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Converse Delegation at Southeast Model

Converse Wins at Southeast Model

The Southeast Model Arab League, held March 13-15 at Converse College, brought together more than 210 delegates from five states to represent 21 Arab countries. Events began Friday evening with the keynote speech by 1Lt Kristi Faris Butler, an intelligence officer dealing with Middle East military threat assessment, stationed at Shaw Air Force Base in Sumter, South Carolina. Lt. Butler, a three-year member and former head delegate on the Converse Model Arab League delegation, spoke about how her years

in the Model Arab League program shaped her interests and skills that led to her present position. During her undergraduate years, Lt. Butler spent a summer studying Arabic at the Arabic Language Institute in Fez (ALIF), Morocco, and after graduation she taught English at ALIF for a year.

Co-Secretaries General Anne Fagge and Anna Owens then convened the 23rd Southeast Model plenary session. With computer technology that linked each council through gmail

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Zareen Khan speaks at Southeast Model Summit



Samantha Nicholson speaks in Joint Defense Council at Southeast Model



Special Council on Judiciary composes a resolution

chat, a central nerve center run by the Chief of Staff in the Model headquarters office, and display of draft resolutions on large screens in each room, the councils flowed with unusual efficiency.

The weekend was filled with lively debate with some delegates from the always-spirited Palestinian Council literally standing on the tables at times to be heard during raucous unmoderated caucuses. The economic plight of Gaza and border control issues was a major issue of concern in this council. The new Special Summit of Arab Ministers of Justice was more subdued as it examined topics such as intellectual property rights, media independence, international human rights treaties, and member states involvement and responsibilities with the International Criminal Court. The Political Council had moments of fractured breakdown, and indeed each council had deep controversies as well as issues of consensus. Students experienced a sound lesson in the difficulties, failures, successes, and triumphs of international diplomacy. Every delegate at whatever level of preparation and expertise had the opportunity to gain immensely from the experience.

As usual the Arab Court of Justice was one of the more interesting venues as it struggled with court cases involving capture at sea and international piracy; a minimum marriage age for women and female children; environmental pollution; the status of Kirkuk in postwar Iraq; and diplomatic recognition of Somaliland.

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On Saturday evening all delegates and faculty sponsors enjoyed a delicious Arab banquet in the Converse dining hall. At the Awards Ceremony following the Summit session, Dr. Thomas Baucom of Jacksonville State University, on the occasion of his forthcoming retirement, was presented the Southeast Model Arab League “Meritorious Service Award” commemorating 15 years of service as faculty adviser bringing a delegation to the model. The Outstanding Delegation Award went to Converse College (Egypt), followed by Northeastern University (Iraq), and Kennesaw State University (Syria). The Egypt delegation took a council award in all seven councils and won two awards on the Arab Court of Justice. Converse’s freshman



Caucusing continues in the hall at break at Southeast Model



Kateyln Ridenour answers questions in the Arab Court of Justice

delegation, representing Qatar, also won two awards, including one on the Arab Court of Justice. Honorable Mention awards went to the University of North Carolina—Charlotte (Jordan), Georgia State University (Saudi Arabia), and Mercer University (Lebanon). The faculty awarded the Outstanding

Chair to Karlen Senn of Converse College who chaired the Special Summit of Arab Ministers of Justice.

The 24th Southeast Model Arab League will be held next year, March 12-14, 2010 at Converse College.



Gardner-Webb University in their first year at the Southeast Model



National Model listens to keynote speaker

Southeast Model Schools Dominate at National Model

Southeast Model participant schools dominated the National Model Arab League, held March 27-29, 2009, at Georgetown University. Mercer University (Lebanon), Converse College (Egypt), and Northeastern University (Iraq), fresh from their winning performances at the Southeast Model, swept the first three places at the National Model. The U.S. Military Academy (Bahrain) and University of California at Santa Barbara (UAE) also were cited with awards. Twenty four colleges and universities participated. Besides the 22 schools representing the

22 members of the Arab League, four colleges and universities, including four schools, Northeastern, Converse, York College of Pennsylvania, and George Washington University, contributed delegates to a joint delegation representing the observer nation of Eritrea. The other participating schools were George Mason University (Algeria), University of North Carolina at Pembroke (Comoros), University of Pittsburgh (Djibouti), Northwestern University (Jordan), Hood College (Kuwait), University of Utah (Libya), Virginia Military

Institute (Mauritania), Mount St. Mary's (Morocco), Grand Valley State University (Oman), American University of Cairo (Palestine), United States Air Force Academy (Qatar), Georgia State University (Saudi Arabia), University of Arkansas (Somalia), Miami University (Sudan), Kennesaw State University (Syria), University of Houston (Tunisia), and the University of North Texas (Yemen).

The Model opened with keynote speeches by H.E. Dr. Hussein

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Hassouna, League of Arab States ambassador in the United States, and HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Talal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, son of HRH Prince Talal bin Abdulaziz, international humanitarian, philanthropist, and exponent of progressive politics. Prince Abdulaziz bin Talan is currently studying in the United States.

The Model's events began with schools attending briefings at the respective embassies that the institution represented. Following three days of spirited debate, the Model closed with the summit session and awards ceremony. Guest speaker at the awards ceremony was the Iraqi ambassador to the United States, H.E. Samir Sumaida'ie, who gave an optimistic assessment of



Monica Lineberger speaks in Social Council at National Model

Iraq's progress and future.

The Southeast Model schools will be prominent again at next year's National Model as they will provide

more than half of the Secretariat, including the chairs of four of the seven councils, both assistant secretary generals, and the chief of staff.



Economic Council at National Model

Profile of a Model Arab League Advisor



Linda U. Morrison

Model Arab League delegations come in all shapes, sizes, and constituencies, but the most successful programs are led dedicated faculty advisors who devote immense amounts of time and attention to affording students the opportunities that this program provides. The academic rewards for such service are few, the sacrifices great. The individuals who demonstrate this level of dedication to their students should be highly honored. In this issue, we profile two of the most dedicated and effective advisers.

Since her involvement with Model Arab League, Linda U. Morrison has built the Kennesaw State University program into a regional and national powerhouse. Always impeccably prepared, skilled debaters and nego-

tiators, the Kennesaw delegations bring distinction to their school. Few individuals have longer and more experience with Model Arab League than Philip D'Agati. Under his leadership the Northeastern University delegation is always one of the top performers at every model.

The following statements about their experience in the MAL program was at the request of the editor who wishes to profile such exemplary individuals.

Linda U. Morrison *Kennesaw State University*

Originally from Pittsburgh, PA, I grew up as an “army brat.” Living all over the United States and also abroad fostered an early interest in history and international

affairs. After receiving a BA in history from Penn State in 1963, I had begun to plan for a foreign service career. I was sidetracked after meeting my husband of 45 years. Following completion of graduate work at the University of Mississippi, the University of Florida and Emory and having two daughters, I began a 31 year public school teaching career. While I loved teaching my Advanced Placement United States History juniors, my favorite class was a senior elective, Current Issues. Students in this class enjoyed award winning annual participation in both the regional and national high school Model United Nations program. When I retired in 2003, Kennesaw State University’s Political Science/International Affairs Department invited me to be part of their adjunct faculty. My duties included being the faculty advisor to the KSU High School MUN and advisor to the college Model United Nations team and the Model Arab League delegation. It has been a perfect fit for a semi-retired life long learner.

Long familiar with model UN programs, I was a novice to MAL. I will always be grateful to Dr. Joe Dunn and other faculty advisors as they were so helpful at my first SRMAL in 2004. Our team developed an organizational structure that has made us successful at every regional and national conference since. This is an extra curricular activity which requires students to meet every Sunday afternoon from 2-5. The team captain runs the meetings according to MAL

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Philip D'Agati

rules of procedure. Delegates are self motivated in their research and very active in sharing. Because they are a small group, relative to MUN, they become close friends who frequently meet socially. Old members often join us in preparation meetings and social events. Everyone feels real ownership of the program. The regional conference is our favorite. Over the years, students have made special friends with delegates from other schools. Since we all stay in the same hotel in Spartanburg, it is easy to caucus after hours. The national conference is special especially because we budget extra days in Washington, D.C. to sightsee and meet in briefing sessions with the embassy of the country we are representing. In recent years, we have had a private tour of the capital and a “policy briefing” with Senator Johnny Isakson who is extremely impressed with the students’ poise and knowledge. I consider the Arab League experience life changing for most of my students who have little opportunity to travel. The Washington trip is particularly eye opening to our international students. We are fortunate to be

well financed by the Global Society of Kennesaw State University.

Philip D'Agati *Northeastern University*

My interest in Model Arab League began in 1999 as a grad student at Northeastern University. At that time, I was a student of European History and a member of NU’s Model UN team. I first began as a TA for the MAL team and then, in Fall 2003, as its official Advisor. I have advised the MAL team from 2003 – 2006, and again from 2007 – present.

Originally, I had very little interest in the history or politics of the Arab world. One of the great benefits of the MAL program is to enliven that spirit of interest. This enthusiasm for a region that was originally uninteresting to me is just one of many things I enjoy imparting on my team. That enthusiasm, coupled with an appreciation for practice-learning form the two principle elements of my team’s preparation.

Pedagogically, I have always been a strong supported of Experiential Education. I utilize simulation-forms of learning in many of my courses and in turn use more traditional styles of education in them and in the training of NU’s Model UN and Model Arab League team. Admittedly, my background in the experiential side of my teaching comes from self-practice. As a student, I was a delegate, chair, and Secretary General of the National MAL. I also founded the Northeast Regional MAL and co-founded the Boston High School

MAL. These experiences form the core of my background as an advisor. As such, while preparing my team and advising it on location, I enjoy offering my students a clearer understanding of their role as diplomats of the Arab World. While this does surprise some of my students, I even participate in a few practices just to maintain a more hands-on understanding of “delegating.”

As an advisor, I also see myself as being committed to all students present at the conference and to the overall success of the conference. It is that spirit of cooperation among teams that make the MAL program a true success. As a part of this, my role as an advisor has included working with students and advisors from the United States Military Academy at West Point, Simmons College, University of Massachusetts at Boston, and Merrimack College to develop new MAL programs for participation at the Northeast Regional and at Nationals.

In service to the Model Arab League program and the National Council, I believe the responsibility of the faculty advisor is to provide all participants with support and guidance when needed. As for my team, the duty of an advisor goes beyond that of imparting knowledge. It includes being a mentor and a friend. It is this dedication that plays one of many key roles in the development of Northeastern’s MAL program into a gem of the Political Science department at NU and into one of several respected and dignified teams at the National MAL.

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Iraqi Kurdistan: Observing the Struggle of Traditional Progress

Chelsea Jaccard

I recently returned from six months in Iraq, but not the Iraq one normally hears about on the news or reads about in the papers. I lived in the “other Iraq”, known as Iraqi Kurdistan. For most of the estimated 28 million Kurds around the world, the largest ethnic community that has never had their own political state, Kurdistan is a myth, a legend, something their grandparents fought for, their parents imagined, but to most it is not a reality. However, the reality exists in the three northernmost provinces of Iraq, where after the Gulf War and a 1991 UN resolution, the “Northern No Fly Zone” was created. This protective envelop ended Saddam Hussein’s postwar effort to destroy the Kurds through the use of poison gas attacks, village razing, assassinations,

Chelsea Jaccard in Kurdistan



and other indiscriminate forms of murder. Since that time, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has undergone power struggles and a civil war to emerge as a transitional post conflict society posed for economic and political progress. I was able to work within this system at some of the highest levels of their government.

As the country director for a small consulting firm with two small but high-level projects, I lived in Erbil, the regional capital, and I had access to ministers, members of Parliament, foreign advisors, and many other constituencies in this dynamic situation. It was quite an experience for a 27-year-old woman immediately out of her master’s program at American University. Respect was not something automatically granted within these circles; it had to be earned through one’s work and the reputation established. Although my company had gained a certain amount of prestige in the region, as the new country director I had to prove myself in an environment where connections are quite personal. The first few weeks were a dizzying schedule of lunches, dinner parties, and meetings to introduce me to all the people that I needed to know. At first I was star struck by dining at the home of the head of the Kurdish Democratic Peoples Party (one of the two main political parties), spending the day with the minister of the department of foreign affairs, or meeting with

the minister of planning and the minister of municipalities. One day I went to play tennis at one of the nicer hotels in Erbil and ended up playing doubles against another government minister. The longer that I was in country, the more these activities became the norm rather than extraordinary.

Iraqi Kurdistan is an anomaly in the morass of the rest of Iraq. Very little violence has occurred within the Kurdish border and no foreigners have been killed or taken hostage. Much of this can be attributed to the Kurds’ own *Peshmerga* militia, who maintain tight controls on the borders and track all non-Kurds in the region. I never once felt unsafe while living in northern Iraq. I drove a car, shopped in the stores, walked the streets, and toured the region, including vast unexplored territories that are ripe for tourism. Erbil claims to have been an inhabited city for more than 8,000 years giving it rival claim against Damascus for the honor of being the world’s longest continuously-inhabited city. I will leave that dispute to the historians. After spending many afternoons exploring the wonderful Erbil Citadel, the original fortress city that radiates its antiquity from its dirt brick walls, dusty floors, and old iron doors and gates, I am amazed at how some things survive the centuries in tact to tell their story to the present.

I was a Peace Corps volunteer in

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northern Ghana from 2003-2005, so this was not my first sustained interaction in a foreign environment, but in Kurdistan I was engaged at a much higher level of activity and responsibility than in my previous experience. The Ghana experience proved invaluable because in all such situations one learns to operate within the cultural context. Progress in Kurdistan, as in all of Iraq, is much slower than westerners want; traditional western standards of efficiency and work ethic are foreign and generally unwelcome. My challenge always was to get work completed without isolating my counterparts, pushing them too hard, or embarrassing them. Although willingness to change exists and progress in northern Iraq is occurring on a pace that to them seems incredible, for Westerners the day to day impediments and the inertia can seem intractable.

On one hand, northern Iraq and Erbil in particular are experiencing a reconstruction boom with cranes and tall skeletons of new luxury hotels and shopping malls dominating the skyline in every direction. On a normal weekend day, I could wander the shopping mall buying clothes or DVD's, stroll through one of the many beautifully maintained parks or gardens, and spend the evening at the world class go cart race track eating pizza and drinking beer. This is certainly not what I expected when I first went to Iraq. Obvious progress towards a more modern democracy is evident in the capital Erbil and the other large cities of Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah.

On the other hand, it is clear that the Kurds are a traditional people.



Meeting with Kurdish leaders

Traditional society is the backbone of life in Iraqi Kurdistan, and the battle between modernity and traditional society creates tensions that are readily felt. This makes Kurdistan typical of all of Iraq, the entire Middle East region, and indeed the whole developing world. I experienced age-old Kurdish culture as I traveled outside of Erbil. In one instance, I spent a few nights in a traditional village and celebrated *Eid al Fitr*, the breaking of the fast at the end of Ramadan. I stayed with a quite traditional family that had fourteen children, most of them girls, who all worked tirelessly to make the food and clean up following the celebration. Sleeping on the floor reminded me of my Peace Corps days. But in this most traditional of families, the females were quick to sit down to watch television and DVDs at night while the men went visiting from house to house in the village.

The tensions of progress and tradition will continue to challenge Kurdistan

and all of Iraq. It is my hope that progress can continue without destroying traditional society, the plight of so many exploding cities in the region. Kurdistan affords greater hope than many areas that a balance can be achieved to bring about a better society that blends the past and the future in a model for other parts of the Middle East.

I left Kurdistan when my company's contract ended, but the friendships and contacts I made while there will be with me for years to come.

***Chelsea Jaccard graduated from Converse College in 2003 with a double major in politics and art. She was a three-year award-winning member of the Converse Model Arab League program and during her undergraduate years studied Arabic at the Arabic Language Institute of Fez in Morocco and through independent correspondence study at Converse. She continued her Arabic study during her masters degree program in International Peace and Conflict Resolution with a Middle East emphasis at American University in Washington, DC.*

Arabic at Converse College



Mirko Hall

When Mirko Hall was hired in 2007 to revitalize and build the German language program at Converse College, he didn't realize that his experience many years earlier immediately after he graduated from high school year would be so important to his career. At 18 years old, Hall enlisted in the Army and as a young private was sent to study Arabic at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California. Further trained as a linguist and an interrogator, he deployed in 1994 during the Desert Storm Ceasefire Campaign to Kuwait, where he translated U.S. warfighting doctrine into Arabic and Kuwaiti intelligence reports into English for the U.S. Army Training and Support—Kuwait and the Office of Military Cooperation—Kuwait. As a reservist in 1995, he deployed to Guantanamo, Cuba with a Military Information Support Team to run information campaigns for Cuban and Haitian migrants housed at the base. Although he considered

accepting warrant officer status and remaining in the Army, he chose to return to college and completed his undergraduate, masters, and Ph.D. degrees all in German studies at the University of Minnesota. The Army and his Arabic language training seemed to be a part of the distant past. However, when he applied for the position in German language at Converse, the hiring committee found his background in Arabic an added bonus.

The high profile of the Converse Model Arab League delegation at the small women's college of 600 undergraduates translated that a group of students had a strong interest in Arabic language. Over the last decade, several Converse students have pursued Arabic in summer study in Morocco, Jordan, Egypt, and Yemen, and a few students improved their skills through 200-mile roundtrip weekend commutes to work with a tutor in Columbia, South Carolina. Some students who began their study of Arabic in the summer programs continued it in graduate school. See the article in this issue on the student who worked in Kurdistan. Another student continued Arabic in graduate study at the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Texas, where she taught an introductory Arabic language course. She now employs her skills in the Middle East division of the Congressional Research Office. Another continued her study while teaching English in Morocco before joining the U.S. Air Force and serving as an intelligence officer involved in Middle East air

threat assessment (see other article in this issue). Finally, one former student joined the Air Force after graduation, studied Arabic and Farsi in the military and during her masters at Georgetown University, served three tours in Iraq, and later taught Arabic for the U.S. Military Academy in a summer program in Qatar and as an adjunct faculty member at Texas A & M University.

When the word got out that first-year Arabic would be available on the Converse campus, the response was enthusiastic. Hall has had to limit his enrollment in first-year Arabic the last two years and strong desire exists for him to offer second-year study. Although his teaching responsibilities in German have made this impossible at the moment, he has provided a few students independent study opportunities to continue the language. At present summer study abroad is the best option available, but Converse hopes in the future to build on the foundation that it has begun in Arabic and offer at least the second year.

As Dr. Hall recently counseled a group of graduate students in cultural studies at his alma mater, "In a challenging job market for languages in academia, one never knows what are the extras that make one attractive for a position. Certainly Arabic served as a bonus for me and I believe for Converse College as well."

LEARNING RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Book Review

Dr. Joe P. Dunn

Charles A. Dana Professor of History
and Politics, Converse College

Patrick Cockburn, *Muqtada Al-Sadr and the Fall of Iraq*
(London: Faber and Faber, 2008)

In the Byzantine politics of current Iraq, the number of players is considerable and their shifting alliances remind one of the various *mujahedeen* forces in Afghanistan. For the novice, understanding all the various factions is overwhelming; and even the more expert student struggles to comprehend the multi-sided mortal conflict among remaining Baathists, al Qaeda, the role of the fanatical anti-Shia Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, secular politicians both indigenous and ex-patriot, and traditional tribal leaders both Sunni and Shia, not to mention the various American military and civilian commands. The Shia side of the equation alone is daunting enough with the interplay between the competing elements, including the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) under Muhammad

Baqir al-Hakim, the Dawa party, the Sadrist and their Mahdi Army, the secular Shia politicians, the august Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who maintains that the clergy should stay out of the political fray, and a host of rival political clerics, including figures such as Sayyid Majid al-Khoei.

Out of all of this, and from very much outside the system, emerged the young, mid-thirties Muqtada al-Sadr, who became one of the major players in the civil war and who is likely to be a factor in the future. Award-winning war correspondent Patrick Cockburn, who has reported from Iraq since 1977, offers the first biographical portrait of the enigmatic voice of millions of poor Shia in the teeming Sadr City ghetto of Baghdad. Like any undertaking penned amidst an every changing situation, the book is not destined to be an ultimate work, but the engaging and often insightful sketch is very useful for anyone who seeks to understand the myriad competing elements in contention for power in post occupation Iraq.

Although himself a relative unknown until the U.S. invasion, Muqtada al-Sadr stemmed from prestigious Shia family roots. He is the fourth son of the highly respected Iraqi cleric, the late Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr, the son-in-law of Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir As-Sadr, and the great grandson of the revered Lebanese cleric Ismail as-Sadr. Muqtada's father and two of his older brothers were murdered

by Saddam Hussein henchmen in 1999, just as his father-in-law had been executed by the Iraqi government earlier in 1980. If this were not enough, Muqtada is a cousin of the Imam Moussa as-Sadr, the Iranian-Lebanese founder of the Amal Movement, who disappeared in Libya in 1978, and is believed to have been murdered by Muammar Qaddafi.

Prior to the assassination of his father, Muqtada was a student in the Najaf *Hawza* or religious seminary, where he was anything but a diligent student of the complexities of Shia law and theology. With his father's death, he turned his attention to his father's network of charities and social services and increasingly he became more political. Because Muqtada lacks the proper religious education and degrees required by Shi'a doctrines, he does not claim the title of *mujtahid* or senior religious scholar, but he does invoke certain legitimacy as a *sayyid* (direct descendants of Muhammad).

Beyond Muqtada's background, Cockburn traces the history of Saddam's repression of Shias and the internal struggles within the various elements of the Shia community. One important incident is the murder of Sayyid Majid al-Khoei, who was a favorite of the United States and a family rival of the Sadrs. This atrocity has been linked to orders from Muqtada, and Cockburn indicates that he is not convinced by the Sadrist argument that they were not responsible. But Cockburn admits that in this case and many others, the Mahdi

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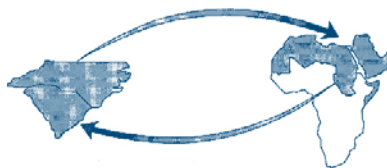
Army, composed of violent young men loyal to Muqtada, did not mean that Muqtada had more than marginal control over its actions. What is more apparent is that the United States in its invasion stumbled into something which it neither understood or had any hopes of controlling, and that Paul Bremer and the American Coalition Provisional Authority made mistake after mistake.

Cockburn concludes that Muqtada al-Sadr is the most surprising and important figure to emerge in Iraq since the U.S. invasion. The U.S. and other Iraqi elements, Sunni and Shia, underestimated him. Although characterized in the

West as a messianic firebrand, Muqtada, Cockburn explains, is often pragmatic and politically astute. His control over the Mahdi Army is ephemeral as the undisciplined group sometimes follows Sadrist's desires and at other times operates entirely on its own. Muqtada probably reflects the impoverish millions of poor Shias better than anyone else; however, he is not in total control of his own movement. Try as the U.S. did to marginalize him, it was not possible. Muqtada has been consistent in his commitment that the U.S. must leave Iraq; and he is pragmatic that sometimes this means fighting and at other times it means retiring from the fray. Much as the U.S. attempted

to dismiss him as an Iranian tool, Muqtada is an Arab Iraqi willing to work with the Iranians when it is in his interest, but he does not intend to become their instrument.

As indicated above, this book is hardly the last word; however, it is a very good start in attempting to come to grips with the confusing and fluid situation in Iraq. Cockburn's conclusion may be premature, but after reading the book it is hard to dismiss his assertion that a unified Iraq is not a likely outcome. A loose federation and continuing conflict may be the best that can be hoped for in any intermediate or long term.



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