H.E. Dr. Seyed Mohammad Hossein Adeli on “Gas and Alternative Fuels”

H.E. Dr. Seyed Mohammad Hossein Adeli, the Secretary General of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), delivered a CIRS Monthly Dialogue lecture titled, “Gas and Alternative Fuels: Present and Future Shares and Challenges.” The talk focused on the dynamics of the gas market and provided an overview of the latest revolutions in the energy sector such as the emergence of shale gas.

“What do we do in Tornado Tower here in Doha?” asked Adeli, who is also Iran’s former ambassador to Japan, Canada, and the United Kingdom, and holds two Ph.D. degrees in economics and business administration. He answered, “Our mission is to provide an authentic platform for the discussion of gas activity and a center for debate and the exchange of ideas, to promote gas as a clean fuel, increase the market share of gas, and contribute to the stability of the global energy market. But our most important task is to develop dialogue throughout the energy market, to be in contact with other producers, exporters, consumers, academics, and all other stakeholders.”

Mehran Kamrava, Director of CIRS, emphasized the importance of the topic, saying “We know that natural gas is the cleanest burning fossil fuel, offering environmental and efficiency advantages over other energy resources. Combined with global energy needs that will only increase over time, it’s vital that we understand the market and policy forces that will impact the relationship of supply and demand. The implications for Qatar’s economy and, by extension, its national vision development goals, as well as the global economy, are tremendous, which is why we were so pleased to host an energy specialist of Dr. Adeli’s caliber on our campus for students, faculty, visiting dignitaries, and the Doha community.”

Speaking on alternative sources of energy, Adeli stated “there are huge technically recoverable shale gas resources globally” but noted their negative environmental impact and the required technological and policy advances needed to unlock this resource’s potential. Other challenges faced by the energy sector include security of demand, environmental impact of coal, and the

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Greetings from Doha.

Over the past few months, CIRS has been busy initiating and engaging with a number of new and ongoing research projects, producing English and Arabic-language publications, and connecting with members of the Qatar community through a robust public affairs program, including Focused Discussions, Monthly Dialogues, as well as working group discussions on a variety of topics of relevance to the Gulf and Middle East region.

Recently, CIRS published a new book titled, *Sectarian Politics in the Persian Gulf* (Lawrence G. Potter, ed. London: Hurst 2013). This book is the result of multi-year research efforts into original and timely topics. Additionally, we published a new CIRS Occasional Paper titled, “Implications of the 2011-13 Syrian Uprising for the Middle Eastern Regional Security Complex” authored by Fred Lawson, Professor of Government at Mills College and a former Visiting Scholar at CIRS for the 2009-2010 academic year. This semester, CIRS also published a new Summary Report that details the research initiative on “Social Change in Post-Khomeini Iran,” which critically examines some of the most important topics within contemporary Iran. As always, these publications can be downloaded for free from the CIRS website. For more information on the most recent CIRS publications, please refer to page 3 of this newsletter.

In terms of research and scholarship efforts conducted by CIRS over the past few months, 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. 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 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
The paper focuses on the new configuration of the Middle Eastern regional security complex (RSC) in the context of the large-scale popular uprisings that broke out across the Arab world in the winter of 2010-11. Foreign policies adopted between 2000 and 2010 by the Ba’thi regime in Damascus, the leaderships of Hizbullah and HAMAS, and the Israeli government to parry overlapping internal and external threats created an unprecedented patchwork of strategic rivalries and alignments. The reconfigured RSC that emerged out of the “Winter of Arab Discontent” is only beginning to be explicated, and can best be addressed by tracing the connection between domestic political conflicts and shifts in external belligerence and alignment across the region.

This Summary Report details the CIRS research initiative on “Social Change in Post-Khomeini Iran” and critically examines some of the most important topics within contemporary Iran, focusing on its social, cultural, economic, and political domains. A few recent efforts have been undertaken by scholars to engage in in-depth research on domestic development within Iran. In line with this body of nascent scholarship, CIRS launched an empirically grounded research initiative aimed at studying the variety of changes and developments currently underway in Iranian society. Through this multi-disciplinary, empirically-based research initiative, our goal is to present a comprehensive study of contemporary Iranian society.
Zahra Babar, Associate Director for Research at CIRS, examined some of the trends in Qatar’s dramatic population increase over the past few decades, paying particular attention to the demographic patterns of non-GCC Arab migrant populations. “The migrant population in the Gulf in general, and in Qatar in particular, has increased significantly over the past few decades,” she said. In the 1990s, the total population of Qatar was about 500,000 people, and has increased threefold to almost 2 million in 2013.

Giving some background to her research, Babar explained that “although we all are aware of this large demographic presence of foreigners in Qatar, surprisingly enough, we actually do not know very much about them.” Reliable data on who these people are, where they come from, how they are integrated in the labor market, and how they experience life in Qatar is scant. “Obtaining data in Qatar on national and ethnic compositions of the migrant population is a huge challenge. Any researcher trying to work on some aspect of labor migration in Qatar finds that the data availability, data accessibility, and data reliability is very scarce,” she noted. With Qatar’s hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup approaching, critical attention has focused on Qatar’s labor practices with several high-profile and defamatory exposés in the international media. Babar warned, however, that people should be wary of those who claim to have solid facts and figures regarding migration and labor conditions in Qatar. “I hope you would remain skeptical when any one of these articles proceeds to give you particular figures,” she said.

Guiding her research, Babar explained, was the question: “why is it important to talk about nationality?” Nationality, she said, has a direct impact on one’s life in Qatar as a migrant, including how it determines salary structures, benefits and prospects, and how one experiences life and work in the country. Thus, “nationality has a strong correlation with how one is integrated into Qatar’s labor market.”

Situating these demographic changes historically, Babar argued that the GCC states, with their burgeoning hydrocarbon industries and small populations, were obliged to import foreign workers. Initially, in the early days of the industry, the logical choice was to employ workers from neighboring Arab countries, given the geographic, linguistic, religious, and cultural affinities, and the ease of Arab integration into existing Gulf societies. However, as these massive hydrocarbon industries grew and globalized, and as political economic imperatives surpassed these initial sociocultural considerations, there were dramatic shifts in the policies, practices, and patterns of the Qatari labor market.

Effectively, non-GCC Arab migrants in Qatar have, since the 1970s, integrated into society by maintaining their traditional family structures. Of the total non-GCC Arab residents in Qatar, only 52 percent are active in the labor force and contribute to the economy, while 48 percent are dependents—children and housewives. If this is compared to corresponding data from other nationalities, there is a significant and noticeable difference. There are only 17 percent non-working dependents in the Indian community and only 1 percent in the Nepalese community. Further, the discrepancy in these figures also reveals that non-GCC Arab migrants presumably earn higher salaries to be able to maintain a dependent household in Qatar. Thus, Babar argued, it is easy to see why Qatari policymakers would be more inclined to import cheaper and more manageable labor from Asia.

In sum, Babar concluded that, “in Qatar, the state and society are extremely concerned about the demographic imbalance and the increasing presence of foreigners outnumbering them, and so really what they are looking for is to have their labor market needs met without any incremental increase to the population.”

Zahra Babar has worked in the international aid, community development, and poverty alleviation sector, and served with the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations Development Programme. She has edited, with Mehran Kamrava, Migrant Labor in the Persian Gulf, and with Suzi Murgani, Food Security in the Middle East.
CIRS Working Group Meeting on “Social Currents in the Maghreb”

CIRS held its inaugural “Social currents in the Maghreb” working group meeting on January 7-8, 2014, in Washington D.C. While much of the mainstream media and recent scholarship on the Maghreb has focused on the political and security dimensions of the region, participants gathered over two days to discuss the social changes and fluxes in contemporary Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Mauritania. Members of the working group discussed social issues that preceded the recent political transformations of the region, and sought to examine the complex trajectory of its existing societal conditions.

Much of the recent debates on the Maghreb have revolved around political transformations, and more specifically on their relation to Islamic movements in the context of the Arab Spring. While the historical trajectory of Islamic movements and parties has generally been accounted for, the internal dynamics of political parties have largely been neglected in the scholarship. Working group participants highlighted the dynamics between Islamists and leaders of various political parties as well as generational dynamics within the parties. Political parties and movements as a unit of analysis need to incorporate internal notions of ideological hybridity that not only challenge the status-quo of the country’s political landscape, but also of the movements’ longstanding policies and strategies. These internal subtleties allude to the ideological innovation of Islamic movements.

The participants discussed religious practice and the anthropology of Salafism and Sufism. Sufi observances and religious pilgrimages by the Tijaniyyah who migrate from West Africa to the Maghreb, have created economic and social networks that permeate the two regions. While the Tijaniyyah movement has largely expanded to West Africa, these Sufi networks have also traditionally served as vital linkages of knowledge production.

Another thread connecting the Maghreb to West Africa and the Sahel is the transnational element of Amazigh movements. While most scholars have focused on political and social struggles of the Amazighs in Algeria and Morocco in isolation, their movements have become increasingly transnational in nature as they incorporate other Amazighs or social groups, such as the Tuareg, in their politics. With these attempts to create transnational connections comes a sense of national ambivalence as questions of identity are pushed to the forefront with regards to “Africanity” and “Amazighness.” These questions do not necessarily allude to deep ethnic tensions between a certain social group and their respective national counterparts, but rather highlight contemporary politics and how it emerges in a changing political system with relative political openings or closings.

Hybrid identities were also discussed in the context of the Haratine in Mauritania. The Haratine, or people of slave descent, currently experience different levels of political and social subservience. The Haratine are also not a homogenous group and identify themselves as Arab, Berber, African, and Mauritanian. Identity, which may also be used as a political tool, directly affects the strategic alliances that the Haratine movement builds in order to further its political cause in Mauritania. While much of the movement’s emphasis has been on political and social subordination, economic emancipation has not been effectively addressed by the movement nor experienced by the Haratine today.

Other movements such as the Polisario in Western Sahara have not gained much footing in their political trajectory but have secured greater access to economic funds. Contrary to conventional wisdom about the armed movement, the Polisario has increasingly diversified its portfolio of economic and developmental funding to include non-state sources beyond Algeria. Resources from civil society organizations and family members abroad broaden the Polisario movement’s economic base of support and simultaneously affect the activities and investments of the movement.

In addition to identity politics, the politics of language and its historical, economic and social salience were discussed. The language of instruction in Moroccan schools, for instance, has largely been caught between the dual and seemingly contradictory goals...
CIRS Attends the 55th International Studies Association Conference in Toronto

The Center for International and Regional Studies participated in the 55th International Studies Association (ISA) Annual Convention held in Toronto, Canada, on March 26–29, 2014. During the conference, Mehran Kamrava, Director of CIRS, chaired three panels focusing on the security implications of the Arab Spring, the Iranian nuclear program, and the international relations of Iran. Suzi Mirgani, Manager and Editor of Publications at CIRS, presented a paper titled “Globalized Uprisings and Mediated Resistance: Digital Space and Unofficial Cultural Production” in a panel focusing on “Digital Space and Political Participation in the Global South.”

In addition, CIRS had a booth display in the book exhibition hall to showcase its latest publications and research initiatives. CIRS staff were on hand to network with conference participants and to discuss research opportunities at CIRS.
Omran Al-Kuwari, co-founder and CEO of GreenGulf, delivered a CIRS Focused Discussion lecture on “The Paradox of Renewable Energy in Qatar” on February 12, 2014. The talk was centered on the incentive of investing in renewable energy in the context of Qatar, and how these have been radically transformed over recent years.

The Gulf is seen as a single market, Al-Kuwari said, but it is important to point out the differences between the various regional states. “Qatar is a very unique country in the Gulf,” as “it is the only country in the world that you can safely say has enough gas and enough power to supply itself and to export for the foreseeable future.” Qatar is in a favorable position because of its large natural gas reserves, which has provided an increasingly advantageous energy option for a new generation of people.

Al-Kuwari gave a brief historical overview of the Gulf region’s hydrocarbon exploitation efforts. The largest gas reserves in the world were discovered in the North Field between Qatar and Iran about thirty years ago. At the time, this discovery was greeted with disappointment as natural gas commanded little value, and was perceived to be of inferior quality to oil and other hydrocarbons driving the global economy. However, as technology advanced, and as environmental issues became more pertinent, “gas became the fuel of choice for power production,” he said.

Currently, “Qatar is the only country in the GCC that could supply all its power—from gas,” meaning that it can exploit its oil reserves purely for export and revenue generation. Other countries in the region like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Oman rely primarily on oil to generate power supplies to drive their own national economies as well as international ones, and so must divide oil reserves between national needs and international requirements. Such a model, Al-Kuwari argued, is ultimately unsustainable as these countries are burning their own oil, which leads to loss of export revenue, the rapid depletion of the resource, as well as increased pollution. Thus, “renewable energy has become a necessity,” he said. In the Gulf, this necessity stems purely from an economic perspective, regardless of the positive ideological and environmental advantages offered by renewable energy. Oil and gas reserves will gradually become depleted, and nuclear energy will take a long time to establish, if at all. Renewable energy is actually the only viable alternative for many of the regional states, as well as international ones.

Due to technological advancements in the area of renewable energies, the costs have now been considerably reduced. Demand has simultaneously been increased because of an increase in population in all the countries of the region as well as an increase in industry and output.

Because Qatar is in a unique position in terms of having excess energy, the decision-makers have the luxury of creating these projects from their foundation in a deliberate and efficient way that makes sense for the future. Importantly, Al-Kuwari noted, “because of Qatar’s long-term interest in becoming more of a diversified economy,” these initiatives are being built from the ground up, and are being established all across the country in a simultaneous and synergistic manner that makes cohesive and efficient sense. Currently, GreenGulf is involved in multiple projects and encouraging the use of solar energy as a highly efficient and clean energy source that will ultimately lead to more awareness and education regarding the benefits of clean technologies.

Omran Al-Kuwari is the co-founder and CEO of GreenGulf, a clean technology and renewable energy advisory business focused on the development and management of renewable energy in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia. He is an energy professional with over 10 year experience in the Energy Industry. After joining QatarGas in 1999, Al-Kuwari worked for several joint ventures, Qatar Petroleum affiliates and ExxonMobil in Doha and the United Kingdom. Al-Kuwari holds a BA in Business Administration from George Washington University, and an MBA from City University London. His research has focused on “Renewable Energy in Qatar” in 2010.
Regional and international experts gathered for the inaugural meeting of the CIRS “Transitional Justice in the Middle East” research initiative on February 15-16, 2014. While much of the scholarship on transitional justice has been conducted in other regions of the globe, recent political transitions in the region have invigorated studies on the manifestation and application of transitional justice mechanisms in the Middle East. Topics ranging from the theoretical underpinnings and scope of transitional justice to specific case-studies of Middle Eastern experiences related to reconciliation were discussed by the multi-disciplinary working group participants.

In beginning the discussion, the participants drew on past and current experiences of countries from around the globe in order to identify the most salient markers studied in the field. Studying transitional justice in a comparative perspective, however, has revealed that assessing its impact is not a seamless activity as the process itself continues to have shifting goals. Within transitional justice, there is a myriad of objectives related to retributive justice, deterrence, vindication of victims, and reconciliation that both practitioners and academics discuss and refer to. However, each of these benchmarks remains elusive with regards to whom they address, what form or shape they take, and the mechanisms and institutions that are used to address them. The vindication of victims, the diversity in types of victims, and the change in their requirements further complicate the objectives.

Moreover, it is not clear how practitioners and scholars define victim-centered justice. At times, and particularly in Islamic law and teachings, there exists a structural tension between forgiveness and societal reconciliation and the private rights of retribution for the individual victim. A victim-centric approach would more actively advocate for the individual’s right to justice. In addition, the scope of transitional justice is also a contested issue. While in the past it has primarily been about accountability for gross violations to human rights—particularly in relation to bodily harm—it has expanded its remit and is increasingly connected to development policy, and economic, social, and cultural rights. This is particularly salient in the context of the recent uprisings in the Middle East, where criminal liability for monetary and political corruption has been put on the transitional justice agenda.

Part of the difficulty in defining goals and assessing impact lies in the issue of local versus international ownership over transitional justice processes. Since the 1990s, mechanisms and processes of transitional justice have been heavily internationally driven and funded. Thus, assessing where the demand for various goals stems from and the level of local ownership are vital when discussing case-studies of transitional justice and their respective impacts. Concomitantly, the local power dynamics that are at play in articulating demands also provide insight into why particular actors advocate for certain temporal boundaries of transitional justice as well as various mechanisms and institutional designs to deal with past injustices.

Memories and narratives about the past are an integral part of a society’s transition post-conflict. There are more formal processes of truth telling and dealing with the past such as truth and reconciliation commissions and trials and tribunals; many of these visible processes, however, have been adopted by the state. Other informal processes involve civil society, cultural production, and non-recorded narratives. Participants further discussed how structural constraints related to the ancien regime can also pose challenges to institutional development and the promotion of human rights—two areas that are closely linked with transitional justice processes. Where the security sector has been implicated in human rights violations and lacks accountability, security sector reform is a focal point of institutional development. In Egypt, the continued dominant role of the army has hindered efforts of security sector reform—reform that is particularly concerned with citizen and human security rather than that of the ruling powers. Although transitional justice promotes the development of constitutions and institutional reform, whether it creates systems that align with values that are beneficial to societies in the long-run, depends on a multitude of vital factors.

In discussing constitutional development and transition, the participants noted the faulty assumption that transitional justice is linked to democratization and that the end point to the transition is in the form of a liberal democratic system. In fact, in cases such as the monarchies of Bahrain and Morocco, transitional justice mechanisms have been implemented without the preface of political transition. Evidently in these cases, democratization is not the end goal, but rather, the implementation of these mechanisms may enable monarchs to gain political capital both locally and internationally. In the absence of political transition the efficacy of truth commissions and the commissions of inquiry in Morocco and Bahrain, respectively, were discussed. In addition to the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms in countries without political change, participants also discussed plans for transitional justice in cases of ongoing conflict—specifically, in Syria where members of the opposition have already drafted detailed plans for transitional justice.
Matt Buehler explains why the Arab Spring missed the Maghreb

Matt Buehler, the 2013-2014 Post-Doctoral Fellow at CIRS, delivered a Monthly Dialogue lecture on “Why did the Arab Spring miss the Maghreb? Continuity through Co-optation in Morocco and Mauritania,” on February 17, 2014. The talk summarized the results of in-depth fieldwork undertaken in Morocco and Mauritania, where Buehler conducted over 100 interviews with politicians and policymakers. The central question guiding Buehler’s research was, “Under what conditions did an Arab regime survive the Arab Spring?” Some popular theories currently on offer by scholars propose that monarchical states that have a wealth of natural resources, a long history of military loyalty, and a strategy of appeasing indigenous ethnic groups are more resilient and better equipped to overcome civil unrest than nations that do not enjoy similar privileges. In order to put these theories to the test, Buehler argued that it was first necessary to outline the key infrastructural and political differences exhibited by his case study countries of Morocco and Mauritania.

Giving some background to Morocco and Mauritania’s political structures, Buehler challenged the prevalent thesis of the “monarchical exception,” which states “that monarchies seemed to persist longer than non-monarchies.” He explained that, for these two countries, the regime’s mode of governance mattered little for authoritarian persistence, as both states were able to weather the storm of protests that shook their governments in 2011 and 2012, despite the fact that Morocco is a monarchy and Mauritania is not.

Another theory Buehler examined suggests that countries with a wealth of natural resources, such as the Arab countries of the Gulf, will necessarily overcome civic discord by dint of their ability to placate any opposition by offering a series of concessions. However, although Morocco has substantial natural resources, Mauritania is poor in terms of natural endowments. Yet, they both were able to stave off any serious opposition. This theory too, Buehler argued, was unsustainable.

Observers argue that military loyalty is another crucial characteristic of regime survival, and that the perseverance of Arab regimes depended on the degree of support given by the powerful underlying military state apparatus. The collapse of governments in Egypt and Tunisia are given as key examples. Yet, Buehler argued, whereas Morocco has a history of military loyalty, “in Mauritania, by contrast, there is a very long history of military coups—every single Mauritanian president has been ousted by a coup.”

Further theories state that successful integration and assimilation of diverse ethnic minorities is necessarily a means of avoiding internal friction. “In some Arab countries, maybe in Bahrain, maybe in Syria, you might think marginalized ethnic minorities seized the opportunity of the Arab Spring to assert their demands,” Buehler said. However, he pointed out that Morocco has done much to integrate its once marginalized ethnic groups, but Mauritania made no such progress. Thus, once again, “we can’t say that ethnic integration was a very important factor in driving this process,” he said.

In sum, Buehler warned against the simplistic categorization of Arab states, and argued that there was no definitive answer as to why some regimes fell, whilst others overcame popular unrest in the long run. As his research in Morocco and Mauritania attests, both governments exhibited resilience in the face of the uprisings despite their fundamental differences in terms of political structure, resource wealth, military loyalty, and ethnic integration.

“After having outlined the key dissimilarities between the two states, the key question remains “what is the commonality in Moroccan and Mauritanian strategies of survival?” He answered this by saying that “these two regimes employed a very crafty, robust strategy of co-optation, which they used to build certain political parties—pro-regime political parties.” In order to study the much abused and complex phenomenon of “co-optation” more closely, Buehler conducted a series of statistical tests throughout Morocco and Mauritania to gauge the extent of regime infiltration into rural politics. Buehler’s research findings conclude that Morocco and Mauritania’s strength “was their ability to monopolize the rural structures of power in order to buttress their rule during the Arab Spring.”

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Matt Buehler explains why the Arab Spring missed the Maghreb

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Matt Buehler holds a Ph.D. degree in government from the University of Texas at Austin and will begin a tenure-track position at the University of Tennessee’s Department of Political Science in fall 2014. Buehler has done extensive fieldwork in Tunisia, Morocco, and Mauritania, and is currently working on a book tentatively titled, The Social Base of Divide-and-Rule: Left-Islamist Opposition Alliances in North Africa’s Arab Spring.
R. Seetharaman, Group Chief Executive Officer of Doha Bank, delivered the first CIRS Monthly Dialogue of 2014 with a lecture on “Sustainable Development for Economies and Corporations” on January 20, 2014. Drawing on his experience as the head of a major financial institution, he explained how, as a result of the global financial crisis, economic systems all over the world have been shaken to their core and forced to undergo massive transformations at a fundamental level. These global financial institutions have had to align themselves according to a new world order of financial market re-regulation in the interest of creating more conservative, cautious, and sustainable global economies.

Seetharaman adumbrated the unprecedented circumstances that have affected global financial systems over the past few years, including the liquidity crisis, that turned into a funding and solvency crisis, where entire nations such as Greece and Iceland experienced far-reaching economic collapse. In these cases, he argued, politics and economics did not speak to each other on the level of convergence that they should have. The liquidity crisis was addressed by unstable and short-term solutions, such as printing more money to improve the cash flow and to stabilize stock markets, that were ultimately unsustainable. The problem was patched up on a superficial level, but the fundamental roots of the economic crisis remained. Because “we live in an interconnected, interdependent world,” he explained, currency markets and commodity markets are intertwined, and what affects one affects the other.

“Whether you run a socially responsible mission as a corporate head or a country head, you have to practice social responsibility.”

Reeling from years of global economic stagnation and recession, governments, corporations, and financial institutions have realized that massive overhauls in the system are necessary, Seetharaman said. “This crisis is an opportunity for the new world order,” he advised. The type of rapacious corporate capitalism and market speculation that defined the last few decades of deregulated market economies have altered economics in form and substance. Similarly, countries that adhered to a socialist structure of economic governance have also found it necessary to change their financial structures, and have been making concerted efforts to end their isolation and connect with the global economy.

In fact, Seetharaman said, these two formerly oppositional economic philosophies, capitalism and socialism, are increasingly becoming intertwined for a more effective and sustainable global economic reality. “Mixed economies are the game changers. We have seen the emerging markets incrementally producing over 60% of gross domestic product in terms of global growth, and these economies have to be an integral part of the order of inclusive growth. This is why the G7 has become the G8, and G8 has become the G20,” he said.

Because financial institutions operate as much on public money as they do on private shareholder assets, the public–private partnership model is the most sustainable way of moving forward, Seetharaman advised. Taking the example of Doha Bank, he argued that private shareholder money accounts for approximately 11 billion, and yet customer deposits account for an enormous 35 billion. It thus becomes obvious that even if a financial institution is private, it is often, in reality, public. The global financial crisis revealed that the public is in fact an important stakeholder whose investments must be protected and not gambled with. “Whether you run a socially responsible mission as a corporate head or a country head, you have to practice social responsibility. That way, you will take care of all the stakeholders,” he explained.

In conclusion, Seetharaman argued that because of the increase in the patterns of globalized connectivity on all levels, whether in terms of financial markets or broader issues of climate change, governance systems all over the world must attempt to adhere to the same ethical, socially–responsible, and sustainable standards. At the universal level, we need to “set new initiatives that are responsive to achieve the United Nations’ mission for eradication of extreme poverty, gender equality, economic sustainability, primary healthcare, education, global collaborations,” he concluded.

Dr. R. Seetharaman (www.seetharaman.org) is a recipient of multiple doctorates from leading universities of the world, including a Ph.D. in Global Governance from the European University and Doctorate of Law by Washington College. He is a Chartered Accountant and holds certificates in IT Systems and Corporate Management. He has been named “Best CEO in Middle East” and “World Leader Business Person” and is a recipient of “The Gullands Excellence Award as a Phenomenal Banker.” A regular commentator on international finance in global media outfits, he has transformed Doha Bank into one of the best performing Banks in the Middle East region.
WORKING GROUP MEETING ON “ARAB MIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN THE GCC”

The final working group of the CIRS research initiative on “Arab Migrant Communities in the GCC” was held in Doha on March 15-16, 2014. Grant recipients gathered with an additional cohort of migration experts and scholars to discuss their research findings and to solicit feedback on their draft paper submissions. The topics investigated ranged from broad migration policies in the GCC and their respective implications on the distribution of nationalities within the population, to specific ethnographic case-studies highlighting the experiences of Arab expatriates in the Gulf.

From the onset of the Gulf oil economy in the 1950s to the present era, the ebbs and flows of Arab migration to the GCC have largely been attributed to the Middle East’s regional geopolitical context and its influence on national migration policies. While Arab migrants formed a large component of the expatriate community until the 1980s, their presence in the Gulf has dwindled as Asian migrants from the East currently outnumber non-GCC Arabs. The participants explained that although much of the literature attributes this shift to the geopolitical context, rapid development, the ensuing change in Gulf economies and the aggregate increase in demand for low-skilled labor by the private sector has also contributed to the shift in the composition of the expatriate workforce. Labor data from Qatar indicates that non-national Arabs in the Qatari labor force predominantly feature in managerial and administrative sectors, in professional, scientific, and technical activities, and in services. Within particular occupations, such as teaching, Arab nationals have continued to have a steady and dominating presence primarily due to the shared linguistic and cultural affinities with Qatari nationals. As such, demand for Arab teachers in the region shows no signs of abating. These tied porous identities coupled with the integral role of Arab migrants in teaching and children’s development, has led to what some have dubbed as the “Egyptianization” of the education field and of local culture and dialects. Thus, while GCC governments may source labor for low-skilled segments of the economy from various geographic regions, Arab migrants will continue to have a dominant presence within sectors that require certain shared cultural, linguistic, and religious affinities.

Concomitant with the rise in import of low-skilled labor has been the increased demand for high-skilled migrants as GCC states strive to develop knowledge-based economies. The participants discussed Arab high-skilled migrants, particularly those emanating from emigration-prone countries such as Lebanon. Within this cohort, there is a significant presence of highly skilled female migrants that challenge the commonly perceived notion that Arab migrants to the Gulf are predominantly male. Moreover, studies within Lebanon indicate that a substantial proportion of Lebanese females migrating to the Gulf are not married, thereby also undermining the conception that female migrants are only present in their capacity as “sponsored dependents” within the Gulf countries.

Beyond demographics and economic stratification, the working group members discussed issues of identity, transnationalism, social inclusion and exclusion, and everyday experiences of Arab expatriates. Interviews with highly skilled Lebanese in Kuwait have indicated that while the Gulf continues to be an attractive destination for employment, interaction and integration with nationals remains limited. This is largely attributed to the lack of provision of pathways to citizenship in the Gulf as compared to other popular destinations such as the USA or Europe. However, these sentiments of lack of integration and limited inclusion do not reveal themselves uniformly across Arab communities; the decades-long presence of Arabs in the region has exhibited varying generational experiences and attitudes of migrants in the Gulf. A study of Palestinians in the UAE indicates that second-generation migrants tend to socialize with Emiratis much more than the first generation, and as such feel more integrated. Other migrants reveal intergenerational tensions between their families and their Gulf sponsors, as exhibited by the study of second-generation domestic-service Hadrami immigrants in Kuwait. While first generation Hadramis perceive success and dependency on the houses they serve as positively intertwined, the second generation views this relation as a problematic one that impedes their economic and social mobility.

The participants also discussed outlooks and perceptions of second-generation Arab migrants in comparison to other expatriate nationalities and to GCC nationals within a university setting. Given that the geopolitical context of the region will continue to play a significant role in migratory practices, student perceptions of the Arab uprisings and their socioeconomic impact on the region as a whole is vital. For instance, one study indicates that outlooks on the future of the Middle East are not overly hopeful amongst students. Surprisingly, however, for both GCC nationals and Arab expatriates alike, unemployment remains a significant concern for youth. Thus, the extent to which GCC labor markets will continue to absorb Arab migrants, despite insecurities regarding national unemployment, will have significant implications on regional migratory practices in the Middle East and the Gulf.
LABOR RECRUITMENT IN THE GULF STATES

As part of its ongoing contribution to global debates on migration and development, the International Labor Organisation has recently launched the Migration and Governance Network (MAGNET), with its prime mandate being to critically improve labor migration governance in the Arab states. MAGNET brings together scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to share ideas and views on regional labor migration, and to set an agenda for further research. CIRS Associate Director for Research, Zahra Babar, participated in a workshop convened by the MAGNET project in Istanbul on April 29-30, 2014. The workshop, titled “Taking Stock and Moving Forward on Recruitment of Migrant Workers in the Arab States,” brought together a number of experts who over the course of two days debated a range of critical issues related to recruitment.

Academics and policymakers have been drawing greater attention to the significant, and at times problematic, role that recruitment agencies and labor brokerages play in the labor migration system in the Persian Gulf. The recruitment industry contains a mix of formal and informal actors, and not all recruiting agencies can be considered undesirable, as many provide tangible overseas employment for thousands of people who have limited economic opportunities in their home countries. Public sector actors also bear responsibility for managing aspects of the transnational recruitment process, and have been criticized for being weak and lethargic in creating an effective regulatory environment. While the ILO framework for migrant workers is unequivocal in stressing that migrants ought to pay no recruitment costs, in reality labor recruitment is a complex, transnational business enterprise where money is certainly made from job seekers. Recruiters, operating transnationally in both countries of origin and destination, serve to link potential migrants in remote locations of Asia and Africa with manpower agencies and employers based in the GCC, and profit from the provision of this service. Migrants may end up paying several thousand dollars for the opportunity of obtaining work contracts in the Gulf, and often incur high levels of debt in the process.

One of the participants at the MAGNET workshop shared the findings of a recent research project that examined the recruitment process for workers engaged in Qatar’s construction sector. These migrant workers, originating from the Philippines, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, were mostly recruited through the use of unlicensed sub-agents, and through informal and unregulated recruitment channels. Generally the migrants arrived in Qatar carrying large amounts of debt which they had accrued as a result of the recruitment costs. For example, most workers from India had paid close to $1,000 to recruiters, despite the fact that the Indian government has capped recruitment fees at $200. While from a rights-based perspective there is unanimous agreement that migrants should be charged no fees at all, the intense competition for jobs in the Gulf and the desperation of many job seekers, means that abolishing all profit making from these processes remains a challenge. An additional crucial finding of this research effort was that migrants experience high levels of deception practiced by unscrupulous recruiters, and that there is collusion between intermediaries in both origin and destination countries when it comes to misleading and misinforming migrants. Many migrants are not given adequate information up front in relation to the costs that they will incur through the recruitment process; the contracts shown to them by recruiters in the country of origin often (and deliberately) do not accurately reflect the real wages that they will earn in Qatar nor the sort of work tasks that they will be performing; and migrants also do not have access to information on the costs of living in Qatar and the expenses that they need to account for, and thus are unable to make an informed decision on whether the wages they will be earning during their time overseas is worth the cost. During the group discussion at the workshop, there was general consensus that there needs to be more active research undertaken on wage levels and real earnings across all the GCC states, as there is a paucity of data on migrants’ wages and earning potential in the region.

Participants at the workshop were also briefed on a case-study of the recruitment system within India. There are more than 2,000 registered recruiting agencies in India, some of which maintain high standards, are licensed, operate within the regulatory environment, and adopt a best practices approach. However, there are also a large number of agencies which engage in exploitative practices, are geared to maximize their own profits, exploit the vulnerabilities of potential migrants, and operate largely outside the regulatory system. Increasingly, employers in Gulf countries are also choosing to recruit directly in India, sending their own agents to identify and hire workers, thus bypassing the appropriate and regulated recruitment channels. One of the key challenges pointed out in this case-study was that the more established recruiting agencies that are licensed and monitored are usually based in urban centers in India, while more and more migrants are being recruited from remote, rural locations. As a result there is an ongoing dependency on sub-agents in these remote areas, and the sub-agents are mostly unregulated and unlicensed.

One of the themes animating much of the workshop discussion was that the heightened degree of informalization of recruitment processes is creating greater vulnerabilities for migrants to the Gulf states, and policymakers need to prioritize interventions to combat this. While stronger institutionalization and policymaking efforts, effective legislative tools,
and an enabled judicial mechanism for administering punitive actions against recruiters operating outside the regulatory environment are all crucial, engaging with the private sector and business interests is also essential. Research has not adequately incorporated the perceptions, needs, and concerns of business communities and employers in the recruitment processes of the Gulf countries. Participants raised the merit of changing the commercial viewpoint, and working with business enterprises so that they could check that their labor supply chains operate according to ethically acceptable standards. The United Nations’ Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights posits that while the state bears primary responsibility to uphold the human rights and labor standards for its populace, private actors have a duty to not infringe on the human rights of their employees. One must acknowledge that businesses have to be profitable and commercially viable, however, they can also maintain ethical standards in their labor recruitment processes. MAGNET participants were given a presentation by FSI Worldwide, an international manpower agency that practices “ethical recruitment.” In all its recruiting operations, FSI charges no fees to migrants, ensures that workers are not coerced in any way, are recruited purely on merit, and are fully informed of their rights and obligations.

By way of conclusion, participants raised concerns regarding a number of areas that require further research in order to feed into policy interventions on labor recruitment. Suggested topics included: research on the gap between law-making, legislation, and practice; the impact of pre-departure training and development of migrants; ethical recruitment and self-governance of the international business community; the impact of “labor bans” by labor exporting countries on recruitment policy and practice; and comparative recruitment processes from different source regions—the Arab world, Africa, and Asia. The regulation of labor recruitment to the Gulf countries epitomizes the fact that managing transnational labor migration is a complex and global challenge, encompassing multiple legal frameworks, assorted stakeholders, and a range of national and international interests that must be accommodated.
World Literature and National Culture Planning: A History of Literary Translation in the Middle East

As a scholar of world literature, I have been extensively preoccupied with foregrounding the dynamic role of narratives in constructing our sense of temporal and spatial existence and belonging in a globalized world. I study modern and contemporary literature with a sustained focus on the question of how individual or collective subjects are actively engaged in imagining their being-in-the-world. I approach the world novel as the narrative mode of situating local subjectivities and histories within larger global structures. Departing from this premise, I examine the formal development and permutations of the world novel in relation to stages of global geopolitical networks (imperialism, neocolonialism, and neoliberalism). Through my analysis of the aesthetic of cognitive mapping in three successive phases, I propose a new interpretive framework that highlights the triangular relationship between collective subjectivities, global networks, and fictive imagination. The main ambition of my work is to redress the lack of critical interest in questions of form and mediation in current approaches to literary globalization and transnationalism.


Now I am working on a study of the formation of a humanist world literature canon in Turkey, Egypt, and Iran, tentatively titled, World Literature and National Culture Planning: A History of Literary Translation in the Middle East. The specific historical pivot that I focus on in my project is the early twentieth-century “translation arc” formed by state-sponsored indigenous translation programs in three major literary capitals in the Middle East: namely Istanbul, Cairo, and Tehran. Each of these projects emerges in the first half of the twentieth century as a future-oriented “culture planning” vision propagated by the new national elites. Each context follows two complementary logics and discourses of translation: a humanistic one, where the aim was to translate into the vernacular the “masterpieces of world literature and thought,” and a developmentalist one that proposed to make the most recent literary developments available to the national readership. Translation, therefore, served as a mirror, reflecting the literary and cultural “lacks” of the target system, as much as it was meant to import new forms and ideas, which would eventually help the nation overcome its perceived deficiencies. My ultimate goal in this project is to make an intervention in current world literature and translation studies by foregrounding the specificity of “other” translation histories and practices that are shaped by contested processes of nation-building.

In addition to my book project, I have two articles in progress. The first one treats past-present trends in Africa-Gulf relations through a comparative analysis of the representations of the hydrocarbon culture in “the oil novel” of these regions. I argue that prominent African and Arab writers of petrofiction such as Helon Habila, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Ben Okri, Abdalrahman Munif, Nawal El-Saadawi, and Reza Negarestani share a common ecocritical frame in registering oil’s relations with ecological crisis, war, urbanization, and campaigns for environmental justice. The second article will serve as a comprehensive introduction to Middle Eastern Literature and Theory, and is forthcoming in The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies.

At Georgetown, Northwestern, UCLA and Duke, I have had the great opportunity to design and teach a rich variety of courses to a diverse group of students. As a recognition of my passion for teaching, I was awarded the prestigious Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Advanced Instructorship by Duke University’s Graduate School. In my teaching, I aspire to endow students with a command of critical concepts and tools for analyzing how texts and images represent economic, cultural political, and demographic transformations in a complex web of circulation, movement, and translation. All my courses address the prospects and challenges of these transformations from a particular point of focus: human rights issues; migration and diasporic cultures; globalization, identities, and violence; new media technologies in the global South; transnational movements; postcolonial Englishes; and shifting paradigms in literary and visual forms of expression.

While being mindful of the larger tapestry of interconnection and commonality in a global mode of inquiry, I also believe in the pedagogical necessity of drawing attention to temporal and spatial singularities and differences across cultures and societies through close-reading. I am encouraged to learn that my students are particularly appreciative of how literature from separate parts of the world could reach out and touch them. In my “Approaches to World Literature” course, for instance, they explore the history and current models of framing literature in a global setting. Through fiction by Dai Sijie, Orhan Pamuk, and Amitav Ghosh (among others), they examine different understandings of the concept of world literature and construct their arguments in relation to existing scholarship in the field. Next semester I am excited to be offering a special topic course on “Cultures of Sport in Literature and Film.”
The Center for International and Regional Studies held its inaugural Faculty Research Workshop on April 7, 2014, led by Karl Widerquist, Associate Professor of Philosophy at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. Several internationally-based participants were invited to discuss his book titled, *Prehistoric Myths in Modern Political Philosophy*. The manuscript is currently in its final stages of preparation and argues that many prominent contemporary political theories rely on false claims about human origins and life in non-state societies. The book shows how several dubious claims became widely accepted premises because they seemed plausible (or even obvious) to Europeans of the early colonial period. It shows how contemporary theories continue to pass on those premises, often unnoticed and unchallenged, and it assembles anthropological and archaeological evidence to refute them. Finally, it discusses the ramifications of these findings for contemporary justifications of property, inequality, and the state.

The CIRS Faculty Research Workshop, in the form of a closed-door, one-day seminar gathers together a small number of renowned scholars to engage in a focused discussion on a book manuscript that is in its final stages of preparation and has been authored by a member of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar faculty. The gathering consists of a series of structured brainstorming sessions, through which the participants engage in a thorough and critical discussion of the book manuscript. All participants will have read the manuscript in advance of the meeting, and individual scholars are asked to lead focused group discussions on different chapters.
Gary Wasserman Lectures on “What Are We Doing Here (in Doha)?”

Gary Wasserman, professor of Government at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, delivered a CIRS Focused Discussion lecture titled, “Why Are We Here (in Doha)” on April 27, 2014. Encouraging discussion among members of the Georgetown University in Qatar community, Wasserman noted that he did not have an answer to the question posed in the title of the lecture, but would offer five different possible models that approach an answer.

The first model is to consider Georgetown University in Qatar as an extension of the American imperium. In this model, the United States offers the Middle East region two of its key capabilities: military bases for regional security, and US schools providing world class education—in other words, what political scientists call hard power of economic wealth and military weapons as well as soft power of ideas. In this sense, Wasserman argued “we are the American superpower in its educational garb.”

These offerings are not necessarily negative and may be key to the current peace and prosperity in much of the world. The limitation to this model, however, is that the faculty and educators at Georgetown in Qatar do not necessarily serve as ideal ambassadors of US government policy. They are more likely to dissent, to question, and to challenge official US policy in their critical scribblings, and in their informed debates with students and others, whether at home or abroad. Moreover, the Qatari hosts are hardly a passive colonized people; they initiated this relationship, they pay for it, and they negotiate the contract under which Georgetown in Qatar operates, at the least as equals.

On the opposite end of the spectrum lies the second model offered by Wasserman—the “expat model.” Here, individual members of the Georgetown community travel abroad to practice their professions; a practical task that is not always integrated into that of any larger, more idealized notion of a Western institution. In this sense, he argued, “we are well-compensated hired help. We are here to fill a job and provide a service that cannot be produced locally; arguably a home-delivered prestige commodity—a Western brand name.” However, Wasserman’s objection to this model is that, whether consciously or not, Georgetown is expected to, and is in fact, changing behavior, as all educational institutions are wont to do.

The third model is the “contract model,” where Georgetown is obligated to act as a professional school for training diplomats in and for Qatar. The institution was invited by its Qatari hosts to offer some, but not all, aspects of the Georgetown college experience, sanitizing the more controversial elements of US culture and society. Wasserman’s reservations of this model center on the fact that very few of the graduates actually end up in the foreign service, and so the Georgetown education is far more encompassing than merely a training center for diplomats. “We are in fact as close to a liberal arts college as Education City gets,” he explained.

Which leads to the fourth model, that of “liberalism,” where Georgetown can be seen as spreading secular humanism in the form of the widest possible inquiry and tolerance of freedom of thought and expression, especially as for those who struggle with social oppression in terms of gender, race, or sexual orientation. However, Wasserman’s objection to the applicability of this model is that even though Georgetown invites students to think for themselves, the institution is in fact asking them to subscribe to a particular Westernized ideal of thinking. By being in Qatar, Georgetown must reconcile with the reality that it does not operate in a liberal society that elevates individual thought above all. Rather it is one where family, community, and religious ties are more highly valued. The students from this region are a complex mix of loyalty and obligation to their families and societies, along with a desire to integrate into globalizing outlooks and identities. This mixed campus experience makes it difficult for Georgetown to “cleanly” deliver the traditional Western ideals of liberalism. Nor should we, Wasserman stated.

The fifth and concluding model Wasserman offered is what he called “the muddled bubble.” In this model, Georgetown in Qatar is operating, without a set blueprint, in an environment of messy uncertainty. This, he argued, will necessarily mean that the institution is at the interface of different and changing cultures. “We occupy what should be an uncomfortable, unpredictable, but potentially innovative space,” he argued. The model of the bubble demands that Georgetown in Qatar seek a degree of autonomy, not only from potentially reactionary local pressures, but also from the foreign traditions and interests of the main campus. The “muddled” part of the model, he explained, comes from the experimental, unclear process by which we create an unusual blend of transnational students prepared for an unclear and unique future. Thus, Wasserman concluded, we should celebrate our unique position of being muddled “not by a clash of civilizations, but by a confusion of civilizations.”

Gary Wasserman has fashioned a career in teaching, political consulting and writing. Previously he taught graduate students at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Nanjing, China. He received his Ph.D. with Distinction from Columbia University. His publications include Politics in Action: Cases in Modern American Government, and The Basics of American Politics (15th ed).
Mohammed Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Assistant Professor of Commercial Law at Qatar University and the 2013-2014 CIRS-Qatar University Fellow, delivered the final CIRS Monthly Dialogue lecture of the 2013-2014 academic year on May 12, 2014. The topic of discussion was “Insights into the Qatari Legal System,” wherein Al-Khulaifi gave an overview of Qatari regulations, the judicial and legislative sectors, and the relationship between legislation and developments in Qatar. Current Qatari legislations are divided into two main categories. The first is public law, which involves the public authority such as international law, constitutional law, and criminal law. The second is private law, which includes civil and commercial laws.

Al-Khulaifi gave some background to Qatari legal history by noting that, since the 7th century, early Qatari society referred to custom and Shari’ah when solving disputes, which were used extensively in cases put forth by pearl divers of the time. Despite the Gulf countries’ subscription to the British mandate in the modern period, Shari’ah law remained as the prevailing law for citizens. Since Qatari society has always been regulated by a traditional form of social governance, “it would be majorly incorrect to say that the history of law in Qatar started with the issuance of the official gazette in 1960,” he explained. With Qatari independence in 1971, there was an overhaul of the legal system wherein “British courts were eliminated and replaced by the ‘Qatari justice courts,’” which presides over civil, commercial, and criminal law, while the Shari’ah court presides over family and inheritance issues.

Since the establishment of the hydrocarbon industry in Qatar, the country’s legal system went through a significant transformation to pave the way for foreign corporate and economic interests and investments. This has been achieved by adopting laws that ease the legal process for doing business, and by aligning with many of the international norms, he noted. Currently, “Qatar is engaged in a tremendous number of high-value projects,” as “the country is involved with approximately US$250 billion worth of projects related to the preparation of the FIFA World Cup 2022,” he added.

Describing the legal process itself, Al-Khulaifi explained that, in order for one of the ministries to propose issuing a law, it is first prepared as a “draft” created by specialized legal committees in the Council of Ministers, which is then presented to the Shura Council for consideration. Upon acceptance, the Shura Council returns the “draft” to the Council of Ministers to be crafted into its final form and then to be issued by the Office of His Highness the Emir. Once it is signed by His Highness the Emir, it is sent to the Ministry of Justice for publication in the official Gazette of the State for application in public life. “It is also quite crucial to emphasize that the Qatar legislations are mostly similar in content to the legislations in the Gulf region and the Arab World,” he continued.

In conclusion, Al-Khulaifi noted that Qatar was ranked 14th in the 2011-2012 Global Competitiveness Ranking. Since there is such growth in the commercial and business sectors in Qatar, which are continually expanding, there should also be vigilance regarding the application of the law, and dealing with any necessary revision as needed. “This fact should continuously notify the legislator and lawmakers in the country to cope with the ultimate development in the different fields of law by reviewing the existing laws and providing new reliable regulations that would legally protect […] development in Qatar,” he concluded.

Mohammed Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi graduated from Qatar University with a Bachelor degree of Law (LL.B) in 2007 and received a 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. 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.
Sam Bahour Discusses “New Paradigms for a Palestine in Perpetual Limbo?”

Sam Bahour, Managing Partner at Applied Information Management (AIM), Director at the Arab Islamic Bank, and a policy adviser to the Al-Shabaka Palestinian Policy Network, delivered a CIRS Monthly Dialogue lecture on “New Paradigms for a Palestine in Perpetual Limbo?” on April 21, 2014, which centered on the persisting nature of the Israel–Palestine conflict. Bahour explained that it is not just the overt acts of Israeli violence and injustice that Palestinians must overcome, but the “peace industry” itself that has been built around the problem and that paradoxically sustains the struggle even as it attempts to aid in its resolution. A solid superstructure of international NGOs, human rights organizations, advocacy groups, academic think tanks, cultural programs, and solidarity groups have been constructed around the conflict, and thrive off of its existence.

Bahour argued that Palestine is in a state of perpetual limbo because “today’s Israeli position rests on the assumption that procrastination will continue to tilt the strategic balance increasingly in Israel’s favor.” Decade by decade, he adumbrated key instances of how power relations between Israel and Palestine were incrementally and consistently skewed in favor of the Israeli state and with the backing, or indifference, of much of the international community. The Israeli occupation has ingrained ideological pathologies that do not conceptualize Palestinians as equals, or as deserving of equality. “We are not facing a right-wing Israeli government. We are facing the state institution of Israel, which has embedded within it an exclusivist ideology of Zionism bent on maintaining a world view which gives preferential treatment to Jews, and is bent on redemption of the land of Israel,” Bahour explained.

“The issue of Palestine reflects a historical injustice so large and so blatant that its flame refuses to extinguish.”

Israel is reticent to reach a final settlement and to put an end to the conflict because of four perceived alternatives to a negotiated agreement—all of which are in Israel’s favor and undermine the Palestinian position. The first is for Israel to prolong negotiations indefinitely by feigning progress even as it encroaches on Palestinian lands and rights. The second is for Israel to set up a pseudo-provisional two-state arrangement wherein a weakened Palestinian authority masquerades as a Palestinian government. The third is a unilateral separation dictated by Israel, and the fourth is for Egypt and Jordan to assume control of the occupied territories.

However, “Israeli strategic planners overestimate their own strength and underestimate the strategic opportunities available to the Palestinians,” he said, as these four Israeli-favored outcomes can be challenged by the reorientation of Palestinian strategy through four new paradigms. These include putting an end to the idea of a two-state negotiation; the reconstitution of the Palestinian authority into a more proactive entity serving Palestinian priorities; the elevation of intelligent resistance over negotiations and the reassertion of national unity through reform of the PLO and eliciting international third-party support; and the shift from a two-state solution to a bi-national or unitary democratic single state. When Palestinians finally concede to the fact that a genuine negotiated outcome is not being offered by the Israelis, they will be able to conscientiously reject the idea of a two-state solution.

Shifting to his perspective as a Palestinian parent, Bahour spoke about how his daughters perceive the future of Palestine. Although his children are aware of the total military occupation that restricts their lives, their modern and globalized attitude means that they think differently on many of the existing issues, and have their own opinions on how the conflict should be resolved. Speaking from the perspective of the Palestinian youth generation, his daughters lamented the futility of fighting against Israel’s behemoth military and nuclear power and expressed their fatigue with decades of struggling for an international law which cannot be implemented. They opted instead to redefine Palestinian self-determination, and to come up with a radical alternative that is both unimaginable and unacceptable to the older generation of Palestinians: conceding that the Palestinians are powerless to create a viable state under the current conditions, thus surrendering the Palestinian struggle for statehood in return for full human, civil, and political rights within the structure of the Israeli state.

“The issue of Palestine reflects a historical injustice so large and so blatant that its flame refuses to extinguish,” Bahour argued, but this new paradigm of self-determination as envisioned by Palestinian youth turns the model of the conflict on its head and defies decades of orchestrated Israeli control with its counter-intuitive offering. Thus, he concluded, the youth generation “is at a crossroads between continuing on the statehood path, which we are losing by the day […] or to drop statehood and call for civil rights.”

Sam Bahour is a Palestinian-American based in Al-Bireh/Ramallah, Palestine, and a freelance consultant specializing in business development with a niche focus on start-ups. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Palestine Telecommunications Company and the PLAZA Shopping Center, and was a Board of Trustees member at Birzeit University. He is a member of the core Local Reference Group of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), and co-founder of the Dalia Association. Bahour is co-editor of HOMELAND: Oral History of Palestine and Palestinians.
Mohamed Zayani, Associate Professor at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, delivered a CIRS Focused Discussion lecture on “Networked Arab Publics and Contention in the Digital Age” on April 15, 2014. The talk was based on Zayani’s ongoing book project, which analyzes the changing relationships between media and politics in the Arab world, especially as they relate to the Arab uprisings in Tunisia.

The book provides an ethnographic account of evolving media practices that bring into focus the intricate relationship between the emerging digital culture in the Arab world, youth engagement and youth involvement, cyber dissidence and resistance, and political expression. Zayani was prompted into further investigations on the subject because in much of the literature, the role of media, especially social media, was either highly inflated or unduly analyzed, leaving little room to cogitate upon the complexities of the nuanced relationship between people, media, politics, and power.

Examining the media’s role in the Arab uprisings, Zayani highlighted the importance of country-specific studies. There has been a tendency to cast the countries of the Arab uprisings into a single homogenous phenomenon under the rubric of the “Arab Spring,” without paying attention to the important contextual differences between each state. Tunisia proved to be a crucial site of convergence for media, politics, and popular contention as it was the first Arab country to connect to the Internet in 1991 and the first overt site of the Arab uprisings. Thus, Zayani analyzes the correlation between Internet penetration and political change, arguing that “on the one hand, the country lived under the rule of a regime that proved adept at modernizing authoritarianism and ensuring regime durability. On the other hand, the country adopted an avant-garde Internet development model and purposefully sought to build a digital infrastructure that is capable of positioning the country as a model for an aspiring networked society in the age of globalization.” Attempts to balance these two factors was a challenge for the Tunisian regime, which ultimately collapsed under the pressure of a technologically-equipped and vocalized public.

“My study aims to redirect attention from the formal political institutions of the Arab world to the politics of everyday life”

As Arab media developed during the 1990s, creating a virtual public sphere where political issues could be discussed relatively openly, this schism became more pronounced. Internet activism was propelled by a number of factors including the demographic reality of the region, which was encompassed in a youth bulge where two-thirds of the Arab world are below the age of 25. “The conundrum was that this significant socio-demographic category has been largely left out of political life—or at least that was the perception.” Importantly, this growing youthful population was buoyed by two simultaneous phenomena of mass education and mass media, both of which were significant in their challenge to traditional constructions of authority and advocacy of rational and critical thinking.

Focusing on questions of political socialization, Zayani’s study is geared towards answering a central question: “How do young people become politicized on the Internet?” This goes against the general assumption that Arab youth were, on the whole, politically marginalized and disinterested. The events of the Arab uprisings proved the contrary, and Arab youth exhibited strong political consciousness, activism, and engagement. The main overlooked issue is that they tend to express their political stances through means other than formal political structures.

Thus, Zayani concluded by noting the importance of challenging traditional categorizations of what it means to be political, explaining: “My study aims to redirect attention from the formal political institutions of the Arab world to the politics of everyday life.” In this reformulation, digital contention yields more than just dissidence; it encourages other forms of assertiveness associated with the concept of citizenship.
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 will also 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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