



Regional Power Competition in the Middle East

Our speaker for February 25 is Dr. Larry Goodson, professor of Middle East studies, Department of National Security and Strategy, Army War College.

He has spoken to us before, but this time, because of the pandemic, it will be as part of our webinar series sponsored by Legend Financial.

All members will receive information on how to participate by e-mail and on our website as the date draws near.

Dr. Goodson is regularly called upon to advise U.S. senior political and military leaders on Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Middle East.

He is the only member of the Army War College faculty to hold the Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower Chair of National Security twice (2014-2017 and 2004-2007). In 2019, he was on sabbatical as a Visiting Fellow at the Changing Character of War Center, Pembroke College, Oxford University.

Dr. Goodson earned all of his degrees at the University of North Carolina. He conducted his doctoral dissertation field work in Peshawar, Pakistan (1986-1987). He taught at the American University in Cairo (1994-2000).

Dr. Goodson is the author of the bestselling *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban* (2001), as well as numerous book chapters and articles.

Currently, he is writing *The Syrian War: First Great War of the 21st Century*.

Dr. Goodson has lived in the United Kingdom, Egypt, Pakistan, and Afghanistan and has traveled extensively through the Middle East and South Asia, including India, North Africa, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, and Cyprus.

He has lectured on Afghanistan, Pakistan, Islam, and the Middle East to audiences at more than 100 universities, schools, and organizations. Dr. Goodson has been interviewed more than 1,000 times on those subjects since September 11, 2001.



Goodson's Views on Middle East Peace

In February 2018, Dr. Larry Goodson published an article in the Army War College blog, titled "Five Enduring Barriers to Peace in the Middle East." Here is a summary:

The Middle East has experienced 22 conflicts in the early years of the 21st century, and its future promises far more. This is because of five enduring, persistent tensions that foster conflict in the region, each consisting of a major social, economic, or political change that is colliding with a significant, relatively constant feature of the region.

- 1. Demographic Growth vs. Geographic and Economic Limitations: The Middle East is geographically stressed and increasingly challenged by a ballooning population.*
- 2. Young Countries vs. Ancient Societies: While called the "cradle of civilization," the Middle East is one of the least politically mature regions in the world after a century of foreign powers dividing its lands and making competing promises to Arabs and Jews with regard to Palestine.*
- 3. Modern Radical Islamism vs. Traditional Abrahamic Religions: Today's radical Islamist movement applies strict conservative interpretations of Islamic law and advocates violent methods to achieve a purer society and challenge Christian and/or Jewish states.*
- 4. The "Arab Spring" vs. Traditional Authoritarianism: Almost every Middle Eastern government embraced autocracy in the 20th century and remained autocratic into the 21st century. In December 2010, protests, demonstrations, violence, and revolution, swept the Arab World. Governments fell in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya, while reforms took place almost everywhere else. This regional upheaval promised to bring democracy to this wholly undemocratic region.*
- 5. Great Power Competition vs. Inattention: During the Cold War, the United States invested in oil and sold military hardware, but kept its military postured for conflict elsewhere. When the powers did intervene in the Middle East, such as Soviet involvement in Egypt under Nasser and the U.S.-led Persian Gulf War, the long-term results were not favorable. Unfortunately, the same can be said for 15 years of U.S. military involvement in the region since the invasion of Iraq.*

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The Rise of Authoritarianism
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The world is witnessing a new form of authoritarian state, one in which national leaders seek to legitimize and consolidate power by manipulating legislative bodies.

So says Dr. Ae sil Woo, assistant professor of political science at Gettysburg College, who addressed the Foreign Policy Association via webinar on January 21.

Although there has been a decrease in the number of authoritarian states since the 1970s, Dr. Woo cited three disturbing trends that have enabled leaders to neutralize the opposition and maintain virtual dictatorial power.

Trend One: Seize power through election, then use nominally democratic institutions to consolidate power and exclude opposition.

Trend Two: Allow a degree of opposition within the legislature to make the country appear to be democratic, but still maintain unfettered control over policy.

Trend Three: Alter voting rules and procedures within the legislature to further frustrate efforts of the opposition.

Dr. Woo cited Hong Kong as an example in which China has set the voting rules in such a way that government bills pass nearly every time while opposition bills rarely succeed.

She warned that these tactics have the potential of eroding even some of the world's most stable democracies.

FPA Past Speaker to Direct the CIA

William J. Burns, President Biden's choice to direct the Central Intelligence Agency, appeared before the Foreign Policy Association in November 2015 at the first annual President's Speaker Series. He spoke about American foreign policy in the 21st century.

Burns, 64, has local connections. He is a graduate of Trinity High School, having spent his teen years in the Carlisle area while his father served as Deputy Commandant of the Army War College. His parents, Maj. Gen. William F. Burns and wife Peggy, live in South Middleton Township.

Burns is a career diplomat who has served in posts around the world, including as U.S. ambassador to Russia and Jordan. He was Deputy Secretary of State in the Obama administration. More recently, he was President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a Washington-based international affairs think tank.

**FPA 2020-2021
Program Schedule and Topics**

Please note several changes in the schedule.
All events via webinars at least through April.
We hope to return to the West Shore Country Club in May, but only if it is safe to do so.

- Feb. 25** Regional Power Competition in the Middle East
- March 18** The Impact of the COVID Pandemic on the International System (Note the topic change.)
- April 8** International Fellows Reception (Cancelled due to the pandemic.)
- April 22** Turkey at the Crossroads (An addition to the schedule.)
- May 20** Iran: How Did We Get Here And What Do We Do Now?
- May 12** Embassy Trip, in person or virtual? Delegation of the European Union

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