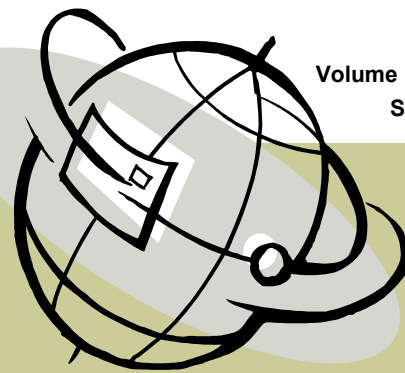


# IR Matters!



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Greetings from post-graduation Lewisburg!

On May 14<sup>th</sup>, Bucknell held its 173<sup>rd</sup> commencement ceremony. 884 freshly minted Bucknell graduates from 37 states and 20 countries walked across the stage on the Malesardi quad on what was the perfect sunny graduation day. Our keynote speaker was the legendary basketball coach Jay Wright '83, who "coached up" the Team of '23. He reminded graduates that our life journeys are sure to include challenges, insecurities and failures but that Bucknellians have honed the skills to persevere and thrive. The Class of 2023 knows all about resilience and rising to the challenge in the face of adversity. Much of their time at Bucknell was marked by the pandemic and having to learn new ways of learning in an altered environment. Coach Wright summed up his advice to our graduates in four cornerstones on which his coaching is based: "*Hard*: Work hard every day, bring enthusiasm and your best effort in everything you do. *Together*: Live your life for others. Be kind and selfless. *Smart*: Be a lifetime learner. Never stop growing. Always be open to new ideas. *Pride*: Take pride in being part of something bigger than yourself rather than focusing on personal glory." Good advice indeed.

The Class of 2023 has 25 students, 21 majors and four minors. We congratulate them as they begin this next phase in their lives. Arya Bedi '23, Nabeel Jan '23, and Elena Roe '23 were this year's recipients of the Bucknell Prize in International Relations. Two IR majors completed yearlong projects and successfully defended their Honors Theses in April. Congratulations to IR majors Nabeel Jan '23, who wrote his honors thesis for his double major in Film Studies and Elena Roe '23, who wrote hers for IR. You can read a little more about their projects in the following pages. Elena was also inducted into Phi Beta Kappa this year.

This year, one member of the IR community was awarded a prestigious Fulbright: Julia Tokish '22 will be attending the University of Leicester in the UK to pursue an M.A. in Human Rights and Global Ethics. These two years have been a highlight for IR students and faculty in achieving

coveted Fulbrights. Last year, Giuliana Ferrara '22 was awarded a Fulbright which took her to Ghent, Belgium for the year. Add to this Prof. Zhu's Fulbright in Australia last year and we have three members of the Bucknell IR community who were awarded Fulbrights in a short span of two years during which time Bucknell itself was named a top Fulbright-producing university for the second year in a row. Special congratulations go to these individuals for their outstanding achievements. You will be able to read about Julia and Giuliana's experiences in the following pages.

This semester, our students attended a number of webinars which included topics such as graduate school applications, the global ramifications of the war in Ukraine, climate compensation and cooperation, US strategy in East Asia, and the geopolitics of oil. We marked the publication of Professor Larrabure's new book [Latin American Crisis and the New Authoritarian State](#) with a book launch and we held our annual senior sendoff dinner just a few weeks before graduation. It's been a busy week and now IR students and faculty all head into the summer to attend to our research, internships, and summer jobs and, yes, also to get some much-needed rest.

In this issue of *IR Matters!*, we bring you reflections from IR faculty, students and alumni. You can read about Professor Larrabure's work on authoritarianism in Latin America, Professor Zhu's thoughts on Ukraine/Taiwan, paths to a Fulbright and beyond by Giuliana Ferrara '22 and Julia Tokish '22, the rewards of writing honors theses by Elena Roe '23, and the opportunities that lie beyond an IR degree by our alumni Laurie Harrison '88 and Raymond Prushnok '01. We hope you enjoy their reflections.

In just a few months, we will all return energized and eager for a new academic year. Until then, be well and please keep in touch!

Professor and Chair of IR

## Authoritarianism and Crisis in Latin America

Even before COVID-19 entered the global vernacular, Latin America was undergoing one of its most acute social, political and economic crises in recent decades, one that has witnessed the erosion of center-left politics and the rise of new authoritarian governments. In my new book, *the Latin American Crisis and the New Authoritarian State* (Routledge, 2023), I attempt to understand and explain this ongoing crisis, while pointing to possible paths out of it. To accomplish these goals, I utilized a neo-Marxist approach, emphasizing praxis, intersubjectivity, and relationality, to look at the cases of Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Venezuela, arguably the most notable cases of left decline and authoritarian resurgence in the region. Specifically, I looked at the relationship between the left governments in question and some of the most important social movements that emerged and developed in their context, the recovered factory movement in Argentina, the free transit movement in Brazil, the student movement in Chile and the popular economy in Venezuela, linking this relationship to broader political and economic phenomena from a historical and comparative perspective.

I argue that the collapse of the left governments (known as the pink tide) can be explained by a number of external and internal factors. Our work here has focused on the latter, developing the concept of the neostructuralist bargain as a key explanatory mechanism. The neostructuralist bargain can be understood by the coming together of two sides. The first side is that of social movements, which we have understood via the concept of postcapitalist struggles, which encompass not all but certainly many of the most decisive social movements since the neoliberal era. Unlike traditional labor struggles, guerilla movements, and populist political parties, postcapitalist struggles strive to reinvent democratic participation while articulating non-market mechanisms for production and reproduction. Also unlike struggles of the past, postcapitalist struggles are politically much more ambiguous, encompassing a variety of currents that are often not easily reconcilable, and contain a dose of nostalgia. Finally, as they strive to reinvent democratic participation, postcapitalist struggles are institutionally weak, relying on comparatively more spontaneous forms of organization. The second side of the neostructuralist bargain is that of the pink tide governments. While being somewhat sensitive to the basic material needs of the most vulnerable in society, the pink tide's policy and institutional orientation was firmly rooted in classic notions of progress and democracy, in which popular sectors play a very limited role.

Contrary to mainstream arguments in support of the pink tide, particularly the more moderate governments, the result of the neostructuralist bargain was the progressive erosion of democratic institutions, increased social conflict and economic polarization. The contradictions and limitations found at the core of the neostructuralist bargain unfolded into two new political paths for the region. The first and more dominant path became what I call the "anti-bureaucratic authoritarian" state, best expressed in the wave of right wing governments that began to take power in the region following the end of the commodities boom, notably the governments of Bolsonaro in Brazil, Macri in Argentina, and Piñera in Chile. In contrast to the classic "bureaucratic authoritarian" state of decades past consisting of the long-term suspension of democracy and widespread repression of popular forces to "normalize" the economy and society, the "anti-bureaucratic authoritarian" state merely eschews democratic norms and procedures, while instilling further social and economic uncertainty and even chaos in the social and political fabric. The exception is the authoritarianism that developed in Venezuela after the death of Chávez, which for its capacity to demobilize popular sectors, centralize power and dismantle democratic institutions (both new and old) is much closer to the classic bureaucratic authoritarian state, but with a "socialist" and magical twist.

The second political path that unfolded was the creation of what I call the "new democratic road to socialism", best expressed in Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution up to 2014 and more recently the leftist Frente Amplio in Chile. Although comparable to the classic case of Allende's Popular Unity government in that it features the expansion of democratic structures in a peaceful process of state transformation, the new democratic road to socialism contains a number of novel features, such as leadership by sectors of society beyond industrial workers (i.e. students, women, and informal workers), a more diverse and flexible political ideological makeup, the incorporation of post-capitalist practices, and values within a long-term transformative process, and the use of low-level strategic force against existing structures of the capitalist state and supportive sectors. However, it should be noted that there is an ocean of contextual difference between Venezuela and Chile. Indeed, from the perspective of historical development, the countries are at near opposite extremes across a range of indicators pertaining to economic diversification. In short, Chile does not carry the baggage of magical development. This path taken by Chile has also evidenced an evolution in the authoritarian politics of the Piñera governments which began as an anti-bureaucratic authoritarian state, but with the state of siege in 2019, began to show signs of

*"... the result of the neostructuralist bargain was the progressive erosion of democratic institutions, increased social conflict and economic polarization."*

*Professor Larrabure*

more classic authoritarianism.

Are there any viable paths out of this crisis in the region? Unfortunately, the situation looks rather grim. Shortly after the publication of my book, a number of events transpired that support its pessimism. The constituent assembly process that began in Chile in recent years was defeated or at least severely weakened when, to the surprise of most, Chilean citizens voted down the proposed new constitution in 2023, plunging the country into a constitutional limbo. In Brazil, the January 8 riots against recently elected President Lula sewed chaos and confusion into the body politic, expressing a dangerous and novel form of ultra-right wing performative politics that only strengthen the most anachronistic elements of the ruling PT government. Finally, in Perú, my home country, now former progressive president Pedro Castillo sits in jail for an alleged attempted coup attempt against his own government. What all of these events appear to confirm is the growth of the new authoritarian state, one in which, in contrast to the past, chaos, confusion, and volatility are not a barrier to domination and accumulation but rather the key mechanisms.

Professor Larrabure

## End Wars Instead of Funding Them

One year after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the ugliness of humanity is fully on display. But instead of working to stop the war immediately, major powers in the world are directly or indirectly prolonging this man-made tragedy. In total, as of the time of writing, the United States has committed more than [\\$27.4 billion](#) in security assistance to Ukraine since the beginning of the current administration, and more than \$26.7 billion since the beginning of Russia's brutal invasion on February 24, 2022. President Joe Biden himself [announced another half a billion dollars](#) in military aid to Ukraine during his February 20 surprise visit to Kyiv. "To meet Ukraine's evolving battlefield requirements, the United States will continue to work with its Allies and partners to provide Ukraine with key capabilities," the U.S. [Department of Defense](#) declared when announcing the additional security aid. When appearing alongside Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv, [Biden](#) proudly stated that, "Together, we've committed nearly 700 tanks and thousands of armored vehicles. 1,000 artillery systems, more than 2 million rounds of artillery ammunition, more than 50 advanced launch rocket systems, anti-ship and air defense systems, all to defend Ukraine." At the same time, Japanese prime minister [Fumio Kishida](#) said his country would be pledging another \$5.5 billion in assistance, because of

"strong concern that Ukraine may be tomorrow's East Asia."

Supporting Ukraine in its resistance against Russian invasion is the right thing to do. But is this the only thing the United States can do? Have the United States and other powers tried to end the war? Why has our society become so tolerant of this bloody war?

China, another major global power—which [is reportedly considering supplying](#) Russia with drones and artillery equipment—released its "[Global Security Initiative Concept Paper](#)" a few days before the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion. In this document, China touts the concept of "common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security," and reiterates its commitments "to respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries" and "to taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously."

This is a paradoxical position: the first commitment appears to be supporting Ukraine, while the second supports Russia. Without specific, actionable measures to implement this supposed global security initiative, the document sounds hollow.

Yet the contradictory position may be the point, since the same dire situation that exists in Ukraine also exists in the Taiwan Strait. It's in everyone's interest not to turn Taiwan into another Ukraine. Yet the United States and China seem to be heading towards the exact same kind of showdown.

Depending on who you ask, a U.S.-China war over Taiwan could break out in 2049, 2035, 2027, or as soon as [2025](#)—with that last one being based on the "gut feelings" of General Mike Minihan of the U.S. Air Mobility Command.

And how is the United States preparing for this potential scenario? By arming Taiwan.

Washington has never ceased arms sales to Taiwan after it switched official recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979, which is consistent with the [Taiwan Relations Act](#) (TRA). The TRA, passed by Congress and signed into law by President Jimmy Carter, states that the United States "shall provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character."

In recent years, the United States has sharply increased security and military support for Taiwan while China becomes more assertive. For instance, the [Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act](#), included in the 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), authorizes appropriations for military grant assistance for Taiwan up to \$2 billion per year from 2023 through 2027.

*"Supporting Ukraine in its resistance against Russian invasion is the right thing to do. But is this the only thing the United States can do? Have the United States and other powers tried to end the war?"*

Professor Zhu

*"... because NATO's Article V functions as a security guarantee for the Baltic states, this has resulted in a security consensus within these nations, meaning that there is functionally no debate... and women are able to avoid role incongruence surrounding the masculinized issue of security."*

Elena Roe  
23

This so-called "[porcupine strategy](#)" is aimed at arming Taiwan so much that China would think twice before it launches an attack on Taiwan. The question is, with the People's Liberation Army's own modernization and Xi Jinping's historical mission of realizing the "Chinese dream," which includes China's unification with Taiwan, will the porcupine strategy work? Or is it counterproductive, since Washington's efforts to beef up Taiwan's defense will only harden Beijing's resolve to be better prepared for an eventual conflict?

U.S. diplomats and scholars used to be the most consistent and loudest supporters of cross-Taiwan Strait dialogue. Nowadays, nobody in Washington is promoting dialogue; everyone is busy predicting *when* the war with China will start—it is automatically presumed that such an outcome is a foregone conclusion.

The U.S. government tended to be vague about its long-term goal in Taiwan, and it was believed that Washington did not care about a particular outcome of cross-strait relations so long as the process is peaceful. Today, the United States does not seem to support cross-strait unification anymore, even if it is achieved peacefully. Indeed, Taiwan has become a more valuable strategic asset for both Washington and Beijing as U.S.-China rivalry intensifies.

As Washington continues to arm Taiwan and as Beijing ramps up military and diplomatic pressures on Taiwan, a U.S.-China military conflict seems highly likely.

No one benefits from wars, except greedy arms dealers. As great powers, the United States and China should ask themselves: what have we done to end or prevent wars?

Professor Zhu

This blog appeared in *The National Interest* on March 2, 2023

## Women Leaders in the Baltic States: Untying the Double-Bind

In beginning the process of writing an honors thesis, my decision as to what I really wanted to explore came from a desire to combine the academic interests I've engaged with over my 3 years as a Bucknell student. I came to Bucknell largely because of the Presidential Fellowship program, and as such have been working with Professor Burns in the Political Science Department since the moment I stepped on campus. I

continued our project on women leaders and counterterrorism while taking classes in Russian, and fell in love with Slavic culture and the history of the region. As such, I wanted to incorporate a somewhat comparative analysis of feminist theory within a post-Soviet regional context into my Honors Thesis.

The post-Soviet region is something of a "dark zone" in feminist politics. The cultural context is distinctly different from any variation of Western feminism, and so I entered a field of research in which there is very minimal literature. I did know a few things for sure, however. First, I knew that there were a lot of women Presidents and Prime Ministers in the region. I also knew that since independence, but especially over the course of the last decade, the perceived security crisis from the potential of a Russian invasion is strong, especially in the Baltic states. In accordance with feminist literature, these conditions don't jive. Cross-nationally, we know that populations prefer men in power during security crises. This led me to wonder, what is different about the state of Baltic security that could impact women's success within the executive branch? Given the influence of NATO in the security strategy of the Baltic states, my research question was as follows: how does the influence of NATO impact the effect of stereotypes on women executives and their ability to gain/maintain power?

In order to address this question, my thesis took the form of two case studies: Estonia and Lithuania. I chose these nations because of the three, they are the most different - geographically, demographically, and in terms of perceived security threat. I utilized process-tracing as a methodology, which essentially involves tracing the history of a nation or issue across a set period of time in order to develop a comprehensive timeline of events, legislation, and evidence that can either support or negate a hypothesis. I traced the legislative history of Estonia and Lithuania from independence to present, incorporating historical background to contextualize the state of gender roles generally and within politics. I also traced gender representation within both legislatures, women's participation in debates around security, and the detailed development of NATO as a functional "security guarantee" for the Baltic states.

I posit that because NATO's Article V functions as a security guarantee for the Baltic states, this has resulted in a security consensus within these nations - meaning that there is functionally no debate among lawmakers or constituents as to what security policy should look like. This removes security as an issue within the electoral process, and women are able to avoid role incongruence surrounding the masculinized issue of security. NATO's influence has altered the role of the executive, and particularly the role of the woman executive, in the sense that a highly



International organization removes extra pressure in the area of security. As long as the security consensus remains intact, women are rewarded politically for following the status quo.



*Elena Roe '23 with Professor Burns at the European Conference on Politics and Gender Ljubljana, Slovenia (July 2022)  
Photo courtesy of Elena Roe '23*

There is so much room left for inquiry after this project. Gender stereotypes, the way we see women leaders, varies heavily based on cultural context and historical memory. This project continues to excite me because this difference appears to lead to different outcomes for women in the region despite prevailing stereotypes and crises. I'm incredibly thankful to Profs. Mitchell and Burns for their guidance throughout this process, to the IR department for encouraging my educational inquiry, and to my family and peers for their support. I'm beyond excited to see where this line of questioning goes next.

*Elena Roe '23  
Recipient of the Bucknell Prize in International Relations*

## From Ghent to London: Where a Fulbright Can Take You

I never intended for my year abroad to turn into two years, but soon it will be just that. Last spring, I fortunately was awarded a Fulbright grant to serve as an English Teaching Assistant in Belgium for the 2022-2023 academic year. I was placed at the university in Ghent (spelled as Gent in Flemish), Belgium's third-

largest city, which is characterized by its vibrant student life and rich history. With just about one month left on my grant, I can say that this year in Belgium has been one of growth, curiosity, and exploration, inspiring my decision to pursue a Master's degree in International and Social Public Policy at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) beginning this fall.

Living in the heart of Europe on my Fulbright grant, I have been able to connect directly with the individuals across the US and Europe who impact public policy. I had the opportunity to meet the American Ambassador to Belgium, Michael Adler. I conversed with American foreign service officers at a Thanksgiving dinner hosted by the US Embassy. I attended a conference on the Balkan countries in which the heads of state of Albania, North Macedonia, and Montenegro were the headline speakers. I visited both the European Parliament and Commission, discussing with some members of the Commission their areas of expertise. For someone captivated by the ways in which public policy impacts the basic functions of society and international relations, these opportunities and conversations were inspiring and invaluable. Reflecting upon these experiences, I wanted these dialogues to continue, so pursuing graduate studies in one of the world's most dynamic cities seemed like a fruitful avenue.

Perhaps more significantly, I have developed a greater appreciation not only for global education but also for global cooperation over the course of my year abroad. My Fulbright experience has shown me the strength of engaging in cross-cultural connections and dialogue. Whether teaching English to an international student body in Ghent, volunteering at a refugee food kitchen in Brussels, or meeting Belgians across Flanders and Wallonia, every opportunity of my grant has been a chance to engage with diverse perspectives and develop cultural humility. Of course, this experience has not been without its challenges, whether that be a result of cultural differences, language barriers, or typical relocation struggles. However, the diversity of lived experiences that I encountered fueled a desire to understand the systemic factors that engender these differences. Once again, graduate education seemed like a natural next step.

My Fulbright grant has also encouraged me to reflect upon my undergraduate studies. As a teaching assistant in Belgium, I work with undergraduate students everyday who are brimming with curiosity. I work alongside other teachers (*lesgevers*) and PhD students conducting fascinating research on diverse linguistic topics. Thus, regardless of whether I am at the front of a classroom or among my colleagues, I am constantly surrounded by the exploration for greater understanding

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*Giuliana  
Ferrara '22*

This made me miss, more than anything else, being a student, being a researcher. When I think back to my time at Bucknell, I can recognize that my fascination with understanding the intricacies of our world, and international decision-making more specifically, was not quelled but instead stoked by my academic experiences. In fact, my senior honors thesis was a significant influence in my decision to continue my studies at LSE. The subject of my thesis was the divergent refugee integration policies of Italy, Hungary, Sweden, and the EU and their implications for future EU integration. While studying at LSE next year, I hope to continue this examination of migration-related policies.

Nevertheless, I can credit Bucknell – the classes, professors, and resources – with igniting my early eagerness to learn. So, for any current student reading, I would advise you to take full advantage of the opportunities that Bucknell affords you. You never know where they may lead you!

Giuliana Ferrara '22

## Embracing Opportunities

During my time at Bucknell, I pursued majors in International Relations and Economics while also minoring in Spanish. I had the opportunity to study abroad in Chile, row crew, and establish lasting connections with friends and professors. As an activist, I worked on an alternative newsletter, advocated for a living wage and a sweatshop-free bookstore, registered students to vote in 2000, and participated in student government. My experiences at Bucknell taught me valuable lessons and challenged me to defend my beliefs in the classroom and in life.

One course that stood out to me was Professor Uçarer's Human Rights seminar. She created an environment that fostered debate, encouraged us to challenge our views and listen to others. I cherished this experience and the opportunity to safely express ideas that I later rejected or opened my mind to later in life. Today, in a world where opinions can follow you online forever, this kind of environment seems rare and valuable.

After graduation, I was eager to make a difference and explore new horizons. I joined a non-profit organization in Albuquerque as a community organizer and lobbyist, working to combat predatory lending. Over four years, I made a difference, earned recognition for my efforts, and found mentors and friends along the way. One mentor introduced me to the Secretary of Aging in Pennsylvania, which led to my involvement in aging, social services, long-term care, and healthcare-related public policy.

Eventually, I joined UPMC Health Plan where I supported government-sponsored insurance programs and services that impact older adults and people with disabilities. My journey led me to found the UPMC Center for Social Impact, where we focus on employment, housing, health equity, supporting underserved populations, and collaborating with human services and community-based organizations. Since 2019, we have launched numerous successful programs addressing these issues.

Through experiences across sectors, I have learned

*"My journey led me to found the UPMC Center for Social Impact, where we focus on employment, housing, health equity, supporting underserved populations, and collaborating with human services and community-based organizations."*

Ray Prusknok  
'01



Above: Giuliana Ferrara '22 at the European Parliament  
Below: At the US Embassy in Brussels

Photos courtesy of Giuliana Ferrara



In essence, my Fulbright experience has provided me with tangible opportunities to witness divergent policies at work and has reminded me of the excitement of being a student. For that, I am grateful for this year abroad as it is leading me to graduate school.



Photo courtesy of Ray Prushnok '01

valuable lessons that I want to share with my fellow IREL students and alums:

Do what you say you will do. Success often comes down to showing up and honoring your commitments. Trust and integrity are built gradually but can be lost quickly. It is also important to establish limits with the people around you and to avoid unspoken expectations that can ruin relationships, both personal and professional.

Relationships are the foundation of success. Even if you work remotely, find human opportunities. Believe in others, and they will believe in you. Seek leadership through serving others and extending trust first. Engage with strangers. Talk less, listen more, and seek mentorship. People love to help, so do not be afraid to ask for advice.

Stay curious, *Crescit Eundo*. Read and explore ideas outside of your field (and scroll). I have found meaningful career insights in topics like behavioral economics and cosmology, which might seem unrelated to my work. As retired IREL Prof Dick Peterec always recommends, read opposing perspectives before forming your own opinions. This is especially vital in today's highly personalized media landscape and narrowing social networks.

In closing, I encourage you to embrace each opportunity and never stop learning. Your experiences, relationships, and willingness to take risks will shape your path to success. Welcome the journey ahead and remember that you never know where your career might take you.

Ray Prushnok '01  
Executive Director, UPMC Center for Social Impact

## A Summer to Remember in Kyrgyzstan



Photos courtesy of Gracyn Shaw '24

Last summer I spent the summer in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Originally, I was supposed to go to Estonia through a State Department program for ROTC cadets, but after the Russian invasion it was deemed too risky to go. I was upset to hear the news, but I knew that I wanted the chance to study abroad and improve upon my Russian language skills. I found another program through Bard College to travel halfway across the world to Kyrgyzstan. I remember feeling really nervous before I left, as I knew almost nothing about Kyrgyzstan or the culture. However, when I arrived, I found a really welcoming community. I lived with a host family, who I got very close with, and even invited back for my host sister's wedding! I learned so much about Kyrgyz culture and tradition, and my Russian language skills improved immensely. I also had the chance to meet students from different universities all around the US through the program, and we all got really close. Every day we had a Russian class from 8:30-12, and then a Central Asian politics and foreign policy class from 1:00-3. After classes were over, we usually had a field trip to either a museum, park, concert or another cultural event from 3-5. There were a lot of challenges to overcome, as things felt very different from home at first, but I soon adjusted and felt at home in Bishkek.

One of my favorite things was exploring the countryside in Kyrgyzstan. The country is covered 90% in mountain regions, so much of the country is left in its natural beauty. There was lots of hiking, swimming, horseback riding, and driving. We went to Son-Kul, about a 10-hour drive from Bishkek through the mountains to a lake, and it was one of the most incredible experiences I've ever had. We also would regularly go on long hikes through the mountains, which were some of the most difficult but most

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Gracyn Shaw  
'24



*"I had the great fortune to enter the workforce with a strong foundation in critical thinking, the courage and confidence to just about anything out no matter how new of unfamiliar the situation, and the keen understating of the importance of human relationships across languages, borders, cultures, and time."*

Laurie  
Skirkanich  
Harrison '88



rewarding hikes I've ever done. Within the city as well, I loved learning about the history of Kyrgyzstan and its Soviet ties. Given everything happening with Ukraine, it was really interesting how the culture and attitude towards Russia was shifting. I was in the country when the Central Asian Leaders Summit occurred, which was a big turning point for the region, and so it was really cool to be there when it happened. As an International Relations and Russian dual major, studying abroad in a post-Soviet country was a very educational experience. There isn't a lot of interest in the West to learn more about Central Asia, so gaining those invaluable experiences will be something I carry with me throughout my career, wherever that may take me in the world of IR. I also really enjoyed living in an immersive Russian-speaking environment. It provided me with many challenges for sure, but it is something that I recommend to any IR or Russian major interested in the Russian and Eurasian region!

Gracyn Shaw '24

## IR: Framework for Adventure

As a 1988 International Relations (IR) and Russian Bucknell alumna, I had the great fortune to enter the workforce with a strong foundation in critical thinking, the courage and confidence to figure just about anything out no matter how new or unfamiliar the situation, and the keen understanding of the

importance of human relationships across languages, borders, cultures, and time.

Certainly, a huge part of those skills came from the small, intensive classwork, attentive professors, and my semester abroad senior year. And this solid foundation set the stage for many adventures. I have travelled on delegations with NASA to Greece, Amsterdam, and Moscow where I delivered presentations in Russian at state institutes for science. I've attended international aerospace, telecom and business conferences in London, Brussels, and Malta and have represented companies in Bangkok, Sao Paulo, Hong Kong, Dublin, Paris, Barcelona, Toulouse, and Andorra.

One of my favorite work assignments was as a knowledge management professional and USAID contractor, traveling to the US Mission in Thailand. There, I had to navigate the impossibly crowded city streets on TukTuks to obtain last-minute supplies for the training session we were conducting. The people I met there from all over Southeast Asia were working to save our rainforests and their inhabitants. It was a powerful collection of wise and determined professionals and an experience I will never forget. You may be curious how I ended up with such a varied career. The secret is simple: be a voracious learner, do the things that people need and find useful, build relationships, and follow your heart.

The actual story is less pithy: After Bucknell, I studied at the Russian and East European Institute at Indiana University in Bloomington. As part of my studies, I spent a semester in Washington, DC at a think tank as the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship in International Peace and Security. After graduating with an MA, I worked as a translator, entering Russian aerospace documents into a NASA database and, subsequently, was involved in the redesign of that database, a project which became an entry into the world of software development which I have been in for over 25 years.

Along the way, I launched a side business, which gave me the opportunity to do some work with the International Research Exchange Board (IREX). These were fun, sometimes bi-lingual gigs in a time that predated smart phones and before the World Wide Web had a graphic interface. I demonstrated Internet functionality to World Bank officials in Russian and briefed Fulbright scholars from the Newly Independent States (NIS) on using the Internet for social science research. After obtaining an MBA with a concentration in Information Systems at College Park, Maryland, I spent time in the IT consulting and Telecommunications industries. Again, my IR foundations from Bucknell came in handy to obtain a telecommunications position in Paris where I worked and lived for 2 years. While there, I did volunteer work

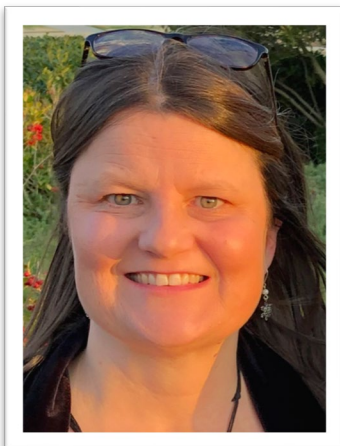


to interpret from Russian to French for Chechen refugees in the basement of an old Parisian church.

Both Russian and French - and French wine, of course - played a key role in befriending other expats from around the globe. My husband, Scott, and I had endless fun learning French slang and *verlan* from our expat friends, while helping them to understand cultural references of then-popular American television, such as *Friends* or *Sex in the City*. Intending to take time off to start a family, we settled in the tiny nation of Andorra nestled high in the Pyrenees mountains. I volunteered time at UNICEF and taught innovative English classes, creating courses that taught business concepts while advancing English skills. Clients included politicians, banking executives and representatives of the Bureau for Business Innovation. I was subsequently hired by the Prime Minister to work on the Future of Europe Summit, an initiative to diversify the economy by bringing world leaders, business persons, and academics to Andorra to highlight its role as a potential center for innovation at the crossroads of Europe.

Eventually returning to the States, I continued my IT career. My current professional work involves helping technologists to build a culture of innovation, shifting old paradigms to better compete in a rapidly evolving technological and global business landscape. Understanding frameworks through which to view the world is a huge part of the International Relations discipline. It's also fabulous training for understanding business and even systems frameworks.

IR studies provided me with a broad interdisciplinary education and cross-disciplinary thinking that has allowed me to keep learning and adapting across many different careers. It has been an adventure-filled, interesting, fun and rewarding life.



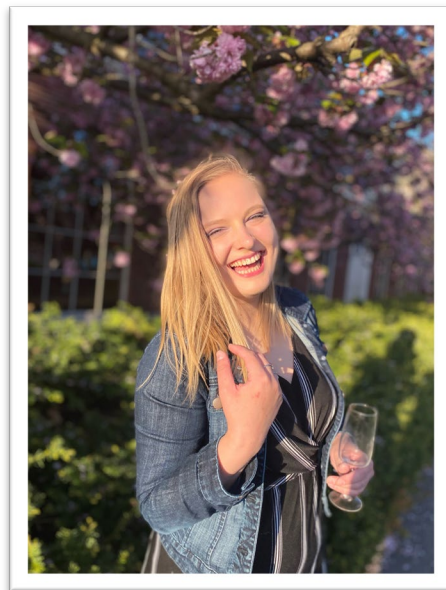
Laurie Skirkanich Harrison '88

## Fulbright Reflections

On March 27 2023, I was selected for a Fulbright award to pursue an M.A. in Human Rights and Global Ethics at the University of Leicester in the UK. This award wasn't just a stroke of luck. It came after months - years, really - of hard work and preparation.

The most obvious form that this took was the actual application, which I worked on under the advisement of the brilliant Margaret Marr, Bucknell's Director for Undergraduate Fellowships and Research. Step one was selecting a program. I chose to apply for a master's degree in the United Kingdom, a country that I've always held a deep interest in.

Choosing a graduate program to apply for was easy. As a triple major in international relations, Arabic & Arab world studies, and theatre, I was already drawn to issues of human rights and multiculturalism, especially in the legal field. Leicester, with its strong multicultural and artsy nature, stood out as a city uniquely suited to my interests. When I came across the University of Leicester's M.A. in Human Rights and Global Ethics, I immediately knew that this was where my application would take me.



Julia Tokish '22 at senior sunset in May 2022  
Photo courtesy of Julia Tokish

In the first stage of this Fulbright application, I had to write five essays of varying lengths: the Abstract, Statement of Grant Purpose, Personal Statement, Plans Upon Return to the US, and Host Country Engagement. I began this step later than most in June 2022, writing and rewriting thirteen drafts of these essays before finally submitting them in October. Along

*"I could've  
gotten  
discouraged  
and given up  
altogether, but  
instead I used  
these two  
attempts to  
push me  
further  
forward.  
Without  
failing  
(twice!), I  
never  
would've  
gained the  
understanding  
I needed in  
order to  
succeed now."*

Julia Tokish  
'22

the way, I sent these drafts to dozens of professors to review, asked for letters of recommendation, and even met with a professor from the University of Leicester to gain a better understanding of the program.

I was selected as a semi-finalist in January, three months after I had submitted my original application. The next step was interview preparation. In February, the US-UK Fulbright Commission sent me a list of seven questions to prepare for a fifteen-minute interview. I participated in multiple mock interviews with professors and friends, working on balancing detail with strict timing. I completed the interview while I was at work; I had no control over scheduling. I hardly had time to breathe between questions, but I was able to summarize the main points of my application and expand on my thought process. Afterward, all I could do was wait. In March, nine months after I'd started working on this application, I received the email that I was selected for the award.

This months-long series of writing, discussing, and interviewing might seem like the only part that really matters. However, my preparation for this application really began years ago, without me even knowing it. This Fulbright award marks the third application that I've completed with the assistance of the Margaret Marr. The first two – a Truman application and another Fulbright application to teach English in the Palestinian Territories – were both as long and complex as the process I described previously. But in both of these cases, I didn't even make it past the first round. Looking back, I don't consider these first attempts to be setbacks. Both were invaluable in strengthening my understanding of the application process and clarifying my future goals. I could've gotten discouraged and given up altogether, but instead I used these two attempts to push me further forward. Without failing (twice!), I never would've gained the understanding I needed in order to succeed now.

I am beyond thrilled to travel to the UK in September and commit myself to learning both inside the classroom and outside in the community. I am so grateful for the support of Bucknell's faculty (and the International Relations department, of course) in not just my Fulbright application, but my entire undergraduate experience. If I can leave one piece of advice for Bucknell students now, it's this: The next time you see an opportunity you're interested in, go for it. You never know what will happen.

*Julia Tokish '22*

## Bucknell Prize in International Relations Goes to...

Leading towards graduation, the department considers seniors to award the Bucknell Prize in International Relations to a senior or seniors demonstrating outstanding academic performance in international relations. This year, the award went to three outstanding students who were recognized at the department's senior sendoff which was held on April 27, 2023. Each of these students excelled in and beyond the classroom. IR is proud to present the recipients of this year's Bucknell Prize in International relations: Arya Bedi, Nabeel Jan, and Elena Roe.



*Bucknell Prize in IR Recipients 2023  
Left to right: Elena Roe, Nabeel Jan, and Arya Bedi  
Photo courtesy of Professor Uçarer*

Arya is an IR and classics double major, passionate about human rights and especially the plight of refugees. In addition to her engaged and excellent work in IR classes, she also served as the student

*Congratulations to  
Arya Bedi '23,  
Nabeel Jan '23,  
and Elena Roe '23  
who are the  
recipients of this  
year's Bucknell  
prize in  
International  
Relations!*

representative on the Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee. She will be starting her new position at Accenture soon. Nabeel is a double major in International Relations and Film and Media Studies. He is the president of the Class of 2023 and a contributing writer to the Bucknellian. Nabeel directed the first year play Kodachrome in Fall 2022 and completed his honors in Film and Media Studies by directing a feature film which was recently screened at the Campus Theatre. Last, but not least, Elena is a Presidential Fellow and worked with Prof. Burns in the Political Science Department. She attended national and international conferences, wrote an honors thesis in IR (see the piece she penned for this edition of the newsletter) and will pursue her interest in the intersection of gender and security in graduate school at Virginia Tech. Elena, like Nabeel, sings with Beyond Unison. Congratulations!

Each and every year, we are fortunate to have curious, hard-working, globally engaged students that are drawn to the major. As we bid a fond farewell to the Class of 2023, we welcome the Class of 2025 who officially became part of the IR community a few weeks ago. We look forward to working with them over the coming years. Welcome Class of 2025: Christine Ajao, Joseph Antner, Tales Carneiro Passos, Sam Coughlin, Daisy Crystal, Bridget Gardella, Evan Goldstein, Grace Kim, Riley King, Anna Lajos, Cassie Lawler, Grant Laws, Tris Lehner, Spencer Lewis, Isabel Rondinelli, Gabby Segura-Suarez, Gracyn Shaw, Charlotte Sullivan, Ariel Ulrich, Eleni Vasiliades, Blythe Wallick, and ella Woldd.



And, now, we get to introduce you to IR Class of 2023. **Congratulations everyone!** In the words of Semisonic, "It's closing time.. It's time for you to go out to the places you will be from." It's been a privilege getting to know you and working with you as you made your way through the major. Please stay in touch and let us know how your lives unfold beyond Bucknell. Know that you always have a home and warm welcome right here in Lewisburg. We will miss you all.



## Class of 2023: IR Majors

Alec D. Baker  
Arya R. Bedi  
Maxwell W. Chen  
Abbie B. Coscia  
Katelyn M. Craven  
Kyra E. DeVoe  
Kaylee L. Donnelly  
George C. Englehart  
Sarah C. Haas  
Charlotte E. Hoffberger  
Nabeel R. Jan  
Lindsey R. Kulp  
Madison M. Kurtz  
Isaiah M. Mays  
Alexandra I. Miller  
Claire M. O'Brien  
Matthew T. Rayski  
Elena G. Roe  
Will N. Tanner IV  
Adrien M. Touzot  
Lisa N. Zoch

## Class of 2023: IR Minors

Griffin Lombardi  
Kameron Schreffler  
Julia Sullivan  
Maya Wadhwa

*Congrats grads!*



*IR Faculty teach  
a wide array of  
courses and  
engage in  
interesting  
research—this  
summary will give  
you a sense of  
what we are  
currently working  
on.*

*Please also  
consider  
contributing to the  
Alumni News  
Section of your  
newsletter by  
sending us your  
[updates](#).*







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**We're on the Web!**

Visit the [IR  
Department](#).

*Interested in  
[supporting](#) the  
mission of the  
International  
Relations  
Department?*

*We'd love to hear  
from [you](#). Send your  
updates and/or your  
short submissions on  
projects or  
perspectives*

*The **IR Matters!**  
newsletter highlights  
events and people in  
the Bucknell IR  
community. The  
publication appears  
once a semester and  
welcomes feedback  
and submissions from  
students, alumni, and  
faculty.*

## IR Faculty News

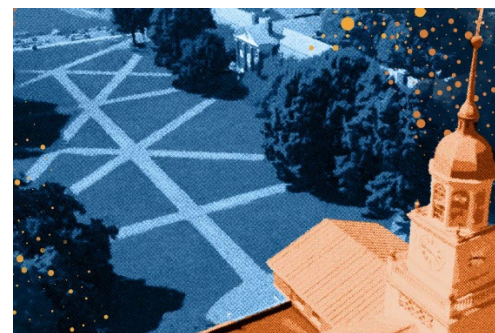
**Professor Boateng** attended and presented a paper at the ISA Montreal in March. The paper was titled *Bridging Africa's Knowledge Gap through Advocate Scholarship*. It argues that scholars in positions of power must use their positions to fight epistemic injustice, inequality and discrimination in the academe. He also participated on a panel that the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC organized on the Localization of Humanitarian Action. This panel was aimed to generate expert views on how national governments and organizations can be supported to provide efficient and timely assistance to those affected by conflict-related and natural disasters. Professor Boateng will be joining the faculty of Clark University as a tenure-track assistant professor in the coming academic year.

**Professor Uçarer** attended the European Union Studies Association conference in May and presented a paper entitled "With Open Arms? Temporary Protection and Selective Solidarity in the European Union." She will present a revised version of this paper at the Council for European Studies Conference in Reykjavik, Iceland in June. She gratefully acknowledges research assistance provided by Charlotte Hoffberger '23.

## Of Note: Campus News and Events



**[Bucknell Honors Class of 2023 Graduates.](#)** The Bucknell community gathered together on Malesardi Quadrangle Sunday, May 14, to celebrate the academic achievements of the Class of 2023, a group of graduates whose educational journey was marked by tenacity, grit, and grace.



**[Bucknell Launches New Center for Access & Success.](#)** The new center will serve students enrolled in Bucknell's five national and signature pathway scholarship programs, providing a cohesive system of high-touch mentoring and support throughout their four years on campus and enhancing their ability to excel at the University.



**[Bucknell Named Fulbright Scholar Top-Producing Institution.](#)** For the second straight year, Bucknell has been named a top producer of Fulbright Scholars by the U. S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. This recognition is given to the US colleges and universities with the highest number of 2022-23 Fulbright scholars. Among the recipients are IR's own Giuliana Ferrara '22 (Ghent, Belgium, 2022-23) and Julia Tokish '22 (2023-24).



**[Remembering Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1958 Visit to Bucknell.](#)** Special contributor Merrett R. Stierheim '58 reflects on the experience and how the message continues to inspire him today.