Our Center for Middle East Studies has passed a milestone: we are five years old.

As I reflect back, I’m reminded of the idiom that “time flies when you are having fun.” It has been a wonderful experience for me to be the founding director of this center. I firmly believe we have made a difference both in advancing scholarship on the Middle East and in raising public awareness about the tangled and complicated politics of the region. A huge part of our success is due to Ambassador Christopher Hill’s stewardship of the Josef Korbel School along with strong support we have received from faculty, staff and students at the University of Denver. We are also indebted to the many friends we have made along the way and who reside in the broader Denver community; their support of our work is deeply appreciated.

During the past academic year, the 2016 presidential election influenced our work. We began the year with a major public forum on assessing the legacy of President Obama’s Middle East policy and we ended the year with trying to come to terms with the fact that Donald Trump is now the President of the United States. In between, we organized/co-sponsored 50 events, including four book launches and a new “Meydan Film Series” that was run by our two faculty research affiliates, Joel Gordon and Carol Woodall. Our institutional partnerships with World Denver, The Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy and the American University of Beirut remain strong and we continue to seek out new opportunities to raise our profile on the national and international stage.

A major highlight over the past year was the publication and promotion of our new book, Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East (Oxford University Press, 2017). We are extremely proud of this endeavor given its relevance to the turmoil in the region plus the fact that many of the leading scholars working on the Middle East have contributed chapters. In May 2017, a book tour in London took place where the volume was well received and which included events at the London School of Economics, Oxford University, Chatham House and Royal Holloway University.

Another major highlight for us was the granting of tenure to Andrea Stanton (Religious Studies) and Jonathan Sciarcon (Judaic Studies/History). Both teach and write in the area of Middle East Studies and play an important role in our center’s mission. Sincere congratulations to both of them for this accomplishment.

Looking ahead, as the Middle East sinks further into turmoil, the demand for insight, analysis and scholarship on the region will remain strong. Our center is committed to providing this in the most objective, serious and relevant way possible. We look forward to the next five years.

We look forward to the next five years.
Co-editors Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel released their new book in March with Oxford University Press. *Sectarianization* is a collection of essays from some of the world’s most notable Middle East scholars, and aims to disentangle the conventional argument that attributes the current regional instability to ancient sectarian strife.

**Contributors**

Ussama Makdisi • Bassel F Salloukh • Yezid Sayigh • Adam Gaiser • Vali Nasr • Fanar Haddad • Paulo Gabriel Hilu Pinto • Madawi Al-Rasheed • Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi • Stacey Philbrick Yadav • Toby Matthiesen • Madeline Wells • Timothy Sisk •

“The master narrative that everything in the Middle East is explained by religious fanaticism has a long history in the West... Hashemi and Postel do an enormous service by bringing together in one volume a mass of research knocking down the ‘sectarianism thesis.’ It is essential for anyone who wants to truly understand this crucial region.”

- Juan Cole  
  University of Michigan

“...The rigorous historical and socio-political analyses in the book make it clear that the astonishing sectarian conflicts in today’s Middle East have little to do with any ancient primordial loyalties, but are rooted in the contemporary geopolitics of the region. Sectarianization is an indispensable read for these bleak times.”

- Asef Bayat  
  University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

In early May Hashemi and Postel did a book tour to promote the new publication in London and Oxford. The London School of Economics’ Middle East Centre hosted a panel discussion with fellow book contributors Madawi Al-Rasheed, Toby Matthiesen and Eskander Sadeghi-Boroujerdi. Hashemi and Postel also presented at the Oxford Department of International Development, Chatham House, and at other events.

**Pictured:** Book co-editors Nader Hashemi (left) and Danny Postel (right) interviewing for the University of Denver's Book Chat *video series*
Institutional Partnerships

American University of Beirut
As part of our partnership with AUB, we were pleased to bring Associate Professor of Political Studies Karim Makdisi to campus this past April. He spent time meeting with Korbel MA students and faculty, gave a presentation on UN chemical weapons disarmament in Syria, and participated in our Middle East Dialogues series with CMES Affiliate Faculty member Andrea Stanton (pictured).

WorldDenver
The second year of our partnership with WorldDenver produced four successful events with speakers of phenomenally high caliber. We began year two by co-hosting “Understanding the Muslim Community in Colorado,” a day-long event featuring panel discussions from prominent Muslim scholars and community members and an introduction from Denver Mayor Michael Hancock. In the fall we brought former Libyan Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril to campus for a conversation with Dean of the Josef Korbel School, Christopher Hill. In October Henri Barkey, Director of the Middle East Program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, gave a lecture on the lessons to be learned from the 2016 attempted coup in Turkey, and Madawi Al-Rasheed, Visiting Professor at the London School of Economics’ Middle East Centre, spoke on the current state of Saudi politics in April.

Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy
We were proud to co-sponsor the 18th Annual Conference for the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy in Washington DC on April 18th. The conference sought to bring together scholars, activists and policymakers to discuss the topic of “The Trump Administration and the Islamic World: From Fighting Extremism to Bringing Peace and Prosperity.” CMES Director Nader Hashemi spoke on a panel titled “Trump’s Embrace of Political Authoritarianism: Whither the Future of the Arab-Islamic World.”
CMES Director Nader Hashemi kept up a busy publishing schedule this year, including:

- **Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East** (Oxford University Press, 2017).
- A short publication “Muslim Experience of Secularism: A Need for New Understanding” that provides a transcript of his discussion with The Reading Group in Singapore.

He also contributed chapters to several new book publications:

- **A Secular Age Beyond the West** (Cambridge University Press, 2017)
- **The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics** entitled (Oxford University Press, 2016)

Finally, Director Hashemi has published articles with *The Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies*, *Newsweek*, and *CNN*.

We are also very pleased to announce the publication of Visiting Scholar Ahmed Abd Rabou’s first book, published with the Arab Reform Institute:

*Civil-Military Relations in the Middle East: A Comparative Study of the Political Role of the Military in Egypt and Turkey* focuses on Egypt after the uprisings in 2011. The book is guided by the question “what strategies might help Egypt’s civilizations keep the military at bay?” It explores the military’s stance on civil-Islamist competition and how Egypt might benefit from the Turkish experience, the latter having made considerable progress towards civilian control.

Distinguished Fellow Ambassador Gary Grappo frequently published articles on US foreign policy:

- Five articles in *Fair Observer*, including “Obama Leaves No Legacy in the Middle East”
- “Ex-ambassador to Rex Tillerson: You’re wrong, values matter in America” was published in the *Orlando Sentinel* as a powerful critique of some of the troubling new patterns in Donald Trump’s foreign policy
- “Making Iraq Great Again” and five other pieces in *The Cipher Brief*
Events

The Center had a record-breaking year for events, with 50 total hosted and co-sponsored panels, guest speakers, film screenings, teach-ins, and cultural celebrations. We broadened our scope of events this year as well, partnering with over thirty different departments across campus, and organizations across the country and around the world to provide top quality programming to our community.

This year we premiered our new Meydan: Middle East Film Series, where we screened ten films from various countries in the region. Each screening was followed by an audience discussion with one of our two co-curators, CMES Research Affiliates Carole Woodall and Joel Gordon. We look forward to a successful second season!
CMES Distinguished Fellow, Ambassador Gary Grappo, May 2017

Martha Nussbaum speaking on lessons learned from the 2016 US Presidential election, January, 2017

Over 400 DU students, faculty and staff gather for an informational meeting and open forum regarding Donald Trump’s Muslim Ban, January 30, 2017

Carole Woodall speaking on a panel discussing the migration crisis, Fall 2016

Daniel Brumberg, November 2016
Community Engagement

With an extremely contentious political season and US Presidential election in the fall of 2016, our research affiliates and faculty members stayed busy interacting with the media and commenting on the latest political developments.

Nader Hashemi travels the globe speaking with audiences on various political topics. Aside from our Sectarianization book tour, he visited:

- Sun Valley, Idaho
- Santa Fe, New Mexico
- Boston, Massachusetts
- Washington DC
- Bloomington, Indiana
- Kuala Lampur, Malaysia (pictured)
The Middle East Dialogues is our series of bite-sized interviews with major Middle East scholars, journalists and advocates. This past year we were able to sit down with seven scholars of the region:

Marc Lynch, Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at George Washington University & Director of the Project on Middle East Political Science (pictured)

Christopher de Bellaigue, journalist and author of several books, most recently The Islamic Enlightenment: Struggle Between Faith and Reason

Karim Makdisi, Associate Professor of Political Studies at American University of Beirut

Madawi Al-Rasheed, a leading expert on Saudi Arabia, and currently Visiting Scholar for the Middle East Centre at the London School of Economics

Laura Secor, journalist and author of Children of Paradise: Struggle for the Soul of Iran

Daniel Brumberg, Associate Professor at Georgetown University and author of Power & Change in Iran: Politics of Contention and Conciliation

Henri Barkey, Director of the Middle East Program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Watch each of our Middle East Dialogues on our website at http://www.du.edu/korbel/middleeast/dialogues

University Enrichment Course: Donald Trump and the Middle East: Towards a New US Foreign Policy

Director Hashemi taught another mini-course for the University Enrichment program this year, focusing on the potential changes and upheaval in US Foreign Policy towards the Middle East under a new presidential administration. These courses are geared towards providing short but in-depth information on various topics to community members who are interested in pursuing further education but who aren't enrolled in a full degree-granting program.
Student Trip to Israel & Palestine — June 13th - 27th

We wrapped up the 2016-17 academic year with an amazing opportunity for ten Korbel graduate students to spend two weeks in an immersive study of the most contested land on the globe: the Holy Land. Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, students spent two weeks on an in-depth, multi-narrative study of the area, including:

- Met with NGOs, politicians, community groups, university students, and interfaith groups
- Spent two nights in a Palestinian homestay
- Participated in Iftar and Shabat
- Visited the Knesset, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Wailing Wall, Dome of the Rock, and many other important religious and political sites

Liebich Family Fund for Middle East Internships

Thanks to the generous support from the Liebich family, we have two students spending their summers completing internships in the Middle East region at:

- United Nations Development Program, Istanbul, Turkey
- Eyejusters, Handicap International Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon

_Pictured: Korbel student Andrew Repp at his internship placement in Amman, Jordan. Summer, 2016_

Supporting Student Groups

Director Nader Hashemi is the faculty advisor for two student groups at Korbel, and we are proud to support their work:

- No Lost Generation DU: refugee advocacy and awareness
- Middle East Discussion Group: engages in conversations and events to discuss critical political current events in the MENA region

_Pictured: No Lost Generation event titled Voices of Refugees_
A final word about important staff changes. In October, we said goodbye to our Associate Director, Danny Postel. With his huge personality and intellect, he played a critical role in building our center from scratch. Most of what we have achieved during this time has been a result of his hard work, earnest commitment and due diligence. Beyond his role as Associate Director, Danny made a valuable contribution to the intellectual life of the Josef Korbel School and to the University of Denver. His departure was a sad occasion for us and we are deeply indebted to him for his enduring contributions. Danny has moved back to his hometown of Chicago where he is the Assistant Director of the Middle East and North African Studies Program at Northwestern University.

Tiffany Wilk, our hardworking, competent and amazing Administrative & Research Assistant, is also leaving us. For the past two years, she has been the heart and soul of the center. Whether it was organizing our busy schedule of events, managing our budget, supervising our work-study students or interacting with our donors, Tiffany always delivered a stellar performance. I wish we could keep her longer but she is newly engaged and is moving to Seattle to pursue work in gender and international development. Her departure is also a sad occasion for us. We are indebted to her contributions and wish her strong success with her future career plans.

The work of our center would not be possible without the support of our student workers, both of whom graduated this June. Dominic Nelson graduated with a BA in Economics and International Relations, and has moved back to his home city of Los Angeles, hoping to move to Washington DC to pursue work in the field of international security. Dominic started with us as an intern his sophomore year, and returned to us after studying abroad in Amman, Jordan.

Katie Smedema graduated with an MA in International Studies from the Josef Korbel School, specializing in Vulnerable Populations in the Middle East. Katie assisted with marketing and promotional work for the center, as well as assisted with the dozens of public events that we hosted this past year. She plans to pursue work in Washington DC.

We are deeply grateful to have had Katie and Dominic in the center this past year, and their work contributing to the daily operations of the center has been invaluable. We wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors.

Finally, we are pleased to welcome former Korbel student, Gina Jannone, onboard in the position of Program Manager. Gina graduated with an MA in Middle East Politics and Religion from the Josef Korbel School in 2016. She was extremely active in the work of the Center as a student; she frequented our public events, participated in our student trip to Turkey in 2015, was Co-President of the Middle East Discussion Group, and was always a fantastic liaison for us to the Korbel student body. We look forward to the experience and passion she will bring with her to the Center.