



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY
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Middle East Studies at Marine Corps University Fall 2015 MENA Democratization Seminar

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The U.S. began to emphasize democracy promotion in the Middle East in the 1990s. However, it was not until after the attacks of 9/11 that the U.S. drastically increased its democracy aid to the region. In a speech before the UN General Assembly in 2004, then U.S. President George W. Bush stated that, “for too long, many nations, including my own, tolerated, even excused, oppression in the Middle East in the name of stability. . . . We must help the reformers of the Middle East as they work for freedom and strive to build a community of peaceful, democratic nations.” By Fiscal Year-2009, the annual U.S. democracy aid was more than the total amount spent in the decade from 1991-2001. Like his predecessor, democracy promotion has been a pillar of President Barack Obama Administration’s national security and foreign policy strategies and a recurrent theme in his foreign policy addresses. In his 2009 Cairo speech, President Obama stated that he was there to “seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world” and to voice his “commitment to governments that reflect the will of the people.”

The popular uprisings, commonly referred to as the Arab Spring, brought the hope of a new age of democracy throughout the region. However, that new age has not materialized. The U.S. enthusiasm for democracy promotion has dwindled. The current crisis in Syria and Iraq and the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant are further complicating the meaning and future of democracy in the region. U.S. policy and security calculations are evolving to meet the challenges of these emerging security threats.

As the Marines are continually asked to serve in the Middle East, this seminar is designed to foster a deeper understanding of the concept of democracy in this complex security environment and encourage dialogue among students, faculty, and outside experts. We at Middle East Studies believe it is incumbent upon those of us with the knowledge, experience, and expertise to help shape this dialogue and inform the minds of our future civilian and military leaders.

This seminar brings together policymakers, military and civilian subject matter experts, and scholars with different areas of expertise in the MENA region to discuss issues, including, but not limited to, United States’ expectations from the expansion of democratic norms and institutions in the MENA, differences in perceptions and policies about democracy and democracy promotion among U.S. policymakers and regional actors, and the evolution of the concept of democracy in the region, especially since 9/11, the U.S. military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, events associated with the Arab uprisings, and the current upsurge of terrorist activities in the region.

The seminar is co-hosted by Middle East Studies at Marine Corps University and the Marine Corps University Foundation (MCUF) and serves as part of the Marine Corps War College’s “Diplomacy and Statecraft” instructional block. The seminar consists of two panels (one morning and one afternoon) of three guest speakers each panel and a keynote speaker in the morning and afternoon. The event is open to the public. All Marine Corps University students, faculty, and staff as well as the broader Department of Defense and the professional military education communities are encouraged to attend.