

Poland's deal with the EU: Protecting borders or violating human rights?

Since 2021, there has been an ongoing migration crisis present on the Polish-Belarusian border.

(Page 6)



Dear Diary, It's Me, I'm the Problem (and I'm Singing About It) - 'Sad Girl Pop' as a Tool for Introspection

As the days get rainier, windier, and colder, autumn brings with it an air of melancholy. It is once again the season of yearning through ballads on the radio, on your record player, or in your earphones.

(Page 11)



One Year of Grief and Resistance: Maastricht's Response

It has been a year since the Hamas attack on Israel, following one of the deadliest operations by the IDF the world has seen. At least 42,709 Palestinians, 2,000 Lebanese, and 1,139 Israeli lives lost in this war.

(Page 18)

New Bus Line for the Jewish Community in London: Protection or Division?

In London, a new bus line dedicated to members of the Jewish community was inaugurated this September, connecting the neighborhoods of Stamford Hill and Golders Green, both known for their significant Jewish populations. This initiative, introduced by Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, will operate seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. and was part of Khan's commitments during his reelection campaign. This measure aims to address the rise in antisemitic acts of violence in London and globally, nearly one year after October 7th. However, it also raises broader ethical questions about how to tackle such issues. (Page 12)



Editor's Letter



After months of preparation, elaboration, and speculation on our biggest project this year, I have the honor to present to you the first MD Newspaper 'Winter Edition'. You may not know this, but this project has been in the making for some time now, engaging in lots of brainstorming and planning.

As part of a general welcome, let me introduce myself.

My name is Sarah, I am 21 years old, French, and a third-year student at the University College Maastricht, the Editor in Chief of the Maastricht Diplomat, and Head of the Journal Committee at UNSA. I was nominated and elected to endorse this role in May last year, and have been since then, engaged in making our Journal grow.



I feel very lucky to have by my side an amazing board of co-heads to help me in this journey. These amazing people are Vanille (Co-head of Foreign Correspondence and Development), Raquel (Co-head of Audiovisual), Jules (Co-head of Social Media), A.G (Co-head of Creation), and Elena (Co-head of Editing). I do not know what I would do without them, and I am so very thankful to have them by my side.

From August to October, our priority was to build a powerful team that would be engaged, motivated, and coercive altogether. After a number of interviews, discussions, and reflections, we finally succeeded in recruiting 19 members for the Editorial team, 3 members for the Audiovisual team, and 8 members for the Foreign Correspondence team.

Since the start of our meetings, our Editorial team has been working hard every week, drafting articles, with our editors receiving feedback, and editing their pieces to end up the best they could be. So far, we have published more than 30 articles since mid-October, written a 5 piece series on U.S. elections, and worked on a report on Fashionclash, which is only the beginning. Our co-heads have been particularly proud of the achievements of our team.

Nonetheless, there is way more to journalism than only writing. Our audiovisual team has also worked very thoroughly in the making of Audiovisual content such as videos, podcasts, and much more. On the 24th of October, the AV team produced its first podcast of the year, also the first episode of our new portrait series, with Sanae Okamoto, a UNU researcher specializing in climate change and mental health. Also diffusing content for the U.S. elections on Instagram, the AV is now focused on a bigger project to report on the Fashionclash festival.

Here at the Maastricht Diplomat, we are committed to publishing high-quality and well-written articles to our readers. We aim for a thorough understanding and reflection of Maastricht, the world around us, and, ourselves.

For this edition, our priority was to create a printed Journal that reflects who we are. A newspaper that would engage us, is the Maastricht Diplomat Journal, and our organization, the United Nations Student Association of Maastricht. This newspaper is also the result of a collaboration of us, the Maastricht Diplomat, and the UNSA Committee of Marketing and Communications

I would like to express huge thanks to everyone who helped us achieve this project. Thanks to the Executive Board, the Governing Board, and particularly Nienke, Mercure, my co-heads, my team, and all the additional help we got.

In this edition, you will find a mix of updates from UNSA and articles from the MD team, already published and available on our website maastrichtdiplomat.org.

Now, I hope you enjoy the voyage through our little MD world and appreciate the work we have put through to make this Edition happen.

Best wishes,
Sarah.



Executive Board

Dear Readers,

We are proud to announce that you are holding the first ever edition of the Maastricht Diplomat newspaper in your hands. All of the content has been produced by students in Maastricht, the ambitious writers of the United Nations Student Association Journal Committee. Further, the composition of this paper has come from our great designers in the UNSA Marketing Committee. No matter where you typically get your news, we hope you take a minute to flip through the pages and appreciate some reporting by students for students.

If you find yourself enjoying the paper, we encourage you to check out all of the other exciting activities and productions UNSA is working on! We hope to provide an environment where ambitious students in Maastricht can get actively involved, discover new topics of interest, acquire new skills, & make lifelong connections.

All of our activities are imagined, coordinated, and carried out by our seven committees: Journal & Marketing, the producers of this paper, along with External Relations, Events, Development, Delegations, and EuroMUN.

These teams bring together students from all different faculties, study programs, and national and cultural backgrounds to make an open-minded, diverse environment. UNSA aims to uphold the values of the United Nations here in Maastricht by promoting the importance of global cooperation and intercultural exchange to achieve common goals. We seek to create a space where everyone can feel a sense of community and belonging.

As the 24/25 Executive Board, we could not be more proud of what our teams have accomplished so far and are incredibly honored to play a part in all they will do throughout the year. If you're curious about our work, know that you are more than welcome in the UNSA family and we hope to see you soon.

Warm Regards,

Addison, Isabel & Luis
The 2024/25 Executive Board



President

Hi y'all! I'm Addison, this year's UNSA President! Outside of my UNSA world, I am a 3rd year Global Studies student interested in just migration processes and how this relates to the UN system.

Coming from the US, specifically Oklahoma, the transition to Maastricht life was a difficult one. I struggled to find my place and navigate such a new environment. Joining UNSA was the best decision I could have made. The association has given me my closest friends, my greatest career connections, and has taught me so much about who I want to be in the world.

While I could give a much longer spiel about UNSA, I will leave it by saying that, whether you read our journal, join an event, or get much more active in our work, I hope you find a sense of community that is not only diverse and international, but one that is kind, welcoming, and can offer you a sense of belonging right here in Maastricht. See you soon!

Vice-President & Secretary

Hey, I am Luis, a second year Global Studies student. I'm this year's Secretary & Vice-President. I am passionate about understanding and combining different perspectives and how this can be used to solve real issues. In my studies as well as in UNSA, I enjoy having the opportunity to explore a wide range of topics and to meet people from many different backgrounds.

What I love the most about UNSA, is how everyone brings their very personal perspectives, background and experiences and thus adds to the whole organization and the work we are doing. All this has given me a lot in more than one regard. I found many meaningful friendships during the last year, was able to discover many topics that interest me and to experience an amazing personal growth, last year as a member of the Marketing Committee and this year as Secretary.

Besides my work for UNSA, I am very passionate about photography and cooking, and I'm always down for a fun evening and talk with friends. :)

I am looking forward to all our accomplishments throughout the year, knowing how much I can rely on our amazing governing board! See you around in Maastricht! Luis

Vice-President & Treasurer

Hi everyone! I'm Isabel, a third year Global Studies student here in Maastricht and this year's Treasurer & Vice-President of UNSA! My absolute favorite hobby is (obviously) UNSA but I also enjoy watching K-dramas and reading a good book.

Reflecting on my time in Maastricht, joining UNSA two years ago was one of my best decisions I could have made. It has been an incredible place to grow both professionally and personally, while being surrounded by many inspiring people who have now become some of my closest friends. This year, my goal is to ensure every member feels the same joy that I've found within UNSA - a place where we learn, connect, and make unforgettable memories together.

Hope to see you around soon! <3

Why does Albania want to create a muslim microstate?

By Jaap Steunenberger

Most microstates come into being through a quirk of history. Take the Vatican, for example, created in a compromise between the Pope and Mussolini. Or Liechtenstein, for whom, due to its position between Switzerland and Austria, it did not make sense to become part of Germany as did so many other German microstates. These microstates have long histories and, arguably, a reason for their existence. Albania's Prime Minister, Edi Rama, instead wants to simply create a new microstate from scratch.

On September 21st 2024 the creation of the Sovereign State of the Bektashi order was announced. A 0.11 km² plot of land in Tirana, covering about the same area as De Vrijthof, the Law Faculty and SBE, would host it. This came as a complete surprise to both other states, including close NATO allies such as the US, and to the Albanians themselves. The state would act as a promoter for Bektashi Islam, as well as religious moderation and tolerance.

Bektashism is an order within Islam originally from Turkey, but has become dominant in Albania after persecution and expulsion. Elements of pre-islamic religious practices from Turkey are combined with teachings of the Koran, as well as a central role for wise men known as dervishes. Due to an important role in the independence movement from the Ottomans, as well as a tolerance for other religions, Bektashi Islam is held in high regard in Albania, even if only 5 percent of the population follows its teachings.

The proposed state would have its own borders, passports, and laws. It would consist mostly of the pre-existing Bektashi compound buildings, and its citizens would be high religious officials. One should, however, not expect a system of governance based on the traditional norms and values of Islam. Far from, with the current religious leader or Dede Baba, Baba Mondî, who is to be the head of state, stating 'alcohol is to be allowed and women can wear what they want'. Instead, the state is to promote and give space to a moderate voice of Islam.

'We are the only ones ... who tell the truth about Islam ... and don't mix it up with politics' says Mondî. The hope is that the independent, sovereign state will be able to spread its message of coexistence of religions without needing to consider the economic or political implications of their actions. It would be a neutral platform for interfaith discussion and exchange, aimed at increasing understanding between parties. And, since the Bektashi order is not a well-known or particularly large religious organization, it will be able to act more freely on an international level than comparable states like the Vatican.

The plans are grand and idealistic. However, in order for them to be implemented, some major hurdles must be overcome. In order for the state to be established, the Albanian constitution would need to be changed, which needs broad political support. The ruling coalition would not have the two-thirds majority required to push through such reforms. Furthermore, the population of Albania and other religious groups have not reacted particularly positively to the announcement. Albanian Sunni Muslim and Protestant leaders found it off-putting that they had not been consulted before, and worried about an artificial imbalance in the religious dynamics of the country. Citizens, taken by surprise, also felt it could be a ploy to distract from domestic issues. Some fear it is a way to enable tax evasion through international law loopholes. Others criticize the idea as being a simple international attention-grab, with no feasible implementation.

Domestic forces are not the only ones standing in the way of the Sovereign State of the Bektashi Order. A state in international law must be recognized by other states in order to gain statehood, and it seems unlikely many other states will elect to recognize the new state. Statehood comes with many privileges, and it is expectable that other states don't want to set a precedent that can be easily abused. A potential solution would be a state modeled after the Military Order of Malta, with limited recognition but a certain degree of international recognition and clout.

Nonetheless, Edi Rama, the Prime Minister, has recognized that he may be called crazy for this idea. Yet, he desires to push on, because 'the important thing, crazy or not, is to fight for good'. A legal team is drafting a proposal to make the new state a reality, and it is to be seen if that will be successful. ★



Development Committee

Hello! I'm Tillie and, for this 2024/2025 academic year, I am Head of Development. I am so excited and grateful to have this role, and already in these short few months, I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know my committee members and being a member of the UNSA board.

The Development Committee works with a number of NGOs, which, based on these partnerships and the momentum of our members, seek volunteering opportunities for students, organize fundraisers, and raise awareness to crucial issues.

Over the next year, I hope to foster closer relations with our partner NGOs, and allow for both active and general members to engage with them. As a team, we have already begun searching and engaging with new possible partners. In addition, I am making a conscious effort to increase and diversify our partners, each with different objectives and operating in a variety of regions;

Learning from our partner NGOs, their mission, vision and values, is crucial to understand how these organizations work, and how our committee can get involved. In my first months as Head of Development, I've had the opportunity to speak to many inspiring people working or volunteering in these NGOs, for which I hope to communicate and expand on their mutual missions, all through the Development Committee.

To achieve this, the committee is working on numerous social media series to present our partners, issues we consider crucial, and opportunities we can offer. This project will allow committee members to express what they deem important, and help us spark conversations; so we look forward to bringing this to you!

I deeply appreciate the work and motivation from our committee members, who behind the scenes are working eagerly to bring UNSA members a plethora of activities and information, and we hope you enjoy them as well!

All the best,
Tillie Morris, Head of Development



EuroMUN

Dear readers,

I am Santiago Salazar, and I have the honor of being the Secretary-General for the upcoming edition of EuroMUN 2025.

For those that naturally wonder “what is EuroMUN?,” it is essential to first understand what MUN is. In short, it refers to “Model United Nations”, a debating conference whereby students act as delegates of specific countries, debating on UN-oriented committees, for an internationally relevant topic. With committees ranging from beginner to expert levels, MUN is the perfect opportunity for anyone who wants to boost public speaking and negotiation skills, while enjoying an enriching experience with social events tailored to balance out the debate’s rigor.

Within UNSA, EuroMUN is the committee which organizes Maastricht’s MUN conference, aiming to give delegates the best possible experience. Therefore, we have 4 specialized committees – academics, marketing, logistics & socials, and registrations & communications – which target specific organizational aspects of the conference and work weekly to anticipate, address, and execute any actions required to run EuroMUN smoothly.

The beginning of the academic year has seen numerous developments within our committee, starting with the announcement of EuroMUN’s topic, Peace and Efficiency in Times of Conflict, along with the dates, with the conference taking place between May 2nd-5th 2025. After concluding our recruitment, we familiarized our members with their team roles. However, the biggest load of our work has already started, with our team diving into preparations for MiniMUN 2025 – a conference that replicates the EuroMUN experience on a smaller scale for 1 day, taking place on January 18th, 2025.



The closer we get to EuroMUN, the more updates we will have for the benefits which we manage to obtain for chairs, delegates, and UNSA overall. Stay tuned for more, and we hope to give you a warm welcome to the EuroMUN experience!

Best regards,



Santiago

To Flow or Not to Flow

—

The Atlantic Current’s Existential Crisis

By Virgile de Maupeou

Water is pretty cool, right? Drink it and you’re not thirsty anymore; pour it on yourself and you’re cleaner than ever before; dive in it and you’re refreshed to the core. But most importantly, water even powers one of Earth’s most crucial climate systems: the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)

Now compromised, the AMOC has been pushed into an existential crisis due to human-induced climate change. Its slowdown and potential collapse could have catastrophic impacts on Europe’s weather, global rainfall patterns and food production around the world. Before all, let’s first clarify what the AMOC is and why it is so crucial.

The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) is a core component of our planet’s ocean circulation system, acting like a giant heating system. As warm surface water flows from the tropics to the North Atlantic, it releases heat, warming Europe and making it milder than other regions at similar latitudes. This process is driven by thermohaline circulation, which relies on temperature (“thermo”) and salinity (“haline”). As warm surface water flows from the Tropics toward the North Atlantic, it cools and, in northern latitudes, loses some of its water content to ice formation leaving the remaining water saltier. The combined increase in salinity and drop in temperature make the water much denser. This very dense water then sinks into the deep ocean, pulling warmer water from the south to take its place. This process sustains the AMOC’s continuous flow, with the cold, dense water eventually flowing back toward the tropics and rising to the surface in a constant cycle. Problem? Human-induced climate change is threatening the functioning of this entire cycle, putting the AMOC at increasing risk.

The AMOC slowdown and potential collapse

Most abrupt temperatures and climate changes in Earth’s history have been linked with instabilities in the AMOC. By studying the past, geologists have identified distinct markers, they refer to as the “fingerprints” of an AMOC slowdown. For several decades now, scientists have detected those fingerprints: a century-long cooling trend of the Atlantic’s cold blob region, and a warming along the North American coast. This signals an AMOC slowdown since the mid-twentieth century.

This AMOC slowdown is driven by climate change. Rising temperatures lower water salinity in the Arctic due to melting ice and increased precipitation, while also warming surface waters. Together, these changes reduce water density, weakening the Atlantic’s sinking mechanism and gradually slowing the AMOC.

The scary part is that this creates a feedback loop—where the initial change reinforces itself. As the AMOC weakens, it brings less salty water from the south to northern latitudes, making the water in the Arctic region even less dense and harder to sink, which further slows down the AMOC.

This process could eventually lead to a tipping point—a threshold beyond which the AMOC’s slowdown becomes self-sustaining and would lead to a complete collapse, even without further human interference.

Imagine you’re balancing on a chair, leaning back on just two legs. You can push back slowly until a certain point: the tipping point, where you fall over no matter what you do. In this case, the AMOC’s tipping point, leading to its collapse, may have been widely underestimated.

md
04

Last month, more than 40 renowned scientists issued an open letter to the Nordic council of ministers stressing that the risk concerning the potential collapse of the AMOC has been

strongly underestimated – even in the latest IPCC report. This strong stance does not come out of the blue. In recent years, many scientific studies have highlighted the underestimated risk of the AMOC potential collapse. Where the IPCC forecasted a tipping point after 2100, new findings suggest that it could come around 2050 with the current scenario of future emissions.

While some papers highlight ongoing uncertainties in prediction models, relying solely on this to argue that we are far from a tipping point is a very risky bet, given the catastrophic consequences an AMOC collapse would have on our civilization.

Now, this is the spooky part.

An AMOC collapse scenario would have several severe consequences. While the following impacts and figures represent a complete AMOC collapse, a continuous slowdown would bring similar effects, though to a lesser extent.

The collapse of the AMOC would bring dramatic changes to Europe's climate. As the AMOC slows and potentially collapses, the cold blob in the Arctic region will expand, bringing colder and colder air towards Northern Europe. This shift would have a substantial impact on annual temperatures across the region. In northern Europe, annual temperatures could drop by 1.2°C to 2.5°C. Winter temperatures would eventually take the biggest hit, with a decrease of over 10 degrees in the far north and between 5 to 7 degrees in the UK.



So now you're thinking, "oh nevermind, global warming will eventually compensate for it...". Right? Well not so fast. Let's remember that we're looking at annual temperature averages here. For this part of Europe, the "zero" annual change is misleading. It actually results from mean winter temperature dropping by about 4 degrees and summer temperatures rising by roughly the same amount. So while the average temperature might stay steady over the year, the standard deviation – the difference between the coldest and the warmest day of the year – would drastically increase, meaning much bigger swings in temperature between and within seasons.

In short, a stable annual average does not mean stable temperatures, but rather more extreme ups and downs from season to season. For instance, the 1.2°C of global warming experienced in Europe does not mean that each day of the year is exactly 1.2°C warmer. Instead, temperatures have surged to record highs of 48.8°C in Sicily in 2021 and dropped to -35.8°C in the proving of Leon, Spain, highlighting the increasing intensity of seasonal extremes.

Additionally, the mix of cold air from northern Europe and hot air from the south isn't a cocktail I'd recommend. This increase in air temperature contrast will increase the likelihood and strength of extreme events. To give you an impression of the gravity of the situation, in an interview for the Guardian, Stefan Rahmstorf – renowned Oceanographer part of the Potsdam Institute – warns about the fact that he "would expect major extreme weather events that we have not seen in the past".

But if you think that's a lot, you haven't seen the rest. An AMOC collapse would cool the Northern Hemisphere more than the Southern Hemisphere, creating a temperature imbalance that pulls the Intertropical Convergence Zone – a rain belt near the equator – southward.

Why does this matter? Imagine a surplus of water in regions not accustomed to heavy rain, and drought in areas that depend on it. Tragic right?

A recent study showed that this southward shift could drastically disrupt three major monsoon systems: The West African, Indian, and East Asian monsoons. Each of these monsoons would experience shorter wet seasons with reduced rainfall coupled with extended dry seasons. This disruption would have severe impacts on agriculture and water availability for the nearly 3 billion people affected by these monsoons.

Europe would face an overall decrease in precipitation across the continent, though, masking significant regional disparities, particularly in summer. In the Mediterranean region, summer rainfall could increase by up to 35%, raising the risk of flooding in areas unaccustomed to sudden surges in rain. Meanwhile, northern Europe would experience drier summers, leading to more frequent droughts, straining water supplies, and intensifying wildfire regimes.

Due to these significant disruptions in Europe's seasonal temperatures and humidity, a study suggests that an AMOC collapse could severely reduce crop productivity across key agricultural regions in western, northern, and eastern Europe. The letter issued by more than forty scientists warned that it could "threaten the viability of agriculture in northwestern Europe".

Eventually, the collapse of the AMOC will also strongly contribute to water-level rise along the south-east American coast. Between 2015-2020, the AMOC slowdown has already accounted for 30 to 50% of floods in the region. Additionally, the ocean's capacity to store carbon—a crucial role, as the ocean has absorbed 25% of our emissions since the industrial revolution—will be strongly diminished. In turn, an AMOC collapse would significantly accelerate climate change.

This article, rather than a discussion on how doomed we are, serves as a call for immediate action.

The climate crisis has rarely felt more real than with recent climate-driven disasters, like the flooding in Valencia. These events should be a wake-up call for each of us, motivating change at both individual and collective levels. ★

External Relations Committee

Dear Readers,

I'm Lidia Zaleska, currently in my second year of a Bachelor's in European Studies at Maastricht University. After a rewarding experience as an active member of the External Relations Committee last year, I'm honored to now serve as its Head, working alongside an incredible team. Together, we are dedicated to making UNSA a community with a great outreach and meaningful connections.



As the new academic year started, we have made the power of diversity the center of our mission, which is also a full-time commitment for UNSA as a whole. I am thrilled to see this association's variety grow and cannot wait to see how these many members will bring to UNSA a broader understanding of collaboration and community.

Working with my dedicated co-heads—Hannah, Marianna, and Samija—we aim to maintain and expand UNSA's valued partnerships, placing a special emphasis on developing ties with institutional partners.

Our upcoming study trips to The Hague, Berlin, Geneva, Luxembourg, Vienna, and Brussels highlight our team's dedication to create impactful academic experiences for our members.

Additionally, one of our primary goals this year is to grow our Alumni Network, providing an Alumni Newsletter, an internal portal for former UNSA members, and reunions to reconnect over shared memories.

Thank you for your support and engagement in our journey. We are looking forward to an incredible year.

Warm regards,

Lidia Zaleska - Head of the External Relations Committee.



Poland's deal with the EU: Protecting borders or violating human rights?

By Patrycja Tobola

Since 2021, there has been an ongoing migration crisis present on the Polish-Belarusian border. Belarusian authorities, with the president Aleksandr Lukashenko at the forefront, have been exerting their power and unwanted influence over Eastern Europe by transferring migrants illegally through the forest on the frontier of the countries. Together with Russia, they are trying to use those people as a demographic weapon by intentionally facilitating and directing the flow of migrants towards the European Union in order to disrupt the political stability of its member countries. Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia have described the crisis as hybrid warfare waged by Belarus against the EU.

Directed by eastern authorities, the situation made Poland declare a state of emergency in Podlachia, Poland's north-eastern region. Groups of migrants, usually coming from the Middle East and South Sudan, have tried to cross the border. Podlachia is most known for Europe's last temperate primeval forest –



Białowieża National Park. The total area of the park is over one hundred square kilometers, adjacent to the border with Belarus. It used to provide an ideal route for migrants to cross, especially since there were no checkpoints in place before the crisis. However, after many instances of migrants' irregular entries, the Polish right-wing populist government decided to build a 180-kilometer-long wall made out of barbed wire in order to stop people from crossing. It is constantly guarded by border guards who not only protect the Polish frontier from illegal immigrants, but also tend to beat them, scare them with dogs, and rob them of their mobile phones or clothes.

Starving and hypothermic refugees are dying in the forests, and are transited by both Polish and Lithuanian soldiers back to Belarus. Polish non-governmental organizations are not allowed to help them, and medical and material support cannot be delivered. Grupa Granica [eng: "Group: Border"] is an activist group that opposes the authorities' response to the crisis by actively helping migrants. They do not only cover the topic online on their Instagram but also provide them with legal and financial help. Despite the centrist party winning the elections in 2023 as the opposition to the right-wing populist government, the situation on the border has not improved. Promises to stop the violation of human rights remain only promises. The previous government's narrative that migrants from the Middle East are dangerous is hindering the process of integration and fostering division within society. This perception not only affects public opinion but also impacts policy decisions, making it challenging for migrants to find acceptance in Polish society.

Recently, there has been a debate about the Migration Pact, introduced and voted in favour of by the European Union. It is a set of new rules that should help manage migration flows and establish a one common asylum system at EU level. In theory, it seems like a great new tool to make screenings and procedures run more smoothly. European Commission describes it as a "guarantee of people's rights".

The Migration Pact for 2025-2030 is supposed to "regain control and provide security". However, Grupa Granica argues that the consequences of the announced actions will only deepen the ongoing chaos on the border. One of the articles of the Migration Pact states the suspension of the right to submit applications for international protection which is a direct violation not only of the Geneva Convention but also Polish Constitution. By agreeing to that pact, Donald Tusk, Polish prime minister, deprives hundreds of men and women of possible asylum, thereby violating the international principle of non-refoulement which forbids a country from deporting any person to any country in which their "life or freedom would be threatened".

With the war in Ukraine happening right behind Poland's eastern border, Tusk has found a perfect excuse for the decision to introduce the Pact. He states that it will protect our country from Russia which uses migrants to destabilize the European Union. "The right to asylum is used by Lukashenko in a way that goes against the essence of the right to asylum", he said. The Migration Pact for 2025-2030 presents a controversial approach to managing border security. While the government frames it as a necessary measure to safeguard national interests against external threats, activist groups argue that it undermines fundamental human rights and international obligations. "Europe cannot take everyone in" is what we hear, looking away from the hundreds of thousands of people who are seeking refuge and are being forced to try to survive in the Białowieża Forest. ★

Marketing Committee

Hi everybody!

I am Nienke van der Meulen, and I have the honor of being this year's Head of Marketing and Communications!

You may not have heard about the Marketing and Communications Committee, since we mostly operate 'behind the curtains' of UNSA, but there is a lot of work to be done! We are involved in basically all of UNSA's events, study trips, new partnerships and of course, if I may say so myself, this beautiful newspaper. There are a lot of fun projects in our team and we want to give our team members the opportunity to let their creativity run free. With creating Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn posts, keeping up the website, designing posters and taking pictures at our events, we have a lot of possibilities to be as creative as we would like to be.

Since the beginning of this academic year, my Co-heads and I have been working to create new and fun graphic designs for our Instagram, currently working on creating more reels.

Just over a month ago, we put together our amazing team. A couple weeks ago we organized an Adobe workshop to get everyone accustomed to Adobe Illustrator. Ever since, the team members have been working on their own designs and projects, which makes me so happy. I am proud of the work they are creating, and excited to see what the future holds.

We are prepping lots of fun projects, both within our committee as well as for the General Members of UNSA. I won't get into the details now, we will keep that for the next edition of the newspaper :).

Bye for now, and see you at the next edition!

Best wishes,



Nienke



Bridging Currents: Navigating Water Cooperation in the MENA-region

By Mark Sijtsma

In a region where rivers are lifelines and scarcity breeds tension, the struggle for accessible water has become just as prevalent as the deserts surrounding it. In the face of urgent consequences of climate change, such as desertification and desalination, the topic of hydro politics has become a primary geopolitical topic on the agenda of nations in the region of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This issue is exacerbated by dam building projects, such as Türkiye's 'Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP)', which pursues the building of various dams and irrigation systems in the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates, and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), which concerns the construction of a large dam on the Nile River Basin in Ethiopia. These projects offer significant benefits for the nations that undertake them, yet they have enormous impacts on the water supply for the countries downstream. Amidst climate change, self-interested geopolitical agenda, and water scarcity, the need for water cooperation is more urgent than ever.

The MENA region has been widely acknowledged as the most water-stressed region in the world, as most of its landscapes are characterized by flat and arid desert land. Furthermore, research shows that water is the most fundamental human need and its systemic lack has serious political, cultural, and economic consequences, as well as drastic water security repercussions. Lack of access to water is an obstacle to education and a leading cause of infant mortality, and, when paired with violent intent, a destructive force that can escalate conflicts.

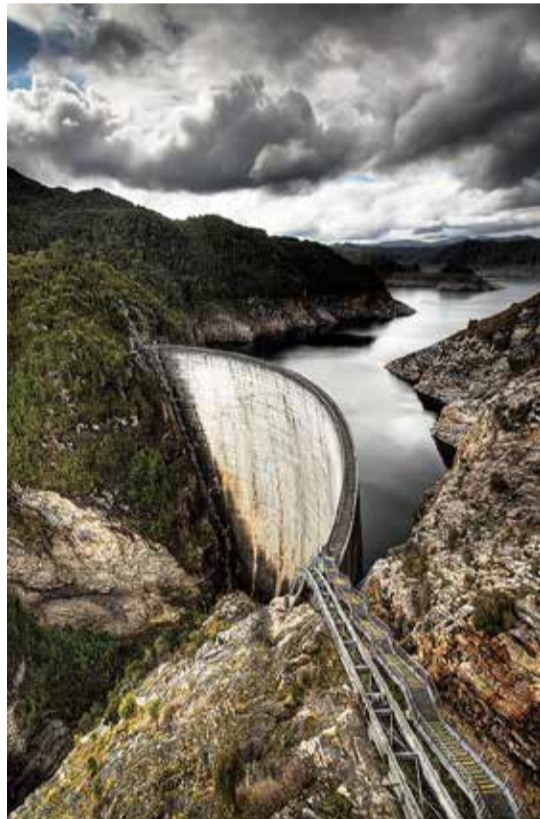
Access to water is heavily affected by geographical factors. Türkiye's GAP project is a prime example. The transboundary river system of the Tigris and Euphrates originate in Türkiye, commencing in its Eastern mountains, the rivers travel through Syria and most of Iraq. With the GAP project, Türkiye unilaterally controls the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, in which dams, irrigation systems, and water management plans have been established. This has resulted in a zero-sum game between Türkiye, Syria, and Iraq for the river's benefits. Consequently, Türkiye's various dam and hydropower projects have decreased Iraq's water supply by 80 percent since 1975.

The recently built 'Ilisu' dam on the Tigris has been the most prominent spark of geopolitical tensions, with Iraq and Syria exploring international legal mechanisms and diplomatic channels to block the construction of the dam. Add climate change to the mix and the situation becomes even more dire. It is predicted that the flows of the Tigris and Euphrates will decrease by up to 60 percent at the end of this century due to climate change. All in all, a zero-sum game for water control is bound to create water shortages. Cooperation is not just useful, it is necessary.

On top of Türkiye's GAP project, Ethiopia's GERD project on the Nile River Basin has also raised tensions in the MENA region between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia. Historically, Egypt - and, to a lesser extent, Sudan - have held considerable control over the Nile River Basin due to colonial treaties in 1902 and 1929. These treaties granted hydro hegemony to Egypt and Sudan, despite being their downstream position. Nonetheless, the introduction of the Ethiopian GERD project in 2011, combined with the political instability in Egypt due to the Arab Spring in the same year, these power balances are now being challenged, fuelling unrest in the bilateral relations among the nations.

This is further exacerbated by China's financial involvement in the dam's construction. Despite usually adhering to a policy of non-interference, in the GERD project, China seems to be taking a proactive political stance in favour of Ethiopia. Although Chinese representatives merely state that its involvement is 'in the spirit of friendly cooperation', the consequences of a power shift in the hydro management of the region can be drastic. Currently, there is no consensus on how to manage the benefits of the dam, but research shows, if managed properly, the dam can have benefits for water resilience and electricity cooperation between the three nations. Thus, if inclusive dialogue and water diplomacy is at the forefront of addressing the problem, a productive solution can be found.

The advantages of cooperation are evident. Joint water projects in border areas in Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Türkiye, as well as Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan are predicted to have the potential to irrigate thousands of hectares of land in the area. In the case of the Tigris and Euphrates, Turkish hydroelectricity, Iraqi irrigation, and potable water from Syria should be understood as a basis for cooperation and



coordination, not as a geopolitical leverage tool. In the case of the GERD project, the electrical and water benefits of the dam can be shared to ensure resilience and economic prosperity of the whole region, rather than solely one nation.

Most crucially, water can be a platform to base peaceful processes on. Transboundary water solutions can de-escalate tensions and serve as a starting point for cooperative solutions. In the latter half of the twentieth century over 200 water treaties have been negotiated successfully, serving as tools for promoting stability and peace. Therefore, water cooperation in the MENA region is essential for the contemporary problems the region is facing. In the words of Ban Ki-Moon: "let us commit to invest in water security as a means to ensure long-term international peace." Thus, a productive solution to water scarcity is a cooperative solution. ★

Clinitex: A Company Inspired by the Montessori Pedagogy

By Faustine Rocoplan

Founded in 1980 by Thierry Pick in his parents' garage in France, Clinitex is now a major player in professional cleaning, with over 4,000 employees and 6,000 customers. What distinguishes this company, beyond its success, is its unique management model, strongly inspired by the principles of Montessori pedagogy.

Montessori pedagogy was created by Maria Montessori almost 50 years ago. It was first developed for children and then applied to teenagers. Rather than feeding children with facts, Montessori education strives to nurture each child's natural desire for knowledge, understanding, and respect. This pedagogy wants children to learn on their own or in groups by doing their experiments. Children follow their curiosity at their own pace, taking the time they need to understand each concept. The child practices self-regulation and self-assessment, he should look critically at his work and recognize, correct, and learn from his errors. Children in a Montessori classroom have different ages, 3 different years are encompassed within a classroom, so the oldest students mentor the younger ones recreating a 'family environment'. This pedagogy enables children and teenagers to work in groups where each one listens to their needs while taking the group into account. Furthermore, children follow their pace for learning which then makes them have higher social-emotional skills than people following a traditional educational path because they listen to their needs. They learn to listen to themselves and others, creating a more adapted and human pedagogy. This approach is based on children's and adolescents' cognitive psychology and aims to help them be self-confident, respectful, and autonomous in their learning.



The Clinitex approach is based on transparency and autonomy, a work structure that overturns traditional enterprise hierarchies.

At Clinitex, all employees have access to 100% of the company's information. This transparency aims to avoid power struggles and promote a climate of trust. One outstanding feature is the publication of all salaries on the intranet. This implies that remuneration must be fair and "mountable", creating an environment where everyone knows what others earn, thus reinforcing pay equity.

Employee remuneration is based on three main components: Base salary, salary variables, which depend on individual performance and dividends, representing the risk premium for shareholders who decide not to sell their shares. This results-oriented approach enables each employee to better understand the value of his or her work and its impact on the company. Unlike traditional management practices where employees are evaluated by line managers, at Clinitex there are no formal appraisals. For Thierry Pick, a traditional appraisal reinforces a relationship of superiority. Instead, employees are asked to carry out a self-assessment. Then, to obtain external feedback, they must seek the opinion of a colleague. This process doesn't take place in an office, but on a walk, encouraging an informal and open discussion of annual performance. This approach reflects Clinitex's spirit of trust and autonomy. If an employee doesn't get a self-evaluation from his colleagues, it means he's not reliable enough for others to validate his work.

Clinitex goes even further in its horizontal approach: there is no Human Resources Director. Each employee is free to hire someone according to his or her own criteria if there is a need. Working hours are not imposed, and telecommuting is widely encouraged. For Thierry Pick, control is a brake on agility and trust: "You have to trust people," he says, illustrating his belief that autonomous employees are more committed and productive.

In an interview, Thierry Pick also criticizes the traditional capitalist model. While he acknowledges that capitalism is the "least bad of systems", he warns against the infinite quest for profit. He compares this phenomenon to nature: wild animals, like giraffes or lions, reach a threshold of satiation and never consume beyond their needs. In his view, companies should have a "prosperity threshold", a level beyond which they stop accumulating profits and redistribute them equitably among employees and shareholders.

We can see that this business model indeed has roots in Montessori pedagogy by encouraging employee autonomy and responsibility and fostering trust within the company. Clinitex employees are encouraged to assess themselves, take responsibility for their actions, and manage their work independently. Montessori pedagogy also advocates the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development of children, values that are echoed in Clinitex's operations, where employee well-being is paramount.

Clinitex is proof that a different business model, inspired by educational concepts such as Montessori pedagogy, can succeed in a world traditionally dominated by strict hierarchical structures and the pursuit of profit at all costs. By promoting transparency, trust, autonomy, and a deep sense of fairness, Clinitex shows that capitalism can be humanized while remaining competitive and flourishing. ★

The intriguing promise of the White Gold

By Jakob Aufenberg

Under a burning sun, turning skin into sunburnt remnants in no time, lies a treasure attracting gold diggers and fortune seekers as the rotten fruit attracts the flies.

Hearing salt crouch beneath your sneakers' sole and Condors screaming overhead, it's hard to imagine that such a beautifully deserted place finds itself in the centre of world geopolitics as a gigantic treasure chest.

The Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia's most famous tourist attraction, impresses everyone who has seen it in persona with an endless expanse of flat, white salt, reminiscing a glacier or an infinite field covered by freshly fallen snow. However, as with so many of our earth's most precious places, its beauty is not merely superficial but reveals its treasures at second sight. Hidden deeply beneath the mirroring white surface of the Salar slumber the world's biggest riches of lithium, a resource sought after as no other nowadays.

For years and years, this sleeping beauty was left untouched by mankind and its affairs.

Now, this period of peace appears to have ended.

Shiny and easily flammable, this light metal may appear too hot to handle and rejective to any human touch. However, its chemical characteristics make it perfectly fit to serve as an indispensable component of electric car batteries, thereby fuelling the long-sought sustainable transition of the automotive industry. This plain trait catapulted the once-deserted salt flat into sudden global prominence and spotlight.

Unfortunately, this highly wanted metal does not recur the trajectory from the depths of the Salar to surface level on its own; expensive and complex machinery is needed to extract, refine and convert it. In a notoriously resource-rich and cash-poor region of this globe, differing approaches have been taken to amass necessary capital.

Chile and Argentina, fellow beneficiaries of the so-called "lithium triangle", containing around 75% of global reserves, found themselves rather open to foreign investment to remedy their need for cash. Awarding licences both to state-owned companies and foreign actors, both attempted to strike a balance between a too-liberal and a too-protectionist approach. Nothing new, right?

The old tune of resource exploitation seems to repeat itself; South America's immense wealth impoverishes its people who cannot stop the continent's open veins from bleeding out its potential.



Attempting the unthinkable

Can't there be an alternative way to further process this white gold, one may ask, without running the risk of foreign investors taking the monetary lion's share and leaving nothing but crumbs of the cake in the country of origin?

Let's see how Bolivia deals with the issue.

The landlocked Andean country took an avenue that was long thought to be impossible. A rigorous nationalisation policy under President Evo Morales, the first Indigenous-elected leader worldwide, attempted to do away with overly assertive foreign investors and set the course for purely domestic lithium production. Suffering from post-colonial trauma and deep wounds torn such as the mines of Potosi, this strategy appears logical.

However, this project failed.

The Morales administration took power in 2006; a study conducted in 2021 shows a production of 400 tons on behalf of the state-owned company YLB. In 2022, production amounted to merely 600 tons. A lot in absolute numbers. Nothing, in relation to a total of 23 million tons of lithium underneath Bolivian soil. In comparison, Argentinian production, with the help of foreign investors, amounted to 65 – 70.000 tons in 2023 alone.

What do these numbers tell us? Are these simply proof of an unstoppable neo-liberal triumphal march? Maybe.

Following the presidential elections in 2019, Morales was forced to step down and leave leeway to his party colleague Luis Arce. Although formally of the same party and colour, Arce started implementing a further opening towards the world's markets. As gates were opened, it did not take long for the arrival of the flooding. US-American and European, but especially Chinese and Russian companies started their courtship to snatch away the oro blanco.

Just recently, this mission has appeared to be successful, as licences were awarded to the Russian Uranium Group One and the Chinese Citic Guan to construct various extraction plants on the shores of the Salar. This joint inversion will have a volume of 1,4 billion dollars and amounts to a potential extraction of 100.000 tons annually. A great increase in productivity, surely.

The appeal of increased production and efficiency cannot be overseen. However, with this departure from nationalisation and the yielding-in towards the temptations of the free market, the future of Bolivia seems more than blurry.

It is still unclear whether the country will keep its feet in the door of the production process or will fall victim to another South- American evergreen. Will the lithium production stay in Bolivian hands, and, most importantly, will the benefits produced by the lithium really benefit its own people? What matters now is a government acting in concordance with the will of the people.

Well, as many are more qualified to speak on this matter than a noisy second year undergraduate, I decided to reach out to one of these people.

My friend Renan probably knows the Salar and thus, the centre of our discussion, as no other. As a tour guide, he has made this beauty his workplace and shares its unique views and moments with us Gringos. As I ask him about the failed nationalisation attempt, he shares with me an answer that allures to the root of so many problems.

“We will need to conduct an analysis. Why didn't it function? Bolivia is a country with a precarious education. Nationalisation means making these resources benefit our country. With such precarious education, nationalisation means nothing but corruption. This cannot work out.”

With low levels of technical proficiency, he reassures me, foreign participation is in principle vital.



“Just a few months ago, I talked to American engineers. They believed the Bolivian government needed to wait at least 10 years until sustainable extraction technologies are developed. However, Jakob, Bolivia is caught in a lithium fever dream. The corresponding contracts with Russian and Chinese firms have been made; no governor nor deputy thinks about local communities or nature.”

Foreign participation in lithium extraction appears not to be bad per se. The turn-out depends on those who regulate the extraction. Bolivian lawmakers.

“When it comes to the involvement of foreign companies, we come back to education. Foreign investment is not the root of our problems. But unfortunately, not only our technicians lack knowledge, which makes foreign participation inevitable, but also our politicians. This leads to them selling out our country.”

What then are strategies to break out of this vicious circle?

“What we need in this country is a figure that unites the people; a figure that states with honesty that they will work for our country. Not for themselves. What we suffer from in Latin America is social separation. How can there be unity if there is no one fighting for the united interests of the people?

The key will be to raise our level of education and to form a government that is fighting neither for its own nor foreign interests, but for Bolivia.” *

Isolationism and protectionism follow promptly from a nationalisation of natural resources. With a precariously underdeveloped industry, Bolivia could not stem the challenges any isolated state in an interconnected economy faces. Fearing the temptations of foreign money, Bolivia found itself with none of it at all. Though temptations persist, the new administration took on a game of fire to kickstart the country's potential.

To avoid that this game gets out of control, the player should not lose sight of his objectives. Only a prudent strategy that builds upon a distributive enjoyment of riches and fosters educational development will provide long term benefits.

I would like to express a huge thanks to Renan for his great contribution!

*Translated from Spanish ★

The Fall of a Dictator: An Account of the Student-People's Uprising in Bangladesh

By Léa Besnard

Quotas for government jobs may not be what you think would spark up a revolution — even though they were indeed the initial driver behind the nationwide revolt that ultimately led to Sheikh Hasina's flight from the country by military aircraft.

So, what happened in Bangladesh over the summer, and why did this crisis get so little media coverage? How did peaceful student protests turn into a death toll of over a thousand, and put an abrupt end to the Prime Minister's 15-year mandate? And what is to happen next, now that Bangladesh underwent what many consider a “second independence”?

To explore the events of the summer and the possible futures for Bangladesh, I conducted an interview with Faizan Ahmed, a former student from Dhaka, who I'd like to thank for his time and insight.

It all started in June 2024, when the Supreme Court of Bangladesh ruled in favour of the return of quotas for government jobs, a system which automatically reserves 30% of these jobs to the descendants of freedom fighters — soldiers who fought against Pakistan in the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. This system had already been abolished in 2018 following public outcry, but the High Court decision on June 5th sparked a new wave of peaceful student protests in Dhaka.

Perceived as unfair by students, government job quotas are said to limit merit-based opportunities, especially in the context of economic difficulties, with unemployment rates being as high as 15.7% for people between the ages of 15 and 24. Specifically, government jobs have higher wages and better advantages in comparison to the private sector, which makes them more attractive to the youth.

Many also hold the belief that the real point of this quota system is to favour those who may have ties with the prime minister, as Hasina's grandfather was the leader of the freedom fighters during the Liberation War. Hence, having their relatives make up a considerable part of government jobs is perceived by some as an attempt to gather supporters of Hasina's regime in the public sector, as Faizan explains: “Sheikh Hasina uses that to keep her own people in power [...] She used this excuse to give favours to a lot of people so they'd be part of the government.”

Originally peaceful, the protests of July took a violent turn after Sheikh Hasina called protesters the “descendants of the razakar”, a pejorative word which can be translated as ‘traitor’.

“Razakar was a term used for the Bengalis who supported Pakistan's regime [during the 1971 Liberation War]. These Bengalis were viewed as enemies of the state, because they betrayed their own people... It's a really offensive thing to say to anybody, because you work against your country's fight for freedom. It's a derogatory term [...], so that's what set it off. Because up until then, the protests were peaceful. The violence didn't go that far. But as soon as she called us razakars, everybody was like: ‘We're done. We're not having it anymore.’”

Tensions only increased following mass brutality by state forces, including the police, the army, and the Chhatra League (the student wing of the government party) — leading to a death toll of over a thousand, and 400 people losing their eyesight during what is often called the ‘July Massacre’. Faizan describes the violence of the governmental crackdown: “The army was instructed to shoot protestors on sight. [...] Two of my friends were arrested, they were taken into a cell and beaten up mercilessly.”



However, the violent repression from state forces was not enough to deter protesters this time around. “But this time, they [the students] just didn’t give up. And after that, the whole country came behind the students when they saw how we were being treated. It wasn’t just the students’ fight anymore, it was the whole country’s fight against an oppressive regime.”

On July 17th, the government established a nationwide military curfew and a complete internet shutdown of the country, a tactic Hasina had already used in the past. “During the 2018 protests, they also had a blackout. So this isn't the first time it happened.”

Bangladesh inhabitants were therefore cut off from the rest of the world for five days — an event which had extended consequences on various industries and the country’s economy, including the shutdown of garment factories, which account for a significant share of Bangladesh’s GDP.

For Faizan, who was in the Netherlands during the protest, not being able to reach his family and friends during the shutdown was a stressful experience. “I didn't have contact with my family for three days, and then eventually they figured out these third party apps in order to contact people outside the country. And when the internet came back, they controlled the bandwidth a lot, so everything was super slow [...] and everything was also monitored, allegedly.”

To understand why students and workers showed such resistance in the face of extreme police violence, we have to take into account that the discontent about Sheikh Hasina’s regime stems deeper than job quotas: it is also the accumulated anger and frustration resulting from 15 years of a regime of corruption, alleged rigged elections, state violence, human rights violation, censorship measures, and authoritarian drifts. “The quota system was just a trigger for the revolution to start, [it] is not big enough to start a revolution. It’s also her 15-year dictatorship, freedom of speech restrictions — there are so many people who got locked up for saying anything against the government: one of my friend’s grandfather, who is an internationally accredited journalist, was taken into a torture cell for writing against the government”.

So the July protests were not merely a story about job opportunities and fairness; it was the revolt of a people against an authoritarian-leaning regime, driving resistance to unprecedented levels. “The narrative kind of changed from ‘they [the police] are coming, let’s disperse this area’ to ‘Oh, they are coming to attack us, we need more hands’”. This previously unseen energy from the protesters spurred them to storm the Prime Minister’s palace on August 5th, forcing Hasina—now in exile in India—to flee her residence by helicopter, her regime collapsing in turn. “It was a scene out of a movie. [...] To be very honest, I was hoping for it, but I didn't expect it was actually gonna play out like it did”.

Since her resignation, an interim government headed by Dr Mohammed Yunus, a Nobel Prize laureate and one of Hasina’s most vocal critics and opponents, was created. It is however unsure when or how new elections will occur. Some argue that the political vacuum left by the collapse of the former regime is dangerous, thus prompting rapid action; others, however, call for more profound changes to prevent the mistakes of the past from recurring and to strengthen Bangladesh’s institutions and restore its democracy. The main risk now is that slow action and a lack of communication with Bangladeshis will divide the country once again. “Everybody united against the government because we had one goal; and now that we won, the unity spread out again.”

While avoiding corruption is at the heart of the interim government’s concerns, this might be a tough task given its prevalence in the past — and even then, the problem runs deeper. “At the same time, it's not just corruption that's wrong with Bangladesh. It's education, labour laws, women's rights, pollution, overpopulation... There needs to be a really strong interim government which would actively try to break down the structure that was created by the Awami League. [...] We don’t know how long people will be happy with an interim government. We don't know how much influence the interim government can have on the country, or how much they can go against the Constitution. There are a lot of questions that are still unanswered, a lot of work to be done, and I don’t know what’s gonna happen. But I want to be hopeful.”

In the midst of all the chaos, one thing is certain: Bangladesh is now at a crossroads. ★

Events Committee

Dear Readers,

My name is Laura Murer and I have the honor to be the Head of Events for the year 2024-2025. The Events Committee focuses on representing UNSA goals and missions through social and academic events. Members of the Events Committee are given the space to explore their creativity, but also to enrich organization, planning, and leadership skills.

Recently, the Events Committee celebrated UNSA's 18th Birthday. We brought all our members back to 2006, the year when UNSA was founded, and let them enjoy this night in the spirit of UNSA!

The Events Committee is actively preparing a variety of exciting events, like the Lecture Series. With the goal of offering the best events for our members, we reimagined our traditional event to create a dynamic academic afternoon centered on a single theme, exploring diverse perspectives while enhancing networking opportunities. We are also planning a Friendsgiving evening, featuring good food and fun activities to bind all UNSA members together!

With December around the corner, we will be organizing our first collaborative event with the Development Committee, a Winter Market! Development and Events are working together in the hope to bring together funds to support Rotary Club Tripoli Cosmopolis [RCTC]. We also aim to bring active members closer by hosting a Secret Santa and fostering connections across committees. Looking ahead, UNSA is also preparing for one of our major academic events, Careers Beyond Borders, set for February. We're dedicated to create a memorable year filled with enriching experiences for all!

For now, I will try not to spoil it too much, and let you discover the fun and broadening activities the Event Committee offers! On this note, we hope to see you there and enjoy our events to their fullest!

My kindest regards,
Laura Murer.



Dear Diary, It's Me, I'm the Problem (and I'm Singing About It) - 'Sad Girl Pop' as a Tool for Introspection

By *Mabault Etienne*

As the days get rainier, windier, and colder, autumn brings with it an air of melancholy. It is once again the season of yearning through ballads on the radio, on your record player, or in your earphones. In the meantime, late summer nights are spent listening to 'Sad Girl Pop': light-hearted, if not upbeat chords, accompanied by painfully self-aware lyrics. The feverish heat comes down and the scalding stories of summer suddenly feel real; it is time to reflect, mourn, and deal with the consequences.

'Sad Girl Pop' isn't exactly the most recent phenomenon: an article by Ilana Kaplan pinpoints the concrete beginnings of the subgenre around 2016 when Billie Eilish's career took off. Self-expression, vulnerability and especially melancholy are key descriptors of this musical genre. From its Greek roots *melan-* and *kholē*, "black bile", melancholy permeates languages through an array of expressions: *mono no aware* in Japanese, *ressasser* in French, *saudade* in Portuguese... Beyond mere sadness, melancholy implies regret, self-reflection and, more often than not, an inability to move on.

Some artists have made melancholy a main feature of their discography: Lorde did it in her sophomore album, *Melodrama*, released in 2017. In the first song on the track list, *Green Light*, Lorde clearly sets the scene for an album that seeks to deal with a particularly painful breakup that she struggles to move on from: "Oh, I wish I could get my things and just let go / I'm waiting for it, that green light, I want it". She goes from bittersweet to accusatory in the span of one song (*Hard Feelings/Loveless*), to self-deprecating in her duo *Liability* and *Liability (Reprise)* – and herein lies a new development, where Lorde touches upon the possibility of her being at fault. The introspection is short-lived, however, as the album moves forward with the final celebratory anthem *Perfect Places*.

Escapism, back then, was the key to problem-solving. When given the opportunity to drown your sorrows in deafening music and/or alcohol, it was obvious that the numbing brightness of the spotlights was easier on the eyes than looking within yourself. Sure, we were sad, but at least we were crying in the club. Then, COVID hit – and suddenly, the problems were locked inside with us.

In 2020, Taylor Swift, affectionately dubbed "the music industry" and usually known for her catchy pop hits, released her 'sister albums' *folklore* and *evermore* (hailed as the epitome of *Sad Girl Autumn*). As the artist explained it herself, the duology is the result of musical exploration during lockdown. Though the most striking innovation to Swift's usual genre is her (successful) attempt at fictional storytelling, the albums also feature a new approach to vulnerability that can only come with being forced to spend time with yourself. Songs like *champagne problems*, *mirrorball*, *this is me trying*, or *right where you left me* paint the troubled image of a character that might resemble the author. The albums do not shy away from Swift's melancholy, and they do so by starting a dialogue about flaws. From there, self-awareness emerges as a new aspect of music made by pop stars; but not of pop music just yet. The trend of emotional vulnerability central to 'Sad Girl Pop' gradually starts to incorporate an element of introspection, self-doubt and potentially even self-blame. Swift's next original album, *Midnights*, hit the charts in 2023. The album is evidently more pop than its 2020 counterparts, but the lyrics have retained their vulnerability. In *Anti-Hero*, she flat-out acknowledges that she is the problem, even going as far as recognising that she weaponises her qualities, against the backdrop of a lively pop rhythm. There is no beating around the bush: the conclusion to her quarantine introspection is that, sometimes, she's the one to blame. The end result is a peppy lamentation that we enjoy relating and singing along to – and it allows us to vocalise our flaws before anyone else can use them against us.

Taking after Swift (as her protégé and now close friend), 23-year-old Gracie Abrams released her first album, *Good Riddance* in 2023, as testimony to dwelling on the past and her feelings towards it. The intros to most of her songs would not presage their deep-rooted sadness: in *Difficult*, she sings "Oh, I hope I wake up invisible / I'd be someone no one knows / I guess I'm just difficult" in a similar upbeat fashion. In her second album, *The Secret of Us* (2024), which propelled her onto the mainstream pop scene, Abrams goes even further than Swift and normalises making mistakes throughout the record: in her song *I Love You, I'm Sorry*, her fixation on a past relationship concludes with the realisation that she "was a dick, it is what it is, a habit to kick, the age-old curse". All of this pent-up and lingering melancholy ended up having a point: pop lyrics have become a therapy session that the artist engages in with themselves. What used to be dramatic tales of love, revenge and empowerment turned into personal diaries bursting with vulnerability and self-blame. In a way, pop music has become the best vehicle for introspection: dancing to the metre of your own drama, because blasting music in your apartment and singing along is cheaper than professional therapy. Additionally, at a time when pop culture is heavily marked by accountability for both public and private deeds, artists acknowledging their mistakes not only feels like the "right" thing to do: it also breaks the perfect façade that comes with being a role model. Swift and Abrams show that they are three-dimensional, imperfect and yet, still well-liked –

and this is reassuring for the fans, especially female fans, who cannot easily get away with being perceived as flawed.



The remaining issue, and arguably the hardest one, is change. Though the public gets to see the cracks, it can never be privy to how the pieces are put back together and how relationships are mended. Some of us stick to listening on loop, thinking that knowing our faults is good enough, and we embark on a journey of selfish sadness. In this case, the cycle never breaks and all of it is just noise. So I guess we are all still crying in the club, 'laying on the horn to prove that it haunts us' as Abrams puts it; but this time around, we know why we ended up there again. ★

Femicides in Turkey: A National Emergency

By *Sena Gonel*

The republic of Türkiye, majorly known as Turkey internationally, is a country in the Middle East famous for its tourist spots and cultural heritage. However, it is also home to many social and political issues that often raise global attention. The most recent and conspicuous issue that has led to outrage by the public as well as other states is the alarming femicides that have seemingly taken over the female safety standards in the country. This persistent crisis has been affecting women in Turkey for years, and the situation is getting progressively worse every month.

The femicides in Turkey, which should undeniably be classified as a safety crisis, persists despite efforts from advocacy groups and public protests. The current Turkish government's apparent indifference has rendered these efforts largely ineffective, as it is also suspected by protestors that women's safety is not a priority to the ruling party. One of the most recent and attention-grabbing cases in the international platform was the murder of two 19 year old women on 4 October 2024 - İkbâl Uzuner and Ayşenur Halil - by Semih Çelik. Both crimes occurred in the metropolitan city of Istanbul. Çelik first murdered Halil at her house. Then he met Uzuner in the historical building of Edirnekapı, dismembered her and threw her decapitated head down the walls while many passers-by witnessed the incident, including Uzuner's mother. He proceeded to commit suicide by jumping off the same building. These murders attracted a lot of rage due to the brutality of the manner they were conducted in, and further investigation proved Çelik had psychological problems and showed signs that he was capable of such violence, and even painted about them.

Statistics

Only in September, 34 women were killed by men, while 20 died under circumstances categorized as suspicious. According to the data provided by the "We Will Stop Femicides" platform created by Turkish women - not taking into account the suspicious circumstances - at least 376 women have been killed by men since the start of 2024. The number of women murders in 2008 being 68 shows the huge surge of femicides of Turkey in recent years.

Judicial problems and overcrowding

The reason behind these surge in numbers is often attributed to the ineffective judicial system. The main issue of the judicial procedure is often attributed to the leniency when handling femicide cases, with perpetrators frequently receiving light sentences or early releases. According to the “We Will Stop Femicides” Platform, many offenders are granted reduced sentences if they claim “good behavior” or express remorse, even in severe cases where premeditated violence is evident. The fact that there is a population that keeps growing at rapid rates and has reached 85 million citizens in 2024, leading to overcrowding in prisons adds to the problem. The overcrowding subsequently leads to criminals who commit femicides to either be pardoned or given more lenient sentences than the law demands. According to article 81 of the Turkish Penal Code, the act of intentionally killing someone is punished by life imprisonment, which is very often not the result of proceedings against femicides. During to Covid-19, thousands of inmates were released to ease the overcrowding problem, with the exception of political prisoners. The fact that violent offenders, mostly against women, were released during this measure creates the conception that violence and murder will be excused or that justice will be easy to evade within the public and leads to effortless crimes, nurturing a cycle of violence. In many of the cases, released offenders have resumed stalking or threatening their victims, and often following through on their threats. A widely known case in September 2024 involved a 26-year-old policewoman who was killed by an assailant who held 26 criminal offenses. These kinds of situations underscore how inadequate judicial practices can place survivors in even greater danger.



Cultural roots

Young feminists explain that the reason women are most often the victim of distortion in law is caused by the patriarchal regime rooted in Turkey’s traditionalist view. The data collected on motives of these crimes show that 40% of femicides stem from men preserving the “honor” of the family. Women are almost always killed by their husbands, ex-partners, relatives or someone they know due to wanting divorce, refusing to marry, or showing control and autonomy over their own lives. Activists argue that Turkey’s patriarchal societal norms add to the problem, since this perspective often undervalues women’s independence, their decision making power concerning their lives and places importance on women fulfilling their roles within the family structure. Consequently, when women defy the expectations imposed on them, the likelihood of a violent outcome increases.

The Istanbul Convention

Another decision by the Turkish government that garnered a lot of backlash with the rise of femicide rates was made in 2021 when Turkey officially withdrew from the Istanbul Convention, a landmark treaty of the Council of Europe that Turkey was the first to sign in 2011. The aim of the treaty was to prepare a legal framework to avert and tackle violence against women, prosecute offenders, and establish measures. Turkish officials kept supporting the withdrawal since then, insisting that the national law of Turkey is adequate for the protection of women. However, it is argued otherwise by women’s rights groups as well as the statistics, which reveal a rise in femicides with the number reaching and exceeding 400 every year since 2021. This fact is seen as connected with the treaty also due to the commitment it symbolized: an effort to change societal norms concerning women’s rights and safety, which was an objective not followed through. Women’s rights advocates fear that without the Istanbul Convention government inaction on femicides could get even worse, as there are also some conservative groups pushing to restrict women’s rights under “traditional family values.” Critics say current policies are inadequate, shaped by religious norms that often tolerate, rather than prevent, violence against women.

Reforms

The commonness of these crimes placed Turkey under a harsh spotlight, revealing how deeply entrenched cultural, judicial, and political factors are driving gender-based violence across the country. The way to address and take preventive measures against these femicides requires Turkey to take immediate legislative and judicial reform, along with a cultural shift towards a more gender-equal community. Activists are adamant that Turkey should rejoin the Istanbul Convention as a first step to show a renewed commitment to resolving these issues, even though it seems unlikely at the moment due to the officials’ statements saying the withdrawal did not affect women protection in the first place. Apart from that, another direly needed action is strengthening penalties for femicides, halting sentence reduction for good behavior so the offenders are held accountable, fixing the notion that femicide can go unpunished. It is necessary for police training on domestic violence cases as a preventive measure as well, since they are often dismissed as without the required care and thus normalized, causing the “violence is excused” mentality in the society. A cultural shift would be harder to achieve as it would take more time and resources to change beliefs rooted so deeply in a community, along with the effects from religious groups. However, awareness campaigns about gender equality -especially in schools-, access and funding to women shelters and psychological support services would be a step forward.

The current femicides and women safety crisis in Turkey that is caused by many reasons such as malfunctions in the legal system and cultural norms needs urgent legislative, judicial, social reforms and significant intervention. Without the government taking actions, the cycle of violence and impunity is likely to persist and continue endangering women in Turkey. This situation is without a doubt a national emergency, and the choices made from here on out, to ignore or to act, will shape the future of women in Turkey for years to come. ★

New Bus Line for the Jewish Community in London: Protection or Division?

By Emma Larrue

What Happened and Why?

In London, a new bus line dedicated to members of the Jewish community was inaugurated this September, connecting the neighborhoods of Stamford Hill and Golders Green, both known for their significant Jewish populations. This initiative, introduced by Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, will operate seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. and was part of Khan's commitments during his reelection campaign. This measure aims to address the rise in antisemitic acts of violence in London and globally, nearly one year after October 7th. However, it also raises broader ethical questions about how to tackle such issues.

The creation of this bus line is a direct response to a 15-year-old and ongoing request from the Jewish community in London, which has faced a notable increase in antisemitic incidents. Following October 7th, the violent situation in Gaza and the subsequent global protests in support of Palestinians intensified tensions and anti-Israeli demonstrations worldwide, including in London. Reports indicate a 278,9% rise in antisemitic acts since the conflict began.

In response to this situation, local authorities have implemented the bus line as a one-year experimental measure designed to enhance the security of Jewish commuters and provide them with a safer space. In a BBC interview, Sadiq Khan emphasized that this initiative is a direct response to the growing fear experienced by the Jewish community in London.

“They were frightened because of a massive increase of antisemitism since October 7 last year” Sadiq Khan, BBC London.

With this measure, we can notice the British pragmatism in decision-making, seeking to address immediate security concerns while acknowledging the current tensions.

Some could also argue that this measure was taken because of electoral reason as Sadiq Khan was campaigning for his 3rd mandate when making the promise for the bus, traducing his wish to gain the Jewish’s community’s trust for the elections.

Article previous page:

What's being said?

The decision has generated a range of reactions. Leaders of the Jewish community have expressed relief and gratitude, viewing the measure as crucial for their physical security.

"In a period where our community is encountering unprecedented antisemitism, any measure that bolsters the confidence of Jewish individuals in using public transport is immensely valued."

Adrian Cohen, Vice President of the Board of Deputies.

Conversely, some critics question the implications of such a measure. Could the bus line be seen as a form of exclusion, segregating the Jewish community from public spaces? Can the solution be counter-productive where buses would be seen as a target for those having bad intentions towards the Jews? How are the bus drivers going to identify if a person is Jewish? Some argue that the implementation of this measure could lead to an unintended consequence: if antisemitic incidents were to occur even within these designated areas, critics might claim that Jews should have remained within their own communities. This could result in a dangerous narrative suggesting that Jews are to blame for exposing themselves to violence by venturing beyond their designated safe spaces.

Reactions on social media also reflect this uncertainty. Some users describe the measure as "shocking" and lament that such a separation is necessary to ensure the safety of a particular group. Comments from figures like Michael Dickson (Executive Director of 'StandWithUs' on X), criticize the use of a segregated bus system as an indicator of the severity of antisemitic hatred, highlighting the complexity of the ongoing debate:

"If anti-Jewish hate is so bad that you have to resort to a separate bus system to keep Jews physically safe, you have a serious problem".

Michael Dickson, X.

Historical comparisons have also been drawn. Critics argue that establishing a dedicated bus line could evoke disturbing reminders of past segregationist policies, referring to Hitlerian regime. However, it is important to recognize that the current situation is fundamentally different from historical authoritarian regimes, as the intention behind this measure is to provide security and protection, not to discriminate.

What's at stake?

In response to critics, BBC London clarified that the 310-bus line is not exclusively for Jewish citizens but is open to all passengers. However, the route specifically connects two predominantly Jewish areas, providing a direct link so that Jewish commuters can avoid switching buses in areas they may feel unsafe in. This route adjustment specifically follows several reports of assaults on Jewish individuals in these neighborhoods, particularly after the events of October 7, 2023.

While this clarification addresses concerns about passenger identification based on religion, it still raises broader questions about the British government's response to the rise in antisemitic incidents in London since October 7. Some argue that instead of addressing the root causes of the issue, the government has applied a temporary fix, or "band-aid solution," rather than trying to pursue long-term strategies to combat antisemitism more effectively.

This case shows the complexities surrounding the ongoing conflict in Gaza. During the protests in Maastricht last spring, some Jewish students expressed concerns about feeling threatened by the demonstrations, which led to constructive discussions between Jewish student associations and protest organizers to ensure the movement remained peaceful. These conversations highlighted the balance between advocating for a cause and ensuring that this advocacy does not foster hostility towards others. This way, the protests served as a reminder of the importance of open dialogue in navigating sensitive global issues and keep a pacific conversation.

Overall, this initiative is an example of how local authorities are attempting to respond to a concerning rise in antisemitism even if the measure raises significant questions about segregation and integration. While the measure is broadly welcomed by those directly affected for its protective benefits, some see it as counter-productive in the fight for antisemitism violence. However, for now, nothing is set in stone, the measure is only a year-long experiment. Local authorities have committed to assessing the satisfaction of bus line users throughout the year and will adjust it as necessary for a possible future continuation of the measure. ★

A Tale of Two Germanies - The Rise of AfD and BSW

By Simone Capuozzo

The German coalition government has collapsed after Chancellor Scholz's decision to sack Finance Minister Lindner. The Chancellor has requested a confidence vote for next January, but the opposition is demanding snap elections. This would be the nail in the coffin for the ruling 'traffic light' (die Ampel) coalition, made up of Social Democrats (SPD, in red), Liberals (FDP, in yellow), and Greens, creating an opportunity for new parties to establish themselves in the political mainstream. For example, Alternative für Deutschland, Germany's new far-right party, has shockingly won the state election in Thuringia and coming in as a close second in Saxony and Brandenburg, both part of the former Eastern Germany, also known as the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Another surprise was the far-left party Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW), which finished third in all three states. The Ampel has suffered a heavy defeat and was overtaken by the Christian Democrats (CDU), who won the elections in Saxony. A somewhat positive note comes from Brandenburg, where the SPD has maintained its stronghold, while AfD and BSW climbed to the second and third spots respectively. Despite being on the opposite side of the political spectrum, AfD and BSW overlap on anti-immigration and pro-Russian discourse. Considering the ongoing political chaos and snap federal elections approaching, what has caused Germany's rise in conservatism and extremism?

The main reason could be found in the Ampel coalition's infighting. The shutdown of nuclear plants and the start of the Ukraine War has sparked an energy crisis. The Greens were firm on their anti-nuclear stance and claimed to have given enough concessions, while the FDP Liberals called for an extension of Germany's nuclear plants' usage, as they warned of significant economic damages. The SPD of Chancellor Scholz had the uneasy task of reconciling its allies while the cost of living crisis worsened. In the end, after an extension, Germany's last three nuclear plants were shut down in 2023. Another point of controversy was immigration. Popular dissatisfaction has been exacerbated by the knife attack which killed three people in Solingen. This incident symbolises a federal-wide rising wave of violence, with stabbings occurring especially at train stations. In response, the Ampel is trying to tackle illegal immigration, but the CDU is refusing to support the coalition ahead of the elections. Finally, the coalition has collapsed following FDP Finance Minister Lindner's drafting of a report suggesting to cut spending. This has caused the furious reaction of the SPD Chancellor Scholz, who has taken the decision to let Lindner go. In face of these shortcomings, the AfD and BSW find fertile ground to fuel anti-establishment sentiment.

Looking at these parties' origins, the AfD was founded in 2013 near Frankfurt to counter the existence of the Euro and the EU as a whole. After some initial success in the former East Germany, the AfD succeeded in obtaining federal seats in 2017. The key figures of this party are party leader Bjorn Hocke and Chancellor candidate Alice Weidel. Adding to past controversies regarding antisemitism, the AfD has also caught the eye of Germany's Constitutional Court since 2021, leading to investigations for prohibited far-right extremism. As for the BSW, it was founded this January in Berlin as a breakaway branch of the German Left and has quickly gained consensus thanks to its 'leftist conservatism'. In fact, this new political force joins economic progressivism with a more cautious approach to social issues. Here, the key individual is Sahra Wagenknecht, who gives the party its name. Both parties post about three main issues: immigration, Ukraine, and euroscepticism. First, the AfD attacks immigrants' violence, calling for mass expulsions; while BSW claims refugees are overburdening Germany's welfare system. In a survey, 60% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with Germany's immigration policy, claiming the system has reached its full capacity and fearing social conflict. Second, the AfD demands a halt to payments to Ukraine in response to its involvement in the destruction of Nord Stream II pipeline, while BSW sees the use of German weapons on Russian territory as leading to an escalation. This somewhat resonates with popular demand, as most people agree not enough effort has been put towards reaching an agreement, whereas public opinion is split over economic and military support for Kyiv.

Finally, the AfD sees the EU as sabotaging the German car industry with the excuse of climate change, while the BSW accuses Brussels of exploiting taxpayers to accelerate Ukrainian membership. While a slim majority agrees with Ukrainian accession, the car industry is at the heart of heated debate. The EU is trying to counter the flooding of cheap Chinese electric vehicles in its markets, and Volkswagen has announced an unprecedented closure of German factories due to rising costs. Fearing a trade war with Beijing, BMW has urged Germany to vote against the proposal for additional tariffs on Chinese vehicles. The call has been heard by Berlin, but tariffs are set to be implemented nonetheless, weakening many Germans' work security. It is curious to note how features of former and upcoming US president Donald Trump's political discourse are finding emulators in the heart of Europe. The latter put emphasis on social media to spread his impoverished and inflammatory discourse to dissatisfied masses. This reflects academia's warning of Instagram's radicalising capabilities, with the AfD becoming the most popular party among young Germans, and traditional media forced to report their controversies. This has cost the parties accusations of populism and russophilia, as the parties' nostalgic appeal stems from left-behind Eastern Germany. Taking into consideration the federal-wide struggles Berlin is facing, why are these parties so successful in the former East Germany?

Despite improvements, the former GDR is still economically lagging behind the West, as the shutdown of former state-subsidised firms has led to mass unemployment and emigration. This has fuelled dissatisfaction, and authoritarian tendencies linked to the East's communist past. In a survey carried out by the University of Leipzig, half of respondents declared to be unsatisfied with democracy, and a third agreed on the need for authoritarian rule. 70% of respondents believe immigrants are a burden to the welfare state, and 50% call for an immigration ban for Muslims. Moreover, a third of respondents claim Jewish people have too much influence in politics. These extremist standpoints are seen as caused by the communist past and post-reunification poverty, as unemployment and migration to the West skyrocketed. This led to a loss of trust in mainstream politics and, for a quarter of respondents, a reevaluation of the Nazi past. This can explain why AfD and BSW are gaining nation-wide consensus, reaching respectively 15,9% and 6,2% in the 2023 European elections. Moreover, the return of anti-immigration sentiment could mean the end of Germany's cosmopolitan parenthesis, as Berlin had embraced diversity only since the 2000s by giving citizenship to second-generation immigrants. However, former Chancellor Angela Merkel admitted in 2010 that her country's attempt to embrace multiculturalism had failed. Merkel tried to revitalise the project during the 2015 refugee crisis under the slogan 'wir schaffen das!' (we can do it), with mixed results. Some refugees are struggling to integrate, immigration-related costs have skyrocketed, and far-right discourse has entered the mainstream, dividing Germany and Europe. However, the latter is at a crossroads, as a petition to ban the AfD has officially entered Parliament. Nonetheless, a positive judgement from Germany's Constitutional Court is far from certain. To issue a ban, the party would have to be declared anti-constitutional. This would be possible under two criteria: first, the party should be declared capable of undermining or abolishing Germany's democratic order or compromise the existence of the Federal Republic as a whole.

Second, the party should also be found capable of achieving its anti-democratic aims. In sum, the shocking results in Eastern Germany have cemented AfD and BSW status as new political forces, weakening mainstream parties. The turn to conservatism may be seen as the end of Germany's openness, but we shall not normalise the presence of certified extremist parties. With the snap federal elections approaching and a constitutional judgement pending, we are left to wonder whether East German dissatisfaction will spill over to the West and potentially jeopardise democracy. ★



Goodbye Eastern Europe? Opportunities in crisis for a region with a troubled past

By Zeteny Jakab

The outbreak of the Ukraine War in 2022 pushed Eastern Europe into a perilous situation. A region historically ridden with imperial strife, humanitarian catastrophes and shifting state borders was once again in danger of falling into its historical predicament. The relative peace and stability of the post-Soviet era was yet again upended by violence. However, many are optimistic that the response to this shock has not weakened, but in fact empowered the common identity of these nations.

Due to the Cold War, Eastern Europe has always been considered a backwater for the West. Artificially lumped together as a sort of 'other' Europe, with conflict and poverty. Jacob Mikanowski's book *Goodbye Eastern Europe* explores such a fallacious understanding of this region which disregards its inherent cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious complexities. Being a borderland between different empires, the collateral effect of such diversity has been constant struggle.

It seemed that this pattern would once again repeat with Putin's invasion on the 24th of February, 2022. The war in Ukraine became to be considered as the 'The first major war in Europe since World War II', which threatened the institutional foundations and identities that have developed in the region in the peaceful years from the 90s. In this period, many post-Eastern bloc countries managed to converge at a breakneck pace to 'Western' institutional and economic standards. Accession to NATO and EU offered a prospect of stability and prosperity unseen in many countries' history. Poland with a robust economic performance became a potential challenger for Germany, and Estonia, a pioneer in digitalisation with many others following suit. However, the turmoil of history once again seemed to threaten these stellar achievements.

To the surprise of many, it was precisely the shock of the Ukraine war that inspired unity in this region. Poland, despite being a conservative nation with a strong anti-immigration sentiment was suddenly taking in millions of Ukrainian refugees. The Czechs, a largely isolationist and anti-NATO country, were now actively campaigning for coordinated Ukraine support on all institutional platforms. Even the Baltics, with little diplomatic might now have the loudest voices for unconditional support for Ukraine. Suddenly, the 'other Europe' became united at the forefront of European policy-making. The recent appointment of former Estonian Prime Minister Kallas, as foreign policy chief for the EU is but one example of that. Rather than being ever divided and conflictive, the region now stands in almost complete unity for the common cause of security.

The unity is only almost complete, because nations like Hungary and Slovakia have been deliberately undermining such unity. It often seems that the 'not our war' narrative still prevails as an attractive political slogan in some nations. Leaders have mobilised deep-rooted fears about the threat of war and rejected cooperation, in the hope that abstention will spare them from conflict. In fact the further south one goes, in countries like Serbia, Bulgaria or Macedonia, the support for Ukraine dwindles. Division and selfishness still prevail, despite the lessons from history that should have been learned about the nature of Russian aggression.

Nevertheless, this renewed confidence in Eastern Europe may spread further. In fact, cooperation between Eastern European states is not new. Take the Visegrad Four alliance, between Hungary, Poland, Czechia and Slovakia, or the Three Seas Initiative encompassing all countries between the Baltic, Adriatic and Black Seas. However, these alliances were still weakened by a lack of leadership and often only served temporary needs. For instance, the conflict over support for Ukraine, wrecked the Visegrad Group in 2022, which now exists in name only.

The urgency to cooperate in Eastern Europe is acute. Not just on Ukraine, but on other key issues. It is clear that Russian aggression will persist through the years and unity between nations will be required. Particularly, with the recent reelection of Donald Trump, the trans-Atlantic alliance could be on weak footing.

Fortunately, we can already see signs of nations willing to harmonise further on fields of defence, energy security or more widely with the creation of a common capital market. Furthermore, the internal economic and political instabilities in Germany and France have left the EU with a power vacuum. A confident, resolved Eastern Europe may as well fill in this leadership gap. But for this to occur, it needs to continue to learn from its past identity. It will only succeed if this diverse identity inspires more cooperation, and not further conflict. ★

From Champion to Sickman: Germany's crises in a tumultuous world

By Augustin Forjonel-Legrand

Delegations Committee

Hello dear readers! My name is Lena Hadžić, and I am the Head of the Delegations Committee for the academic year 2024/25!

While this title is very long and sounds very professional, what does it actually mean? What is the Delegations committee? What are we doing there?

The Delegations Committee represents UNSA Maastricht at Model United Nations conferences across Europe. Not to take light away from our home conference, EuroMUN, I will keep the explanation short. Model United Nations conference, or a MUN, is a simulation of the UN where the participants, better known as delegates, get to represent a country and its stance on various issues. It is our goal to provide our members with opportunities to learn about MUN, gain valuable skills, attend MUN conferences, and simply travel and have fun.

Now, the Delegations committee is split into two sub-committees, called the Permanent and the External Delegation. The Permanent Delegation (PD) is where we assemble a group of beginners and teach them everything there is to know about MUN from scratch. From workshops to MUN simulations, they are given an opportunity to learn new skills, such as research, argumentation, debate and negotiation. The External Delegation (ExD) is tailored for people who have done MUN before. It is a more demanding environment, where the delegates get to go toe-to-toe with one another to perfect their skills.

My co-heads, Yoni, Jaša and Elias, as well as I have been working hard to provide our committee members with many opportunities and activities. Apart from our weekly meetings filled with workshops and debate, we went on a trip to Brussels with PD, providing them with a weekend of fun and academic growth. We have many things in the making, not just for our active members but also for general UNSA members. However, as of now, a big milestone is approaching for our committee: we are all going to our first conference, SGMUN in St. Gallen, Switzerland! If you want to hear how this unfolds, stay tuned :)

With much love,
Lena



“Blühende Landschaften”

35 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the former chancellor Helmut Kohl's evocation of “Blühende Landschaften” (“Blossoming Landscapes”) waiting for the country, Germany is facing a severe multi-dimensional crisis. Indeed, Mr Kohl promised, in 1990, a country of prosperity and global affirmation after the reunification. Today, these lands seem to have faded. With a deeply weakened economy, leading to the collapse of the governing coalition, Germany is no longer the power it was at the beginning of this century. Some experts argue that it became the “Sickman of Europe” of our time. It could become even worse seeing the actual global context.

Multiple Crises

Germany is facing crises at multiple scales. The most striking for the country and its partners is the economic crisis. For the second consecutive year, Germany is entering a recession. The federal government forecasts a recession of -0.2% in 2024, following a 0.3% growth decline in 2023. Moreover, these economic difficulties become visible through growing unemployment, mostly in industrial production. On October 28, Volkswagen announced a drastic redundancy plan, thinking about the closing of 3 factories in Germany and thousands of job cuts. This illustrates the growing difficulties of a model in difficulty.

Germany's economic model is built upon the manufacturing sector. It represented 20,4% of the annual growth input in 2023. It is higher than in other countries (9,8% in France, 8,8% in Britain) but this sector is threatened by global concurrence.

Moreover, Germany depends on its exchanges with other countries. The country depended on Russia for its energy provisioning. In 2021, before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, 49% of its gas provisioning came from Russia. The government then had to change its strategy due to growing inflation, which increased its economic difficulties.

However, Germany is still dependent on others for its exports. Since 2015, China has been its leading partner in exportation. Nevertheless, the trend is changing as geopolitical tensions rise between Europe and China. Today, China is again Germany's main trading partner, after having been briefly replaced by the United States. Both countries are very important in Germany's exportation system. It could be even worse for Germany due to the comeback of Donald Trump and his policy based on commercial tariffs (a price that a country must pay if it wants to export there). Trump promised to increase the tariffs, which would induce a loss for Germany close to 1% of its GDP (a loss equivalent to €42bn, according to the president of the Bundesbank). However, half of the German economic growth comes from its exports. If the American President-Elect respected his promises, it would become very difficult for Germany to maintain high exportations due to growing prices.

So, this bad economic conjuncture would worsen the actual situation. Indeed, the country is going through internal economic difficulties due to an economic model relying too much on manufacturing and exports. Moreover, it is affected by external pressures, coming from the United States and China. These economic difficulties are the result of structural changes, thus the country must adapt to new global realities.

Like with many other European countries, Germany faces a massive increase in far-right extremism, mostly characterized by the rise of Alternative für Deutschland, mostly in Eastern regions. By looking at the electoral map, one can observe a division between the former two sides of the country. Indeed, the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) supported in majority of the far-right party Alternative für Deutschland. On the other hand, the former “Western Germany” plebiscites were more in favor of the pro-European parties (Christian Democrats, Socialists, and the Greens).

This illustrates a general crisis of identity in Eastern Germany. The term *ostalgie* is often used to describe the “nostalgia of the East” and is defined as the fact that East Germans regret the period of the GDR. Then, the economy was stable and they had good living standards. For some, the reunification caused many problems by fragilizing the economy and creating a degradation of the quality of life. Far-Right parties use this myth of a “glorified past in the East” and promise to improve the situation and to make it as glorious as in the past. Even though the Iron Curtain has been shattered 35 years ago, it still divides the society today.

Moreover, it is essential to consider that Germany is going through a political crisis. Chancellor Scholz's coalition collapsed after the dismissal of its liberal finance minister (November, 6). Indeed, this occurred in the context of growing instability and disagreements between the parties of the coalition, based on the economic trajectory the country should take to cope with the recession, and the climate policy, among other internal tensions. Because his Ampel coalition collapsed, the chancellor Olaf Scholz will call early elections, taking place on February 23. This recent political development has been analyzed by my colleague Simone Capuozzo, whose article is worth reading!

Change of polarity in Europe

Since the creation of the European Union, Germany has been a driving force, especially under the term of Angela Merkel. It has engaged Europe on the path of a geopolitical affirmation against the major powers of the world, played a significant role in the fight against climate change, and held firm leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, Merkel's European dynamic couldn't be sustained by Olaf Scholz, above all in the context of the Ukraine war.

One could argue that Germany is not the only leader in Europe. The French-German alliance indeed used to be influential. Once again, this used to work well during the term of Angela Merkel. Today, French President Macron and Olaf Scholz have shifting interests on many topics. They disagree on the European defense strategy, on the respect of the Maastricht's criteria, diplomatic partnership, and economic policies in Europe. One significant illustration of these divisions is the current discussion on the EU-MERCOSUR Trade Agreement. France is against this treaty which would significantly increase the amount of South American agricultural products having a negative for the French economy. On the opposite, Germany defends this treaty because it would increase its exports, benefiting its economy.

The "Franco-German engine" seems to have broken down. Moreover, both must face internal difficulties (the rise of the far-right, the immigration crisis, and the budget deficit) which makes a relationship even more difficult. This is leading to a slowing of European strategic affirmation and leadership.

What could be the main consequence of these actual difficulties and the result of successive crises, is a shift in Europe's polarity. Now that major powers like France or Germany are weakened, new countries are taking the leadership. In the aftermath of the Ukraine war, the Baltics and Eastern countries are taking a more important place in Europe's strategic and defense project. The most concrete example of this shift to the East is the nomination of the former Estonian Prime Minister, Kaja Kallas, as the head of European Diplomacy in the new European Commission. At the dawn of a new Trump Era, the Europeans must get more united and emancipate from both China and the United States, to develop a common geopolitical perspective. By nominating Kaja Kallas, who was in the first line facing the Ukraine War, this issue will be addressed. It illustrates a strategic shift to Eastern Europe.

Also, Europe sees a shift in its economy, where the southern countries are becoming more and more dynamic while the northern powers are slowing down. Indeed, according to the Atlantic Council, Spain, Italy, and France were the largest contributors to the European GDP in 2023. This mostly comes from the fact that their economy is supported by sectors like tourism, services, and light manufacturing. By having a prosperous economy, these countries reversed the 2000s pattern, when they were the ones slowing and bringing difficulties to the European Union.

Growing uncertainty

These economic and political difficulties are general tendencies in Europe but are tenfold in Germany. The tendencies that are forecasted for its economy are anticipating growth in 2025 (+0,8%) and in 2026 (+1,3%). However, the country still faces multiple challenges and instability. During the next months, the political campaign and the creation of a new government will divert Germany from its European and global policies, making the EU even weaker than it is now. In the meantime, Donald Trump will be sworn in as the 47th President of the United States. As the CDU (Conservative Christian Democrats) leader Friedrich Merz is ahead in the polls and yearns to become the next chancellor, will it make the relationship with Donald Trump more "cordial" and soften the impact of trade tariffs? Will this period of trouble leave time for European rulers, like Viktor Orban, to take the lead on European foreign policy, now that Germany is less powerful? Would Donald Trump use this time to put in place his drastic tariff plans? Without a powerful Germany, the European Union also faces uncertain times. It is time for the Europeans to get united! ★

U.S. Elections - He's Back.

What to expect from a second Trump presidency?

By Elena Bovée and Claire Anderson

Donald Trump has won the 2024 presidential election. In what was predicted to be one of the closest U.S. presidential elections in history, former President Trump took sweeping control of all battleground states to solidify his 312 electoral votes. Despite two failed assassination attempts, 34 counts of falsifying business records, three other ongoing (soon to be closed) criminal cases, and rampant scandal in his campaign rhetoric, Donald J. Trump will assume the position of 47th President of the United States.

Battleground state breakdown

The Associated Press (AP), announced Donald Trump the winner of the 2024 election Wednesday morning, after he secured 270 votes from the electoral college. It was not until November 10 that all states/electoral college votes were accounted for, the results: Trump had won an overwhelming 312 votes while Harris maintained 226.

The key to Trump's victory lay in the contested regions known as battleground/swing states. These states are crucial in determining the winner of any presidential election, and they are defined by their ability to remain neutral and uncharacterized as strictly Democratic or Republican. The key swing states include Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Georgia, Nevada, and Arizona.

As close as this election was predicted to be, Donald Trump's immense control and support from every single swing state was overlooked. Trump maintained support from North Carolina, a state that voted for him in the past three elections, but flipped the remaining six states. While Biden's victory in 2020 heavily depended on winning the "rust-belt" northern states of Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin, Trump's support from all three of these states paved the way to victory.

As the Electoral College allocates votes to states based on census, ranging anywhere from 3 to 54 electoral votes, Pennsylvania is the most determinant of the swing states as it has 19 electoral votes. The difference in votes between candidates in swing states ranged from as close as 29,000 votes (Wisconsin) to 189,000 votes (North Carolina).

Victory speech at Mar-a-Lago & concession at Howard University

Hours before election results were formally announced by the Associated Press, Trump began a victory speech at his election watch-party event at the Mar-a-Lago resort in West Palm Beach, Florida. In a 30-minute speech addressing his supporters, Trump declared that "this was the greatest political movement [MAGA] of all time that is about to reach a new level of importance to help our country heal."

He took the time to provide gratitude for all his supporters, congratulate and thank all of his staff, advisors, and running mate J.D. Vance, and personally recognize all of his children who have remained beside him through the test of time.

In celebrating the victory, Vice President-elect J.D. Vance described the achievement as "the great political comeback in American history." The speech is the first of many to follow, in the days following the election Trump also received congratulatory phone calls from opponent Kamala Harris and current President Biden. Biden's call also served the purpose of arranging a meeting in the Oval Office to coordinate the logistics of the transition.

During her concession speech at her alma mater Howard University, Harris spoke that while she concedes this election, she does not "concede the fight that fueled this campaign. The fight for freedom, for opportunity, for fairness, and the dignity of all people". 100-day campaign...

For the Democrats and Harris supporters, her loss is especially hard-hitting Harris, a prosecutor, then district attorney, turned attorney general, promoted to Senator, and finally, Vice President, made her what many believe to be an exceedingly qualified candidate over Trump who made his career in the business sector and whose first time running for public office was the 2016 presidential election.

“Dictator on Day 1” and Agenda 47

Trump infamously remarked that he would be a dictator on his first day in office in a town hall event in Iowa, specifically regarding hardline policies on immigration and expanding oil drilling projects.

Trump has made clear his plans if elected through various speeches during his campaign and online. A few of his 45 promises stated on his website include no welfare for illegal aliens, protecting students from “the radical left and Marxist maniacs”, a call for immediate de-escalation and peace, and rebuilding America’s “depleted military”.

Immigration and secure borders have been one of the biggest concerns of his voters and his policies have demonstrated that to the highest degree. Mass deportation, sealing the US border, and sending troops are a few of the hardline promises Trump has made concerning immigration policy.

Other promises include raising tariffs of 10% to 20% or higher on foreign goods, a plan that many economists say could lead to higher prices. Further economic policies include tax cuts for senior citizens and homeowners. Regarding inflation, one of the most relevant topics amongst voters, a Republican National Committee spokesperson remarked that when elected, Trump would “cut taxes and unleash American energy to lower prices on groceries and other goods”.

Trump's first presidency was defined by his unpredictable and sporadic nature; his second presidency will likely follow the same pattern only now with a completely new perspective on international landscapes.

For Russia and Ukraine, it is safe to assume that military aid for the country at war will be cut. In statements made earlier this year regarding the suspension of aid, Trump vowed to immediately “have that settled” upon re-election. As for Trump and Putin’s relationship, it remains undetermined. Following the announcement of Trump’s election Putin called to congratulate Trump and speak on his willingness to begin “talks” with the president. As both leaders have shown admiration and passiveness for one another, how the interplay between the war and their relationships will unfold is difficult to predict.

For Israel and Gaza, the second major global conflict that Trump will be inheriting, his victory does not signal hope for Palestinians. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is reportedly enthusiastic about a second Trump term and former Israeli ambassador to Washington, Michael Oren, has stated how Trump “has the most pro-Israel record of any president”. Trump has encouraged Netanyahu to “finish the job”, a sentiment that strung fear into the hearts of many Palestinian advocates.

As Trump may take action to withdraw from the Paris Agreement a second time, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres described the decision to do so as “crippling.” Trump formally ceased U.S. participation in the Paris Agreement during his first presidency under the pretense of “unfair economic burdens” placed on American workers, taxpayers, and businesses.

As the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) is set to take place from Nov. 11-22 in Azerbaijan; U.S. Climate envoy John Podesta declared that Donald Trump can only slow, not stop, U.S. climate pledges. Podesta also stated that despite the Trump administration's disregard for the climate, “the work to contain climate change is going to continue in the United States.”

One of the final hot topics on Trump’s presidency agenda is the pardoning of the January 6 rioters. With over 1,500 charged for the Capitol insurrection, it remains unclear who exactly will be pardoned. In June, Trump campaign spokesperson Karolime Leavitt said that the President-elect would decide on a “case by case basis” who will be pardoned.

What’s to come?

In the immediate days post-election, there was a wide range of speculation attempting to address what exactly went wrong for Harris. In taking into account her 107-day campaign length and record-breaking achievement of raising nearly \$1 billion, there are many factors to be accounted for. The one common denominator: the cult of personality surrounding Donald Trump remains as steadfast and as strong as ever. As Trump won the popular vote with just shy of 75 million votes, the majority of American registered voters feel confident in his ability to better represent the nation than the Biden administration did. Further powerful sentiment lies in his commitment to put “America first” when tackling foreign policy and to “Make America Great Again” when dealing with domestic affairs.

This next era of the Trump administration will be accompanied by the handcrafted Trump Supreme Court (largely defined by the three judges he appointed during his first term), and a republican majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. With this republican win, many can expect the easier implementation of GoP policy proposals and the forwarding of their agenda. There is the off-chance that any extremist rhetoric used for populist talking points will be dialed back and the Trump administration and the GoP will get more complacent in victory.

Democratic lawmakers, spearheaded by California governor Gavin Newsom, are racing to “Trump-proof” different aspects of their state constitution including cementing funding towards the attorney general’s office, state agencies, and climate policies. Blue states across the nation are taking part in this trend to bond their policy priorities regardless of Donald Trump’s agenda.

President-elect Donald Trump will benefit greatly from the red majority in all branches of government. With the recent immunity ruling done by the Supreme Court and the fact that the U.S. Justice Department cannot prosecute a sitting president (Watergate era precedent), Trump’s three current criminal trials will be set to wind down/close before he takes office. With sentencing for the Hush Money Case set to take place on Nov. 26, the Federal Election Interference Case was recently put on pause on behalf of Special Council Jack Smith, and the Classified Documents Case and Georgia Election Interference Case have remained in the early stages of indictment.

A demographic breakdown: who Trump has to thank

These election results highlight the different demographics of the American people. Certain groups such as Latino men and young white men have been the most significant in this election cycle.

Trump made great gains in the Latino community who have usually voted primarily Democratic. One explanation for this shift is economic concerns: inflation and high interest rates led voters to believe the previous administration was in dire need to be replaced. Additionally, the Latino population is primarily working class, a demographic that Republican’s continuously outperform Democrats in.

Young men are another key group in determining the fate of the election. Trump ran a strong campaign directly targeting men, with one ad stating, “You did everything right in life, you went to college, you got a job, and now the Democrats and women want to hold you back.”

In appealing to the gender divide and traditional masculine roles, Trump maintained the support of right-wing podcasters/influencers like Steven Crowder, Charlie Kirk, Ben Shapiro, and many more. In an interview with podcaster Joe Rogan, which gained over 45 million views, the catering to the “manosphere” and continuing radicalization of young men proved advantageous.

Regarding women, while the overall population of female voters voted for Harris, white women primarily voted for Trump. This is a decrease for the Democratic ticket compared to the last election cycle as Harris failed to capture the same margin of women voters as Biden or Clinton.

Personal message - Bovée

In Maastricht University, a relatively liberal environment and populated with individuals who are less directly connected to the US, the authors of this article have one plea; please know that this election does not represent who we are and what we stand for, please know that our country is so much more than one man and most importantly, do not lose hope that the United States is a lost cause. Millions of Americans will be directly impacted by these results but will continue to fight for what they believe in, and while outrage is natural, we also plead for empathy and understanding.

While this result is incredibly disappointing for many people, we have and will continue to fight to protect the rights of women, the LGBTQ community, and all marginalized groups.

When it comes to living as an American, it is easy to focus on our dark history and our setbacks, but as much as America is about its terrors and its wars, it is equally about its social movements and fights for justice. All the good and all the bad exist together and are equally important.

Although fear and uncertainty are a natural response, we mustn't lose hope. In the words of the current Vice President, only when it's dark enough can you see the stars.

Personal message - Anderson

This loss in U.S. presidential history will be talked about and studied for years to come. Although not the only thing dictating the fate of the election, there seems to be a clear gender divide guiding the results of the election (along with weakened rhetoric on immigration and lack of economic populism). We as a nation have let down our women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and minority groups: from sea to shining sea.

As angry and disappointed as I am in the 2024 election results I know America has seen a lot worse. This new era of a final Trump presidency will be challenging, but things are rarely as bad as they seem. Your imagination, anticipation, and fear of what is to come is often worse than actuality. Do not misunderstand me, Trump's first presidential term was consequential, but not as tumultuous as estimates made it seem. Fear will always succeed in reality.

For American expats here in Maastricht who are heartbroken by these election results: keep a still and calm mind. We have no choice but to play the hand we're dealt and work towards achieving America we've been taught about.

The opinions expressed within this article are solely the author's and are not affiliated with either the Maastricht Diplomat or UNSA. ★

One Year of Grief and Resistance: Maastricht's Response

By Sarah Hourquet and Raquel Ureña

It has been a year since the Hamas attack on Israel, following one of the deadliest operations by the IDF the world has seen. At least 42,709 Palestinians, 2,000 Lebanese, and 1,139 Israeli lives lost in this war. As a result, the international community has varying reactions. Some stand with Israel's right to defence, as does the United States and many Western world powers. However, many others see Israel's right to defence as a justification to continue the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, at least 13 countries, including South Africa, and more recently Bolivia brought forth to the International Court of Justice.

To which the question is raised, to what extent does National security override the human right to life?

Since the invasion of Israel into the Gaza Strip, the attacks and lost lives that followed saddened and impacted all of us in different ways. Here in Maastricht, several protests, demonstrations, awareness campaigns and acts of solidarity on the conflict took place all year. Residents, students, tutors, professors, associations, political movements, and many others have stood in support of the Palestinian people and responded to decades of aggression on the state of Palestine. All around the world, people started to reflect on what their role in this war was. Their taxes, the companies they bought from, and the institutions they supported. As students, this put into question one of our biggest economic expenses: our education.

At the scale of Maastricht University, the debate revolved around how close of a relationship does UM have with Israeli Institutions. For that matter, the goal was to highlight Maastricht University's complicity in the Israeli occupation of Palestine. In the spring of this year, we saw a worldwide movement of academics calling for universities to cut ties with Israeli institutions, with the overall goal of a full stop to the aggression on Palestinian people. Encampments started to happen everywhere, including here, in Maastricht, at the campus of FASOS Faculty: Rafah Garden. After months of demands from the students and staff to the UM Executive Board to take a stance and actions against the Israeli aggression, the defendants came to realize the only thing left to do was to make this encampment happen. UM had started to get worried about the consequences this could have on their reputation and connections while facing increasing pressure and deadlines from student hunger strikes. (i.e. At the start of the encampment, a handful of students, staff and parents started a hunger strike to highlight the gravity of the situation and incite the university to take action). After 10 days of the encampment, the demonstrators stated UM called the police on the protesters for 'trespassing' after reportedly giving the students 18 minutes' notice. Nonetheless, the University Statement of that day justified itself saying "The protesters voluntarily left their tent camp".

On May 24th, two days after the eviction of the protestors at the encampment, UM issued a statement on "new policy on partnerships with institutions in conflict areas", essentially showing for a "temporary freezing" of certain partnerships. However, UM didn't provide any additional information on how and with whom those "freezings" would happen. Despite this small victory for the supporting student community, this is still not sufficient for many.

Today, the proportions and reach the aggression have taken are nothing short of extreme, causing intense worrying around the globe. Not only Gaza, but Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen have also been bombed and aggressed by the state of Israel in the past few weeks.

As with Palestine, Israel's involvement in Lebanon and the surrounding countries runs deep. It did not start on October 7. Lebanon's Hezbollah is a political party and armed group that controls the country's most powerful armed forces. Hezbollah rose as a response to Israeli occupation in the 1980s, having a strong history of opposing Israeli occupation in Southern Lebanon and taking credit for Israel's withdrawal of troops in 2000. This group has ties with Iran, both militarily and financially, and is an ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Critical information to further understand how Israel's fight against Hamas and Hezbollah may unravel even more chaos in the region.

As a response to Israel killing Hamas leader chief Ismail Haniyeh, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, and an Iranian general in Beirut, Iran launched an attack on Israeli bases the first week of October this year. Following the attack, Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu affirmed Iran would "will pay for it", supported by following statements of many Western powers including the United States and the UK.

On October 8, At least 7 people were killed in an Israeli strike on a residential building in Damascus, Syria. Hezbollah hit Israel's Haifa with the 'biggest' rocket attack yet, as Israel followed with more strikes on Beirut. Although Saudi Arabia has been a long-time partner with the U.S., their rapprochement with Iran in recent years now might shift the trend of war. Despite stating their neutrality in the conflict a few weeks ago, on October 8th they still invited the Iranian Foreign Minister to visit, meanwhile, the prospects of an Israeli deal faded away. After Arriving in Riyadh, the Iranian foreign minister said: "We hope that these talks in Saudi Arabia can lead to improved conditions in the region for Palestine and for Lebanon and for peace".

While alarm floods Northern Gaza, as Israel calls for a full evacuation of the three main hospitals, Kamal Adwan, Awda, and the Indonesian Hospitals, because of military expansions in the Jabalia refugee camp. As a result of military escalation in this area, UNRWA altered through X that they were forced to suspend lifesaving services. There are about 400,000 people still cornered in the camp by the Israeli army, who have been restricted to only 2 working water wells. Tareq Abu Azzoum, an Al Jazeera reporter, stated that those who try to flee have been shot by snipers, and at least 43 people have been reportedly killed. The Kamal Aswan Hospital is mainly evacuated, due to leaving behind a limited number of medics to attend to patients in critical conditions. "We will remain steadfast, we will stay and we will offer our medical services no matter the cost." (Quote taken for Aljazeera, from the Director of Kamal Adwan Hospital.)

Despite time passing, and media coverage wavering as the range of destruction extends, our grief remains relentless. The mass insecurity in the region spreads rapidly as bombs detonate nearby. Fear of a growing war clouds the nation. More people are confused and anxious. More people are displaced. More people are losing homes, family, and friends. More are dying.

We, at the Maastricht Diplomat, are dedicated to reporting real stories that shape a more informed and aware public. For the past year, we have seen the media weaponized to further uphold a time of oppression and persecution utilizing countless fake news, censorship, and ignorance. Now more than ever, we see the importance of press freedom in times of repression.

As the Maastricht Diplomat, we have been involved and concerned about how words, written or spoken, can have a positive impact towards a more informed and aware public. We will continue our commitment to uplift all voices, as is our duty to foster an informed and engaged community. ★



united nations
student association

BURGERLIJK



Cycling x Coffee

F/M FOTOMUSEUM
AAN HET VRIJTHOF



Belingual Maastricht



Maastricht Diplomat

