



CONTAGION EFFECT: RADICALIZATION, UNREST, AND COMPETITION IN THE COVID-19 ERA

AGENDA

September 16 -17, 2020: A LIVESTREAMING EVENT

DAY ONE AGENDA: SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

OPENING REMARKS

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| 8:55 - 9:00 | WELCOME! LIVESTREAM CONFERENCE COUNTDOWN
<i>GPC Conference Emcee: Dr. Garrett Potts, USF</i> |
| 9:00 - 9:10 | DR. ERIC EISENBERG , Dean, College of Arts & Sciences,
University of South Florida |
| 9:10 - 9:25 | LTG (R) TERRY WOLFF , Director, Near East South Asia
(NESAs) Center for Strategic Studies |
| 9:25 - 9:45 | MR. TODD VEAZIE , Director, Strategic Multilayer Assessment
(SMA), Pentagon Joint Staff/J39 |
| 9:45 - 10:00 | DR. RIK LEGAULT , Department of Homeland Security |
| 10:00 - 10:15 | BREAK |
| 10:15 - 11:00 | KEYNOTE SPEAKER
MAJOR GENERAL (R)MICHAEL NAGATA
"The Rise of Malign Actors in the Globalized, Digital Age" |
| 11:00 - 11:20 | SPEAKER Q & A |

11:20 - 11:30

BREAK

11:30 - 1:00

PANEL 1: COMPETITION FOR INFLUENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Perception matters. This panel will discuss U.S., Chinese, Russian, and Iranian interests in the region against the backdrop of emergent change driven by technological advances, empowerment of the individual, and the weakening of the Westphalian international system. In particular, the panel will examine opportunities and risks that the ongoing response to the crisis poses for the USG and its competitors in the region.

PANEL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As China, Russia, Iran, and the United States compete for influence in the CENTCOM AOR, how has the perceived response of each of these actors shifted the geopolitical balance of influence in the region?
2. What are the goals of each of these competitors in the region, and how have they changed in response to the pandemic?
3. How can the USG harness disruption in the region to further its interests and objectives while preventing erosion of U.S. influence?
4. Will the pandemic affect Iranian leadership, decision calculus, and future pathways in the post-COVID period?

MODERATOR: DR. RICHARD RUSSELL (NESA)

PANELISTS

- LTG (R) Karen Gibson, Purdue University
- Dr. Mohsen Milani, USF, Iran
- Dr. Nikolay Kozhanov, Chatham House, Russia
- Dr. Maorong Jiang, Creighton University, China

1:00 - 1:30

PANEL Q & A

1:30 - 2:15

LUNCH

2:15 - 2:45

**PLENARY SPEAKER
MR. ROBERT JONES**

Deputy J5, SOJTF

“Embracing Uncertainty and Mitigating Operational Risk: How to Change the Operational Lens”

2:45 - 4:00

PANEL 2: POPULATION DYNAMICS: UNREST & VIOLENT EXTREMISM

This panel will address the rising tide of populism in the Middle East—characterized by popular protests calling for improved governance while rejecting sectarianism. It will question if this is a durable trend that will result in more responsive and representative governments and whether this trend could be overcome by the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic where autocratic governments take advantage of the chaos to consolidate power.

While some individuals and populations have turned to political protest to address grievances, violent extremism remains a destabilizing factor. The Central Region suffers from numerous drivers of instability, rooted in the potential for economic and political collapse, massive populations of internally displaced persons and refugees, and traumatized and aggrieved populations vulnerable to radical ideologies. This panel will explore the drivers and buffers of popular protest, violent extremism, and other expressions of grievance in the Region.

PANEL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How will rising populism—rejection of sectarianism, demand for better governance, and empowerment of populations—shape the Middle East over the next five years?
2. What are the drivers of grievance in the Central Region that lead some individuals to choose violent extremism over political protest? What steps can the USG encourage to increase resilience against violent extremism?
3. How will the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic impact stability in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Lebanon, and Iraq? Will we see a return to increased authoritarianism and the decline of populism?

MODERATOR: LEANNE ERDBERG STEADMAN, ESQ. (USIP)

PANELISTS

- Dr. Jennifer Jefferis (NESA), Lebanon/Jordan
- Dr. Hassan Abbas (NESA), *Pakistan*
- Dr. Aleksandra (Aleks) Nesic (JFK Special Warfare Center & School)
- Dr. Gawdat Bahgat (NESA)

4:00 - 4:30

PANEL Q & A



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DAY TWO AGENDA: SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

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|----------------------|--|
| 8:55 - 9:00 | WELCOME! LIVESTREAM CONFERENCE
<i>GPC Conference Emcee: Dr. Garrett Potts, USF</i> |
| 9:00 - 9:20 | LTG (R) KAREN GIBSON
Deputy Director of National Intelligence for National Security Partnerships
“How America Advances in the Great Power Competition” |
| 9:20 - 9:30 | SPEAKER Q & A |
| 9:30 - 10:15 | KEYNOTE SPEAKER
MAJOR GENERAL ALEXUS G. GRYNKEWICH
Director of Operations, U.S. Command
“Defining the U.S. Role in the Great Power Competition” |
| 10:15 - 10:30 | KEYNOTE Q & A |
| 10:30 - 10:45 | BREAK |
| 10:45 - 12:00 | PANEL 3: COMPETITION FOR INFLUENCE:
INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT |

This panel will define and discuss Great Power Competition, relating to national security objectives, information dynamics,

strategic decision-making, and operations in the Information Environment.

PANEL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How will information about the COVID-19 crisis be leveraged to influence the CASA Region?
2. How will information be used through transient populations to influence regional governments in the CASA Region?
3. How will technological innovation factor into influence through the information environment?
4. How might information be used to create divides within populations and governments that may disadvantage the U.S. and U.S. allies in the CASA Region?

MODERATOR: DR. SEAN RYAN (WEST LIBERTY UNIVERSITY)

PANELISTS

- Dr. Gregory Seese (Johns Hopkins)
- Dr. Les Grau (USA Foreign Military Studies Office)
- Dr. Andrea Dew (USNWC)
- Ms. Leila Golestani (Former Iran Advisor, USSOCOM Commander)

12:00- 12:30

PANEL Q & A

12:30 - 1:15

LUNCH

1:15 - 2:30

PANEL 4: THE COVID-19 GRAY RHINO: PREDICTABILITY, IMPACT, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CENTCOM

This panel will explore the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on global populations and their regimes, ramifications for global power competition, practical detection, and implications for the military.

PANEL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were the key interactions between COVID-19 and other variables of the system you study, and what was the nature of those interactions?
2. Were there any effects of the pandemic on your domain of expertise that have surprised you?
3. How could the actors in your domain have been better prepared to respond to the pandemic? What leadership and support are required for an effective response?

MODERATOR: DR. LARRY KUZNAR (NSI)

“It’s a Gray Rhino! the nature of pandemics & how they are understood, what predictability means, the means for detection”

PANELISTS

- Dr. Yaneer Bar Yam (NECSI)
- Dr. Haroro J. Ingram (GWU)
- Lt. COL Christopher Forrest (NSC)

2:30 -3:00

PANEL Q & A

CLOSING REMARKS

3:00 - 3:15

DR. PAUL SANBERG

Senior Vice President for Research, Innovation, & Knowledge Enterprise & President of the USF Research Foundation
University of South Florida