



The Passport

World Affairs Council of the Monterey Bay Area (www.wacmb.org)

September 2021

Quick Takes: World Issues in the Age of Covid-19

Quick Takes is a series of short video presentations by leading experts in international affairs. One new *Quick Take* will be produced each month, and is posted to our website. Once posted, ***Quick Takes* are permanently available for you to view at your convenience.** To access the latest video, go to www.wacmb.org, where you will immediately see it on the home page.

September 15, 2021: Thomas Barfield, Boston University

Crisis in Afghanistan and the Consequences of Wishful Thinking



Much has been made of the Afghan government's military collapse that allowed the Taliban to seize all of the country without significant opposition, as if that was unprecedented. In fact, the last four governments in Afghanistan all collapsed in the very same way. Each experienced a sudden outside shock that led people to believe the existing regime had no future. In a land where the perception of power is power itself, acting on that belief made it a self-fulfilling prophecy. After each incident, the intoxication of an absolute victory led to the creation of governments by victors who believed they had no need to reconcile with their enemies and sowed the seeds for their own eventual replacement. Can the Taliban break out of this forty-year cycle, or will they provoke a new civil war in which they could lose power just as easily as they gained it?

Thomas Barfield is a social anthropologist who conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork among pastoral nomads in northern Afghanistan in the mid-1970s, with shorter periods of research in Xinjiang, China, and post-Soviet Central Asia. His current research focuses on problems of political development in Afghanistan, particularly on systems of local governance and dispute resolution. In 2006, he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship that led to the publication of *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton University Press, 2010). His previous publications include *The Central Asian Arabs of Afghanistan* (University of Texas Press, 1981) and *Afghanistan: An Atlas of Indigenous Domestic Architecture* (University of Texas Press, 1991).

Professor Barfield is Professor of Anthropology at Boston University. He is also Director of the University's Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations. Since 2005, he has served as the President of the American Institute of Afghanistan Studies. He earned his BA in Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania, and both his MA and PhD in Social Anthropology from Harvard University.



WACMB in Profile: David Thon

“WACMB in Profile” is a series of occasional articles that profile the people who make our organization tick.

Midway through 2018, WACMB members saw a substantial upgrade in the organization’s website. That’s when David Thon took over as webmaster. But he’s more than just our webmaster: since he manages all the technical aspects of the *Quick Takes* series and helps out with WACMB’s social media presence, we now refer to him as our Information Czar. So it might surprise you to learn that David has never actually held an official job in information technology.

After growing up in Illinois, David moved to Indiana for college, earning a BA with a double major in Philosophy and English Literature from Valparaiso University, followed by a BS in Electrical Engineering from Valparaiso Technical Institute. He worked his way through college by designing, building, and operating the stage lighting and sound systems for a 500-seat dinner theater near Chicago. After graduating, he was a technical editor for Motorola, then worked for several years as a high-tech recruiter (aka headhunter) before settling into a career in marketing in the tech industry, doing both Product Marketing and Marketing Communications at Cadence Design Systems. David really enjoyed the creative challenges of communicating complex concepts to a wide range of audiences, such as formulating messaging plans, developing content, and implementing delivery. Along the way, he earned an MBA from CSU Hayward (now CSU East Bay).

While attending a street fair in San Francisco, David met Susann; they eloped to Victoria, BC, where they were married in the conservatory of the Empress Hotel. (You may have met Susann; before the pandemic, she was one of the wonderful volunteers

who worked the registration table for WACMB’s monthly luncheons.) David and Susann made their home in the Bay Area, where they operated The Registration Desk, a conference registration and service company, for several decades. They served some very large events, include the California Governor’s Conference for Women with over 10,000 attendees. As the chief technologist, CIO, and janitor, David built the office systems, wrote the database applications, created the website, and was the one-and-only person on the helpdesk.

After retiring in 2016, David and Susann moved to Pacific Grove full-time. When he’s not creating YouTube videos for WACMB and the Carmel Foundation, David pursues his long-time hobby of photography, both taking photographs and printing his work. David and Susann were introduced to WACMB by their neighbors Mary Jo McDonough and George Satterthwaite, and enjoyed the luncheons so much that they joined the organization. Fortunately, they also volunteered their time and skills in support of WACMB, for which we are all quite grateful!

Discussion Group

On Monday, September 13, the WACMB Discussion Group will consider the topic “Russia - The United States - Ukraine: Where Do We Go From Here?” The topic ties into Ambassador William Taylor’s August 15 *Quick Take* on the same subject. Find additional information on the topic in a Council on Foreign Relations backgrounder: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-crossroads-europe-and-russia> The Discussion Group will meet on Zoom from 4:00 - 5:30 pm.

The WACMB Discussion Group is facilitated by Judith Glickman and Boyd Haight. If you are interested in participating in the group, please send an email to info@wacmb.org and let them know.

Come join the conversation!

Affiliate Report: Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS)

Toni Thomas, MIIS's Associate Dean for Academic Operations and WACMB liaison, has provided these items of interest that are happening at MIIS.

- MIIS will return to in-person learning this fall, with about 500 students on campus and 650 students in total. Campus access will be limited to students, faculty and staff until further notice. MIIS centers will continue with online programming during the fall term.

- UNICEF has agreed to provide internship opportunities for MIIS students.

- Current MIIS Dean and faculty member Laura Burian and many MIIS alumni and students worked as interpreters at this summer's 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

- MIIS has hired a Director of Residential Life and is on track to move 89 students into its new Munras housing facility. However, those students who are not among the lucky 89 are reporting that it has been more difficult than usual to find housing in the area, with inventory lower and prices higher.

And so, MIIS has a request for you:

Can You Help?

Do you have a room, apartment, or house that you could rent to a MIIS student? If so, you can submit your rental information using one of these methods:

1. Use the online form found at go.miis.edu/landlords
2. Send an email to miishousinginfo@miis.edu
3. Call 831-647-3572 or 831-647-4120

All rental listings are posted in a private, student-only housing group managed by the MIIS Office of Student Services. If you have any questions, please contact Naomi Braswell at the email address or phone numbers that are listed in items 2 and 3.

A Message from the President of the World Affairs Council of the Monterey Bay Area

Dear WAC Members,

I am so proud of how the World Affairs Council transitioned to providing content to you, our members, during the Covid pandemic. Beginning June 15, 2020, we began sharing video-based *Quick Takes* on international affairs by leading professionals from across the country. We have now completed over 25 such videos, all of which can be viewed anytime you please on our website. We also now produce a twice-a-month set of links to foreign policy content from universities, think tanks and leading publications. If you have signed up for emails from WACMB, both of these series have regularly arrived in your inbox. We also seamlessly transitioned to Zoom-based discussion groups, and have seen participation in these groups actually go up during the pandemic!

Your Board had hoped to restart in-person luncheons in October 2021. Unfortunately, the surge of the Delta variant has made a Fall start imprudent, given transmission rates among even the vaccinated. We are now aiming for a January start, but will need to assess the situation in November. (We need about a two-month period to organize a luncheon.) *The health of you, our members, is our foremost priority.*

I thank you for your support and patience, and urge you to continue to support your local World Affairs Council. We will all get through this together, and your Board will continue to provide you interesting content, whether digitally or in person. Stay well!

Glenn E. Robinson
President

The Passport September 2021

This is the monthly newsletter of the World Affairs Council of the Monterey Bay Area (WACMB). WACMB is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization established to promote the presentation, discussion, and study of international affairs. WACMB is a tax-exempt 501 (c) (3) organization, EIN-770301206. Contributions are tax deductible as permitted by law. WACMB sponsors monthly luncheons, discussion groups, and student scholarships.

Corporate and institutional support for the World Affairs Council of the Monterey Bay Area is provided by
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