 Interview with Seyyed Hossein Nasr on Religion & the Environment

Seyyed Hossein Nasr is University Professor of Islamic Studies at George Washington University, and one of the most important and foremost scholars of Islamic, Religious, and Comparative Studies in the world today. In this interview by Adeel Khan, Managing Editor of the journal Religions-Adyān, and Patrick Laude, Professor at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, Nasr elaborates upon the importance of a religious understanding of nature for the preservation of the environment.

Why is it necessary to have a religious view of nature for the environmental movement? Why is a secular view of nature insufficient for environmental activism? This is a hard question whose full answer would require a book. In fact, I have provided an extensive answer to this query in two of my books, *Man and Nature* and *Religion and the Order of Nature*. But let me summarize here some of the reasons for the necessity of having a religious view of nature. The environmental crisis has come about as a result of the applications of a materialistic and secularist science of nature, and the solution to this crisis cannot obviously be found within the very paradigm that has caused it in the first place. We need another paradigm that views nature not as an “it,” not as a vast mechanism devoid of life, not only as merely a source of raw materials to be exploited by man, not as a material reality devoid of innate spiritual significance, but as a sacred reality to be treated as such. Furthermore, if we understand what the sacred is, we shall realize that such a paradigm cannot come from anywhere but the Sacred Itself and the traditional sacred cosmologies and worldviews that dominated the perspective of humanity over the ages until the rise of modernism. These are still alive for many members of the human family despite being marginalized in many parts of the globe through the spread of the secular view of reality accompanying the spread of modernism.

Let us remember the basic metaphysical teaching to which traditional religions refer and upon which they are based in one way or another, the doctrine which the Western and Islamic traditions refer to as the “great chain of being” or ladder of universal existence. According to this basic teaching both the macrocosm and the microcosm do not possess only one level of reality or being but consist ultimately of multiple states of being which have been summarized in our classical texts as spiritus (al-rūḥ), anima (al-nafs), and corpus (al-jism). Within ourselves as microcosms all three...
Greetings from Doha.

CIRS has been busy over the past few months engaging on a number of new and ongoing research initiatives, producing English and Arabic-language publications, and connecting with members of the Qatar community through a robust public affairs programming effort, including Focused Discussions, Monthly Dialogue lectures, as well as informative Panel discussions on a variety of topics of relevance to the Middle East region.

We are especially pleased to announce the publication of a new CIRS Occasional Paper on “Iran’s Northern Exposure: Foreign Policy Challenges in Eurasia” authored by Manochehr Dorraj, a former CIRS Visiting Scholar, and Nader Entessar, Chair of the Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice at the University of South Alabama. CIRS has also just published an Arabic version of “GCC States’ Land Investments Abroad: The Case of Cambodia,” which is part of the larger CIRS research initiative on “Food Security and Food Sovereignty in the Middle East.” These publications can be downloaded for free from the CIRS website. Additionally, this summer, I published a book titled Qatar: Small State, Big Politics with Cornell University Press. The book describes Qatar’s ever-growing influence on, and importance in, regional and international affairs. For more information on the most recent CIRS publications, please refer to page 3 of this newsletter.

As for CIRS research and scholarship efforts, we have been actively working on a number of projects, and have been engaged in several ongoing and overlapping research initiatives, including “Transitional Justice in the Middle East,” “The Evolution of Gulf Global Cities,” “Social Currents in the Maghreb,” and “Healthcare Policy and Politics in the Gulf States.” These initiatives are designed to explore these topics through empirically-grounded, theoretically informed research where the goal is to fill in existing gaps in the literature and to contribute original knowledge to the field.

Furthermore, this newsletter contains detailed information about each CIRS activity and research initiative conducted over the past few months, as well as articles highlighting recent lectures, events, and faculty research.

We warmly welcome feedback from our readership, whether it is through Facebook, Twitter, or by e-mail. I, and the rest of the CIRS team, look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at our upcoming lectures. Finally, we invite our readers to follow CIRS news and activities by logging on to the CIRS website at: http://cirs.georgetown.edu.

Sincerely,

Mehran Kamrava
Professor
Director of the Center for International and Regional Studies
School of Foreign Service in Qatar
Georgetown University
Iran’s Northern Exposure
By Manochehr Dorraj and Nader Entessar

“Iran’s Northern Exposure: Foreign Policy Challenges in Eurasia” is authored by Manochehr Dorraj and Nader Entessar. The paper analyzes Iran’s evolving interest and geopolitical challenges to its foreign policy in Central Eurasia. As an emerging regional power with its own political agenda, perception, and calculus of its interests, Iran uses identity politics and shared cultural and religious values, where appropriate, to forge closer relations with Central Eurasian countries. Beyond this motif in Iran’s foreign policy, this paper concentrates on political, economic, and strategic variables affecting Iran’s foreign policy decisions in Central Eurasia. Islamic factors are treated as variables within the broader context of sociocultural factors that have played a role in shaping Iran’s foreign policy in the region.

Qatar: Small State, Big Politics
By Mehran Kamrava

In his most recent publication, Qatar: Small State, Big Politics (Cornell University Press, 2013), Mehran Kamrava, Director of CIRS, writes that the Persian Gulf state of Qatar has fewer than two million inhabitants, virtually no potable water, and has been an independent nation only since 1971. Yet its enormous oil and gas wealth has permitted the ruling al Thani family to exert a disproportionately large influence on regional and even international politics.

Kamrava presents Qatar as an experimental country, building a new society while exerting what he calls “subtle power.” Qatar’s effective use of its subtle power, Kamrava argues, challenges how we understand the role of small states in the global system. Given the Gulf state’s outsized influence on regional and international affairs, this book is a critical and timely account of contemporary Qatari politics and society.

GCC States’ Land Investments Abroad: The Case of Cambodia

This report has been prepared using data generated from fieldwork in Cambodia. It seeks to evaluate the country as a potential long-term source of agricultural staples for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states as part of their national food security policy strategies. This research has been undertaken as part of the “Food Security and Food Sovereignty in the Middle East” research initiative funded by CIRS. The project examined Cambodia as a prospective target of agricultural investment by GCC states. The findings of the project as a whole can be found in the forthcoming CIRS edited volume on Food Security in the Middle East. The main conclusion drawn in this report is that the acquisition of agricultural land in developing countries like Cambodia is a poor and risky strategy for the objective of securing food supplies for GCC states. This is because such approaches tend to dispossess, injure, or impoverish local communities, jeopardizing the viability of projects. The report also highlights the substantial opportunities for GCC states to invest in the Cambodian agricultural sector and proposes a potentially more reliable path to deliver the desired food security objectives by investing in smallholder agriculture instead of large-scale land acquisition.

استثمارات دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي في الأراضي الزراعية بالخارج: حالة كمبوديا - التقرير الموجز

تم إعداد هذا التقرير عبر استخدام البيانات التي تحمست عن العمل الميداني في كمبوديا، ويستند إلى تقييم البلاد كمساحي ممكن وطويل الأجل للموارد الزراعية الأساسية للدول الأعضاء في مجلس التعاون الخليجي، كجزء من استراتيجياتها في مجال السياسة الوطنية للأمن الغذائي. وقد أجري هذا البحث في إطار القيادة البحثية بعنوان “الأمن الغذائي والسيادة الغذائية في الشرق الأوسط”، بتمويل من مركزدراسات الدولي.ponder ويشمل التقرير في حقل كمبوديا كمفهوم محتمل بالنسبة إلى دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي في كل من كمبوديا كهف محتمل بالنسبة إلى دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي في ما يخص الاستثمارات في الأرض. ويمكن النظر في جميع استنتاجات هذا المشروع في كتاب “الأمن الغذائي في الشرق الأوسط” الذي سيصدر قريباً عن مركز الدراسات الدولي. والاستنتاج الرئيسي الذي خلقه التقرير هو أن حيازة أراض زراعية في البلدان النامية مثل كمبوديا تشكل استراتيجية بسيطة وخطرة في ما يخص هدف تأمين إمدادات غذائية للدول العضو في مجلس التعاون الخليجي. ويعزى السبب إلى أن نهج مثل ذلك إلى تجريد السكان في المجتمعات المحلية من ممتلكاتهم، وتصيبهم بالأذية، أو تفترؤهم، كما أنها تعرّض استمرارية المشاريع إلى الخطر. كذلك، يسلط هذا التقرير الضوء على الفرص المحتملة المتجهة دولة مجلس التعاون الخليجي في القطاع الزراعي في كمبوديا، ويقترح مسار آخر موثوقية لتحقيق الأهداف المرجوة في مجال الأمن الغذائي من خلال الاستثمار في الحيازات الزراعية الصغيرة عوضاً عن كبيرة منها.

ضي استثمارات دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي في الأراضي الزراعية بالخارج: حالة كمبوديا - التقرير الموجز

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Citizen Education After Political Transition: Comparative Experiences From Ethiopia And Kenya

For some time now I have been interested in how citizenship is constructed in transitioning countries. The genesis of the project was a unique opportunity some years ago in Ethiopia to assist in teaching workshops to high school civics teachers. Those sessions, and my other research on federalism and equality in Ethiopia, sparked my thinking on citizen-in-the-making. In my recent book, Making Citizens in Africa: Ethnicity, Gender and National Identity in Ethiopia (Cambridge University Press 2013), I explored the ways in which state actors and ordinary citizens create, contest, and ultimately expand citizenship in reforming contexts. My focus was on how “meaningful citizenship” is created and its impact on consequential social inequalities such as those associated with ethnicity and gender.

Now I am planning to return to the study of citizen education itself, during and after political reform processes. I am particularly interested in constitutional reform and I focus on experiences of citizen education in countries in sub-Saharan Africa that have rewritten or significantly revised their constitution in the past twenty years. I seek to take this research project in a comparative direction by considering teachers as a distinct group of actors in a state embarking on a new constitutional order. I go beyond the common questions—what do people learn in civic education and what impact does that have?—to ask who creates citizens?

The focus of existing research in comparative democratization has been on electoral reforms and political institutions. We know that citizens are informed and educated about political reforms through a variety of sources, including the media, government agents, and public educational systems. These are generally analyzed from an outcome perspective. Sometimes the focus has been on the impact of civic education programs on political knowledge or political opinions. Other studies have concentrated on the effects of political participation on violence or political stability. Often, education of citizens has been in the context of specific electoral activities rather than long-term education for social and political transformation. Political scientists have also generally focused on adult civic education.

But the existing scholarship does not adequately address the tensions around formalized processes of citizen-creation embedded in civic education programs. Research on high school civics in the United States and other advanced western democracies points to the complicated relationship between teachers and students. This is, however, in a considerably less politicized learning environment than in places that are newly democratizing, or are recently post-conflict.

Despite the growing interest in citizenship generally, we know relatively little about the content and aims of educational reforms around political change and constitutional reforms, particularly as these relate to outcomes, not purely pedagogical and educational ones. We might ask, for instance: what training do high school and university educators have in what is broadly termed “civics” or “government” and how do they perceive their role vis-à-vis political projects around constitutional change? How do parents and community members see their role? Is it politicized or professionalized? How does that shape the content and style of teaching of these critical topics?

My current research project is an empirical study of a particular “class” of actors in the citizenship-creation process: teachers. Though often analyzed from a pedagogical perspective, the teaching of civic education and related subjects by a particular set of teachers in environments where core concepts are politicized and often very controversial puts these teachers at the forefront of citizen education. These constitutional reforms are typically happening in a social and political environment transitioning away from highly repressive political systems, including harsh limitations on free speech, free press, and open learning environments. To ask teachers to rather rapidly become the instruments of new knowledge and new practice is a set of tasks requiring staggering knowledge and ability. Yet, almost always teachers in these contexts have little training in their subject or in teaching pedagogy and especially, limited exposure to the debates and decisions about new constitutions.

My research methodology is historical, comparative, and qualitative. I analyze civics textbooks, teacher training materials and policies, and historical documents on citizen education in the two countries. I have already conducted interviews and engaged in extensive participant observation with the writers of the revised civics curriculum in Ethiopia and a group of high school civics teachers attending a “training of trainers” workshop. The goal is to learn more about the overall structure of civic education in Kenya and Ethiopia, both government and civil society. The interviews establish government and donor expectations for civic education and the role of teachers. Future fieldwork will include focus groups with Kenyan and Ethiopian teachers.

Though the historical and cultural contexts vary, the notions of meaningful citizenship and civic education reflected in this research have global dimensions. In the context of a society reforming laws and institutions, especially through thorough-going constitutional reforms and after periods of civil war or conflict as both Kenya and Ethiopia have seen, developmental interventions in education must be the focus. Analyzing the role of local teachers in the creation and transmission of citizenship values and norms will facilitate the development of policy that is better able to build citizens that can shape governance norms in democratic and peaceful ways.
“THE ECONOMICS OF MIGRATION IN THE GCC”

George Naufal, Assistant Professor of Economics at the American University of Sharjah delivered a CIRS Monthly Dialogue lecture titled, “The Economics of Migration in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries” on September 9, 2013. The lecture mapped the history of non-GCC Arab workers migrating to GCC states, and explained how and why there were such dramatic changes to these migration patterns since the 1970s.

Naufal elaborated upon the history of labor migration to the GCC states in order to explain why these counties became a uniquely attractive destination for large numbers of foreign laborers. The chief factor turning the region into a hub of temporary economic migration was the discovery of large oil and natural gas reserves in the early twentieth century. Decades after the discovery of hydrocarbon reserves, during the time of the oil embargo of the 1970s, Naufal explained that “the GCC countries—Saudi Arabia first—received the largest transfer of wealth in human history.” Because the local populations were small in number and inexperienced, there was a dire need to import foreign labor in order to fully exploit the nascent industry. Naufal recounted that “in 1981, when the GCC was formed, the population was around 15 million” people living on a relatively vast amount of land. As the growth of the hydrocarbon industry accelerated, this in turn led to increased economic growth and related development projects, which required even more labor power. “The ultimate goal was to develop and develop fast, and the best way to do so is to bring labor,” he added.

Owing to geographical proximity as well as shared language, culture, and religion, “it was the non-GCC Arabs who came first in the ‘70s and the ‘80s” as migrant workers to the GCC states. However, this influx was gradually capped in the mid-80s when GCC governments realized that the Arab migrant workers posed a disruptive threat by introducing their own domestic religious and political ideologies, which were not welcome in the region. Naufal cited the first Gulf war as “a structural break in the nationality, or the source of workers,” to the GCC. During this time, citizens of Middle East countries that supported Iraq were deported en mass from GCC states.

The large numbers of non-GCC Arab migrant laborers were replaced with Asian and South Asian workers. Naufal argued that “the estimates put the non-GCC Arabs in the ‘70s to be around 70 percent of the labor force and the Asians less than 20 percent.” These figures were almost exactly reversed in 2005. GCC policymakers found that the Asian workers were economically beneficial as they would work more for less pay, and there was also less chance that they would be politically, religiously, or ideologically influential.

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The determinants of migration to the Gulf are the results of push and pull factors that are international and domestic according to the needs of both the sending and receiving countries. On their part, South Asian and South East Asian laborers traveled to the GCC to escape unemployment and poor standards of living in their home countries. “In comparison, in 2010, the standard of living in Qatar, measured by income per capita, was 23 times that of Sri Lanka, 35 times that of Yemen, 50 times that of Sudan, and 70 times that of Bangladesh.” Naufal noted that these macro-economic measurements translate on a micro personal level: “if you were an Egyptian farmer in the ‘70s, and you came to Saudi Arabia, you made 30 times your salary. In the ‘80s, if you were a school teacher in Egypt, you made 20 times your salary. In the ‘90s, if you were a Jordanian engineer, you tripled your income by moving to Kuwait.”

Naufal also explored the remittances phenomenon from the Gulf, which “are much less volatile and much more stable than foreign direct investment and foreign aid.” During the global economic crisis, remittances from the GCC remained strong, “basically, one fourth or one fifth of remittances in the world comes from the GCC,” he added. Pointing out the direct correlation between GCC labor policies and the growth and development of labor sending countries that receive direct remitted capital, Naufal commented that Middle East countries have thus missed out on potential investments and wealth that has been redirected to Asian countries.

Similarly, he noted the direct correlation between geopolitical events and GCC labor policies. Because of the volatility of many Middle East countries, the GCC states are especially attractive as a migration destination to the populations of neighboring Arab countries. Naufal argued that “since World War II, before the Arab Spring, up until 2010, the Middle East has had 28 serious conflicts.” Conflicts result in high unemployment rates and a lack of job opportunities, which for a large youthful population spell serious future challenges. To this end, he proposed that GCC labor policies could have partially alleviated some of the employment stresses that resulted in the Arab uprisings.

In conclusion, Naufal noted the future challenges to the GCC labor market. “The GCC countries were able to create, in the last ten years, 7 million jobs—that’s almost one million jobs a year,” he said. However, job creation matters less than ensuring that the local population enters fully into the labor market. Currently, unemployment rates are extremely high for local GCC populations who either refuse unattractive jobs, or cannot compete with more experienced foreign workers. “Countries in the Gulf have to think about what will happen to the price of oil and if at some point they will be able to balance their budget,” Naufal commented. In order to offset these worries, some GCC governments have begun diversifying their economies and investing heavily in education to give the local populations a competitive advantage in any future labor market.

George Naufal has a Ph.D. in Economics from Texas A&M University. His research has focused mostly on the Middle East and North Africa region with an emphasis on the Gulf countries. He is the co-author of Expats and the Labor Force: The Story of the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
Luciano Zaccara on the 2013 Iranian Elections

Luciano Zaccara, Visiting Assistant Professor at Georgetown University SFS-Qatar, delivered a CIRS Focused Discussion on the topic, “Do Elections Matter? Reflections on the 2013 Iranian Presidential Polls” on September 30, 2013. Answering this question in the affirmative at the start of the lecture, he went on to explain why elections are so important to the Iranian political system. Having conducted extensive fieldwork in Iran, Zaccara observed in-situ the last six electoral processes in Iran, including the Presidential Elections of 2005, 2009 and 2013; the Legislatives Elections of 2008 and 2012; and the Municipals and Assembly of Experts elections of 2006. He explained that “electoral life in Iran is very active; in the last 34 years of the Republic’s history there were 32 electoral processes in Iran,” which reveals how significant elections are for the regime to legitimize its political processes and institutions.

Giving some historical background, Zaccara noted that there have been a total of eleven presidential elections since the creation of the Islamic Republic. He added that only two presidents did not complete their terms; one was President Bani-Sadr who was impeached in 1980, and the other was President Rajai who was assassinated in 1981. The third, fourth, fifth, and sixth presidents, Khamenei, Rafsanjani, Khatami, and Ahmadinejad, were elected for two terms, which is the maximum allowable time in office. Of these, Rafsanjani and Khamenei obtained the highest proportion of votes with 95 percent each. Although Ahmadinejad officially attracted more participation in the electoral process, with figures reaching up to 83 percent, he was the most contested candidate in the history of Iranian elections.

Elections in Iran are vital for the survival of the political system despite the various governmental constraints. He explained that “electoral processes have very important functions in Iran, even within the authoritarian limits set by the constitutional and electoral frameworks, which are very particular in the Iranian case.” Despite the uproar regarding the 2009 results, electoral processes in Iran have important functions. First, they draw much light over the intra-elite dispute. Second, they serve the government to check the limits set by the constitutional and electoral frameworks, which are very important. Third, but no less important, they bring candidates into office, sometimes with unexpected results. And fourth, they determine the government’s composition,” Zaccara argued.

Describing the electoral process itself, Zaccara said that the voting system implemented in Iran in unique: there is no official registration of number of voters; the percentage of voters is calculated on a population census; and citizens can cast their vote in any polling station in the country. All these factors make it difficult for researchers and officials who study voting patterns to determine the exact proportion and geographic location of voters. Because of these unusual factors, many international observers believed that the results of the 2009 elections were fabricated. However, he said, keeping in mind the way in which the electoral framework is implemented in Iran, the history of result publication proves that these kinds of numbers are indeed possible. Zaccara added that a further difficulty for researchers is to compare election results over the years as the official information provided is not always consistent.

During the 2013 elections, 675 candidates were officially registered, but only eight made it through the strict criteria to enter the final stages of the elections. Of these, Rohani won the most votes and inaugurated his term as president on August 3, 2013. The week before the elections, Rohani had less than 10 percent of voting intention. However, the day after a key debate where he emphasized the importance of foreign policy, his popularity increased sharply indicating public interest in moving away from the isolationist policies of his predecessor. As a further indicator of the public’s desire for a new type of leadership, he received only 39 percent of votes obtained in Qom, which is considered the center of Shi’a religious clergy, while in peripheral provinces such as Sistan-Baluchistan Rohani obtained more than 73 percent of the vote. In Tehran, the most important and populated district he obtained 48 percent.

In conclusion, Zaccara argued that, on the domestic side, the most recent elections in Iran provided a re-legitimation of the political system and a recuperation of the population’s trust after the events of 2009. “My hypothesis around the results is that the popular support towards a particular candidate is not ideological, but highly circumstantial,” he said. On the international front, the elections have helped in the slow recovery of trust and opening up dialogue between Iran and the rest of the world.

Luciano Zaccara is the director of the OPEMAM-Observatory on Politics and Elections in the Muslim and Arab World, and an Honorary Research Fellow at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter. He holds a Ph.D. in Arab and Islamic Studies from Autónoma University of Madrid and a B.A. in Political Science from the National University of Rosario in Argentina.
ABDULLAH AL-ARIAN LECTURES ON “EGYPT AND THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD”

Abdullah Al-Arian, Assistant Professor of History at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, delivered a CIRS Monthly Dialogue lecture titled “From Revolution to Coup: Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood” on October 7, 2013.

Testament to Egypt’s importance in the Arab World, he argued that “whatever happens in Egypt has a tremendous impact on the outcomes of movements across the entire region. We are already seeing the consequence of that in places like Tunisia, Syria, Palestine, and elsewhere.” To this effect, Al-Arian addressed three areas: first, he traced the trajectory of the Muslim Brotherhood over the last four decades of its history. Second, he evaluated how that history shaped the decisions and performance of the Muslim Brotherhood over the course of the last few years in Egypt. Finally, he ventured some possible scenarios for the future of the Brotherhood, and its place in Egyptian politics and society.

Giving some background to the institution of the group, Al-Arian noted that despite having been formed eighty-five years ago by Hassan Al-Banna, it experienced very few ideological or organizational shifts over the years. During the presidency of Anwar Sadat in the 1970s, Egypt began a new era in which formative economic and political liberalizations were taking place, shifting power away from the military and towards a new urban middle-class. The Brotherhood’s traditional support-base existed in rural Egypt, but “during the course of its reconstitution, the organization’s veteran leadership tapped into this emerging social group that was increasingly urbanized, middle-class, professional, and, to a certain extent, more religiously devout due in large part to disenchantment or disillusionment with the failures of the Nasser period,” he argued. The group entered into a modern phase of its history where Islamic activism was coupled with practical concerns, and economic prowess. At this time, the Brotherhood worked on streamlining its message in order to overcome an increasingly fragmented sense of Islamic identity, and to challenge the rise of competing movements that attempted to fill the void of post-colonial power struggles. During this phase of its history, “the Muslim Brotherhood is slowly beginning to engage more directly with society and, to a certain extent as well, with the state,” he explained.

Seeking to protect their vested interest, and not wanting to jeopardize the tacit agreements forged with the Mubarak regime over the years, the Brotherhood acted cautiously when it came to overt political engagement, and remained on the margins of the 2011 uprisings. Al-Arian suggested that “It’s not a revolutionary movement, it’s a reform movement,” which is exemplified by the group’s reticence to join the civil society uprisings in Egypt at the early stages of unrest. “It was only three days later, when the momentum was clearly picking up that finally the leadership reverses its decision and decides to flood Tahrir Square with its supporters who, of course, played a very critical role in the biggest clashes between them and Mubarak’s security agents,” he said.

After the fall of the Mubarak regime, “the Muslim Brotherhood, along with millions of other Egyptians, faced a very critical choice: do they support the transition to a new government that was basically being put in place by the military, or do they demand true revolutionary change by opposing all attempts by the military to try to impose its roadmap for the ensuing transition?” When Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohamed Morsi took office, despite a few token gestures to appease the public, he made no major changes to the existing mode of governance. In fact, “the most critical institutions—the bureaucracy, the judiciary, the police, the intelligence services, and most major ministries—would essentially continue to function with a ‘business-as-usual’ attitude, with only cosmetic changes being made,” Al-Arian noted.

Although the Brotherhood had a successful history of organizing grassroots civil institutions at the community level, the group lacked any form of expertise when it came to large-scale economic and political proficiency necessary for the functioning of an entire nation. Thus, during their time in office, the Brotherhood submitted to the entrenched authoritarian hold of the army ensuring that it remain beyond recrimination despite the abuses committed during the uprisings, and that it would not be held accountable despite its undemocratic and opaque modes of operation. Ultimately, allowing the military to continue its control would be the group’s undoing as “the Muslim Brotherhood was actually helping to create the climate in which a freely elected president could be overthrown by the defense minister and head of the military,” he contended.

In conclusion, Al-Arian argued that the Brotherhood has once again become an ostracized entity whose leaders have been imprisoned, their institutions destroyed, their assets seized, and their media shut down. As a final thought, however, he posited that “an unintended consequence of the state’s desire to destroy the Muslim Brotherhood will actually enable the development of alternative modes of organization and mobilization.”

Abdullah Al-Arian holds a doctorate in history from Georgetown University. He received his Masters degree from the London School of Economics and his BA from Duke University. Al-Arian is the author of the upcoming book Answering the Call: Popular Islamic Activism in Egypt, 1968-1981, to be published by Oxford University Press.
Interview with Seyyed Hossein Nasr

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are present and can be experienced by us. Our spirit, which some confuse with the psyche, affects and is related to our psyche and our psyche to our body. Our total being is a whole, a wholeness that we realize when we are healthy both outwardly and inwardly. It is not accidental that wholeness, health, and holiness are etymologically related. Nor is it accidental that the limitations of a secularist view of the body as a machine and the medicine based upon it are drawing so many to what is now called holistic medicine. Despite many achievements in certain fields, modern medicine is confronted with limitations even in the treatment of many physical diseases as a result of its imprisonment in a secularist view of the psycho-physical aspect of the human microcosm. The secular view of nature, as far as it concerns the human body, is inadequate because it is not based on the whole of reality and is therefore only partially real.

“I am in favor of every form of authentic environmental activism even if it claims to be secularist as long as it has some effect in defending the natural environment.”

Now, the same truth holds for the macrocosm. Nature is not only a collection of objects to be studied only through observation and analysis and dominated for utilitarian ends. All levels of the reality of nature are interconnected. Nor is nature a dead reality in parts of which life has appeared as an accident. Nature is a whole, a living whole. This is the truth that has led some to pose in recent decades the Gaia hypothesis which, however, does not go far enough, for it excludes the reality of the spirit. Yes, even within and beyond the domain of life, nature is permeated by the presence of the spirit. Such a vision, moreover, is not simply a poetic expression but is based on metaphysical and cosmological sciences which are real, that is, they correspond to the nature of reality, to the nature of things seen in their totality. A secularist view of nature is simply not completely real and mistakes a part of the reality of nature for the whole and commits the sin of omission. Therefore, it cannot solve in an ultimate sense the environmental crisis that is itself caused by this truncated view of reality in the first place. Only traditional doctrines contained in the world’s traditional religions and cosmologies can bring about once again awareness of the reality of the multiple states of being in which the world of nature, as we experience it externally, participates and from whose higher levels it is not divorced.

Furthermore, it is only the religious view of man as a being having religious responsibility for the world of nature that can induce followers of various religions to take this responsibility seriously. Let us not forget that most human beings even today follow one religion or another and on the practical level, religious injunctions to protect the natural environment are much more efficacious in most parts of the world than the advice of some scientist or secular Western environmentalist. The world is not just France or Germany. Would a villager in Sumatra or a pilgrim at the foot of Mount Fuji in Japan listen more to a Muslim or Buddhist teacher advising him or her not to pollute a stream nearby or desecrate the mountain peak before him or her or to instructions from a secular environmentalist or some government agency? In fact, if you look at this matter globally, you would have to agree that an environmental ethics that is based on religious ethics is much more efficacious among human beings living on most continents than an environmental ethics presented as having nothing to do with religion. Paradoxically, even the environmental ethics presented by secularists ultimately has a religious basis even if its proponents claim to be secularists. Just look at the central idea mentioned so often today that life is sacred and valuable and that it should be preserved.

I am in favor of every form of authentic environmental activism even if it claims to be secularist as long as it has some effect in defending the natural environment even if it is not the ultimate answer. I am also aware that for many ardent defenders of nature especially in the West, who claim to be secularists and have turned away from their own religious traditions, their environmental activities themselves have certain attributes which are in a deeper sense religious so that some who consider themselves to be secularists are even willing to endanger their own lives to save the natural environment, practicing the religious virtue of self-sacrifice even if they think they are secular. But to solve the environmental crisis completely and not only ameliorate the situation requires the acceptance of a paradigm that rejects the de-sacralization of both man and nature, and that has its roots in religion understood in its most universal sense and not only in its legal and social aspects although these aspects which include what we now call environmental ethics are also of great importance in the solution of the crisis at hand.

How can the environment we inhabit remind us of our place in the cosmos? And its reasons?

Nature reminds us of our place in the cosmos through its very existence, its forms, its laws, and the Divine Wisdom it exhibits and reflects in its every detail. Alas, not all men have eyes and hearts open enough to be reminded of the signs (the āyāt) that God has placed in nature precisely to help us to remember Him, His Wisdom, and Power. If we open our eyes and hearts, we shall be able to see these signs and also our interconnection to all other beings not only materially in terms of the commonality of the chemical elements within our bodies and within the rest of the world, but also spiritually. Nature can teach us about the purpose of creation and our role in it and indirectly help us spiritually by providing sign posts on the path that leads to the Origin of all existence. Nature can also teach us humility and is a means of overcoming our hubris, a sin that plays a central role in the creation of the environmental crisis.

When modern science began, some of its greatest figures still looked upon their science as a way of studying God’s Wisdom and His signs in the created order. The great botanist John Ray would go into the fields to study plant specimens as vestigia Dei (literally āyāt Allah or signs of God). In discovering the three laws of planetary motion, Johannes Kepler believed that he was discovering the harmony of the world that God had established therein. In writing his Principia, Isaac Newton thought that he was studying the “mind of God.” All these scientists were highly religious men. But although exceptions continued, the mainstream of modern science
soon turned away from such concerns. Entelechy, teleology, and final causes as well as the presence of the Wisdom of God in His creation came to be denied and were expelled from the concern of science. Consequently, the place of man in the cosmos came to be seen only in material terms.

A discourse developed concerning the position of man in the cosmos that combined a false humility with hidden hubris. We are told ad nauseam that man is but an insignificant creature living on a minor planet revolving around one among innumerable suns in a cosmos of dimensions so vast that its vastness is beyond even our imagination. But rarely are we told by the champions of scientism how it is that this insignificant being can know the vast reality that is the cosmos, and such people even make claims about having certain knowledge of cosmic history going way back to billions of years ago usually hiding the conjectures and uncertain assumptions upon which their so-called scientific knowledge is based. Moreover, such supposed cosmological knowledge keeps being presented as completely certain knowledge and in fact the only possible knowledge of the cosmos despite the fact that this knowledge itself keeps changing all the time and does not possess any finality. What happened to that humility that was also asserted? That is why I spoke of fake humility. On the basis of what criterion do those who follow scientism reject the traditional cosmologies if not hidden hubris or sheer ignorance?

If we go beyond this truncated vision of reality and see the cosmos in its total reality, the natural environment can teach us not only our interconnection with all beings and especially with the web of life, but also something about our central role on this earth. The fact that we, as one among numerous species on earth, have been the only beings who have been capable of bringing about the environmental crisis is itself proof of our centrality in this world. The environmental crisis is itself proof, if proof be needed, of our role as the central creature here on earth, as the center of the circle of terrestrial existence. Awakening to the real meaning of man and nature, we could then substitute authentic humility for that false humility that is so pervasive in so much scientific discourse today and substitute authentic knowledge of the nature of reality on all its levels for that truncated knowledge parading as the only authentic knowledge and based on that hidden hubris that is foundational to the environmental crisis.

The Qur’an states, “Verily we come from God and to Him we return.” This is a key verse that defines our position in the world of existence. The natural environment, if understood in depth, can help us to realize this truth as we journey through this world and also make us more aware of our responsibility towards the world of nature, a responsibility placed upon our shoulders by Him to Whom we shall return. This is the role that traditional cosmologies fulfilled over the ages. How unfortunate it is that most modern scientists negate the value of these sacred cosmologies, of this *cosmologia perennis* that is also *universalis*, and how rare are those scientists who understand the wisdom hidden therein! A scientist such as Wolfgang Smith who wrote the very significant book *The Wisdom of Ancient Cosmology* is rare indeed. The deafening silence that has been the response to his work from the scientific community is a tragic commentary upon the sorry state of the domineering worldview of the present-day world.

**Does religion necessarily help in environmental consciousness? How come America, the biggest polluter, is also a pious nation?**

I think that I have already answered why religion in its universal dimension and sapiental teachings provides crucial help in gaining an environmental consciousness that could provide us with full awareness of the total reality of the natural environment and therefore help us to solve the crisis at hand. As for why America, or more precisely the United States, is a pious nation while also being the world’s biggest polluter of the environment, this question requires an answer that is based on a very complicated set of factors. Let us recall some of them. Protestantism, which is still the most important religion in America and the most important source for the ethics that dominated American society after the European invasion of North America, was historically tied to the rise of capitalism which itself was central to the development of modern industrialism with its dire consequences for the natural environment. Furthermore, putting aside early Protestant theosophy, mainstream Protestantism developed for the most part an acosmic theology. Most of its followers emphasized individual and social religious ethics confined almost exclusively to the human world and not a truly Christian theology of nature. As for Catholicism that came to America from the nineteenth century onward, it had already surrendered the cosmos to modern science after the trial of Galileo.

Since most of the Europeans who migrated to America in its earlier days, whether they were Puritans, Quakers, Anabaptists, or other similar groups, were religious communities and migrated to escape religious persecution back in Europe, they took advantage of the religious freedom that they found in their new homeland and created laws to preserve that freedom. Religion therefore remained strong among the masses but it did not possess a strong intellectual dimension. However, at least secularist and anti-religious philosophies did not find as congenial a setting for their spread there as they did in Europe. From the eighteenth century onward most Western anti-religious philosophies came from Europe. America did not produce a Bayle, Marx, Comte, or Sartre; those men were all Europeans. One can say sarcastically but in truth that today the most notable “intellectual” export of Europe is this new current of atheism. In this domain European exports are far ahead of the American.

As a result of the spread of secularist philosophies, piety diminished in Europe but it continued fairly strongly particularly on the popular level in America especially in the Bible belt which does not have a European equivalent. Yet, this American piety accepted a secularist view of nature and the sciences based upon it without bothering to pay...
much attention to the fact that this view of the natural environment was by no means Christian. In conquering America from the Atlantic to the Pacific, most Americans would go to church on Sunday while they had no qualms about killing animals, not to speak of the natives, and destroying forests the rest of the week with an ethically innocent attitude. These realities were combined with the great industrial power of America, which was made possible not only by the hard work of American men and women, but also because of the vast resources made available to Americans as a result of their domination over a continent which had been preserved in an almost virginal state of paradisal beauty by the natives, the so-called American Indians, who had inhabited it for many millennia before the coming of the white man.

The combination of these factors made possible the coexistence in America of piety on a certain level, but without the intellectual and spiritual dimension of religion especially as it pertained to the world of nature, an ethics tied to the practice of unbridled capitalism, later immersion without resistance in a culture of consumerism and the development of the most powerful industrial economy in the world. The result today is the presence of a society in which there is much piety on a certain level but also the power and the will to be the greatest polluter of the natural environment.

In this context it is also interesting to note that when the environmental crisis began to loom on the horizon most of those in America who were sensitive to the destruction of the natural environment left the formal religious structures of American society, some seeking religious guidance in other religions including not only Oriental ones but also Native American religions, and others created what came to be known as the New Age religions. The political consequence of this turning of events is that these days the right of the American political spectrum is associated with the religious right identified mostly with Evangelicals and is little interested in the environmental movement while the left of the political spectrum, often accused by the right of being secularist and even anti-Christian, has become the defender of the natural environment.

In conclusion to this response it must be added in all fairness that throughout American religious and political history there has existed also a current that has been aware of the spiritual significance of nature. We can see this current in the sermons of Jonathan Edwards and the writings of Henry David Thoreau as well as in the creation of the national park system by Theodore Roosevelt. It is not at all accidental that the present day environmental movement began not in Europe or some other continent but in America.

Do scriptures of Abrahamic and other faiths help us in any way to approach the environment with care?

The sacred scriptures of various religions present us with guidance in our treatment of the natural world by pointing out the reality of both what nature is and who we are and what our responsibilities are in the world in which we live, the world including not only the human world but the non-human one as well. All we have to do is to study the Tao Te Ching, the Buddhist sutras, the Upanishads, or the Avesta. As for the Abrahamic religions, there are numerous references in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, to the world as God’s creation and our responsibility before God to deal with His creation with care.

The last of these sacred scriptures, the Qur’ân, is especially rich in this matter. It often addresses not only men but also other creatures and in many verses takes natural phenomena and objects as witness, including the sun and the moon as well as the pomegranate and the olive. The Qur’ân also reminds man constantly that all creatures have rights (huquq) which man must respect. That is why Islamic Law (al-Shari‘ah), which derives from the Qur’ân, contains many injunctions concerning our responsibility towards other non-human creatures from the beasts of burden to fruit trees. Care for God’s creation is one of the central messages of the Qur’ân and an important part of the Shari‘ah.

Does one have to have a mystical perspective to appreciate the sacrality of nature?

Among followers of primal religions the awareness of the sacrality of nature was ubiquitous and so was what we call the mystical perspective. This fact is true even today to the extent that these primal religions, such as the Native American, Aborigine, or Yoruba religions, have survived in a state of wholeness. But among the later religions that dominate the world today, especially among the Abrahamic religions, the legal and social dimensions of religion and the mystical and esoteric dimensions became more separated, Hinduism being to some extent an exception being both a primordial religion and a “historical” one. In the later religions awareness of the sacrality of nature became more emphasized in that aspect of these religions which are usually called mystical or esoteric rather than in their social and legal teachings. We therefore see a greater emphasis upon the sacred quality of nature in Taoism than in Confucianism. And in the Abrahamic world, the Kabbalists in Judaism, the Christian mystics, and the Sufis in Islam have been more concerned with the sacrality of nature than those who have spoken of only their religions’ legal and social teachings. It is not at all accidental that St. Francis of Assisi, who has been named as the patron saint of ecology by the Catholic Church, was also one of the greatest Christian mystics.

In today’s world, therefore, awareness of the mystical perspective is of the utmost importance in the re-discovery of the sacrality of nature. It is the writings of the mystics and sages and those devoted to the mystical and metaphysical perspective, whether they be the Zohar, the Canticles of St. Francis, or the poems of Rûmî that provide the most accessible means for most people today to re-discover the sacrality of nature.
What message does Islam have for those oil producing countries that do not place an ethical limit on their extraction of mineral resources? The message of Islam to them is multifold. First of all, the use of any natural resource should be in accord with the harmony and balance of nature that Islamic thought, basing itself on the Noble Qur’an, emphasizes so much. Secondly, oil production should be carried out with the welfare of not only the present generation but also future generations in mind. Thirdly, increasing production just to placate external powers who then help to keep political structures in Muslim lands in power is certainly not Islamic. Nor is greater production to buy useless arms or making one’s citizens to become better consumers of foreign products beyond their legitimate needs.

“One on the practical level, religious injunctions to protect the natural environment are much more efficacious in most parts of the world than the advice of some scientist or secular Western environmentalist.”

One must concede that in the present situation there is no way for governments in Muslim countries which possess petroleum resources not to produce oil whose consumption results nevertheless in such great dangers for the natural environment. The wealth that comes from its sale accelerates the destruction of the Islamic ambience of those countries and results in so many political, economic, and social problems resulting in the creation of such environmentally speaking monstrosities as modern Dubai. I remember that Iryānī, who became the first president of Yemen after Imam Badr was deposed, called oil  {bawl} Iblīs, the urine of the Devil. If we recall the burning of the Kuwaiti oil fields and what has happened to the ecology of the Persian Gulf since the production of oil in that region began, not to speak of all the political upheavals and wars caused by ever increasing “need” of powerful countries for oil and therefore their attempts to dominate oil producing countries in one way or another, it becomes clear that Iryānī’s observation was not just a poetic exaggeration.

If Islamic teachings were to be followed, much more care would be taken by oil producing countries in the production of their oil, which should be carried out with the utmost awareness of its consequences in light of its impact upon both the natural environment including global warming and the real welfare of Islamic society. Oil is not an unquestioned divine gift to be squandered as modern man has done; it is a double-edged sword. Man cannot squander and deplete in a century and a half what took nature, according to geologists, some four hundred million years to create, without this human action wreaking havoc upon the natural environment including of course causing global warming. The thoughtless use of wealth derived from oil to build very tall buildings even right next to the Ka‘bah thereby changing the very experience of the ḥajj, not to speak of their negative environmental impact, seems like an eschatological sign of the end of the world. Did not the Prophet—  {udayhīl’-salāt wa’l-salām—say that one of the signs of the coming of the Hour, that is, the end of the world, would be that man would build tall buildings? Islam certainly places an ethical limit on the production of any substance such as oil that would have such devastating effects upon both the natural environment and human society. But one must ask the question, where are the ears that would listen to Islamic teachings on such matters? If there are some ears which do listen, they do not belong, or rarely belong, to authorities and people in power who decide such questions.

Is it necessary to invest in green research and development if a country’s wealth is primarily from extracting mineral resources? Investing in green research is incumbent upon all societies but especially upon oil producing countries which possess the wealth necessary to devote to such research. Such countries must remember that oil is limited no matter how great their resources. They must devote some of their resources to green research now while they still can. This is an investment in the future of their own people. They must remember that countries as different as America and China are spending much effort in green research. If the Muslim oil producing countries which have all the means necessary to pursue such research now, do not do so, soon their oil resources will become depleted and they will be left as consumers forced to buy from whatever wealth they have left, the new green technologies developed by others.

What message do the world’s religions have regarding ethical consumption? The message of the world’s religions concerning ethical consumption, whether they be Hinduism and Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, or Judaism, Christianity, and Islam just to give a few examples, is very clear. It is to avoid excessive consumption and waste or what Muslims call ḥaraq. The Qur’an states explicitly that human beings should avoid both miserliness and excess in spending. All religions teach the virtue of being content with one’s lot (qinā‘āb) and not to be wasteful, greedy, and gluttonous. Religions extol the virtue of poverty rather than wealth without denying that the wealthy can also be virtuous if they spend their wealth for God and in charity to others. In this context it is necessary to recall that Christ said, “Blessed are the poor,” a saying conveniently forgotten by many especially some Protestant sects which not accidentally are the same groups that are so indifferent to the plight of the environment. Certain sayings of the Prophet also echo the dictum of Christ. Of course both Christ and the Prophet were also in favor of economic justice as were other prophets. Moreover, economic justice is central to the teachings of religions about ethical consumption but this justice is not meant to be based on waste and over consumption for the sake of economic benefit to certain groups and must also include justice for all creatures of the earth and not only human rights.

Do the world religions predict an end of the world in terms of the environmental crisis? If we look at the teachings of various religions about the Last Days, whether it be the Hindu description of the end of the Kali Yuga, the Revelation of John in the Christian Bible, or certain passages of the Qur’an and Hadīth about the end of the world, we see that the crisis in the order of the natural environment plays a major role in eschatological events. But there is also the crisis in the human order and the turning of men and women away from God and religious teaching, a turning away that is also a central component in the creation of the conditions that result in the end of the world. Therefore, one must say yes, the religions envisage eschatological events in relation to an unprecedented crisis in the natural environment but also in relation to the spiritual and religious decay and deviation among human beings.
Qatar University Fellow
Mohammed Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi

In order to enhance local research productivity, and to build upon its established collegial relationship with Qatar University, in 2012, the Center for International and Regional Studies launched an annual fellowship to be awarded to a distinguished member of Qatar University’s faculty.

Mohammed Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi has been selected as the 2013-2014 CIRS Qatar University Fellow. He is the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Assistant Professor of Commercial Law at Qatar University – College of Law. He graduated from Qatar University with a Bachelor degree of Law (LL.B) in 2007 and then received his Master of Laws (LL.M) and Judicial Science Doctorate (J.S.D) degrees from the University of California, Berkeley in 2011. Al-Khulaifi received the State Ph.D. award from H.H Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, the Qatari Emir, at Qatar Education Excellence Day in 2012.

Besides his academic work, Al-Khulaifi is an authorized Qatari Lawyer at Abdulaziz Saleh Al-Khulaifi’s law office in Doha. In addition, he has been consulted by governmental institutions to present his legal opinions on matters related to commercial legislations in the state of Qatar.

CIRS Post-Doctoral Fellow
Matt Buehler

Matt Buehler is the 2013-2014 Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Center for International Regional Studies, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. He holds degrees in government from the University of Texas at Austin (Ph.D. and M.A.) and Willamette University (B.A.). In Fall 2014, he will begin a tenure-track position at the University of Tennessee’s Department of Political Science.

Buehler’s research area is comparative politics with expertise in the Middle East. He has been traveling to the region since 2006, completing over three years of fieldwork and Arabic training in North Africa, Syria, and the Persian Gulf. His main research interests include democratization, authoritarianism, the Arab Spring, Islamist movements, North African political parties, and Moroccan politics.


SFS-Q Faculty Fellow
Mohamed Zayani

CIRS launched an annual fellowship to be awarded to a member of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar (SFS-Q) faculty in order to enhance research opportunities.

Mohamed Zayani has been selected as the 2013-2014 CIRS-SFS Qatar Faculty Fellow. He is an Associate Professor of Critical Theory at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar as well as an Affiliate Faculty with the Communication, Culture and Technology Program. Zayani’s research interest lies at the intersection of cultural studies, communication studies, and political science, with particular attention to the evolving dynamics of global communication. His work revolves around four main axes of inquiry: the dynamics of global flows and counter-flows, the shifting boundaries between traditional and new media, the political implication of social media, and the cultural anthropology of media. Over the course of the year, Zayani will continue his close collaboration with CIRS’s research on the role of the Arab media in the aftermath of the 2011 uprisings. This research initiative has been underway for the past year, and Zayani has been and will continue to be its central driving force as it moves forward.
In contrast to the burgeoning literature on Asian immigrants in the Gulf, Arab migration to the region has been a neglected area of study. In order to fill this gap, CIRS launched a grant-based research initiative on “Arab Migrant Communities in the GCC.” Five grant proposals were awarded to scholars to conduct fieldwork and original research on various topics related to Arab migration in the region. In conjunction, CIRS held a two-day meeting to discuss the economic and political push and pull factors of Arab migration to the region, the historical migration trajectory, the current conditions and varied experiences of Arab expatriates residing and working in the Gulf, as well as future trends in regional migration. Along with the five teams of research grant awardees, who updated the group on their ongoing research and preliminary findings, the working group participants consisted of a cohort of experts and scholars.

The advent of the Gulf oil economies in the 1950s brought with it an influx of migrants predominantly from the Arab world. As the literature documents, the stocks and flows of regional migration have altered throughout the years, with the first Gulf War demonstrating a break in the inflow of Arabs, and a dramatic increase in the import of an Asian workforce. Viewed as more politicized in comparison to their Asian and Western counterparts, Arab migrants in the GCC have historically been impacted by the geopolitical atmosphere. In light of the recent uprisings throughout the region, and more specifically in recognition of the political consciousness of Arab youth, the participants discussed the significance of assessing perceptions of the Arab uprisings amongst non-local students in the GCC. The attitudes of foreign students towards political and social change taking place in the region has significant implications for future policies related to labor and migration. While perceptions embedded in historical events or narratives impact the governance of migration, they too influence the relations between locals and expatriate Arabs. Mapping the historical-political consequences of the first Gulf War and more recently the Arab uprisings provides a lens to assess how certain Gulf states have negotiated their tenuous relationship with their migrant Arab communities. Based on the historical context, different generations of Palestinians in the UAE, for example, have exhibited varying experiences of cross-nationality interaction, different degrees of willingness to engage on political issues, and, most substantially, diverse levels of success in their ability to obtain Gulf citizenship.

Underlying the politics of migration, the notion of impermanence and temporariness in relation to the “transient foreigner” was repeatedly discussed throughout the meeting. As participants pointed out, the “temporariness of migration” in the Gulf states, particularly as it relates to Arab migrants, is an indication more so of their political and social status rather than the duration of their stay in the region. People of Arab origin have resided within the GCC for decades, resulting in a significant proportion of second and third generation GCC-born Arab expatriates. While limited pathways to citizenship have policymakers categorizing migrants as “temporary,” numerous long-standing migrant communities have carved out a more permanent presence within the GCC.

As the dominant Arab nationality throughout the GCC, Egyptians have permeated a range of economic sectors and are generally considered to be the most diverse Arab expatriate community within the Gulf states. The diversity of the Egyptian community in certain states such as Kuwait is manifested in the demographically based socio-spatial and geographic distribution of Egyptians throughout the city. The diverse experiences and socioeconomic statuses of Egyptians provide a valuable foundation for the analysis of “bonding capital” within the Egyptian community as well as “bridging capital” with the host community. Moreover, as Egyptians in Kuwait constitute the second largest source of remittances to Egypt, their impact on homeland development is substantial. While most studies focus on the micro-level impact of remittances at the household level, experts discussed the need to assess its impact on macro-level development and how it affects the home country’s investment climate.

While most Arab migrants have traditionally migrated to North America and Europe, they are increasingly choosing the GCC as a destination despite limited pathways to integration and citizenship. For instance, the number of high-skilled Lebanese immigrants in Kuwait has exponentially
Charles Schmitz Critiques the “Weak State” Narrative

Born in the political sciences, the literature on failed states is remarkably silent on the question of power. This striking intellectual turn is accomplished by reducing the state to a functional mechanism that provides political and economic “goods” to the consumer/citizen. The state’s function is to serve the citizen, and the state’s performance is measured by the degree to which the state satisfies the citizen’s desires. Citizen happiness, or more precisely the lack of citizen disruption of the international order, is the measure of a successful state.

In this idealized state, the citizen is endogenous to the model, and exists prior to the establishment of the state. The citizen stands outside politics, and exists naturally. This universal individual citizen revolted against the monarchs of Europe to create a modern republic built upon an idealized national community—a homogenous collection of individuals that share some variety of cultural commonality born by a collective history. The natural political community, like the individual citizen, exists prior to the establishment of states. Each state reflects the particular preferences of the homogenous group of citizens in a territory.

In the literature on failed states, power—and government—is an unavoidable evil. In this sense, power is bad, power corrupts, and power must be limited. Thus, the government must be controlled with checks and balances. The literature specifies corrupt leadership as the primary culprit of state failure. “So it is that leadership errors across history have destroyed states for personal gain; in the contemporary era, leadership mistakes continue to erode fragile polities in Africa, Asia, and Oceania that already operate on the cusp of failure.” The main issue then is establishing the “rule of law,” to control the ambitions of political leaders.

The two key means of controlling states are transparency and elections. Transparency is akin to a Dutch home where windows are left without curtains, exposing the interior of the house to the view of the passerby in the street, to show that nothing is being hidden by the upstanding inhabitants of the house. Transparency means that the citizen/passerby can view the inner workings of government. If there is any untoward behavior, any sign that the public servant is not serving the citizen, then elections allow the citizen to discipline the state. A free press is the guarantee of transparency, and elections are the guarantee of accountability. Power rests not in the state, but in the citizen; hence, those in power are called public servants. Reality is turned on its head; those with power are servants and the individual citizen determines the state’s destiny.

When an American thinks about the problem of government-building, he directs himself not to the creation of authority and the accumulation of power but rather to the limitation of authority and the division of power. Asked to design a government, he comes up with a written constitution, bill of rights, separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, regular elections, competitive parties—all excellent devices for limiting government. The Lockean American is so fundamentally anti-government that he identifies government with restrictions on government. Confronted with the need to design a political system which will maximize power and authority, he has no ready answer. His general formula is that governments should be based on free and fair elections.

This powerful ideal of the state motivates not only the literature on failed states, but also much of US foreign policy. For US policymakers, elections are the essence of government. If a fair election is held, then the government is legitimate, because the citizens have made their choice. Elections legitimatized Hamid Karzai’s government and allowed the United States to justify war against those who resisted the US installed regime. In US counterinsurgency policy, the first objective of the military is to secure the peace in order to hold elections. Elections allow citizens to state their preference and have their voice, and, thereby, to delegitimize any political violence, because the majority has made its choice. The American military occupation of a “foreign” territory is simply a means, a mechanism that allows the citizen to make a choice. The US soldier is a neutral referee that creates a fair playing field for the political contestants to compete in a rational, non-violent way. From this perspective, the US military has no political agenda; war is not an extension of politics, but a technical adjustment to the mechanism of the state to enable its proper function. Here, the US wants only to ensure the enforcement of the game of nation-states to make states behave properly.

A second constituency, the international community, is served by this functional state. Similarly devoid of politics, and standing as a natural entity, an end-product of a natural human progression, the vaguely-defined “international community” represents the moral community served by the states of the world. States provide the international community with stability and predictability. If all states were properly functioning and properly reflecting the international order, is the measure of a successful state.4 From this perspective, international relations are reduced to technical considerations of adjusting states to function properly in the global community. If all states were properly functioning and properly reflecting the

2 Samuel P. Huntington and Harvard University, Center for International Affairs, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 7.
collective desires of their citizens, then there would be no question of international relations—Kant’s perpetual peace would be achieved. Questions of power relations in the world are similarly obscured, erased, and obfuscated.  

**Politics of Concepts**

Leaving politics out of the state obscures the politics of the state failure concept. Unsaid is who is doing the repairing. Who stands to judge the failure of states? While the academic proponents of the failed state concept argue for objective measures of state success and failure, in practice the concept of failed states is politicized. State failure is invoked as a justification for intervention by powers whose interests are threatened. The United States, Europe, and Saudi Arabia claim that they intervene in Yemen because al-Qaeda threatens them, because Yemen instability threatens Saudi oil, and, ironically, because Yemenis embrace the republican democratic ideals that failed state literature espouses, but which represent a threat to the monarchies of the Gulf Cooperation Council. In the Yemeni case, strong “foreign” influences shape the formation of the Yemeni state. Rather than the territorial state of Yemen embodying the interests of its citizens, more often than not the Yemeni state is more like prison disciplining Yemenis for interests of neighboring Saudi Arabia, for example, keeping Yemenis from threatening the Saudi regime, or the United States, and making sure that Yemenis don’t join al-Qaeda and launch attacks on US soil. The Yemeni military defends not its borders but turns its guns internally on the people living in the territory of Yemen. Violence is not a result of the failure of the state but the state’s attacks on “citizens,” not because of corruption or failed leadership, but because ‘foreign’ interests want to discipline and control Yemenis.

The idea of failed states takes root in structures of power, particularly international power. States are not equal peers in the international order, but are shaped by power into hierarchies of competing interests with great inequalities in power. The failed states literature rests conceptually on the moral goods supplied by the “international community,” without any interrogation of the politics of this international community. Whose peace and security is preserved by the system of states? Whose imperative is it? In earlier, less interconnected eras, state weakness and failure could be isolated and kept distant from the developed world. Failure once held fewer implications for the surrounding regions and for the peace and security of the globe. Now, however, as much as their citizens suffer, the failings of states also pose enormous dangers beyond their own orders. Preventing nation-states from failing, and resuscitating those that have failed and will fail, have thus become the critical, all-consuming, strategic and moral imperatives of our terrorized time.

The failed states literature places great faith in an ahistorical, autonomous citizen; however, citizens are not naturally occurring foundational elements of political community, but historical creations of social and political processes. Citizens are shaped by power in the sense that citizens are molded by nationalism, by ideas of self and others, and by ideas of good and bad. The state failure literature obscures the politics of constructing a citizenry by arguing that national character is the result of the aggregation of individual citizen preferences. The process of democracy results in localized, decentralized units of collective citizen preference—the naturalized nation-states of the contemporary world. That citizens and their relationship to the state could be politically constructed, that is, built by power, shaped by power, and, more importantly, politically contested, is lost on the failed state literature. Those in power shape political discourse, and thus shape understandings of the political world.

**Political Authority and Institutions**

The failed state literature ignores the politics of institutions. State institutions in the view of state failure literature are like parts of a car, functional pieces of a machine that powers the car or makes the state function. They are made of interchangeable plastic parts, not the struggles of people. In reality, institutions are born of political struggle and institutions embody the outcomes of political victories and defeats. Institutions arise from battlefields, coups, and electoral victories. The literature on the origins of the modern state speaks of victories and defeats of classes, aristocracies, mass movements, and the political projects of particular figures and groups of people. The search for individual liberty is the victory of the bourgeoisie over the absolutist monarchies or the evolution of bureaucratic rationalism by protestant militants. The construction of political authority is a particularly glaring gap in the state failure literature. The state failure literature assumes that because an election provides a mantle of legitimacy to a state, political authority flows automatically from that legitimacy. In reality, the construction of political authority, institutions of state, is a long historical process that involves deep transformations of society. Huntington’s key contribution was to show that what was at issue was the construction of political authority, not its political contents.

The idealized model of state presented in the failed state literature exists largely in Europe, its transplants, and Japan. In the rest of the world, in the former colonial world, state formation stems from very different political origins. The assumption in the state failure literature of the presence of a European model of the state in the former colonial world blinds adherents of the failed state literature to the actual workings of power in much of the world. The reification of the state form and the assumption that the natural order is the modern state obscures the ways in which power is configured and works in much of the world, and imposes an institutional form that may inhibit rather than facilitate the peace and prosperity that state failure adherents claim results from the functioning of the state.

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CIRS Research Initiative on “Weak States in the Greater Middle East”

CIRS held a second working group to conclude its research initiative on “Weak States in the Greater Middle East” on May 18-19 2013. Participants met in Washington D.C. to discuss individual paper submissions that collectively scrutinize the prevailing weak states discourse in the region. Through thematic topics and specific case studies, scholars employed a multi-disciplinary approach to assess historical, political, economic, and social causes and consequences of state “fragility” within the broader Middle East.

The participants began by discussing the typology and characterization of governance indexes that construct a continuum of state strength based on a state’s ability to deliver baskets of political goods to its citizenry. These indicators seek to diagnose governance outcomes that are theoretically based on the Westphalian concept of the nation-state. However, while examining the dynamic domestic and regional conditions of the Middle East, participants questioned the normative premise of indices that disregard statehood and state-building as ongoing processes. During the discussion on defining “hollow-strong” states, the limitations of monolithic conceptions of governance as compared to the significance of power struggles that lead to weak governance structures was highlighted.

While indicators of grievances are undoubtedly evident in certain countries in the Middle East, infusing these signs of governance weakness with a sense of history gives a much more nuanced understanding of current political predicaments facing the state. The categorization of states by donor agencies and foreign policy makers often elides the historical rootedness of contemporary governance structures.

Understanding how leaders in the region maintained power for decades in the post-independence period provides greater insight to conceptualizing the relationship between regime type and governance outcomes. For instance, while the Sudanese nation-state has increasingly disintegrated in the recent decades, President Bashir and members of the local and regional ruling elite have maintained cohesion and allegiance via a modernized patronage system within the political market place. However, this political oligarchy is constantly evolving and may become increasingly unstable as the ruling elite’s “political budget” dwindles in the face of a failed Islamist national project and diminishing financial revenues. Libya’s Qaddafi was also plagued by divisive patronage politics that inadvertently marginalized certain tribes, ethnicities, and geographical areas. In the post-Qaddafi period, Libyans are grappling with issues of exclusion and reconciliation of groups that were affiliated with the regime as they move through a transitional period that seeks to create a new political order. Following the uprisings and fall of dictators, the transitional period and ensuing instability in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia also highlights how the democratization process may endanger effective governance outcomes.

While historical context and colonial legacy provide a more nuanced understanding of how certain regimes have attained and sustained power, it also highlights how these power struggles have accordingly created weak governance structures. Institution building in the case of Palestine has largely been dictated by a constellation of factors: building institutions that serve Israel’s colonial interests as well as Palestinian interests; being a rentier-type state; and the consolidation of personalistic politics of the ruling elite at the expense of institution building in Palestine.

Much like Sudan, Libya, and Palestine’s historically rooted political trajectory, participants highlighted the significance of understanding the political foundations of Yemen’s institutions. The Yemeni civil war (1962-1970) and the fall of the Imamate granted Yemen’s
tribal sheikhdoms unprecedented power. While the political field was also dominated by the military and merchants connected to the military and the state, the prominence of the tribal sheikhs has remained a persistent factor in determining the stability of the Yemeni state. Additionally, Yemen’s domestic political landscape has been intruded upon by Saudi Arabia in order to secure its own strategic interests. The recent GCC agreement pushed forth by regional and international powers such as Saudi Arabia and the U.S. in the aftermath of the uprisings in Yemen, has reinforced Yemen’s prevailing governance style, and has therefore undermined state building efforts. Thus, external actors are also directly implicated in structuring the governance of the Yemeni state, where their level of support for state-building efforts is determined by their own geopolitical interests.

The role of external elements in determining domestic stability is not unique to the case of Yemen. In the Levant, the Syrian crisis has illuminated Lebanon’s vulnerabilities to geopolitical currents. Sectarian elites and parties, and specifically Hezbollah, have emerged as strong political actors within Lebanon that have formulated their own foreign policy strategies. This has essentially opened up Lebanon as a political battlefield of geopolitical agendas. In addition, regional political dynamics, interactions and contributions of diasporas to their home states also have implications on state building or rebuilding. While it is not possible to generalize how diasporas may impact developments back home, scholars discussed the role of remittances and voting from abroad and how these relate to the security, capacity, and legitimacy of the home state in specific cases.

The significant role of donor agencies in development further highlights that state-formation is impacted by global agendas. The absorptive capacity and relationship between quantity of aid and aid effectiveness in states with weak institutions was also addressed by working group members. Gaps in state capacity and state willingness to provide for marginalized areas or groups have created pockets of NGO intervention in states within the broader Middle East. The marginalization and social exclusion of women in Sudan and Pakistan have led both local and international NGOs alike to deliver development projects, such as micro-finance initiatives, towards the economic empowerment of women. While these interventions specifically target the economic sphere, their implementation may hinder or propel women’s political and social inclusion depending on the local context.

Beyond absolute development needs, it is evident that geopolitical dynamics determine both the quantity and quality of aid a country receives. For instance, the presence of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula within Yemen’s borders and the consequent perpetual politicization of Yemen’s classification as a weak or failing state, has dictated USAID’s strategy towards Yemen. USAID’s state-centric development approach for resolving conflict, elides local nuances and perceptions of the Yemeni central government, existing traditional legal norms, and embedded blockages to reform within the government. These faulty stabilization intervention efforts may result in un-intended consequences—including increasing anti-western sentiments within Yemen.

Parallel to Yemen, interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan have sought to narrow the subnational space of governance in Iraq and Afghanistan. Cities of the global South have increasingly been framed in a securitized manner, as loci for political violence and contestation. Thus, at the expense of fomenting democratic pluralism at the subnational level, intervening powers have prioritized elections at the national level in an attempt to attain and maintain political stability that is conducive to their military intervention interests.

These individual chapters that seek to challenge and critically analyze the causes and consequences of state “fragility” will be compiled into an edited volume on “Weak States in the Greater Middle East.”

Suzi Mirgani, Manager and Editor for CIRS Publications, and Ganesh Seshan, Professor of Economics at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, received a grant from the Qatar Foundation Undergraduate Research Experience Program (UREP) to mentor a team of Georgetown University in Qatar students. The project titled “Advancing Financial Education for Transnational Families” develops a structured financial education curriculum for migrant workers and their households. The financial education aims to encourage (temporary) migrants and their households back home to develop and work towards long-term and sound financial planning.

The project will utilize a randomized control trial of a large sample of Indian migrants from Kerala to systematically test whether improving financial literacy of the migrant and their household stimulates formal savings and investments by migrant and leads to more productive uses of remittances by their household back home. An important component of the study is the financial education intervention and its method of delivery. Instead of relying on the availability of trainer(s) to deliver the curriculum whether in Doha (to the migrant) or in India (to the households), the research team is developing a set of instructional materials on financial education that will be delivered through DVDs as well as online content.
CIRS Researchers Present Papers at the Middle East Studies Association Conference in New Orleans

The Center for International and Regional Studies participated in the 2013 Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Conference held in New Orleans, Louisiana, on October 10-13, 2013. During the conference, Mehran Kamrava, Director of CIRS, delivered a paper presentation titled “Qatari Foreign Policy and the Exercise of Subtle Power” as part of a panel on “Impact of the 2010-12 Uprisings on International Relations in the Middle East, Part I.” The paper examined the ways in which Qatar is exercising a new form of power that does not conform to our traditional conceptions of “soft,” “hard,” or “smart” power. This new, composite form of power, can be best described as “subtle power.”

Zahra Babar, Assistant Director for Research at CIRS, delivered a paper titled “Negotiating the Alien Arab: Labor Mobility in the State of Qatar” as part of a panel on “Arab Gulf Migration: Practices, Data and Policies.” During her panel presentation Babar shared current data on current Arab expatriates in Qatar by nationality and labor force participation. Her preliminary research suggests that there are far fewer Arab expatriates in Qatar than previous sources have stated, and that Arabs are integrated in the workforce in a dissimilar pattern to Asians.

In addition, CIRS displayed publications and research initiatives at the conference’s annual book bazaar, where participants perused CIRS materials.

Dwaa Osman, Research Analyst at CIRS, delivered a paper titled “Agency of the Socially Excluded: Women in Pakistan and Sudan” as part of the “Women’s Political Agency” Panel. This paper assesses the services provided by NGOs in the rural areas of Pakistan and Sudan and their attempt to overcome the challenges of exclusion faced by rural women.

In addition, CIRS working group meeting on Arab Migrant Communities in the GCC

increased in recent years. While assessing the push factors of Lebanese emigration to Kuwait, participants identified the limited size and prospects of the Lebanese labor market, along with issues of clientalism and corruption as major drivers of emigration. In addition to economic and political push factors of Arab migration, a deteriorating “quality of life” in some home countries have led migrants to seek employment in Gulf cities, which are characterized by high growth, sound infrastructure, and the accessibility of public goods. An increase in Jordanian female immigration to the Gulf suggests that the rising age of marriage, the geographic proximity of the GCC, the availability of job opportunities, and the “comfortable lifestyle” offered have made this region the ideal destination for Arab female migrants. Moreover, within certain sectors of the GCC labor market, there appears to be a level of dependency on Arab workers, most notably due to the shared Arabic language with the host country. Arab teachers, for instance, are a unique part of the labor force in the Gulf, in that they cannot easily be replaced by Asians or Westerners. While the pull-factors to the GCC may outweigh the status of impermanence its migrants face, Arab workers nonetheless accommodate their temporaryness into their risk and decision-making process. Impermanent contracts affect the behavior of workers as manifested in their tendency to invest in the present rather any future-related endeavors.

Investigating intergroup-relations and particularly the relationship between Arab workers and GCC employers within the workplace was also discussed as a point of interest. In certain sectors, there is a “privileging” of Arab workers and assessing opportunities or barriers to promotion and professional development in the Gulf is of importance. In addition to standard workplace relations, the relationship between Hadrami migrants and their Kuwaiti employers is unique in comparison to other Arab expatriate experiences. Since the start of their migration to Kuwait in the early 1950s, Hadramis were quickly absorbed into the domestic services sector. Throughout the decades, a culture of dependency developed between Hadramis and their mo’azib (Kuwaiti sponsor and employer) where immigrants and their sons work for the same household for decades. What is exemplary in this relationship in comparison to other workplace relations is the inherent hierarchy and enduring commitment to the mo’azib that eliminates any possibility of competition with the locals. In comparison with other Arab immigrants that characteristically tend to be economically valued, Hadramis are symbolically valued in the Kuwaiti community. These differences in the experiences of Arab migrants based on historical context and nationality offer a nuanced understanding on the evolving conditions of expatriates and the dynamics of migration in the Gulf.

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Debating Darfur in the World

Rogaia Abusharaf, Associate Professor of Anthropology at Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar and CIRS SFS-Qatar Faculty Fellow for 2012–2013, led a Focused Discussion on “Debating Darfur in the World” on April 24, 2013. The lecture focused on the narratives that have been used by the Sudanese government, Western media, and diaspora communities to make sense of the Darfur crisis. Reporting on the extent of violence, Abusharaf recounted that “during the seven years of strife in Darfur, more than 2.7 million persons have been forcibly displaced. Human rights organizations estimate the death toll at 400,000,” although, she said, this figure is significantly higher if we take into account those who died as a result of displacement and other circumstances related to the conflict.

“The deployment of the Arab versus African formulation as the sole explanatory model divorced from other sociopolitical forces shaping society in Darfur is a serious distortion.”

The Darfur crisis has become a linchpin for various interest groups, including Western public figures and media outlets, as a cause célèbre often to further ulterior political and ideological goals. In this context, the narrative used to describe the crisis often echoes that of the WWII Holocaust as it is rooted in notions of ethnicity and ethnic cleansing. “Yet,” Abusharaf argued, “the deployment of the Arab versus African formulation as the sole explanatory model divorced from other sociopolitical forces shaping society in Darfur is a serious distortion,” as these are unstable ethnic categories that do not neatly subscribe to Darfuri power and identity structures. Darfur has a long history of intermarriage and reciprocity between the hybrid ethnic groups, and so this strict categorization of Arab versus African cannot be sustained except through the epistemic violence of reductionist and ideologically-loaded political narratives. She continued by noting that “ethnicity, when politically mobilized and manipulated, camouflages other fundamental dimensions of the conflict, such as banditry, land-tenure systems, environmental degradation, arms proliferation and militarization, border politics, and systemic marginality.” In the past, “alterity did not prompt massacres;” in the current climate, however, it is used as justification for violence, either deliberately or inadvertently by irresponsible actors.

As judgment for the atrocities taking place in Darfur, President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir was issued with an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court. The warrant elicited both pro and anti Al-Bashir sentiments, locally and within the Sudanese diaspora abroad. The responses of these groups differ markedly from each other as the groups align themselves with different strategic interests. Citing her ethnographic research conducted at Darfur-related conferences, rallies, and meetings, Abusharaf explained how political and cultural identities produce radically different discourses on Darfur. In the United States, for example, questions of race and gender are at the forefront of framing the Darfur crisis, whereas the diasporic discourses annunciated in Doha are more aligned with narratives of reconciliation and social cohesion.

Darfur has thus become the site upon which notions of anti-imperialism and victimization are simultaneously enacted by pro and anti Al-Bashir camps, respectively. These narratives have been broadcast in the international media as public theatrical performances where Darfur is simultaneously portrayed as resistance to neocolonial international forces as well as to domestic ethnic marginalization.

As a final thought, Abusharaf commented that there are current concerted efforts taking place in Doha to address the Darfur crisis. This is a loose organization of interested people that do not classify themselves according to strict ethnic divisions, but along the lines of an active civil society. “In the midst of passions, pity, propaganda, and polarization, debating Darfur requires a special objectivity and distance from approaches that enlarge rifts and fragmentation that keep the tragedy going,” she concluded.

Rogaia M. Abusharaf is the author of Transforming Displaced Women in Sudan: Politics and the Body in a Squatter Settlement (University of Chicago Press 2009); Female Circumcision: Multicultural Perspectives (Ed.). (University of Pennsylvania Press 2006) and Wanderings (Cornell University Press 2002). She is the editor of a 2010 special issue of South Atlantic Quarterly (Duke University Press). She was a recipient of Postdoctoral and Senior fellowships at Durham University in the UK and at Brown and Harvard Universities. Bellagio Study Center, Qatar University College of Arts and Sciences.
This fall semester I have the good fortune to teach a course here at Georgetown's Qatar campus that unites my study of Latin American cultural history with my developing interest in cultural arts. The course, entitled “Cultural Arts and Social Change in Modern Latin America,” uses the lens of popular visual arts to examine modern Latin American countries at times when identities and politics are in most flux—during times of social change.

As I develop and teach this course, I have been afforded the intellectual and creative space to explore areas for future research and work. To what extent might cultural arts, specifically popular culture visual arts, illustrate narratives we do not see in written texts from the same time—narratives that offer different insights into people's political, economic, or cultural motivations to support or engage in broader societal efforts at change? How might visual arts complement or change the meaning of written texts when paired with them?

Cultural arts are a means by which societies express, develop, and contest their identities, as well as their human needs and political desires. Visual artifacts and objects are ways we communicate and influence, and societies constantly renegotiate the meanings assigned to these objects. Hence, creative arts have political and cultural agency; thus the term cultural arts. At once creative and political, cultural arts can serve as a lens through which we can examine not just people's motivations as rational actors to engage in change, but their emotional motivations to do so.

Arts appeal to us on both cognitive and emotional levels. Unlike written texts or even music, we do not have to understand a language to feel an emotional connection to a work of visual art. We can appreciate the aesthetics and the emotions generated by those aesthetics—the colors, the lines and the images. Portrayals of mothers and sons, home and exile, war and peace—while the signs and symbols used to express these might vary slightly from culture to culture, they nonetheless have a broad appeal to our emotions. Visual arts then are a way that we can forge “personal” relationships and a sense of community with people we have never met. Benedict Anderson spoke of language as an important component of developing national identities. If we look at cultural arts, especially popular visual arts, as texts that communicate meanings as well as emotion, then visual images are powerful ways to develop group and national identities.

The cognitive reasons why people might express a desire for broader societal change—little or no access to sufficient employment, education, food, and other basic life necessities—are more frequently studied. Emotional motivations, and the role of popular visual arts in appealing to those emotional motivations, have been looked at to a much lesser degree. This work has been done even lesser still in Latin America.

Both moments, and especially the popular arts from these moments, continue to shape national and international consciousness today. Consider Kirkpatrick’s red, white, and black rendering of Korda’s original black and white photograph of Che Guevara at a funeral in Cuba. The iconic image we know today has taken on a life of its own and been taken up by numerous movements, many of which having nothing at all to do with Latin America or socialist revolution.

In addition, studying Latin America might also help us better understand and study other parts of the world that have a colonial history. Latin American countries certainly have different narratives, but all have some version of a colonial experience, with some lasting as long as 400 years. The post-colonial experience and the process of nation-building is not simply a matter of establishing political and legal independence, it is a matter of establishing cultural independence and articulating a national cultural narrative. Thus, cultural arts are an important component of establishing a post-colonial identity. Latin American countries’ attempts to use cultural arts in this way merit studying in their own right, but they also help us better understand the process of nation-building in post-colonial societies.

Popular visual arts can also be used instrumentally, and more effectively than other forms of written political communication. The case study of Chilean arpilleras—quilt squares in bold folk art style depicting images of repression under the Pinochet dictatorship—is one example of an instrumental use of cultural arts. Arpilleras, produced by the Catholic Church, financially and emotionally supported the women left behind by the sons, daughters, and husbands who disappeared under the dictatorship. The arpilleras, produced by these groups of women in church basements, created a sense of community among people who did not know each other, established similar shared experiences of losing loved ones, and encouraged bystander publics to engage in these movements. All of this was communicated primarily though visual symbols and not written text.

To connect these interests back to this fascinating place where I find myself, in Doha, Qatar, I see a number of comparisons. How might studying popular visual arts at times of social change in Latin America better help us understand what is happening here in Qatar—a country positioning itself as a cultural capital, a post-colonial society, and instrumentally using cultural arts to articulate a national identity?
In January 2013, CIRS launched a new multidisciplinary research initiative titled “Arab Migrant Communities in the GCC.” Since the bulk of ongoing research efforts are focused on non-Arab migrants, the Arab migrant communities present in the Gulf have been a neglected area that merits further scholarly discussion and focus. Some of the questions that will be addressed in this research initiative include:

- What type of work opportunities do most Arab migrant workers seek in the GCC states?
- Are working conditions any different from that of non-Arab migrant workers?
- How have various labor nationalization programs (e.g. Qatariization, Saudization) impacted Arab migrants in the GCC states?
- What are the patterns of sociocultural integration?
- What are the overall living, employment, and residential conditions?

To investigate some of these issues, CIRS has awarded grants to the following five projects:

**The “Other Arab” & Gulf Citizens: The Façade of Mutual Accommodation in Historical Context**
Manal Jamal, James Madison University

The expatriate continuum ranges from the affluent privileged Westerners on one end, Arabs ranging in the middle, with the Lebanese, Palestinians, and Syrians at the top of the employment and pay hierarchy of the Arab population, and the marginalized South Asian and East Asian laborers at the opposite end of the continuum. This project seeks to explore developments as they apply to Arabs of Palestinian origin in the United Arab Emirates. The objective is to develop a more historically sensitive political chronology culminating in events surrounding the first Gulf War and the Arab Spring. The project builds on archival research conducted in the National Archives of the United Kingdom, and will entail semi-structured, open-ended interviews with Arabs of Palestinian origin in the UAE, and additional archival research.

**Attitudes of Foreign Students in the GCC towards the Arab Spring: A Case of Students in the UAE**
George Naufal, Ismail Genc, and Carlos Vargas-Silva, American University of Sharjah

This project explores the attitudes of foreign students in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) towards the Arab Spring. Using business school students enrolled at the American University of Sharjah as a case study, the project explores how these attitudes vary according to student characteristics including migration history. Particular attention is placed on the difference in attitude of Arab and non-Arab students. The results of this research will have serious implications on future migration and labor policies.

**The Experiences of Egyptian Migrants in Kuwait**
Abbie Taylor and Susan Martin, Institute for the Study of International Migration, Georgetown University

An examination of the migration flows and experiences of Egyptians in Kuwait will provide a fascinating snapshot of Arab migrants in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Researchers at the Institute for the Study of International Migration (ISIM) at Georgetown University in collaboration with the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies (CCAS) also at Georgetown University propose an ethnographic study, focusing on the lived experience of Egyptians as migrants in Kuwait, through a literature review, desk analysis of online media sources, and fieldwork comprising of interviews and discussion groups with Egyptian migrants in Kuwait, relevant civil society actors, and government officials.

**An Investigation of a New Generation of Hadrami Immigrants in Kuwait**
Abdullah M. Alajmi, Arab Open University, Kuwait

This is an ethnographic fieldwork to examine the factors critical to the persistence of Hadrami migration to Kuwait. Research demonstrates that while Hadramis have always formed the majority of Yemeni immigrants in Kuwait, they never had effective roles in the wider economies of Kuwait migration. Data will be collected from direct observation of working conditions and immigrants’ personal accounts of migratory experiences, which will be tested against formal documentation of the relevant literature. The proposed study will be a departure from the research on Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) migration that mainly concentrates on its structural, legal, and political features. This research will examine the micro and meso levels of migration using the individual experience, the intra-community conditions, and the immigrant-sponsor relationships as the main units of analysis.

**High Skilled Lebanese Migrants in Kuwait**
Garret Maher, Gulf University for Science and Technology, Kuwait

High skilled migration to Kuwait, particularly of other Arab migrants, is a relatively new phenomenon; the migration of many, mainly young, highly-skilled and well-educated Lebanese migrants has taken place in recent decades. This new research project has a number of key objectives, which include gaining a better understanding of highly-skilled Lebanese migrant groups in Kuwait; examining the role of transnationalism in their daily lives including the role of social networks in their decision to migrate from Lebanon to Kuwait, and how they were recruited; their experiences in a Kuwaiti work environment; the use of remittances; and the extent to which transnational identities have been created.
CIRS Research on the Evolution of Gulf Cities

CIRS held a two-day working group under the research initiative “The Evolution of Gulf Global Cities” on October 5–6, 2013. Scholars from various multi-disciplinary backgrounds as well as urban practitioners and architects examined historical, social, economic, and political aspects of urban transformations in the Persian Gulf.

During the working group meeting, discussion bridged past and present conditions of Gulf societies in order to understand the evolution of urban centers across the region. Before the advent of the oil economy, Gulf port cities were considered “cosmopolitan,” with fluid borders and territories that deemed them as centers of cultural and economic exchange. While these cities are contemorarily integrated into global networks and continue to host large populations of foreign migrants from around the world, the diversity and hybridity of the city has eroded into what participants characterized as “hyper-segregated and divided” spaces.

Aspects of these modern urban developments and features may be understood in relation to historical modes of globalization. Oil has served as a vital globalizing factor, as its discovery brought an influx of international oil companies to the Gulf and led to the localization of global forces of international capitalism. This was clearly manifested in the development of company towns across the region, which also provided new modes of institution building and urban planning. Many of these company towns—such as Kuwait Oil Company’s Ahmadi town in Kuwait—enforced socio-spatial segregation amongst its residents based on ethnicity, occupational standing and socioeconomic status. Dubbed by some participants as “neo-colonial capital enterprises implanted in space”, these company towns resemble the segregated urban fabric of many Gulf cities today—underscoring the need to understand how the Gulf region has been and continues to be shaped by imperial and colonial legacies.

The contrast between the rigidity present in today’s cities compared with the mobility that Gulf port cities historically exemplified may be paralleled to ramifications of planned cities versus naturally created urban spaces. With the advent of state centralization, master urban plans were introduced, and increasingly the state managed the inflow of migrants through socio-spatial engineering. Of growing interest and importance is assessing the political economy of governance and its impact on the urban fabric. Various stakeholders, including the ruling regimes, governmental and political institutions, the business community, foreign consultants and local urban practitioners collectively affect the urban landscape. National strategies, such as Qatar’s 2030, envision a transition from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy, and have resulted in the development of large scale projects that aim to increasingly incorporate the city into global knowledge-economy networks. These state-driven transitions manifest in uneven spatial and social development at the city level, where different spaces exhibit varying levels of global integration and where gentrification benefits an increasingly mobile capitalist class.

Diversification from oil-based economies has also led many Gulf Cooperation Council states to focus on developing their tourism sectors. Cities such as Dubai and Doha have exhibited rapid commodification of their space, heritage industries, and environment in order to build venues tailored for tourism consumption. Particularly problematic is the limited version of regional and local history and identity presented by the emerging heritage industry, as epitomized by the narrow representations of indigenous religious and ethnic minorities within national museums of contemporary Gulf cities.

Unplanned spaces were also discussed by the participants. In Iran’s bustling port of Bandar Abbas, informal settlements have spread on the city’s periphery. While Bandar Abbas appears to be an affluent port due to trade and revenues generated from illicit trading activities, inequality and poverty are manifested in its urban slums and informal settlements. Periodical city plans however, seek to upgrade and formalize these informal settlements by incorporating them within the city’s boundaries. This formalization process however, does not provide avenues for community participation as urban planning continues to be developed by the central state. As agreed by the participants, community participation in urban planning is vital for the social sustainability of the built environment. In contrast to today’s Gulf cities, the built environment of traditional Middle Eastern cities was shaped by the end user and proved to be more “organic.” With the zonal segregation of today’s planned cities however, residents have gradually lost the ability to have regular encounters and confrontations with each other—namely, they’ve lost the urban sense of the city. As such, only a social force as opposed to a top-down agenda can create social sustainability in these already planned cities. Around the Gulf, civic groups have started to emerge that are attempting to restore urban fluidity and their right to the city. These grassroots attempts, along with recent protests around the region, depict a politicization of urban space where the city has become both a site and stake of political contestation.
The Consortium of Arab Policy Research Institutes (CAPRI) at the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) and the Center on Knowledge-to-Policy for Health at AUB collaborated with CIRS to host a workshop on September 12, 2013, entitled “Knowledge Translation: Bridging the Gap between Research and Policy II.” This one-day event brought together academics, representatives from research institutes, policy analysts, and advocates from around the region to understand the linkage between knowledge production and policy making in the Arab world.

Multiple research centers and particularly policy research institutes (PRIs) have emerged throughout the Middle East in the recent years. In addition to independent institutions, several universities have become more research oriented in acknowledgement of the value of knowledge production and its vital contribution to innovation and evidence-based advocacy. Moreover, experts at the Center on Knowledge-to-Policy for Health at AUB noted that the incentive system of research in the region is evolving, so that research centers and universities are increasingly engaging in areas of inquiry that are policy relevant. Since the majority of policy research institutes in the region are still in their nascent stages, they face some significant challenges. For one, the receptivity of policy makers to researchers remains limited as they rarely create spaces for utilizing research evidence in their policy making process. Secondly, local research in Arab countries is perceived to have limited credibility, and regional government officials continue to heavily rely on international consultants. Recommendations to alleviate those challenges were provided by experts at IFI, suggesting that first, research centers should develop credibility in a certain area over a number of years, and second, researchers should interact with state officials and policymakers in order to better understand their needs and keep them informed on their own research output.

With the presence of over 240 PRIs in the region, institutes such as CAPRI are identifying ways of strengthening the outreach and communication strategies of research centers in order to enhance their efficacy in impacting policy. Workshop participants presented both their experiences in linking research with advocacy to influence policy change. In the case of the “Tobacco Free Initiative” in Lebanon, for example, civil society organizations worked with researchers at AUB to achieve two goals. First, they mobilized the public by transmitting information on the dangers of public smoking and second they augmented their advocacy to policy makers by informing them of the level of support within their voting constituency for policy change. During this process, it was highlighted that research needs to be repackaged and transformed into something that is easily communicated in order to increase its receptivity. The media was identified as a vital intermediary between activists and their target audience, both in mobilizing support from citizens and in influencing policy makers to achieve change.

Although the “Tobacco Free Initiative” in Lebanon presents a success story, it was recognized by the workshop participants that in other political settings different tactics need to be utilized. In more autocratic Arab countries where votes cannot be used as leverage, policy advocates face the challenge of identifying means by which they can influence policy makers. Moreover, while the media is a vital force in fostering change in some societies, its utilization by activists in other countries may backfire. It was noted that in some states, policymakers and members of the ruling regime may view this public form of policy advocacy negatively, and take it as an attempt to destabilize the state. Thus, in more autocratic settings, policy makers fear setting the precedent whereby the media can drive policy, and have accordingly resisted publicly communicated policy changes. Another point of departure from the Lebanese case study is the limited presence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or civil society organizations (CSOs) in other countries around the Middle East. As discussed during the workshop, this has two major implications on linking knowledge production to policymaking. First, policy advocacy transforms into a top-down process, whereby activists introduce the initiatives to those in power rather than attempting to mobilize people behind their cause. Secondly, with the limited presence of CSOs, researchers are left with the task of producing research, disseminating knowledge, formulating evidence-based policy, and engaging in policy advocacy. The latter directly falls in line with the new evolving role of researchers and universities that are increasingly reaching out to decision makers and affecting policy. Participants in the workshop concluded that while building the capacity of researchers to repackate knowledge for the policy world is a technical process, developing a culture that is conducive to research-based policy requires social and political buy-in.
**Call for Papers**

The Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar (SFS-Q) is pleased to announce a call for contributions to its publication 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. Papers must adhere to the Chicago Manual of Style (16th edition) and all transliterations must adhere to 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 manuscripts to cirsresearch@georgetown.edu. Inquiries about publications or other related questions may be directed to Suzi Mirgani, Manager and Editor for CIRS Publications at sm623@georgetown.edu.

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