corridors to safe havens inside Syria, perhaps around Damascus and along Syria's borders with Turkey and Jordan, and providing humanitarian aid. Still another is arming the Syrian opposition, mainly the Turkey-based Free Syrian Army, even with its uncertain leadership. The most risky option is limited military action, such as ordering air strikes and establishing no-fly zones, as a justifiable last resort under the doctrine

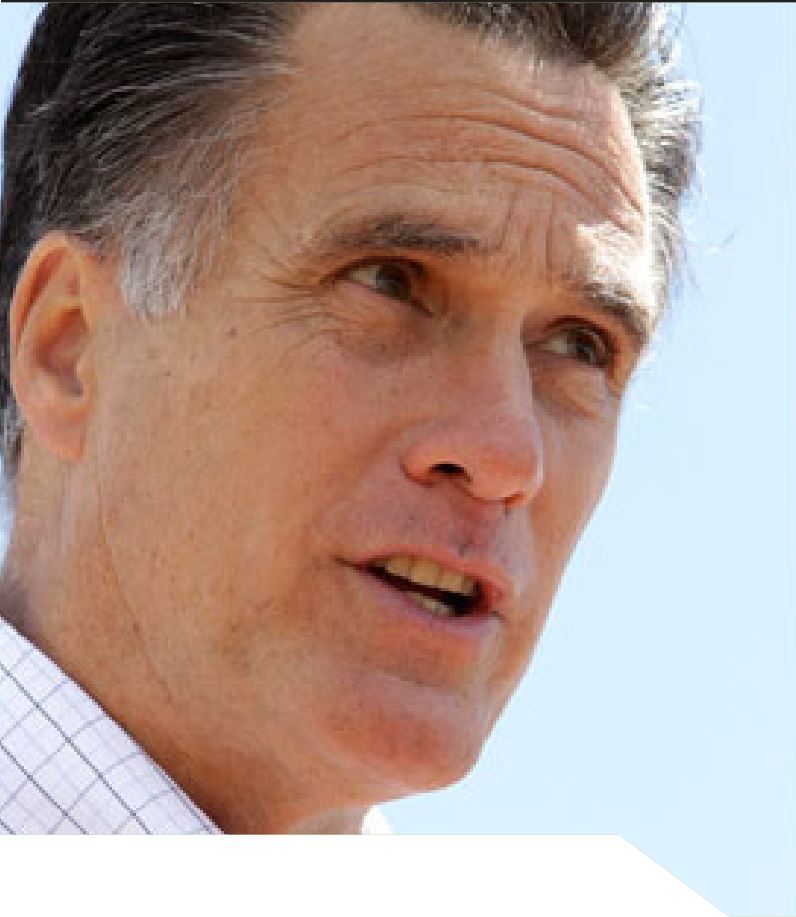
of R2P, the Responsibility to Protect. However, Washington should beware of falling into the trap of mission creep and getting bogged down in a quagmire.

President Assad must be put on notice that he cannot continue killing his people with impunity. The desperate cries of the Syrian people for help have to be answered. Not doing so now would tarnish the reputation of the Obama presidency, leaving an indelible stain on its legacy.

**Professor Edward Drachman, Department of Political Science and International Relations, SUNY Geneseo**  
June 15, 2012



# The 2012 Election



As of July 2012, the Presidential election is shaping up to be close, similarly to 2000 and 2004. During the past 25 years several political scientists have developed models, based upon the analysis of elections since WW II, that try to both predict and explain the outcome of presidential elections in the United States. As you might imagine, these models rest primarily on the performance of the economy. Political scientists hold that approximately 90% of the voting public carries a fairly strong partisan identification that rarely changes. Most people vote consistently Democrat or Republican. An extraordinary set of circumstances are necessary for most Republicans to vote for a Democratic candidate and vice-versa. Given that currently there is a relatively even distribution of Democrats and Republicans in the United States, the outcome of the Presidential election depends on which candidate receives the support of independents (sometimes called swing voters). The state of the U.S. economy figures prominently in determining which candidate receives the support of the independents. One of the ironies of American elections is that in-

dependents, holding, in essence, the balance of power for determining electoral outcomes, are less interested and knowledgeable about politics than partisans. A graph depicting the relationship between growth in real disposable income for the year prior to the election and presidential vote share for presidential elections from 1952 to 2008 appears below.

Let me make a few points about these models. A model linking economic conditions to presidential elections does a pretty good job of predicting the vote share; that is, the data points are very close to the line. The years where the data points are more distant from the line—1952, 1968, 1972, 1996, and 2000—were years where the much of the public faulted the president for his management of U.S. Foreign Policy (1952 & 1968), when the out-party's candidate was unusually unappealing (1972 & 1996), or when the incumbent president was considered of unsound character (2000). Even in these cases, however, the predictions are not too far off, albeit enough to make us aware that the economy is not the only consideration that matters to vot-



ers, only for 2000 does the model incorrectly predict the winner. Presidents can get into serious electoral trouble for putting the U.S. into a difficult war.

Note the model does a good job when using income growth for a one year period. Income growth could be exceptionally good (or bad) for the three years prior to the election, but what is really consequential is income growth for the year prior to the election. In fact, perhaps poor income growth at the beginning of a president's term might make good income growth more likely to occur at the end of a term. As a Professor, I consider this the equivalent to ignoring students' performance for the first 12 weeks of the semester, counting only performance for the last two weeks of the semester. Also, the model, and by implication many voters, clearly believe the president is responsible for economic growth. This is a matter of dispute among economists!! Many economists maintain presidents play, at best, a minor role in the short-term fluctuations of the U.S. Economy. Good electoral fortune to the president lucky to preside over a robust economy. The model does a good job of predicting presidential vote margins without any reference to candidates' issue positions, campaign spending, perceived character attributes, vice-presidential selections, treatment of their pets, or any of the other factors that receive considerable attention in the national media. At the end of the day, it's (almost) all about the dollars.

Political scientists and economists have employed a variety of measures of the economy (unemployment rate, change in the unemployment rate, six month

change in disposable income, the inflation rate, change in the inflation rate, change in non-farm disposable income, change in GNP, and have varied the time period—3 months, 6 months, 9 months, 1 year, 2 years, etc.) in most cases which economic indicator used does not matter as the indicators often correlate quite strongly, although we do know voters have a very short time horizon. Political scientists are unsure which indicator voters, acknowledging it is possible that different voters use different indicators (or some combination of indicators) for forming judgments about the U.S. economy. In the current period job growth has been, at best, tepid, while the stock market and income growth have been good, perhaps producing uncertainty.

As of May 2012 real disposable income increased from the previous year at a rate of 2.5%, which predicts Obama to receive 54% of the vote. Obviously, improved economic growth will increase the Democratic vote share, and poor income growth will reduce it. Moreover, the margin is sufficiently close that other considerations may tip the outcome in another direction.

Political scientists know that many voters exercise a partisan bias when judging the state of the U.S. economy. Recent polls demonstrate that Democrats are more positive than Republicans about the state of the U.S. economy. This pattern is nothing new. One can look as far back as far as 1980, when survey researchers began to systematically measure assessments of the U.S. economy, to detect a fairly strong partisan bias to economic assessments. It is possible that Democrats focus on one part of the economy, Republicans another aspect. However, the survey evidence strongly demonstrates that citizens use their partisan biases to form their judgments of the U.S. economy, rather than relying on their judgments of the U.S. economy to construct their political preferences. Political independents reach judgments about the U.S. economy unhindered by partisan biases.

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Predicted presidential vote percentage measured against change in real disposable income from previous year

