What is the importance of diasporas for states’ foreign policy aims? Scholars have long established the role of diasporas as transnational lobbying forces that promote sending states’ interests abroad, but the full extent of diasporas’ involvement in states’ foreign policy is under-researched. In fact, diaspora communities are arguably able to serve as “soft power” instruments of governments’ diplomatic strategies by promoting specific foreign policy agendas beyond the borders of the nation-state. Drawing on a wide variety of qualitative and quantitative sources, I demonstrate how Egypt and Israel, in particular, promoted migrant activism across the Third World during the Cold War: Egyptian high-skilled migrants were tasked with disseminating ideas of anti-colonialism and Arab nationalism across the Arab world, sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America; Israeli professionals aimed to rally newly-independent states, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, in support of Israel within the United Nations and to counter Egyptian efforts abroad. Overall, I put forth two arguments with regard to the interplay between diasporas and foreign policy: firstly, states are able to employ diaspora groups abroad not merely as lobbying agents that target foreign political elites, but as instruments of soft power that attempt to shape social and public opinion within host states; secondly, such strategies may result in inter-state soft power antagonism, as rival states’ diaspora groups engage in competition for winning ‘hearts and minds’ abroad.

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AUC Tahrir Campus
Sixth Floor Lounge

October 30, 2017
6:30-8:00 pm

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