



WORLD  
AFFAIRS  
COUNCIL of  
ALBUQUERQUE

Member, World Affairs Councils of America

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## ***OFF TO THE RACES !!!!!!!***

Wow, the new year has certainly started off with a lot to talk about “transformational initiatives”, both from an international perspective and from a domestic view as well as the overlap between them. From active conflict in Ukraine and the ICJ finding of the risk of genocide in Gaza and West Bank to military coups, civil wars, great power competition in Africa and latent confrontation around the South China Sea, the international environment is awash in challenges for American foreign policy. But even here at home, the domestic aspects of our country’s global relationships are fraught. Realignment of US institutions engaged in international diplomacy such as the United States Agency for International Development, Voice of America and entities within the National Endowment for Democracy is occurring at a rapid pace. Moreover, the tone of the relationships with our closest neighbors and largest trading partners, Canada and Mexico, has changed markedly while the nature of the global trade architecture is changing. All of this has generated great speculation among academics, think tanks, former practitioners, the media and most certainly our nation’s leading institutions. Going forward, and even already in process, the World Affairs Council of Albuquerque will strive to bring at least competing views and insight across the spectrum of challenges and, hopefully, some small bit of clarity along the way.

## ***WHERE WE WERE***

The Council maintained its string of timely and insightful evening dinner programs on contemporary foreign policy issues confronting our country, to an extent

anticipating the profound new directions in American foreign policy. In addition to our ongoing relationship with the Oasis Continuing Education Center, the Council, in cooperation with the New Mexico Trade Alliance, set up a 4-part program for a binational delegation of US and Korean representatives exploring trade and development opportunities in New Mexico. As for our enduring programs, WACABQ continued high school and UNM student participation at Council events, expanded cooperation with Albuquerque Public Schools, and initiated the 2024-2025 Global Educator of the Year program.

### ***RECENT MEETINGS***

Previous US presidents have continued a modernization program of America's nuclear forces that, over a period of 30 years, is estimated will cost in excess of \$2 trillion. The current administration, while on occasion suggesting a major reduction in strategic forces with Russia and China, seems most likely to continue this trend. The third quarter kicked off with a January dinner program that featured a compelling presentation by Dr. Amir Mohagheghi, the senior scientist from Sandia National Labs, entitled "Global Security Challenges in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Nuclear Age". Dr. Mohagheghi laid out in detail the role that Sandia's Cooperative Monitoring Center has played in over 120 countries in the struggle to restrain nuclear proliferation and mitigate the potential risks associated with it.

America's foreign policy challenges in Africa are many and varied. Among them are a series of military coups across the center of the continent, Chinese expanding economic influence, Russian paramilitary forces propping up autocratic regimes and internal civil wars in multiple states. In order to get a handle on these situations and likely US policy initiatives, the Council in February hosted Ambassador Terry McCulley, the former chief of mission in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Nigeria. Ambassador McCulley provided a comprehensive overview of the evolving geopolitical environment on the continent and highlighted the likely implications that restructuring of America's diplomatic capabilities will have on America's role in Africa.

The ongoing war in Palestine, both in Gaza and the West Bank, is increasingly characterized by the most respected international and non-governmental organizations as a potential genocide, fraught with accusations of war crimes, apartheid and ethnic cleansing. Increasingly, however, conflict has spread into Lebanon, Syria and Iran. Dr. Emile Nakhleh, a life member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a retired senior intelligence officer at the CIA and founding

director of its Political Islam Strategic Analysis Program addressed the Council's dinner in March. He summarized not only the ongoing Israeli military operations in the occupied areas of Palestine but also the implications for the United States of Israel's incursions in Lebanon and Syria, the exchange of fires between Israel and Iran and the ongoing American offensive against the Houthi in Yemen.



Dr. Amir Mohagherhi



Ambassador Terry McCulley



Dr. Emile Nahkleh

During the quarter, the Council also continued its cooperative program with the Oasis Continuing Education Center in February and March. In February, Ambassador William Itoh examined 2025 security challenges in Asia for the new Trump administration including China-Taiwan potentials, confrontation in the South China Sea and North Korean nuclear threats.



Ambassador William Itoh

In March, the Council added yet another dimension to its community-focused efforts, hosting a Korea-focused delegation composed of Mr. Tom Ramage of the Korea Economic Institute of America, Ms. Kim Haejung from the Korean Embassy in Washington and LCDR Ki Suh Jung from the Department of State. Consistent with our regular interactions with Oasis, we organized a panel discussion on US-Republic of Korea bilateral relations including the strategic importance of Korea within its region and to the U.S., the impact on Korea of U. S.-China competition, North Korea's nuclear program and Pyongyang's participation in the Ukraine war. But, the WACQBQ also coordinated a visit by the three person-delegation focused on trade development in New Mexico. The New Mexico Trade Alliance hosted a general discussion of potential bilateral trade and then scheduled individual meetings with five New Mexico companies interested in export of product to Korea.



Tom Ramage



Kim Haejung



Ki Suh Jung

## ***EVENTS ON TAP***

The transformation of American foreign policy, both process and substance, continues as the new administration completes his first 100 days in office. Our fourth quarter began with a look at one of our country's most honored organizations, the Peace Corps. Our guest on 9 April was Ms. Josephine (Jody) Olsen. A graduate of the University of Utah with a doctorate from the University of Maryland, Jody began as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Tunisia in 1966 and grew to be the Peace Corps Director from 2018 to 2021. She shared how service and volunteering build trust, partnerships, and respect across communities, states, and nations and make successfully managing crises and emergencies possible.

The world's most populous state and largest democracy has taken on greater and greater political, diplomatic and economic roles globally over the past two decades. Indeed, as a founding member of the BRICS association and the loosely defined consulting group along with the United States, Australia and Japan, India is assuming greater significance for the United States, both regionally and globally. Yet increasing nationalism within its boundaries has raised some concerns. On 22 May, Vangala Ram, a retired US foreign service officer currently with the Institute of World Politics will discuss for us the internal politics around the New Delhi government and the ascending geopolitical role that India has assumed.

The Arab Spring that started in December 2010 was an uprising of the "Arab Street", the common citizens in much of the Arab world that led to major political and social changes throughout the region. The Arab Barometer is a nonpartisan research network that provides insight into the social, political, and economic attitudes and values of ordinary citizens across the Arab world. It has been conducting public opinion surveys in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) since 2006 and is the largest repository of publicly available data on the views of men and women in the region. On 12 June the Council will host Mr. Michael Robbins, the director and co-principal investigator from that organization, to explain the "Arab Street" in the context of the multiple crosscutting influences in reaction to current Israeli behavior in the region.



Dr. Jody Olsen



Dr. Vangala Ram



Dr. Michael Robbins

## ***ANCILLARY EFFORTS***

### **The High School Level**

The Council continues its focus on Albuquerque area high school students and teachers -- public, private and charter -- including our mainstay program that, at Council expense, brings a teacher and up to five students to each of the dinner programs at Tanoan Golf Club. With great appreciation, high school access to our meetings is funded by member donations directed to this program over and above annual membership dues during the annual membership renewal period. At the next renewal, please consider a tax-free donation in any amount to this meaningful initiative. This quarter Albuquerque Academy and La Cueva High School on two occasions participated in the program. Of special note, La Cueva's Moslem Student Organization, mentored by last year's Global Educator of the Year, Randy Martin, attended Dr. Nakhleh's presentation on the Middle East -- participating while recognizing the Ramadan fast as accommodated by our Tanoan hosts.



### La Cueva's Moslem Student Organization

The Council kicked off the 2025 application process for the Albuquerque Area Global Educator of the Year award that we initiated for 2024. That program has been a resounding success. This year we expanded access to the program to nearby communities including Rio Rancho, Los Lunas, Moriarty, Santa Fe and Los Alamos. The nomination period closed on 7 April with four remarkably impressive nominations – including two from APS and two from independent high schools. Announcement of the winner will occur on or about 21 April.

### **The University Level**

At the university level, the Council continued to host students from the UNM ROTC departments and the Global National Security Policy Institute. Moreover we continued to cooperate with the University's International Studies Institute and Department of Political Science, in both cases mutually proliferating announcements of each entity's events. In addition, WACABQ hosted a delegation from the UNM World Affairs Delegation, the university-level Model UN team.

## ***BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IN ALBUQUERQUE & SANTA FE***

Our efforts continue to grow WACABQ's relationships with other organizations in the Albuquerque area focused on international affairs. The reciprocal memberships with Global Ties Albuquerque, Global Santa Fe and the Santa Fe World Affairs Forum remain strong as does our co-sponsorship with the World Affairs Council of Connecticut's book review program moderated by Jim Falk of Global Santa Fe. Highlights of the latter were Jim's January in-person interview with CNN'S Jeffrey Toobin discussing the politics of presidential pardons and a virtual discussion with Edward Alden, a Foreign Policy magazine columnist, on the future of international borders. Keep in mind that your WACABQ membership entitles you to participate in events put on by these three partner organizations at their member prices. We will continue to forward to you announcements of their opportunities for which WACABQ members are eligible at reduced rates. (See three upcoming opportunities at the end of this newsletter.)

Our interactions with UNM's International Studies Institute and the Albuquerque International Association now include reciprocal distribution of each other's program announcements to the respective memberships. More broadly, the Council has taken a leading role in the effort to synchronize opportunities available to the community from all internationally focused organizations in the area. Referred to as the ABQ Engage Coalition, Mike Daly from our board took the lead in creating a community-wide website that integrates information on all internationally-related events in the Albuquerque area and then seamlessly integrates the information into the Albuquerque City Government's events calendar website ABQToDo. The Council is now working with Global Ties Albuquerque, the Albuquerque city government, the Albuquerque Sister Cities program and the University of New Mexico for an October community-wide exploration of local international engagement efforts. More to follow.

### ***WACABQ IN THE MEDIA***

Several members of the Council recently published thought pieces in local newspapers. Citations are listed here:

- Emile Nakhleh, OPINION: "Another inauguration in Lebanon offers hope for the Middle East". Albuquerque Journal, 29 January 2025.
- Gregory Vuksich, OPINION: "Try Another Approach to Primary Voting". Santa Fe New Mexican, 7 March 2025.
- Gregory Vuksich, OPINION: "Representatives Should Be More Involved in Nuclear Modernization". Albuquerque Journal, 13 April 2025.

## ***SOME REMINDERS***

As the Council goes forward, we encourage everyone to spread the word about WACABQ membership among others – friends, colleagues and acquaintances -- who might enjoy and benefit from what it has to offer.

The Board of Directors now aspires to continue to grow the breadth of what we offer to the Albuquerque community. Currently, our financial footing is sufficient to manage our ongoing endeavors but, in order to achieve these broader aims, strengthening our finances is a must. Several board members have submitted applications for – and in at least one case received – financial support from the local community. The board asks for your help with any insights or introductions that you may have as WACABQ creates a body of sponsors – commercial enterprises, financial institutions, professional organizations, fraternal societies and others -- that have interests in global affairs.

Please remember when you meet with friends and colleagues that the Council has updated its web page, Facebook and Instagram sites to assist in growing awareness of the Council among the Albuquerque community. Our Facebook site, “World Affairs Council of ABQ” is: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61551637121498&mibextid=LQQJ4d>. The link to our Instagram site is: [https://instagram.com/worldaffairsabq?igshid=OGQ5ZDc2ODk2ZA%3D%3D&utm\\_source=qr](https://instagram.com/worldaffairsabq?igshid=OGQ5ZDc2ODk2ZA%3D%3D&utm_source=qr)

## ***LAST THOUGHTS***

We want to thank Aaron Velasquez for his time and efforts as a member of the Council’s board of directors over the past several years and particularly his contributions as a member of the Program Committee. Aaron brought us several exemplary speakers and on other occasions moderated our evening dinner lectures.

## ***UPCOMING PARTNER EVENTS***

**From Albuquerque International Association**

Dale Dekker, architect and founding principal with the Dekker firm, will present the next lecture in the AIA's continuing series with his talk "Shoring up New Mexico's Economy: The Times They are a Changin..." The talk is planned for Thursday, April 24 at 4 pm in Botts Hall in the Albuquerque Special Collections Library, Central and Edith.

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## **From Global Santa Fe**

**Thursday, April 17, 2025; 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm**  
**Center for Contemporary Arts, 1050 Old Pecos Trail**  
**Member \$25 (Global Santa Fe members may BRING A FRIEND to this event for FREE.)**  
**Non-Member \$40**

As the world watches the evolving dynamics between the U.S. and China, what will Trump's second administration mean for this critical relationship? Join us for an insightful discussion with David J. Firestein who returns to give us an update on the issues, challenges and prospects facing U.S. - China relations. Mr. Firestein is a leading expert on U.S.-China relations and the inaugural president and CEO of the George H. W. Bush Foundation for U.S.-China Relations. An esteemed diplomat, scholar, and policy leader, Mr. Firestein brings decades of experience, including his tenure as a senior U.S. diplomat and his leadership at institutions like the East West Institute.

Drawing on his expertise in diplomacy, trade, and geopolitical strategy and with tensions over Taiwan, economic competition, and global security in the balance, this conversation is more relevant than ever. Don't miss this opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of what the future may hold and come together as a community that cares.

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## **From Global Ties Albuquerque**

We have an exciting group that will be staying with us June 6-14, 2025. The group is part of the [Congressional Office for International Leadership \(COIL\) – Open](#)

World program and will be 5 highly placed officials from Ukraine here to exchange best practices on Judicial/Legal Delegation on Processing Cultural Heritage Crime. This program is unique in that they are being “hosted” by New Mexico District Court Judge Jim Browning.

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