Donald Trump is now president of the United States of America. Coming to terms with this new reality and assessing its global impact shaped our programming for the 2017-2018 academic year. We organized several public forums to assess the rise of authoritarianism and the decline of democracy both at home and abroad. Trump’s new foreign policy was of special interest to us given how some of his boldest initiatives took place in the Middle East: the moving of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, pulling out of the Iran nuclear accord, using American military force in Syria. Understanding the nature, significance, and consequences of these events falls within our center’s mandate. Based on audience participation and feedback, these public forums were of huge interest to our faculty, students, and members of the broader DU community.

Due to the ongoing generosity of our friends and donors, we were again able to support significant student travel to the Middle East. The Don and Marcia Liebich Fund supported student internships to the region while an anonymous donor allowed us to send another cohort of students to Israel and the West Bank for a two-week trip. We are indebted to our colleague, Micheline Ishay, who played an important role in making this trip a success.

What you see in this newsletter is a mere snapshot of our activities during the past academic year. I would like to acknowledge the strong support we received from our Acting Dean Pardis Mahdavi, the staff and faculty at the Korbel School, Judith Judd, and, most importantly, John DeBlasio, whose generosity and vision make all of this possible.

A final word of recognition to Gina Jannone, our new program manager. She took over from Tiffany Wilk and has done a stellar job running our center. Her commitment, enthusiasm, and professionalism are a major reason for our center’s success.

Nader Hashemi
Director, Center for Middle East Studies
Associate Professor
Josef Korbel School of International Studies
University of Denver
Our Team

Nader Hashemi
Director

Gina Jannone
Program Manager

Ambassador Gary Grappo
Distinguished Fellow

Zayd al-Marayati
Graduate Student Assistant

Elisabeth Govern
Undergraduate Student Assistant

New Affiliate Faculty

CMES is proud to have 16 affiliated faculty and research affiliates in Colorado and beyond.

Pardis Mahdavi
Acting Dean
Josef Korbel School

Adam Rovner
Associate Professor
English & Jewish History
Publications

Occasional Paper Series
CMES published two excellent occasional papers this year on pertinent topics. William Hartung, director of the Arms and Security Project at the Center for International Policy, discusses the danger of the Trump administration’s policies toward Saudi Arabia in “Donald Trump’s Dangerous Love Affair With Saudi Arabia and Its Impacts on Mideast Security”, published in December 2017. In May, we published a paper by Todd Green, associate professor of religion at Luther College, which critiques mainstream calls for an Islamic Reformation.

Coming Soon: Arabic Translation of Sectarianization
Praise keeps rolling in for Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East, co-edited by Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel. Over the past year, the editors have discussed their book at the Middle East Institute, Bus Boys and Poets in Washington, DC, and Volumes Bookcafe in Chicago. They’ve also been interviewed by the BBC, Muftah, Slate, CBC, and more. Now, the book is being translated into Arabic, set to be completed by the end of 2018.

“A possible paradigm shift in the explanatory efficacy of sectarianism as a static category and catch-all reason for conflict in the Middle East.” — Review of Middle East Studies

Educational Oases in the Desert: The Alliance Israélite Universelle’s Girls’ Schools in Ottoman Iraq, 1895-1915
CMES congratulates faculty affiliate Jonathan Sciarcon, Associate Professor of Jewish and Middle East History, for publishing his book, Educational Oases in the Desert: The Alliance Israélite Universelle Girls’ Schools in Ottoman Iraq, 1895-1915. Published by the State University of NY Press, the book explores the history of the French schools that pioneered female education in Ottoman Iraq’s Jewish communities.
CMES in the News

Opinion

Iran, Saudi Arabia and Modern Hatreds

By Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel

Mr. Hashemi and Mr. Postel are co-editors of "Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East."

May 15, 2018

CMES faculty and affiliates published articles on a wide range of issues in prestigious publications this year. Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel, assistant director of the MENA program at Northwestern University, co-wrote an op-ed for the New York Times critiquing discussions of sectarianism in the Middle East.


Ambassador Gary Grappo
CMES Distinguished Fellow

Ambassador Grappo regularly offers commentary on major news related to the Middle East, from Trump’s policies to the Iran-Saudi Arabian regional rivalry. Ambassador Grappo published more than 15 articles throughout the year in publications including the Fair Observer, the Cipher Brief, and Dan Rather’s News and Guts.
CMES Responds to Breaking News in the Middle East

**JANUARY 2018**
Protests in Iran How Should the U.S. Respond?
Dean Pardis Mahdavi and Nader Hashemi

**MARCH 2018**
The New Saudi Crown Prince: Committed Reformer or Just Acting the Part?
Panel: Ambassador Gary Grappo, Claude d’Estree, Nader Hashemi

**APRIL 2018**
Syria, Gas Attacks, and Savagery: How Should the World Respond?
Panel: Tom Farer, Micheline Ishay, Lewis Griffith, Amb. Gary Grappo
Moderator: Nader Hashemi

**MAY 2018**
Trump and the End of the Iranian Nuclear Deal: What Comes Next?
Panel: David Goldfischer, Nader Hashemi, Martin Rhodes, Amb. Gary Grappo
Moderator: Pardis Mahdavi
Guest Speakers

Trita Parsi  
Author & Executive Director, NIAC

Fawaz Gerges  
Professor of International Relations, London School of Economics

Ali Kadivar  
Assistant Professor, Boston College

Saeid Golkar  
Visiting Assistant Professor, University of Tennessee Chattanooga

Israel 70 Years Later

2018 marks the 70th year since the founding of the state of Israel, an event that shaped the region in innumerable ways. CMES hosted several guests who have dedicated their lives to peacebuilding and dialogue.

Rabbi Arik Ascherman  
Human Rights Activist

Tarik Abuata  
Executive Director, Friends of Sabeel North America

Combatants for Peace

Our second season of the Meydan Film Series saw larger audiences and featured films from Iran, Turkey, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, and Israel/Palestine. CMES research affiliates Carole Woodall and Joel Gordon curate the series and lead discussions after each film.
CMES co-sponsored three more successful events this year with WorldDenver, one of the city’s hubs for global affairs. In December, we co-hosted an event with Reza Aslan, best-selling author and religious scholar, for a discussion of his newest book, *God: A History*. We partnered with WorldDenver for an event in January featuring Jason Pack, founder of EyeonISISinLibya.com, and president of Libya-Analyses.com, for a discussion on the history and current state of affairs in Libya. In June, CMES co-sponsored an event with Mohamed Ahmed, who created the cartoon character Average Mohamed to challenge extremist narratives.

CMES was proud to co-sponsor the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy’s 19th annual conference on April 26 in Washington, DC. The theme of this year’s conference was Authoritarianism and Democratic Decline In the Age of Sectarianism and Populism. Discussion topics included the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Egypt, political transition in Tunisia, and the future of Turkey.

CMES Director Nader Hashemi served as the Program’s Committee Chair and gave introductory remarks. He also moderated the panel on the Iran-Saudi rivalry.
Community Engagement

CMES faculty had another busy year of interviews, public talks, panels, and book events both at home and abroad. Nader Hashemi was a regular on major networks including Al Jazeera English, CNN, and CTV News, discussing breaking news in the Middle East. Hashemi had speaking engagements in Istanbul, Turkey, and Doha, Qatar, and was invited to Kuala Lumpur for a five-day speaking tour. In the Denver community, Hashemi participated in panel discussions at the Denver Film Festival, the Denver Press Club, and Metropolitan State University.

News Media and Community Events

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Pictured top: Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel discuss their book, Sectarianization, at Volumes Bookcafe in Chicago; Denver Film Festival flier highlighting Syrian refugee crisis panel featuring Hashemi; Hashemi speaks on a panel at the Middle East Institute in Washington, DC. Pictured bottom: Micheline Ishay is interviewed on 9News; CMES Affiliate David Goldfischer on 9News; Hashemi being interviewed on CNN;
Student Trip to Israel and Palestine
June 14th–June 27th

For the second straight year, CMES sponsored an interactive two-week tour through Israel and the West Bank. Following a 10-week workshop led by Professor Micheline Ishay, nine Korbel graduate students had the opportunity to engage in thought-provoking and difficult conversations with local politicians, NGOs, religious leaders, artists, and more. Thanks to the generous support of an anonymous donor, the students’ trip expenses were significantly subsidized.

Highlights of the trip include:
- Visits to the Knesset, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Western Wall, Dome of the Rock, and many other important political and religious sites.
- Meetings with activists and peace builders from B’Tselem, Tent of Nations, the Parents Circle, and more.
- Homestays with Palestinian families.
- Visits to the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee.

The group meets with activists from Women Wage Peace.

Liebich Family Fund
for Middle East Internships

Thanks to the generous support of Don and Marcia Liebich, five MA students received funding for completing internships in the region this year.

We congratulate our students for securing such impressive internships at the following organizations:
- Stephen Preisig | Syria Direct, Jordan
- Sarah Hanselin | CARE Jordan, Jordan
- Joseph DuBroff | Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Israel
- Brittany Van Soest | U.S. State Department, Algeria
- Berk Ozmeral | Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Turkey

2017 Liebich Fund recipient Lauren Craig in Dubai
2017 Liebich Fund recipient Anam Ahmed in Istanbul
Job Talk With Korbel Alumni

CMES partnered with Korbel’s Office of Career and Professional Development to host two Korbel alums working to empower women. Lauren DeSutter, Director of Alternativ Project, and Danielle Givens, Executive Director of the Marshall Fund, spoke to students about their work with women in Pakistan. They recently presented their work on a panel at the UN Conference on the Status of Women.

Student Groups

CMES Director Nader Hashemi serves as the faculty advisor for two student groups at Korbel:
♦ Middle East Discussion Group
♦ No Lost Generation

CMES also co-sponsored three student-led events over the course of the year:
♦ Amnesty at Korbel’s film screening of 8 Borders, 8 Days
♦ Diversity Summit
♦ Crisis Engagement and Negotiation Exercise (CENEX)

Inaugural Korbel Ping Pong Tournament

CMES served up a bit of ping pong diplomacy during the spring quarter! To celebrate Korbel receiving a ping pong table gifted by a generous donor, CMES organized two tournaments that showcased the impressive skills of the Korbel students, faculty, and staff. Whether it was the beginner or advanced round, students spent a fun Friday afternoon competing for prizes, cheering on their friends, and eating pizza.

Cover image: Dian Agustino, MA 2019 (expected) takes in the sites in Jerusalem during the student trip to Israel and the West Bank. Photo credit: Kate Waidler
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