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The American Austrian Foundation



Annenberg
SCHOOL FOR COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

MILTON WOLF SEMINAR VIENNA, AUSTRIA APRIL 16-18, 2013

DIPLOMATIC MANEUVERS AND JOURNALISTIC COVERAGE IN A TIME OF RESET, PIVOT AND REBALANCE

SEMINAR OVERVIEW

Launched in 2001, the Milton Wolf Seminar Series aims to deal with developing issues in diplomacy and journalism – both broadly defined. The 2013 seminar is jointly organized by the Center for Global Communication Studies (CGCS) at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, The American Austrian Foundation (AAF), and the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna (DA). Guests include those working for state and multi-lateral organizations, journalists, media development practitioners, academics, and a select group of highly engaged graduate students interested in the seminar themes.

The organizers envision the Milton Wolf Seminar as a meeting place for media practitioners, diplomats, academics, and students to share their perspectives, formulate new ideas, and identify areas where further research is needed. While the seminar will incorporate various speakers and panels, it is designed as a two-day continuing conversation in which all participants are encouraged to openly engage in dialogue and explore potential synergies and future collaborations. In order to encourage an open exchange of ideas, seminar attendance is limited only to invited participants and students.

THEMATIC OVERVIEW

The 2013 seminar, **Diplomatic Maneuvers and Journalistic Coverage in a Time of Reset, Pivot and Rebalance** addresses the critical role of diplomats and journalists in shaping the outcomes of what we call global geopolitical pivots. Pivots in this case refer to emergent geopolitical shifts around which multiple stakeholders--from major powers, to

multilateral organizations, to bloggers working in isolation--seek to provide input on the most appropriate outcomes. As Zbigniew Brzezinski (1998) defined them, "Geopolitical pivots are the states whose importance is derived not from their power and motivation but rather from their sensitive location and from the consequences of their potentially vulnerable condition for the behavior of geo-strategic players. Most often, geopolitical pivots are determined by their geography, which in some cases gives them a special role in either defining access to important areas or in denying resources to a significant player."

Examples of contemporary global pivots that will be considered in this year's Seminar include: the shifts in geopolitical approaches to Syria, the external role of Iran and the fixing on Syrian conflict, calls for regime change in Iran, and the intense Western attention to reform movements and government change in Burma (Myanmar).

In the case of Syria, since protestors first took to the streets in 2011, a range of actors have participated in a complex and shifting web of global diplomatic discussions surrounding the legitimacy of the al-Assad regime, the utility of international intervention in the civil war, and the viability of the disparate Syrian opposition movements. Burma, also known as Myanmar, a closed regime ruled by the military since 1962, underwent its first election in 2010. Although boycotted by the opposition, this election marked the first sign of emergent changes within the country and has ignited the diplomatic community. Burma's return to geopolitical prominence was punctuated by visits by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in December 2011 and President Barak Obama in November 2012. They were the first senior US officials to visit the country in over fifty years. The third geopolitical pivot under analysis is the case of Iran. In 2009-2010 the world watched as election protesters took to the streets of Iran. While the Green Revolution failed to achieve regime change, those events, coupled with heightened security concerns over Israel, Syria, and the Iranian nuclear program, have placed Iran at the heart of global diplomatic conversations.

In each of these cases, different state and non-state actors have put forward competing narratives advocating particular outcomes. These narratives are circulated, among other mechanisms, through political speeches, in the press, and via the internet. This year's seminar will explore the critical role of this narrative construction in shaping diplomatic outcomes. How do diplomats, journalists, and other stakeholders seek to advocate for particular outcomes, and to what effect? Conversely, how do these geopolitical pivots or shifts affect on-going narratives of democratization, shifts from authoritarian regimes, and the role of media and communications in diplomacy?

AGENDA

DAY ONE – APRIL 16, 2013

6:00 – 8:00 PM Welcome Reception and Registration (Diplomatic Academy)

DAY TWO: APRIL 17, 2013

9:00 – 10:00 Welcome & Introduction

- [Katharine Eltz-Aulitzky](#), Executive Director, *The American Austrian Foundation*
- [Monroe Price](#), Director, Center for Global Communications Studies, *Annenberg School for Communication University of Pennsylvania*
- [Ambassador Hans Winkler](#), Director, *Diplomatic Academy Vienna*

10:00 – 12:00 Session 1: Global Pivots: Controlling the Narrative

Geopolitical shifts such as the Arab Spring, the fall of communism, or the opening up of closed regimes often bring flurries of speculation and negotiation about intermediate and long-term outcomes. With rapid changes in the communications environment, state actors are competing with an ever-increasing range of actors to interpret and proscribe these outcomes, often through the media. This introductory panel will address the changing role of media diplomacy, media actors, and non-state actors in shaping the outcomes of these global geopolitical shifts.

Panelists:

- **Monroe Price** (chair)
- [Ben O'Loughlin](#), Professor of International Relations, *Royal Holloway, University of London*
- [Katharine Sarikakis](#), Professor of Communication, *University of Vienna*
- [Yaroslav Skvortsov](#), Dean of the International Journalism Faculty at *MGIMO-University*

12:00 – 1:30 Welcoming Lunch

1:30 – 3:15 Session 2: Burma

Burma, also known as Myanmar, a closed regime ruled by the military since 1962, underwent its first election in 2010. Although boycotted by the opposition, this election marked the first sign of emergent changes within the country and has ignited the diplomatic community. This panel will focus on processes by which the international community, especially NGOs reframe the role of journalism and media law and policy in reform. It will also investigate the efforts of diplomats, journalists, and other non-state actors to frame transformations within Burma.

Panelists:

- **Monroe Price** (chair)
- **[Sir Robert Francis Cooper](#)**, *Counsellor*, European External Action Service. Author of *The Breaking of Nations*.
- **Khin Maung Win**; Deputy Executive Director, [Democratic Voice of Burma](#)
- **Esben Q. Harboe**, Programme Manager, Myanmar, [International Media Support](#)

3:15 – 3:30 Tea Break

3:30 – 5:30 Session 3: Iran

In 2009, protestors took to the streets and to the social media sites in the largest challenge to Iran's theocracy since 1979. Four years later, the "Green Revolution" has stalled, but Iran remains a geopolitical pivot, particularly in light of its participation in Syria. This session will focus on the role of the journalists and diplomats in shaping the ongoing narrative about Iran and its relationship to external events in the Middle East. Topics for discussion include the methods and ethics of efforts to expand networks of discourse within Iran and between Iran and the world on significant issues.

Panelists:

- **[Briar Smith](#)**; Associate Director, *Center for Global Communication Studies* (chair)
- **Farzan Sabet**; Editor and Co-Founder, [Iranpolitik.com](#)
- **[Majid Rafizadeh](#)**; President and Director, [International American Council on Middle East](#)
- **[Golnaz Esfandiari](#)**; Senior Correspondent, *Radio Free Europe*

7:30 Heurigen Weingut Wolff

9:00 – 10:30 Session 4: The Absence of a Viable Narrative: Its' Consequences for Diplomacy and Journalism

As the Arab Spring began in December 2010, a narrative of change swept the Middle East and North Africa as protestors took to the streets and long-sitting autocratic rulers in Tunisia, then Egypt and then Libya toppled. This year's Milton Wolf Seminar will take place over two years after the protests in Syria began. Assad remains in power; and the death toll continues to mount as does discussion and debate on the best way forward for resolving the crisis. This session will explore diplomatic and other international efforts to fashion a convincing narrative about the future of the Assad regime and the government of Syria. It will pay particular attention to the points of discord between major Western powers and those of Russia, China, Egypt, and Iran and the role of the media in undermining or supporting these positions.

Panelists:

- **Ambassador Hans Winkler** (chair)
- **Majid Rafizadeh**, President and Director, *International American Council on Middle East*
- [David Faris](#), Assistant Professor of Political Science, and Director, International Studies Program, *Roosevelt University*
- [Anthony Mills](#), Deputy Director, [International Press Institute](#)
- [Ambassador Gabriele Matzner-Holzer](#), Former Austrian Ambassador to Tunisia

10:30 – 10:45 Tea Break

10:45 – 12:15 Session 5: Alternate Voices: The Struggle for a Syrian Strategic Narrative

This session will examine the successes and failures of external efforts to shape information flows in and out of Syria and international opinion about the ongoing conflict by journalists, bloggers, and other alternative voices. Subjects of discussion include liberation technology, partnerships with social media and traditional media organizations, and non-conventional information transfers.

Panelists

- [Ambassador Karl Schramek](#); Austrian Ambassador to Belgium, former Ambassador to Syria (chair)
- **Hanin Ghaddar**; Managing Editor, [NOW News](#)
- **Ahed Al Hendi**; Arabic Program Coordinator, [cyberdissidents.org](#)

12:15 – 1:30 Lunch

1:30 – 3:00 Session 6: Are there “Pivots” and how will they affect Diplomacy and Journalism?

British geographer, Sir Halford Mackinder first set out his theory that Eastern Europe was the "The Geographical Pivot of History" in 1904. His concept of a geographical pivot is often credited with invigorating the study of geopolitics. Over a century later, the world system has changed considerably. As multilateral organizations, non-state actors, global communications systems, and transnational activist networks move to the fore, the conduct of international relations surrounding these pivots has evolved and become exponentially more complicated. This session will examine emerging sites for renegotiation in the world system. It will explore a number of case studies, such as: Al Jazeera's expanding operations in the United States and the Western pivot to Asia, and France's recent activities in Mali.

Panelists

- Monroe Price (Chair)
- [Simon Haselock](#); Chief Operating Officer & Director, *Albany Associates*
- **David Faris**, Assistant Professor of Political Science, and Director, International Studies Program, *Roosevelt University*
- [Barbara Trionfi, Press Freedom Manager Asia and the Middle East, *International Press Institute*](#)

3:00 – 3:30 Wrap Up Discussion

We invite all interested panelists and participants to join us in the Musikzimmer for a final round of discussion.

3:30 – 5:00 Emerging Scholar Discussion Session

During this afternoon meeting in the Musikzimmer, we will continue the discussion focused on how this relates to the work of the Emerging Scholars. Emerging scholars will be invited to describe how the issues discussed relate to their own projects and activities.

6:30 Reception Deputy Chief of the US Mission Lee Brudwig (please bring your invitation)