



TENNESSEE
WORLD
AFFAIRS
COUNCIL

August 2026 Newsletter



Dr. Liane Hentschke
Executive Director

From the Executive Director

Welcome to a new season of learning, dialogue, and global engagement. The Tennessee World Affairs Council opened its Fall 2026 Distinguished Speaker Series with a special event celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. As our nation celebrates this historic milestone, we have an opportunity to reflect not only on America's history, but also on the values and institutions that have shaped our country and its role in the world.

On August 12, TNWAC had the honor of hosting Lieutenant Commander Patrick Ryan, Colonel Kevin Baird, and Brigadier General Eden Murrie, moderated by Dr. Breck Walker. Hosted by Brown Advisory at Richland Country Club, the event brought together close to 100 people for a thoughtful conversation about our nation's history, service, leadership, and civic responsibility.

The spirit of learning and civic responsibility lies at the heart of the Tennessee World Affairs Council. Two hundred fifty years in, the conversation about what America means — and what it owes both its own citizens and the world — is far from finished. TNWAC exists to keep that conversation going, thoughtfully and together. That commitment is reflected throughout this month's newsletter.

We explore the historical origins of the term "Middle East" and the increasing use of "West Asia," reflecting the region's growing strategic and economic connections with Asia. This discussion is particularly timely as we welcome Mohammed Soliman to our Distinguished Speaker Series to discuss West Asia and the geopolitical forces reshaping this critical region.

Our guest columnist and TNWAC Board Member Terrence Burns reflects on the World Cup and the power of sports diplomacy. His article reminds us that global sporting events are much more than competitions: they create opportunities for international cooperation, cultural exchange, and the exercise of "soft power."

We are also honored to feature LtGen Lawrence Nicholson, whose reflections underscore why understanding our rapidly changing world has never been more important. His words speak directly to TNWAC's mission of bringing experts and communities together to encourage informed discussion, different perspectives, and critical thinking.

Finally, this issue invites you to explore international careers, test your knowledge through our Global Affairs Knowledge Quiz, discover travel opportunities, and find new ways to engage with and support TNWAC.

As we begin another exciting season, I invite you to explore our upcoming events at TNWAC.org, bring a friend, and continue to be part of this important conversation. Thank you for supporting TNWAC and our commitment to building a more informed, engaged, and globally connected Tennessee.

Explore International Careers

EVENTS AND SPECIAL PROJECTS ASSISTANT

In this position, you will assist in the planning and execution of the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition's small- and large-scale events in over 30 states across the country.

[Learn more...](#)

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER

In this role, you will work collaboratively and cultivate relationships with refugee and immigrant leaders, refugee resettlement agencies, faith communities, immigrants' rights groups, civic engagement organizations and other partners to increase refugee and immigrant civic participation and build a sustainable organizing infrastructure.

[Learn more...](#)

Did You Know?

Middle East or West Asia?

The term "Middle East" was introduced in 1902 by American naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, whose theory that control of sea lanes determines global power shaped the thinking of leaders from Theodore Roosevelt to Kaiser Wilhelm II.

Roosevelt embraced Mahan's vision by transforming the United States into a global maritime power—expanding the U.S. Navy, building the Panama Canal, and sending the Great White Fleet around the world to demonstrate America's growing reach. At the same time, Kaiser Wilhelm II adopted Mahan's ideas to justify Germany's naval expansion before World War I.

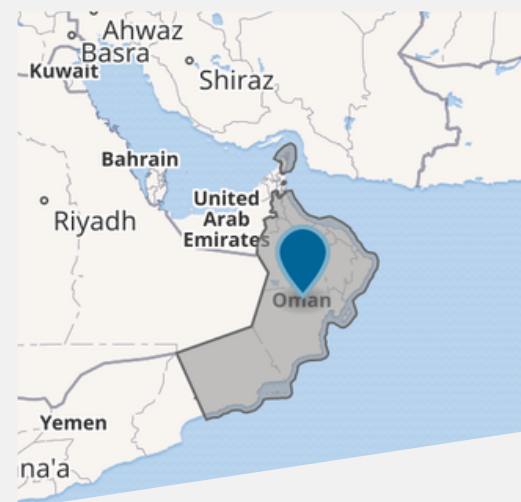
More than a century later, Mahan's theory still resonates. Around 80% of the oil passing through the Strait of Hormuz is destined for Asia; China is Saudi Arabia's largest trading partner, and India is rapidly deepening its ties with the Gulf. As global economic power shifts toward the Indo-Pacific, many scholars increasingly refer to the region as West Asia—reflecting its growing strategic and economic integration with Asia rather than with Europe.

- [More on Mahan's influence on Theodore Roosevelt](#)
- [Mohammed Soliman: West Asia](#)

Why Is Oman Suddenly in the Headlines?

Oman, a small Gulf nation often overshadowed by its larger neighbors, has emerged as a strategically important player in the Iran crisis. Located at the southeastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, Oman sits beside the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important energy chokepoints, through which a significant share of global oil and gas supplies passes.

Beyond its geography, Oman's influence comes from its long-standing policy of diplomatic balance. By maintaining channels with both Iran and Western countries, Oman has positioned itself as an intermediary at a time when regional tensions threaten energy markets and global stability.



Guest Columnist

The views and opinions expressed in our guest column are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Tennessee World Affairs Council.



Terrence Burns

Board Member, Tennessee World Affairs Council

The World Cup Is Over. The Lesson Isn't.

The largest World Cup ever staged — 48 teams, 16 cities, three countries, one month — just concluded. Most people watched it as sport. After thirty years working in global sport, I can tell you it is much more than that. I have advised on 14 Olympic bids and two FIFA World Cup bids. Global sport is the culmination of sports diplomacy. Governments guarantee visas, security, and infrastructure because the return is measured not only by revenue but also by image.

Did you see the social media feeds from foreign visitors? Their outpouring of "American positivity" affirmed our nation and its people, and it wasn't a marketing campaign. It was authentic. Political scientists call this "soft power." Sport is one of its purest instruments. A country that hosts well is a country the world visits, invests in, and negotiates with on better terms. Three things stood out. It showcased cooperation among three host nations. It sparked curiosity among millions of Americans about other countries. And it is not the last of its kind: Los Angeles hosts the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the 2030 World Cup will span six countries, and Salt Lake City returns as Winter Olympic host in 2034.

Which brings me to Tennessee. Our state is wired into the same system. We build export markets, attract international employers, and have transformed a state once known for a narrow set of industries into one that trades with the world.

That sets expectations for what comes next. A workforce that understands the countries it sells to performs better. A graduate who understands a foreign market is more valuable. An official who understands the forces behind a trade decision makes better ones. The opportunity is to align our understanding of the world with the reality in which we already operate.

The good news is that an organization exists in Tennessee to help make it happen. In 1918, at the end of the First World War, a group of Americans decided that our country should not retreat from the world. The "Foreign Policy Association" was born, which gave rise to a national network of World Affairs Councils — roughly 90 today, in cities and states across the country, all nonpartisan.

The Tennessee World Affairs Council is a member of that network. TNWAC built its reputation on a speaker series that brings diplomats, journalists, and scholars to Tennessee audiences to help explain world affairs. We are expanding that effort into a statewide platform for corporate, educational, and government partners, offering insight into the markets and global forces Tennesseans use to connect with the wider world.

The 2026 World Cup is out of the headlines. The world it put on display is not. Tennessee has earned its place in that world, and what we make of it matters. That conversation is open to anyone in Tennessee who wants a seat. Come join us.

LtGen Lawrence Nicholson: Understanding Our Changing World Has Never Been More Important



Retiring in 2019 after 39 years of wearing the cloth of our nation, and serving as the Commander of more than 30 thousand US Marines and Sailors in the Western Pacific, LtGen Larry Nicholson relocated from Japan to the great state of Tennessee and served as the Vice President for Execution and Leadership for the H.T. Hackney Company in Knoxville. From 2022 through today he serves as a Senior Mentor and Highly Qualified Expert for the US Military, and continues to travel globally in support of large-scale USMC, Joint, and combined military exercises.

Additionally, he serves as a Distinguished Senior Fellow for the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, and in addition to being on the advisory board of the TNWAC, he is on the advisory boards for The Spirit of America, and serves as the Chairman of the advisory Board for the University of Tennessee, Howard Baker School of National Security and Foreign Affairs (NSFA). He and his wife Deborah enjoy spoiling their 9 grandchildren, and hiking in the beautiful Smoky Mountains of Tennessee.

"I believe there has never been a more important time for our citizens to better understand how our rapidly changing world is directly impacting each of us. No longer is our nation protected by two vast oceans that provided centuries of security and great distances from those who would wish us harm militarily or economically. Change is inevitable, but the rate of change today is unprecedented, and we will need a well-educated, alert, and engaged population to face and deal with the immense challenges ahead. What the Tennessee World Affairs Council is doing in a principled non-partisan way, by providing opportunities for topical event briefings from subject matter experts in their field, encouraging follow on discussions, and stimulating and encouraging critical thinking is invaluable. TNWAC is playing a critical role in facilitating community leadership to help prepare our fellow citizens for the challenges ahead. I am truly honored to be a part of this important organization."

AUGUST 12 EVENT RECAP: AMERICA AT 250



GLOBAL AFFAIRS KNOWLEDGE QUIZ

1 Which 19th Century American President (and Tennessean) stands out as the man who nearly doubled the size of the United States?

- A John Tyler
- B James K. Polk
- C Zachary Taylor
- D Andrew Johnson

2 Tennessee was the __ state to be admitted to the union in 1796?

- A 14th
- B 15th
- C 16th
- D 17th

3 Who was Tennessee's first governor?

- A Andrew Jackson
- B William Blount
- C John Sevier
- D William Dickson



We extend our sincere thanks to our Board Member, Sam Waitt, for creating these quiz questions, which encourage us to expand our knowledge of global affairs.

Check out Sam's article on [Breitbart News](#) for more information on the president who doubled the size of America.

4 Tennessean Alvin York was awarded the Medal of Honor for his daring attack against the enemy in which conflict?

- A Spanish-American War
- B World War I
- C World War II
- D Korean War

5 How many members of Congress (including two US Senators) represent Tennessee on Capitol Hill? (This is also Tennessee's amount of electoral votes)

- A 7
- B 9
- C 10
- D 11

Find the answers to the quiz on the last page of the newsletter





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PLEASURES OF PROVENCE

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GREECE - ATHENS & KALAMATA

Sep 25 - Oct 4

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Support TNWAC

As a nonpartisan nonprofit organization, our mission is to **promote international awareness, understanding**, and connections to enhance the region's global stature and to prepare Tennesseans to thrive in our increasingly complex and interconnected world.

1

Bring a friend to one of our events and encourage them to join us as a member!

2

Introduce our team to an **expert in your network** to join us as a speaker in 2026!

3

Encourage **businesses you love to join TNWAC** as a corporate member or sponsor!



TENNESSEE
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DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER
SERIES LUNCHEON

The Iran War and The Asian Future of the Middle East

Wed. August 19 | 11:00am - 1:00pm

Sponsored By

BASS BERRY + SIMS

21 Platform Way S, Suite 3500
Nashville, TN 37203



MOHAMMED SOLIMAN

Director, McLarty Associates
Senior Fellow, Middle East Institute



TENNESSEE
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DISTINGUISHED
SPEAKER SERIES
LUNCHEON

The New Rules of Global Commerce: Why Adaptability is the New Competitive Advantage

Wed. September 2 | 11:00am - 1:00pm



AllianceBernstein
501 Commerce St
Nashville, TN 37203



LAURA RITCHEY

President & Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
GEODIS Americas Region

Answers for the knowledge Quiz

- 5/5 – Your global knowledge is amazing. You're truly on top of world affairs! 🌍
- 4/5 – Impressive! You have strong global awareness.
- 3/5 – Not bad! You're well-informed, with room to grow.
- 2/5 – A good start! Keep exploring global issues.
- 1/5 – You're just getting started – stay curious!
- 0/5 – TNWAC bring knowledge and understanding through in-person events, webinars, and the Newsletter

1) B 2) C 3) C 4) B 5) D

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