In order to gauge local public opinion regarding the United States Presidential elections and to bring the nuances of the American debate to the Gulf region, CIRS hosted its own Democratic vs. Republican debate on October 12, 2008, at the Diplomatic Club in Doha. On the Republican side was James Patti, Director of Strategic Planning & Analysis for the Division of Biology & Medicine at Brown University and early supporter of Senator John McCain’s campaign for the Republican nomination. On behalf of the Democrats was Gary Wasserman, Visiting Professor of Government at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. The debate, which was attended by a record audience of interested members of the local community, was moderated by David Foster, seasoned journalist and correspondent at the Al Jazeera English television network.

Left to right: Gary Wasserman, David Foster, and James Patti

Continued on page 6
Director’s Greeting

A warm Doha greeting from all of us at CIRS!

I am pleased to report the completion of another successful quarter by CIRS. Over the course of the past few months, we had a number of successes on a variety of fronts, ranging from our research and scholarly endeavors to our publications and our public affairs programming. In each step along the way, we have been fortunate to benefit from the input and support of our community, and I have been personally fortunate to have the support of an incredible team of staff members.

These successes have ranged from the completion of a highly successful conference on “Innovation in Islam” to the recruitment of two rising academics, Katja Niethammer and James Onley, as our Post-Doctoral Fellow and Visiting Fellow, respectively. Other important initiatives have included a series of timely Distinguished Lectures, as well as research initiatives on The International Relations of the Gulf and the issue of migrant labor in the region.

To say that we live in challenging and yet exciting times may be a cliché, but it’s true, especially here in the Gulf region. As I write, a slump in the housing market in the US has turned into a full-scale global financial crisis, with its consequences beginning to be felt here in the Gulf; the United States has just elected a new president; civil conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan continue to rage with intensity; Pakistan teeters on the verge of chaos; and Iranian politicians are gearing up for what promises to be an extraordinarily significant presidential election in June 2009.

With these developments shaping our world for decades to come, CIRS is placing itself at the forefront of research and scholarship with lasting significance. We are quite excited about our research initiative on Migrant Labor in the Gulf, sponsoring original, empirically-grounded fieldwork on a topic of tremendous significance here in the region. Over the coming months, we will also be convening working groups of experts from both the academic and the policy communities in order to assess our present levels of understanding of migrant labor issues and those areas where our research and scholarship can add important contributions.

Another important initiative explores dynamics and emerging trends affecting the international relations of the Gulf. Comprised of some of the most renowned experts on the study of the Gulf, this research initiative examines areas such as the history of British power in the Gulf, the consequences of the war in Iraq for the Gulf states, Iranian foreign policy in relation to Iran’s Arab neighbors, GCC collective security efforts, Saudi and Qatari foreign policies, the American security umbrella, and the emerging role of China and India.

As we move forward, in addition to our various research initiatives, we will be launching two new publications series, CIRS Reports and CIRS Briefs, and we will be publishing our next Occasional Paper in the near future. We look forward to your participation in our public affairs programming, especially our Monthly Dialogues and our Distinguished Lecture Series, and I personally look forward to hearing from you about our research initiatives and our academic programs.

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.
CIRS is pleased to announce its new web address and contact numbers.

- The new CIRS website is: cirs.georgetown.edu
- The new CIRS phone number is: +974 457 8400
- The new CIRS fax number is: +974 457 8401

CIRS staff and the Department of Public Affairs have worked over the past few months on developing the website’s content and design in preparation for the launch.

The website has been designed to make internet navigation as simple and user-friendly as possible. Viewers can learn about all CIRS activities and initiatives, read summaries of past events as well as see schedules and register for upcoming events.

Due to its expanded efforts in research, scholarship and event organization, CIRS has also created two new contact e-mail addresses that are designed to deal with specific inquiries to any of its various branches.

For questions related to research and publications, e-mail inquiries can be directed to cirresearch@georgetown.edu.

For all inquiries regarding CIRS positions and appointments, contact cirpositions@georgetown.edu.

Distinguished Lecture Series

The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy

On June 17, 2008, The Center for International and Regional Studies hosted a lecture by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt as part of its Distinguished Lecture Series. The lecture, attended by a capacity audience of 500 people, was based on Mearsheimer and Walt’s 2007 book, entitled The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy.

Mearsheimer and Walt stressed the importance of studying the role of the Israeli lobby in U.S. foreign policy-making with some sensitivity since the subject often gives rise to strong passions among most Americans. Walt made it clear that the views expressed in the book challenged the politics of the Israel lobby and their resultant policies, but not the validity or place of lobbying in U.S. politics itself. Walt outlined the special role that interest groups play in U.S. politics, demonstrating that the Israel lobby was one of the most influential forces in American politics, shaping American policy toward Israel often to the detriment of the United States. He questioned the wisdom of the special relationship that exists between the U.S. and Israel, viewing it as both inimical to American strategic and international interests around the world.

Mearsheimer concluded by saying that, at least in the near future, there was little reason for optimism regarding a change in the entrenched nature of the relationship between the Israel lobby and U.S. foreign policy. Mearsheimer argued that the lobby’s effectiveness in
Spotlight on the Faculty

Mohamed Zayani is Visiting Associate Professor at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. His research interests lie in the intersection between literature, critical theory, cultural studies and media studies.

Mohamed Zayani has recently published a book-length study (co-authored with Sofiane Sahraoui) entitled The Culture of Al Jazeera. This project, which is a sequel to an earlier study conducted on the Qatar-based network, left the author with several unanswered questions. The book takes an in-depth view at this unconventional media player in an attempt to determine whether, and to what extent, its emergence as a media powerhouse on the global scene is underlined by any organizational strength or uniqueness. It considers the question of whether Al Jazeera is merely a fad thriving on the thirst for freedom of expression in the Middle East region or a new breed of media organizations whose “prowess” is sustained by its organizational culture and model. Venturing into major aspects of culture and internal organization, this study is an ethnography that provides insights into the inner workings of an eccentric and controversial media organization struggling to find its identity.

For Dr. Zayani, the contribution of the book is not only polemical but also methodological. This study is as much driven by the search for a new paradigm (and conceptual tools) for studying alternative or local media in a global context, as it is motivated by an attempt to delve into an elusive media player in an era marked by the intricate dynamics of media flows and counterflows.

Currently, Dr. Zayani is working on another project that focuses on the relationship between media, audiences and publics in the Arab world and the implications of an emerging mediated Arab public sphere.

Conference

CIRS Goes to MESA

42nd Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association of North America

November 22-25, 2008, Washington, DC.

CIRS attended the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association, where Mehran Kamrava, Director of CIRS, was invited to deliver a paper entitled “Political Discourses in Post-Reform Iran.” As part of the conference exhibition program, CIRS showcased its publication and research initiatives, and distributed its promotional materials to conference attendees.

Research Initiative

Migrant Labor in the Gulf

CIRS is launching a major research initiative on migrant labor issues and concerns in the Gulf region. The initiative will have two distinct but interrelated streams.

One stream consists of awarding Research Grants to scholars interested in conducting primary research and fieldwork on migrant labor issues in one of the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The grants are designed to support fieldwork and original empirical research on topics related to migrant labor in the Gulf.

The research must take place in one of the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council and be focused on the consequences of migrant labor for the recipient state or states. Grant awardees must also become active participants in the Georgetown University SFS-Qatar’s Migrant Labor Working Group.

The second stream, which runs simultaneously alongside the Research Grants program and also includes some of the Grant recipients, consists of a Migrant Labor Working Group made up of an interdisciplinary team of experts in subjects and consists of academics, experts, labor organizations, and representatives from various governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The recipients of the Research Grants are expected to also become active in the Working Group.

See page 15 for information on how to apply for the Research Grant.
CIRS kicked off its Distinguished Lecture Series for the 2008-2009 academic year with a lecture by Rami Khouri, editor-at-large of The Daily Star newspaper in Beirut and Director of the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut. Khouri’s talk, held at the Doha Diplomatic Club on August 24, 2008, was attended by an audience of 350 people.

Khouri began his lecture by emphasizing that the Middle East is currently undergoing a period of momentous change within itself and in its relationship with the West. This, he said, was a pivotal moment in history as executive decisions being made in the current political climate are likely to have both short-term and long-lasting consequences. Past failures, he noted, could have been avoided had there been better political leadership in the region. According to Khouri, contrary to popular belief, the fall of communism in the 1990s had more significant effects on the Middle East than did the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The conclusion of the Cold War presented one such opportunity for the Middle East, when the region saw a revival of political movements, a newfound dynamism, and emergence of new players. Sadly, he said, the historic opportunities thus presented to the Middle East were lost.

“Opportunities could have been capitalized on if there had been better leadership”

Khouri named five immediate and short-term changes looming on the horizon with profound consequences for the Middle East. They include: 1) The election of a new president in the United States; 2) The likelihood of United States and coalition troops withdrawing from Iraq and its consequences; 3) A possible resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue; 4) Movement on the Arab-Israeli conflict; and 5) Global energy shifts resulting in increasingly significant roles played by Russia and China.

Along with these short-term changes, Khouri named the five major crises that are affecting the region and that need to be addressed urgently by the region’s political leaders. These crises are: 1) the lack of a stable and secure statehood; 2) the uncertain nature of the relationship between citizens and the state; 3) the lack of availability of basic human needs services and socioeconomic development; 4) the crisis of individual and national identities; and 5) the relationship crisis between the Arab world and the rest of the world.

Khouri concluded by summing up the issues that are of the greatest concern to Arabs. The need for accountable governments is perhaps the most widely sought-after goal, as is the yearning for protection of civil rights and security. “This is a moment of tremendous potential regional change in the Middle East”

For now, Khouri argued, there is neither the bold leadership nor the permissive international environment needed to tackle the Middle East’s many problems.

An edited transcript of this Distinguished Lecture will be published as a CIRS Brief in December. This is a new publication format and is the first in a series of transcribed lecture booklets.
Republicans and Democrats Debate in Doha, continued from p. 1

Foster asked both representatives to deliver a five minute introductory summary of the primary issues in order to define the most pertinent concerns of the evening’s debate. Gary Wasserman argued that the United States’ Presidential debate had become sidetracked by the public focus on celebrity politics and personality examinations and this has caused a tremendous amount of confusion among the electorate. The choice between both nominees should, in fact, be a simple and straightforward decision between each party’s policies and programs over the next four years. He argued that the Republican Party treated the American people with little respect by constantly reiterating statements and slogans that were untrue, hoping “that they would swallow it.” This, he said, was in keeping with the Bush administration’s tactic of bullishly repeating a statement ad nauseam in order to convince the public of its sincerity. Wasserman concluded his opening statement by saying that “if we want change, it needs to be more than a campaign slogan; we need Barack Obama.”

“The U.S. is a center-right nation, and a Democrat promises a hard-left turn that is not acceptable to most Americans” - James Patti

In his introductory remarks, James Patti argued that the public should remember that the Republican Party is not, and should not, be defined by the Bush administration. The Republican Party, he argued, is the party of Abraham Lincoln and Ronald Reagan and it is the party of free trade and courageous public policies. He noted that whoever becomes elected as President of the United States needs the strong will to fill a number of criteria in order to reassert America’s role in the world. Senator McCain, he said, despite the negative rhetoric and opinion polls would make an excellent leader.

After both debaters had defined their political positions, David Foster asked each a series of pointed questions regarding the state of the United States economy and its foreign policy and what hope there was for the Middle East if both Republican and Democratic campaign strategies insisted on the importance of maintaining a strong relationship with Israel. Wasserman answered by saying that despite all their fundamental differences, both the pro-Israel and anti-Israel lobbies were in agreement on one issue and that is the belief in the strong influence of the Israel lobby and its ability to affect foreign policy. Wasserman noted that foreign policy decisions depend on a number of considerations and variables and do not simply follow a formula of befriending Israel at all costs.

Jim Patti argued, in relation to the question of foreign policy and Iraq, that Senator Obama was extremely irresponsible towards the American people by giving a definite time-frame for troop withdrawal regardless of the ensuing consequences. He admitted that “Brand America” was extremely damaged at the moment, but this was not irreparable, as the American system allowed for renewal and reconstruction. Patti emphasized that what is needed is greater oversight, stronger reforms and a clearer vision.

“If we want change, it needs to be more than a campaign slogan; we need Barack Obama” - Gary Wasserman

Audience members were invited to ask questions of both men, which produced a lively discussion. Some of the questions focused on initiating a conversation debating Arab views of America and what it means to be an Arab American in the current climate of home security and racial profiling.

Both speakers were asked to give concluding statements to wrap up the debate. Patti ended by saying that he had great respect for Barack Obama but because of the Senator’s inexperience, he should not be elected in 2008 rather, he should use the next four years to gather some valuable insight into the Presidency and run in the 2012 election. Wasserman warned that the Presidential candidates should not avoid concentrating on the important overarching issues by resorting to the tabloid tactics of mud-slinging and personality discredits in order to achieve their objectives.
Research Initiative

International Relations of the Gulf Working Group

On June 18 and 19, 2008, CIRS hosted a working group discussing the International Relations of the Gulf. This initial round of talks consisted of gathering together twelve experts of the Gulf region to conduct preliminary investigations on their chosen topics. Group members critically assessed the project’s focus, parameters of analysis, and main thesis.

A second round of talks is scheduled to take place in January 2009, when the working group will reconvene in Doha to finalize the project. The group will give each other feedback on articles they are writing on the various topics in discussion.

The collection of articles will result in the publication of an academic book highlighting new research on international relations of the Gulf. The book will contain chapters based on the following themes:

James Onley, University of Exeter
**Britain and the Persian Gulf**

Fred Lawson, Mills College
**Foreign Policy Perspectives of the Persian Gulf States**

Mohammed Ayoob, Michigan State University
**The American Security Umbrella: Strategies, Effectiveness, and Consequences**

Daniel Byman, Georgetown University
**The Iraqi Factor: Regional Consequences of Internal Turmoil**

Joseph Kostiner, Tel Aviv University
**GCC Collective Security Efforts**

J.E. Peterson, University of Arizona
**Border Disputes among the Southern States of the Persian Gulf**

Gerd Nonneman, University of Exeter
**Conceptualizing EU-Gulf Relations: Trends and Realities**

Mehran Kamrava, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar
**Iran’s Relations with the Southern States of the Persian Gulf**

Gregory Gause, University of Vermont
**Saudi Arabia’s Regional Security Policy**

Steven Wright, Qatar University
**Qatar: Energy Security and Foreign Policy**

N. Janardhan, Gulf Research Center
**The Asian Factor in Gulf Security: India and China**

Katja Niethammer, German Institute for International and Security Affairs
**GCC Political Reforms and their External Dimensions**

Zahra Babar joins CIRS as Project Manager

Zahra Babar received her BA in Government from Smith College and her MA from the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. She spent several years working for the Sarhad Rural Support Programme, the United Nations Development Programme and the International Labour Organisation in broad-based rural upliftment and poverty alleviation projects, with a primary focus on eradicating gender-based economic imbalances.
On April 5-6, 2008, CIRS hosted the “Innovation in Islam” conference. This two-day event featured discussions and dialogue with some of Islamic Studies’ most prominent scholars. The conference covered a variety of topics such as the idea and reality of innovation in Islam; development of knowledge in early Islam; development and change in Islamic legal systems; the arts and artistic innovation in Islam; science and scientific innovation in Islam; jurisprudential innovation in Islam; and politics and political innovation in Islam.

The conference was divided into six panels; below are summary abstracts of the papers delivered at the conference and a highlight of the keynote speech.

**Adonis**

**Keynote Speech**

*Innovation in Islam: New Directions for Humanity*

Adonis argued that Islam has become a “closed and ritualistic political system” rather than “one of learning and spirituality.” What Islam needs urgently, he said, is “renewal” (tajaddud) rather than “innovation” (ibda’). Adonis concluded that Islam inheres within it a “deep theoretical revolution” that today has been hijacked by the forces of fundamentalism. Reclaiming the true essence of the religion, he argued, cannot take place in isolation from freedom, both of thought and action.

Panel I: Innovation in Islam: Concept and Reality

Chair: James Reardon-Anderson, Georgetown University SFS-Qatar

**Nasr Abu-Zayd**

University of Humanistics in Utrecht

*Development of Knowledge in Early Islam*

This paper focused on the positive, liberal, and inclusive discourses embedded in the writings of Muslim thinkers who sought to reread and revisit Islamic tradition. The paper also hinted at the negative impact of the present state of political affairs, namely the occupation of Iraq, the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the enforced reformation agenda implicit in the American ‘Wider Middle East’ project.

**Nelly Hanna**

American University in Cairo

*History from Below; Dictionary from Below*

The paper discussed a 17th century dictionary of the colloquial Arabic of Cairo. The work is Yusuf al-Maghribi’s *Raf‘ al Isar fi kal’alam ahl Misr*. The paper proposed to approach this work in terms of the social, political and cultural contexts of its time rather than in terms of the history of its genre. It can thus be studied as a source for social history, or as a ‘dictionary from below’ in the sense that the author includes the vocabulary used by women, by children, and by craftsmen.

Panel II: Islamic Institutions: Traditions and Contributions

Chair: Patrick Meadows, Georgetown University SFS-Qatar

**Sumaiya Hamdani**

George Mason University

*The Fatimid Legacy: Policy and Precedent for Minority-Majority Coexistence in Islam*

This paper examined the religious policies of the Fatimids from the time of the establishment of their first state in Tunis in 297 H-909 CE, and the transfer of their state to Egypt in 356-969. The paper compared the evolution of religious tolerance policy towards the Fatimids and their agents, or da’is, and generals implemented on their behalf.

**Amira Sonbol**

Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar

*The Changing Family in Islam*

This paper discussed Personal Status Laws and how in Muslim countries they are based on the Islamic Shari‘a and as such are considered God’s Laws as provided through the Qur’an and the Sunna. Any effort to change personal status laws then becomes an attack on the very basic principles of Islam. It is this formula that confronts attempts to change gender relations and laws pertaining to women. This presentation traced the genesis of modern personal status laws pertaining to family and their implication to women’s history and legal rights.

**Zakaryya Abdel-Hady**

Qatar University

*The Masjid: Yesterday and Today*

This paper discussed the role of the Mosque in Islamic history, community, and life and how it is a symbol of a Muslim’s identity. The paper shed light on the historical role the mosque preformed as an institution has, and how it has contributed to Islam.
Panel III: Islam and the Intellectual Process  
Chair: Ibrahim Oweiss, Georgetown University SFS-Qatar

Hassan Hanafi  
Cairo University  
*New Directions in Islamic Thought*

This paper discussed the rich and varied facets of Islam. Much of Western media and publicly formulated discourses have concentrated on Islamic fundamentalism and violent Islam as the only version of the religion, thereby reducing the whole to one of its parts. The paper discussed socialist Islam, revolutionary Islam and nationalist Islam and cautioned that it was wrong to label all these Islamic innovations as Western. Notions such as liberalism, socialism, and nationalism are not the monopoly of the West but are innovations in every human culture which require parallel comparative cultural studies.

Mohammed Arkoun  
La Sorbonne  
*Islam and the Intellectual Process; Deconstructing Episteme(s)*

This paper examined the concept of historical epistemology applied to ‘closed official corpora’ of Islamic creed. This included the Qur’anic discourse, the Hadîth and sîra discourse, the Sharî’a/fiqh discourse and the historiography discourse. These discourses have different linguistic and semiotic statutes and were considered in their historical epistemic environment without mixing any level of analysis with the traditional normative theological and exegetical approaches. This paper limited its inquiry to two basic epistemic systems: the deconstruction of the Mushaf and its epistemic environment and the deconstruction of the foundational system of thought (‘ilm usûl al-dîn and usûl al-fiqh).

Tariq Ramadan  
St. Antony’s College, Oxford University  
*Knowledge and Hermeneutics in Islam Today*

This paper stressed the importance of analyzing subject positions with regards to knowledge. Knowledge as well as Islamic scholarship, Ramadan noted, were always entangled in a web of power relations and subject to these challenges.

Panel IV: Literary and Artistic Innovation  
Chair: Patricia O’Connor, Georgetown University SFS-Qatar

Walter Denny  
University of Massachusetts Amherst  
*Innovation and Tradition in Islamic Art*

This paper argued that the art of Islamic cultures draws its distinctiveness in style, subject matter, genre, and aesthetics from its continuity with tradition. The paper examined Islamic ceramics and the relationship between technical and artistic innovation; Islamic architecture and the relationship between engineering and spatial innovation; and the art of the Islamic carpet. These are deeply embedded in all social and economic levels of certain Islamic cultures, and often stereotyped as the most traditional of Islamic art forms.

Patrick Laude  
Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar  
*Sufi Poetry: Innovation and Tradition*

This paper explored the spiritual function of poetry in Sufism as a paradoxical, ever-shifting, mediation between presence and absence. Based on the principle that Sufi poetry is the epitome of Islamic poetry through its cultivation of inner authenticity, this paper argued that poetic inspiration amounts to an originality flowing from the very source of the spiritual tradition.

Jawid Mojaddedi  
Rutgers University  
*History and Biography*

This paper focused on a selection of writings of what is perhaps the most idiosyncratic genre of Islamic historiography, namely the tabaqat (‘generations’) genre; biographical compilations about the same individuals, repeated generation after generation. This has been interpreted as strong evidence of an unwillingness to embrace creativity and innovation from past precedents. This paper, however, proposed an alternative reading which argued that the repeated recalling, re-embracing, and re-constituting of the past in forever changing contexts has been in itself a dynamic and creative process rather than a backward orientation to a pristine foundational period.

Continued on page 10
Innovation in Islam, continued from p. 9

Panel V: Theology and Politics of Fiqh
Chair: Edmund Ghareeb, Georgetown University SFS-Qatar

Mehran Kamrava
Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar
Shi’a Fiqh at the Gates of Historic Change

Kamrava’s paper focused on the innovation that is presently taking place within Iranian Shi’a doctrine and jurisprudence. He chronicled the direction of Iranian Shi’ism after the country’s 1978-79 revolution and the debates within it that have come to constitute what he labels as a “reformist religious discourse”. Some of the most fundamental principles of Shi’a fiqh and theology have come under question as a result of this emerging discourse.

Ziba Mir-Hosseini
University of London
Hijab in Fiqh: Politics and Theology

This paper discussed the hijab as a major site of ideological struggle between traditionalism and modernity, and a yardstick for measuring the emancipation or repression of Muslim women. Hijab has become an arena where Islamist and secular feminist rhetorics have clashed. The paper documented how jurisprudential positions and notions of hijab in Iran evolved in response to socio-political factors. It concluded by highlighting wider implications of the new juristic position on hijab for establishing common ground between secular feminist and Islamic discourses.

Omaima Abou-Bakr
Qatar University
Interpreting Women’s Biographies in Medieval Islamic Writings: A Sub-text of the “Feminine”

This paper discussed how the study of women’s biographies in medieval histories is an important endeavor. Women’s biographies are, according to postmodern theories, texts that can be read according to subject position. This opens up alternative readings of history and women’s roles in Islamic culture. However, Abou-Bakr stressed that the study of Muslim women in cultural history has yet to benefit from such approaches.

Panel VI: Islam and Modernity
Chair: Joshua Mitchell, Georgetown University SFS-Qatar

Sherman Jackson
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
Liberal/Progressive, Modern and Modernized Islam: Muslims and the American State

This paper examined Muslim and non-Muslim relationships in the United States and the presumption that the West itself is an uncontested category to which Muslims, as newcomers, must simply accommodate themselves. This presumption also assumes that liberalism is the only legitimate discourse in which such a conversation can proceed. It also assumes that Muslims in the West are devoid of agency and that “Islam” itself is a wholly fixed and unresponsive monad.

John Voll
Georgetown University
Modern Movements in Islam

This paper examined Muslim movements in the modern era as important examples of innovation in Islam. The broader patterns of the development of these movements in the past two centuries reflect the dynamism of the interactions between Islam and modernity. This paper stressed the importance of looking at the broader historical dynamics of these developments as well as examining the specific movements.

Peter Gran
Temple University
The Reception of Islamic Roots of Capitalism as a Bellwether of Scholarly Views about Islam and Modernity

This paper argued that in the past quarter century, one encounters two forms of liberalism both of which in effect deny the existence of modern Islamic culture. To illustrate this dilemma, the paper took up the reaction to Islamic Roots, a book which claimed otherwise. The paper also suggested that the new opportunities in thought at this point would seem to come from the fact that liberalism does not know how to deal with the actual decline of the West. This is the time which would allow for fields such as Islamic Studies to break with this orientalizing past.
CIRS Research Fellows 2008-2009

James Onley - Senior Fellow

James Onley joined the Center for International and Regional Studies as a Senior Fellow in June 2008. Onley is Director of the Gulf Studies programme and Senior Lecturer in Middle Eastern History at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter, England.

Onley was previously Assistant Professor of Gulf History at the American University of Sharjah, UAE. He specializes in the history, society, and culture of the Gulf Arab states and holds a DPhil from the University of Oxford (2001), where he studied at St. Antony’s College.


Before joining academia, Onley served in the Canadian Army for twelve years and was a UN peacekeeper in Iraq at the end of the Iran-Iraq War.

During his Fellowship, Onley is invited to lecture on Gulf history and culture and is welcomed as part of CIRS and SFS-Qatar’s intellectual community.

Katja Niethammer - Post-Doctoral Fellow

Katja Niethammer joined CIRS as the Post-Doctoral Fellow in August 2008. Niethammer has a Ph.D. in Islamic Studies from the Free University of Berlin.

From 2004-2008 Niethammer worked as a researcher at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP), research group “Middle East and Africa.” Previously, Niethammer worked as Academic Coordinator of the Interdisciplinary Center “Social and Cultural History of the Middle East” from 2001-2004, and as project manager for both the publishing group Georg von Holtzbrinck and the Berlin-based House of World Cultures (Haus der Kulturen der Welt).

She studied Islamic Studies and Communication Studies at the Free University of Berlin and the University of Birzeit, Palestinian Autonomous Territories.

During her Fellowship, Niethammer will be involved in three major projects. In the first project, Niethammer will initiate a year-long examination of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries’ domestic and foreign policies. In the second project, Niethammer will devote time to the topic of political reform and work towards turning her Ph.D. dissertation entitled “The King’s Democracy: Institutional Transformation, Conflicts of Identities, and Discourses on Democracy in Bahrain’s Reform Process,” into a book manuscript. A third project Niethammer will work on is analyzing the role Qatar and Saudi Arabia play in regional conflict mediation.

CIRS Publishes Annual Report 2007-2008

CIRS published its 2007-2008 Annual Report documenting all its activities and achievements over the past academic year. The Report includes summaries and full listings of all conferences, events, publications, and research initiatives undertaken as part of CIRS’ efforts to promote cross-cultural understanding and dialogue, encourage in-depth scholarship, and provide the forum for thought-provoking public lectures and events.

To read the 2007-2008 CIRS Annual Report in PDF format, please visit the CIRS website at cirs.georgetown.edu/publications/ or to request a free copy, please write to cirsresearch@georgetown.edu
Spotlight on the Faculty

Kai-Henrik Barth is Visiting Assistant Professor at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. From 2002 to 2008 he was a member of the core faculty in Georgetown’s Security Studies Program (SSP) on the main campus, where he also served as Director of Studies for the last three years.

CIRS: Please describe a research project you are working on.

Barth: I am working on two different projects. One is on nuclear decision-making in Iran and the other is on the nuclear ambitions of the Gulf States. In my first project, I analyze the drivers behind the Iranian program. Many political scientists, nonproliferation experts, and journalists have addressed this question, but I offer a different perspective: my methodology is based on the history and sociology of science and technology, and therefore I put more emphasis on the social construction of large technical systems and the interests of social groups and individuals. In particular, I want to figure out the extent to which the Iranian nuclear establishment, that is, scientists, engineers, and administrators associated with the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), has pushed the program forward, not simply as an enabler, but as a driver shaping policy outcomes. Most analysts assume that Iran invests in its nuclear program because of the country’s security problems, but this is an a-historical view. Security is not the only driver for the development of a program, and it is often not even the most significant one. I argue that many nuclear programs are driven, at least in part, by mundane things like technical experts not wanting to lose their jobs, and so they lobby for the expansion of nuclear activities. This is often overlooked by neo-realists, who, unfortunately, dominate the analysis of nuclear weapons programs. There are many layers of analysis, and I find it very problematic when a historically complex case is reduced to just one variable, such as security. In nearly all cases of nuclear weapons development, other factors such as prestige, domestic politics, or the parochial interests of certain social groups play significant roles. Many analysts look for parsimonious theories, and they argue that such simplistic theories are not only academically superior, but also necessary to provide guidance to policy-makers. I would argue, however, that such theories cut away important aspects of the development of these programs and often lead to counter-productive policies. Providing a more comprehensive understanding of cases such as Iran’s program requires inter-disciplinary researchers, and this is where I might be able to contribute: I was a physicist once in my life, I have a PhD in the history of science and technology, and for the past seven years, I have worked with political scientists.

CIRS: What methodologies are you using?

Barth: I see myself as a contemporary historian who also uses political science approaches such as process tracing or case study methods. I see no fundamental problems in using historical methods for the analysis of contemporary developments. In contrast, some of my peers in history will argue that historical study of events after, let’s say 1980, is not possible in any depth since sources are classified or otherwise inaccessible. I disagree: there will never be a final interpretation, and contemporary historians, using available texts, artifacts, and oral history interviews as historical material, can provide a first cut. I have conducted numerous oral-history interviews with leading nuclear scientists such as Hans Bethe, Edward Teller, Yevgeny Velikhov, and J.B. Taylor.

I am biased in favor of qualitative approaches in the social sciences. I am a physicist and I have a high respect for numbers, modeling, and statistics, but I also know how numbers can mislead. Even natural scientists often cannot agree on what a particular set of numbers mean. Consequently, I am often skeptical about quantitative methods in the social sciences. I have seen analysts using fancy mathematics to predict the next nuclear proliferators, and the results were more than questionable. As a contemporary historian, I like to work with documents and people, and I am interested in understanding their actions, motivations, and constraints. Understanding individual cases often means more to me than theorizing about generalizations. Having said that, I experienced some of the most fascinating moments of my academic career struggling with theories such as quantum electrodynamics, social constructivism, neo-realism, and actor-network models. Theories are useful heuristic devices, but the “truth” is still in the details.

CIRS: Do you do any creative work outside of your academic work?

Barth: I love photography and enjoy working with software such as Aperture and Photoshop to make my own prints. I also dabble in music composition. As a student I worked for many years as a roadie, building concert stages and providing security during shows. I worked at hundreds of rock and classical concerts, including the Rolling Stones, Sting, Peter Gabriel, Luciano Pavarotti, and the pianist Vladimir Horowitz. I am not a musician at all, but programs such as Logic or GarageBand allow people like me to “build” songs using loops and recorded sounds. I try to create music for films, mostly with a danceable beat, and I had fun writing my own phone’s ringtone.
Monthly Dialogue Series

A Hunger for Trees: Myths of Desecration in Nature

Victoria Pedrick, Associate Dean and Associate Professor of Classics at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, gave a lecture entitled “A Hunger for Trees: Myths of Desecration in Nature” on April 22, 2008. Pedrick’s lecture was addressed to an invited audience made up of students, Qatar Foundation faculty and staff, locally-based ambassadors, and interested members of the general public. The talk was the sixth in the Monthly Dialogue Series; an academic outreach effort sponsored by CIRS where faculty members discuss their latest work and research interests.

Pedrick explained that “ancient Greek and Roman myths,” although fictional, “offer us a window onto the ancient sensibilities and imagination of nature.” Beneath their fantastical elements, these myths reveal the truth of how ancient peoples reacted towards their natural environments and how they affirmed their debt to it. She explained that by comparing ancient stories to modern ones, we can see a relative deterioration in values regarding the natural environment and how we have downgraded nature to little more than a resource that is subject to the mercy of our voracious needs.

Today’s insatiable appetite and “hunger for trees” quashes nature’s delicate balance, as resources are exploited with impunity and humans rarely give back in the form of sustainability and reciprocity.

Beauty and the Beast: Environment and Industry in Qatar

On September 15, 2008, Renee Richer, Professor of Biology at Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, gave a Monthly Dialogue lecture about the effects of industrialization in Qatar.

Richer’s talk focused on putting into context an assumption that is often taken for granted, namely that strict environmental rules automatically work in reducing environmental damage. Richer questioned this hypothesis by giving evidence from primary research she had conducted on the state of environmental protection in Qatar.

Although Qatar recently adopted strict laws regarding the allowable amount of toxic particulate matter in air or water, she stressed that environmental protection can only be achieved if all surrounding countries adhered to the same standards. If Qatar imposes strict air and water regulations and neighboring countries do not, then its environmental objectives cannot be met. Richer said that environmental pollution is a regional problem and not one that can be adequately addressed within the borders of just one country. Gulf countries should attempt to standardize their laws and work in tandem toward their enforcement.

Some organizations are attempting to adhere to environmental conservation by trying to find a medium between healthy productivity and a healthy environment.

Richer concluded on a positive note by saying that although Qatar is developing at an accelerated pace, because of its small population, it is not too difficult to have community involvement in the direction that industrial projects take regarding the environment. She also noted that the Supreme Council for the Environment was elevated to a ministerial level, which was a positive step in Qatar’s progress towards valuing the environment.
pursuing an Israel-centered agenda is the reason why the U.S. favors Israeli policies over Palestinian protests. Moreover, Mearsheimer maintained, the efforts of the Israel lobby not only undermine American interests, they also harm the interests of Israel itself and run counter to the wishes of a number of high-profile Israeli political figures and currents of thought.

Mearsheimer concluded by saying that, at least in the near future, there was little reason for optimism regarding a change in the entrenched nature of the relationship between the Israel lobby and U.S. foreign policy.
Opportunities 2009 - 2010

Research Grants

Center for International and Regional Studies
Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar

Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar’s Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) announces the launching of a major research initiative designed to enhance our understanding of migrant labor issues in the Gulf. CIRS will award a number of research grants designed to support original, empirically-grounded research involving fieldwork on topics related to migrant labor in the Gulf. Award recipients are expected to become active participants in the CIRS research initiative on the issue. The awards can last up to a maximum of two years, with a possibility of renewal.

Researchers interested in applying should send a cover letter and a detailed research proposal that conforms to the guidelines outlined on the CIRS website at cirs.georgetown.edu. Before applying, candidates are strongly urged to consult the Request for Proposals on the CIRS website.

Review of proposals begins on February 15, 2009 and will last until the research funds are allocated. For inquiries and grant application submission, please contact cirsresearch@georgetown.edu.

Post-Doctoral Fellowship

Center for International and Regional Studies
Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar
Location: Doha, State of Qatar

Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar’s 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 2009 semester. The Fellow is expected to devote this time to turning his/her dissertation into a book manuscript for publication.

Applicants must have completed a PhD between August 1, 2006 and August 31, 2009. The fellowship requires residence at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. The Fellow will be given library privileges at Georgetown University and office space at CIRS, and is expected to participate fully in the academic and intellectual life of the Center, including delivering occasional lectures at CIRS and taking part in the Center’s academic seminars and conferences. Depending on needs and interests, the Fellow may be invited to teach one course as well.

SFS-Qatar, which is located in Education City in Doha, Qatar, is a branch of the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service and offers a four-year undergraduate curriculum leading to the Bachelor of Science in Foreign Service (BSFS) degree identical to that offered on the Main Campus of Georgetown University in Washington, DC. Each year, the SFS-Qatar admits a class of approximately 50 students, primarily from the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, who take courses on and will graduate from the Doha campus. The students and facilities of SFS-Qatar are outstanding. SFS-Qatar employees join a community of scholars in Education City who teach in the other branch campuses of Carnegie-Mellon University, Weill Cornell Medical College, Texas A&M University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Northwestern University.

Compensation, benefits and other terms of employment are highly competitive. Review of applications begins December 15, 2008 and will continue until the position is filled.

Interested candidates should submit a cover letter, a current curriculum vitae, three letters of recommendation, and a synopsis of their PhD dissertation. Also, candidates should provide a statement outlining the precise nature of their intended work during the period of the fellowship, the final product’s significance in terms of the discipline and the body of knowledge, and when the completion of the project for publication may be expected. Please submit application materials electronically to cirspositions@georgetown.edu. Applications or supporting materials may be sent as well to Naila Sherman, CIRS Associate Director, 3300 Whitehaven Street, NW, Suite 2100, Washington, DC 20007-2401.

Georgetown University is an Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action Employer. Women and minority candidates are particularly encouraged to apply.
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Upcoming 2008-2009 CIRS Events

December 1, 2008  Distinguished Lecture: Hanan Ashrawi
The Future of Palestine

December 3, 2008  Monthly Dialogue: Jo Ann Moran Cruz and Haifaa Khalafallah
Religion and Legitimization of Political Rule in the Islamic and Christian Worlds: Preliminary Findings

January 8-9, 2009  Working Group: International Relations of the Gulf, Session II

January 14, 2009  Monthly Dialogue: Katja Niethammer
Democrats and Autocrats, Shiites and Sunnis: Political Reform and Confessional Identities in Bahrain

For event inquiries: cirsevents@georgetown.edu
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