



diplomatische  
akademie wien  
Vienna School of International Studies  
École des Hautes Études Internationales de Vienne



## Ambassador Milton A. Wolf Seminar

### on Media and Diplomacy 2023

#### **Media at the Abyss: War, De-globalization, and the Diplomatic Response**

**Vienna, Austria**

**APRIL 12-14, 2023**

#### **About The Milton Wolf Seminar Series**

Launched in 2001, the Milton Wolf Seminar Series addresses developing issues in diplomacy and journalism – both broadly defined. The University of Pennsylvania Annenberg School for Communication, The American Austrian Foundation (AAF), and the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna (DA) have jointly organized this seminar since 2010. The Austrian Marshall Foundation has supported the Milton Wolf Seminar since 2017. Panelists include individuals working for state and multilateral organizations, journalists, civil society actors, representatives from media and internet companies, and academics. The Milton Wolf Seminar Series particularly emphasizes the contribution of young and mid-career scholars, by inviting a select group of outstanding graduate students each year to attend the seminar in Vienna as Emerging Scholar fellows.

The organizers envision the Milton Wolf Seminar as a meeting place for all participants to share their perspectives, formulate new ideas, and identify areas for further research and discussion. While the seminar incorporates various speakers and panels, we design it as a two-day continuing conversation in which all participants are encouraged to openly engage in dialogue and explore potential synergies and future collaborations. To encourage an open exchange of ideas, seminar attendance is limited only to invited participants and students. We also ask that participants and panelists attend all sessions and events, whenever possible.

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## About the 2023 Seminar

Every Milton Wolf Seminar has explored the media's role in international relations in some dimension. Early Seminars in 2010 and 2011 coincided with a global wave of protests and “Twitter revolutions,” including the “Arab Spring,” and Occupy Wall Street. Conversations heralded the dawn of a new more equitable global media system built upon platforms that promised to “do no evil.” Participants discussed companies like Twitter, Facebook, and Google in light of their ability to promote prosocial change and a new mode of transnational collaboration. More than a decade later, the debate has changed radically. Conversations about social media platforms formerly lauded as “revolutionary” now center on information/disinformation warfare, the fragmentation of the public sphere, and the exsanguination of traditional journalistic practices and business models.

Public trust in journalistic institutions has plummeted as authoritarianism is on the rise. Governments across the political spectrum are reimagining their public diplomacy and international broadcasting efforts to cut through the noise of an increasingly distorted and dystopian communications environment, or, in some cases, to harness the trope of fake news as a shield. Freedom of expression and the right to information campaigns have taken a back seat to discussions on how to limit the fall-out from troll farms and computational propaganda. Discussions about globalism and international understanding have been superseded by speculation about the rise of de-globalization and rising isolationism. Never has the need for journalism and a functional information environment been so urgent while the industry is simultaneously so imperiled.

The 2023 Seminar will dive deeply into the evolving role of media and international relations across areas of practice: diplomacy, journalism, development, activism, and analysis. It will investigate related new developments in old and new media, legal and regulatory norms, and diplomatic interventions. Case studies will provide dystopian and prosocial examples of how governments, journalists, activists, and digital and traditional media organizations are seeking to shape and leverage a contemporary media environment characterized by dis/misinformation, fragmentation, decline, and receding public trust in information sources.

Panelists at the 2023 Seminar will discuss critical questions and potential solutions to current challenges facing media and diplomacy. What is the shape and form of journalism and information in a de-globalizing world? What sort of regulatory models for media platforms should be pursued? Are there any local, national, or global interventions that suggest new pathways forward? What Tuesday, March 28, 2023





are the implications of these trends for transnational activism and social justice movements? Invited guests will include academics, researchers, legal experts, technologists, citizen activists, regulators, diplomats, and journalists actively involved in identifying and building different solutions.

## AGENDA

### Wednesday, April 12, 2023

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

### Thursday, April 13, 2023

**9:00 – 10:00 Welcome Tea & Introduction**

- **Katharine Eltz-Aulitzky**, Executive Director, The American Austrian Foundation
- **Emil Brix**, Director, Diplomatic Academy Vienna
- **Amelia Arsenault**, Chief Public Diplomacy Research Officer, US Department of State
- **Victor Pickard**, Co-Director, Media, Inequality & Change Center, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania

**10:00 – 12:00 Session 1: The Rhetoric and Realities of De-globalization**

Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, escalating tensions between the People's Republic of China and the West, and fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic have escalated pronouncements that the world has entered an era of de-globalization characterized by economic de-integration, hyper-nationalist movements, and xenophobia, and further fragmentation of media systems. Others argue that the rumors of the death of globalization are greatly exaggerated and that the expansion of remote work, income inequality, and evolutions in technology are leading to new more complex forms of globalization. This opening session will set the stage for the two days of

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discussion and debate. Panelists will explore the rhetoric and the realities behind de-globalization trends and the implications for media and international relations.

#### Panelists:

- **Moderator: Amelia Arsenault** Chief Public Diplomacy Research Officer, US Department of State
- **Barry Lynn**, Executive Director, Open Markets Institute
- **Gavin Sundwall**, Managing Director for Policy and Planning, Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources US Department of State
- **Patrick Wintour**, Diplomatic Editor, *The Guardian*

#### 12:00 – 1:30 Welcoming Lunch

#### 1:30 – 3:00 Session 2: Geopolitics, Diplomacy, and the End of Truth

The early 2010's optimism about social media's potential to promote democratization and international understanding has faded. Conversations have turned into info-wars, the end of truth, and the seemingly unstoppable onslaught of disinformation. Governments across the political spectrum are reimagining public diplomatic practices to cut through the noise of an increasingly distorted and dystopian communications' environment. Some public diplomats are looking forward, exploring new technological tools and practices and forging alliances with digital platforms and analytics companies. Others are looking backward, doubling down on largely non-digital practices popularized during the Cold War era, such as media literacy programs, cultural exchanges, and language learning. A third and more troubling trend is the propagation of disinformation and misinformation by diplomats and other public officials. Panelists in this session will discuss the ramifications of new geostrategic alignments and media practices for international relations, journalism, and diplomacy.

- **Moderator: Wolfgang Petritsch**, President, Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation
- **Kecheng Fang**, Assistant Professor, School of Journalism and Communication, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)
- **Cathrin Kahlweit**, Correspondent, Sueddeutsche Zeitung
- **Sergey Utkin**, Professor, University of Southern Denmark

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### **3:00 – 3:15 Tea Break**

### **3:15 – 5:00 Session 3: Global Trends, Local Realities: Case Studies**

While the first two panels focus widely on major transformations in geostrategic alignments, this panel narrows the aperture to examine the complexities and lessons learned in local contexts. Case studies will include efforts to mitigate disinformation in Poland, the implications of Chinese soft power activities in Africa, religious minority populations in China, and Qatar's geopolitical ambitions. Panelists will provide a deep dive into these case studies with a particular focus on the implications of local developments for global trends and vice versa.

- **Moderator: Emil Brix**, Director, Diplomatic Academy Vienna
- **Zsofia Fülöp**, Fellow, Reuters Institute
- **Małgorzata Kopka-Piątek**, Head, European and Migration Policy Program, Institute of Public Affairs (IPA)
- **Lada Roylzcky**, Founder and Managing Partner, Black Trident Defense & Security Consulting Group

### **6:30 – 8:00 Reception at the US Deputy Chief of Mission's Residence**

**Friday, April 14, 2023**

### **9:00 – 10:00 Coffee and Conversation with the 2023 Emerging Scholars**

Supporting junior scholars is a key part of the Milton Wolf Seminar. Please join us for morning coffee and a lively roundtable discussion with our 2023 Emerging Scholar Fellows who will present their research and explain how it relates to the 2023 Seminar theme.

### **10:00 – 10.15 Tea Break**

### **10:15 – 12:00 Session 4: Resistance, Response, and Revolution: Global Movements for a World on the Edge**

Activists around the globe are innovating new organizing techniques against a backdrop of information overload, compassion fatigue, and information warfare to pursue their social justice aims. This panel focuses on recent evolutions in organizing techniques (structural and tactical) on the international stage and government and industry responses. Panelists will present case studies.

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studies on an array of social justice, human rights, and labor movements, including those within newsrooms, and discuss how responses vary according to the structural methods they have at their disposal, both online and off.

- **Moderator: Des Freedman**, Head of Department and Co-Director, Leverhulme Media Research Centre, Goldsmiths, University of London
- **Dragana Kaurin**, Founder & Executive Director, Localization Lab
- **Hossein Kermani**, MSCA Post-Doctoral Researcher, Political Communication Research Group, University of Vienna
- **Ekaterina Kotrikadze**, News Director and Anchor, TV Rain (Dozhd TV)

### 12:00 – 1:15 *Lunch*

### 1:15 – 3:00 **Session 5: Platforms and Demagogues: The Future of Digital Monopolies**

Digital monopolies like Facebook and Google are both sites of information contestation as well as the engine threatening traditional journalism as we know it. Twitter is rapidly devolving into a hell's cape of misinformation and hate speech reflecting Musk's unconstrained id. As these platforms contribute to the leaching of resources that sustain journalism and force outlets to design content for optimization on their sites, they are both parasites and hosts. This cycle has laid bare how platforms not only fail to host a global town square but contribute to the deterioration of deliberative discourse. As digital monopolies increasingly dictate the parameters of information circulation, their policies (and ownership) on political advertising, adherence to legal standards in closed and totalitarian societies, transparency, data protection, and privacy are fundamental and far-reaching. Panelists will include activists, media scholars, diplomats, and platform representatives concerned with the current state and potential reform of these digital monopolies.

- **Moderator: Victor Pickard**, Co-Director, Media, Inequality & Change Center, Annenberg School for Communication
- **Geert Lovink**, Professor, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences
- **Jasmine McNealy**, Associate Professor, Department of Media Production, Management, and Technology, College of Journalism and Communications, University of Florida
- **Des Freedman**, Head of Department and Co-Director of the Goldsmiths Leverhulme Media Research Centre, Goldsmiths, University of London

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### 3:00 – 3:15 *Tea Break*

### 3:15 – 5:00 **Session 6: Dreams of Utopia: The Journalism We Need for a World at the Precipice**

While previous sessions focused squarely on contemporary challenges, this closing session will turn to potential solutions and ways ahead. Panelists will discuss developments in media ecosystems and journalistic practices with a particular eye towards potential pathways and future directions. Panelists will explore the role of journalists in critical contemporary news topics, including war, climate change, global populism, disinformation, and ever-deepening wealth disparities. They will reflect on the social, structural, and economic factors tempering the capacity of journalists to absorb and write about pressing global issues and maintain an informed global citizenry. Questions for consideration include: What are ideal journalistic practices, norms, and systems that best serve humanity and the contemporary world order? Conversely, or perversely, is contemporary journalism shoring up and contributing to a hotter, more perilous planet? How can journalism help save the world?

- Moderator: **Michael Freund**, former Head of the Media Department, Webster University, Vienna
- **Dean Starkman**, Fellow, Center for Media, Data and Society, Visiting Lecturer, School of Public Policy, Central European University
- **Victor Pickard**, Co-Director, Media, Inequality & Change Center, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
- **Kate Wright**, Senior Lecturer and Chancellor's Fellow in Media and Communication, University of Edinburgh

### 7:30 **Heurigen Fuhrigassl Huber**

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