Social Unrest in the Middle East
College Park Marriott Hotel & Conference Center
University of Maryland, College Park
September 24, 2015

8:00    Check-in and Registration (Free)

8:30    Welcome
Michael May, Executive Director
University of Maryland Center for Advanced Study of Language (CASL)

Introduction of Conference Theme
David Cattler, National Intelligence Manager for the Near East

Conference Overview
Joseph Danks, CASL

9:00   The Syrian Uprising: Why Sykes-Picot isn't to Blame
Daniel Neep, Georgetown University

10:15  Break

10:45   Islamic Nationalism and Fundamentalism: Extremist Ideology and
Muslim Violence in the Middle East
Mansoor Moaddel, University of Maryland

12:00  Lunch: Buffet ($18)

1:00    Impact of ISIS on the Sociocultural & Strategic Evolution of the Middle
East Region
Shalini Venturelli, American University
Testing How Significant Developmental “Imbalances” May Drive Abrupt Socio-political Change
Jonathan Moyer, University of Denver

3:30 Break

Commentary on Future Scenarios: Middle East 2020
Mathew Burrows, Atlantic Council

Closing Remarks
Amy Pate, Research Director, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START)

Sponsored by
University of Maryland Center for Advanced Study of Language (CASL), National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence

Location
College Park Marriott Hotel & Conference Center
3501 University Blvd.
East Hyattsville, MD 20783

Parking
Covered garage on site; no fee; no permit needed

Food
Buffet lunch ($18)
Starbucks Coffee (on site)

Internet
Complementary Wi-Fi on site

Twitter
To share your thoughts and questions, use #sumeumd
Speaker Biographies and Abstracts

Daniel Neep is assistant professor in political science at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies in the School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University. Dr. Neep’s main field of expertise is state formation and state-society relations in the Middle East, with a focus on Syria. He is the author of ‘Occupying Syria under the French Mandate: Space, Insurgency and State Formation’ (Cambridge University Press, 2012) and is currently conducting new research for a book looking at the spatial and economic dimensions of state formation in Syria from 1920 to the present day. Dr. Neep has spent several years in Syria since the late 1990s, variously studying, working and teaching, and is fluent in Damascene Arabic. Prior to joining Georgetown in 2013, he was a lecturer [assistant professor] in the Department of Politics at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom. He also worked for 3 years as Research Director (Syria) for the Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL), in which capacity he was based in Damascus throughout the first year of the Syrian uprising before relocating to Amman, Jordan. Before moving into academia, Dr. Neep was Head of the Middle East & North Africa Programme at the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI), a foreign policy think tank in London, from 2002 to 2004. Dr. Neep was an affiliated researcher at the American University of Beirut in 2015. He sits on the editorial boards of two academic journals, Contemporary Levant and Critical Military Studies. Dr. Neep teaches courses on comparative politics of the Middle East, the politics of Syria, empire, and war & military politics on Georgetown’s renowned Master's program in Arab Studies.

The Syrian Uprising: Why Sykes-Picot isn’t to Blame

Many journalists and experts suggest that the current uprising is the result of the artificial origins of the Syrian state, which was carved out of the carcass of the Ottoman Empire after World War One by European colonial powers. By grouping together disparate ethnic and religious groups, they say, the new state of Syria contained deep social faultlines that made the outbreak of civil war all but inevitable. However, over-emphasizing the role of Sykes-Picot overlooks the myriad ways in which the inhabitants of this new country over time developed profound commitments to the idea of being Syrian. The building of national institutions, the expansion of the power of government, an evolving sense of nationalism, and the logic of political pragmatism have all helped Syria's transformation from artificial construct to meaningful reality. This talk analyzes the development of modern Syrian politics not from the perspective of sectarian identity - which has limited explanatory purchase - but instead argues for the importance of institutions, political ideas, and social class.

Mansoor Moaddel is professor of sociology at the University of Maryland, College Park. He studies culture, ideology, political conflict, revolution and social change. His work currently focuses on the causes and consequences of values and attitudes of the Middle Eastern publics. He has carried out values surveys in Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Turkey. He has also carried out youth surveys in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. His previous research project analyzed the determinants of ideological production in the Islamic world, in which he studied the rise of Islamic modernism in Egypt, India, and Iran in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; liberal nationalism in Egypt, anti-clerical secularism in Iran, liberal Arabism and Pan-Arab nationalism in Syria and Iraq in the first half of twentieth century; and Islamic fundamentalism in Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, and Syria in the second half of the twentieth
century. His fields of research and teaching interests are values survey, sociology of ideology, sociology of religion, political conflict and revolution, terrorism and political violence, and Islam and the Middle East. He has also taught statistics and research methods. He has recently completed a cross-national comparative survey project in seven Middle Eastern countries, including Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Turkey. He is currently planning to launch a panel study of the dynamics of changes in values and political engagement in Tunisia. For more information, see www.mevs.org.

**Islamic Nationalism & Fundamentalism: Extremist Ideology and Muslim Violence in the Middle East**

In explaining the causes of Muslim extremism of the past decades, the role of two historical processes must be taken into account. First, ideological discourses are terribly important in bringing into relief a new historical pattern. They are preceded by and manifested in the formation of secular states of the 1920s, pan-Arab nationalist states of the 1950s through the 1960s, and the Islamic governments of late. Second, Muslim extremism is shaped by two intertwine processes: the refutation of rational reasoning in favor of literalism, and the rejection of secularism in order to unite religion and politics in an Islamic government. Findings from comparative cross-national surveys have shown fundamentalism having negative relationships with liberal values across nations. To combat Muslim extremism is thus to empower its historical nemesis: liberalism. Extremism will decline when people realize the utility of recognizing individual right, gender equality, and secular politics for the construction of a responsive government and prosperous society.

**Shalini Venturelli** is Associate Professor of International Communication and International Relations, in the School of International Service, American University, Washington, DC. She conducts international sociocultural field research and multidisciplinary complex qualitative analysis on the information environment of conflict, culture and international security, ideology-formation and strategic communication, sociocultural drivers of insurgency conflict, cultural studies analysis of global social media networks, evolutionary analysis of jihadist networks and extremist groups, and assessments of governance, security and stabilization in unstable regions. Dr. Venturelli has multidisciplinary expertise, and is multilingual. She is the author of many publications on the information and communication environments and networks, the global communication and knowledge revolution, and culture, media and international security. Professor Venturelli received a Ph.D. from the University of Colorado at Boulder in International Communication & International Relations, an M.A. from the University of Chicago in Interdisciplinary Social Science, and a B.S. from Illinois State University in Economics.

**Impact of ISIS on the Sociocultural & Strategic Evolution of the Middle East Region**

While significant advances have been made in understanding the attraction and function of extremist terror networks, the analysis is seldom drawn from longer-term field research of impact on populations and actors on the ground, or through multidisciplinary sociocultural and qualitative data on dynamical interactions and outcomes of all key players at the regional strategic level. This gap is addressed in a set of key findings from an extensive two-stage research project that investigates powerful forces shaping the future of the MENA region. Building on a deep study of the ISIS network’s evolutionary capability, the study identifies the impact of the terror network on the sociocultural environment and strategic transformation of the Middle East region. Using multidimensional qualitative data and methods, the project employs a new complex-factor framework for assessing regional stability, adaptation and/or dissolution. This allows deeper insight into the overall power-law network dynamics shaping the region's
future through restructuring and realignments of key actors and interests, which include: critical population groups, primary state and non-state actors, security forces, ISIS and other violent extremist networks, rebel militias and organizations, and the influence strategies of powerful external states. The assessment also captures broader sociocultural and strategic forces that go beyond the interests, influence and interactions of any single power-player in the conflict. The report offers projected pathways in the stabilization and destabilization of regional social order unleashed by ISIS as evidenced in the dynamic contestation and interplay of key actors within and beyond the region.

Jonathan Moyer is research assistant professor at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies and associate director of the Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures at the University of Denver. He works in three areas, all of which extend and use the International Futures (IFs) integrated assessment platform. Jonathan aids the strategic planning efforts of various countries, international organizations, and corporations. This funded research has supported analysis for groups like the Arrow Electronics, New Partnership for African Development, USAID, and the Western Cape provincial government of South Africa. He also leads the creation of new data and tools to better understand and analyze international relations theory. This funded research has supported the creation of many new data series including contributions to documents such as the U.S. National Intelligence Council Global Trends 2030 report. Dr. Moyer also researches the impact of developmental imbalances on state failure and fragility. He is Lead Co-PI on a three-year Minerva-funded research grant that began in the fall of 2014.

**Testing How Significant Developmental “Imbalances” May Drive Abrupt Socio-political Change**

Country-year measures of state fragility generally did a poor job of predicting abrupt socio-political change associated with Arab Spring countries. This may be because development imbalances—high levels of human development coupled with poor access to political decision-making structures—were a significant driver of the abrupt socio-political change that started in Tunisia and were not included in measures of state fragility. The U.S. Department of Defense Minerva Initiative funded research over three years to explore the relationship between developmental imbalances and state fragility. This research project started by exploring how new measures of developmental imbalances interact within the Goldstone et. al. (2010) quantitative model used to predict instability. For the most part, the Goldstone et al. (2010) model is robust when tested historically and we found that very few alternative drivers of instability improve model behavior. However, that said, there are alternative model specifications that do improve historical model performance, particularly the use of a continuous representation of polity regime type (not variables directly tied to measuring developmental imbalances). Removing a variable criticized for building violence into the model used to forecast instability and violence (Vreeland) causes historical performance of the model to decline. While fit of the alternative model is not as strong for the historical period used for model development, out-of-sample prediction for certain cases may be better.
Mathew J. Burrows serves as the Director of the Atlantic Council’s Strategic Foresight Initiative in the Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security. He was appointed Counselor to the National Intelligence Council (NIC) in 2007 and Director of the Analysis and Production Staff (APS) in 2010. As Director of APS, Burrows was responsible for managing a staff of senior analysts and production technicians who guide and shepherd all NIC products from inception to dissemination. He was the principal drafter for the NIC publication *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds*, which received widespread recognition and praise in the international media and among academics and think tanks. In 2005, he was asked to set up and direct the NIC's new Long Range Analysis Unit, which is now known as the Strategic Futures Group. Burrows joined the CIA in 1986, where he served as Analyst for the Directorate of Intelligence (DI), covering Western Europe, including the development of European institutions such as the European Union. From 1998 to 1999 he was the first holder of the Intelligence Community Fellowship and served at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. Other previous positions included assignments as Special Assistant to the US UN Ambassador Richard Holbrooke (1999-2001) and Deputy National Security Advisor to US Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill (2001-2002). He is a member of the DI’s Senior Analyst Service. Burrows graduated from Wesleyan University in 1976 and received a PhD in European history from Cambridge University, England in 1983.