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A Portrait of Turkey

On October 17, the World Affairs Council of the Mid Hudson Valley in co sponsorship with the Turkish Cultural Foundation hosted an event entitled “Portrait of Turkey,” which focused on US-Turkish relations and cultural exchange, as well as a celebration of Turkish food. A part of the evening was dedicated to hear about the experiences the three high school teachers, Elaine Arvidson, Lauren Collet, and Andrea Tejedor, who participated in the 2012 Spotlight on Turkey program. These educators were selected, as some of the best in the area, to engage on a summer study tour of Turkey which included visits to historical sites and seminars on Turkey’s political and social history. These teachers, in turn, shared their experiences through presentations at the event, along with keynote speaker David Saltzman, who has represented the Turkish state before the United States courts for more than 15 years. Mr. Saltzman’s talk focused on the past and future of US-Turkish relations.

Mr. Saltzman began his talk exploring international relations of Turkey during WWI. While Turkey was still a part of the Ottoman Empire, the United States chose not to fight the Ottomans in open warfare. After the establishment of Turkish Republic in 1923, the United States began a free trade agreement with Turkey. Mr. Saltzman stated that this agreement on the part of the United States was one of the country’s first recognitions of Turkey as a major player in regional politics. After Turkey’s neutral stance in the Second World War, both the United States and the Soviet Union understood in order to have influence in the Middle East, either country would have to have amicable relations with the Turks. The development assistance that Mr. Saltzman outlined the US providing Turkey post-1947 was very top-heavy, and relations mainly took place on a state to state level. Saltzman stated that no real intercultural social exchanges between the countries occurred until the 1950s. While Turkish people have been coming to the United States for some time, Mr. Saltzman outlined that Turkish economic relations with the United States started to blossom during this time.

Today, Saltzman argued that the United States exports to Turkey had the potential to continue to grow, as Turkey is a “land of opportunity for American business.” However, the recent crisis in Syria has slowed business relations between Turkey and the US. Turkey’s interest in Syria lies in the influx of Syrian refugees putting pressure on the Turkish state and the PKK terrorist group using the Syrian crisis to potential carry out attacks on Turkey. Mr. Saltzman stated that the stability of democracy in the Middle East relies on a partnership between Turkey, Israel, and the United States, even though Turkish Israeli relations have had a rocky few years. Saltzman pointed out a need for a better understanding of Turkey and the Turks by American politicians, free of negative bias.

It is true that Turkish-American relations have been somewhat contentious since the early 2000s. The deterioration of relations between the two countries marked by the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, after the Turkish Parliament voted to not allow American troops to be deployed from Turkey into northern



Iraq. The Turkish government believed that the Bush administration did not sufficiently consider Turkish economic and security risks during the Iraq invasion. Ankara had also hoped that the United States would use the Iraq invasion as an opportunity to directly pursue the PKK terrorist organization, which the US did not end up doing. As Mr. Saltzman stated in his lecture, recently, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been critical of the United States' hesitant response to the Syrian crisis, believing it showed American indifference to Turkey's national security issues. Yet, despite this criticism, relations between Turkey and the United States have been more amicable since the 2011 Arab Spring. During the crisis in Libya, Turkey initially opposed NATO intervention, but after considering the vast amount of business projects and transactions which Turkey had invested in Libya, the Turkish government eventually supported the US motion to intervene. The Obama administration in general has made efforts to repair relations with Turkey, as the country is an important strategic partner, even with Mr. Erdogan's continued rejection of Israel. President Obama has made efforts to cultivate a strong personal relationship with the Turkish Prime Minister in an attempt to cultivate strong diplomatic ties between the two countries. Additionally, global recognition of the successes of Turkey's Anatolian businessmen and women presents a gateway for US investment in growing Turkish capitalism.

It is clear that Turkey has been an important partner to the United States in the past. The current administration is going to great lengths to repair American relations with Turkey in order to revitalize this critical strategic and economic relationship. The World Affairs Council of the Mid Hudson Valley brought the issues of US-Turkish relations to light at its "Portrait of Turkey" event hosted by the Dutchess County Community College and presented the importance of Turkey in US foreign policy dialogue.

"Myths vs. Realities of Pentagon Spending" a WAC event

This November, World Affairs Council of the Mid Hudson Valley in co-sponsorship with the Department of Political Science at Vassar College and the Gillespie Forum, invited William Hartung to hold a lecture entitled "Myths vs. Realities of Pentagon Spending." The lecture was held in Rockefeller Hall at Vassar College on November 15. Mr. Hartung is the current director of the Common Defense Campaign: Arms & Security Project at the Center for International Policy specializing in weapons proliferation and defense spending. He is also the author of the book, *Prophets of War* and has appeared as a featured expert on national security issues on CBS's 60 Minutes. Mr. Hartung's led a provocative discussion about Pentagon spending and its importance to each and every citizen.

In his opening statements, Mr. Hartung provided a context for the subject of military spending. He argued that the key question for the average citizen to understand was not how much money we spend, but where the money is going and what it is doing. The United States spends more on its military than anywhere else in the world. Mr. Hartung stated that the U.S has, "plenty of [military] resources but are we putting them in the right place?" While the American nuclear stockpile stills remains at around 5,000 weapons, Mr. Hartung aptly pointed out that the national security threats the United States faced in the past are quickly changing with climate change and the threat of cyber warfare. He stated

that the tools which the United States needs in order to fight these new types of threats are vastly underfunded. In turn, the monetary influence of the Pentagon and other military actors has been expanding into civilian life. Mr. Hartung referred to what he called the "military congressional industrial complex" when discussing this change in militarism.



Military actors such as the weapons powerhouse Lockheed Martin state that jobs will be lost if they lose government funding. Hartung claimed that this threat of job loss through lost funding for the organization, especially with the current economic climate, was not a risk that the government is willing to take. In addition, the military congressional industrial complex (MCIC) funds think tanks which will produce research in favor of military spending. Money is also funneled to congressional candidates who will vote in favor of Lockheed Martin's interest. Mr. Hartung spoke of a "revolving door," in which government employees will transition to private military contractors like Lockheed Martin to assist the company in its dealings with the government. While this does seem like a somewhat grim picture, Hartung conveyed that positive changes in military spending are occurring. He used the cancellation of Lockheed Martin's F-22 fighter production as an example of a sensible cut in military spending. He stated politicians like Barney Frank and Ron Paul are calling for a \$1 trillion dollar cut in Pentagon spending. Congressional members, who were elected under the so called "Tea Party" agenda, are also calling for a pullback in military spending. The lecture did conclude on an optimistic note, after a passionate Q + A discussion with the audience. Mr. Hartung ended by saying that the average citizen should hope for a balanced approach to cuts and spending in the military.

Overall, the lecture produced a high turnout of both students and World Affairs Council members. Mr. Hartung informed everyone at the event that citizens can make changes in the way the government allocates military spending by staying informed and contacting their Congress person. This event provided an intimate look at a topic which many Americans care about. The quality of the discussion allowed for an enlightening evening.

Kenya's Election: Will violence occur again?

Four years after the post-election crisis of 2007, many Kenyans were eager to return to the voting booths this year to see the end of President Mwai Kibaki's ten year term and to start a new chapter in Kenyan politics. It appears, however, that the election date has been pushed back to March 2013, according to Chairman Issak Hussan of the country's Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission. This commission, which determined the election date, is a relatively new electoral body, created under Kenya's new constitution. This is the same commission that followed the 2007 election. While a pre-election coalition agreement to decide who will run for President has been decided this week, voting will not commence until next spring. The March 2013 election will also be the first vote under the country's new constitution, making it a deciding moment in Kenyan history. However, many Kenyans and international observers fear that the 2013 elections will result



in significant bloodshed. The violence seen in the last election resulted from ethnic and tribal tensions, which were intensified after Kibaki's reelection. While Kenya is still grieving this tragedy that took the lives of almost 1,000 citizens, can the country avoid such a crisis this time around?

This is an important question, especially to the people of Nyanza province, where much of the 2007 post-election violence took place. After the election results were announced in December 2007, Kibaki's challenger Raila Odinga accused the President of electoral fraud. This was later confirmed by many international third parties. In light of the rigged election, Kibaki and Odinga entered a power sharing agreement which allowed Kibaki to remain President and Odinga to assume to role of Prime Minister. However, the accusations of political fraud on both parts aggravated underlying ethnic tensions along the tribal lines of each candidate. Odinga's Luo supporters, as members of one of the major tribes in Kenya, resented Kibaki's Kikuyu voter base. Kikuyu tribe has long been in power in the country. Many parts of the Rift Valley, the traditional home of the Kikuyu tribe, were ravaged by Odinga's supporters. Kibaki's supporters retaliated by inciting violence in Odinga's native Nyanza province and Nairobi's Kibera slum, in which half of the inhabitants are Luo. These ethnic divisions, which have been manipulated in the name of political mobilization by Kibaki and many other Kenyan politicians, still exist in Kenya today. The vast land and property inequality, which exists between regions of the country in turn resulted in economic

discrepancies between tribal groups residing in different areas. As the 2013 election draws near, the fear of these unresolved issues becomes a real concern for Kenya's presidential candidates.



The fear is not entirely unfounded. Ethnic violence has already resulted earlier this year in the Tana Delta region. A dispute over resources led to a militia of the Pokomo people to carry out an attack against the Orma in the village of Kilelengwani, which left more than 100 people dead on both sides. The massacre led Frances Kagema, a conservationist of the Tana Delta, to speculate whether the violence had been fueled by political interest in the region, as the land has high potential for large scale cultivation of biofuel crops. Kagema claimed that there had been a political scramble for the region for the past four years, and with the election on the horizon, he is nervous that the Tana Delta might witness this type of bloodshed again. In November, violent clashes between the Samburu and Turkana tribes in Northern Kenya became so extreme that the Kenyan military had to intervene. Instances like these pose the question whether Kenyan politicians will continue the tradition of ethnic mobilization for political gain in 2013, and this will, in turn, lead to further post-election bloodletting.

Yet, politicians who exploit the ethnic divisions are no longer free from impunity. In early 2011, former Kenyan minister of finance Uhuru Kenyatta, son of the first Kenyan president Jomo Kenyatta, was indicted by the ICC for crimes against humanity in the wake of the devastating post-election violence of 2007. Both Mr. Kenyatta and his colleague cabinet secretary Francis Muthaura now stand to face trial at the Hague, both accused of rallying an organized campaign of violence against Odinga's supporters in Kenya's last election. While a date has yet to be set for the trials, a precedent has been set. It appears that the international community is no longer willing to ignore the violent manipulation of ethnic divisions for political gain, regardless of family ties or financial prowess.

Overall, Kenya is at a crossroads. The country has a chance to leave the post-election violence of 2007 in the past with a new election under a new constitution. This month, the pre-election coalition will determine the politicians whose names will be on the ballot in March. While some ethnic violence has been witnessed in the country this year, the upcoming trials of some of Kenya's most prominent politicians look like a good step towards progress. Kenyatta is, after all, the richest man in the country, with his father's face proudly displayed on every Kenyan shilling. If Uhuru Kenyatta can face trial at The Hague, it is possible that 2013 might not be as grim as predicted for the Kenya election.*

Membership Options

Join Us! Meet and exchange ideas and questions with people in the region who share an interest in international issues. The World Affairs Council of the Mid-Hudson Valley is an all volunteer organization. Membership directly supports the educational programs and activities which bring nonpartisan, lively information about critical issues facing our nation and the world.

Individual Membership Levels

| | |
|------------|---------|
| Student | \$5 |
| Educator | \$35 |
| Single | \$50 |
| Dual | \$70 |
| Sponsor | \$100 |
| Leader | \$250 |
| Patron | \$500 |
| Benefactor | \$1,000 |

Organization Membership Levels

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| Not for Profit | \$100 |
| Displomat | \$250 |
| Envoy | \$500 |
| Consul | \$1,000 |
| Ambassador | \$2,500 |

Benefits of Membership:

- Deepen your understanding of international issues that touch our lives as professionals, citizens, and students
- Connect and network with experts and like-minded individuals in the Hudson Valley who are seeking to expand their knowledge and understanding of global affairs
- Invitations of public lectures, youth activities programs, and other events
- Invitations at reduced cost for Members-Only Dinners at the CIA
- Receive advance notice of all WACMHV activities through email
- Receive advanced copies of the quarterly WACMHV Newsletter
- Invitation to special pre-event receptions for Patrons, Benefactors, and Organization Members
- Through WACA, special rates on publications from *Foreign Affairs*, *World Policy Journal*, and books from Brookings and other publishers

*References used for "Kenya's Election: Will violence occur again?" article:

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