



Workshop Topics and Schedule

In a region of changing stability, the Middle East countries have experienced a decade of abundant intervening forces. Global powers and aspiring for regional hegemony are shaping and re-shaping axes, networks and influences. The goal of this project is to map these changing networks in the post-Arab Spring Middle East, and to analyze the motives and influences of the powers involved. Among them are the US, China, Russia, Turkey, Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. The workshop series will culminate in an edited volume and an international conference.

Workshop 1 (September 29, 2021): Mapping the Middle East in 2021

This session will also serve to present the project to participants

Since former president Barack Obama made his pivot to Asia, Gulf Arab leaders have perceived the US to be withdrawing from the region, leaving a vacuum that has been quickly filled by other powers, principally Russia and, to a lesser extent, China. While the level of US interest and involvement in the region can be debated, and a new administration reconfiguring how it engages with partners and adversaries in the Middle East, it is clear that the region is experiencing a multipolar moment. How is this reality affecting partnerships and alliances in the region? How are regional and local actors positioning themselves? Will we witness increased Gulf Arab security cooperation following the Al Ula summit? Did the Abraham Accords reshape regional alliances in the face of regional threats?

Confirmed Speakers:

- **F. Gregory Gause, III**, Professor and head of the international affairs department, the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University
- **Benjamin Miller**, Full Professor of International Relations, the University of Haifa
- **Ambassador Douglas Silliman**, President, AGSIW

Workshop 2 (November 2021): Regional Influences on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict following the Abraham Accords

The Abraham Accords came as a major blow to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian national movement more broadly. The movement has tied its strategy for years to the Arab Peace Initiative, which committed Arab states to diplomatic openings with Israel based on a two-state solution and an end to the occupation begun in 1967. What do the Accords mean for Israeli-Palestinian relations? Do these developments fundamentally alter Palestinian strategic calculations or simply expose existing weaknesses? Will the UAE and Bahrain be able or inclined to use their new relations with Israel on behalf of Palestinian interests? How does this affect domestic Palestinian and Israeli politics? Is there a new opening on Palestinian issues for regional powers, such as Iran or Turkey, or does this mainly strengthen coalitions opposing their agendas?



Workshop 3 (January 2022): The Abraham Accords: A Buffer Against Turkish and Iranian Influence?

The normalization process between Israel and the Gulf states opens up new diverse opportunities for strategic collaborations for both parties. Many in Israel and in Gulf capitals see the top political-security priority for relations as a strategic realignment, and the creation of a broad regional front against the two non-Arab powers, Iran and Turkey. Do the Abraham accords signify a combined attempt of Arab/Sunni states and Israel to balance Iranian/Shiite regional influence? Does the same thinking apply vis-a-vis Turkish influence in the region?

Workshop 4 (March 2022): The Biden Foreign Policy Agenda

President Biden's Middle East priorities are becoming clearer, not only from statements but also the special envoys he has appointed, with the most important foreign policy considerations given to Iran and Yemen. What are the implications of Biden's evolving Middle East agenda? And what template do the last few months lay for the next three and a half years?

Workshop 5 (May 2022): The Implications of the US-China Global Competition for the Middle East

The Middle East, including the oil-rich Gulf countries, is a key part of the Belt and Road Initiative that is crucial to China's energy supply and trade ties with the rest of the world. Over the past decade, China's relationship in the Middle East, especially with the Gulf states has rapidly grown beyond energy sales. China's increased interest in the Middle East has also come at a time when the U.S. has become less interested in the region and more concerned with global competition with China. What are the implications of the US-China global competition for the Middle East? As China becomes increasingly involved in the region, can it afford to remain uninterested in contributing to the stability of the Middle East? How do countries like Israel and the Gulf states see China's involvement in the region?

Workshop 6 (July 2022): Russia's Influence in the Middle East: Expansion beyond Syria?

Russia has emerged as a key power broker and military actor in the Middle East. In 2015, it sent its air force and a limited number of ground troops to Syria and saved President Bashar al-Assad's regime from what looked like certain defeat. Using its success in Syria as a springboard, Russia has transformed old relationships throughout the region and forged new ones. While Russia is a regional rather than a global power, it has acted like a major player, and has asserted itself militarily in a number of conflicts. It has increased arms sales not only to Ankara, but also to Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt. Furthermore, Moscow has driven forward the OPEC+ agenda, and has worked closely with Riyadh to keep the OPEC+ grouping compliant with production cuts. Why does Russia want a presence in the Middle East? With some Gulf countries looking to reestablish relations with Bashar Al-Assad, how does their relationship with Russia affect this calculus? How does Israel view Russia's presence on its Northern border? Is Russia powerful enough to continue its regional involvement for the long haul?



The Arab Gulf States
Institute in Washington
Building bridges of understanding



About AGSIW:

The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington (AGSIW), launched in 2015, is an independent, nonprofit institution dedicated to providing expert research and analysis of the social, economic, and political dimensions of the Gulf Arab states and how they impact domestic and foreign policy. AGSIW focuses on issues ranging from politics and security to economics, trade, and business; from social dynamics to civil society and culture. Through programs, publications, and scholarly exchanges the institute seeks to encourage thoughtful debate and inform the U.S. policy community regarding this critical geostrategic region.

About the University of Haifa and the NSSC:

The University of Haifa was founded in 1963. It is broadly divided into six Faculties: Humanities, Social Sciences, Law, Science and Science Education, Social Welfare and Health Studies, and Education. The university is a home for more than 18,000 undergraduate and graduate students from all sectors of Israeli society – Jews, Muslims, Christians, Druze, religious and secular students and also many students from all over the world who study in the international school. Website

The National Security Studies Center (NSSC) at the University of Haifa was established in 2000. The NSSC analyses security-related topics in three levels: national, regional and global. It focuses on the study of interrelationships between the great powers in these three aspects. The NSSC deals with the implications of the involvements and interventions of regional powers in the affairs of other states. The center also works on studies related to the Israel-Palestine conflict, the fundamental political issues and key conflicts of the middle east and the different alliances in the region. These issues are studied in different aspects including politically, economically, socially, and technologically. Website