Professor Carol Lancaster, Interim Dean of the Walsh School of Foreign Service at George-town University in Washington, DC, kicked off the CIRS Distinguished Lecture with a talk on “Wealth and Power in the ‘New International Order.’” Lancaster was introduced by Lamia Adi, a sophomore GU-Q student and President of the DC-Qatar Forum, which fosters inter-cultural dialogue between students on the DC and the Qatar campuses.

In addition to an extensive career in govern-ment, Lancaster has been a consultant for the United Nations, the World Bank, and numerous other organizations. She serves on the board of the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Vital Voices, the Society for International Development, and the advisory board for Center for Global Development.

Beginning the evening’s lecture, Lancaster said the “basic message today is that we are living in a slow-moving and fundamental transition in wealth and power in the world, involving changes in the distribution of wealth, a redefinition of power, and challenges to world order.”

It was necessary, Lancaster argued, to answer three broad questions in order to elaborate upon the reasons for these paradigmatic shifts, including: 1) What was the nature of the “old world order”? 2) What changes have occurred that have contributed to a different world today? and 3) What are the consequences for international balances of power, wealth, and order?

The “old world order,” Lancaster noted, was largely defined as being state-centric; states were the major actors, and had the ability to use their power to effective ends. The two super powers of the United States and the Soviet Union that dominated the international scene for many decades of the twentieth century were prime ex-amples. As such, Lancaster argued that one of the markers for the end of the old world order could be defined as the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. She added that, to a certain extent, we miss “the certainties and the clarity that made the old world order, if not bearable, at least, understandable and often predictable.” In the “new world order,” Lancaster argued, “the state has not ended and is not going to end. States are still the major actors in the world but military force, as the United States has demonstrated in the last four or five years, is not enough to control events.”
Greetings from all of us at CIRS!

As the Georgetown campus in Qatar and with it CIRS enter into the fifth year of operations, we begin to slowly 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 plan for this year’s public affairs programming and research initiatives.

Organizational, CIRS will be enhancing its research capacity with the addition of an Associate Director for Research who will take the lead in coordinating our research initiatives and our collaborative projects with partner institutions.

We are currently in the midst of work on one of these research initiatives, namely the study of migrant labor in the Gulf region. Despite the pervasiveness of the phenomenon of migrant labor in the GCC countries, and the social and political weight that local policymakers often attach to the issue, little systematic work has been done on the composition of the migrant labor force in the Gulf, the transnational networks they establish with the communities they left behind, their changing values and priorities, and the policies that host governments adopt in relation to them. 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 have two additional research initiatives planned. Beginning early in 2010, we will commence work on a comprehensive study of the political economy of the Gulf, looking at topics such as the role of sovereign wealth funds, the rise (and fall?) of the so-called “Dubai model,” regional patterns of economic development, the political economy of rentierism, food security, knowledge-based economies, international banking, and efforts at a GCC monetary union. Each of the participants, a number of whom will be drawn from Georgetown's Doha and DC campuses, will be asked to work on an original, empirically-grounded paper that will form an eventual chapter in a book on the topic.

A few months into 2010, we plan on starting a research initiative on the nuclear question in the Middle East. The aim of this project is to look at both nuclear energy and weapons programs in the greater Middle East region from Israel all the way to Pakistan. The project’s focus will be on nuclear decision-making mechanisms and logics, dual-use technologies, and the environmental uses and consequences of nuclear energy. 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 the issue of collapsed—or collapsing—states and the increasing attention directed at open-sea piracy.

In the coming months, look for CIRS events outside of Doha, and also to our advertisements for the post-doctoral and senior fellowship positions. 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
Focused Discussion

Presidential Elections in Iran

On June 14, 2009, CIRS hosted a discussion on the Iranian presidential elections featuring Dr. Mehrzad Boroujerdi, an Associate Professor of Political Science at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University. Professor Boroujerdi is engaged in a broad, empirical study of the Iranian political elites. Guests included a number of ambassadors and diplomats resident in Qatar, educational experts from Qatar University, as well as Georgetown University faculty.

Boroujerdi began by framing the current elections and their results within a historical perspective, before proceeding through an analysis of what happened in Iran on June 12th 2009, the subsequent public reaction to the results, and what impact this might have on the future shape of the Iranian political system.

Through graphs and other statistical evidence Boroujerdi highlighted particular trends from previous Iranian presidential elections, the novel features of this particular election, as well as statistical data necessary for determining the legitimacy of the current election results.

Boroujerdi pointed out that despite the role of the president being limited in Iran’s political structure, the ten elections held for the position since the revolution have been actively contested.

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Research and Scholarship

Introducing Attiya Ahmad as the 2009-2010 CIRS Post-Doctoral Fellow

Attiya Ahmad recently completed her Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology at Duke University in the US. Based on over two years of fieldwork conducted in Kuwait, Nepal, and Pakistan, her research focuses on South Asian migrant domestic workers in Kuwait who have converted to Islam, a project that points to the importance of the household as a cosmopolitan space and site of confluence between Islamic reform and dawa movements, and the feminization of transnational labour migration that marks our contemporary period. Dr. Ahmad’s work brings together scholarship on Islamic studies, globalization, diaspora and migration studies, economic anthropology, and political economy.

During her tenure as a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Center for International and Regional Studies, Ahmad plans to revise her dissertation into a book manuscript tentatively entitled Limits of Conversion: Dawa, Domestic Work and Migrant South Asian Women in Kuwait. She is also preparing to publish several journal articles and contributions to edited volumes, and will begin preliminary work on her next research project, which focuses on transnational networks of Islamic charity throughout West and South Asia.

Attiya Ahmad’s research focuses on South Asian migrant domestic workers in Kuwait

Before embarking on a career in academia, Ahmad worked with NGOs in Palestine, Pakistan, and Canada, and was actively involved in anti-racism, global justice, youth, and environmental movements in Canada.
Further, in the old world order, wealth across the globe, Lancaster said, was concentrated and imbalanced and still is, to a certain degree, but not as sharply as it was in the past. The hemispheric divides that were characterized by a rich North and a poor South are now being blurred as there has been tremendous economic and social progress in many of the countries that were once considered Third World and under-developed.

Adumbrating the causes that have lead to these changes, Lancaster said that the most important factors were related to revolutionary advancements in technology; achievements in global education and access to knowledge along with an increase in life expectancy; developments in a country’s capacity that makes full use of its human and natural resources; and growing prosperity that can be considered both an effect and a cause of these factors. Although we think we are living in a time that is marked by various global conflicts, Lancaster said “the data show that the number of conflicts—civil conflicts in particular—have declined since the early 90s” and so the new world order can be largely characterized by relative political stability.

Another major change that will define the new world order, Lancaster noted, is related to demography and the changing nature of the world’s population. Current prospering nations have largely ageing populations, whilst developing countries have youthful populations, which will necessarily shift the entire international economic and social patterns of the future. With an estimated world population of 9 billion in 2050, this will have dramatic effect on resources and climate.

Concluding the lecture, Lancaster argued that globalization in the form of international social and economic integration has been vital to the de-concentration and distribution of wealth and the redefinition and decentralization of power. As a result, we have seen the dynamic emergence and influence of non-state actors, including international organizations – both benevolent and malevolent, informal networks, and individuals connecting with one another across boundaries. There is strength and yet, at the same time, great vulnerability in such an interdependent world.

Lancaster listens to an English translation of an audience question delivered in Arabic.

“the data show that the number of conflicts—civil conflicts in particular—have declined since the early 90s.”

Research and Scholarship

CIRS Publishes Occasional Paper on “Britain and the Gulf Shaikhdoms”


James Onley is Senior Lecturer in Middle Eastern History at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter, and was CIRS Senior Fellow during the 2008–2009 academic year. He specializes in the history, society, culture, and politics of the Gulf Arab states.

The paper argues “that Britain’s role as guardian of the Persian Gulf, beginning in 1835, was not imposed coercively, that Britain largely conformed to local expectations of a protector’s duties and rights, and that its record in Eastern Arabia was far better than its record elsewhere in the Middle East.” As such, the research “provides a new account of Britain’s withdrawal from the Persian Gulf, showing how Britain introduced defense arrangements that remain in place forty years on.”

To request a complimentary copy of the paper, please contact cirresearch@georgetown.edu.
During the previous stage of my research life, I had been focused on the historical development of Islamic law in relation to women and gender issues. I wrote one book, *In the House of the Law*, exploring these issues in the context of the Ottoman period by working with a variety of legal materials, including works of jurisprudence and fatwas, as well as the records of Islamic courts in Jerusalem, Nablus, and Damascus. In the process of doing this research, I began to pose for myself broader questions about the role of Islamic law as doctrine and practice across time and space. The result was another book, *Women, Family, and Gender in Islamic Law*, that allowed me to work through my ideas about the way the Islamic legal system has shaped and gendered the family, property rights, sexuality, and public roles in times past and present. This book captured much of what I had learned about the law from other scholars and my own research over the past two decades or so.

Although I continue to be very engaged by the topic of Islamic law, my research career is now striking out in a very different direction. My curiosity was piqued when I encountered the story of a man known as “Selim the Algerine.” A friend had been commissioned to make a film for the new Arab-American Museum in Dearborn, Michigan, and she was searching for unusual Arab-American stories. Would I take a look at some material in the Georgetown Library Special Collections related to an individual known as “Selim the Algerine” and get back to her? I was not at all prepared for what I found: an “Appalachian tale” about Selim, son of an Ottoman official from Algiers, who was abducted by Spanish pirates in the western Mediterranean in the mid-eighteenth century on his homeward journey from studies in Istanbul, sold into slavery, and transported to Louisiana, from where he escaped slavery, and transported to Louisiana, from where he escaped plantation life only to be captured by the Shawnee, and then ultimately found shelter in English settler society in Williamsburg, Virginia, as a valued man of letters. The Williamsburg gentry helped sponsor his repatriation to Algiers, only to have him reappear in their midst a few years later, a changed man who had clearly suffered some great disappointments. He settled down in Williamsburg, eventually acquired the reputation of a harmless eccentric who hovered on the edge of sanity, and then drifted into obscurity.

Now I am on the trail of Selim. Was this a true story? Or was it a local legend that distilled a number of the fantasies and anxieties of the day about pirates, slaves, Indians, and “Algerines”? Over the past couple of years I have used research time carved out from other projects to look for Selim in eighteenth century materials, including biographical dictionaries and chronicles from Algiers, western Mediterranean travel accounts, narratives of captivity among Ohio Valley native Americans, and the papers and letters of Virginia gentry with Williamsburg connections. I have found evidence that Selim was a real person, but there is just not enough material to write a standard historical biography. But I think that his story is one well worth telling for today’s readers because it brings the history of eighteenth century globalization into a different focus. Historians have addressed early-modern (1600-1800) globalization as a largely European-centered phenomenon, shaped by the economic links and cultural encounters that came with the expansion of Europe overseas into the Americas and Asia. The case of Selim tells a related but different globalization story, one that brings connections among the Ottoman Empire, the western Mediterranean, and colonial North America to center-stage as merchants, slavers, and settlers operate their new networks far from Europe. I would like to tell this story not only by demonstrating how globalization connected disparate areas of the globe through the movement of goods, people, and ideas (all of which we see in Selim), but also by exploring how a figure like Selim was understood as he crossed a number of cultural borders. What did Selim represent for those who interacted with him? As a “face” of globalization, what kinds of reflections and reactions did his presence provoke, both at the time of his adventures and subsequently when his story achieved quasi-mythic standing in local culture?

I am still contemplating the right genre for my book about Selim. I am currently envisioning the book as one of “imaginary history,” deeply steeped in the multiple contexts of the time but taking liberties to imagine the emotional life of the protagonist. The historical settings will be key, but my goal is to write a contemporary version of the tale of Selim, one that captures the drama of his life in a way that speaks to today’s interest in cultural encounters and encourages the reader to reflect on the experience of eighteenth century globalization as seen through the eyes of one of its victims.
Resuming its annual Public Affairs Programming series after the summer break, CIRS kicked off the 2009-2010 academic year with a Monthly Dialogue lecture by Alexis Antoniades, professor of economics at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. The Monthly Dialogue, entitled “The Future of the Global Economy,” took place on September 8, 2009 and was attended by ambassadors and embassy representatives, Georgetown University and Education City faculty, as well as interested members of the public.

Dr. Antoniades spoke on three distinct areas: he took the audience through a general overview of the current economic recession and its relationship to past events, he then relayed the consequences of the crises and its international impact, and, finally, he outlined several short-term and long-term recovery strategies for overcoming the current crisis.

Noting that in order to predict what the future of the global economy might look like, Antoniades said that it was necessary to first analyze the factors that have produced the current situation. The global economic crisis that began in 2008, he noted, was unlike any of the past international recessions, and did not fall into any certified pattern.

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Summarizing the consequences of the global recession on the United States, he noted that “we have extremely high unemployment now and it will probably not come down anytime soon. We have lower trade, lower output, lower consumption spending, and a higher savings rate. This is not typical of past recessions.” Antoniades showed comparisons between different economic recessions at different historical and geographical points, including the great 1920s depression in the United States and the recession in Japan in the 1990s.

The primary trigger for the current economic decline was located in the housing market in the United States. The sub-prime crisis, Antoniades said, was caused by a number of factors, starting with the Clinton administration in the United States and its active push for a home-ownership scheme. Banks acted accordingly, giving out loans to applicants regardless of their high-risk status and their inability to honor the pay-back schemes. Banks, investment firms, and other related finance institutions, by selling off their loans and increasing their leverage, engaged in a number of financial innovations and manipulations rather than monitoring the activities played out in the housing market. The simultaneous increase in interest rates, house prices, and loans meant that this real-estate bubble had to burst.

A major consequence of the current financial crisis is the increasing rate of unemployment. It is important to note, Antoniades said, that it is not just the magnitude of unemployment that is of concern, but the speed at which it has escalated. Currently, in the United States, “unemployment is at 9.7%, and is expected to go up.” This figure, he said, actually understates the rate of unemployment because it does not take into account the percentage of discouraged workers: people “who decide to exit the labor force, to take early retirement or who decide to go back to school.” If these were added to the count, “the number would actually be 11%.” By looking at the last two recessions in the United States, “we notice that unemployment doesn’t actually go down after the end of the recession; it keeps going up. So things do not look good.” Another interesting measure, Antoniades noted, is “capacity utilization,” which measures how much of a country’s economy is being utilized. He noted that “at this point, the U.S. economy is working at 67-68% of its capacity, the lowest it has been since 1962.”

American consumers are known for being resilient and for being big spenders, but the recession has curbed this attitude. Antoniades argued that “Consumers will become savers. This is something new for the U.S. economy.” He noted that “This is the first time that we have a positive savings rate; it went up to 7% in May, where it used to be 0% before.”
Presidential Elections in Iran, continued from page 3

“Iran,” Boroujerdi argued, “has a fragile civil society that is trying to stand up to the political establishment.” In the early days of the revolution, the requirements for being eligible to run for the office were low, but in more recent years the ruling elites, and in particular the Supreme Leader, have strictly limited the number of eligible candidates to the cream of the crop.

Boroujerdi said that there was little chance that President Ahmadinejad was the genuine winner of the elections with the announced margin of victory.

In order to address the question of why so many people are suspicious of the election results, Boroujerdi presented a series of graphs of the figures just released by the Iranian Election Commission. According to the data given out by the Commission, this last presidential election has been the most popular election since the revolution, with over 82 percent of all eligible voters casting their ballots. This is a significant jump from the previous percentage of four years ago, and is even greater than the elections of 1997, which up until then had been the most popular election. Voter participation in the presidential election in Iran to the tune of around 60 percent is considered the norm, so experts on Iranian politics determine that the given numbers for this year are abnormally high.

Furthermore, elections where one of the candidates is a sitting president have historically been less popular with Iranian voters, due to the public’s perception that the incumbent has the strong advantage of retaining his seat. Three times in Iran’s recent history, on the occasions where Presidents Khamana’i, Rafsanjani, and Khatami were running for a second term there was a significant drop in voter turnout. If the numbers are to be trusted for the current election, they not only indicate that the voter percentage is the highest in the history of post-revolutionary elections, but also that there has been a substantial increase in voter turn-out since the elections of four years ago. Boroujerdi argued that “nothing that we have seen within the last thirty years compares to what we have just observed in Iran.”

Causing further skepticism regarding the authenticity of the 2009 election results is the fact that in all the previous elections candidates were able to usually win at least a single province, and most likely the one that they originate from. In the current election that did not happen. Several of the running candidates did not win the majority of the votes from their provinces.

Important issues in these elections were the economy and the staggeringly high unemployment and inflation rates. Corruption in the government, as well as the international isolation of the country were also hotly contested issues which each of the candidates spoke to. Despite the economic woes of the country, the other candidates in this election were unable to form any clear and coherent economic platforms to counter President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s.

Boroujerdi noted that the 2009 Iranian presidential elections demonstrated some novel features previously unseen in Iranian post-revolutionary politics. Amongst other things, these included the active role of the media, especially alternate and internet media; the positions adopted by the various clerical parties; and the phenomena of placing a candidate’s wife under public scrutiny. It was also the first time in Iranian presidential elections that a previous president who had completed two terms in office attempted to run for a third before pulling out of the campaign.

Boroujerdi noted that the active participation, involvement and energy seen in the Iranian public throughout this election and following it, is unprecedented in post-revolutionary Iran. It is a clear indication that the will for a more participatory political system is extremely strong and alive in the Iranian state.

Research and Scholarship

International Relations of the Gulf

Summary Report

CIRS has published the “International Relations of the Gulf” Summary Report which includes twelve synopses of the papers delivered at the “International Relations of the Gulf” working group meetings held in Doha. The complete papers have been collected as an edited volume to be published next year by Syracuse University Press. The International Relations of the Gulf research initiative explores critical issues in the Gulf region such as security strategies and foreign policy implications of political reforms in the Gulf region, questions of sovereignty and borders, American policy, and the foreign and security policies of Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and other regional actors.

“The International Relations of the Gulf research initiative explores critical issues in the Gulf region such as security strategies and foreign policy implications.”
Robert Wirsing, Visiting Professor of International Relations at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, delivered the October CIRS Monthly Dialogue on the topic of “The Af-Pak Misadventure: Where is America’s ‘Long War’ Heading?...And Why?”

Introducing the issues, Wirsing noted that he did not necessarily approve of the designation “Af-Pak” but drew attention to its formal use by the United States government as part of its wider international relations terminology.

The lecture was premised on four main questions related to the current situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan: 1) What is the war in Afghanistan all about? 2) What are the five obstacles confronting the Obama administration in the “Af-Pak” war? 3) What are Obama’s fundamental options in this war? and; 4) What should the Obama administration do to bring this war to a conclusion?

In order to introduce a general background of the current military operations taking place in the region, Wirsing gave some figures related to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, which is made-up of United States, NATO, and other allies. “The U.S. currently has approximately 68,000 troops either deployed or on route to Afghanistan” and “NATO has about 38,000 troops” so “there is a total of 106,000 troops of the ISAF forces in Afghanistan.” He noted that it was more difficult to record the exact number of Taliban insurgents, but “back in 2007, the New York Times estimate was 10,000 fighters, but only 3,000 full-time, which is not very much in a country the size of Afghanistan. The government in Kabul more recently, in February 2009, gave a figure of 10-15,000.” Nonetheless, Wirsing noted that “no estimate suggests that this is a vast insurgency.”

A very common explanation is Islamic extremism” and Islamic madrassa indoctrinated fanaticism. But Wirsing argued that “religious extremism is not the sole or even most important driver” of the war and would go so far as “to dismiss religion and religious extremism almost entirely.” He argued that “the madrassa issue is a red herring and always has been a distraction from what is really going on in this region.” Other reasons for the war that have been proposed are factional tribal identities, the rise of mercenary insurgents fighting the war for a wage, revenge and hatred of America, and a traditional aversion to occupying forces. Insofar as the main drivers of American policy are concerned, Wirsing argued that “America has a much broader agenda in Central Asia than chasing Al Qaeda; its agenda has a lot to do with geography.” As such, he introduced into the discussion “the enormous importance of energy security, energy resources, oil, and gas.” These issues, he said, were the primary reasons for America’s presence in Afghanistan. Wirsing argued that Afghanistan’s strategic position, bordering a number of energy producing countries, means that it is a potentially important conduit between South and Central Asia. These resources could be exploited and transported rather than being contained, as they currently are, between the two giants of China and Russia. Wirsing quoted from U.S. legislation regarding the region, entitled the Silk Road Strategy Act, which details United States significant long-term interests in the region from security to energy and economic development. This Act outlines American policy regarding development of infrastructure in Central Asia, such as pipelines, transportation routes, and export opportunities for otherwise landlocked nations. Wirsing argued that “it is odd that much of the debate that goes on in North America generally, so often omits mention of energy, oil, and gas, which I regard as hugely important.” He pointed out the many tactics in place for “ensuring American and Western access to these tremendous resources, the potential of which could be vast,” possibly up to $15 trillion in petroleum and natural gas resources in the Caspian region alone. Wirsing emphasized that “Afghanistan’s strategic importance goes way beyond containment of a terrorist threat and it also implies a prolonged Western presence.”

Wirsing also stated the costs of fighting the war in Afghanistan by saying that “the United States and NATO together, essentially the Bush administration, from November 2001 to December 2008, had spent over 281 billion dollars on the war in Afghanistan. Covert expenditures would enlarge that substantially.”

“Afghanistan’s strategic importance goes way beyond containment of a terrorist threat and it also implies a prolonged Western presence.”

Continued on page 14
Spotlight on the Faculty

Karine Walther is a Visiting Assistant Professor of History at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. Most recently, she has served as a visiting lecturer at the Harvard Kennedy School. She has also held a postdoctoral fellowship in the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School. Previously, she served as a visiting Assistant Professor of History at Middlebury College.

She holds a PhD in history from Columbia University, a Maîtrise and Licence in sociology from the University of Paris VIII and a BA in American studies from the University of Texas, Austin.

For the last six months, I have been working on a manuscript entitled Sacred Empire: Islam and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1821-1921, which is currently under review by Oxford University Press. This project is an expansion of my dissertation, which I completed in May of 2008 at Columbia University. The central focus of the work is how ideas about Islam influenced U.S. foreign policy between the Greek War of Independence in 1821 and the establishment of the mandate system in the Middle East after WWI. In addition to studying the actions of foreign policy elites, I analyze how non-governmental actors such as missionaries, religious groups, businessmen and academics influenced government understandings and actions. Finally, I explore the important transnational ties between European colonial administrators and American government officials when it came to governing Muslim subjects.

The project includes four distinct foreign policy arenas where the United States came into contact with Islam and Muslims. I begin by investigating how Americans responded to the Eastern Question, the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, in the nineteenth century. American missionaries were the most important actors influencing American understandings of these important events. For this reason, religion and religious conflict were the primary lenses through which the United States understood the violence committed by the Ottoman Empire against various nationalist groups.

My second case study examines American efforts to govern Muslims in the newly acquired colony of the Philippines, an encounter popularly called the “Moro Problem.” I argue that the religious identity of Muslim Filipinos became an essential component of their political and social identity as American subjects. I also explore how the United States exchanged knowledge with European colonial powers on how to govern non-Christian subjects. My project concludes by examining American involvement in the establishment of the mandate system in the Middle East at the end of WWI, taking into account American reactions to the Armenian Genocide.

My third case study examines the United States' diplomatic involvement in the protection of Moroccan Jews in the period leading up to the Moroccan Crisis of 1906. I analyze how transnational religious organizations pushed American diplomats and policy makers to take a stand on the rights of Jewish Moroccans at both the Madrid Conference of 1880 and the Algeciras Conference of 1906. Americans believed that Muslims, by nature, mistreated religious minorities, prompting the United States to unofficially support a greater European colonial presence in North Africa.

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Contrary to the idea of American exceptionalism, the United States was embedded within a much larger history of empire and imperial understandings. Interactions with other empires as well as direct governance over colonial subjects in its own expanding empire contributed in constructing an often misguided idea of Islam and Muslims that would shape not only government responses, but domestic belief systems as well. I hope that my research will reveal the important role cultural beliefs play in influencing relations between nations and peoples.

“In addition to studying the actions of foreign policy elites, I analyze how non-governmental actors such as missionaries, religious groups, businessmen and academics influenced government understandings and actions.”
CIRS organized a panel presentation on the issues of “Water, Energy, and Climate Change in the Gulf.” The panel, chaired by the Interim Dean of GU-Q, Mehran Kamrava, was made up of Professor Tim Beach of the Georgetown University, Professor Sharif Elmusa of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, and Mari Luomi, a researcher at The Finnish Institute for International Affairs and a PhD candidate at Durham University. All three experts approached the panel topics from their unique disciplinary perspectives of geoscience, environmental politics, and political science respectively.

Tim Beach gave the first presentation in which he illustrated the state of the world’s biodiversity in the current ecological climate and how its degradation relates directly to issues of diminished resources and, ultimately, to issues of human rights. He argued that “the world and the Gulf are faced with solving two ends in the equation of water.” One aspect of the politics of water is to maintain ecosystems and the other is to provide adequate amounts of water for direct human needs and uses. Currently, with increases in global population numbers and temperature levels, there is a water deficit in many parts of the world. Beach maintained that “in the last hundred years or so, about half of the world’s wetlands have disappeared.”

Currently, “wetlands cover 6% of the world, but provide a disproportionate amount of the ecosystem services to humanity and form hotspots for biodiversity” as they have a high net primary productivity, Beach said. “However,” he noted, “wetlands face continuous threats,” and there are many areas of disappearing wetlands around the globe due to human agricultural and farming projects as well climate change effects. Beach argued that wetlands, marshes, and mangroves are some of the most important areas for ecosystem services such as fish, wildlife, and soil habitats. Critically, from an environmental economic perspective, apart from being habitats for endangered species and spawning grounds for fishing industries, Beach explained that “wetlands are natural water quality improvers” and so, in the long run, their worth per hectare is far greater than prime farmland. As such, “wetlands are natural carbon sequestration areas” that need proper maintenance for their full potential to be activated.

Sharif Elmusa gave the second presentation on the subject of “debating water and oil wars” in the Middle East. He argued that water wars, although long predicted, have not come to pass, but what we have instead are wars over oil. The reason for this, he argued, is because water is of regional significance, it is not a resource sold on the world market. The primary reason there is international political interest in the dearth of water is that it could lead to the disruption of oil supplies.

Countries with valuable resources – ones that can be appropriated and sold on the world market – are more likely to suffer violent conflict than countries that do not, and oil qualifies as one of these finite and highly sought-after resources. Elmusa explained that these resources do not only underlie armed conflicts, but also help in the prolongation and intensification of existing ones; “you cannot understand what is happening in Iraq today, without understanding the role of oil in the civil war that is taking place,” he said.

In this regard, Elmusa, quoting Gary Wills, said that the United States has had two long-standing and active interests in the Gulf area and its fossil fuels. One goal “is to guarantee the secure supply of oil to the industrialized countries, and the second is to prevent any hostile power from acquiring political or military control over those resources.” Historically, “any attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region was regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America,” he added.

This entrenched mindset was translated into the two American-led wars involving Iraq. While 9/11 may have triggered the 2003 war, as some have claimed, it would not have happened without the prior fixation on “securing” the oil supply from the region.
Mehran Kamrava introduces Alexis Antoniades

According to Antoniades, as a consequence of the current global economic recession, there will be major restructuring and rebalancing of the U.S. economy, but it will not go back to its former state, and “this,” he noted, “is not a bad thing.” Although high unemployment is undesirable, high savings rates and low debts are a positive. For these reasons, it is impossible for the U.S. economic recovery to result from domestic spending in the short-run. Antoniades argued that “the recovery will come from abroad, especially from Asian countries and countries with big economies – Brazil, Russia, India, and China.” China, in particular, will stimulate the global recovery, as it will outperform all other countries in the coming years, leading to enormous growth. As China grows, consumers will start spending more and saving less. This change in consumption behavior by the Chinese will increase the demand for consumption goods, especially for goods imported from advanced economies like the United States. Consequently, advanced economies will be able to exit the prolonged recession through this export-led recovery.

Although the U.S. has long been the world leader in innovation, education, and technology, in the long-run, these other developing countries will catch-up in record time. The rapid growth of these developing economies, however, will put enormous stress on the environment and on resources, which will cause long-term degradation and pollution. Antoniades concluded on a positive note for the United States by arguing that “there is an opportunity here for advanced economies,” because they still have superior technological ability in comparison to the rest of the world. The U.S. can thus “invest in clean and green technology and then export their expertise and products to China and the other Asian countries,” thereby facilitating innovation and maintaining its pole position in the world economy.

To have sustainable growth and a sustainable recovery, there needs to be consumer confidence: people need to spend so that money circulates and creates growth in the economy. Firms and businesses also need to invest in new endeavors to raise output and facilitate growth. But this cycle is broken because, for growth to happen, consumers and businesses need to acquire loans from banks, which is something that is unlikely to occur in the current frugal climate.

Many analysts and economists determine recoveries, Antoniades said, as either V shaped, meaning that the economy declines, but there is a speedy recovery; U-shaped, meaning the economy declines, remains down for a while, and then recovers; or L-shaped, meaning that the economy declines and then flat-lines, making the recovery a long and arduous process. He argued that in his opinion, an L-shape recovery would be closest to what the global economy is currently experiencing in its recovery phase.

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Mehran Kamrava, CIRS Director and Interim Dean of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, lectured to a group of French scholars from the HEC on the Geopolitics of the Gulf. Kamrava gave a broad overview of the relationships between the Gulf states and how these associations are shaped by the geopolitics of the region.

Through a series of topographic and geopolitical maps, Kamrava looked at how the Gulf region has progressed into a series of nation states in the post-Ottoman period. Many of these countries were voluntarily under the tutelage of British protection as a means to safeguard their interests against Iran. He argued that the Gulf states gained their independence at various periods in the twentieth century, the oldest being the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which was established in the 1930s. The UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain all gained their independence in the 1970s, after Britain vacated the areas east of the Suez Canal.

As such, most of the Gulf states came into existence relatively recently, although the tribes and peoples that inhabit these areas are ancient groupings who have lived for centuries in sporadic fishing and pearling villages. In the past, there were no major urban centers but merely villages where wealthy families were later to emerge as the merchant classes and became the rulers of their regions. Kamrava maintained that “the national youth of these countries has significant consequences regarding economic development, the patterns of state-society relationships, and how political leaders assert their rule over their societies and the kinds of vision that they are able to articulate. These are recent political entities with very recent political histories.”

By the 1950s, the Gulf states become tremendously resource-wealthy, with an abundance of exploitable natural resources. Therefore, Kamrava argued, rentierism, or “the rent and the interest that they accrued from the sale of oil, become their economic mainstay.” As such, “the state-building in these countries is consistent with economic penetration of the West. If you look at the modern map of the region, particularly in places like Saudi Arabia, you see that state-building is simultaneous with massive amounts of wealth being pumped into the economy.”

In terms of existing boundaries, there are still several border disputes between many of the Gulf states. One major dispute, Kamrava noted, exists between Kuwait, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. Although in recent years these border disputes have not erupted into open warfare, this was precisely the reason for Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

Turning to economic issues, Kamrava called attention to the increasing projected demand for oil in the coming decades, with the estimated 21.7 million bbl/d (barrels per day) that was being produced in the Gulf region in 2000 rising to 30.7 million bbl/d by 2010 and 42.9 million bbl/d by 2020. The Gulf’s share of world production is estimated to rise from 28 percent in 2000 to 35 percent in 2020. Not surprisingly, with very small population sizes, in recent decades, the Gulf states have registered some of the highest GNP & GDP average annual growth rates in the world.

Massive economic wealth has not made these states immune to the global economic downturn. In fact, according to Kamrava, the GCC state’s exposure to the global financial crisis has hit six areas particularly hard:

1. Direct banking sector exposure to toxic assets;
2. Sudden stop/reversal in foreign capital inflows;
3. Weaker non-commodity export growth;
4. Plunge in commodity prices, most notably crude oil; and,
5. Faltering demand for energy-intensive industrial and building materials.

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Kamrava noted that there has been a 60 percent fall in GCC hydrocarbons revenue in 2009, to around $200 billion. This, he argued, has had five notable consequences. It has, first and foremost, led to a sharp decline in liquidity and assets that fueled the 2002-2009 business growth spurt. Second, there has been a steady growth deceleration in all economic sectors. Third, there has also been a steady decline in inflation, especially in real estate and other consumer indices. Fifth and last, built-in structural resilience and growth momentum will make Qatar less susceptible to downturn, followed by Abu Dhabi, and Saudi Arabia.
Elmusa noted that although “water is scarce and is going to become even scarcer because of rapid population growth, urbanization, and global warming,” he speculated further on why wars were fought over oil rather than water. Water, he argued, flows across countries, but oil does not. To get oil, you must go to the source.

If, however, a war was to be waged over water, it would happen among the downstream Arab states, the reason being their dependence on the geography and the distribution of power in each basin. Syria, for instance, cannot go to war with Turkey over the Euphrates River because Turkey is much stronger militarily and because taking over the origins of this watercourse would entail domination over millions of Kurds. However, Syria and Iraq could find themselves engaged in military confrontation if Turkey does not release enough water for the two states. The same could happen in the Nile basin between Egypt and Sudan, because Egypt cannot project its military away from its immediate borders to Ethiopia, the source of the bulk of the Nile’s flow. But this, he said, depends on the unknown future of Sudan itself.

In conclusion, Elmusa explained that avoiding water or oil wars in the future requires that we stop thinking of these wars as political possibilities, and begin thinking innovatively of viable alternatives.

The third and final speaker, Mari Luomi, presented a political science perspective of the pressures and potential sources of threat that climate change poses to the Gulf monarchies. She argued that “climate change itself is envisaged to have different kinds of negative consequences that could potentially be destabilizing for the countries of the Middle East.” Although this was the case, Luomi warned that discussing climate change within a strict security framework could lead to emphasizing adaptation measures over mitigation as well as shifting approaches to the problem from multilateralism to unilateralism and responsibility from the individual to the state. She argued that “the six Gulf Cooperation Council states, particularly the four OPEC member states – Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, and Qatar – perceive climate change mitigation as a threat to their economies.”

The negative consequences of climate change affect the physical, social, and economic aspects of any country or region. The physical consequences include temperature and sea-level rise, changes in precipitation, and intensity and frequency of natural disasters. Social consequences include problems with food and water security, migration, and instability and, finally, in terms of economic consequences, “the cost of delayed action to fight climate change will be higher than that of prompt action,” she said.

In terms of responsibility for alleviating climate change, she noted that “although it is indisputably the industrialized states that bear the responsibility for climate change, and should take the lead in fighting it, developing states will have to understand that the battle can only be won if everyone participates according to their capabilities.”

Concluding the final presentation, Luomi explained that climate change presents the Gulf countries with opportunities that could be actively exploited. She argued that “there are tangible financial benefits to be gained through decarbonizing Qatar’s energy economy by exploring energy efficiency, solar energy, and carbon trade.” To this effect, new ministries for the environment are being set up in many Gulf states that try to project new images of themselves as energy-efficient and sustainable countries by investing in a variety of alternative energy projects and initiatives.

Finally, because there is a regional leadership vacuum in the Gulf and in the Middle East, "Qatar should, among other things, seek to develop technologies and solutions related to natural gas, which is widely seen as a transitional fuel," Luomi said.
The Af-Pak Misadventure: Where is America’s “Long War” Heading?... And Why?

In describing “the five obstacles confronting the Obama administration in the Af-Pak war,” Wirsing listed them as a) Waning public, congressional, and Democratic Party support in America b) Disenchantment with the Afghan government in Kabul magnified by election fraud and its undermined legitimacy c) Pakistan’s less than perfect fit as America’s ally in the “war on terrorism” d) The impracticality of Obama’s promise of greater regional collaboration and finally, e) The need for Obama to avoid the appearance of weakness and indecisiveness. “If Obama chooses to do nothing or chooses to exit or reduce American forces, it might appear as a failure of political will in America’s Af-Pak policy.”

Wirsing outlined the options open to the Obama administration, including the most viable, in his opinion, which is to escalate by adding more troops in Afghanistan in order to put an end to an already lengthy war.

According to Wirsing, the short-term solutions open to the Obama administration include an immediate troop surge; a shift from offensive to defensive counter-insurgency by withdrawing troops from exposed areas to selected urban centers to provide security for as much of the Afghan population as possible; prioritizing a major reduction in civilian casualties by suspending unmanned drone attacks; fully implementing the Congressionally endorsed increase in aid to Pakistan; and, finally, encouraging Pakistani cooperation in Afghanistan.

The long-term initiatives that the Obama administration could implement range from pursuing opportunities for talks with the Taliban elements over power-sharing to endorsing the Iran, Pakistan, India (IPI) gas pipeline, and urging consideration of a civilian nuclear agreement with Pakistan akin to that reached with India.
The Season in Events

CIRS Highlights

GU-Q student Lamia Adi introduces Carol Lancaster

Sharif Elmusa converses with guests after the lecture

Carol Lancaster takes questions from the audience

Guests peruse CIRS publications before the start of a Distinguished Lecture

An audience member asks a question during a CIRS Monthly Dialogue lecture

Audience at a Monthly Dialogue Lecture
Call for Occasional Papers

The Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar is pleased to announce a call for contributions to its Occasional Paper series. CIRS publishes original research in a broad range of issues related to the Gulf region in the areas of international relations, political science, economics, and Islamic studies. Other topics of current significance also will be considered.

Papers should be a maximum of 10,000 words and cannot have been previously published or under consideration for publication elsewhere. Citations must appear at the end of the paper using the format of the International Journal of Middle East Studies. All submissions are subject to a double-blind review process. Any copyright concerns are the full responsibility of the author.

Please submit to cirsresearch@georgetown.edu. Inquiries about the Occasional Paper series or other related questions may be directed to Suzi Mirgani, CIRS Publications Coordinator, at sm623@georgetown.edu.

Post-Doctoral Fellowship

The Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar’s (GU-Qatar) Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) is pleased to announce an opening for a Post-Doctoral Fellowship. The fellowship will support a recent PhD recipient in any discipline working on the area of the Middle East with priority to those working on the Gulf. The Fellowship is for a period of one academic year starting in the Fall 2010 semester, with a possibility of renewal for one additional year. Compensation, benefits and other terms of employment are highly competitive.

Review of applications begins January 4, 2010 and will continue until the position is filled. Interested candidates are invited to visit http://cirs.georgetown.edu/research/positions/ for more information.

Senior Fellowship

The Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar’s (GU-Qatar) Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) is pleased to announce an opening for a nonresidential Visiting Scholar Fellowship beginning in Fall 2010. The position is open to scholars in all disciplines working on any area of the Middle East, with priority given to those working on the Gulf. This position is ideal for mid- and senior-level academics. Compensation, benefits and other terms of employment are highly competitive.

Review of applications begins January 4, 2010 and will continue until the position is filled. Interested candidates are invited to visit http://cirs.georgetown.edu/research/positions/ for more information.