



NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY
NEAR EAST SOUTH ASIA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20319-5066



Dear Dr. Zalman,

I would like to thank you for your recent lecture at the Near East and South Asia Center for Strategic Studies. As you know, your lecture served as the culminating lecture of a two week program titled “Beyond Sykes Picot: Systems, States and Societies in the New 21st Century.” We had 45 individuals from 23 different countries in the audience, and I was delighted by how your lecture on “Forecasting the Future” was intensely relevant to each of them.

Your lecture was simultaneously intellectually challenging and accessible to the wide range of individuals in the audience – from the military generals to the diplomats. By making the clear distinction between intelligence (which you described as a puzzle to be solved) and forecasting (a blank page), you gave the audience both the motive and the tools to step beyond the immediacy of their perspective into a more holistic and strategic vantage point. While the concepts you introduced can be frustratingly amorphous, you coupled them with practical tools and examples that made them not only understandable, but useful. For example, your method of helping the audience grasp “the future” by urging them to imagine they were in the same place 100 years ago, and then challenging them to explain the technology around them was incredibly effective.

Your list of recommendations for how leaders can more productively plan for the future provided a clear and attainable path forward for everyone in the room. By breaking down your strategies for future forecasting into simple and achievable steps, you encouraged the audience to see the future as something they have the capacity to shape, influence and benefit from, instead of something they must reactively respond to. For leaders who operate in a strategic environment, this distinction is crucial.

In short, I can’t imagine a better way to have ended a two week program. Your lecture was a high point for me and the other seminar participants, and I truly appreciate you taking the time to share your unique expertise with us. I sincerely look forward to inviting you to many more seminars in the future.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Jefferis
Associate Professor
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