Alumni Reception and Seminar in Washington, DC

A special seminar on “The Nuclear Crisis with North Korea”, and the biennial Security Studies Program Alumni Reception highlighted a trip to Washington, DC on April 26, 2018.

Chaired by SSP Director, Barry Posen, the seminar addressed nuclear issues on the Korean peninsula. Panelists Jim Walsh, Vipin Narang, and Taylor Fravel spoke to the 60 attendees. The seminar was followed by a lively question and answer session.

Associate Professor Vipin Narang highlighted the speed and determination with which North Korea sprinted in the past year to develop its nuclear arsenal, which now includes a thermonuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missile capability that can likely target the United States. Given the cost and effort of the program along with the deterrence benefits, Narang argued that there was little chance of Kim Jong Un voluntarily surrendering his nuclear weapons. Instead, the path forward, he argued, is better spent on talking to the Kim regime about limits on the program and deterring it, rather than on the hope of unilateral disarmament. Principal Research Scientist Jim Walsh's presentation began with the historical context, where North Korea found itself strategically after the fall of the Soviet Union and how the pace of testing has evolved across three different N Korean leaders. He then reviewed the strengths and weakness of policy options like diplomacy and preventive war. He concluded with reflections on whether there could be a conflict on the peninsula, even if all the players want to avoid one. War is improbable, he noted, but improbable events happen -- they just happen less often. Professor Fravel examined China’s role on the peninsula. China’s interests, Fravel argued, include the future disposition of the Korean Peninsula and the U.S. presence there, instability within North Korea that could spill into China, and supporting one of the last other remaining socialist states in the world. Fravel then noted the meeting between Xi Jinping and Kim Jong Un, which reflected the normalization of ties between China and North Korea and signaled China’s support for its neighbor and unwillingness to support any further increase in maximum pressure, much less regime, thus placing constraints on U.S. policy.

Several SSP alums who are now in the DC area, as well as invited guests from Capitol Hill and many members MIT Club of Washington DC attended the event. The MIT Club serves undergraduate and graduate student alumni in the area. Following the seminar, the group adjourned to take part in the SSP alumni reception. The popular reception is held in DC every two years and provides a chance for former students, including military fellows, to renew old ties and to meet current members of the program.

Harlene Miller Retirement

After 18 years of working at SSP, Harlene Miller retired on May 30, 2018. SSP sent her off with a party at which we celebrated her many years of service and exquisite care behind many events
which she helped to coordinate. James Wynn joins the administrative staff at SSP taking on the roles which Harlene coordinated previously.

SSP Graduates 2018

2017-18 Fellows Move on
Stanton Fellow Dani Nedal will be a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute of Politics and Strategy at Carnegie Mellon University. Stanton Fellow Sara Moller will be headed to the NATO Defense College in Rome as an Eisenhower Fellow in the fall, before returning to Seton Hall University in January 2019. After leaving MIT, Stanton Fellow Takaaki Daitoku is going back to Japan and will search for a job there. Army Fellow Lieutenant Colonel Douglas William Copeland will be Executive Officer to LTG Paul Ostrowski, the Principal Military Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Acquisition, Logistics & Technology) or ASA(ALT). Marine Fellow Lieutenant Colonel Shannon Brown will be Staff of Marine Aviation. Headquarters Marine Corps in the Pentagon, Navy Fellow Captain Peter Mirisola will be Commander of Destroyer Squadron 50 in Manama, Bahrain. Airforce Fellow Lieutenant Colonel Randel James Gordon will remain in Cambridge and work for the Air Force’s new technology accelerator “AFWRX,” and Army Fellow Colonel Warren Sponsler will be Deputy Director, Next Generation Combat Vehicle (NGCV) Cross Functional Team (CFT), U.S. Army Futures Command.

Where We Spoke
Kevin Benson (Army Fellow, 2001-02)
On May 20, 2018, Benson presented a talk on global warming and national security to the Johnson County Kansas chapter of Move On.

Jonathan Caverley (Research Associate)

Yonsei University, Seoul, April 19, 2018.

Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago, May 4, 2018.

M. Taylor Fravel (Faculty)

“China’s Calculus in the South China Sea,” MIT, April 2018.


Eugene Gholz (Research Affiliate)


Kelly Greenhill (Research Affiliate)

“Fear and Present Danger: Extra-factual Information in International Politics,” invited address at Tufts Medical School, Boston, MA, June 2018.

“Trump’s America” as part of an invited panel at the 2018 E’storia Festival, Gorizia, Italy, May 2018.

“The Strategic Deployment and Manipulation of Rumors, Conspiracy Theories and Other Forms of Extra-factual Information (EFI) in International Politics,” Interview with Aroop Mukharji on Snack Break, filmed in Cambridge, MA, My 2018.

“Coercion: The Power to Hurt in International Politics,” with co-author and co-editor Peter Krause, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, April 2018.


“Extra-factual Information as a Threat to the Liberal International Order,” as part of an invited roundtable at the ISA annual meeting, San Francisco, CA, April 2018.

Jeanne Guillemin (Senior Advisor)
Jeanne Guillemin spoke with Chris Lydon on Radio Open Source (WBUT) on June 14, 2018 in a discussion of the US-North Korean meeting on denuclearization. In the conversation were Ambassador Chas Freeman, Jim Carroll, and Richard Rhodes.

Paul Heer (CIS Robert E. Wilhelm fellow, ’16)
On June 12, 2018 Paul Heer discussed North Korea and China on the “Intelligence Matters” podcast hosted by former CIA Acting Director Michael Morell.

Gregory Koblentz (Alum ’04)

“The Future of Strategic Stability in a Multipolar Asia,” presentation at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy, Seoul, South Korea, June 1, 2018; Asan Institute for Policy Studies, Seoul, South Korea, May 31, 2018; Symposium on International Security Issues and Concerns: Asia and Beyond at George Mason University Korea, Songdo, South Korea, May 31, 2018.


Peter Krause (Research Affiliate)

Alan Kuperman (Alum, ’02)


“Plutonium for Energy?” at International House of Japan, Tokyo, June 28, 2018; Parliament (Diet) of Japan, Tokyo, June 27, 2018; George Washington University, Nuclear Security Boot Camp, June 14, 2018; George Washington University, Nuclear Policy Talk, June 11, 2018; Stimson Center, Washington, D.C., June 12, 2018.

Marika Landau-Wells (Alum, ’18)
Panelist at “Climate Science in a Time of Political Disruption,” a workshop hosted by the Program on Science, Technology, and Society at the Harvard Kennedy School, April 6, 2018.

Speaker at “Accelerating Nuclear Threat in the Midst of a Diplomacy Vacuum,” an event hosted by PopTech, Beyond Conflict, and N Square Collaborative, April 27, 2018.

Philip Martin (Graduate Student)

Timothy McDonnell (Graduate Student)
“Diplomatic Wallop: Nixon and the Return of Counterforce,” at ISA.

Rachel Esplin Odell (Graduate Student)

Reid Pauly (Graduate Student)
Reid Pauly spoke at the U.S. Naval War College on “Elite Aversion to the Use of Nuclear Weapons: Evidence from Wargames” on June 29, 2018.

Barry Posen (Faculty)
“Illiberal Hegemony,” Center for International Studies, MIT, seminar for Boston Consuls General, April 10, 2018.


Richard Samuels (Faculty)

Apichai W. Shipper (Alum, ’01)
Apichai Shipper presented the keynote address, “How the US Trains its Diplomats” at the Philippines’ Foreign Service Institute, Manila, May 2018.

In March 2018, Shipper was invited to speak at Columbia University, New York, on “Thailand’s Foreign Relations with ASEAN, China, and the US.”

Joel Sokolsky (Senior Advisor)

Spoke as a part of a panel on the Canadian commitment to NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence in Latvia at Macdonald-Laurier Institute, Ottawa, Canada, June 13, 2018.

Spoke as a part of a panel on US Foreign Policy at Norwich University, Residency Conference, June 20, 2018.

David Weinberg (Alum, ’12)
Congressional testimony, “Grading Counterterrorism Cooperation with GCC States,” Joint Hearing, House Foreign Affairs Committee’s Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa and Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, April 26, 2018.

What We Wrote

Kevin Benson (Army Fellow, 2001-02)

Mark Bell (Alum, ’16)

Jonathan Caverley (Research Associate)


Mayumi Fukushima (Graduate Student)

Eugene Gholz (Research Affiliate)


Jeanne Guillemin (Senior Advisor)

Paul Heer (CIS Robert E. Wilhelm fellow, ’16)

Alan Kuperman (Alum, ’02)
Philip Martin (Graduate Student)

Timothy McDonnell (Graduate Student)

Jeremy Pressman (Alum, '02)


Richard Samuels (Faculty)

Richard Samuels, co-editor, “Japan’s Pivot in Asia,” *International Affairs* (July, 2018)


Apichai W. Shipper (Alum, '01)


Marsha Simon (Alum, '05)


Joel Sokolsky (Senior Advisor)

Brian Taylor (Alum, ’98)


**General announcements**

Boaz Atzili (Alum, ’06)
Boaz Atzili has been nominated the Director of Doctoral Studies Program at the School of International Service, American University.

Jonathan Caverley (Research Associate)
Jon was elected to the International Security Studies Section of the International Studies Association, and will serve, with Monica Duffy-Toft, as the section program chair for next year’s conference.

M. Taylor Fravel (Faculty)
Taylor has been promoted to Full Professor and has become the Arthur and Ruth Sloan Professor of Political Science, effective July 1, 2018.

Marika Landau-Wells (Alum, ’18)
Marika received a one-year postdoctoral fellowship from the Beyond Conflict Innovation Lab to study the neural bases of threat perception. During the fellowship, she will be based at MIT in the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences in the lab of Prof. Rebecca Saxe.

Austin Long (Alum, ’10)
On June 21, 2018 Long testified to the House Foreign Affairs Committee Sub-committee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade on “Russian Nuclear Forces and Prospects for Arms Control.”

Philip Martin (Graduate Student)
Philip Martin was awarded a 2018-19 Pre-doctoral Research Fellowship at the Belfer Center’s International Security Program at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

Timothy McDonnell (Graduate Student)
Tim McDonnell received a pre-doctoral fellowship at George Washington University’s Institute for Security and Conflict Studies for the 2018-19 academic year.

Yoni Shimshoni (Research Affiliate)
Starting September for the academic year 2018-19, Shimshoni will be a Research Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center in D.C., working on society-centric warfare and strategy, a project he began at SSP in 2016.

Timothy Wright (Alum, ’18)
After successfully defending his dissertation, “From Predators to Providers: The Role of Violence and Rules in Establishing Social Control,” Tim will move on to his next job commanding 1st Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment and a NATO Battle Group in Poland.

Awards and Scholarships

Mayumi Fukushima (Graduate Student)
Mayumi Fukushima won a Smith Richardson Foundation Pre-doctoral Fellowship from Yale University’s International Security Studies Program, which will begin on September 1, 2018.

Marika Landau-Wells (Alum, ’18)
Marika received the Lucian Pye Award for Outstanding Political Science PhD Dissertation. Her dissertation title is: Dealing with Danger: Threat Perception and Policy Preferences.

Austin Long (Alum, ’10)
Austin Long and Brendan Green won the 2018 Outstanding Article Award in International History and Politics from the American Political Science Association International History and Politics Section for “The MAD Who Wasn’t There: Soviet Reactions to the Late Cold War Strategic Balance.”

Rachel Esplin Odell (Graduate Student)
At the annual International Studies Association conference in San Francisco in April, Rachel Esplin Odell was awarded the Alexander George Award for Best Graduate Student Paper from ISA’s Foreign Policy Analysis Section for her paper entitled “Maritime Hegemony and the Fiction of the Free Sea: Explaining States’ Claims to Maritime Jurisdiction,” presented at the ISA 2017 conference in Baltimore.

Apichai W. Shipper (Alum, ’01)
Apichai Shipper was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation from the Government of the Philippines for his talk “How the US Trains its Diplomats,” which has been written up in the website for the Philippines’ Department of Foreign Affairs.