



News Coverage of Foreign Affairs and National Security

Jill Abramson, New York Times Executive Editor

March 28, 2013—*New York Times* Executive Editor Jill Abramson joined *New York Times* Deputy Washington Bureau Chief Elisabeth Bumiller for a conversation on News Coverage of Foreign Affairs and National Security. Abramson emphasized the importance of international news coverage to *The Times*, noting that the paper had not made any cuts to its foreign bureaus or correspondents despite financial pressures. She also addressed the difficulty of balancing coverage of conflict zones with the safety of her journalists. Other topics covered included lessons learned from the paper's coverage in the lead up to the Iraq War and the impact of hacking of *The Times* on reporting in China.

Abramson discussed the company's recent decision to rename *The International Herald Tribune* and introduce *The International New York Times* to bolster the paper's international presence. *The Times* currently has 17 international bureaus and utilizes local freelance journalists—known as stringers—in dozens of countries to ensure detailed accuracy for every story. When asked where she would like to open more bureaus, Abramson responded that the greatest need is in Latin America, where *The Times* currently has just one bureau, in Mexico City, as well as correspondents based in Venezuela, Brazil and Argentina. She would also like to have an increased presence in Africa, where the paper has only three full-time bureaus.

Abramson underlined that the budget cuts and the economic recession had not impacted *The New*

York Times' foreign coverage and that the paper is hiring, not shedding staff. *The Times'* revenue from subscriptions (both print and online) currently exceeds their advertising revenue, which she says shows that "print is far from dead."

The most difficult part of her job, Abramson said, is balancing the imperative for news coverage with the safety of her journalists. She has to weigh the risks with the rewards of getting first-hand coverage in conflict zones. On a personal note, she shared the stories of some of the recent kidnappings and deaths of *Times* journalists, including her friend, Dan Pearl. In addition to *Times* reporters, Abramson recognized the huge risks taken by stringers and foreign national freelancers, without whom, she said, *The Times* would be unable to function.



Board Chair Maxine Isaacs, Jill Abramson,
Patricia Ellis and Ann McLaughlin Korologos



WFGP Board Chair Maxine Isaacs, Jill Abramson, Elisabeth Bumiller, Ambassador Mohamed Tawfik of Egypt, and Patricia Ellis



New York Times Executive Editor Jill Abramson and Deputy Washington Bureau Chief Elisabeth Bumiller engage in conversation



Board Member Dawn Calabia and Ambassador Faida Mitifu of the Democratic Republic of Congo



Donna Constantinople, Hasan Dossal, and Board Member Mary Catherine Toker



Patricia Ellis introduces Jill Abramson to Ambassador Mohamed Al-Rumaihi of Qatar



Author and journalist Elizabeth Becker with *Washington Post* Associate Editor Karen DeYoung

Special thanks to Maxine Isaacs and Ann Korologos for their support of this event.

Beyond the Headlines: Syria

An Update from Ambassador Rosemary DiCarlo



Jun 7—Ambassador Rosemary DiCarlo, US Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, briefed WFPG on the situation in Syria. DiCarlo discussed the continued fighting within Syria and along the Syrian-Israeli border, described the humanitarian emergency, and gave an update on the latest

diplomatic and political efforts to resolve the crisis.

DiCarlo emphasized the value of the UN as an impartial arbiter in working with American and Russian facilitators to bring Syrian parties to the negotiating table. The UN has played a similar role in other transitions in the region. In Libya, its political mission is helping to build the representative institutions that will provide a solid foundation for the country's post-Qaddafi democratic future. In Yemen, UN representatives have helped to supervise the implementation of a National Dialogue to promote reconciliation under a new constitution in the aftermath of 2011's civil unrest.

DiCarlo outlined the UN's plans for the upcoming "Geneva II" talks on Syria. In negotiations to be attended by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and mediated by Lakhdar Brahimi, key members of the international community hope to facilitate agreement between the government and the opposition on the creation of a transitional governing body vested, by the mutual consent of the parties, with full executive powers and designed to be broadly representative and inclusive of all Syrians. DiCarlo acknowledged that many obstacles remain before

the talks can begin. She noted that UN diplomats are working with the Syrian opposition to build an effective, representative delegation, so that a sustainable political solution to the crisis can be reached as soon as possible.

On the situation along the Syrian-Israeli border, DiCarlo discussed the recent skirmishes which have endangered the safety of lightly armed UN peace-keeping troops. She emphasized the importance of proceeding to negotiations in time to prevent the spread of conflict throughout the broader region and particularly into Lebanon, where the militant political faction Hezbollah has chosen to align itself with the Syrian regime. Any UN-facilitated talks must incorporate key regional players such as Jordan and Turkey. DiCarlo emphasized that all players will need to engage productively and in good faith with the fundamental principles of the Geneva II process.

DiCarlo also highlighted the UN's humanitarian efforts in Syria. Since the beginning of the conflict, UN agencies have provided critical support to the wounded, the hungry, and the displaced. As casualty numbers rise, the organization's diplomats continue to work to overcome the regime's strict restrictions on humanitarian access, both across borders and across battle lines. The humanitarian needs are immense and growing. DiCarlo noted that, if violence continues at current levels, half the Syrian population could be displaced by the end of 2013. Time is of the essence, for ordinary Syrians as well as for their leaders: a negotiated political transition, DiCarlo stressed, should be the international community's very highest priority in Syria.

Education during the War: Reflections from Syria

Jun. 4—Rasha Faek, a Syrian journalist now based in Jordan with *Al-Fanar*, shared her reflections with WFPG and NAFSA: Association of International Educators. Faek discussed the impact of large-scale civil conflict on the lives of Syria's students, who have seen their universities damaged, closed, targeted in bombings and rocket attacks, and converted into shelters for the displaced. She also touched on the financial, logistical, and psychological challenges faced by Syrian students seeking to continue their studies abroad, and called for the international community to take a larger role in supporting Syrian students and teachers in their efforts to protect, strengthen, and improve their country's educational system.



Author Series: On Saudi Arabia

Its People, Past, Religion, Fault Lines—and Future



Karen Elliott House, former publisher of *The Wall Street Journal*, spoke to the WFPG on her new book, *On Saudi Arabia: Its People, Past, Religion, Fault Lines—And Future*. House described the factors affecting stability in Saudi Arabia, as well as areas for opportunity and potential challenges that the kingdom

faces domestically and internationally. She addressed the situation of Saudi youth, the royal family, oil wealth, and the impact of the Arab awakening on the autocratic monarchy, as well as Saudi-American relations and their impact in the region. The events were hosted by Board Member Diana Villiers Negroponte in DC and cosponsored by IIE in NY.

According to House, the stability of Saudi Arabia rests on three pillars: oil wealth, the religious establishment, and the Al-Saud family—all of which are facing challenges. Oil wealth is being threatened by rising domestic consumption and could potentially suffer if America becomes more energy self-sufficient. The religious establishment is being jeopardized by the growing divide between the way Islam is preached and practiced. Lastly, the Al-Saud family will face a succession issue after the death of the last prince of the ruling generation.

In her remarks, House also discussed a variety of social issues including high unemployment, the ballooning youth population, and the impact of social media, as well as the government's attempt to control internet access. House that in a country of 27 million people, Saudis watch around 90 million YouTube videos a day. Their population is also

very young—60% are under 20. Turning to the Arab Spring, House addressed the different strategies enacted by the Al-Saud family to help prevent revolution. House also responded to questions on Islamic jihadism and Wahhabism, and how the West should respond to Islamic fundamentalism by supporting moderates instead of targeting extremists.

House went into great detail on the role of women, and emphasized her belief that she sees women as the salvation of Saudi Arabia and as potential agents of change. She pointed to their participation in the Shura Council as a sign of their rising political status, even if it is largely symbolic. In addition to being more politically active, women are now a growing force in the private sector, slowly being offered more entrepreneurial opportunities, and participating in the work force by working at businesses open to women, like lingerie stores. Although women are making great strides, House believes Saudi Arabia's so-called feminist movement will be unique in that, "they're not going to be bra-burning. They're using the Quran to defend themselves against the religious establishment, the same way the religious establishment uses the Quran on women." In contrast, House mentioned that there is still hesitation from more conservative women.

Her remarks and personal anecdotes conveyed her admiration of Saudi people, namely their generosity and kindness, which she was able to experience through the past 30 years of travel and study. House also shared that she felt continually drawn back to Saudi Arabia, both personally and professionally. She partially attributes this fascination to her upbringing in a small, conservative, religious town in the panhandle of Texas, which she felt helped her to relate to Saudi Arabia more than the average American.



Board Member Carolyn Brehm with Karen Elliot House



Patricia Ellis and Karen Elliot House, with Board Member and Host Diana Negroponte

Beyond the Headlines: Egypt & Iran

Egypt: Headed for a Civil State or Civil War?



Jul 23—Michele Dunne, vice president of the Atlantic Council and director of the Rafik Hariri Center, spoke on the situation in Egypt. Dunne covered events leading to Morsi's removal, the future of the Muslim Brotherhood, the role of the military, the interim government, the proposed timeline for elections and constitutional reform, and the prospects for political and economic stability. She also spoke about the US's role and the implications for the region.

In Dunne's opinion, Morsi's removal from office is a military coup. She discussed the three main divisions clamoring for control in Egypt: secularists and the military, Islamists, and the state, with the military banding together with the secularists against the Islamists. In her view, excluding Islamists from the process sends a message to the region that Islam and democracy are incompatible. Dunne expressed doubts in the timeline for elections and constitutional reforms; however, she sees the quick formation of an interim government as a positive development.

She discussed the interim government and its makeup and explained that it is supported by the military and does not include the Muslim Brotherhood. Dunne believes that some of the members of the interim government have good intentions, are well-suited to address the country's economic issues, and have extensive foreign policy experience. She also thinks that some appointees were chosen because of their reputations in the West, like new Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy, who previously served as ambassador to the US. She expressed confidence that the military would not run the government, but that they will step in if violence increases. The Muslim Brotherhood may refuse to take part in the democratic transition, but they will remain a major player in Egypt.

Dunne stressed that US policy towards Egypt must be thoroughly reassessed and built on principles which encourage movement towards democracy, inclusion, and reconciliation. She also discussed the importance of working with Europe, the Gulf, and the IMF in developing an aid package for Egypt. The economic situation in Egypt is dire and according to Dunne it will take years to recover, but international aid can assist with emergency stabilization measures.

Iran: What Can We Expect from a Rouhani Presidency?



Jul 18—Atlantic Council Senior Fellow Barbara Slavin briefed attendees on the results of Iran's presidential election and explored the implications for the nuclear issue and for Iran's relationships with the US and in the Middle East. She also discussed how Iran's political posture could change in response to the rapidly evolving regional landscape. In the discussion, Slavin advocated "cautious optimism" with regard to Iran's pragmatic new president, a well-connected former nuclear negotiator who may be able to work across "paralyzing" factional divides to address the economic crisis that Iran is facing.

Slavin believes the West "may be at the peak of our leverage" in negotiations with Iran. Iran's newly elected president, Hassan Rouhani, is said to have the confidence of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and Slavin expects that he may have some leeway to negotiate and to address Iran's economic problems, which he understands are directly correlated to foreign sanctions.

Rouhani, while insisting on Iran's right to enrich uranium, was quoted as saying that "wheels need to spin in factories. It's not enough just to have centrifuges running." Slavin stressed that one-on-one talks may more productive than UN facilitated P5+1 process.

Slavin also posits that changing regional security dynamics could contribute to a reshaping of Iran's policy on Syria. Rouhani has indicated that he will seek to dial down tensions with Saudi Arabia, and the Iranian regime remains concerned with the stability of Iraq's Shiite government. As the Syrian conflict escalates, Iran may find its interests best served by joining other regional stakeholders in their efforts.

According to Slavin, Rouhani's recent remarks suggest that Rouhani may soften some of the regime's most repressive domestic policies. Given his closeness to the Ayatollah, however, he is unlikely to take radical steps. Although Slavin emphasized that "the change that will come in Iran will come in an evolutionary manner," she believes that Rouhani's election presents an opportunity for engagement—an opportunity that must be taken seriously.

Switzerland: Small Country, Big Impact

Reflections on the Swiss Economy, Innovation and Switzerland's Role in Europe and the US



Jul 22—Ambassador Manuel Sager of Switzerland hosted WFPG for a discussion at his residence. In his remarks, Sager discussed reasons for the strong Swiss economy, with an emphasis on the importance of innovation. He also covered Switzerland's close political and economic relationships with the EU and the US. The discussion was moderated by WFPG President Patricia Ellis.

On the importance of Swiss innovation, Sager emphasized that a large portion of Switzerland's economy is based on adding high value to products for export. Switzerland also promotes international cooperation on innovation through swissnex liaison offices, which foster scientific and academic relations, as well as business start ups. As an example of Swiss innovation, Sager cited the SolarImpulse plane, the solar powered plane which recently flew across the US. In the future, Sager anticipates that pharmaceuticals

and micro-technology will continue to be important sectors for the country's. Green technology and the environment are also emerging priorities for Switzerland, especially following the government's announcement that nuclear power will be phased out by 2030.

Sager also addressed the close economic relationship Switzerland maintains with its European neighbors and with the EU. According to Sager, foregoing membership in the EU has allowed Switzerland to maintain its fiscal autonomy, the stability of the Swiss franc, and a balanced budget. Switzerland does however maintain a close relationship with the EU through numerous bilateral agreements. The EU is Switzerland's most important policy and trading partner: 60% of Swiss exports go to EU member states and 80% of imports come from the EU.

The US and Switzerland also have strong political and economic relations. Switzerland can represent US interests in countries where the US does not have diplomatic relations, including Cuba and Iran. Additionally, 560 Swiss companies are represented in the US, providing jobs to nearly half a million Americans, and roughly 1,000 US companies have offices in Switzerland, employing close to 75,000 people. Sager noted that Swiss companies invest more in research and development in the US than companies from any other country. Sager also acknowledged that the US and Switzerland do have some conflicts that they are working to resolve, including a tax dispute regarding the exchange of banking information, but that overall, the relationship between these two nations is very strong.



Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan, Patricia Ellis, Board Member Carolyn Brehm of P&G, Catherine Bennett of Tyco, and Ambassador Manuel Sager of Switzerland



Board Member Isabel Jasinowski, Ambassador Sager, and Elisabeth Bumiller of The New York Times

Celebrating Women Diplomats Washington, DC and New York, NY



Mar 19|Apr 30—Women’s Foreign Policy Group held its annual Celebration of Women Diplomats, honoring the 31 women permanent representatives to the United Nations, 30 women ambassadors and charges d'affaires to the US, and 17 women consuls general. The events were hosted by member Geraldine Kunstadter at her home in New York and Ambassador Marina Kaljurand of Estonia in Washington, DC.

The event in Washington featured remarks by Ambassadors Jadranka Negodic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tebelelo Seretse of Botswana, Marina Kaljurand of Estonia, Ritva Koukku-Ronde of Finland, Claudia Fritsche of Liechtenstein, Jacinth Henry-Martin of Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Deborah Mae Lovell Antigua and Barbuda. WFPG also recognized the Deputy Chiefs of Mission of Barbados, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Kenya, Mexico, Namibia, and Romania. This year, in light of the debate spurred by Sheryl Sandberg’s recent book, *Lean In*, and Anne-Marie Slaughter’s articles, the ambassadors were asked to make brief comments on what can be done to motivate women to believe in themselves and “lean in” to new opportunities to succeed in their careers.

In their comments, many of the women Ambassadors highlighted the importance of education, both of girls and of society at large. Ambassador Negodic noted that education allows women to make informed decisions about their rights. Ambassador Koukku-Ronde and Ambassador Lovell noted that men and boys need to be included in the discussion and

educated on gender equality both within and outside home. Ambassador Seretse went on to focus on mentoring, saying, “if today, each and every one of us can adopt at least one mentee, regardless of what country they come from, I think we’ll all be moving in the right direction.”

“ [If] each and every one of us can adopt at least one mentee... I think we’ll all be moving in the right direction. ”

Ambassador Fritsche and Ambassador Henry-Martin shared insights on advancement in the workplace. To shatter the glass ceiling, Ambassador Fritsche asserted that we need authenticity, passion, listening, and living, asserting that in order to achieve success we need to love our job and find time for enjoyment outside of the workplace. Ambassador Henry-Martin focused on another key word: confidence, and challenged women to have faith in their abilities and “lead from in front.”

In New York, the event highlighted the achievements of women representatives to the UN and women consuls general. Honorees included Ambassadors Mirsada Čolaković of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bénédicte Frankinet of Belgium, Gréta Gunnarsdóttir of Iceland, Dessima Williams of Grenada, Mary Elizabeth Flores of Honduras, and Anne Anderson of Ireland. WFPG also recognized the deputy permanent representatives of Brazil, Lebanon, Macedonia, Malawi, Moldova, Norway, and the US, as well as consuls general representing Colombia, Cyprus, Serbia, Slovakia, and Venezuela.

Embassy Series: Indonesia

Indonesia's Foreign and Economic Policies



May 6—In his remarks, H.E. Dr. Dino Patti Djalal, Ambassador of Indonesia, discussed Indonesia's democratic transition and the lessons it might hold for other countries trying to build sustainable post-authoritarian systems. He emphasized Indonesia's democratic "soft power,"

its strong relationship with the US, and its unique role, as a moderate Muslim nation, in facilitating productive conversations among diverse groups of stakeholder nations, both within Southeast Asia and the broader region.

Djalal traced Indonesia's transition from 1998 to the consolidation of the new democratic system. He attributes their success to thoughtful leadership, committed reformers, buy-in from old-regime stakeholders, and sequenced institutional reforms. He suggested that this demonstrates that democracy is compatible with rapid development, ethnic and religious diversity, and Islam. Indonesia's GDP grew by 6.5% in 2012, it is one of the most ethnically diverse nations in the world, and the world's largest Muslim country. In fact, according to Djalal, Islamic political parties are enthusiastic participants in the system. He noted that Indonesia's example as a successful Muslim-majority democracy could be particularly useful to the nations of the Middle East in the wake of the Arab Spring.

Terrorism remains a serious threat, but, since the 2002 Bali bombings, Indonesia has made great progress in preventing attacks: with assistance from the US and Australia, the country has established an effective anti-terrorism unit and pursued policies intended to

empower moderate religious voices. According to Djalal, Indonesia has also been successful in preserving human rights and democratic values, noting that the country has "one of the best law-enforcement records in Asia," and "hundreds of terrorists are in jail." He also touched on domestic challenges, including: corruption, low public confidence in public institutions, elitist politics, and growing economic inequality.

Djalal also discussed Indonesia's role in promoting democracy in Southeast Asia and around the world. The country's leaders have developed both formal and informal frameworks of personal consultation with non-democratic regimes. In the case of Myanmar, they "found that the leadership was quite sensitive about being told about what to do with their democracy by fellow Southeast Asian leaders," and so they advised their generals on democratic reforms. Indonesia has also established a continent-wide discussion group, the Bali Democracy Forum, which brings together some 80 states to share "best practices and lessons learned" as they work, "without pressure," toward more democratic outcomes.

The Ambassador also underlined the importance of the US–Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership. As Indonesia works to extend access to high-quality education to all of its citizens, fewer Indonesian students are studying in the US. Djalal called on both nations to facilitate academic exchange and to improve bilateral cooperation on education more generally. The US–Indonesia relationship in other areas is already very strong, and for good reason: as Djalal emphasized throughout the evening, Indonesia is a diverse, rapidly developing, and vibrant democracy, deeply engaged in helping to create a region at peace.



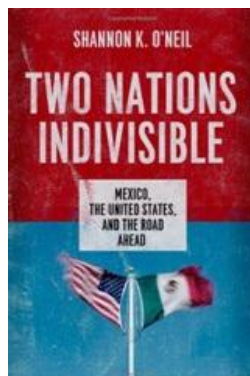
Ambassador Djalal with event moderator, WFPG President Patricia Ellis



Rosa Djalal, Under Secretary of State Tara Sonenshine, Ambassador Djalal, and Patricia Ellis

Author Series: Mexico and the US

Shannon K. O'Neil on *Two Nations Indivisible*



Jun 17|18—Shannon O'Neil, Council on Foreign Relations Senior Fellow for Latin America, spoke at Author Series events in NY and DC on her book, *Two Nations Indivisible: Mexico, The United States, and the Road Ahead*. O'Neil discussed the changes she has observed in Mexico over the last twenty years, including the opening of the economy and growth of the

middle class. She emphasized the need for Americans to better understand US–Mexico relations as well as Mexico's evolving position globally, including new relationships with China and Canada. O'Neil also addressed Mexico's major challenges including corruption, strengthening the rule of law, improving security, and diminishing violence. The events were moderated by WFPG President Patricia Ellis in NY and Board Member Diana Villiers Negroponete in DC.

In the last twenty years, Mexico's economy has undergone a transformation from a closed to an open economy. The numerous factories lining Mexican roads are a testament to their economic potential and a physical reminder that trade between the US and Mexico has quadrupled to half a trillion dollars per year since NAFTA was signed. Today, the middle class makes up almost half of the population of Mexico.

According to O'Neil, 6 million American jobs rely on Mexican consumers and Mexico's economic future is closely tied to that of the US: "If Mexico does well, so too will the United States. If Mexico does poorly,

the repercussions will reach far beyond the US–Mexico border." O'Neil explained that most Americans are not aware of the benefits the US receives from close ties to the Mexican and that the discussions are often dominated by immigration concerns. She went on to outline the impact that harsh immigration policies have on citizens of both nations.

In terms of foreign policy, Mexico's priority is economics. While foreign trade has increased, O'Neil believes that Mexico needs to elevate its position on the global stage. She argued that Mexico has "punched below its weight globally" and therefore is not as involved in multilateral issues as it could be. She discussed the Chinese president's recent visit to Mexico and suggested that China and Mexico are working on being both partners and competitors. She also commented on the new evolving relationship between Mexico and Canada, which would be separate from the United States.

O'Neil discussed two key problems facing Mexico: deteriorating security and corruption. President Peña Nieto promised a new approach during his campaign but so far has continued former President Calderón's security initiatives. O'Neil believes that long term institution building is needed to improve security and the justice system with its weak rule of law. According to O'Neil, to lower violence, killings, and kidnappings "you need to clean up your cops, you need to clean up your courts." She also thinks there is a role for both local and federal security forces. Lastly, she is concerned that rampant corruption, such as bribery, extortion, and blackmail, produces no legal disincentive for criminals.



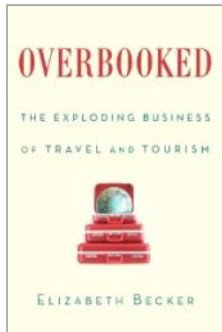
New York, NY: Author Shannon O'Neil with



Washington, DC: Patricia Ellis, Shannon O'Neil, and Board Member Diana Villiers Negroponete

Author Series

Overbooked: The Exploding Business of Travel and Tourism



Jun 12—Author and journalist Elizabeth Becker spoke on her latest book, *Overbooked*. In the discussion with Board Chair Maxine Isaacs, Becker discussed the global impact of the travel and tourism industry, including its environmental, political, and economic effects. The world has opened up to tourism. In 2012, 1 billion international trips were taken and tourism grossed \$6.4 trillion globally—numbers that make the industry hard to ignore.

Becker outlined three main categories of tourism—cultural, consumer, and nature—as well as specialized categories, including medical, sex, and dark tourism. When tourism is done “right”, as in France, it benefits locals and protects cultural sites and local heritage. Becker explained that success requires government involvement and cautioned that when not strictly regulated, tourism can cause more harm than good. Becker regards tourism regulation as part of good governance. Government is responsible for enforcing the “basic rules,” as well as for attracting and monitoring foreign visitors.

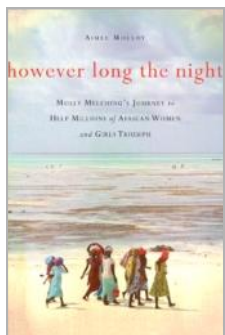
Calling cruises “the fast food of tourism”, Becker spoke on the disastrous impact that the industry is having on the environment and on local communities. Ports receive the disadvantages of tourism with few economic advantages. Additionally, cruise companies are generally incorporated in countries with minimal labor, safety, and environmental regulations.

Unlike most countries, the US government does not make promoting tourism a priority, something that Becker says should change. In the 1990s, when other countries were aiming to improve their economies by using tourism, the US cut tourism out of the budget and withdrew from the World Tourism Organization. After 9/11, tourism in the US declined as a result of stricter visa requirements and treatment at the border. Becker also pointed out that the US has not hosted a major international sporting event since the attacks. Becker explained that “it does not cost that much money to promote tourism” and termed the government’s lack of involvement in the industry as a “political issue.” President Obama has made some improvements for the tourism industry, but according to Becker we still has a long way to go.



Board Chair Maxine Isaacs, Author Elizabeth Becker and WFPG President Patricia Ellis

Helping Women and Girls in Africa: Molly Melching’s Story



Apr 29—Molly Melching, founder of Tostan, spoke on her work with women and girls in West Africa, and how human rights education has empowered them to lead change in their villages. Her story is told in Aimee Molloy’s new book, *However Long the Night: Molly Melching's Journey to Help Millions of African Women and Girls Triumph*. When Melching first

established Tostan in 1991, she focused on providing health and childcare information, but as their program expanded, they began incorporating human rights.

According to Melching, once people learned that they had the right to be free from discrimination and violence and the right to health, they started having conversations on whether certain practices aligned with their well-being, including the practice of female genital cutting. Since the first village issued a declaration abolishing FGC in 1997, over 5,000 villages have followed in Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania, and Guinea-Bissau. Melching also outlined Tostan’s strides on education on malaria, family planning, the role of interactions in child brain development, and the importance of vaccinations and birth registration. She firmly believes that for change to be sustainable, everyone affected needs to be engaged.

Embassy Series: Algeria and Greece

US-Algerian Relations with Ambassador Abdallah Baali

Feb 13—Ambassador Abdallah Baali hosted WFPG at his residence for a conversation which covered the importance of US-Algerian relations, the role of Algeria in North Africa and the Middle East, and the country's domestic challenges. The program was moderated by WFPG President Patricia Ellis.

Baali emphasized the strength of the US-Algerian relationship. To date, the partnership has primarily focused on counterterrorism efforts, but he also noted the US's growing interest in the Algerian market and highlighted recent strategic dialogues designed to further political, military, and economic ties.

On Algeria's role in the region, Baali addressed his country's efforts to maintain stability. Algeria has provided financial support to Tunisia, whose economic problems have threatened its democracy. Algeria also plans to help the Malian government and the Tuareg people resolve their differences. On the hostage crisis in Algeria in January, Baali underlined that criticism of his government's actions ceased once the details of the situation came to light and explained that they needed to act immediately to save the lives of hundreds of hostages.

Looking forward, Baali has faith in his government's ability to listen and respond to its people's needs, which he said, enabled the government to remain stable during the Arab Spring, and which he hopes will continue to bring more freedoms, justice, and progress to the Algerian people in the 2014 elections and beyond.



WFPG President Patricia Ellis with Ambassador and Mrs. Abdallah Baali

The Future of the EU: The View from Greece

Ambassador Christos Panagopoulos

Apr 9—H.E. Christos Panagopoulos of Greece joined journalist Thalia Assuras for a discussion on The Future of the EU: The View from Greece. The Ambassador discussed economic challenges in Greece, including the euro-zone debt crisis and widespread unemployment. The program was held at the Harvard University Center for Hellenic Studies.



Ambassador Panagopoulos and Moderator Thalia Assuras

Panagopoulos explained that, contrary to today's headlines which focus on the economic situation, the EU is persevering. He pointed to the EU's Nobel Peace Prize as an indication of its success and praised the EU for ensuring political stability in the region and for maintaining solidarity, particularly during Greece's economic adjustment period. Mobility and migration within the EU has created opportunities for its citizens, though illegal immigration remains a problem.

On the euro-zone crisis, Panagopoulos said, "We are now in our sixth year of recession in Greece and unemployment has reached a high level of 26%, with 57.6% of youth currently unemployed." He underlined that Greece is working to reduce its deficit by cutting spending and increasing taxes. When asked about job creation, he said that Greece intends to increase competitiveness by focusing on tourism and SMEs.

Panagopoulos asserted that for EU to remain strong, it needs to repair relations between the EU countries struggling economically and those encouraging austerity through confronting old stereotypes.

Beyond the Headlines

Each year, WFPG holds numerous Beyond the Headlines to take our members and guests beyond the front page and provide context for the key issues shaping foreign policy today. So far this year programs have covered developments in Syria, political transitions in Iran and Egypt, progress and challenges for Afghanistan, the changing climate in Burma, and Islamic feminism. To read more on these discussions and other in-depth programming, visit wfp.org/beyond-the-headlines

After the 2014 Withdrawal: Democracy, Stability & Women's Rights

Feb 11—Fawzia Koofi, Afghan Parliament Member and VP of the National Assembly, spoke on the impact of the 2014 troop withdrawal on Afghan society. She also covered the progress of women's rights in the country over the last 11 years, as well as the challenges remaining, including those that she faces in the government. A declared presidential candidate, Koofi noted how important the 2014 elections are to Afghanistan, and how she hopes for a "strong, committed government" that takes care of its citizens. She emphasized the importance of the US's role in Afghanistan, today and after the withdrawal.



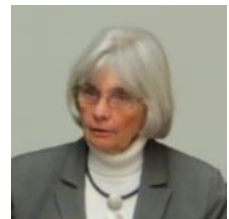
Moderating Extremism in Pakistan



Jul 1—Pakistani activist Mossarat Qadeem spoke on "Moderating Extremism in Pakistan: Working with Women and Youth to Moderate Extremism" at an event cosponsored with the Institute for Inclusive Security. Qadeem spoke about her organization's role and methodology in moderating extremism in Pakistan. She discussed her work with young men engaged in extremism and their mothers to turn the youth around and foster peace within the country. Qadeem also emphasized the need for greater understanding from the international community of the challenges Pakistanis face.

Burma Reborn and Full of Hope

Jan 10—Journalist and author Barbara Crossette, briefed the WFPG on Burma's internal economic and social situation, as well as their relations with its neighbors and the US. In her discussion, she also addressed the continued presence of the Burmese military and the potential challenges for Burma pertaining to its bureaucracy and conflicts with several minority groups. Despite the challenges it faces, Crossette is hopeful for Burma's future. It's strategic location and its upcoming chairmanship of ASEAN will enable Burma play a greater role in the region.



Women in Afghanistan: Progress and Challenges



Apr 15—Stephenie Foster, a women and civil society officer at the US Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, spoke with WFPG members and guests at a brown-bag luncheon on women in Afghanistan. Foster discussed her work and time in Afghanistan, as well as the strides Afghan women have made in the last twelve years. She highlighted the importance of investing in girls' education, women's economic and political empowerment, and security. Foster also discussed the concerns of Afghan women about 2014 with the upcoming foreign troop withdrawal and the presidential and parliamentary elections.

Foreign Policy & National Security Challenges Facing the US

Jan 28—Journalists Karen DeYoung of *The Washington Post* and David Sanger of *The New York Times* returned to debate the current foreign policy and national security challenges facing Obama in his second administration. The speakers offered unique insights into the policy-making process and covered issues including unrest in Syria, transition in Afghanistan, threats from Iran and North Korea, and the unrest in Mali and growth of Islamist-extremist groups in North Africa.



Membership and Mentoring

NY and DC Mentoring Fairs

In February, WFPG held its annual Mentoring Fairs at George Washington University and at NYU. This year's fairs gave over 300 undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to hear from accomplished international affairs professionals. Mentors joined us from across the foreign policy community and shared their insights on career paths in diplomatic service, international law and human rights, think tanks, security, development, and public affairs. **Join us next year 2/5 in DC and 2/19 in NY!**



DC Foreign Policy & Women's Leadership:
Ambassador Marina Kaljurand Estonia



NY Women and Human Rights:
Sanja Zografska-Krsteska, Macedonian Mission to the UN

Member and Guest Reception

In May, WFPG members and staff gathered at a reception in Georgetown to meet one another and to celebrate the WFPG's contributions to promoting women in foreign policy. Brief remarks were made by Tara Sonenshine, US Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, and H.E. Ritva Koukku-Ronde, Ambassador of Finland to the United States. Many thanks to all of our members for their support and a special thank you to WFPG Board Vice Chair Gail Leftwich Kitch for hosting the program!



Patricia Ellis, Gail Leftwich Kitch, Ambassador Ritva Koukku-Ronde, and Under Secretary Tara Sonenshine



WFPG Members Jackie Spedding and Aira Htenas speaking at the reception