
Nik Gowing



Nik Gowing is author of “Skyful of Lies and Black Swans: the New Tyranny of Shifting Information Power in Crises” and has been a main presenter for the BBC since 1996. Prior to the BBC he was for 18 years at ITN where he was bureau chief in Rome and Warsaw, and Diplomatic Editor for Channel 4 from 1988 to 1996.

Nik has a much sought-after analytical expertise on the management of information in the new transparent environments of conflicts, crises, emergencies and times of tension. His published Harvard study challenged conventional wisdom of an automatic cause and effect relationship between real-time television coverage of conflicts (the ‘CNN factor’) and the making of foreign policy. His study for the Carnegie Commission on “Preventing Deadly Conflict” in Washington DC similarly challenged conventional wisdom on assumptions about a role for the media in preventing conflict. Like the Harvard study it received wide attention and stirred new international debate.

His most recent peer-reviewed study is ‘Skyful of Lies and Black Swans: the New Tyranny of Shifting Information Power in Crises’ published in 2009, and it has made a significant impact world-wide because of its uncomfortable challenge to conventional assumptions of the nature of power in major, unexpected crises. It reveals how in such moments the institutions of power - whether political, governmental, military or corporate - face a new, acute vulnerability of both their influence and effectiveness.

He has been a Visiting Fellow in International Relations at Keele University in the UK as well as a fellow at the Joan Shorenstein Barone Center in the J F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. He has also sat on the councils of Chatham House, the board of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, and the advisory council at Wilton Park.

Nik is a distinguished conference chair/moderator and speaker. He is also a lecturer and published analyst on crisis management and the handling of real-time information in times of major emergencies.