

## The Havana Negotiations: Analyzing the Current Colombian Peace Process

By Thomas Flores, Assistant Professor of Conflict Resolution and Political Science, tflores2@gmu.edu

2013 may very well be remembered as the year that brought peace to Colombia. Since last October, representatives of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Colombian government have made dramatic, if halting, progress to end one of the world's longest civil wars. The negotiations provide grounds for optimism that a conflict that has taken the lives of at least 220,000 people and displaced at least 4 million more might finally and mercifully end. Will talks yield an agreement? What will it take to create a positive peace in Colombia? I offer my own ruminations on these questions, a product of research in Colombia and an application of the lessons of the fields of CAR and political economy.

The talks in Havana have focused attention on the FARC, Latin America's oldest insurgent group, particularly since the National Liberation Army (ELN) has remained on the sidelines. Characterizations of the FARC have tended to follow the vicissitudes of U.S. foreign policy. The Colombian state, in concert with its allies in Washington, has variously referred to the FARC as communists during the Cold War, drug traffickers during

the height of the war on drugs, and terrorists since September 11, 2001. Despite the self-interest inherent in such narratives, however, drugs and crime undoubtedly have prolonged and intensified violence in Colombia, as predicted by Paul Collier and other political economists.



Afro-Colombian Mural by Joel Berger in Washington D. C. Photo: Lisa E. Shaw

The story of the FARC's origins, however, offers a different perspective, one that should be familiar to the S-CAR community. Colombia was and is one of the world's most unequal countries, especially in land ownership; in 1960, the largest .5% of farms comprised roughly 40% of all farmland in Colombia. My and others' research shows that land a long history of struggles for

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Commentary

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# S-CAR in Siena, Italy:

## Reflections on the International Association of Genocide Scholars Conference

By Sarah Federman, S-CAR Ph.D. Student, [sfederma@gmu.edu](mailto:sfederma@gmu.edu)



Sarah Federman in Siena, Italy. Photo: Sarah Federman.

Six members from S-CAR, comprising of students and faculty, were invited to participate at the 10th Biennial Conference of The International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) from June 19th to the 22nd. This year's conference was organized under the theme "The Aftermath of Genocide: Victims and Perpetrators, Representations and Interpretations" and took place in the stunning city of Siena, Italy.

Many events addressing genocide tend to leave one with a heavy heart and a fatigued mind. At this event, however, the magical backdrop and festive atmosphere of Siena's annual Palio offset the normal chagrin. To prepare for this horserace that historically determined the city's leadership, local inhabitants participate in all sorts of merrymaking. There were all night parties, marching bands, street performers, and, of course, gelato.

That said, most of us were able to focus, at least most of the time, on the work at hand. The S-CAR community tore themselves away from the gorgeous Tuscan countryside long enough to present on a wide array of topics: Gregory Stanton presented on "Hate Speech and Incitement;" Tetsushi Ogata talked about "The Role of Dealing with the Past in Post-Atrocities Relations Between Japan and China;"

Borislava Manojlovic presented on "The Role of Education in Dealing with the Past and Atrocities Prevention in Post-conflict Croatia;" Elizabeth Mount talked about "The Politics of Representing Sexual Violence: Conceptualizing Genocidal Rape as a Performative Act of Hegemonic Masculinity;" Gedeon Patrick Hakizimana presented on "Gender, Culture and Ethnicity: Reflections on the Narrative of the Rwandan Genocide;" and Sarah Federman presented on "Corporate Accountability for Mass Atrocity: The Case of the French Railroads."

The event was well attended by a relatively young, international crowd who seemed to have quite a hopeful demeanor in spite of, or perhaps because of, their years of personal and professional experience with the horrors and complexities of mass atrocity. In addition to the well-established genocide experts, a number of young scholars presented some very solid work with great humility. Their research efforts seemed earnest and their presentations were clear and to the point.

I never thought studying the French railroad would lead me to a magical week in Italy, but then again life, unlike trains, rarely takes us exactly where we think we will go. If you are interested in the organization or future conferences (next year will be in Winnipeg, Canada) please visit the website: [genocidescholars.org](http://genocidescholars.org). ■



Siena, Italy. Photo: Sarah Federman.



# S-CARs MS Distance Learning Program:

By Juliette Shedd, Associate Dean for Administration and PhD Alumna, [jshedd@gmu.edu](mailto:jshedd@gmu.edu)



Juliette Shedd. Photo: Mason Creative Services.

S-CAR's involvement in distance learning will rise to a new level this January with the launch of a stand-alone distance MS program in Conflict Analysis and Resolution. S-CAR's involvement with distance learning began when the Graduate Certificate Program launched courses that used a hybrid of face-to-face and distance platforms

for student engagement. Soon after, more innovative hybrid elective offerings were added. In the fall of 2011, with support from the Provost's office for course development, the first fully online course was offered, CONF 501, our Master's level introductory course. To facilitate degree completion, we developed the capstone and integration option courses in a distance format. Building on our successes, S-CAR faculty voted in May 2013 to pilot the MS program in a distance format. This new program will allow students to meet the same degree requirements as our traditional face-to-face program and require a 6-credit residency. The rest of the degree requirements can be completed remotely. With a reduced tuition rate of \$750 per credit for out-of-state students, we hope to reach potential students unable to participate in the face-to-face program.

The S-CAR faculty development team led by Dr. Karina Korostelina has been working hard all year to prepare pedagogically sound, innovative courses and has been piloting 3 to 4 courses per semester. Along with MS Program Director Dr. Daniel Rothbart, the team has designed a series of core courses and exciting new electives, including CONF 695's on Micro Theories of Conflict, Conflict and Ethics, and Addressing Intractable Conflicts. Instructional designer Susan Campbell has provided invaluable support for this process.

S-CAR has also been developing increasingly popular distance undergraduate courses. S-CAR PhD alumna Saira Yamin and Assistant Director of Undergrad Student Services, Jane Walker, developed CONF 340: Global Conflict Analysis and Reso-

lution, which is particularly successful in a distance format and is now offered every semester. The Undergraduate Program is currently determining the feasibility of a two year-degree completion distance undergraduate program for students who hold an Associate degree or the equivalent. Developing distance learning programs expands our potential to tap the expertise of the many talented and accomplished alumni we have around the world. As members of our community practice and teach in so many places around the globe, the technology of distance education will allow them to bring their expertise to students they otherwise could not reach. Developing this cohort of "Global Online Faculty" will further highlight the many achievements of our alumni community.

The S-CAR MS program joins a growing slate of distance programs that are part of "Mason Online," including programs in seven of the Universities colleges and schools. Mason Online will allow for joint marketing and student recruitment and support efforts with other partners around the university. Director of Graduate Student Services, Erin Ogilvie-Hudson, who has been successfully leading our students in Malta through their academic programs, will also work with distance students to ensure they have as good an experience in the program as our face-to-face students. All of the distance courses will be evaluated like our face-to-face courses and will be part of our periodic program reviews. This development is just the most recent in a long series of experiments in how we teach and learn at S-CAR. Experiential learning activities, courses that include trips to conflict zones, and compressed class schedules are recent additions to S-CAR's class schedule.

These initiatives have provided students with more flexibility in how they complete our programs and more opportunities for field work to see conflict resolution in action. If you know of students for whom the new distance MS would be a good fit, please direct them to <http://scar.gmu.edu/grad-admissions> for more information. ■

## Fall 2013 Online Courses

### **CONF 695: Micro Theories of Conflict**

*Instructors: Borislava Manojlovic and Karina Korostelina*

### **CONF 695: Addressing Intractable Conflict**

*Instructors: Heidi Burges and Guy Burgess*

## Spring 2014 Online Courses

### **CONF 695: Ethics and Conflict**

*Instructor: Daniel Rothbart*

### **CONF 695: Transforming Conflict Through Insight**

*Instructor: James Price*

[scar.gmu.edu/academics/Online-Courses](http://scar.gmu.edu/academics/Online-Courses)

initiatives

# Congressmen and Sport: Celebrating National Youth Week at Capitol Hill

By Soolmaz Abooli, S-CAR Ph.D. Student, sabooali@gmu.edu

**W**hat do S-CAR's Soolmaz Abooli (Scholar-Athlete), Congressmen Mike McIntyre (D-NC) and Jim Jordan (R-OH) have in common? A love of sport.

In celebration of National Youth Week, the National Council of Youth Sports and Active Policy Solutions hosted a sport event on Capitol Hill on Wednesday, July 24th in the foyer of the Rayburn House Building. Soolmaz joined the two Congressmen as they spoke to the valuable life skills that sport instills in the development of youth. Sport has played an integral part in the lives of both Congressmen. Representative McIntyre recently earned his black belt in Taekwondo, a Korean form of martial arts while Congressman Jordan was a four-time NCAA wrestling champion with a record of 150-1. The Representatives were presented with awards that recognized their efforts on the Congressional Caucus on Youth Sports. They kicked off the event by sharing personal stories about the positive influence sport training and coaches have played in their own development as individuals. Most notably, each stressed the transferability of skills learned on the field to life and vice versa.

An eight-time US National Karate Champion and world medalist and PhD student study-



From Left to Right: Michael Taabasi, Soolmaz Abooli, Congressman Mike McIntyre (D-NC), and Bryan Hays. Photo: Soolmaz Abooli.

ing sport diplomacy, Soolmaz highlighted the value of “scholar-athlete” skills by leading both a martial arts demonstration and discussions with attendees. She focused on how sport has empowered her to excel on and off the court as an athlete, scholar and individual. Soolmaz was joined by colleagues from the American Amateur Karate Federation and the Center for the Study of Gender and Conflict, where she currently serves as the Public Affairs Liaison. Sport has been dubbed a universal language, particularly in grassroots efforts that attempt to build bridges through working in teams toward a common goal. The Sports on the Hill event advocated a “P.L.A.Y.S.” concept where sport is believed to: promote *Physical* activity among all segments of our society; foster healthy *Living*; strive to make *Accessing* physical activities easier by removing barriers; encourage positive *Youth* development activities and outcomes; and improve the *Safety* of participating in physical activities.

These concepts have been utilized by a number of domestic and international NGOs for the purpose of building common ground,

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EVENTS

## Upcoming S-CAR Community Events

**Thursday, August 22, 2013**

**Fall 2013 Masters and PhD Orientation**

6:00pm - 9:00pm

**Friday, September 6, 2013**

**Move this World: Workshop on Applied Conflict Transformation in Global Communities**

12:00pm - 4:00pm

**Tuesday, September 10, 2013**

**S-CAR World Student Day Event**

9:00am - 7:00pm

**Saturday September 21, 2013**

**S-CAR Annual Welcome Dinner**

5:00pm - 9:00pm

<http://scar.gmu.edu/events-roster>

# Alumnus Opinion: Google-Earth Democracy

By Mohammed Cherkaoui, S-CAR Ph.D. Alumnus, mcherkao@gmu.edu



Mursi supporters in Egypt on July 26, 2013. Photo: flickr user Darla Hueske.

The open-ended showdown between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Army-Tamarroud [Rebel] Movement alliance has showcased an alarming implosion of the Egyptian society into two main camps with their radicalized narratives and competing strategies. The removal of elected president Mohamed Mursi from office July 3rd has solidified the divergence of hard-line positions among Egyptians, and triggered deeper concern over a nightmarish slide into a civil war.

The resilient mega-protests and counter protests in Cairo, Alexandria, and elsewhere in Egypt, backed by their political interlocutors and media pundits, have energized an unsettled debate about democracy, electoral legitimacy, populism, religiosity, and militarism.

This cycle of contentious Egyptian politics, as an intriguing transformative Arab Uprising 2.0, implies several complexities which will add to the protractedness of the conflict. It will also push forward a misguided claim of popular "representation" by both sides, and mobilization of growing numbers of supporters outstaying each other in the public squares.

First, the current battle of public narratives has pivoted around two well-structured claims of "legitimacy" with deep moral and cultural underpinnings: 1. A backward legitimacy, or "legitimacy of the ballots," embraced by the Muslim Brotherhood crowd who insist on the imperatives of democracy theory and the respect of the electoral outcome of 2012. Their be-all and end-all condition for entering any dialogue or reconciliation framework with the Army-Tamarroud alliance remains the return of ousted President Mursi to power. Their intellectual defense and emotional attachment to their

## Recent S-CAR Articles, Op-Eds, Letters to the Editor, and Media Appearances

### Advertising Against Muslims? Not with my Tax Dollars

Michael Shank, S-CAR Ph.D. Alumnus *The Washington Post*, 8/2/13

### Rebuilding Infrastructure to Rebuild Middle Class (ASCE: 3.6 trillion)

Michael Shank, S-CAR Ph.D. Alumnus *The Washington Post TV*, 7/31/13

### 'Unusual not to Announce an Order to Evacuate'

Deborah Hersman, S-CAR Alumnus and National Transport Safety Board chair  
*BBC News*, 7/10/13

### OP-ED: Iran in the Era of Moderation and Reform

Sahar Namazikha, S-CAR Ph.D Student *Inter Press Service News Agency*, 7/25/13

**Conflict Analysts from S-CAR have appeared 26 number of occasions since the last newsletter. these 4 represent the latest at time of publication. For a complete list please visit: <http://scar.gmu.edu/media>**

electoral victory, as their main driving force in post-Mubarak Egypt, reinforces their rejection of giving up an eighty-five-year-old dream that was crushed suddenly by the Army Chief and Defense Minister Gen. Abdel Fattah Sisi after one year of Mursi's presidency. This Egyptian scenario has also shown how politics is all personal. In the first half of 2013, Mursi and Sisi devoted much of their focus to their plans to eliminate each other from the public office. Ironically, Sisi joined forces with the liberal circles and a few anti-Islamist businessmen to topple Mursi after a surprising forty-eight hour ultimatum announced on the Egyptian media June 30th.

■ Continued online at:

<http://scar.gmu.edu/newsletter-subject/google-earth-democracy>

press



## Nousha Kabawat, MS Student

By Kwaw de Graft-Johnson, Newsletter Editor and S-CAR Ph.D. Student, kdegraft@gmu.edu

Nousha Kabawat is a Master's student at S-CAR and Program Officer for the Center for World Religions Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution (CRDC). "I must admit that I am currently receiving the best of both worlds as I get to study all these wonderful theories in school and then see them being used through my work," she said. Originally from Syria, Nousha views the conflict in her native land as "very unfortunate" and is thus very passionate about adding to the efforts being made in trying to seek a peaceful resolution to it. She informed me that she saw the youth as the key not only to resolving the conflict but also in maintaining a lasting peace that would transform Syria into a modern democratic society. She is currently involved in an initiative to set up "Summer Camps" for the youth who constitute more than half of the total number of refugees fleeing Syria in neighboring Turkey and Lebanon as well as those who have set up camp on the Syrian border. The goal of the summer camp is to empower the youth by giving them a voice to be able to speak out against the senseless killings taking place. "All the different factions claim to be fighting for



Children at Syrian Refugee Camp. Photo: Nousha Kabawat.

the future of the country but no one seems to be considering what the "future" (youth) of Syria themselves want" she said. After school, Nousha would like to set up a conflict analysis and resolution school in Syria that would have a major influence in the region in promoting non-violent values and principles in bringing about peace and stability in the region. ■

## Gedeon Patrick Hakizimana, S-CAR Ph.D. Student

By Kwaw de Graft-Johnson, Newsletter Editor and S-CAR Ph.D. Student, kdegraft@gmu.edu

Gedeon Patrick Hakizimana is part of the very exciting and diverse PhD cohort at S-CAR admitted in Fall 2012. Before coming to S-CAR, Patrick worked for an agency in Philadelphia that managed a state funded program between established professionals in Philadelphia and the refugees to help them in advancing their careers. Patrick's interest and passion for working with refugees "stems from the fact that as a youth, the genocidal conflict in Rwanda forced me to flee my native land to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where I lived as a refugee for many months," he said. While living in the refugee camp in the DRC, he managed to earn a living by working with an international NGO by assisting with providing nutrition to children. This work allowed Patrick to sustain himself in the camp but he still worried about his personal safety as there were



Gedeon Hakizimana Student.  
Photo: S-CAR.

often ethnic tensions and revenge killings.

Eventually, Patrick was granted asylum to the United States where he managed to earn a bachelor's degree in political science from Eastern University and a Masters degree in International Peace and Conflict Resolution at Arcadia University with a primary focus on reconciliation in Central Africa.

Patrick's life experiences in conflict regions have inspired him to work towards a peaceful resolution to conflict "and for me, S-CAR epitomizes that conviction very much." Patrick regularly speaks to students and young people about his experiences in the Rwandan conflict. His message is geared toward raising awareness and inspiring young people in conflict regions towards peace. ■

## The Havana Negotiations

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Thomas Flores, S-CAR Associate Professor. Photo: Mason Creative Services.

peasants' land rights, coercive expropriation by large landowners, and sclerotic efforts at land reform provided what Jeremy Weinstein would call the "social endowments" necessary for insurgency.

These would sustain the FARC for nearly twenty years before it became involved in drug trafficking. Inequality, then, is at the core of Colombia's story – and not merely economic inequality, but a more complex socio-political structure of exclusion that links the state and rich landowners, but excludes peasants. This inequality has only worsened after five decades of war, a product of displacement of the poor, especially Afro-Colombians. USAID, for instance, estimates that 0.4% of Colombians own 62% of Colombia's best farmland.

Negotiators in Havana to their credit made addressing land inequality the first of five points for peace talks, reaching agreement on a land reform that they described in a joint statement as "the start of a radical transformation of rural Colombia." The reform, if implemented, would invest heavily in rural areas, redistribute land to farmers, and compensate Colombians who have lost property during the war.

There are good reasons to temper our optimism, however. As in Gabriel García Márquez's novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Colombian history tends to repeat itself. The Colombian government has attempted land reform no fewer than fourteen times since 1917; that's an average of one land reform every seven years. A constant in these experiences is the opposition of Colombia's landed class to any democratization of ownership. Landowners have repeatedly used violence to resist redistribution. Paramilitary groups, who at times have maintained close connections to Colombian politicians and the military, have assisted in this effort. Michael Albertus and Oliver Kaplan have found that piecemeal land reforms resulting from elite resistance often increased political violence.

The peace talks in Havana, then, face at least two major obstacles. First, the Colombian state faces a credible commitment problem, in the words of Barbara Walter; "the state's inability or unwillingness to stop rich landowners from derailing land reforms in the past should cause the FARC to doubt the government's commitment to land reform today." Second, it is unclear whether landowning elites have reached what William Zartman would call a ripe moment. This is perhaps

best seen in comments by Álvaro Uribe, president of Colombia between 2002 and 2008, on the peace process. Uribe, the son of a rich landowner killed by the FARC, has criticized the peace process and the agreed-upon land reforms fiercely and publicly.

The collapse of peace talks currently taking place in Havana would only extend the tragedy of Colombia's war. Yet negotiations yielding a negative peace that leaves in place the economic roots of Colombia's war raise the specter of a future of continued poverty, further political violence, crime, and injustice. Three steps might help support the pursuit of positive peace.

First, both sides should invite the United Nations to participate in talks. United Nations Peacekeeping Operations are certainly no panacea, but can help resolve credible commitment problems through disarmament,



The Colombian Countryside. Photo: Thomas Flores.

demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs and monitoring progress on land reform implementation.

Second, the government must build consensus among landowning elites in favor of a major redistribution of land. Colombia's history clearly demonstrates that large landowners can sink land reform. President Santos, himself the scion of a wealthy family, is uniquely placed to lead these dialogues.

Third, both the government and the FARC should seek creative means of building confidence in each other. The government, for example, could crack down on renewed paramilitary violence. The FARC could release more civilian hostages and clamp down on future kidnappings. A mutual cease-fire, which the government has thus far resisted, would also be a good first step.

Let us hope, then, that these talks signal not only an end to Colombia's long war, but also the beginning of the long road to a just peace. ■

## Congressmen and Sport

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National Youth Week Participants. Photo: Soolmaz Abooli

reintegration, peacebuilding, development, and empowerment. Sport's visibility in this community is increasing as it builds upon past successes. The goal is to help today's youth become tomorrow's responsible leaders through the vehicle of sport programs.

At a more core level, below the abstraction of the P.L.A.Y.S. framework, sport emphasizes mental toughness, persistence, responsibility, and the saliency of teamwork. Given this, there is a very real potential to design social and diplomacy programs that inject and rein-

force such qualities into our society. Within the umbrella of policymaking, sport can be used in a structured way to complement development missions of institutional structures such as youth organizations and schools - consider the rampant issue of bullying. If a collection of scholars, sport practitioners, and policymakers can create a combined plan to leverage this angle, sport will truly serve as a universal language at both grassroots and diplomatic levels.

The Hill is a ripe place to start discussions around developing policies that utilize the benefits of sport. It showcases the fact that bipartisan cooperation and communication are indeed achievable when focusing on commonalities. Take for example the two Congressmen; they agree on and share similarities about the imprint that sport, their coaches, and teammates have left on their identities throughout child and adulthood and work together despite being on opposite sides of the aisle. The thaw in US-China relations enabled by President Richard Nixon's ping-pong diplomacy shows that sport can be a powerful tool to bridge gaps between nations. It is an example and precedent upon which to build future successes.

The impact of sport touches our interactions and development at a raw, human level like very little else does. Consequently, it has the unique characteristic to transcend time and sometimes even political barriers. Let's capitalize on that. ■



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