

Intro: You are on with career talks presented by the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at Georgia Tech a regular podcast featuring students, alumni, and friends of the school offering advice to help you succeed in your career endeavors.

Host: Welcome to career talks a podcast service of the Academic Services Office of the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at Georgia Tech. we're talking with Mpaza Kapembwa, a soon to be graduating graduate student. He's with us today to talk about his internship with the president of Poland. He will share with us the process and offering advice on how to find a unique and rewarding opportunity like his. Tell us about yourself, where you're from, what you studied in undergrad and how you chose to come to Sam Nunn School for graduate school.

Mpaza: Thanks for having me. So I went to high school here in Georgia in Dekalb, County to Cross Keys High School and then for undergrad I went to Williams College in Massachusetts, western Mass. I was a Chinese major in undergrad. So once I was done with undergrad I had to go to grad school immediately because of my fellowship with the State Department. Since my job will have me traveling a lot I decided to go to school closer to home.

Host: We're here to talk about your internship with the president of Poland. Can you tell us how you learned about this opportunity?

Mpaza: Yes, so actually, I heard of it from Career Services. I think I got an e-mail from Ms. Jackson. The program was advertised as a partnership between General Electric (GE) and the president's office in Poland. The goal was to get American graduate students to learn more about Poland, it's economy, politics and so forth. The program was twenty students all together, ten students were grad students and then the other ten were undergrad students but the undergrads were all of Polish descent. The goal was for them to help us to learn more. I learned about it from INTA and it was a really cool opportunity

Host: Hmm, sounds like it. Why did you start to apply or how are you selected for this opportunity?

Mpaza: We had to write an essay and submit a transcript. so you have to a 3.5 and above, which I think most people have in grad school. Then just a short essay on why you want to do it. For me, I wanted to do it because in grad school I got a bit interested in kind of security issues and European security. because I realized that you know Europe and the U.S. are the cornerstone of global stability and so on those kind of one. Then two, in February I participated in a program that took some American students to Germany to learn about transatlantic security cooperation so learn about the U.S. and the E.U. security policy and so forth

Host: tell us what your experience entailed, the length, activities and any lessons learnt.

Mpaza: The whole thing was twelve days are but it was a really intense twelve days. We went to five different cities and twelve days. It was really like you know drinking a lot of coffee. Some

of the highlights of the second day we went to the U.S. embassy to get a briefing from U.S. diplomats on what the U.S. cares about in Poland. Mainly for the U.S. is NATO cooperation because Poland borders Russia. Poland has been more outspoken than other European countries regarding the need to sanction Russia and the need to increase security spending. As you might know most European countries don't meet their two percent spending target for NATO but Poland does. Poland has been one of the countries US been pushing and pushing and pushing. That was what they told us that at the embassy. Then on the third day we went to the parliament in Warsaw, which is like in the US, it's a bicameral parliament. They have a lower house in the upper house and the leader of the Senate spoke to us for a very long time. He's a doctor by profession but now he's a politician. He's from the Social Liberal Party so they want a lot of social spending and so forth. He was telling us why it's important that there is a strong E.U. because Poland gets a lot of money from the EU on this one of the least developed countries in the EU. Then we toured the parliament and later that day on the third day we had lunch with the Deputy Foreign Minister. That was very interesting because he was telling us about how Poland this year applied to be on the U.N. Security Council. The Security Council five permanent members and then ten rotating members. Every two years that there's ten new countries and Poland applied to be in it next year. It was like the most important thing for them. Then on day seven we went to Auschwitz. I don't think a lot of people know that Auschwitz is actually in Poland, not in Germany. Poland had a lot of Jews before World War II. Poland had a big Jewish population and so they put the concentration camp there. Eventually brought in people from all over Europe but it was really really cool experience because we learn about it a lot but actually getting to see it is like whoa this is crazy. Then later the day went to a salt museum, like an underground museum because it's a mine but it's a museum. It goes really really down. Then it's like a city down because they show you the mine and then of course there is a church because a lot of Polish people are very religious and there's like shops and cafes. Yes there is like restaurants. We actually had dinner down there too so it was really really interesting. So if anyone goes to Poland, the salt museum and Auschwitz of course. Then the next day, day eight we went to the historic residence of the president of Poland. It's kind of like Camp David where the president goes when he wants some rest then we stayed overnight there. They went above and beyond to make us feel welcome. That was really nice and then we had traditional Polish food that night and music by the fireplace. That was kind of winding down a little bit after going to Auschwitz, which was really heavy having for a lot of us. Then on day ten we actually got to meet the president were actually on T.V. as well. They gave everybody certificates for participating so it was really nice. He called everybody up by name and then thanked us for going to Poland. Then it's been like an hour that's just answering our questions

Host: Oh yeah, what kinds of questions did you ask him?

Mpaza: I asked him how his day is like when does he wake up or when he goes to bed? He said he gets up at seven but he doesn't go to bed until two in the morning. In Poland, the president and the prime minister, so the prime minister is elected I believe and then the prime minister chooses the president who is confirmed by the parliament. The president runs the day-to-day of the government. For example, when president Trump went to Poland recently he met the president because the president is the one who does the day-to-day stuff. Of course he gets

instructions from the prime minister but he has to implement everything. We asked him when he gets up and then I asked him of his biggest frustration being president and for him was that he doesn't have as much power as people think it does. Even if it implements the policies of the prime minister he cannot come up with his own stuff. He just implement what the prime minister tells him.

Host: He just follows orders.

Mpaza: Yeah but when things go wrong , it's his fault

Host: Of Course

Mpaza: That was the biggest frustration for him. Yeah that was day ten. That was the coolest part of the trip actually. I don't like the you know the course part of the trip actually. He didn't just come in and take pictures and then leave. He actually talked to us for a long time.

Host: Sounds, like it's very rewarding being there to experience that. How did your time at Georgia Tech or the Nunn School prepare you for this internship?

Mpaza: Like I mentioned, I was a Chinese major in undergrad. Even if I like politics since middle school, I didn't really know about the theories. When I came here, it was a lot of theories. In my favorite class was Dr. Stulberg's international security. We learned about the theories in international relations and why do countries do what they do. I felt like that class really opened up my mind up. He's a Russian specialist so we talk a lot about Russia and of course Poland. I think that class was like he was influential in me being interested in European security issues.

Host: What advice would you give to students interested in such a unique experience such as yours?

Mpaza: I would definitely say just apply for whatever program not even in conjecture with your interests because for me even if I'm not a Europe person, I was interested in learning about European issues. I could make a case for why I was interested and so that's why I got an opportunity to do this and to go to Germany as well. Even if it's not exactly what you do but it's in conjecture to what you, I would still encourage you to apply. You just never know. A lot of other students might be discouraged because it's not their thing but that may be an advantage for you because think very few people apply to stuff like this. I definitely encourage them to apply. If you can connect it somewhat to what you do definitely apply.

Host: That's very good advice. How do you think this internship will help you with your role as a Foreign Service Officer?

Mpaza: Even if China is my thing technically, I just don't know where my career is going to take me. I may end up in Europe. Students, who study international affairs I think opening yourself

up to learning about as many regions as possible as many countries as possible is very helpful. I might end up in Europe and now I know way more about Europe that I did before I came to Georgia Tech. I don't know how it's going to help in the future but I suspect it's probably going to help.

Host: Is there anything you would like to add or any concluding thoughts?

Mpaza: Yeah, like I just said, I think learning about as many regions as possible is important for students of international relations. While at Georgia Tech last year I went to the Southeast Asia trip so Southeast Asians are different from Asia Pacific like China, Taiwan, Japan. Southeast Asia is like Cambodia, Vietnam, all those countries. I got to learn about that something I didn't know. Then this year of course getting to learn more about Europe. Again, if you can apply for a study abroad trip to a region that you have no connection to I think that's really good for development. You might actually end up liking it more than you suspect you would.

Host: This is true; you just never know where you're heading in your career. You might end up in Europe or you might end up in Southeast Asia and all this is helping you. Well thank you for sharing your insight and expertise with our audience today

Mpaza: Thank you

Outro: This has been career talks a podcast of the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at Georgia Tech brought to you by the Nunn School academic services this and other podcast can be found on our website at www.inta.gatech.edu. Thank you for listening.