



Centre for Middle East Studies

Promoting Peace Through Dialogue



STUDY TOUR ON POLITICS OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

IN THIS ISSUE

*An Educational Visit to 3
Embassies of the MENA region*

- From the desk of His Excellency (Dr.) Bassam Seifeddim Alkhatib, Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to India
- From the desk of His Excellency (Dr.) Rabie Narsh, Ambassador of Lebanon to India

Special Report

Centre for Middle East Studies (CMES), Jindal School of International Affairs (JSIA)

of

O.P. Jindal Global University

In collaboration with the

Embassies of Algeria, Lebanon and Syria in India

Cordially invites you to participate in the

Study Tour of the

EMBASSIES OF ALGERIA, LEBANON AND SYRIA IN INDIA

SPEAKERS



**HIS EXCELLENCY (DR.) BASSAM
SEIFEDDIM ALKHATIB**

Ambassador of the
Syrian Arab Republic to India



**HIS EXCELLENCY (DR.)
RABIE NARSH**

Ambassador of
Lebanon to India



**HIS EXCELLENCY MR.
ABDERRAHMANE BENGUERRAH**

Ambassador of People's
Democratic Republic of Algeria to India



Faculty Coordinator

AMBASSADOR (DR.) ABDUL FATTAH AMMOURAH

Professor and Vice Dean, JSIA, Executive Director of Centre for Middle East Studies and
Chairman of the School Doctoral Committee, JSIA
afammourah@jgu.edu.in

PROGRAMME

11:00 AM – 12:00 AM

Interactive session on **'Syria and India in a Rapidly Changing World'**
His Excellency (Dr.) Bassam Seifeddin Alkhatib, Ambassador of Syria to India

12:15 PM – 01:15 PM

Interactive session on **'Politics in Plural Societies of the Middle East: Lebanon a Case Study'**
His Excellency (Dr.) Rabie Narsh, Ambassador of Lebanon to India

01:30 PM – 02:30 PM

Interactive session on **'Algeria: Past, Present and Challenges'**
His Excellency Mr. Abderrahmane Benguerrah, Ambassador of People's Democratic
Republic of Algeria to India

 **THURSDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2022**  **11:00 AM TO 02:30 PM IST**

Student Coordinators:

Ms. Yukti Panwar, M.A. (Diplomacy, Law and Business) 2021 | Ms. Mokshda Jerath, B.A. (Hons.) Global Affairs 2020
Mr. Arshdeep Singh Dutt, B.A. (Hons.) Global Affairs 2020



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About CMES

The Centre for Middle East Studies works with students who are interested in studying the geo-strategic, geo-economic, cultural, and socio-economic importance of the Middle East for the world at large. As a centre, we believe that any study, seminar, workshop, debate, or discussion must lead to adding value to the ongoing search for peace in the Middle East. Our belief is based on the fact that at the end of the day, it is the lives of the people involved in a conflict that matters and their betterment is what we target. Finally, this is a student-led and student-driven initiative to foster a knowledge-based and intellectually challenging centre.



The Centre for Middle East Studies

Promoting Peace Through Dialogue



Our Objectives

Fostering interdisciplinary research on Middle East Studies in collaboration with regional academics, experts and practitioners.

Supporting balanced Middle Eastern research studies from various perspectives to widen access to first-hand knowledge of the Middle East

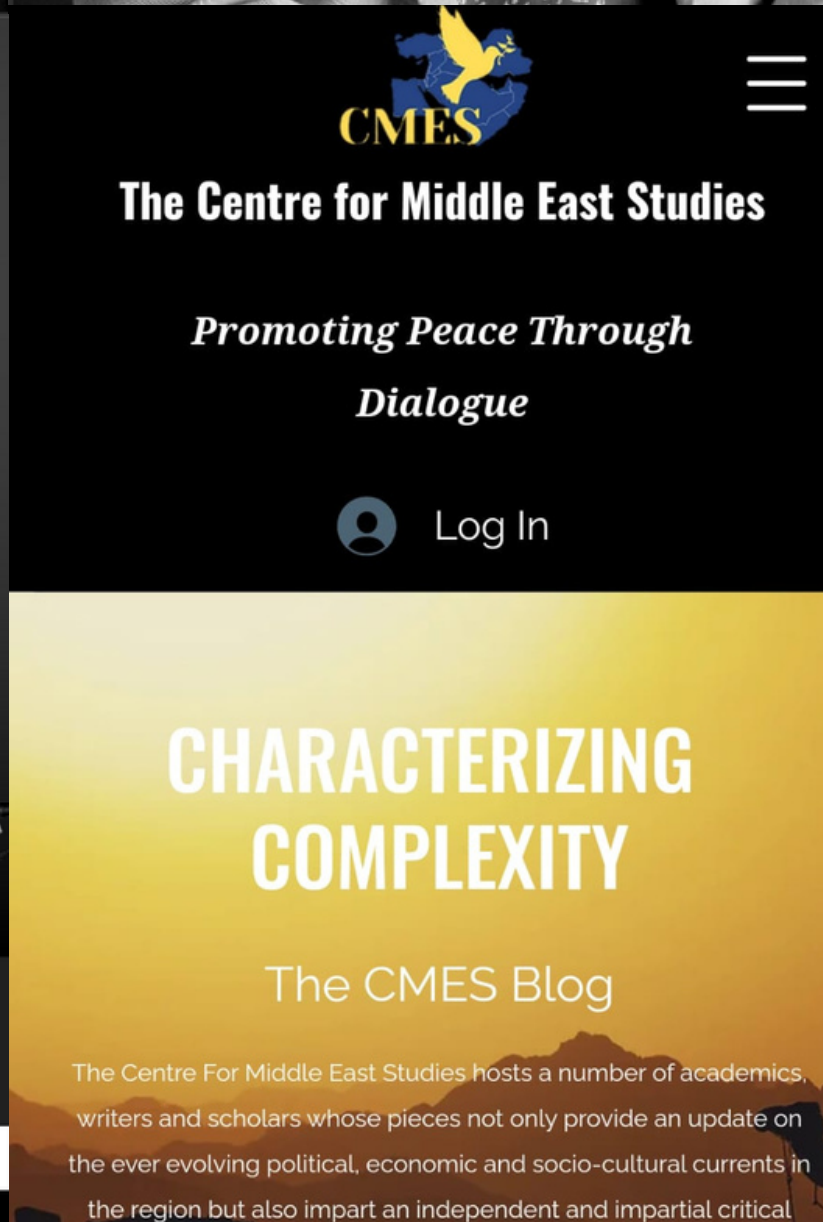
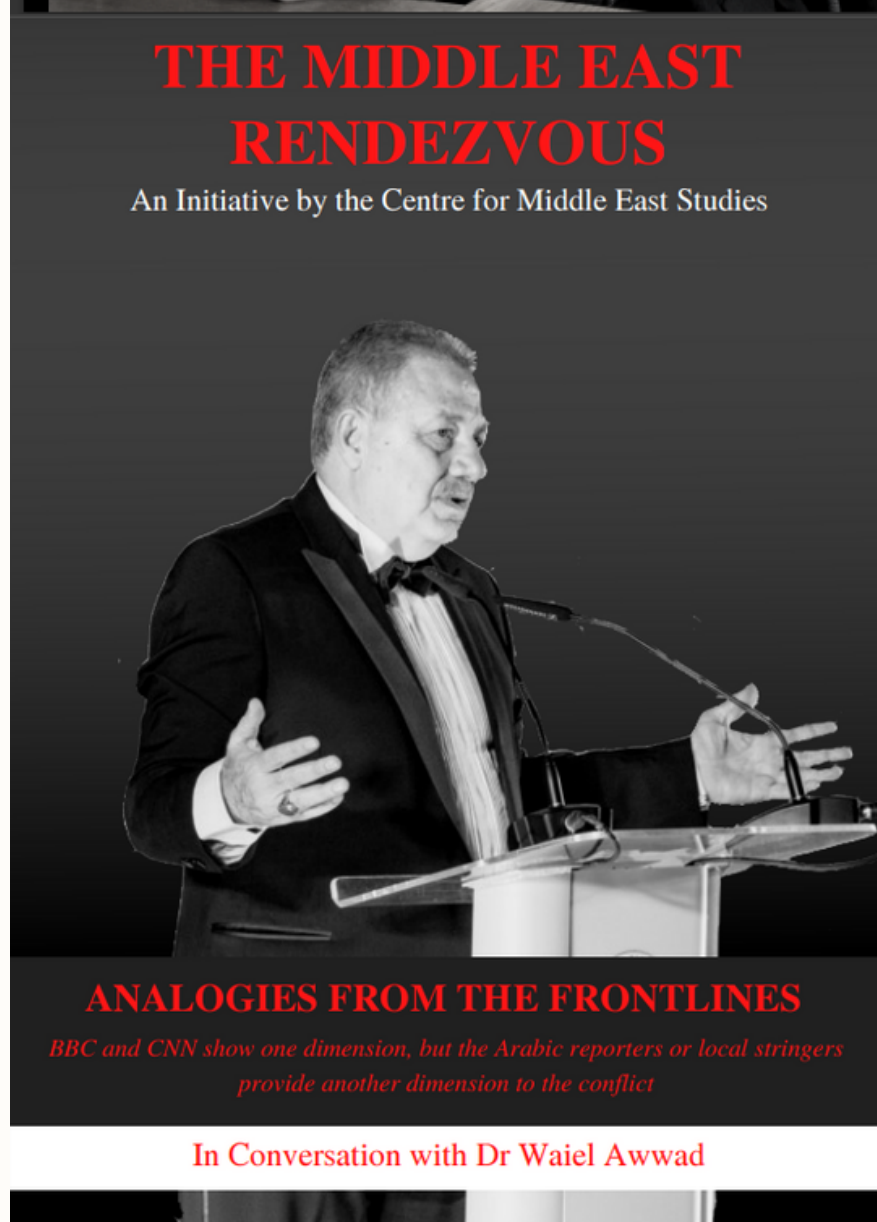
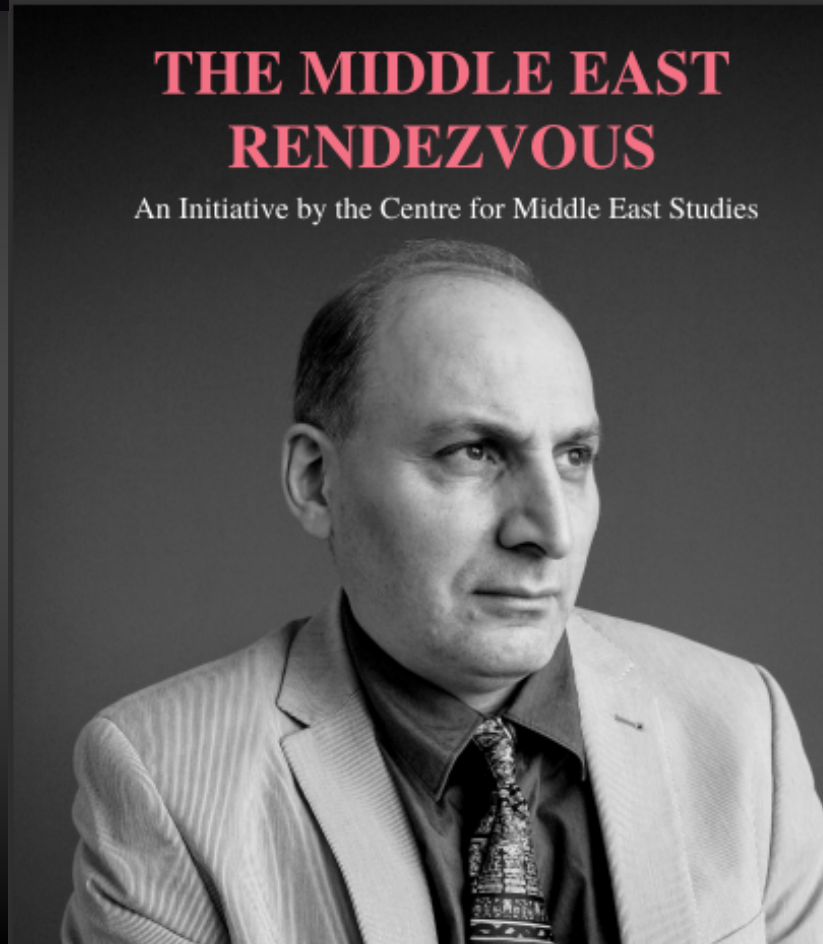
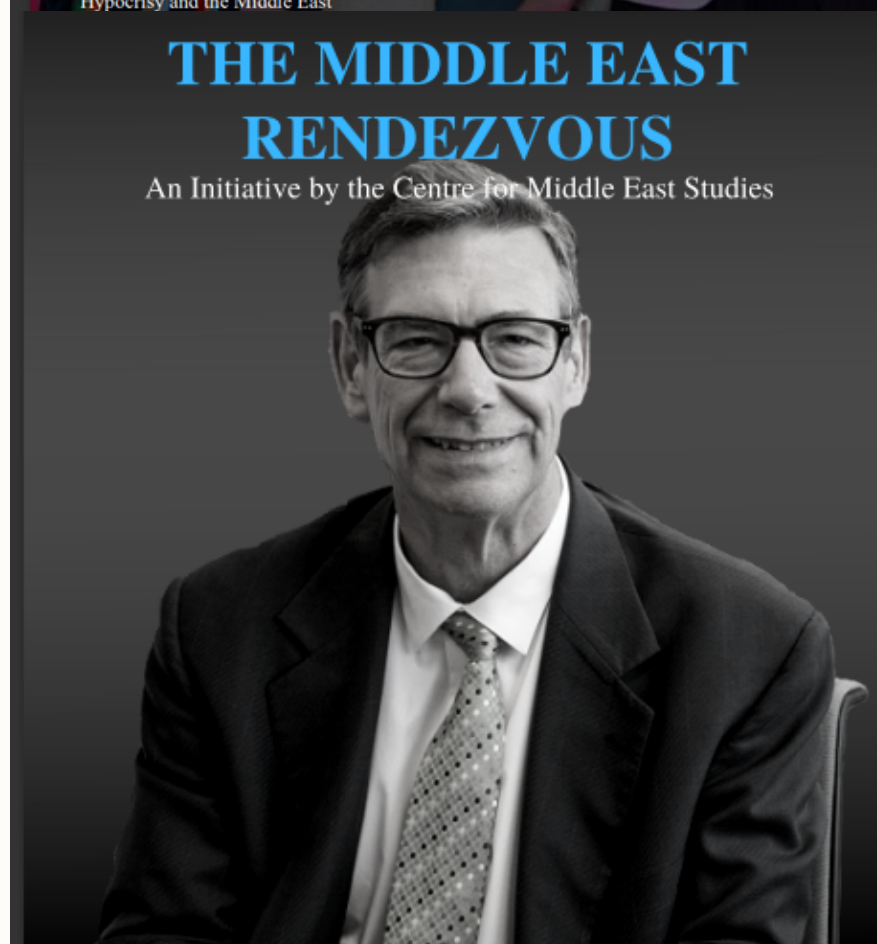
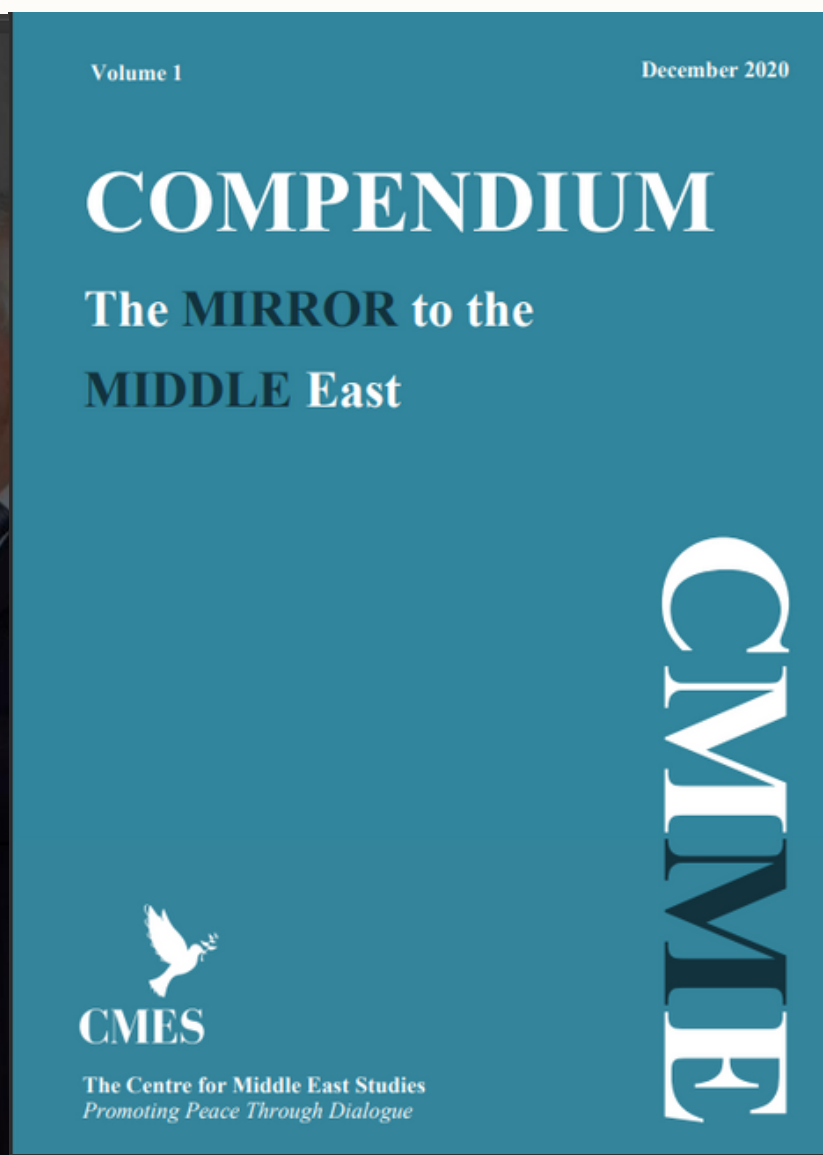
Contributing to broad dissemination of research results and information regarding the Middle East.

Developing materials and resources for educators and the wider public readership.

Conducting research and analysis on bilateral relations between India and the Middle East to explore synergies and address mutual long-standing economic, political and social challenges

Expanding the network of institutional partnerships with universities in the Middle East by opening opportunities for student and faculty exchange.

Projects by CMES



Siasat al-Insaf: The Middle Eastern Review

‘Siasat-al-Insaf’, the ‘Politics of Justice’ is the pioneering journal issue for the Centre of Middle East Studies. Justice imbibes the sole essence of permanence in all the dislodging socio-political and economic contentions that thunder across the region. Justice and politics in the Middle East seem worlds apart however, through impartial opinions and distilled perspectives this journal aims to bridge that very gap between the two. The Journal boasts of numerous publications by faculty, students and scholars from all over the world. The journal has been circulated amongst the foreign embassies accredited to India.

Compendium: The Mirror to the Middle East

The goal of the Centre for Middle East Studies is to provide analysis that is both nuanced in its scope and neutral in its analysis. In this, the centre has launched an initiative aimed at untangling the complexity of the Middle East and essentially mirroring the realities of the region as they now stand. Contribution to Compendium is made by our Researchers and Research Associates. The past issues have covered themes of ‘Gender Reform’, ‘Arab Spring’ and ‘On the Issues of Land.’, ‘Energy politics’ and ‘war and peace in the ME’

The Middle East Rendezvous

The Middle East Rendezvous aims to engage with great minds on topics of contemporary relevance to the Middle East Politics. It hopes to bring out arguments and conversations that can constructively build towards the Centre for Middle East Studies’ goal, i.e., Promoting Peace Through Dialogue.

The CMES blog

The Centre for Middle East Studies hosts a number of academics, writers and scholars whose pieces not only provide an update on the ever evolving political, economic and socio-cultural currents in the region but also impart an independent and impartial critical lens to "rationalise the irrational in the Middle East."

Word from the Editorial Team

Realising changing dynamics in a transforming world order

The 21st century has been one characterised by a shift in the world order established by the United States of America post-collapse of the Soviet Union. There has been a rise in nations with revisionist ideologies and the same have embarked upon lofty schemes to further their influence on the global stage.

Central to such ambitions lies the region of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Neighbouring the east Mediterranean Sea, this region has been throughout history key to shaping the global dynamics due to housing a plethora of resources vital for establishing energy security and having a geo-strategic location that facilitates trade between the east and the west.

To better understand the MENA region politics, this day-long educational venture was organised by the Centre for Middle East Studies on the 6th of October 2022, coincidentally, also the 49th anniversary of the much-celebrated October liberation war, which allowed students studying Politics of the Middle East and North Africa under Prof. Abdul Fattah Ammourah to interact with Ambassadors from the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of Lebanon, and the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, as well as their diplomatic mission at their embassies.

We extend our immense thanks to His Excellency Ambassador (Dr.) Bassam Al Khatib, His Excellency Ambassador (Dr.) Rabie Narsh, His Excellency Ambassador (Mr.) Abderrahmane, along with their diplomatic mission and staff for hosting us. We also express our gratitude to Ambassador (Prof.) (Dr.) Ammourah for reaching out to the respective embassies and making this trip possible, and the JSIA and JGU administration for their swift action in arranging all the logistics. Lastly, we want to thank all the students who were with us during the trip, who made the interactions enjoyable for all of us.

We are happy to share that following the success of this visit, 3 of our students have received the opportunity to intern at the Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic and 7 of our students were offered a chance to intern at the Embassy of Lebanon over the winter.

This special report details the trip through the words of the Ambassadors and students. It sheds light on the subject of the interactions as well as their thoughts on it.

Happy reading!

Embassy of The Syrian Arab Republic

Message from the Ambassador of Syrian Arab Republic



A MESSAGE OF PEACE AND APPRECIATION

On the basis of the invaluable initiative of the renowned O.P. Jindal Global University, I had the honor to receive a group of ingenious students from the school of International Affairs of the University, headed by Ambassador (Prof.) (Dr.) Abdul Fattah Ammourah, Vice Dean at Jindal School of International Affairs, Director of CMES and Chairperson of the School Doctoral Committee. During this academic brotherly gathering and after exchanging words of courtesy and family interests, I had a very fruitful panel of discussion on a topic theme titled "**Syria and India in a Rapidly Changing World**" addressed many aspects of the historical and brotherly relations of India and Syria, followed by a Q&A interactive session for about an hour.

It is, clearly, a very positive message from the University and the Embassy to all Universities and Educational Institutions in India. We, inter alia, agreed upon mutual consent to organise more fora and conferences. We aspire to conduct various academic and cultural activities in the near future. We also agreed to discuss signing an MOU between O.P. Jindal Global University

and the various Syrian educational institutions towards exchanging our knowledge, academic courses and curricula, language courses, lecturers at our respective institutions, students and organisation of training programmes.

It is well known that the last two centuries were dominated by colonialism and western powers, but let us bear in mind that Late President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam mentioned that the 21st Century would be Indian. In this regard, I strongly believe that the Indian "FOUR Ds": Democracy, Dynamism, Diversity and Development, the unique unity representing and connecting friendly, peace-loving peoples around the world who are close to India, being the heart of many great civilizations and building a strong human infrastructure, will entitle India to climb to the top of the ladder and posit itself. Syria, my country, has always chosen to consider India to be in the deepest strata of her soul.

---Dr. Bassam Al khatib

**Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to India,
New Delhi**

Embassy of The Lebanon

*Message From the desk of
His Excellency (Dr.)
Rabie Narsh*

In continuation of the five-year academic collaboration between the Embassy of Lebanon and the prestigious O.P Jindal

Global University, The Embassy of Lebanon in India hosted a study tour for students from the Jindal School of International Affairs (JSIA) of the university.

The study tour, which took place on October 6th, 2022, comprising more than 20 students—was part of an initiative by the Centre for Middle East Studies—headed by professor (Prof.) (Dr.) Abdul Fattah Ammourah, the Vice Dean of JSIA, and Executive Director of the Centre for Middle East Studies.

The Ambassador of Lebanon (Dr.) Rabie Narsh welcomed professor Ammourah and the students and exchanged with them political and academic views. The Ambassador stated that the visit was very special and dear to his heart. Dr. Narsh takes pride in the fact that he is the first JSIA graduate of the doctoral degree, the thesis of which was supervised by professor Ammourah. “My relationship with Jindal Global University is so profound; it goes beyond a professional relationship between an embassy and a university,” he added.

Ambassador Narsh shared with the visiting students, thoughts about politics in plural societies of the Middle East and consociational democracies.



He gave Lebanon as an example of a complex society that chose to run its country through a political system that guarantees each community a share in power—the essence of consociationalist democracy.

Around this theme, moderated by Dr. Ammourah, the Q&A session between the students and Ambassador Narsh was exciting, informative, and insightful.

During the tour, which was academic, sociable, and knowledgeable, a number of students requested to enroll in an internship at the Embassy of Lebanon. The Ambassador gave his approval and warmly welcomed to host seven interns during the winter break of this semester. The Embassy of Lebanon has hosted more than 20 JSIA students for their internships under the direct supervision of Ambassador Narsh and the political section, and with coordination and follow-up with Dr. Ammourah.

Dr. Narsh thanked Dr. Ammourah and the students and expressed the Embassy of Lebanon’s keenness on further cooperation with Jindal Global University, as a glorious reflection of people-to-people relations between the two friendly nations of India and Lebanon.

From the Student's Lens

--Mahek Marwaha, 2021-23

A Thank You Note

"As a student of JSIA and enrolled in the course of politics of the MENA, throughout this report, I would like to acknowledge at the beginning that this study tour and the noteworthy experience that the students had would not have been possible without Prof. (Dr.) Abdul Fattah Ammourah, and the Jindal School of International Affairs (JSIA). The whole process was made seamless by the three student coordinators: Mokshda Jerath, Arshdeep Singh Dutt, and Yukti Panwar who volunteered and took the onus to facilitate this study tour."

At the Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic



The opening remarks were made by His Excellency (Dr.) Bassam Seifeddim Alkhatib, Ambassador of Syria to India, and the floor was given to Prof. (Dr.) Abdul Fattah Ammourah for his remarks where he briefed the students about secular Pan Arabic National Movement's beginnings and the reasons for its opposition, and the disapproval it received from the previous western colonial powers.

His Excellency Dr. Bassam spoke about the historical ties which have forged the Syrian-Indian ties since the ancient times of the Assyrian Empire. The geographical locations of both Syria and India were highlighted, and their benefits and perils were assessed through the lens of Mackinder's Theory.

India's democratic efforts in handling all its internal and external affairs were mentioned while emphasising India and Syria's shared brotherly bond which has resulted in several bilateral projects being undertaken including the establishment of a biotechnology centre in Syria and the setting up of a joint business council between the two states.

We understood that India's support for Palestine is important for Syria as they highly regard the Palestinian cause, and fight for their land, similarly, Syria support's the Kashmir issue in favour of India. The talk concluded with an enriching Q&A session with His Excellency and a host of general conversations with other members at the Embassy.

At the Embassy

of Lebanon



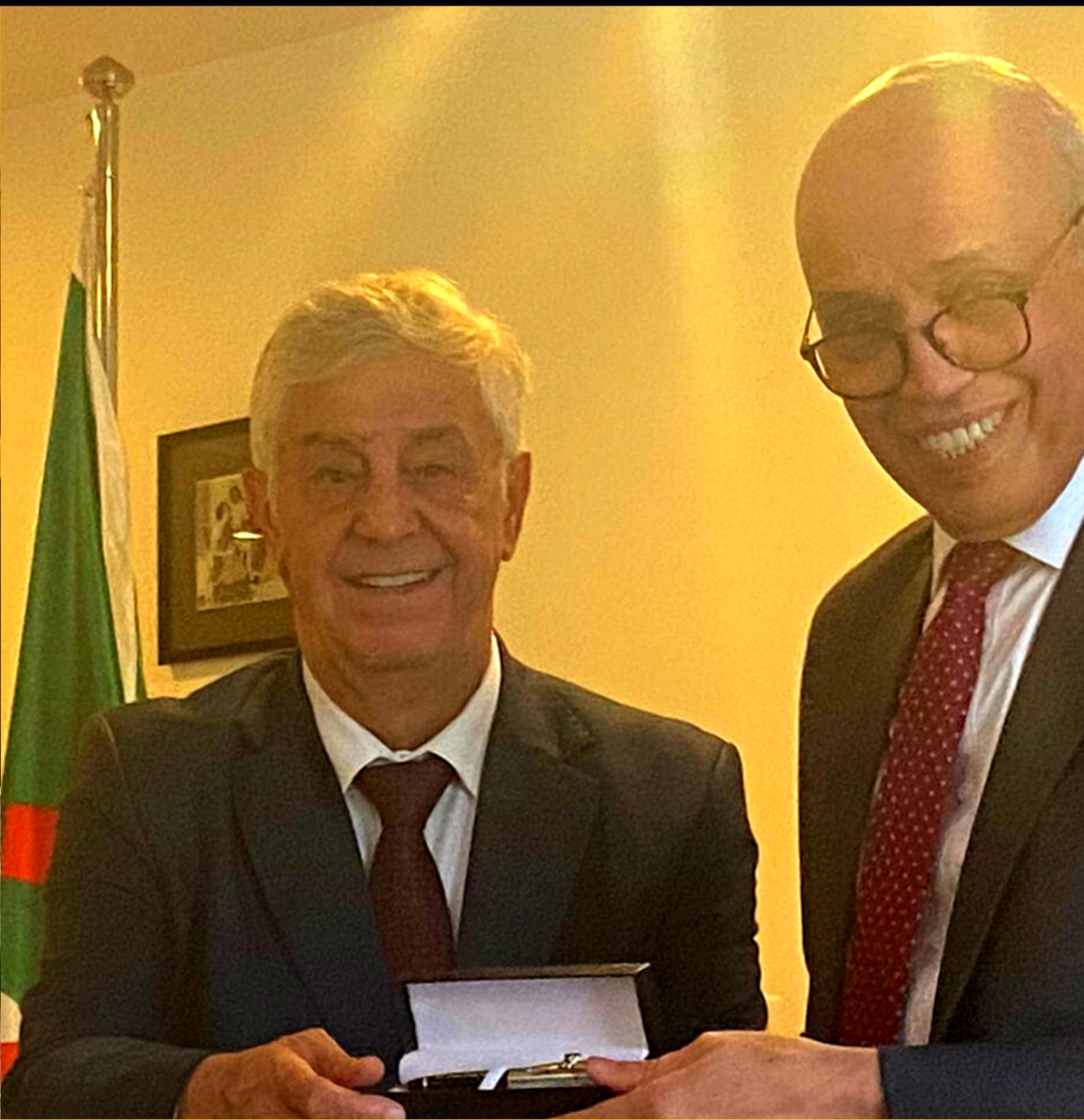
"Students enjoyed a conversation with His Excellency over a cup of tea and savoured authentic Lebanese desserts like the Maamoul"

His Excellency (Dr.) Rabie Narsh, Ambassador of Lebanon to India in his talk spoke about India and Lebanon's diplomatic relations and the politics in plural societies of the Middle East, especially Lebanon. His Excellency highlighted that despite all the religion-based conflicts in the region, the political institution of Lebanon is still intact.

The political institution of Lebanon has assigned power positions to the different sects of Islam, resulting in a unique system that works to represent the entire state population and its diversity; thriving on peculiarity.

The application of a similar parliamentary democratic republic in other ethnically conflicted countries of the Middle East presents a possible solution. The political economy and its stability were also discussed during this visit.

The session included Lebanon's relations with its neighbouring countries in the Middle East particularly Syria, Israel, Jordan, Turkey, and Palestine. The talk was concluded with questions and general discussions on the same.



His Excellency Mr. Abderrahmane Benguerah, Ambassador of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to India, and his talk can be subsumed by Algeria - past, present, and challenges, the role of France in Algeria, Algeria being at the centre of the African Liberation Movement and the Libyan crisis after Gadhafi's assassination, which has stirred up instability all across the Sahel Region.

This instability has become a cause for the growth of violent extremism, radicalisation, terror bases, and camps which is putting the whole social fabric of Africa in danger.

His Excellency extensively discussed Algeria's relations with Libya, Mali Morocco, and Tunisia. He also marked the Palestinian issue as a cause of concern for the whole of the Middle East's stability.

India's support of Algeria's freedom, starting from the Bandung NAM conference in 1955, and India's Democratic values and attributes to resolving key issues were the rock on which today's India-Algeria foundation has been set up and has become the cause of flourishing.

The talk concluded with questions from the students, primarily based on:

- 1) China's Role in African Nations and its implications in Algeria**
- 2) Algeria's growing importance cause of LNG explorations and**
- 3) The impact of this on India-Algeria relations**



Concluding Note

Collectively, the day was a fruitful experience for the students and we got to learn a fair bit about diplomacy and trade practices from the Ambassadors. All the Embassies were kind enough to provide us with their various refreshments. The experience ended on a successful note with all the Embassies showcasing their willingness and welcoming the students to partake in future internship opportunities.

Thoughts of our students

“The trip was definitely one of its kind, and it is not something a normal student like me would expect to happen ever. As someone who has recently started to learn about the MENA region, this trip ended up having exponential additions to my learning journey. I am looking forward to more interactions like these and learn more as I progress forward. I’m grateful to Prof. Ammourah and JSIA for giving us this exposure.”

-Yukti Panwar

“The visit to the Embassies of Syria, Lebanon and Algeria was an enriching experience. Getting to interact with the Ambassadors of the three countries provided an opportunity to leverage theoretical knowledge taught in class and gain practical understanding. This was done through the lectures delivered by the Ambassadors wherein they spoke of their experiences and the way diplomacy works on the ground and how it has evolved over the years. The impact of culture and society in forming relations was one aspect that intrigued me during the interactions. I am grateful to Prof. Ammourah and the student representatives who helped organize this special opportunity.”

-Presksha Jalan



Thoughts of our students



“As students we must listen and learn perspectives from all sides. The study tour of 3 Embassies in New Delhi and hearing the Ambassadors speak helped me in forming more informed opinion of events concerning the MENA region. I can also better understand the theory & texts taught in class by Prof. Ammourah.

It's not often that IR students studying a particular region get to interact directly with Ambassadors from that region. So grateful to Professor for arranging the visit.”

-Rajarshi Nath

“After studying the politics of the Middle Eastern region in class with Dr Ammourah, the students were given the opportunity to substantiate the acquired knowledge through a visit of 3 embassies; Syria, Lebanon and Algeria. This experience has allowed me to learn about factors that are deemed most important politically by the ambassadors, as well as get an insight into the relation between the aforementioned countries and India. Especially the fact that we were able to ask the ambassadors questions regarding anything we wished to know, I found very interesting. And of course, the local snacks provided by the embassies enhanced the entire experience”

-Smit M. Maartje

Thoughts of our students

“Visiting three embassies in a day and getting a chance to discuss and eat with the respective Ambassadors sounds too good to be true. However, this can manifest if one happens to be a student of O.P Jindal Global University, and of Dr. Ammourah, in particular.

Meeting His Excellency Dr. Alkhatib, Syrian Ambassador to India was a learning experience not only about Syria but also of a larger historicity of West Asia. His Excellency Dr. Narsh, Ambassador of Lebanon to India, is an alumnus of O.P. Jindal Global University. Through the Ambassador of Lebanon, I got to know about the pluralistic political system of Lebanon. It made me wonder if this can be a solution to the sectarian politics of West Asian countries. Getting a chance to interact with His Excellency Mr. Benguerrah, Ambassador of Algeria to India was a great experience. His views on the West Asian and North African politics were enlightening.

Meeting and listening to all the Ambassadors would have been a fine experience in itself. However, the best part about the trip was that it was not a one way communication. It was more like an interactive session where we were bringing our views on the table as equals.

I thank my university and specially Professor Ammourah for this opportunity.”

-Harshit Sharma



Our Team

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EDITORIAL TEAM

Mokshda Jerath

Arshdeep Singh Dutt

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Donna Selvaraj



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