



October 2026 Newsletter



Dr. Liane Hentschke
Executive Director

From the Executive Director

October brings another busy and exciting month for the Tennessee World Affairs Council, with opportunities to learn, exchange ideas, and reflect on some of the most important issues shaping our world.

On October 20, we will enjoy a Global Eats gathering, celebrating Mexican cuisine and culture at Mesero Restaurant in Nashville. I encourage you to learn more and register for an evening of good food, conversation, and an opportunity to learn more about the culinary traditions of our neighboring country on our [website](#).

Our Distinguished Speakers Series continues on October 28 with an important discussion on the future of transatlantic relations. We are very pleased to welcome

Dr. Daniel S. Hamilton, co-author of [The Transatlantic Economy 2026: Annual Survey of Jobs, Trade and Investment between the United States and Europe](#), and Stephanie Harwood for a conversation titled 'With Friends Like These... The Way Forward for Transatlantic Trade and Security', moderated by Paul Gallagher.

In November, we will conclude our Fall Distinguished Speakers Series with two events. On November 3, Taber Taabur and Michael Trotter will discuss 'The Kurds: U.S. Relations, Regional Change, and the Kurdish-American Experience', moderated by Dr. Breck Walker. On November 10, we will welcome Dr. James M. Lindsay for The Best and the Worst: 250 Years of U.S. Foreign Policy, in a conversation moderated by our Chairman, Karl Dean. These will be the final two events of a season that has enjoyed strong participation from the greater Nashville community.

Equally important are our Global Dialog webinars, and on October 30 we will welcome Joel Nelson for a webinar moderated by Lee Pollock. These online events offer opportunities to engage with international affairs experts and are an important part of TNWAC's educational mission, allowing us to reach audiences across Tennessee and beyond.

As we approach the end of our Fall season, we are preparing our Winter/Spring 2027 Distinguished Speakers Series. The program will be announced soon, featuring a variety of speakers and topics addressing international challenges and developments that affect our lives, businesses, and communities.

My sincere appreciation goes to our Board of Directors, sponsors, and members, for their continued commitment to TNWAC. My special thanks go to Kristiina Oja, our Newsletter Editor-in-Chief, for her dedication to this publication, and to Abigail Trattner, who coordinates our Distinguished Speakers Series, as well as to the wonderful team of volunteers who generously contribute their time and talents to the TNWAC.

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.



Lawrence Nicholson

Lieutenant General

Comment from a former US Marine Commander: “America First” Does Not Mean America Alone

I believe in America First, but I don't believe in America alone. I am a proud internationalist having served globally during my 39 years of active service. I learned early in my career that allies and partners are not a burden, not an anchor to be drug along, not a nuisance to be marginalized and dismissed, but one to be welcomed, encouraged, and honored.

Serving side by side with our allies

I served during numerous tours in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan. I commanded large formations of US Marines, Sailors and Soldiers in combat against our enemies. During those tours, my Marines and I served side by side with Danish platoons, Estonian Rifle Companies, Georgian Battalions, and British, Australian and Canadian soldiers whose heroism, sacrifice and brilliance during the Kandahar campaign was noted by all. We served with warriors from 52 separate nations in the challenging mountains and river valleys of Afghanistan.

Today we have seven treaty allies around the world. Each with a version of an Article V clause that asserts that an attack on one nation is an attack on all. Five are in Asia (Japan, South Korea, The Philippines, Thailand) and ANZAC (Australia and New Zealand), one in the Middle East (Israel), and one in Europe...of course including the thirty-two nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO.

The most successful military alliance in world history

I served at the NATO HQ in Brussels and learned that NATO is by any definition a “bastard” organization in the most literal, not profane sense of the word. Ask almost any American not involved in diplomacy or international affairs what they think about NATO and the immediate answer always begins with “those damned Europeans”. Conversely ask any European about NATO and the response will be the exact reciprocal “those damned Americans”. No love for the organization on either side of the Atlantic, but yet still, the most enduring and successful military alliance in the history of the world.

NATO was formed with the goal of achieving three absolute imperatives required to keep the continent at peace in the tense post-war environment of 1949: 1. “Keep the Germans down”, 2. “Keep the Russians out”, and 3. (Often proven to be the most challenging) “Keep the Americans in”. It is worth noting that the only time NATO has declared Article V in the 77 years of the history of the alliance was on 12 September 2001, the day after the attacks on 9/11.



Ltn General Lawrence Nicholson during the past year in the Philippines working with our Filipino allies.

Guest Columnist continued

American Isolationism is not a new idea, during our 250 years as a nation, we have had many cycles of inward looking and turning away from international engagement. The most significant episode occurred in the years between wars in 1919-1941. The "America First" party was led by American icon Charles Lindbergh and other highly respected American leaders.

"The only thing worse than fighting with allies, is fighting without them."

Winston Churchill

We work with Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic power

The time-honored and profound motto of my last command of 30,000 Marines in the Pacific simply stated "We fight tonight, but we don't fight alone". We fight as a well-trained joint and combined force with allies and partners. True national power comes from utilizing the old acronym DIME representing the 4 elements of national power: Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic power. Today we work and train with allies and partners across the spectrum of common security in each of those areas. As Winston Churchill stated at the height of the Second World War when US and UK leaders routinely chafed one another, "The only thing worse than fighting with allies, is fighting without them".

A well-read and educated population is utterly essential and serves as the cornerstone of a strong Democracy. Thanks to the Tennessee World Affairs Council for continuing to lead, inform and educate the great citizens of the Volunteer State. Semper Fidelis, LDN.

Did You Know?

What Are France's Protests About?

France's latest protests began with high-school students demanding better education, including more teachers, less crowded classrooms, better-maintained school buildings and more resources. Teachers, parents and trade unions have since joined the demonstrations.

The surprising part? The movement began with school blockades in one Paris suburb in September and quickly spread nationwide, with more than 250,000 people demonstrating on October 6.

Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Le Monde](#)



Sponsor Highlight:



THE KIND WORLD FOUNDATION

We extend our sincere thanks to The Kind World Foundation for their generous donation to the Tennessee World Affairs Council. Their dedication to expanding access to education, empowering communities, and fostering global citizenship through strategic partnerships and impactful programs strengthens our mission to connect Tennesseans with the world.

Thank you for your support!

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR EVENTS



The Middle East After the Iran War: A New (Dis)Order Emerging?

with **Mona Yacoubian**
Director and Senior Advisor
of the Middle East Program
at CSIS

“

It's important to understand what's happening in the region because it's having a real impact every day here at home.

Mona Yacoubian

”



Over the Horizon at BNA

with **Douglas E. Kreulen**,
A.A.E. (President and CEO,
Metropolitan Nashville
Airport Authority)



“

I'm especially excited about the Distinguished Speakers Series, which opens doors to voices and perspectives many of us would never encounter. Having volunteered with TNWAC before joining the Board, I've seen these gatherings spark curiosity and wonderful conversations.

Jill Kolin, Director of Community Engagement at Trinetix and Board Member of TNWAC

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Board Member Highlight: **Bill Hirschman**



I am honored to join the Board of the Tennessee World Affairs Council. My decision to become involved with TNWAC reflects a belief that understanding the world beyond our borders has never been more important—particularly for a growing and increasingly connected community like Nashville.

Throughout my career in capital markets and investment management, I have seen firsthand how events occurring thousands of miles away can quickly affect businesses, markets, communities, and families here at home.

Trade, geopolitics, technology, energy, national security, and global economic trends are no longer distant issues. They increasingly shape the decisions we make every day.

What attracted me to TNWAC is its commitment to bringing thoughtful, informed discussion of these issues to Middle Tennessee. At a time when public dialogue can too easily become polarized, I believe there is tremendous value in creating a forum where people can hear from experts, ask questions, exchange perspectives, and develop a deeper understanding of complex global issues.

As a Board member, I hope to help broaden TNWAC's reach within Nashville's business and civic communities, introduce new people to the organization, and support programs that engage the next generation of globally minded leaders.

Nashville has become a truly international city. I look forward to helping TNWAC ensure that our community's understanding of the world grows along with it.

Bill Hirschman is a Portfolio Manager and Head of Brown Advisory's Nashville office.

Volunteer Spotlight: **Abigail Trattner**

Abigail Trattner graduated from Texas Christian University (TCU) with a B.A. in International Relations and a minor in Asian Studies and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa. She became interested in international affairs in middle school while writing a report on Kailash Satyarthi and his endeavors to end slavery and child labor. In high school Abigail represented Torrance, California, as a member of a sister city delegation visiting Kashiwa, Japan, further solidifying her interests in international affairs and relations.



While at TCU, she participated in Model United Nations and served as a head delegate for two conferences. Before working with TNWAC, she interned with Sister Cities of Franklin and Williamson County introducing her to the vital roles non-profits play in providing educational opportunities about different countries. She enjoys TNWAC's commitment to hosting speaker events that address both political and economic news and learning how varying global events directly impact Tennessee. Abigail also admires TNWAC's dedication to helping students become more involved in international affairs through volunteer opportunities.

Abigail supports TNWAC with coordination of our events, as well as helping with administrative tasks as the Senior Assistant to the Executive Director.

GLOBAL SNAPSHOT

THREE CONFLICTS FLYING UNDER THE RADAR

Not all conflicts make international headlines, but their impact often extends far beyond national borders. From extremist violence in Mali and drug trafficking in Costa Rica to disputes over Nile waters, these three stories show how distant events can have consequences closer to home.



MALI: A Capital Under Siege

- **Fuel blockade:** Since September 2025, al-Qaeda-linked JNIM militants have disrupted fuel supplies to Mali's capital, Bamako, affecting schools, businesses, and electricity. [BBC](#)
- **Escalating violence:** Coordinated attacks in April 2026 and a deadly assault on an army camp in September have intensified the security crisis. [Associated Press](#)
- **Political pressure:** UN analysts assess that JNIM seeks to force negotiations with Mali's military government rather than capture Bamako. [Al Jazeera](#)

Why it matters for Tennessee:

Growing instability in West Africa raises concerns for U.S. counterterrorism and regional security interests, with potential implications for military communities such as Fort Campbell. [CFR](#)

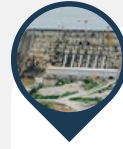


COSTA RICA: The End of Central America's Exception

- **Drug trafficking:** Once considered one of Central America's safest countries, Costa Rica has become an important transit hub for cocaine shipments to North America and Europe. [U.S. State Department](#)
- **Record violence:** Homicides peaked at 907 in 2023, followed by 880 in 2024 and 873 in 2025, largely driven by organized crime and territorial disputes. [Costa Rican government](#)
- **Government response:** Violence remains high in 2026, prompting President Laura Fernández to propose tougher security measures. [BBC](#)

Why it matters for Tennessee:

Drug trafficking contributes to U.S. public safety concerns, while instability in Costa Rica could affect trade, medical-device supply chains, and American travelers.



EGYPT & ETHIOPIA: The Dispute Over the Nile Waters

- **The dam:** Ethiopia's \$5 billion Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, inaugurated in 2025, is Africa's largest hydroelectric project. [Associated Press](#)
- **Water security:** Egypt relies on the Nile for more than 90% of its freshwater needs and fears the dam could reduce water supplies. It demands a binding agreement on dam operations, while Ethiopia considers it essential for electricity generation and economic development as it is expected to provide power to around 60% of Ethiopia's population [Associated Press](#)
- **International tensions:** Disagreements over the dam's operation have strained relations between Egypt and Ethiopia, raising concerns about regional stability. In January 2026, President Trump offered to renew U.S. mediation to help resolve the dispute. [Associated Press](#)

Why it matters for Tennessee:

Nashville has a large Egyptian-American community with close ties to the region. The dispute also has implications for U.S. diplomatic interests and regional stability. [WPLN](#)

*This summary has been researched by our student volunteer **Ibram Ibrahim**.*



GLOBAL AFFAIRS KNOWLEDGE QUIZ

1 A recent attempted hijacking involved a plane carrying mostly Israeli passengers. Under whose flag was the flight registered?

- A** Israel
- B** Greece
- C** United Arab Emirates
- D** Saudi Arabia

3 Canada recently sought a comprehensive strategic partnership with the EU. Who is Canada's current Prime Minister?

- A** Justin Trudeau
- B** Anthony Albanese
- C** Mark Carney
- D** Doug Ford

2 Amid record-high fuel prices, the U.S. considered restricting diesel fuel exports to Europe. What action did Europe take before the administration dropped the proposal?

- A** Ceased buying diesel from Saudi Arabia
- B** Released millions of barrels from their strategic reserves
- C** Ceased buying diesel from Russia
- D** Promised to reverse their green transition legislation

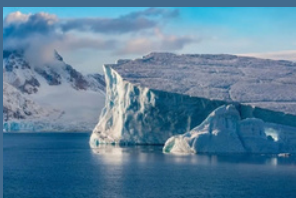
4 The son of an imprisoned former G20 leader has won the first round of his country's presidential election. Who is the former leader?

- A** Christina De Kirchner of Argentina
- B** Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil
- C** Joko Widodo of Indonesia
- D** AMLO of Mexico

5 As Russia faces growing pressure on the battlefield, what aggressive tactics is Moscow considering to push Ukraine and its allies toward accepting harsh peace terms?

- A** Terrorist attacks against European strategic infrastructure and munitions factories
- B** Direct missile strikes on Ukraine's power grid and a de facto blockade of Ukrainian shipping from the port of Odessa
- C** Targeting supply lines on Ukrainian soil as close to the border of Poland as possible without crossing
- D** All of the Above

Thank you to our Board Member, **Sam Waitt**, for creating these quiz questions!



You can read Sam's latest article "A Thaw in the Arctic" [here](#).

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



A Note from the Editor

Behind many of our events, articles, and videos is a wonderful group of student volunteers.



From organizing events and researching global affairs to writing articles and producing videos at short notice, their enthusiasm and creativity make a real difference.

It's a win-win! While we benefit from their fresh perspectives and skills, they gain valuable experience working for a real audience and an engaged community, building professional connections and references along the way. A big thank you to all our student volunteers!

Kristiina Oja is a volunteer at TNWAC.

GLOBAL EATS

Mexican Cuisine:

An Evening at
Mesero Nashville

Guest Speaker:

EDGAR MANDUJANO

Chef at Mesero Nashville



 **OCT 20**

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.

- **Bring a friend** to one of our events and encourage them to join us as a member!
- **Introduce our team to an expert** in your network to join us as a speaker in 2027!
- **Encourage businesses** you love to join TNWAC as a corporate member or sponsor!

TNWAC Events

**REGISTER
NOW!**

WEBINAR

**Brink: Inside the Race to Free the
October 7th Hostages**

Brett McGurk



 **OCT 15**

DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER SERIES

**With Friends Like These...
The Way Forward for
Transatlantic Trade
and Security**

*Dr. Daniel S. Hamilton,
Stephanie Harwood,
moderated by Paul Gallagher*



 **OCT 28**

SAVE THE DATE

 **OCT 30**

Joel Nelson

Moderated by **Lee Pollock**

 **NOV 3**

Tabeer Taabur & Michael Trotter

Moderated by **Dr. Breck Walker**

 **NOV 10**

Dr. James Lindsay

Moderated by **Karl Dean**

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) C

2) B

3) C

4) B

5) D

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