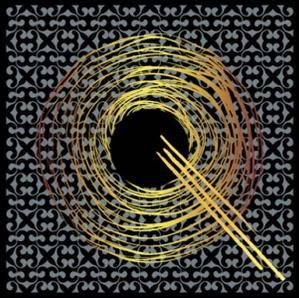


QUASAR INSIGHTS

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INTERNATIONAL
INSTITUTE
معهد كوارزار الدولي
ACCELERATING PARTNERSHIPS
FOR A NEW FUTURE



COVID-19 PANDEMIC ONE YEAR LATER: HOW SAUDI STUDENTS AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY REACHED OUT TO BRIDGE DIVIDES

BY DR KASUN MILLAWITHANACHCHI



When AU went online in March due to COVID-19, over 3800 students moved out of residence halls. But students who had no other options were able to apply for emergency housing, and of those accepted, 67 remained on east campus. Many were international students, which struck a personal chord for Saudi Student Association members. The SSA decided they needed to reach out and connect to bridge isolation, fear, and divides.

So, they created the “We Are in This Together” initiative with Housing and Residence Life to support these students. When they packed care packages, they included samples of mamul, a traditional Saudi Arabian date-and-nut cookie. Sharing Saudi culture with others at AU was what rising Kogod School of Business senior Abdullah Alshaibani hoped to achieve in founding the club, and he’s been encouraged by the strong support this initiative received. To view a video of the SSA project, click on the thumbnail video image above or click [here](#).

SCIENCE DIPLOMACY KEY TO U.S.-SAUDI RELATIONS

Recent changes in geopolitics are once again impacting the historic relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. President Joe Biden has brought new priorities, policies and perspectives to U.S. relationships in the MENA region. One very notable new priority is "listening to science" and re-establishing a focus on scientific research and approaches to problems.

By using Science Diplomacy, both the U.S. and Saudi Arabia now have another historic opportunity to focus on building productive collaborations to advance peace, prosperity, sustainability, and strategic interests. Science Diplomacy is the use of scientific collaborations among nations to address common problems and to build constructive international partnerships.

By focusing on Science Diplomacy, the Kingdom can build its soft power, strategic partnerships, ability to compete economically in the 21st Century, and help make the 2030 Vision a realistic possibility. Science Diplomacy can support the Kingdom's goals in Space, Sustainability, and Health.



Biden with Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal in Oct 2011



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

DR. ZEYAD ALSHAMMARI

Quasar International Institute is a nonpartisan educational nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting peace, prosperity, and a sustainable future for us all. Our goal is to fight hate, build peace, and foster people-to-people exchanges and relationships.

"PRESIDENT BIDEN FACES BIG CHALLENGES BUT EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY CREATES NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE KINGDOM & THE MENA REGION."

I invite you to join me in achieving these goals and fulfilling Quasar's mission. We welcome diverse views and we hope to hear from you.

SCIENCE DIPLOMACY SHOULD BE TOP PRIORITY IN BIDEN FOREIGN POLICY

As President Biden's address on February 4, 2021 makes clear, "science is back." For the first time in history, the Director of the Office of Science and Technology--the President's senior advisor on science--has been made a Cabinet position.

This move makes it clear the priority that Biden will put on all things scientific and technological. Biden announced the appointment of Dr. Eric Lander, an acclaimed mathematician and biologist on February 3, 2021. Dr. Lander was most recently the director of the Broad Institute at Harvard and MIT.

"Science will always be at the forefront of my administration – and these world-renowned scientists will ensure everything we do is grounded in science, facts, and the truth," said Biden. Biden has outlined as top priorities using science to address climate change, provide advanced warning of future pandemics, and promote science and technology education.

However, as a [recent article in The Hill](#) makes clear, integrating Science Diplomacy into U.S. State Department efforts will be a challenge, especially since science was so de-emphasized in the Trump administration.



Eric Lander, Frances Arnold, Maria Zuber, and Alondra Nelson

**"...WE NEED COUNTRIES TO COOPERATE, NOW MORE THAN EVER. NOT A SINGLE GLOBAL CHALLENGE THAT AFFECTS YOUR LIVES CAN BE MET BY ANY ONE NATION ACTING ALONE - NOT EVEN ONE AS POWERFUL AS THE UNITED STATES. AND THERE IS NO WALL HIGH ENOUGH OR STRONG ENOUGH TO HOLD BACK THE CHANGES TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD."
--U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE ANTHONY BLINKEN**

SAUDI STUDENT SAVES UK MAN FROM DROWNING

A Saudi student at the University of Central Lancashire, Turki Al-Shammari, heroically jumped into the River Ribble in Preston, England to save Dean Lowe, after he had entered the water to try to rescue his family's dog. A

Al-Shammari had been out feeding birds in a park when he heard shouting. "I looked down into the river and found man fighting for his life trying not to drown. I jumped immediately and swam to him," he told Arab News for their story February 9, 2021.

The two struggled for 15 minutes to get out of the river. "I went to the strong waters of the river and took the hand of the man. He pushed against a wall near the river and we went together out of the river, after which the police and ambulance arrived. The man cried and hugged me, and thanked me for saving his life," Al-Shammari said.

Lowe's partner Jessica Williams took to Facebook to express her gratitude. "Turki ... is a hero and a beautiful man. He saved Dean Lowe's life, he saved Ella's father, my partner," Williams said. "What an inspiration, I thank you so much Turki, you're an amazing person and we have a friend for life."



Jessica Williams, Dean Lowe, and Turki Al-Shammari

SAUDI DOCTOR WAS PANDEMIC HERO IN ITALY

Last March 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic raged through Italy, among all the heroic healthcare workers on the front-line against COVID-19, there was one a 27-year old Saudi doctor who could have gone home, but instead chose to stay and fight for the Italians who had given him so much opportunity.

Dr. Nasser Alabdulaaly was on the staff of the ASST Hospital of Lodi, in Lombardy, Italy's hardest-hit region. Alabdulaaly, who speaks fluent Italian, described why he stayed in Italy.

"I arrived in Italy in 2011 to study medicine at the University of Pavia, in Lombardy, thanks to a scholarship from the Saudi government. I obtained my medical degree and professional qualification in 2019. I was about to undertake a post-graduate training at the beginning of this year, when the coronavirus broke out in Italy, right in the area where I was living," says Alabdulaaly.

"When the Saudi authorities offered me the opportunity to return to Saudi Arabia, I chose to stay in Italy. My degree doesn't qualify me to work yet in the Kingdom; therefore, I could not have offered any contribution to my country."



"TEN DAYS AGO WE HAD SO MANY DEATHS, SO MANY CASES, AT THAT TIME I COULDN'T EVEN SLEEP LIKE 30 MINUTES, IT WAS VERY HARD FOR ME TO SLEEP EVEN A LITTLE BIT," RECALLS THE DOCTOR.



"In the meantime, the Lombardy region had been declared a red-zone and was in lockdown, the number of positive cases continued to rise, and there was a need for health workers to face the crisis. My hospital internship had been suspended due to the emergency and I was at home for the quarantine. In my silent lockdown city, I was hearing the sirens of the ambulances leaving the hospital relentlessly. It was heartbreaking. I couldn't stay at home knowing that I could make my contribution, even if small, to the local health service."

Italy was desperate for doctors, and expedited procedures for recent graduates to practice. Nasser decided to serve in Lombardy in Lodi, at the center of the pandemic. Colleagues welcomed like family.

"Working exclusively with COVID-19 positive patients, and specially with critical cases, means that you have to deal with death every day. I have to call their families and break the bad news. Believe me, it's the toughest side of my mission. Relatives ask you, sometimes beg you, to allow them to see their beloved ones to give them a last farewell. But you can't allow them. The priority is to protect them from the virus and contain the spread of the contagions."

"Performing my first professional job in a time when the health industry is facing one of its biggest crises, is challenging though. But I am proud and honored to give my help in this emergency, and to be in the front-line as part of a team of extraordinary doctors." *This story was provided by the Saudi Embassy in Italy.*



Dr. Nasser Alabdulaaly obtained his medical degree in 2019 in Italy, and chose to remain to help Italians during the COVID-19 pandemic

PANDEMICS, PEACE & SCIENCE DIPLOMACY

Pandemics. Climate change. Artificial Intelligence. Nuclear war. Star wars.

What is the common theme in these threats to humanity? These challenges of the 21st Century do not respect borders or nations, whether democracies or kingdoms. Any single nation or even any region will be powerless to control these threats and resolve the challenges.

According to the **Peace Research Institute Oslo**, science diplomacy offers a way to hold research-based dialogue that can mobilize diverse knowledge communities, draw attention to new insights, and emphasize a shared commitment to truth. This can then lay the groundwork for constructive dialogue between various states and actors who otherwise find it difficult to interact, reach any shared conclusions, and take collective action.

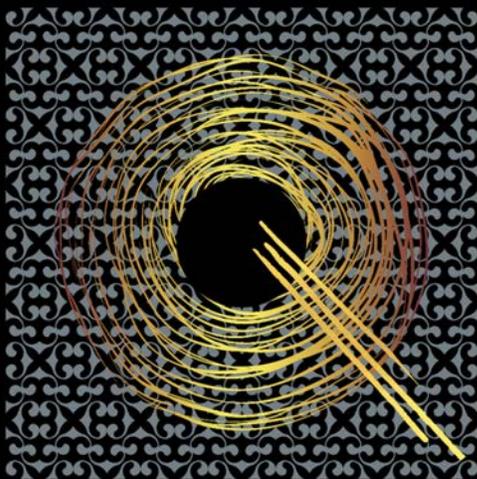
PRIO points to some key examples of how research can open up new channels of communication and cultivated solutions where traditional diplomacy has fallen short. They point to PRIO's experience in Cyprus with two chambers of commerce on opposite sides of the conflict, and how the macroeconomic study they collaborated on that was published in 2014 helped build a foundation for political negotiations the next year.



OUR MISSION

We build international understanding, peace, and cooperation through people-to-people exchanges, experiential learning, leadership development, and travel focused on learning about and engaging in projects in key emerging sectors essential to our collective future.

Quasar is a nonpartisan educational nonprofit dedicated to building understanding and building bridges. Located in Washington, DC, Quasar focuses on developing cooperation, collaborations, and strategic partnerships. Quasar works to enhance U.S. awareness, knowledge, and understanding of Arab countries, the Middle East, and the Islamic world, and we enhance MENA awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the U.S.



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