

INFORMATION STATEMENT

Fellows Dinner

17 May 2026 · i Ricchi, Washington, D.C.



Fellows Dinner, 17 May 2026, at i Ricchi, Washington, D.C.

OVERVIEW

On the evening of 17 May 2026, the Shafik Gabr Foundation convened a Fellows dinner at iRicchi restaurant in Washington, D.C. Alumni Fellows from government, congress, energy, business, law, diplomacy, technology, and civil society came together for an evening of open, candid dialogue in the spirit of which the Foundation was built. The evening was a reflection of what the Foundation has always stood for: that the most impactful conversations happen face-to-face, among people who are willing to engage.

THE EVENING

M. Shafik Gabr opened the evening with personal reflections on the strength and purpose of the Fellowship network, recognizing each Fellow individually and expressing his conviction that this community, bound not by background but by a shared commitment to engagement, represents a rare and powerful force for good. He read a message from Jude Husein, 2025 Fellow, who is announcing her candidacy for City Council of Philadelphia. Even though she was unable to attend, those words captured the spirit of the evening: a testament to the enduring

bonds formed through the Fellowship and a call to action, urging the community to rally behind her. [**Link for donations**](#)

Jeremy Pesner, 2022 Fellow, opened a discussion about the potential for deeper collaboration between the Gabr Fellowship and other Fellowship communities and leadership networks, calling on Fellow members to actively leverage their collective connections and move beyond the dinner table to sustained, practical partnerships. The Foundation supported the idea and shared a donation of 1000 USD to the D.C chapter of the New Leaders Council.

Clara Sherwood, 2025 Fellow, led a discussion on wars of choice versus wars of necessity, anchored in the context of the ongoing conflict with Iran, prompting a wide-ranging exchange on the nature of modern conflict, the limits of military intervention, and the conditions under which force can be considered justified.

Crystal Staebell, 2025 Fellow, raised the geopolitics of energy in the context of the war, exploring how conflict in the region is shaping oil markets, the resilience of international energy cooperation, and the case for nuclear power as a long-term strategic alternative.



Pascal Rathle (2022) and Crystal Staebell (2025)



Moon Sulfab and M. Shaifk Gabr

M. Shafik Gabr extended special recognition to Mr. Moon Sulfab, Administrator of Information Technology, office of Sen. Mitch McConnell, who travelled from San Diego to attend. Chairman Gabr acknowledged Mr. Sulfab's sustained commitment to building bridges between the United States and the Middle East is emblematic of the values the Foundation holds. In a moment that captured the spirit of the evening, Chairman Gabr and Mr. Sulfab exchanged gifts of recognition, a gesture of mutual appreciation between two people united by a shared belief in the power of genuine engagement.

KEY THEMES

The Power and Responsibility of the Fellowship Network

A thread woven throughout the evening was M. Shafik Gabr's belief in the exceptional potential of this community. He reminded Fellows that their exposure to global leaders, complex geopolitical realities, and cross-cultural experience places them far beyond the average person of their generation. With that comes a responsibility: to lead, to engage, and to act. The network, he emphasized, is only as powerful as its members' willingness to use it, not merely to gather, but to build bridges and solve problems for one another and for the world.

Wars of Choice vs. Wars of Necessity

The discussion on Iran provoked one of the evening's most substantive exchanges. M. Shafik Gabr offered his view that the conflict was a war of choice rather than necessity, challenging the notion that Iran posed an existential nuclear threat to the United States or its allies. He questioned whether military force was ever the most effective answer, arguing that economic pressure and strategic engagement offer a more viable path to lasting stability. The discussion drew notable contributions from Jack Lincoln, 2022 Fellow and Alen Amini, 2022 Fellow, reflecting the genuine complexity of the question.

Iran, the Middle East, and the Geopolitics of Energy

Fellows examined how the conflict with Iran is reshaping energy markets and the international cooperation frameworks built around them since the 1970s. The discussion questioned whether the global liberal energy order had failed, and whether the current turn toward national energy self-reliance, particularly in the United States, represents a sustainable long-term strategy. M. Shafik Gabr made the broader case for cooperation over deglobalization, arguing that the world has sufficient resources for all its people, and that the choice between working together and retreating into nationalism is ultimately a question of political will and leadership.



Pascal Rathle (2022) and Hunter King (2017)



Katie Hagen (2022)

Artificial Intelligence, Autonomous Weapons, and the Future of Warfare

AI emerged as one of the evening's most urgent themes. M. Shafik Gabr returned repeatedly to the dangers of autonomous weapons systems, citing the targeting of a school by an AI-selected strike as an example of what is already happening. Fellows discussed the rapid militarization of drone technology, and the looming implications of quantum computing, which could render existing encryption, GPS systems, and nuclear codes vulnerable. The consensus was that the pace of technological change is outstripping the capacity of governments and institutions to regulate it.

Online Accountability and the Danger of Unauthenticated Speech

A pointed exchange on the dangers of anonymous online activity drew one of the evening's sharpest interventions from M. Shafik Gabr. He argued that the absence of authentication online, the inability to hold individuals accountable for what they publish, is one of the most dangerous features of the modern information environment, enabling targeted destruction of reputations, coordinated disinformation, and the erosion of public trust. In a world where the line between fact and fiction is increasingly difficult to locate, he warned, the consequences of unchecked anonymous speech will only grow more severe. He called on world leaders to establish a legal, authenticated internet framework, making the case that this is both technically feasible and politically achievable if the will exists.

Women in Leadership and the Barriers to Political Participation

Stephanie Lord, 2014 Fellow, raised the persistent and structural barriers facing women who seek elected office, with data shared on the alarming rates of harassment, death threats, and online violence directed at female candidates. The discussion connected to broader questions of democratic quality and the conditions necessary for more representative, collaborative governance. Fellows noted that greater female participation in leadership, at every level, correlates with more cooperative, dialogue-oriented approaches to conflict resolution, a point that resonated strongly with the Foundation's own mission.



George Williams (2025) and Leisel Bogan (2016)



Moon Sulfab, Gigi Gabr, M. Shaifk Gabr, and Malak Gabr

The Quality of Leadership and the Imperative to Act

Across every topic, a common concern surfaced: the absence of inspiring, principled leadership at the global level. M. Shafik Gabr was direct in his assessment that too many governments are reactive, short-sighted, and captured by domestic political calculations at the expense of the long view. Pascal Rathle, 2022 Fellow, echoed this concern, reflecting on the growing disconnect between those in power and the people they serve. M. Shafik Gabr challenged the Fellows, as people with rare exposure, experience, and networks, to take seriously their own potential to fill that gap. The example of President Sadat, who flew to Tel Aviv in 1977 with half his land under occupation and spoke to the Knesset to say he did not want to see another Egyptian or Israeli die in war, was invoked once more: proof that one person, willing to take an actual step, can change the course of history.

CONCLUSION

East-West: The Art of Dialogue is an initiative rooted in a single conviction, that dialogue is a bridge, and that it only takes one person to take an actual step. The Fellows Dinner of 17 May was proof of that conviction in action: a room of engaged, informed, and courageous people, willing to disagree, to listen, and to think beyond their own borders. The Foundation exists to create the conditions in which that step becomes possible.



Fellows at Dinner



Thomas Hanna (2016) and Kemp (2015)

FELLOWS

2013: Dan Sullivan (Sully)

2014: Stephanie Lord

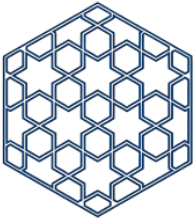
2015: Robert Gouldin (Kemp)

2016 : John Ryan, Leisel Bogan, Thomas Hanna

2017: Hunter King

2022: Jeremy Pesner, Pascal Rathle, Katie Hagen, Jack Lincoln, Crawford Horan

2025: Alphaeus Hanson, Clara Sherwood, Crystal Staebell, George Williams, Mariam El Sherif



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THE NUBIAN STORYTELLER IN THE HAREM

Oil on Canvas

Frederick Arthur Bridgman
American

THE SHAFIK GABR COLLECTION

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