

THE VIEW FROM SOUTH LAWN

As we enter the twenty-seventh year of the Helvidius Group, I am pleased to write that the Journal of Politics & Society continues to provide a unique platform for undergraduate scholarship in the social sciences. I believe the Journal's confidence in the contributions of undergraduates to academic literature is justified by the original and rigorous papers found on this journal's pages and on our website.

Over the last few years, the Journal has undergone a pronounced shift away from domestic concerns and towards an emphasis on international matters. While a cursory glance at the journal's table of contents might suggest a return to focus on the United States, this is not exactly the case. Many papers address far-flung policy issues, while the U.S. papers do not generally look inward; instead, they concern themselves with the interaction of the United States with the rest of the world.

The Guest Essay, written by Columbia professor Andrew Nathan, discusses the changing nature of Chinese international relations. While China is often viewed as challenging, and even rejecting, global norms, Professor Nathan argues that China complies with international regimes, including, most surprisingly, human rights. In the Mao era, China's focus was internal; today, China's rise as a global power has given it a new stake in international conventions.

The author of this semester's Tomassi Essay, Grace Zhang, draws on Billy Graham's personal letters to multiple presidents to shine a light on Graham's unconventional road to political power. By appearing publicly apolitical, Graham had an enormous influence on policy through his relationships with American presidents. The paper concerns the U.S.'s role in the wider world through its analysis of Graham's advocacy of the Vietnam War. Furthermore, the paper's themes maintain relevance today; in particular, Zhang examines religion's sway over U.S. politics and the role of personal relationships in shaping policy.

In the Weatherhead East Asia Institute Essay, Boyao Zhang traces China's relations with the Holy See during the Cold War. While China and the Vatican did not establish formal diplomatic ties between 1949 and 1989, Zhang argues that the two states underwent a process of gradual rapprochement driven by China's exit from the Cold War after Mao's death in 1976.

In the next paper, My Rafstedt compares sexual violence in Bosnia and Rwanda. Examining sexual violence as a weapon of ethnic combat through a feminist lens, Rafstedt argues that the mythology and identity construction of the local population affected the acts of sexual violence committed. The social sciences often fail to look past the actions of political leaders, economic policy-makers, and historical 'great men,' and frequently ignore the role and plight of the powerless. In stark contrast to this norm, Rafstedt's paper turns a microscope to some of the world's most vulnerable populations while maintaining rigorous social scientific standards.

The remaining papers reflect the diversity of interests in the social sciences. Theresa Kennedy claims that despite greater economic diversity, African Americans' shared past, and its resonance today, leads to a belief in 'linked fate,' the view individual outcomes are linked to race. This linked fate, Kennedy argues, is visible in the monolithic voting patterns of African Americans. In the next paper, five undergraduates at Duke University critique isolationism and argue for continued U.S. engagement in the Middle East despite a decreased American reliance on foreign oil. In the final paper, Hart Mechlin uses textual analysis to scrutinize references to oil in the British press leading up to the September 2014 referendum on Scottish independence, arguing newspapers referenced oil opportunistically to support or oppose Scottish independence.

The current Executive Board inherited a number of innovations from our predecessors, chief among them a new print format and online research summaries. We are proud to have continued these traditions and aim for new ways to reach new audiences and offer a broader array of topics and opinions.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Spring 2015 Editorial Board for having the dedication necessary to publish this quality of undergraduate scholarship, and I hope you enjoy this issue of the Journal of Politics & Society.

Nicholas Hallock
Editor in Chief

New York City
May 2015