

Abstract for P. H. Liotta

WISC, Istanbul

FA14 Friday 0900-1030

*Democracy as Vulnerability: Risks and Opportunities; Implications for Security*

Applying emerging social science concepts of vulnerability, risk, and adaptation, this essay examines the wisdom of promoting democracy as a project of “distinctly American internationalism” in seemingly unpropitious locations such as the Greater Near East—an area defined as running from Morocco in the west to Iran in the east and from Sudan in the south to the Black Sea in the north. In the broadest of terms, the Greater Near East can be characterized as passing through a period of “tradition and transition” in which the tradition of non-democratic identity will inevitably come into conflict with some form of transitioning identity and governance. Whether or not such identity and governance will resemble or even should resemble American or western forms remain a central question. Another question that this essay examines is whether any external entity, no matter how powerful, has the right or authority to demand or even actively promote change in the identity and governance of another state. Should a nation with seemingly unlimited power even attempt to stabilize states within a region that seems permanently unsteady—and often on the verge of constant instability—and should a nation with such power honestly attempt to secure its interests by spreading its values? Specifically, in such a world, is democracy dangerous as well as necessary?