



**CONTAGION EFFECT: RADICALIZATION, UNREST, AND
TERRY WOLFF**, Director, Near East South Asia

(NESA) Center for Strategic Studies

9:25 - 9:45

MR. TODD VEAZIE, Director /P /MCID 2013DC 1 g05 1024 47 13.8efBT0g-00 Tc 00

11:00 - 11:20

SPEAKER Q & A

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

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

PANEL DISCUSSION

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