Robert Fisk, award-winning journalist and Middle East correspondent for *The Independent* newspaper, gave the annual faculty-appointed Distinguished Lecture on April 20, 2010, on the subject of “State of Denial: Western Journalism and the Middle East.” Georgetown junior Amna Al-Thani introduced Fisk to a capacity audience of 800 guests at the Four Seasons hotel in Doha.

Fisk began by noting that on September 11, 2001, he was contacted by various news agencies who repeatedly asked him “who did it?” This, he said, was very telling of the state of Western journalism as they would not ask the obvious question of “why did this happen?” Fisk argued that “when you have an ordinary crime on the street, the first thing the police do is look for a motive. But when we had an international crime against humanity in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania, the one thing journalists were not supposed to do was look for a motive.”

In today’s terror driven discourse, Fisk said, delving into the background historical reasons for why such attacks happen is considered synonymous with an apology for terrorist activity. This is a challenge because it opens up a problematic discourse that questions the relationship between the United States, the Arab world, and Israel.

In Western journalism, Fisk argued, “what we were confronting, especially in the United States, was the parasitic, osmotic relationship between journalists and power.” Because the United States administration refers to the Israeli “occupied territories” as “disputed territories” and the Israeli “wall” is referred to as a “security barrier,” this language is picked up by the popular press and becomes the sanitized language of journalism. “By failing to use the real words, we de-semanticize the conflict,” said Fisk. “Through our journalistic cowardice, we make it easier for those who suffer to become the aggressors, and those who are the occupiers to become the victims,” he argued. Journalists become complicit in conflicts when they subscribe to this type of reporting.

*Continued on page 4*
Greetngs from all of us at CIRS! As the Georgetown campus in Qatar and CIRS enter into the fifth year of operations, we begin to welcome a new phase in our institutional evolution. This is reflected both in our organizational set-up and also in our priorities and objectives as we continue with this year’s public affairs programming and research initiatives. Additionally, Georgetown University in Qatar has moved into its new home – our newly completed building in Education City. We welcome our readers to visit the campus and to attend our various events, which we will hold at this location in the near future.

We have just concluded the third, and final, phase of our research initiative on the study of migrant labor in the Gulf region. The initiative covers a variety of disciplines including, anthropology, political science, legal studies, public policy, and statistical demography. The scholars analyzed the broad historic origins of migrant labor to the Gulf as well as issues related to the host and sending countries; questions of identity and gender politics; remittances and nationalization of local labor markets; among larger issues of long-term social change.

In its multi-year, multi-disciplinary study of the subject, CIRS hopes to fill a glaring vacuum in the scholarship on the Gulf region.

For the coming year, we will continue work on “The Political Economy of the Gulf” research initiative. In December 2010, we will have our second working group meeting, which will cover topics such as the role of Sovereign Wealth Funds (SWF), Islamic banking systems, the prospects of a monetary union among GCC states, and the diversification of Gulf state economies. Each of the participants, a number of whom were drawn from Georgetown’s Doha and DC campuses, was asked to work on an original, empirically-grounded paper that will form an eventual chapter in a book on the topic.

We have also launched a research initiative on “Food Security and Food Sovereignty in the Middle East.” The scarcity of data on this topic means that academic work on the subject remains limited and in need of urgent research. In conjunction with the working group meetings on this topic, CIRS will fund empirically-based, original research projects to fill in the existing gap in the literature. We anticipate the project will last approximately eighteen to twenty-four months.

Our public affairs programming, meanwhile, is speeding full steam ahead, with our next panel presentation focusing on two decades of political upheaval in Iraq.

We invite you to visit our website to look for more information on CIRS events, publications, and research opportunities.

Along the way, I and the rest of the CIRS team look forward to hearing from you and hopefully to seeing you at our various venues.

Sincerely,

Mehran Kamrava
Director of CIRS
Interim Dean
Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar
Research and Scholarship

CIRS Launches Arabic Language Publications

CIRS embarked upon a new project of publishing Arabic-language materials for distribution to its Arabic-speaking readership. The publications are in the form of original research conducted in the Arabic language as well as Arabic translations of existing research published by CIRS over the years.

"America, the Middle East, and the Gulf: An Arab View of Challenges Facing the New United States Administration"

This paper was based on a Distinguished Lecture Rami Khouri gave in Qatar. He discusses various options open to the United States government regarding foreign policy initiatives developed towards dealing with problems in the Middle East region.

Research and Scholarship

CIRS Welcomes Its Newest Member: Debra Shushan

The Center for International and Regional Studies welcomes its 2010-2011 Post-Doctoral Fellow, Debra Shushan. Shushan comes to CIRS from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, where she is an Assistant Professor of Government and member of the faculties of International Relations and Middle East Studies. The focus of her research is the foreign policies of Middle East states.

After receiving a bachelor's degree, summa cum laude, in Government from Harvard University, Shushan went on to earn an MPhil in International Relations from Oxford University, and an MA, MPhil, and Ph.D. in Political Science from Yale University. She is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, and recipient of the Marshall Scholarship, the Truman Scholarship, and the Graduate Research Fellowship from the National Science Foundation.

Shushan’s work (with Chris Marcoux) on foreign aid by Arab states has garnered attention, with synopses of their findings published on the website of Foreign Policy and forthcoming in Norrag News. A full-length article is currently under review.

During her time at CIRS, Dr. Shushan is writing a book manuscript on the factors influencing foreign policy-making in autocratic regimes. The book is an empirical analysis of the foreign policies of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria during the 1990-91 and 2003+ Gulf wars. In addition, she is conducting research on Qatari foreign aid within the context of its broader foreign policy agenda.
The worst example of this sanitization of conflict is television, where producers will not allow scenes of death or violence, thus concealing the reality of war from the public. Viewers of television in the West are not given the opportunity to see for themselves the effect of wars. Fisk argued that “our leaders, all of whom at the moment have zero experience of real war – the journalists do, but not our leaders in the West – they are able to present to the public war as a bloodless sandpit, war as something primarily to do with victory and defeat rather than death.”

Currently, Fisk argued, there is a wall of fortresses that divide the world into West and East. There are British, US, and Western European military posts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Tajikistan, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Algeria, Yemen, Qatar, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia, as well as in a variety of other strategically located regions. “It’s a kind of iron curtain across the Middle East,” he said.

**“Through our journalistic cowardice, we make it easier for those who suffer to become the aggressors, and those who are the occupiers to become the victims.”**

Western governments say that they want to export democracy, but, Fisk argued, the voices on the other side say they want nothing more than justice. Currently, the enemies of the Western world are predominantly Islam. He said that “we don’t even largely reflect upon what I suspect is one of the principle frustrations that exist in this region: that Muslims have kept their faith and we have not.” He continued by saying, “what has happened is that a people who have kept their faith are now largely dominated socially, economically, politically, and, usually, militarily, by a people who have lost their faith. How do you explain that to yourselves?”

In conclusion, Fisk said: “I think the West should always be encouraged to send its teachers, and its educators, its builders, its engineers, its bridge-builders, and its scientists to the Muslim world, to learn as well as to help and teach. But, militarily, we have no business being in the Muslim world.”

Earlier in the day, Fisk was invited to the Georgetown Qatar campus to speak informally to a group of faculty, students, and staff. He answered questions related to the effects of technology on journalism.

Robert Fisk has won numerous press awards for his work including being named the British International Journalist of the Year seven times and receiving the Amnesty International UK Press Award twice. He has lived in the Middle East for over thirty years, and has reported on the 1979 Iranian revolution, the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Sabra and Chatila massacre, the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and the war in Afghanistan. He is one of the few western journalists to have interviewed Osama bin Laden, which he has done three times, and is also a best-selling author, whose books include *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East* and *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War*. Robert Fisk holds a PhD in politics from Trinity College Dublin and holds twelve honorary degrees from other universities.
On May 13, 2010, Fred Lawson, Professor of Government at Mills College and the 2009-2010 CIRS Visiting Scholar, gave a CIRS Focused Discussion on the topic of “Alternative Explanations for U.S. Policy in the Gulf” to a group of Qatar-based diplomats, embassy staff, and Georgetown faculty. The lunch talk was held at the Four Seasons hotel in Doha.

Lawson’s lecture delivered an academic overview of American foreign policy toward the Gulf region. He noted that while diplomats and politicians around the world “are busy carrying out the practice of diplomacy and the practice of international relations, there is a whole army of scholars sitting at colleges and universities in the United States trying to understand what is going on and trying to explain international relations.”

Lawson stated that “American foreign policy toward the Gulf has changed dramatically over the last three decades.” From the 1940s to the 1980s, the American presence, especially its military presence, in the region remained minimal and unobtrusive, but during the 1990s, this situation was altered spectacularly and the American military presence became a major feature of many Gulf states. The U.S. presence was not only larger, but, also more overt, and culminated in large-scale military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

“From the 1940s to the 1980s, the American presence, especially its military presence, in the region remained minimal and unobtrusive.”

American scholars, Lawson said, have tried to explain this dramatic shift by proposing three different theses. The first of these, and the most widely accepted, is that “the United States is trying hard to solve problems of security in a world that has no overarching authority structure,” and so acts in its own self interest. This explanation is often called a “realist perspective,” and assumes that most, if not all, aspects of U.S. foreign policy represent a response to changes in the strategic circumstances in which the country finds itself due to changes in world affairs. From this perspective, in order to understand American policy toward the Gulf, there needs to be an analysis of international events that have led to a larger U.S. military presence in the region. Lawson said that a common explanation is that “during the 1990s, both Iraq and Iran had the capability to disrupt oil supplies to the international market,” thereby threatening U.S. interests and prompting greater military engagement in the region.

But, he cautioned, there are far more compelling reasons for the activation of regional U.S. military engagement, including the strategic rivalry between the United States and the People’s Republic of China, India, and Japan for influence in Central Eurasia and the steady weakening of U.S. dominance in the international economy.

The second explanation for U.S. policy emphasizes the United States’s unique ideological and historical characteristics, or “strategic culture.” This explanation, Lawson said, assumes that “the U.S. respects the principles of limited and representative government, values the individual liberties of citizens, and believes that the market offers the best way to organize the economy.” Therefore, policy toward the Gulf is fundamentally shaped by these concerns. During the 1980s and 1990s, both Iran and Iraq’s authoritarian governing structures represented forms of rule that were directly antithetical to the United States’s liberal principles and values. As a result, Lawson argued, “the United States conceives of itself as having an obligation to bring the advantages of limited government and market economies to others.”

The third, and final, outlook characterizes America as an empire that is interested in expanding territorial control and cultural influence around the world. This is a notion of “empire” that differs from the traditional one, Lawson said, in that, in the Gulf as in other areas of the world, “the U.S. is invited to take responsibility” in order to establish regional orderliness. The decentralized global U.S. military presence reflects the peculiar command structure of the American armed forces, which consists of a “network of regional commands around the world,” he said.

“During the 1990s, both Iraq and Iran had the capability to disrupt oil supplies to the international market”

In conclusion, Lawson argued that these three explanations are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but that different aspects of American foreign policy can be linked to each of these lines of argument.
Within the framework of the CIRS research initiative on the topic of migrant labor in the Gulf, we hope to facilitate academic research on different aspects of the topic.

In May of last year, Bahrain became the first GCC state to officially repeal the existing worker sponsorship program. While not completely disbanding sponsored visas for foreign workers, Bahrain has established a series of measures to reform its recruitment and contracting practices, and has taken positive steps towards developing a new regulatory framework. Under the previous “kafala” system, local employers directly sponsored expatriate workers. Under the changes instituted, an independent body, the Bahrain Labour Market Regulatory Authority (BLMRA), has been given the responsibility to oversee the changes to the sponsorship law and has in essence become the direct sponsor of all contractual workers in the country. Further, the BLMRA has also been given the mandate to assess the needs of nationals in the labor market. As is the case in all the other GCC countries, Bahrain suffers from the peculiar anomaly of large volumes of foreign workers juxtaposed with a high unemployment rate for nationals.

The employer sponsorship system, which has been in practice throughout the Gulf region for the past five decades, has been an increasing source of frustration for advocates of migrant workers’ rights in the region. This system has come under international scrutiny and criticism as in practice it unfairly favors the rights of the employers at the expense of the workers. Abuse of the sponsorship system is assumed to be rampant, and, as a result, migrant workers in the region have limited rights or access to the protection offered to nationals. Unsafe work environments, inadequate accommodation, wage disputes, and general human rights and workers’ rights violations are said to exist in many different sectors across the region. A year down the line since Bahrain’s pioneering decision to restructure the sponsorship system, it remains to be seen whether the changes made have in fact translated into determinable improvements on the ground.

Amendments to Bahrain’s visa sponsorship laws have meant an easing of restrictions imposed on workers who wish to move from one place of employment to another. This is a significant and welcome change as it lessens the vulnerability and insecurity inherent under the employer-sponsorship system. The changes to the system, in theory at least, increase pressure on employers to compensate and treat their employees on fairer terms, or else risk them moving on. Economists have also hailed this change, as it allows for a greater and freer labor market, where technically those with the best skills and abilities would be placed in the right jobs. Further changes are still in the development phase while a new regulatory framework is being drafted, and mechanisms for more adequately enforcing existing labor laws are being shaped.

It is interesting to note that when the Bahraini authorities announced the changes to the existing sponsorship system, they clearly articulated that the aim was to reduce the country’s dependency on an expatriate workforce. By limiting the leverage and control that employers can hold over foreign employees, the implicit hope is that local employers (particularly in the private sector) will be motivated to be proactive in hiring amongst nationals. The Bahraini Minister of Labour when defending the move to abolish the sponsorship system amidst an outcry from the business community, responded by stating that the on-going access to cheap and easily controllable expatriate labor was distorting the Gulf labor markets at the expense of nationals. From the Bahraini government’s point of view, repealing the sponsorship system is a calculated move to free up the labor market and bring into place an overall plan to reform both the labor and the educational systems of the country. These steps taken by the Bahraini government became a much debated political concern, testing as they do the fundamental relationship between the state and the private sector.

Perhaps the most telling consequence of Bahrain’s decision to reform its worker sponsorship program is the ripple effect it has had within the region. Over the past year, reformations of the kafala system has become part of a broader discussion amongst other states in the region. A number of GCC countries including Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia have started to publicly call for a reassessment of existing recruitment and contracting regulations as they relate to temporary contractual labor.

Kuwait is in the process of developing a new labor law which aims to do away with the sponsorship system. The new Kuwaiti labor law, currently in draft form, suggests the need for establishing a non-profit entity which would be responsible for determining the labor requirements of the Kuwaiti private and public sectors. The Saudi Ministry of Labour has recently carried out a five-year review of their sponsorship system. One of the recommendations arising out of the Saudi study is the replacement of individual employee sponsorship with sponsorship through deputed private recruitment companies. The UAE government has undertaken a pilot project, involving the governments of two of the main countries of migrant workers’ origin, namely India and the Philippines, with the aim of assessing existing recruitment processes, and developing best practice guidelines for the public and private sectors.

Questions remain as to how far these proposed moves will actually go, and whether the changes will remain to form rather than content. In policy terms, the GCC states have committed themselves to develop strategies which reinforce the protection of foreign workers and for furthering the interests of countries of destination and origin. The degree to which the existing system can be reformed remains to be seen. In addition, domestic workers’ exclusion from GCC national labor laws remains a grave concern. Specific attention must be given to reinforce the protection of the rights of domestic workers, yet current changes to the sponsorship laws in the region neglect this extremely vulnerable segment of society.

Through the grants component of the CIRS research initiative we support original and empirically-based scholarship undertaken by four awarded projects; through our working groups we encourage dialogue and co-operative networking amongst academics; and through our edited volume we aim to broadly disseminate the main conclusions arising out of the project.

Babar is Project Manager at CIRS. Previously, she worked in the international development and humanitarian aid sector. She has served with the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations Development Programme, where she managed a policy-oriented research center. She also spent several years working for one of Pakistan’s largest multisectoral rural development organizations. Her interests lie in economic empowerment, microfinance, and gender development initiatives.
In its inaugural International Lecture, CIRS travelled to the Kingdom of Bahrain on April 26, 2010, to offer insights and dialogue with people in the neighboring GCC state. In this unique Public Affairs Program, CIRS emphasized the objective of providing a forum for exchange of ideas with other communities in the Gulf region and beyond. The distinguished speaker, Mehran Kamrava, was introduced to the audience by Georgetown alumna Haya Al Noaimi.

Kamrava is Interim Dean of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar and Director of the Center for International and Regional Studies. He lectured on the topic of “A 2020 Vision of the Middle East,” where he introduced and analyzed several key trends that have the ability to shape the future of the Middle East over the next ten years. Kamrava said that this was important because “as students of the Middle East, and as citizens of the region, often times we dwell on the past.”

Outlining the evening’s lecture, the four primary areas that Kamrava focused on were related to 1) the nature of the state that currently exists across the Middle East; 2) the role and the nature of the relationship between the United States and the region; 3) the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and 4) the trends occurring in the Gulf region, including the events unfolding in Iran and Iraq.

“The big question is: does it look like, at any time in the foreseeable future, even in the next ten years, the American military is going to disengage from the Middle East?”

Turning to the first area of discussion, or “the state of the state” in the Middle East, Kamrava argued that there are a number of different political dynamics that are currently being played out in the international arena. There are a number of different state formations and governance models that range between the democratic, the non-democratic, and the many other models in between these two opposing spectrums. In the Middle East, there are democratic models of governance that vary in their viability and vibrancy; “some democracies are somewhat more cosmetic, or, at least, have much more limited political parameters around them – you might call them pseudo democracies,” of which Turkey, Israel, and Lebanon are good examples, Kamrava said.

The Middle East also has several states that are non-democratic as they attempt to exclude the public from any political participation through the instrumentalization of repressive mechanisms. There are other political systems in the region that are thoroughly non-democratic, but try to appear democratic. Many of these non-democracies, Kamrava argued, “try to be inclusive and inclusive insofar as the population is concerned – the streets become democratic theaters.”

Discussing the United States’ relationship to the region, Kamrava argued that since WWII, there have been four primary features that have guided American foreign policy towards the Middle East. These include, guaranteeing the safety and security of the state of Israel; guaranteeing access to Middle Eastern oil at reasonable prices; containing regional threats to American interests across the region; and, “after the Cold War – or once Iraq invaded Kuwait – there was a fourth aspect and that was to station military forces in the region directly because regional allies, at least insofar as the United States saw them, turned out to be unreliable for American policy calculations,” Kamrava said. Expounding upon American military presence in the Middle East, he said that if one looks at a map, it becomes clear that “across the Middle East, there is a very strong American presence” in the form of large and easy to mobilize military bases. To this effect, Kamrava said, “the big question is: does it look like, at any time in the foreseeable future, even in the next ten years, the American military is going to disengage from the Middle East?”

These features of American foreign policy, Kamrava said, are instrumental to the discussion regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “America’s alliance with Israel is certainly key in the way that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has unfolded historically and also currently,” he said. Projecting his views on the situation, Kamrava said that “as we move forward, we can see a continuation of this unending peace process,” especially in light of the encroachment of illegal Israeli settlements and rapidly increasing population growth. With this knowledge in mind, and by looking at the sobering facts on the ground, he posed an uncomfortable question to the audience by asking “does it still make sense to talk about a Palestine?”

Looking into the future, Kamrava posed three possible models for what future political turns Palestine might take. The first of these is the “Tibetan model,” where Palestine’s objective to be an officially recognized sovereign state all but disappears as it becomes subsumed under Israel. In this model, “although there is a Palestinian identity, there will not be a Palestinian state all but disappears as it becomes subsumed under Israel. In this model, “although there is a Palestinian identity, there will not be a Palestinian state all but disappears as it becomes subsumed under Israel. In this model, “although there is a Palestinian identity, there will not be a Palestinian state all but disappears as it becomes subsumed under Israel. In this model, “although there is a Palestinian identity, there will not be a Palestinian state” Kamrava explained. The second and opposite possibility is for Palestine to take on

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During a two-day working group meeting on May 23-24, 2010, in Doha, CIRS invited a group of scholars to discuss the subject of the “Nuclear Question in the Middle East.” The presentations took several different approaches ranging from theoretical deliberations, to practical implications, to historical narratives. During the course of the meeting, the scholars noted that it was important to define the terms in use, including the difference between nuclear exploration, nuclear acquisition, and nuclear energy options, as there are fundamental differences between these various programs. Although alluding to the constant overshadowing threat of a weapons program, civilian nuclear energy programs do not directly imply such a drastic development.

After giving situational and historical analysis, the scholars analyzed past, current, and future concerns regarding countries that have, or seek to acquire, nuclear capabilities. The participants talked about macro decision-making in relation to securitization across borders, and also analyzed how the individual characteristics of a state’s leader can influence a country’s abstinence from, or embracing of, a nuclear weapons program. As such, the working group relayed a direct correlation between domestic politics and the decision to go nuclear.

In relation to regional politics, GCC states face a nuclear opponent in Iran and so may acquire nuclear capabilities as a direct response to this threat. Apart from the issue of securitization, the GCC states, although rich in hydrocarbons, have presented a strong case for why there is need for nuclear energy infrastructures, including the need to engage the global economy. The petrochemical industry in the Gulf is an intensively high-energy one that needs sources other than hydrocarbon, and these countries have the capacity and capital costs to make this happen.

Among other issues discussed during the meeting were matters related to global security, regional mistrust, the prestige of gaining nuclear capabilities, and the role of NGOs and civil society groups in pressuring governments to abstain from nuclear energy initiatives. The scholars compared issues of domestic politics and international relations reasons for nuclear weapons acquisition. The participants also questioned the extent to which the decisions of a single government can oversee such long-term and multi-institutional projects over several decades.

The format of CIRS working group research initiatives is to convene two or three working group meetings a year to complete a variety of research projects. The first meeting is an introductory and brainstorming session where the scholars discuss the parameters of the initiative, offer themes and areas of research, and deliberate original questions and problems. The scholars then take the shared information and begin writing draft research papers, which are circulated among the group prior to the second meeting. At a subsequent meeting, scholars critique each other’s papers and offer possible alternatives for research. Towards the conclusion of the project, the papers are revised and then collected into an edited volume and submitted to a university press for publication.

**WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANTS:**

- Zahra Babar, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar
- Kai-Henrik Barth, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar
- Kayhan Barzegar, Center for Middle East Strategic Studies; Islamic Azad University; Harvard Kennedy School’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs
- Alvin Chew, Gulf Research Center
- Avner Cohen, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
- John T. Crist, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar
- Mehran Kamrava, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar
- Mustafa Kibaroglu, Bilkent University
- Thomas W. Lippman, Council on Foreign Relations and Middle East Institute
- Giacomo Luciani, Gulf Research Center Foundation
- Mari Luomi, Finnish Institute of International Affairs
- Suzi Mirgani, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar
- Maria Rost Rublee, University of Auckland
- Etel Solingen, University of California, Irvine
The big question driving my research is, what roles do religion, religious institutions, and grass-root religious communities play in creating, maintaining, undermining, and destroying political order in the Middle East? I have just completed a book manuscript, titled *Crescent and the State: Religion in the Making of the Modern State in Turkey, Iran, and Russia*. Contracted to Syracuse University Press, the manuscript challenges the paradigm still dominant in Turkish studies on state-religion relations, and proposes an alternative narrative, which avoids the pitfalls of the associated paradigm and accounts better for the anomalies that the standard arguments fail to explain and simply ignore.

The dominant paradigm basically reduces the whole Ottoman structure to religion in essence. It naturally follows that modernization necessarily entails getting rid of religion and its associates. My alternative narrative suggests that the secularization of the state in Turkey was not a radical rupture from the past, but was rather another stage in the Ottoman state's relationship to religion and religious institutions; more specifically, it was an adaptation, driven by the state rulers' desire to get the best use of religion and religious institutions in empowering the state. The studies on state-religion relations take it for granted that several studies have found to exist between the state and religion provides the key to understanding the relationship between Islam and authoritarianism. In another related project, I seek to explain the origin and survival of a rather strange coalition between the Islamists and the Liberals in Turkey. On the shoulders of this coalition, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his party rose to power and held onto it. In fact, the existence of that coalition sets Turkey apart from the Arab world, where such a coalition has, so far, failed to come into being. Finally, I have a two other occasional paper projects. The first looks at Turkey-GCC relations and assesses the potential roles Turkey can play in Gulf security and the second examines the transformation of the Turkish state and relates it to the ongoing liberalization of Turkish democracy.

Methodologically, I am eclectic. I believe in the utility of employing multiple methodologies. In general, however, the sort of questions I study lead me toward employing comparative historical methods more often than other methods. In employing this method I pay particular attention to gathering what I call “anthropological data.” I seek to trace societies' macro histories by examining the micro histories of groups and individuals.

Birol Başkan is Visiting Assistant Professor of Government at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. His research looks at how religious institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the political order of the Middle East.
The “East European” or “Central Asian” model, which is for it to emerge as a distinct state in the future. The third, and final, model is for Palestine to become a disparate amalgam of reservations and entities that are landlocked and isolated from one another with little economic and political power.

Finally, turning to the Gulf region, Kamrava projected that, politically, “I don’t think much is going to change, at least insofar as states are concerned” in the GCC, but it is very difficult to predict what will happen in Iran over the next few years. He added that “the regional superpowers [Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt] are not going to be as dominant in dictating regional foreign policy.” Indeed, “we will see a continued ascendance in the economics of the Gulf region, particularly smaller countries like Bahrain and Qatar.” The region will see a new set of powers that, because of their economic wealth, policy agility, and elite cohesion, will become more prominent in shaping the future of the GCC, the Middle East, and beyond.

In conclusion, Kamrava summed up his prognosis for the Middle East of 2020 by saying that “what we will continue to see in the region are American ‘footprints,’” in the form of U.S. military bases, as well as “a continued domination of Israel.” He also noted that “I don’t think there is going to be a wave of democracy sweeping across the region and that is because oil-based economies will continue to exist throughout the region.”

Dean Kamrava lectured to the intellectual community in Manama, Bahrain.

Dean Kamrava Gives a 2020 Vision of the Middle East, Continued from page 7

In the face of declining hydrocarbon reserves in some Gulf nations, this paper analyzes the ways in which e-learning initiatives have been designed to help create the post-oil knowledge economies, which Gulf rulers hope will propel GCC countries into the top tier of technologically advanced societies in the world.

Alan S. Weber joined the Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMC–Q) as a faculty member in the Pre-medical Program in 2006. His research interests include language, history, and the social and cultural dimensions of science and medicine.

For more information, or to receive free copies of all CIRS materials, please visit: http://cirs.georgetown.edu/publications/.

CIRS has published the fifth paper in its Occasional Paper Series. This contribution by Dr. Alan S. Weber, surveys the historical development and current state of e-learning in Qatar and the GCC states, including the educational, political, social, and financial factors that led to the adoption and development of current systems and initiatives.

Although significant challenges have arisen in the use of e-learning technologies, such as general computer literacy; interoperability and cross-platform issues associated with the flood of learning objects on the market; the lack of Arabic language learning objects; and Internet bandwidth and reliability, e-learning is poised to usher in considerable educational changes in the learning populations of the Gulf region.

Research and Scholarship

CIRS Publishes Research on E-Learning in Qatar and the GCC States

CIRS publishes research on e-learning in Qatar and the GCC states, including the educational, political, social, and financial factors that led to the adoption and development of current systems and initiatives.

Although significant challenges have arisen in the use of e-learning technologies, such as general computer literacy; interoperability and cross-platform issues associated with the flood of learning objects on the market; the lack of Arabic language learning objects; and Internet bandwidth and reliability, e-learning is poised to usher in considerable educational changes in the learning populations of the Gulf region.

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Imam Feisal Lectures on Moderate Islam

Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, a prominent Muslim leader in the United States and Chairman of the Cordoba Initiative, visited Qatar during a trip to the region sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. He was invited to Georgetown’s Qatar campus on August 24, 2010, to talk about “Moderate Islam, the Muslim Community in America, and Inter-Faith Dialogue.” Interim Dean Mehran Kamrava introduced the Imam as a “peace-builder” and welcomed the audience “in the spirit of dialogue, discussion, and discourse,” pillars of Georgetown University’s mission in Washington, DC, and Qatar.

“The causes of the divide can be analyzed in different ways, but the Imam identified four basic sources of the problem. The first of these is rooted in global political conflicts such as Israel-Palestine, U.S.-Iran relations, and the presence of U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. The second revolves around a rapidly changing demographic occurring primarily in Europe, where Muslim populations are rapidly increasing. Imam Feisal argued that “because the native populations are declining, there is a sense that the identity make-up of the society is undergoing some permanent shift.” Thirdly, there are fundamental problems that arise as a result of theological interpretation and jurisprudence, where the West believes in secularism in direct opposition to how Muslim political communities are formed.

In conclusion, in order to solve these divisive issues, Imam Feisal argued that the resolutions must be “context specific” and that there is an urgent need to look at the architecture of power.” As Muslims living in the United States need to improve their understanding regarding how the country is structured. Therefore, he argued, “it is important to understand how decisions are made, and to be engaged in that process.”

Imam Feisal is the chairman of the Cordoba Initiative, an independent, non-partisan and multi-national project that works with state and non-state actors to improve Muslim-West relations. In this capacity, he directs projects that aim to heal conflict between Islamic and Western communities by developing youth leadership, empowering women, and engaging Islamic legal scholars in addressing the implications of contemporary Islamic governance. In 1997, he founded the American Society for Muslim Advancement (ASMA), the first Muslim organization committed to bringing American Muslims and non-Muslims together through programs in academia, policy, current affairs, and culture. As Imam of Masjid al-Farah, a mosque located twelve blocks from Ground Zero in New York City, he preaches a message of understanding between people of all creeds. Additionally, Imam Feisal sits on the Board of Trustees of the Islamic Center of New York and serves as an advisor to the Interfaith Center of New York.
In partnership with ictQatar, on April 12, 2010, CIRS organized a Distinguished Lecture featuring Michael Nelson, Visiting Professor of Internet Studies in Georgetown University’s Communication, Culture, and Technology program. Nelson, an expert in the areas of business, culture, and technology, lectured to an audience of 450 people on “The Cloud, the Exaflood, and the Internet of Things – Preparing for the Next Digital Revolution.” Nelson gave an overview of the future of the internet by delving into the policy, technology, and business decisions that are shaping how the technology will be used.

Nelson drew on his experiences working for the United States government, and his contribution to the Obama campaign specifically, by highlighting the strategic use of words in order to make or break certain initiatives. Language, he said, can be used tactically to shape policy decisions. In order to think about the future of computing and the internet, Nelson shared with the audience, eleven key words that sum up the discourse. The first word that he offered was “people,” and this, he said, “is the most important word because it is what defines how technology develops.” The development of new hardware and software used in computing is growing at an accelerated rate and is surpassing the pace at which people are learning to use these technologies. Currently, there is a growing gap between the progress of new technologies and the people able to operate them.

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The second word Nelson offered was “vision,” and this referred to what kind of future people foresee for technology. He argued that “we are entering the third phase in the development of the internet, and this phase is as profound, revolutionary, and transformational as the World Wide Web was ten or fifteen years ago.” This next phase is only just now being defined; “over the next two or three years, we are going to make critical decisions about how the internet evolves and how it is used,” Nelson argued. Importantly, decisions made in the business sector will either open up new possibilities or curtail existing ones.

Through the third word, “Cloud,” the cost of technologies has been lowered significantly. “The ‘cloud,’” Nelson said, “is really a different way of doing computing” that developed out of academia and research institutions that needed to store large quantities of data remotely. Cloud computing involves outsourcing to a third party or provider. Organizations like Microsoft, Google, and Amazon are at the leading edge of the development of this technology.

Nelson’s fourth word was “game changer,” which emphasizes how these new cloud computing services will radically change the way computing is done. The first phase of computing was based on the notion of individual computers working independently of others based on software and data, the second phase developed when computers were plugged into the web giving access to the world, and the third and current phase is the cloud, which means that individual computers do not have to be tied down to their own software and data, but can operate remotely by accessing data from other computers. This new mode of operation is defined by Nelson’s fifth phrase: “Many-to-many.”

Nelson’s sixth offering was the word “things,” which refers to the sharp increase in technological applications and gadgets. He said that “it’s not just about computers and people anymore; it’s about a hundred billion devices.” Indeed, Nelson said “today, about one and a half million PCs and a few hundred million smart phones plug into the internet.” Because of these tools, we are now dealing with an “exaflood.” This is the seventh prominent word in Nelson’s lecture, and refers to the huge increase in the amount of data available on the internet. “We all know what a megabyte is, and a gigabyte, but if you take a billion gigabytes, you get an ‘exabyte,’” Nelson remarked.

This increase in the amount of raw data led to Nelson’s eighth word “collaboration,” which refers to how people can work together to make sense of it. “Social media is, of course, one of the leading edge applications for enabling new types of collaboration. For a lot of people in their teenage years, Twitter and Facebook are actually replacing e-mail,” he said. This is inspiring ‘crowd sourcing,’ which is a means of rallying people from all over the world to sort data. “In the last twenty years, we have gone from having
Daniel Westbrook, Visiting Professor of Economics at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, delivered the August CIRS Monthly Dialogue lecture on the topic of “Education and Market Transition in Viet Nam.” Westbrook first traveled to Viet Nam in 1993 to spend a semester teaching at the National Economics University in Hanoi under a program sponsored by the Ford Foundation; he returned to the Ford Foundation program during the 1995-1996 academic year. Professor Westbrook also spent a year at the Fulbright Economics Training Program in Ho Chi Minh City during 2001-2002. More recently, he worked on Viet Nam as a “case study for looking at the effects of marketization on returns to education.” This is an ongoing research project that centers on the question: “How has the payoff to education evolved during Viet Nam’s market transition?”

To provide context for his research, Westbrook explained the role of education in the economic development process. “The traditional view of economic development describes a process where labor moves from agricultural activities to industrial activities.” Historically, policies based on this view tended to focus on heavy industry. Westbrook also described a more modern definition of economic development which gives a central role to human capital and “acquisition of increasingly sophisticated and productive ways of competing.” This model, he said, “envisions a world where developing countries’ abilities to compete in world markets depend very much on their acquisition of human capital.” Westbrook cited the role education played in producing the rapid economic growth the Asian tiger economies experienced in the latter part of the 20th century.

At the beginning of its transition period, Viet Nam was on the verge of starvation. Even though Viet Nam has enjoyed GDP growth rates of 7-8% per year for over two decades, it remains very poor and there is much room for economic development to occur. Viet Nam’s education policies have been advancing along ambitious goals to support further development. “In order for people to invest in education,” Professor Westbrook explained, “they have to have an incentive.”

It is generally understood that “education gives you access to better jobs and higher wages,” but this assumes the existence of labor markets sophisticated enough to compensate workers for their educational attainments.

Viet Nam’s market transition experience provides an opportunity to examine the effect of improving markets on the returns to education. At the beginning of the transition period, jobs were administratively allocated and market returns to education were weak. During the late 1980s, Viet Nam gradually began its transition to a market-oriented economy. Professor Westbrook documented the degree to which greater labor market depth generated higher returns to education.

Westbrook’s statistical work indicates that the impact of education in Viet Nam is substantial and significant. Moreover, the impact is larger where labor market depth is greatest. Thus, he concluded, “education pays off in a big way and this indicates a very strong incentive to acquire additional schooling or to invest in the schooling of one’s children.”

Professor Westbrook received his Ph.D. from The Ohio State University in 1978 and joined the faculty at Georgetown University during that time. He joined the School of Foreign Service in Qatar in 2008. His current research interests focus on applied micro-economics in economic development and on Viet Nam. Professor Westbrook regularly teaches micro-economic principles, international trade, globalization, environmental economics, economic statistics and econometrics.
a scarcity of data to having an overwhelming amount of data,” Nelson explained. In fact, “the reason President Obama is in the White House is because of these technologies and because of the ‘cloud’ […] The campaign used social media to mobilize hundreds of thousands of people to get them involved in the campaign and to get millions of people to give money,” he said.

“Consumerization” was Nelson’s ninth word, and defines the upgrade of digital technologies in the workplace as people blend their work and home technologies. “This is the trend we see now where people are bringing into the workplace incredibly sophisticated tools and software applications that they use at home,” he said.

The tenth word was “predictions,” and refers to a vision of what the internet will make possible in the near future. One of the predictions that Nelson offered was that “within five years, 80% of all computing and storage done worldwide could happen ‘in the cloud,’” but it is more likely that it will take a decade. Another prediction he suggested was that “within five years, 100 billion devices and sensors could be connected to the net,” but this too will most probably happen within ten years’ time. For these changes to happen there needs to be substantial changes in technological usage, cultural shifts, and policy implementations.

These necessary changes led to Nelson’s eleventh, and final, word, “policy.” He argued that “policy is often fifteen to twenty years behind the technology, and if that policy is not well designed, it can hold everything back. So, governments have a critically important role to play and I am very glad that Qatar, and the Qatari government, is focused on this.”

Concluding the lecture, Nelson gave three possible scenarios for the future of computing. The first of these is the ‘clouds scenario’ wherein a variety of organizations operate different forms of ‘clouds,’ using different technologies that are purposefully incompatible. The second is the ‘cloudy skies’ scenario where different organizations operate different technologies, but agree upon methods of interoperability. The third, and most desirable, possibility is the ‘blue skies’ scenario where different clouds, run by different organizations, all use common standards that make flexibility and interoperability the norm. Finally, Nelson said that “we are now less than 15% of the way through this incredible change” and so it is up to the users to demand the changes that they would like to see happen in the future.

Frieda Wiebe and Doris Goldstein are the Principal Investigators working on a Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF) awarded project that aims to develop a bibliographic database on Islamic Medical and Scientific Ethics (IMSE) and to establish an International Islamic Bioethics Information Resource (IIBIR). The project is a collaborative one between two of Georgetown University’s research libraries: the Bioethics Research Library of the Kennedy Institute of Ethics and the library of the School of Foreign Service in Qatar. It builds on more than thirty years of experience in the field of bioethics and comes as the latest in a series of ethics databases, all developed by the staff of the Kennedy institute of Ethics. The bibliographers of the Kennedy institute compiled the Bioethics Thesaurus which consists of the controlled vocabulary or keywords used for indexing and searching the world’s first library dedicated to the study of bioethics. The Kennedy Institute also publishes the highly-regarded Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal.

The main goal of this research project is to reflect the growing interest in the field of Islamic bioethics and to facilitate access to information resources dealing with this subject. The past few years have witnessed the expansion of interdisciplinary discussions addressing the various ethical implications of recent advances in medical and genetic sciences. Issues such as cloning, organ transplantation, and stem cell research have raised ethical concerns and posed important questions to ethical systems, both religious and secular. The project focuses on ethical discussions either originating in the Muslim world or reflecting Islamic perspectives on these issues. Work on the project involves three main dimensions: survey of relevant resources, acquisition, and finally indexing and integration into the database. Very early results can already be seen. The homepage for the project is at: http://bioethics.georgetown.edu/collections/islamic/index.html.

**Frieda Wiebe is the Library Director at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar.**

**Doris M. Goldstein is the Director of Bioethics Research Library (BRL) Department at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics, Georgetown University.**

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Spotlight on the Faculty

Georgetown University Libraries Project Receives QNRF Funding

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The Season in Events

CIRS Highlights

Paula Newberg addresses lunch guests.

Georgetown alumna Haya Al Noaimi introduces Dean Kamrava at the CIRS International Lecture.

Dan Stoll during his Monthly Dialogue lecture.

Researchers at the “Nuclear Question in the Middle East” Working Group.

A Georgetown University student asks a question.

Imam Feisal interacts with a Georgetown University student.
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