Drawing on his career and experience as a diplomat, Edward Djerejian, former U.S. ambassador to Syria and Israel, offered his insights and analysis of current foreign policy challenges facing the United States in the Middle East and South Asia to a full house at the Diplomatic Club in Doha on March 17, 2009.

Ambassador Djerejian, a graduate of the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, is currently Director of the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University. He has served in eight U.S. administrations from John Kennedy to Bill Clinton and has filled such posts as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs and ambassador to Syria and Israel. In 2008, Djerejian published a book entitled Danger and Opportunity: An American Ambassador’s Journey through the Middle East, detailing his experiences in the region.

Continued on page 4
Greetings from all of us at CIRS!

There has been great variety in the speakers that the Center has hosted over the past few months. The first distinguished speaker of 2009 was Seyyed Hossein Nasr, one of the foremost scholars on Islam, who examined how the preservation of the natural environment is a central theme in Islam and an increasingly relevant and urgent study in many other major disciplines. Currently, all over the world and across all disciplines, questions related to the environment – its depredation and conservation – rank high among the most imperative areas of intellectual inquiry and research. The Spring semester was book-ended with CIRS’s very own James Onley, Senior Fellow for 2008-2009, who took a historical look at the various British security strategies and economic interests in the Gulf region from the eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century.

This quarter, we hosted discussions on an array of important issues as part of the Center’s Monthly Dialogue Series, beginning with a lecture by SFS-Qatar’s distinguished Professor of Economics, Ibrahim M. Oweiss, on the global financial crisis and its effects on the economies of the Gulf. Oweiss has been a long-standing member of Georgetown University faculty since 1967 and this year he embraces his well-deserved retirement. For the past year, Oweiss’s office was located in the same corridor as the Center’s work-space; we will miss his presence in these halls and wish him a restful retreat. The Center is especially proud to have hosted Oweiss’s valedictory lecture.

Other Monthly Dialogue lectures that took place this semester included Mark Farha’s explanation of the historical complexity of regional politics and confessional identities in Lebanon, and my own lecture on how the small states of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates do not readily fit into international relations theories regarding the correlation between a state’s size and its power and influence.

CIRS research initiatives, meanwhile, are in full swing. During the past semester, the Center convened two working group meetings on two distinct topics. Firstly, as part of our research initiative on Migrant Labor in the Gulf, CIRS has funded four grant proposals to study different aspects of the topic. The first working group meeting took place in May and twenty-five experts in the field from a variety of different disciplines came together to discuss the most urgent issues. The second working group meeting, on Comparative Ethics of War, was organized in conjunction with the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO) and brought together eleven scholars from around the world to examine the question of ethics of war in the Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Hindu, and Buddhist traditions.

For the upcoming academic year, we will continue to embark upon equally relevant research projects and public affairs programming. We look forward to your participation in CIRS-sponsored events, especially our Monthly Dialogues and our Distinguished Lectures, and I personally look forward to hearing from you about our research initiatives and our academic programs.

As we wind down another year, CIRS is looking forward to recharging its batteries over the summer and coming up with new ideas for areas of intellectual inquiry and public participation.

Sincerely,

Mehran Kamrava
Director

About CIRS

The Center for International and Regional Studies at Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service in Qatar is guided by the principles of academic excellence, forward vision, and community engagement.

The Center’s mission revolves around five principal goals:

• To provide a forum for scholarship and research on international and regional affairs;
• To encourage in-depth examination and exchange of ideas;
• To foster thoughtful dialogue among students, scholars, and practitioners of international affairs;
• To facilitate the free flow of ideas and knowledge through publishing the products of its research, sponsoring conferences and seminars, and holding workshops designed to explore the complexities of the twenty-first century;
• To engage in outreach activities with a wide range of local, regional, and international partners.
Ibrahim M. Oweiss, Professor of Economics at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, delivered the February CIRS Monthly Dialogue lecture on the subject of “The Current Economic Global Depression: Causes and Effects with Reference to the Gulf Economies.”

Oweiss began by noting that he refers to the current economic crisis as a “depression” rather than the more commonly used term “recession,” because, he said, the fall-out from unemployment will be one of the most devastating features of the years to come. He gave various examples to demonstrate the negative effects of deregulation and emphasized that no country is immune from the global effects of the depression.

“There are many causes for the financial crisis,” Oweiss argued, “and one of them is the war in Iraq” that is a constant drain on financial resources and is costing the U.S. taxpayer dearly. Giving some recent figures, professor Oweiss calculated that the war “costs 371,000 dollars every minute” and has created an unfathomable amount of debt and budget deficit to the U.S. economy. This crisis, he argued, was a result of “the unwise fiscal policy during the Bush administration. Usually at a time of war, a country increases taxes, and not decreases them. George W. Bush inherited a surplus in the budget” and yet awarded tax cuts. With a mounting war, this “had a dual negative effect on the U.S. budget and on the National Debt.”

Research and Scholarship

CIRS Awards Research Grants: Migrant Labor in the Gulf

In 2009, CIRS launched a major research initiative on migrant labor issues and concerns in the Gulf region. The initiative has two distinct but interrelated streams.

One stream of the initiative awards research grants to scholars interested in conducting primary research and fieldwork on migrant labor in the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). After a rigorous selection process, the research grant committee nominated four of the thirty-three submitted proposals as deserving of the grants. The four awarded research proposals are:

1) “A Longitudinal Analysis of Low Income Laborers in Contemporary Qatar” by Andrew Gardner, Qatar University

2) “Migrants to the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries: Values, Behaviors, and Plans” by Arland Thornton, Dirgha Ghimire, Mansoor Mouaddel, and Nathalie Williams, University of Michigan

3) “Migrant Labor and Legal Regulations in Doha and Dubai” by David Mednicoff, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

4) “Trends, Impacts, and Policy Implications of Lesser-Skilled India-Gulf Migrants” by Mary Breeding, Georgetown University
In his lecture, Ambassador Djerejian noted that “the challenges that the Obama administration faces in its foreign policy toward the Arab and Muslim world are comparably great.” He addressed U.S. policy challenges in Israel-Palestine, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, stressing that the politics of the region are often interconnected and what happens in one state can have a significant impact on another. Specifically, he pointed to the centrality of Israel-Palestine conflict, saying that the so-called neoconservatives erred when they claimed that the road to peace in the region ran through Baghdad rather than Jerusalem. While he hailed some positive developments in Israeli-Arab relations, including the Madrid conference of 1991, in which Arabs and Israelis negotiated face-to-face for the first time, Djerejian said that it was essential that U.S. policy be aimed at a resolution of the conflict. He added that the term “peace process,” was not useful as it implies that there is no end in sight, and he therefore preferred to concentrate on a more results-oriented vision.

In his discussion of U.S. foreign policy toward Iraq, Djerejian stressed that the Bush administration made a serious error in ignoring a key recommendation of the Iraq Study Group to engage diplomatically its adversaries, Iran and Syria. The United States has many common interests with Iran in particular, among them cooperation on Iraq, Afghanistan, and energy. Djerejian suggested that all issues be on the table in talks with Iran, except for the threat of regime change. Military action against Iran would be a huge failure, he said.

“This is a struggle of ideas that will determine the future of the Arab world.”

On Afghanistan and Pakistan, the former ambassador suggested that U.S. policy suffers from a lack of coherence in approach, in part, due to the distraction of the war in Iraq. He proposed that the Obama administration lower its military goals and expectations in Afghanistan, partly out of recognition that, historically, the country is not easily controlled by foreign powers. Additionally, the United States should recommit to building roads and infrastructure and providing basic services and security to the Afghan people, given that the Taliban thrives in places where these essentials are missing.

Addressing the region as a whole, Ambassador Djerejian argued that it “is fraught with critical issues – unresolved – that need the attention of the people of the region in the first instance, but also, the hopefully constructive involvement of the outside world.” He argued that “over arching all of these specific issues, in my view, is the struggle of ideas within the Muslim world and by that I mean the struggle between the forces of moderation and the forces of extremism and in the middle, those – especially the younger generations – who haven’t made up their mind which way to go. This is a struggle of ideas that will determine the future of the Arab world.”

Djerejian concluded by noting that the problem for U.S. democracy promotion efforts is the possibility that radical Islamists will use elections to assume power then overthrow the democratic system. The United States should therefore take a careful approach to promote a culture of democracy rather than trying to impose an American-modeled democratic system on foreign cultures. He stressed education as an important building-block in such a promotion of democracy, highlighting the role education played in Arab high society over the centuries and citing Qatar’s Education City as an example of rising new models of education in the region.

Summary by Alex Schank. Schank graduated from Georgetown University and is currently studying Arabic at Qatar University.
Currently, I am working on two books – one of them, a multi-authored volume, focuses on ethnic separatism (Fixing Fractured Nations: Ethnic Separatism in the Asia-Pacific), the other, a co-authored volume, focuses on Asia’s water resources (River Rivalry among Nations: Conflict & Cooperation over Asia’s Water Resources). I am co-editor of, and contribute three chapters to, the first of these; I am co-author and editor of, and contribute three chapters to, the second. Both books mirror my long professional association with three subjects: ethnic identity, river resource rivalry, and the politics of South Asia.

The Fixing Fractured Nations book has as its central objective an assessment of how well or poorly governments in the Asia-Pacific have been coping with violent ethnic separatist movements. Each contributing author is charged with providing a timely and balanced assessment of government performance but also with examining the roots of the separatist movement. Separatism-troubled nations in the book include Thailand, China, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Myanmar (Burma), and Philippines.

One of my chapters for this book focuses on the Baloch separatist movement of Pakistan’s sprawling and lightly populated Balochistan province. I have made a half dozen or so research visits to Balochistan, the first of them about thirty years ago, the most recent about a year ago. Much of the research has consisted of interviews with individuals who have played key roles in the province – including Baloch separatist leaders, Pakistan army officers, police officials, political party notables, human rights advocates, and others. I met some of these individuals decades ago, at a time when Balochistan was in the throes of a major insurgency; others I have encountered in recent visits, at a time when Balochistan faces an incipient Baloch separatist insurgency along with Pashtun tribal turbulence in the northern half of the province stemming from the current war in Afghanistan.

One of the biggest difficulties I have faced in the conduct of this research on Balochistan has been one of access. Pakistan’s borderlands, including Balochistan, are currently being widely described as one of the planet’s “most dangerous places”; and this feature, along with the fact that getting into contact with active insurgent leaders is never an easy task, has certainly complicated my endeavors to conduct an impartial and broadly informed assessment.

A second chapter for this book focuses on Kashmiri separatism in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. I have been professionally engaged with this topic for roughly a quarter of a century, having made numerous visits to Kashmir – to both the Indian and Pakistani sides – and having conducted literally hundreds of interviews with Kashmiri separatists, Indian and Pakistani military officers and intelligence officials, along with knowledgeable journalists, scholars and diplomats. Particularly fascinating in connection with this research were visits to the Siachen Glacier in the northernmost reaches of Kashmir, to both the Pakistani- and Indian-held portions of it. The dispute between these two states over the Siachen, which began in 1984 with India’s movement of troops onto the glacier, is a fragment of the larger dispute over Kashmir. It has kept thousands of troops deployed year around, under horrendously difficult circumstances, at elevations as high as 21,000 feet – the reason for its having been named the “world’s highest battleground.”

This chapter is the last of many writings, including two book-length publications, I have done on the Kashmir dispute. Working on these publications, I discovered an unavoidable problem that crops up whenever the Kashmir dispute is considered – and that is the terrifically heated controversy that surrounds virtually every inch of this interstate territorial dispute, now in its 62nd year. Indian and Pakistani writers on this subject are often passionately partisan, rendering more difficult than usual discovery of the “truth” about it. Unless one is determinedly painstaking and evenhanded, there exists great danger of being taken as a biased advocate of one side or another – something no scholar would welcome.

The second book I am working on, River Rivalry among Nations, represents a fairly substantial departure from my customary research interests. Not a hydrologist by training, it has been necessary that I learn what is for me a new and quite specialized vocabulary pertaining to dams, barrages, irrigation technologies, and so on. This has meant visiting dams and becoming familiar with river courses and, above all, it has also meant coming to understand the politics of river resources in both its domestic and international dimensions. Over the past nine years, I have travelled many times to India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Bhutan exploring the political aspects of the South Asian region’s great rivers – the Ganges, the Indus, and Brahmaputra rivers among them. Water resources – their scarcity, for one thing, and their exploitation for hydropower, for another – are fast rising to a position near the top of the South Asian region’s national policy priorities. My collaborators and I are hoping that our book, which addresses a broad range of river resource problems in Asia, will provide at least some insights into the nature of these problems and how governments might act to resolve them.
Power Realignment in the Gulf

A Monthly Dialogue entitled “International Power Realignment in the Gulf” was delivered on March 10, 2009, by Mehran Kamrava, Director of the Center for International and Regional Studies and an expert on Iran and the Persian Gulf. The Monthly Dialogue was attended by Georgetown faculty, students, staff, and invited guests.

Kamrava’s lecture informed the audience about “how changing dynamics in the Gulf are resulting in the emergence of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates as major players in the region and beyond.” Kamrava argued that we are witnessing a shift in power alignments in the Gulf region as small states, such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, are exhibiting powerful performances in the region as well as within the international arena. In tandem with this trend, the position of the region’s traditional “big powers,” such as Iran and Iraq, are gradually and strategically declining.

This power realignment is important in two respects. Firstly, Kamrava’s thesis regarding the Gulf region is that Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are unusual in that they are “small states” and yet are powerful players changing the international relations of the region. “These small states of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, in many ways, do not fit the defined model. In fact, they are often times going against the model of how small states are supposed to behave in the international arena” according to the various international relations theories. They exhibit an extraordinary set of characteristics and engage in behaviors that are fundamentally atypical.

“These small states of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, in many ways, do not fit the defined model. In fact, they are often times going against the model of how small states are supposed to behave in the international arena.”

These countries, Kamrava noted, rely on the support and protection of global superpowers and Qatar is home to one of the largest United States air bases. These states also spend huge amounts of resources on forging a number of alliances with large states. Traditionally, small states limit themselves to dealing with their immediate geographic surroundings, but Qatar has shown a penchant for helping to negotiate in other countries’ regional and civil strife. These small states show a growing self-confidence and clout and have become “norm makers” as they influence others with their particular style of international relations and, essentially, have the ability to “change the rules of the game.”

The power of these small states, Kamrava pointed out, is evident in three distinct areas:

1. Neither Qatar nor the United Arab Emirates blindly tow Riyadh’s line as they have done historically, particularly concerning trade relations and policies.
2. Both these states demonstrate some fearlessness in relation to Iran, with particular emphasis on their struggle over the issue of the three islands. These countries have also re-claimed their symbolic sovereignty by re-naming the area the “Arabian” Gulf rather than conforming to what has been known historically as the “Persian” Gulf.
3. With the decline of Iraq’s regional influence, these states have emerged as major regional power players.

One of the most important issues regarding these particular small states, Kamrava argued, is that not only do these states change the power dynamics in the region, but they are instrumental in changing our very conception of what constitutes power in the first instance. Traditional scholarship argues that there are two types of power: hard power and soft power. “Hard power” is a country’s ability to gain influence and submission from others through military or forceful means and “soft power” is how a country gains influence by having a strong appeal and by attracting others to its particular values systems and norms.

Kamrava concluded by noting that Qatar and the United Arab Emirates exhibit neither of these powers and yet, they are highly influential and successful states. Kamrava argued that what these small states do have is what he terms “civilian power,” which is a combination of personal and state-owned wealth and stability along with strategic and clever use of these assets. Vast sovereign wealth funds have allowed Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to be partially shielded from the damage that the global economic crisis has had on the rest of the world and has given these small states “big power.”
On January 26, 2009, the faculty of SFS-Qatar invited Seyyed Hossein Nasr, one of the foremost scholars of Islamic, Religious, and Comparative Studies in the world to deliver a Distinguished Lecture. Nasr was introduced to the audience by Mohammed Al Sudairi, SFS-Qatar sophomore and President of the Blue & Gray theater club.

Nasr’s lecture, held at the Al Sharq hotel in Doha, outlined daily environmental struggles within an elaborate frame of spiritual Islam. This subject, Nasr emphasized, “is of gravest importance” because people have resorted to covering up the problem without actually finding a solution. Environmental destruction however, “will not be solved by cosmetics,” but “requires a change in our way of life.”

“Every creature has its rights – independent of humans.”

Nasr noted the irony of human mastery over nature by warning that “to dominate nature is to destroy ourselves” in the process. He also said that there is no issue that should be higher on the world’s agenda, as other peripheral economic and political problems pale in comparison to the environmental crisis. Should the problem of degradation continue at its current rate, no other problem would even exist.

The main problem, Nasr stated, is that Muslims, although passionate about performing their religious duties, do not translate this into a greater awareness of their surrounding environments. This results in what he describes as a “disconnect” between the strength of Muslim faith and the way people’s daily actions and activates do not live up to Islamic principles. This, he argued, is because of the prominence of scientism as the singular most important principle of the modern world.

Initially, scientism became popular in the Muslim world as a means of combating colonialism and saving Islam from the onslaught of the West. This was done by mastering Western schools of thought and combining it with the principles of Islam. During this period, the Muslim world followed the basic assumptions of positivism; “the humanities were cast aside as insignificant” and “there was no intellectual resistance” to the West.

The Muslim world has become enslaved to the technological aspirations of the West and one common denominator, he noted, is that Muslims worship modern technology and science, which is falsely considered to be encouraged by Islam. Not only that, he said, but these modernized Muslims believe that the West will also take care of any problems that arise from technological advancement.

The solution, according to Nasr, is to keep in mind that, ultimately, God is nature and the environment. The question of Islam is integral to the environment as it is the connection humans have to the divine. Religious teaching, Nasr said, is paramount for human survival as it informs people about how to be respectful of their natural environments and how to honor every living creature, of which we are just one species. “Every creature has its rights – independent of humans” and, he emphasized, that we cannot overlook them. To reverse the current crisis, he said, it is imperative that we consider nature sacred.

“To dominate nature is to destroy ourselves.”

Nasr concluded on the note that the populations of the Gulf region have an especially important task of conserving the endangered underwater coral reefs in the area. Coral reefs are one of the most fragile ecological life-forms in the world and, yet, are also one of the most instrumental in sustaining the environment.

Earlier in the day, Nasr was invited to visit the SFS-Qatar campus and had an informal lunch-time discussion with SFS-Qatar Faculty and staff.
James Onley, the 2008–2009 CIRS Senior Fellow and Director of the Gulf Studies program at the University of Exeter, delivered the May Monthly Dialogue lecture entitled “Agents of Empire: Britain’s Local Representatives in the Gulf, 1750s–1950s” on May 4, 2009. Onley began by explaining that the lecture was part of a larger study he conducted towards a book he authored entitled The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj: Merchant, Rulers, and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf, published by Oxford University Press in 2007. The book was based on a year’s fieldwork in Bahrain, where he made extensive use of local merchant family records.

Although the research was based in Bahrain, the book has implications for the Gulf region in general. The Gulf was “a frontier of Britain’s Indian Empire up until 1947.” He noted how the Gulf shaikhdoms formed part of Britain’s Indian Empire, comprised of colonies (the provinces of British India) and protectorates and protected-states (the Gulf shaikhdoms, Princely India, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, the Aden Protectorate, and the British Somaliland Protectorate). “The protectorates and protected-states of the Indian Empire, such as the Gulf shaikhdoms,” he said, “had their foreign affairs and defense managed by the East India Company (EIC) and, later, the British Government of India, until Indian independence in 1947.”

“British India,” he said, “controlled its protected-states by grouping them into diplomatic districts known as ‘political residencies.’ ‘Political resident’ was the title the EIC and the Government of India used for its chief political representatives (ambassadors or consul-generals), whose job it was to manage Britain’s relations with the states within these residencies.” Each residency had a network of subordinate political agencies, run by political agents.

Onley explained how the British maintained a network of political agents throughout the Gulf Residency, controlled from British India. Before the twentieth century, the majority of these agents were locally-recruited men known as “native agents,” who were typically affluent Arab, Persian, or Indian merchants with connections to British India. They not only had an extensive knowledge of local cultures, languages, and politics, which anyone recruited from outside the Gulf could not possibly possess, but also could obtain (through their family, social, and business networks) the intelligence the British needed to operate their informal empire in the Gulf. As wealthy merchants, these agents also enjoyed considerable influence with local rulers and governors. The contacts and influence of the agents enabled the Gulf Resident to tap into local political systems to an extent that would have been otherwise impossible, while at the same time the British connection allowed the agents to increase their wealth and political influence. Onley explained that, while there were often conflicts of interest between trade and politics, the British tolerated this so long as British interests were advanced, the ends justifying the means.

Onley concluded by explaining how, in the early twentieth century, the British Government of India replaced most of its native agents with Britons, not because the agents were ineffective, “but because of the increasing international rivalry in the region – Russia, France, and Germany were becoming increasingly involved in the Gulf region,” necessitating the native agents’ replacement by British officers who were “a more visible sign of Britain’s presence in the region.” Even so, two native agents remained in the less-desirable postings of Sharjah and Gwadar. The last native agent, in Gwadar, retired in 1958.
Focused Discussion

Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq

Journalist and opinion-writer Mona Eltahawy gave a lunchtime lecture at the SFS-Qatar campus on the subject of “Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq.” Eltahawy is an award-winning syndicated columnist and an international public speaker on Arab and Muslim issues. Her opinion pieces have been published frequently in the International Herald Tribune, The Washington Post, the pan-Arab Asharq al-Awsat newspaper and Qatar’s Al-Arab.

Eltahawy began the lecture by noting her shift from being a journalist concerned with balance and objectivism to being compelled to speak out as an opinion-writer rather than as an impartial academic on a variety of issues that affect Muslims. This, she said, was as a result of the change in political climates all over the world after the attacks of September 11, 2001. According to Eltahawy, much of her work is driven by her subject-position as a feminist Muslim, which is an identity that is not always given the forum to voice an opinion. As a female Muslim residing in the United States, Eltahawy felt that her views were not being represented, and this forms the context in which her writing and public speaking are situated. The subject of female suicide bombers, she said, was simultaneously “a deeply fascinating and disturbing subject.”

“[The] sharp increase in female bombers has to do with increased security measures all over Iraq since the U.S. military surge. Today, women can get to places that men cannot.”

To dispel the myth that female suicide bombers are a new ideological formation particular to Islamic extremism and to the Middle East, Eltahawy pointed toward the research conducted in a 1992 book by Eileen McDonald called Shoot the Women First. Eltahawy explained that the title came from the West German security-force directive to shoot the women first upon entering a Red Army stronghold, as the female fighters tended to pose the most aggressive response. The book documents the varied instances of women’s involvement in acts of extremism and violence in organizations such as the Basque separatist movement, the Kurdish PKK separatists in Turkey, the Tamil Tigers, the Baader-Meinhof gang, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, all of which existed long before the instrumentalist use of suicide bombings by certain groups of Islamic extremists. But, “what distinguishes what is happening in Iraq from these examples,” Eltahawy notes, “is that these groups were secular, militant and terrorist groups,” whereas the groups in Iraq are centered around religious extremism.

Eltahawy posed the question: “What is the motivation for women to join a violent group or to become a terrorist?” She argued that “inherent in that question is the idea that a woman is different from a man in choosing to join these groups.” But, she pointed out, scholars on the subject have found that the ideological and political motivations that drive radicalization are largely the same for both men and women.

Eltahawy took Iraq as her case-study and presented a number of statistics regarding female suicide bombers. She reported that, “according to U.S. military statistics, since the invasion in March 2003 until the end of last year, Iraq has seen 57 female suicide bombers – including one who surrendered – and they killed a total of 370 people and injured 650.” What is alarming, she noted, is the rate at which the attacks have increased. In fact, she said, they had tripled in 2008. The reason for the sharp increase in female bombers, Eltahawy explained, had to do with increased security measures all over Iraq since the U.S. military surge. This increase, she said, was because women can get to places that men cannot.

Also alarming, Eltahawy noted, was the varying nature of the females carrying out extremist violence in Iraq. She recounted that one bomber was a thirteen year old girl, another was a woman dressed as a man, and yet another was a married mother of two. These, Eltahawy explained, were unusual characteristics for what constitutes a radical and do not fit within the common profile. Usually, such acts are carried out by single, divorced or widowed women who have lost family members during a particular period and so have also lost their primary sources of income.

Eltahawy noted that extremist violence, such as suicide bombings, has been articulated as an act of desperation, a weapon of political and ideological struggle and “resistance against occupying forces” as well as powerful oppressors. Suicide bombings in Iraq were initially seen as resistance to occupying forces, but these extremist acts have become increasingly religious and sectarian in nature. Ironically, Eltahawy concluded, in Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, and Egypt, such religiously and ideologically-backed martyrdom has seen more Muslims killing Muslims than supposed enemies, occupiers, or infidels. Most of the victims of suicide bombings, she said, are Shi’ia pilgrims and not necessarily legitimate military targets.
Distinguished Lecture Series

U.S.-Arab Relations in a Changing World

Former Egyptian Ambassador to the United States Nabil Fahmy gave his analysis and insight into the foreign policy challenges facing the United States and the Arab world in a Distinguished Lecture at the Diplomatic Club in Doha on April 29, 2009.

Fahmy stressed the inter-connectedness of the challenges facing the region and suggested that developments on both the American and Arab political landscapes have presented new opportunities to tackle them.

He hailed the election of Barack Obama in particular as an indicator that the “United States is going through a transformational change” in terms of the way it sees its place in the world. Under the Clinton administration, he said, the United States struggled with the new roles and responsibilities it assumed as it transitioned from a Cold War superpower to a global power. Meanwhile, George W. Bush “sold his foreign policy to Americans as a function of fears” and withdrew American participation in international treaties and cooperation with the United Nations.

In contrast, President Obama has told Americans that they need to change and has elevated the role of diplomacy in America’s toolkit for international engagement. Obama “was not selling fear,” Fahmy said, America can “engage in the world.”

While the Arab world has a large stake in America’s actions – the global financial crisis, for example, Fahmy said, has led to a $10 billion reduction in foreign investment in the region – it is also experiencing a transformation of its own, spurred by a new openness in the media and an ever-more knowledgeable and globally-exposed youth demographic. Fahmy sees, in the future, a continued importance for states that have traditionally played a leading role in the region, such as Egypt, as well as an increased importance for countries in the Gulf which have an opportunity to diversify their investments and gain a sense of economic power that is not wholly dependent on outside brokers.

“I do not support a model of American democracy in the Middle East, because the American model of democracy is unique to America.”

However, Fahmy said, the Arab world suffers from a lack of unity created by conflicts in national priorities and petty rivalries. Thus, he advised, Arabs need to look to the model of the European Union and “find a way to talk in one voice even if we do not have identical positions.” In addition, the Arab foreign policy agenda should be more proactive and clearly stated, rather than merely reacting to agendas set out by other international players. He said that “the better we become in our part of the world, the more effective we will be in talking to America.”

On a whole host of issues, from Iraq and Iran to Arab-Israeli peace and terrorism, the United States and the Arab world have a different ordering of priorities, according to Fahmy. The encouraging news, however, is that developments on one front often have positive repercussions for others, and President Obama “wants to deal with all these issues together.”

On Israeli-Palestinian peace, Ambassador Fahmy stressed that there is no solution but a two-state solution. He added that he was worried by the formation of a new Israeli government led by Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israeli right. If, however, Arab states make it clear that they will pursue their foreign policy objectives regardless of outside pressure, the United States will respond and offer cooperation on realizing peace, which is also in its national interest, as it did during the 1970s with Anwar Sadat.

Fahmy acknowledged that terrorism is a major challenge facing the Arab world, but he called for some historical perspective on the matter, arguing that Egypt was the target of terrorism and religious extremism before America. He also stated that terrorism is hardly a phenomenon limited to the Middle East. Europe experienced waves of terrorism in the 1960s and 1970s.

On Iraq, Fahmy said it was in the interest of the Arab world that Iraq remain a unified country, and efforts must be made to promote national identity above the myriad sectarian identities that have emerged.

Regarding political reform and the absence of democracy in the region, Fahmy said, “Having better institutions in the Arab world serves the Arab world before it serves America.” He stressed, however, that reform is a longer-term project that requires fostering implementation, rather than appealing to immediate and careless strategies. He further argued, “I do not support a model of American democracy in the Middle East, because the American model of democracy is unique to America.”

Ambassador Fahmy was Egypt’s chief representative to the U.S. for nine years beginning in 1999. He has participated in Arab-Israeli peace talks and is an expert on international security and disarmament.
The other obvious cause for the financial crisis, Oweiss pointed out, is the lack of government regulation in private equity and corporate affairs. This has had a devastating effect and has allowed people to act with impudence because, he said, “Americans have been used to buying with money they do not own,” and there will always be a problem when people overextend themselves and cannot pay back debts. Oweiss warned that “the crack in the U.S. economy is too wide and too deep to be filled by any amount of money, whether it had been approved under the Bush administration or now under the Obama administration.”

“The GCC labor market is bound to be reduced.”

With reference to the Gulf economies, Oweiss stated that no economy is safe from the global economic crisis and the Gulf countries “are being affected to varying degrees.” According to the Oweiss Demand Curve theory, “petro-dollars are declining because the world’s industrial machinery is slowing down”, hence the demand for oil and the prices of oil are also in decline. He argued that the effects for the GCC were also psychological and that Arab investors are used to following the pattern of global stock markets and will undoubtedly become discouraged by the negative outlook. “The GCC labor market” in particular, he added, “is bound to be reduced.” A variety of real-estate projects have been delayed or cancelled in the UAE in particular, costing 260 billion dollars, and losses to sovereign wealth funds in the region may reach 450 billion dollars. This, Oweiss explained “is equal to all petro-dollar revenues for the year 2008. Such losses are only on paper but can materialize if those invested assets are to be liquidated.” However, Qatar, due to years of immense expenditures and investments in natural gas and other important business ventures, will have a reasonable rate of growth in 2009 that will be of help to its economy.

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A question Oweiss addressed was “Is this the end of capitalism?” He answered by explaining that, contrary to French President Nicolas Sarkozy’s affirmative answer, it most definitely was not. If one defines capitalism, in its most basic philosophy, as being “an economic system allowing private citizens to own capital and to benefit from it,” then there will always be some form of capitalism. There are many shades, he said, between “unbridled individualism” and “regulated capitalism” and these need to be properly defined and applied.

On a positive note, Oweiss concluded that there have been many depressions in U.S. and world history, and that people have always managed, over time, to extract themselves from dire situations through overseeing a consistent program of proper regulation. Hope, he concluded, coupled with human ingenuity, unlike all other resources, is not finite.

Oweiss joined the Department of Economics at Georgetown University in 1967 after having served on the faculty of the University of Minnesota and Western Maryland College. He was also a Visiting Professor of Economics at Harvard University and later taught at Johns Hopkins University. He retired in 2002 but came out of retirement in 2005 to teach as a founding member of the faculty of the School of Foreign Service in Qatar. After a distinguished academic career, Oweiss retires from Georgetown University for a second time at the end of the 2009 academic year, after having seen the school graduate its first class of students.

Oweiss has authored over fifty scholarly publications including: Arab Civilization and The Political Economy of Contemporary Egypt.
My big project is a book, *Pragmatic Reasons: A Defense of Morality and Epistemology*, which is forthcoming shortly with Palgrave Macmillan. In it, I defend the idea that morality (among other normative practices) is rational because it promotes our interests. The theory is consequentialist in nature, but also has a lot of affinities with the contractarian tradition that traces from Hobbes to Gauthier (although I reject their assumptions about the egoistic nature of human motivation).

The idea that morality is a set of conventions to advance our mutual interests is nothing new. But the idea is dogged with a lot of problems that still have not been resolved, and that is a big part of what I am trying to do in this book. For example, many problems that arise out of tying morality to rationality (free rider problems, prisoners’ dilemmas, and so on) seem to me to result from embracing the view that all reasoning is individualistic—that is, it is reasoning about what it is rational for me as an individual to do.

I try to show that there is a type of cooperative rationality that is not reducible to individual reasoning. We often must reason about what it is rational for us to do, and that is not reducible to a bunch of people reasoning about what it is rational for each of them to do. Another problem is that if morality is conventional, is it objective? Are moral claims really true, or are they just a kind of useful fiction? I try to tell a story about what makes moral claims true in a robust sense, even if they are conventional.

In the future I am planning to focus more on epistemology. I have written several articles on the philosophy of perception, and have a couple more lined up to write or complete. I also have a couple of side projects, including one in the philosophy of religion concerning the problem of evil.

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The second stream, which runs simultaneously alongside the research grants program and which also includes the twenty researchers participated in the Migrant Labor in the Gulf working group meeting.

CIRS convened the first of its working group meetings on the 16th and 17th of May, 2009.

The working group was comprised of twenty international and local participants from a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, political science, sociology, and public policy. Participants also included policy specialists and migrant labor rights activists. The four research grant awardees that CIRS selected as part of its research grant program also took part in shaping the direction of the initiative.

CIRS has undertaken this research initiative in order to fill the vacuum in the scholarship on the conditions, composition, and overall significance of migrant labor throughout the Gulf region.
In April 7, 2009, Mark Farha, Visiting Assistant Professor at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, was invited by CIRS to deliver the April Monthly Dialogue on the subject of “Lebanon as the Mirror of Arab Politics.”

Farha began by noting that the “sheer number of civil society organizations, the amount of political activism, and the dynamism of social activism that the city of Beirut has witnessed over the centuries is unparalleled.” He further emphasized Lebanon’s unique strength, which, he said, comes from the strategic geographical position that Lebanon occupies as a gateway to the Arab world and the Mediterranean Sea, helping to make it “one of the most vibrant terrains on earth” and “a meeting point for civilizations.” Farha explained that the “melting pot” effect created in Lebanon was as a result of the diversity of its cultures, religions and ethnicities that, for centuries, unleashed creative synergies through their interaction despite periodic backlashes of civil strife.

Historically, Lebanon was a cross-road for a variety of cultures that congregated in this particular location to partake in commercial and intellectual exchanges. One example from ancient history was that segments of the Justinian code were formulated in Beirut. Ancient Beyrutus was hailed as a center for law, and prospective jurists flocked to Lebanon from all over the world to study at its famous school of law until the 6th century.

“Lebanon,” Farha said, “is the oldest democracy in the Middle East, continuously operating since 1926,” and “despite all the trouble that one may associate with Lebanon, it should be borne in mind that what you have here is a political system, which, despite all its failings, has endured for very long periods.” Regarding the milestones of Lebanese political history, Farha pointed out that Lebanon has had no military coups d’état — in contrast to most Arab countries. The country has the highest density per capita of universities and secondary schools in the Arab world, which is partly a legacy of the establishment of Catholic and Protestant missionary schools, and, to this day, many “Lebanese are multi-lingual and quite well-educated.” Farha continued by recording that Lebanon was the first Arab country to grant women’s suffrage in 1953 which, he noted, occurred some twenty years prior to Switzerland’s granting of these rights.

“The liberalism of Lebanon is a function of its pluralism.”

“Lebanon has seen its share of confessional conflict throughout the ages,” Farha recounted, but he argued that, due to Lebanon’s history and diverse mix of cultures, “the liberalism of Lebanon is a function of its pluralism. If you want to get along, if you have a country which is so divided, ethnically and religiously, there are a few options, and one of them is to find a modus vivendi, which de facto means recognizing each group and giving each its due...to maintain the peace long-term.” To this effect, Farha counted no less that eighteen officially recognized spiritual leaders in Lebanon, each representing a different confessional identity and each empowered by the constitution to voice their community’s concerns at the government level.

Despite all these various factions, Farha argued that Lebanon’s problems cannot all be blamed on the friction of confessional identities or external meddling. Juxtaposing the demographic make-up and class divisions of the country, Farha claimed that tensions will continue to loom if socio-economic disparities are not adequately tackled by an enfeebled state. As such, skewed forms of globalization and commercialism have shown a propensity to upset any balance that the country may have achieved.

Farha argued that each of the surrounding Arab countries experiences similar socio-economic and communal predicaments, but that their salience is accentuated by Lebanon’s unique diversity. Just as the hidden potential of Arab thought and culture can unfold in Lebanon’s open marketplace of ideas, so too the negative symptoms of the Arab world are writ large upon the face of Lebanese politics and society.

Farha concluded by outlining three possible future courses open to Lebanon: A pernicious emulation of the Israeli model of exclusive ethno-religious discrimination and confessional segregation; the confessional democracy Lebanon narrowly succeeded to preserve thanks to the 2008 Doha Accords mediated by Qatar; or, finally, the avenue leading towards true national integration in which each citizen is granted full and equal rights in all spheres irrespective of his or her personal religious identity. While Lebanon stands out as the only country in the region neither predicated on a religion of state nor a single sectarian hegemony, professor Farha underscored that the regional escalation of competing communalisms has rendered the reaffirmation of a trans-sectarian, inclusive Arab-Lebanese identity at once all the more difficult and indispensable.
Research and Scholarship

Comparative Ethics of War

The Comparative Ethics of War working group meeting was co-sponsored by the Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) and the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO). The meeting, which took place over two days from the 3rd to the 4th of May, 2009, in Doha, is part of a larger research initiative undertaken by PRIO. The research group met twice previously, in Stresa, Italy in August 2007 and in Oslo, Norway in August 2008. The project is funded by a grant from the Research Council of Norway.

The working group was made up of eleven scholars who debated the “ethics of war” from unique religious, theoretical, and ethical perspectives. Each scholar represented a different theoretical and religious tradition and discussed the question of ethics during times of war from Islamic, Christian, Sikh, Hindu, Jewish, and Buddhist perspectives as well as from feminist, post-modernist, historical, and socialist standpoints.

During the working group meeting, participants discussed the genesis of the question of ethics and just war, and examined their intersections with religious texts and the surrounding social infrastructure during particular historical moments. The ethical impetus of many social structures, they argued, is drawn from religious teachings and behavioral norms promoted by scripture. The political undercurrents regarding the question of human rights, social justice, bettering the means of living, and promoting particular social contracts were also analyzed and compared within each religious tradition. The working group members agreed that to understand the ethics of war, the underlying social structure at particular historical periods must also be examined, thus paying homage to the inextricable links between religion and social models.

There is a strong element in each religious tradition that condones the fight for social justice, and implicitly supports warfare for what is believed to be defending justice and for change. It is supported through the primary sources of many religions that there have been religiously-backed movements for ‘change.’ Historians usually focus on the major changes that have occurred within each religious context but not on the smaller movements. Most collections of scripture have been studied by theologians whose interest has been to study law and practice, but seldom have the sources been scrutinized for their social and historical implications.

The Comparative Ethics of War research initiative will result in an edited volume to be published by Cambridge University Press. The book will assemble the most representative primary sources and editorial commentary from the world’s leading religious traditions, on norms of war. Within the context of the book, the working group aimed to clarify the meaning of terms such as Jihad in order to point out their current use by the media and within the popular vernacular. The scholars recommended carrying out a close scrutiny of the verses which mention a particular religious term and how the usage of language in the text may have a different meaning. The working group members also discussed the actual intellectual process of the project and their handling of issues such as the difficulty of obtaining relevant sources and gaining access to materials. In addition to this edited volume, the project participants are also writing scholarly articles and monographs on selected topics in comparative ethics of war. Some of these publications were presented at the workshop.


Due to the interest shown in Patricia Fagen’s “Iraqi Refugees: Seeking Stability in Syria and Jordan” Occasional Paper, CIRS has printed a second edition of the research, which includes a “Post-Script” update on the current situation.

To read the paper or to request a free hard-copy, please visit CIRS at http://cirs.georgetown.edu/publications
The Season in Events

CIRS Activity Highlights

SFS-Qatar student Haya El Khatib introduces Djerejian

Professor Farha delivers his “Monthly Dialogue” on Lebanese politics

The Q&A session at a “Distinguished Lecture”

Edward Djerejian converses with guests after the lecture

Students from Georgetown University in Washington, DC, attend a CIRS event

Seyyed Hossein Nasr autographs books for guests
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 cirsevents@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.