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Report on Activities 2019–2020

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The academic year of 2019–2020 was a year of disruption and resilience. Who would have ever imagined that we would find ourselves entrapped in a pandemic crisis that would challenge the very foundations of our societies? But life went on, thanks to the dedication and commitment of many people across the globe: from our leaders to the people delivering the essential goods for our daily lives, and especially the doctors, the medical scientists and the police officers on the frontline for us.

Here at American University of Sharjah (AUS), we took on the challenge of new modes of work under the guidance of our leadership. We moved our teaching online, and in so doing, we never lost contact with our students. Therefore, I am delighted to report that, despite the disruptions and the challenges, the academic year of 2019–2020 was intense and productive.

In this report, I will share the major components of my contributions to the mission of AUS in regard to research, teaching and external outreach. At the end, I will address the plans for the future.

Research Activities

Since the publication of the book on policy ideas and monetary policy-making in Japan (Cornell University Press, 2018), the major focus of my research has been the politics of the US world order.

This work has been centered on two projects: a) I have been writing a book manuscript entitled *The Shrewd Sheriff: Leverage and Cooperation in the US World Order*; b) I worked on a co-authored article entitled "Hybrid Threats and the Erosion of Democracy from Within: US Surveillance and European Security." The article was accepted for publication at the *Chinese Political Science Review*.

Both projects analyze the politics of the US world order from a common angle: the relationships between the United States, on the one hand, and the US allies and partners, on the other. At a time when many voices in academia and in diplomacy predict the upcoming demise of the US world order, my projects engage a lively debate and challenge some of its premises and conclusions.

A major theme underlies both the book manuscript and the article: whether, and to what extent, the US exercises leadership towards its partners and allies. As a powerful country that commands a vast pool of resources, the United States should be well positioned to elicit compliance from the allies and partners it supports. That is the very essence of power, of which the United States has a lot: the ability to get someone do something they would not otherwise do.

Yet, even at the apex of its own power, the US has often struggled to get the backing of its friends and allies for its foreign policies. Many examples can be made: from the Suez crisis or the Skybolt affairs more than fifty years ago to the recent cases of the response to the Iranian nuclear program or the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Caught between its quest for leadership and its quest for consensus, the United States has often been unable to attain either leadership or consensus. Its leverage falls short, despite its power and clout. Why?

The book manuscript and the article take two interrelated approaches to answer that question. The manuscript focuses on the role of domestic political institutions and how those institutions structure the processes of leadership turnover in partner and allied nations, while the article analyzes the popular support that the United States receives for some of its most controversial policies, such as mass surveillance of private citizens.

The two projects, therefore, seek to intervene in an area of research and analysis that is bound to be very active and lively in the years to come.

Teaching Activities

The core of my activities as a teacher was centered on teaching courses in the international studies curriculum. I taught three courses in the fall semester, and two courses in the spring semester. All courses were upper division courses in the international studies (INS) curriculum (POL 304 International Organizations; POL 305 Public International Law). My classes were popular: I taught a total of 94 students in fall; and a total of 51 students in spring. I was able to teach two courses in Spring 2020 thanks to a competitive research grant from the AUS Office of Research that allowed for one course release.

Around the middle of the semester in Spring 2020, the usual format of classes here at AUS, as was the case in the rest of the world, was completely upended. To address the COVID-19 pandemic, classes moved online. But while the mode of delivery drastically changed, the content and interaction continued in the virtual space of a computer screen or a cell phone. The AUS students yet again proved to be resilient, adaptable and nimble. At the end of the semester, we all felt we had accomplished something important: we contributed to the worldwide efforts to contain the pandemic while maintaining AUS high standards of learning.

Outreach Activities and Knowledge Transfer

The outreach and knowledge transfer activities consisted of two major events: I delivered a talk in the Speakers' Series in the Division of Social Sciences at New York University, Abu Dhabi (NYUAD). In collaboration with my department, I organized a talk on the AUS campus by Nicholas Kralev, the Executive Director of the Washington International Diplomatic Academy, an independent organization that provides practical professional training in diplomacy and international affairs in Washington, DC.

My talk at NYUAD was entitled "Leverage and Governance under US Hierarchy." The NYUAD

Seminar Series is a regular event where scholars primarily from leading universities in the United States and Europe present their most recent research to the NYUAD faculty. The talk was a great opportunity for an in-depth and engaging discussion of the argument in my book manuscript. I came away from the talk with a stronger commitment to my project.

The talk by Nicholas Kralev was entitled "The Shifting Role and Impact of Diplomacy in a World in Disarray." It analyzed the challenges and prospects for diplomacy in current international affairs. It showed how smart, persistent and effective diplomacy can contribute to a nation's security and prosperity, while promoting global stability in the process. The talk also took an additional step: it highlighted how the work of diplomats has changed in the 21st century. That was very important for our students in international studies: many of them aspire to pursue careers in foreign policy and diplomacy. Therefore, the talk offered a special opportunity to broaden our students' engagement not only with the theory but also the practice of international affairs.

Future Activities

Moving forward, what will the new academic year of 2020–2021 entail? As the constraints of the pandemic hopefully fade away, the academic year will proceed along the three prongs of my commitment to the mission of the university: research, teaching and outreach.

On the research front, I will continue my work on the book manuscript, *The Shrewd Sheriff: Leverage and Cooperation in the US World Order*. On the teaching front, I will contribute to teaching courses in the INS curriculum in accordance with departmental needs; in particular, I will teach a new course, Moot Court, which will allow students to learn about the law and practice of the International Criminal Court. I will also expand the offerings for our students by re-introducing a course on US foreign policy in Spring 2020.

As for the outreach activities, much will depend on the regulations from the Ministry of Health regarding on-campus events. Meanwhile, in collaboration with a colleague in the Department of International Studies, Dr. Jeff King, I have been working to organize a conference entitled Human Rights and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Experiences, Challenges, Prospects.

The conference will help us engage and discuss the tensions and challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic to the international human rights regime with prominent experts and scholars in the field of human rights law and politics. The conference has three primary goals: 1) to showcase the research and teaching on human rights at American University of Sharjah (AUS); 2) to place AUS at the center of active debates on the political and societal consequences of the COVID-19 crisis; 3) and to develop the contributions for an edited volume to be published by a prominent academic press.

We plan to organize the conference in two separate, but interconnected, events: online and on campus. Both are essential and necessary components of the conference plans. The online event is planned for Spring 2020; the on-campus event is planned for Fall 2021.