



THE GABR FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTER



Chairman M. Shafik Gabr, with 2025 Gabr Fellows & Team: Mariam El Sherif, Maries Meshreqeue, Lydia Kamiel, Kristina Arkelyan, Ingy Musallam, Clara Sherwood, Alphaeus D. Hanson, George D. Williams, Omar Talaat, Youssef Emam, Mahmoud Elmakkawe, Crystal Staebell, Jude G Husein, and King Frimpong. | Esraa Ramadan, Tarek El Tobgui, and Maria Wissa.

At the Shafik Gabr Foundation with the 2025 Gabr Fellows 22nd of September 2025 | ARTOC HQ, Cairo, Egypt.

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Bond Revisited

M. SHAFIK GABR

September, 2025

I have always been a fan of James Bond movies, with the exception of the last one, which frankly was a flop as the script, acting, and directing were more concerned with being woke and politically correct rather than 'Bond correct'.

Ian Fleming was turning in his grave.

Bond movies from Sean Connery to Daniel Craig were fun, entertaining and made you forget the agonizing world around you.

I had the pleasure of meeting Roger Moore (Bond) and Samantha Bond (Money Penny) at Christie's on King's Street in London years ago at an auction of Bond items. Moore was in real life, the gentleman you witnessed in his version of the Bond movies he portrayed. Tall in a double-breasted grey suit and a crimson and grey matching tie. We spoke for a few moments at the pre-auction cocktail, and he was very engaging before the announcement of the auction starting when he walked to his first-row seat.

I took an aisle seat in the third row and watched the exciting auction of Bond items. Samantha Bond encouraged me as I bid for the set of Ian Fleming books, and I was lucky I got them.

In my early years, I lived with my late father in India as he was representing the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and I was a teenager in school. Those were the days of Indira Gandhi (Prime Minister of India at the time) and the Egyptian Film Festival coming to New Delhi before anyone had heard of Bollywood.

Being a Bond fan, fast forward, I was in Cairo when the Bond movie *Octopussy* was released in 1983. As always, I enjoyed the movie and was intrigued by the setup which I later learnt was a location in the middle of a lake in Udaipur, India.

After more research over the years, I learnt where the amazing scenes were filmed. It was the magnificent Taj Lake Palace hotel. Located in the middle of Lake Pichola, the magnificent building, all in marble, was built in 1746 with majestic architecture. Lake Palace is a former summer palace of the royal dynasty of Mewar.

Lake Palace was built under the direction of Maharana Jagat Singh II (62nd successor to the royal dynasty of Mewar) of Udaipur, Rajasthan as a summer palace. It was initially called *Jagniwas* or *Jan Niwas* after its founder.

As I learnt from my research, the Taj Palace, which looks as if it is floating over the lake, has hosted 300 dancers and elephants all in service of the Maharana of the time, who held his parties in private.

Maharana Bhopal Singh oversaw the renovation of the Palace, and Maharana Mahendra Singh turned the Lake Palace into a hotel, which received a 5-Star rating.

As with images that remain in your mind, I always wanted to visit.

I had planned in 1983 to stay with my wife in the Treetops Hotel, 3-Star, in Nyeri, Kenya, during our honeymoon. Elizabeth was in Kenya at Treetops Hotel when her father, George VI, died on 6 February 1952, and she became queen. Our visit was not pleasant as we discovered the room was less than tiny, and sharing bathrooms was standard. We literally left the same day.

My wife had always wanted to visit India, and as I had to go to Malaysia and Udaipur was midway, I decided to break our 11-hour flight to Kuala Lumpur and experience the Taj Lake Palace.

What I had not expected was that you could not go directly and had to land at Ahmedabad Airport for immigration clearance, then fly to Maharana Pratap. Indian bureaucracy.

Given the Egyptian bureaucracy, I have a theory that both India and Egypt were influenced by the British and their bureaucracy. Landing in Maharana Pratap we were welcomed by Taj Lake Palace representatives. That was followed by a 40-minute car ride in traffic to the lake. The scene was exquisite as a boat took us to the hotel after a ten-minute ride. There we were welcomed royally, taken to the Chandra Prakash suite and introduced to our “body man” who accompanied us everywhere in our adventure until we left.

The hotel must be experienced to be described. The service was impressive and the hotel an adventure by itself. We were there for two nights.

On our first evening, we visited the Lily Pond. In the Bond movie *Octopussy*, played by Maud Adams, and at the Lily Pond, a picturesque place at the centre of the palace, all her Amazon warriors lingered around it in every exotic dress. It's Bond after all.

On our second night, we dined at the Italian restaurant after my wife and I visited the bar where Roger lingered as Bond, and I sat where he enjoyed his Vesper Martini shaken not stirred. During our dessert, we were literally ambushed as two Indian gentlemen came to our table with a lady.

The younger gentleman introduced himself as Mukesh Singh and asked, “You are Shafik Gabr?” I nodded as I had a mouthful of ice cream. The second gentleman, older and in Indian dress, introduced himself as Rajendra Wadhvani, and he looked at the lady and said, “Wendy Smith from Australia”.

After preliminary introductions, both my wife and I finished our desserts as they hovered seriously, showing they were not going anywhere. Shortly afterwards, we retired to a well-decorated gaming salon where we ordered coffee and Kashmiri tea.

The room designed for chess, backgammon, and card games was where Kamal Khan Louis Jourdan lost to Bond in backgammon as Bond unveiled Khan’s cheating.

We sat in a circle, and Wendy began by apologising that she and her partners crashed upon us, but she explained that Mukesh recognised me from the World Economic Forum in Davos and knew of my interest in technology.

Wendy, in a clear Australian accent, in a bright red dress and blonde hair in a ponytail, and Mukesh, in a combination British-Indian accent in jeans and a blue polo shirt, explained their business in the world of technology and their business presence in Australia, India, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. They continued detailing their history, present activity and multiple successes as I sipped the wonderful Kashmiri tea.

Kashmiri tea has saffron, an important component of the Kashmiri Kahwa, it is also known to have antioxidant effects and can improve mood and ease anxiety. Other spices present in the Kahwa, like clove and cinnamon, have been known to have antioxidant elements, which make the Kashmiri Kahwa tea a healthy and unique beverage that is surprisingly not sold in packages but only made fresh.

Wendy and Mukesh must have spoken for over fifteen minutes in a nonstop manner of back and forth detailing their success and failures. I listened carefully as I sensed they were serious and articulate.

When they paused, I asked half a dozen questions. About their start-ups, their teams and geographic experiences. Their answers were eloquent, based on facts and properly measured. Mukesh was clearly the numbers person, and both Wendy and Rajendra were the technologists. Rajendra rarely spoke except to interject a missing technical nugget.

After they answered all the points I raised, Rajendra spoke, addressing me, “Mr Gabr, Mukesh recognised you as a known tech investor, a regular at the WEF and MSC, plus a first-class promoter” I nodded and responded, “Thank you, exaggerated but appreciated.”

Rajendra explained that their company, Firestone Technology, had two projects and wanted to explain them and gauge my interest and feedback. He mentioned to Wendy to proceed.

Wendy described project “Monte”. It concerns a basic problem we all face every day she said. Misplacing our cell phones, she added Rajendra interjected, and we find it simply by calling its name. Wendy added that you set up the name of your cell phone from a roster of three billion titles. Wendy explained that the technology has been tested with one brand of cell phones. If successful, this technology will be a huge breakthrough as it will be in high demand.

Rajendra picked up the conversation and described the second startup name, “Enord”. It’s in the preliminary stages, but very important and strategic, he emphasised. It’s a technology he added that disengages drones from their power source over a range of 300km. They drop like flies.

The discussion went on for two hours plus. My wife was running out of patience, but she was excited to learn about the birth of “Monte”, as on good days she misplaced her phone half a dozen times.

As the conversation wrapped up, I thanked Rajendra, Wendy, and Mukesh told them I would have my team contact them and check their proposals when they send them next week to our Cairo office.

My wife and I said our goodbyes to Wendy, Mukesh and Rajendra. I hugged my wife as we looked across the lake towards the sparkling lights on the shore. We held hands and headed to our suite, followed by our body man carrying an umbrella even though it was not raining.

We had packing to do as we were leaving for Kuala Lumpur early the next morning. As we went to bed, it was clear Bond’s spirit remained at the palace.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



M. Shafik Gabr is a renowned leader in international business, innovation, and investment, and is one of the world's premier collectors of Orientalist art, and an accomplished philanthropist.

During his career, Gabr established over 25 companies, plus three investment holding companies, including ARTOC Group for Investment and Development, which is a multidisciplinary investment holding company with businesses in infrastructure, automotive, engineering, construction, and real estate. Over the past three years, he has focused on investment in technology and artificial intelligence.

Gabr is the Chairman and founding member of Egypt's International Economic Forum (EIEF), a member of the International Business Council of the World Economic Forum, a Board Member of Stanhope Capital, International Chairman of the Sadat Congressional Gold Medal Committee, and a Member of the Steering Committee of Parliamentary Intelligence Security Forum.

Gabr is on the Advisory Board of the Centre for Financial Stability, the Advisory Board of The Middle East Institute, and the Global Advisory Council of the Mayo Clinic. He is also a former Member of the Metropolitan Museum's International Council and a former member of the Business Council of the World Economic Forum.

In his capacity as Chairman of EIEF, Gabr has hosted global leaders from the worlds of politics, economics, business, media, technology, and culture. These include President Vaclav Klaus, President Atifete Jahjaga, President Boris Tadić, President Zlatko Lagumdžija, Prime Minister Tony Blair; Secretaries James Mattis, John Kelly, and Rex Tillerson; H.E. Amr Moussa, members of Congress, business leaders in technology, academics, and media figures from CNN, Fox, and CNBC. Gabr has also hosted six CNBC programs on 'World Business' and 'Peer to Peer.'

Moreover, as Chairman of the Shafik Gabr Foundation, Gabr regularly hosts his interactive 'Expecting the Unexpected' working dinners in Cairo, Davos, London, Munich, and Washington, DC. The dinners are off the record and engage leaders across the board in timely predictions of geopolitical and geoeconomic issues. The most recent dinners were held in Davos on January 16th, 2025, during the World Economic Forum, and on February 16th, 2025, at the Munich Security Conference. The guests included former Presidents, Ministers, Ambassadors, members of Congress, international organization chairs, heads of think tanks, business leaders, and distinguished scholars from Europe, the Middle East, the United States, and Asia.

Gabr has previously served as the Chairman of the COMESA (Common Market for East and South Africa) Business Council and a member of the Executive Board of the International Chamber of Commerce (Paris). He also served on the advisory boards of Zurich Financial Services and The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). Furthermore, Gabr was a founder of the American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt in 1982, serving as its first Egyptian President from 1995 until 1997, and was a Founding Member of the Wilson Global Advisory Council.

Gabr has been recognized among the “Most Influential Arabs” and “Top 50 Business Leaders in the Arab World.” In 2009, Mr. Gabr was presented with the Foreign Policy Association’s (FPA) award for Corporate Responsibility. In June 2014, Mr. Gabr was awarded the Meridian Global Citizen Award, and in November 2014, the Middle East Institute’s Visionary Award. In March 2015, Gabr received the American University in Cairo’s Global Impact Award in New York. In May 2016, Gabr was awarded the College of Mount Saint Vincent’s Saint Vincent de Paul Award and Drew University’s Peacebuilder Award. In September 2017, Gabr received the Policy Direction and Leadership Award from the London Centre for Policy Research. Most recently, in November 2024, Gabr was awarded the highest honor conferred upon foreign nationals by the President of Italy: the ‘Grande Ufficiale’ (Grand Officer) of the ‘Ordine della Stella d’Italia’ (Order of the Star of Italy) for his extraordinary achievements and merit.

Since 2016, Gabr has focused his attention on innovation and investment in technology, as well as his Foundations. Gabr has invested in a wide spectrum of technology companies, ranging from startups to fully mature companies, and across a wide variety of sectors. Gabr’s focus is multidimensional in a world of technology, which is reflected in his personal approach to the sector through its multifaceted applications, including AI, machine learning, data mining, mobility, and business.

M. Shafik Gabr’s contributions and insights have been the subject of numerous articles, including some published in Egypt Independent. Additionally, his perspectives on international business, investment trends, and cultural diplomacy have been featured in interviews with global media outlets such as Bloomberg, CNBC, BBC, Al-Horra and many more. Through these platforms, Gabr has highlighted his extensive work on cross-cultural dialogue and offered perspective on world markets and geopolitics.

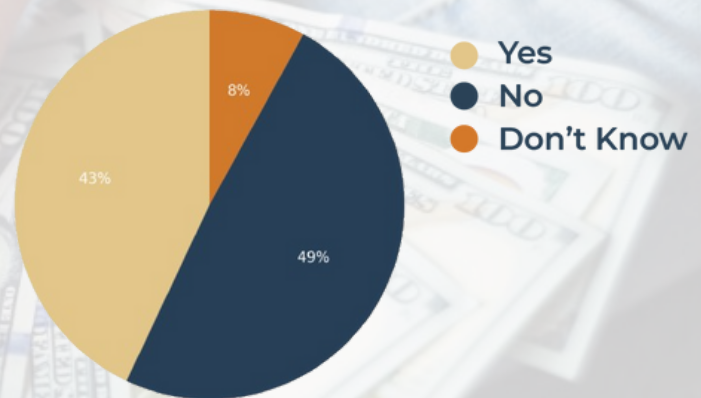
Through The Mohamed Shafik Gabr Foundation for Social Development, Gabr is helping to improve elementary-school education in Egypt, introducing students to arts and culture, and promoting sports and physical fitness for youth. In the area of higher education, Gabr is a major supporter of the American University in Cairo. The Foundation also developed a free medical-care system by providing “Medical Caravans” for residents of underprivileged areas of Greater Cairo. The Foundation established its first Medical and Social Development Centre in Mokattam, Cairo, offering free medical and health services. In 2012, Gabr established the Shafik Gabr Foundation in the U.S., which supports educational and medical initiatives and, in November 2012, launched the ‘East-West: The Art of Dialogue’ initiative (see www.eastwestdialogue.org), promoting exchanges between young emerging leaders from the U.S. and Egypt with the purpose of cultural dialogue and bridge-building. At present, the Foundation’s Fellowship program has over 140 Fellows.

Gabr is recognized as one of the world’s largest collectors of Orientalist art, amassing a unique and extensive collection that captures the beauty, culture, and history of the Middle East and North Africa. His collection showcases masterpieces from the 19th and early 20th centuries, reflecting the works of prominent Orientalist painters who were captivated by the region’s vibrant landscapes, traditions, and people. Through his dedication and passion for preserving and sharing these historical artworks, Gabr has significantly contributed to fostering cultural appreciation and understanding of the Orientalist movement on a global scale.

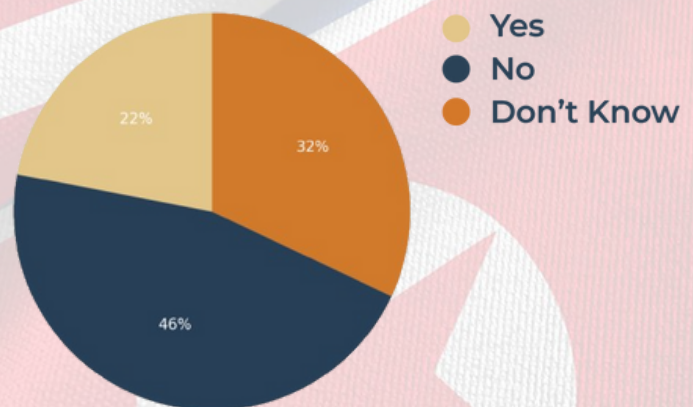
Gabr holds a BA in Economics and Management from the American University in Cairo and an MA in Economics from the University of London.

MONTHLY WORLD PREDICTIONS

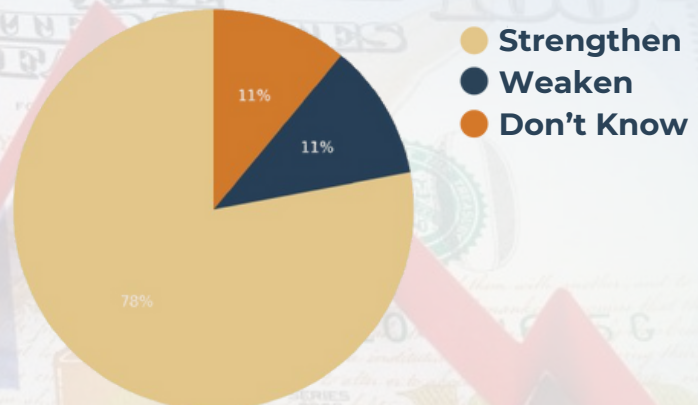
Should countries spend more on defense spending?



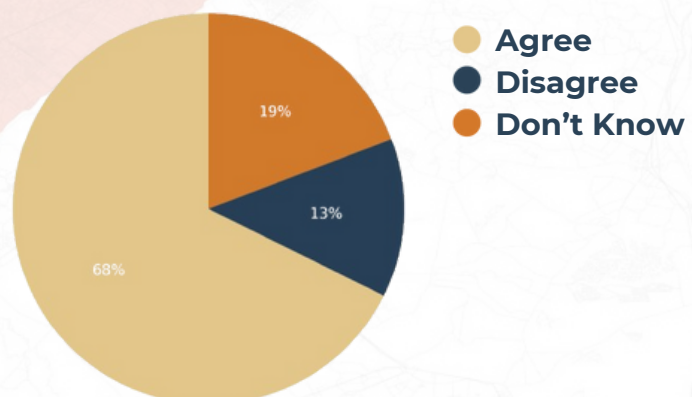
Will President Trump meet the North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un in 2025?



Will the Dollar strengthen or weaken by December 2025?



Tom Friedman, the famous journalist, wrote that Israel's Gaza Campaign is making it a Pariah State. Do you agree or disagree?





FELLOWS' UPDATES



John Ryan, 2016 Fellow

In August, John Ryan, 2016 Gabr Fellow, was promoted to Major in the U.S. Army Reserve, a distinguished milestone in his military career. He looks forward to reconnecting with the Foundation this Fall.

Marielle Becker, 2022 Fellow

Marielle Becker, 2022 Gabr Fellow, recently partnered with Fabrice Guerrier, 2018 Gabr Fellow, becoming the sole representative for his art business. She now provides counsel on portfolio strategy, sales and marketing, and press media. This collaboration marks the first step in building her own art advising business, with a focus on emerging artists and first-time buyers.



Shady El Sherif, 2018 Fellow

Shady El Sherif, 2018 Gabr Fellow, recently moved to Leuven, Belgium to begin his Erasmus scholarship in eGovernance and Innovation.



FELLOWS' UPDATES



Kemp Gouldin, 2015 Fellow

Kemp Gouldin, 2015 Gabr Fellow, was featured by Major League Baseball for his work bringing baseball to Egypt through his company 'Because Baseball'. His efforts are introducing America's pastime sport to a new generation, fostering cultural connections and exchanges. [Read the full story here.](#)

Fabrice Guerrier, 2018 Fellow

Fabrice Guerrier, 2018 Gabr Fellow, honored as Alum of the Year 2025 by Eastern Mennonite University for his visionary work as founder and CEO of Syllble Studios, the world's first collaborative worldbuilding production house for science fiction and fantasy storytelling. [Read more here.](#)



Alphaeus Hanson, 2025 Fellow

Alphaeus Hanson, 2025 Gabr Fellow, recently appointed as a Board Advisor at Dark Alpha Capital, marking an important step in his professional journey.



FELLOWS' UPDATES



Esraa El Zokem 2022 Fellow

Esraa El Zokem 2022 Gabr Fellow, recently began working with Mr. Shafik Gabr, founder and chairman of ARTOC Group for Investment and Development, and The Shafik Gabr Foundation. Esraa has experience in corporate and complex organizational skills.

George Williams, 2025 Fellow

George Williams, 2025 Gabr Fellow, was recently featured on the HGTV series House Hunters in an episode filmed in Long Island, New York, and wrapped up filming another feature in Portugal. In addition, he was selected as a Fellow of the Helsinki Geoeconomics Society, joining the Albert O. Hirschman Cohort, which brings together global leaders to advance thinking at the intersection of geoeconomics, strategy, and international affairs.



Jack Gordon, 2017 Fellow

Jack Gordon, 2017 Gabr Fellow, was awarded the 2025–2027 Sacred Journey Fellowship by Interfaith America. He is currently directing a documentary series on the history of religious freedom in America, tracing the struggles of minority groups to gain tolerance and acceptance.

The series is anticipated to air on PBS in 2026. [Read more here.](#)



FELLOWS' UPDATES

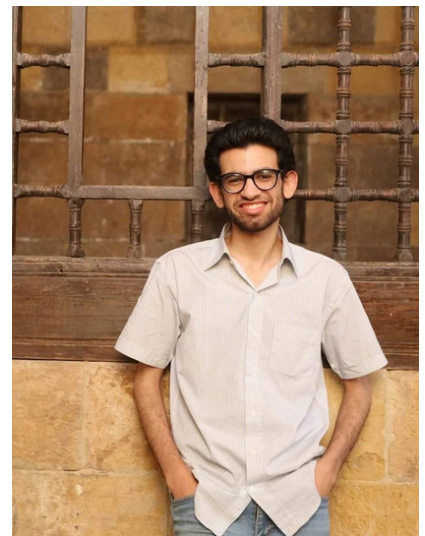


Jeremy Pesner, 2022 Fellow

Jeremy Pesner, 2022 Gabr Fellow, recently has been accepted to the Germany Close Up Fellowship, where he will travel through Germany this October to explore modern German-Jewish relations.

Mahmoud Elmakkawe, 2025 Fellow

Mahmoud Elmakkawe, 2025 Gabr Fellow, attended a regional communication seminar in Brussels on digital diplomacy, FIMI, and strategic outreach as part of his work at the European Union



Marwa Abdalla, 2018 Fellow

Marwa Abdalla, 2018 Gabr Fellow. This month, the Cinema School she manages welcomed a new class of aspiring filmmakers, marking the start of an exciting journey for students eager to develop their unique voices in storytelling.



FELLOWS' UPDATES



Wes Rogerson, 2018 Fellow

Wes Rogerson, 2018 Gabr Fellow, recently relocated to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he continues to lead digital advocacy strategy at the Environmental Defense Fund. The move, prompted by a new opportunity for his fiancée on the Corporate Strategy Team at Highmark Health. It has been a smooth transition and an exciting new chapter in both his personal and professional journey.

Yasser El Zahhar, 2016 Fellow

Yasser El Zahhar, 2016 Gabr Fellow, led the planning and launch of the first-ever audio version of Abjjad, after 13 years of pioneering the Arabic eBook market in MENA. He is especially proud of designing a model fully powered by AI, making audio production faster, more affordable, and more accessible for Arabic titles.



Mariam Ibrahim, 2013 Fellow

Mariam Ibrahim, 2013 Gabr Fellow, is releasing films and creative works that push the boundaries of storytelling through the integration of artificial intelligence in advertising. Her projects explore how AI can enhance creativity, personalization, and audience engagement, marking a significant step forward in the evolution of media production.

ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP



2022 Gabr Fellows at the National Defense University with the NDU President, Lt Gen Michel Plehn

Launched in 2012, the Gabr Fellowship program helps connect and build constructive relationships between future leaders aged 24 and 35. Each year, the Fellowship consists of 16-24 Fellows, half of whom are men and the other half women, with an equal distribution between participants from the United States and Egypt. The Fellowship also accepts applicants from Jordan, Lebanon, France and the United Kingdom. Fellows represent a variety of sectors, including the arts, law, finance, tech, non-profits, and entrepreneurship – both business and social.

The mission of the Fellowship is to promote greater mutual understanding by building bridges between the two cultures by facilitating and the exchange of ideas between emerging leaders from the United States and Egypt. Together, they explore one another's cultures, political realities, business trends, and their goals for the future.

In addition to engaging in deep discussions with key stakeholders from both countries in business, government, academia, religion, science, tech and finance, all Fellows are invited to form multinational teams to complete an action project. These projects empower the Fellows as intercultural ambassadors, amplifying the Fellowship's reach and impact.

Ultimately, through hands-on activities, rigorous discussions, cultural site visits, and the collaborative action projects, the Fellows have a greater understanding of both countries and become part of an international cohort dedicated to building a more equitable and peaceful world.



Gabr Fellows with Major General Mohamed El Keshky, Egypt's Former Assistant Minister of Defense

The Gabr Fellows have acquired a greater understanding of both Egypt and the United States and the challenges faced by both communities. Having served as cultural as well as linguistic ambassadors to one another, they then return home to play the role of diplomat, introducing Egyptians and Americans to a people, a culture and a future never before explored in this way.

Together, they are creating the legacy of The Gabr Fellowship: an international cohort dedicated to pursuing cooperative, collective solutions to their region's most pressing issues.



Gabr Fellows at the Pyramids



SUPPORT THE FOUNDATION

THE SHAFIK GABR FOUNDATION INVITES YOU TO INVEST IN THE FUTURE AND PARTNER WITH THE FOUNDATION USING ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING MEANS:

SPONSOR A FELLOW

Individuals have the opportunity to nominate a Fellow and, if selected, sponsor their participation in the Gabr Fellowship. Sponsors will be recognized in all Foundation publications, marketing materials, and at all events.

CORPORATE PATRON

Corporations can nominate Fellows for participation in the Fellowship Foundation and sponsor their participation on a company-wide level. The company will be listed in all publications, the logo will be presented on the Foundation's homepage, and be given visibility at all events in the United States and Egypt.

UNRESTRICTED SUPPORT

A general operating grant can empower the Foundation to continue to invest in innovative platforms to facilitate ongoing dialogue between the East and West. From new technologies to expanding the program to more countries and a greater number of participants, the Fellowship can create a broader multiregional impact.



TO SUPPORT THE FOUNDATION VISIT <https://www.eastwestdialogue.org/fellowship/how-to-support/>

We also invite our community to contribute thoughts, stories, and recommendations for the newsletter!
Please write to chairman@shafikgabrfoundation.org



The First Timer

Mariam El Sherif 2025 Fellow

September, 2025

I've always been the kind of person who could walk into any room and adapt. Outgoing, engaging, comfortable across industries, I usually have something to add. But then came a day that tested me in ways I never expected.

For the first time in years, I felt completely out of place. Anxious, insecure, and painfully aware of how different I was. My heartbeat felt so loud I thought everyone could hear it. Even Mr. Gabr noticed, my unease was impossible to hide.

Embarrassment quickly followed. *Am I good enough? Can I keep up? Am I really in the right place?*

I was surrounded by brilliant policy experts, diplomats, academics, and lawyers, while I was the lone creative entrepreneur in the room. I felt like an imposter.

When the meeting ended, I was devastated. A voice in my head whispered: *Maybe you don't belong here.* But another voice refused to let go. I had worked too hard for this moment, not out of obligation, but out of passion. I wanted to step beyond my reality and build a new one.

And then, something shifted.

Two Fellows approached me. An alum, reminded me: *"Everyone here is unique. You weren't chosen by chance. Out of hundreds of applicants, you were selected for a reason."* Another Fellow from my current batch leaned over and said: *"Mariam, you're the only one here with a creative entrepreneurial background. That's not a weakness, it's your strength. Own it."*

Their words didn't erase my fear, but they planted a seed of confidence. It wasn't about pretending to belong. It was about proving why I did.

Two days later, I called the head of the selection committee. I asked, *“How do I prepare? How do I train myself to truly stand among these people?”* His advice was kind but vague: *“Trust the program; it will give you what you need.”* But I don’t take “wait and see” as an answer.

So, I built a tool to help myself. I created software with avatars, each representing a different persona, to simulate debates, negotiations, and political discussions. It was difficult and time-consuming, but it gave me something I desperately needed: confidence.

The next meeting was still intimidating, but I walked in differently. I didn’t have every answer, but I could contribute. I wasn’t fearless, but I was prepared. And soon after, I received the call that would change everything: I had been officially selected as a 2025 Gabr Fellow.

But that was only the beginning.

Working closely with Mr. Gabr changed my perspective. He often repeated, *“You are the leaders of tomorrow. You are the future.”* These weren’t just words. They were a reminder that he wasn’t building a program, he was building a legacy, investing in us, the youth, to shape what comes next.

For the first time in my entrepreneurial career, I felt seen. For years, I had been the one clapping for others, lifting others, carrying the weight for others. But now, I’m honored to have a mentor, someone who is recognizing my uniqueness and pushing me to refine it, not erase it.

Through projects like the Fellowship newsletter, I came to understand his mindset and structure. I learned lessons that reshaped how I lead, manage, and think. My network expanded. My knowledge deepened. My vision grew sharper.

Then came another turning point.

During our orientation, I asked about the kinds of projects we would take on. Mr. Gabr shared the story of two Fellows, one Egyptian and one American, who had spent five years documenting cultural similarities between our two nations.

That idea stayed with me.

That same evening, sitting on my rooftop with friends, one half-American, one Sudanese, and me. The conversation naturally drifted to culture. We began listing similarities between Egyptians and Americans. What started casually became something profound. From food culture to media dominance, from love of debate to resilience in hardship, the parallels were undeniable.

Since then, I've documented nearly 300 similarities. Egyptians and Americans share a passion for sports, humor as a coping mechanism, deep family values, entrepreneurial drive, love of storytelling, and an ability to adapt through challenges. Both countries are seen as mediators in their regions. Both shape global culture through cinema and media. Both dream of upward mobility and celebrate self-made success.

The more I studied, the more I realized these parallels are not just cultural quirks. They are bridges, opportunities for deeper understanding and cooperation.

And so, before the Fellowship has even begun, I've already learned one of its greatest lessons: uniqueness is not a liability. It is an asset.

This journey isn't about blending in, it's about standing out, offering what only I can bring to the table, and embracing what life is preparing me for.

If there is one truth I now carry, it is this: when life places you in a room that feels intimidating, don't shrink. Build your own way to rise.

Because the "first timer" isn't an outsider. The first timer is often the one who sees differently, and in that difference lies the power to connect, to innovate, and to lead.

In politics, in business, and in life, that is what moves nations forward.

And that is the leader I intend to become.



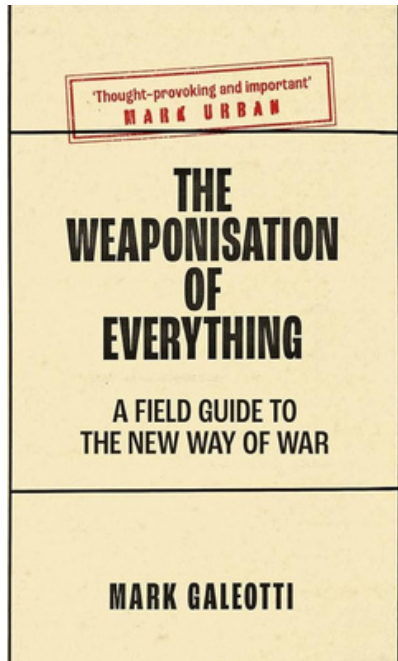
MARIAM AL SHERIF 2025 FELLOW

Mariam El Sherif is an entrepreneur & creative strategist. She is the Co-Founder of FAME, an international media agency, and the visionary behind multiple ventures spanning technology, healthcare, environment, and renewable energy, including One Fureverr, a pet adoption and rescue app, and GenHub, an AI-driven platform accelerating global genetic research and precision medicine.



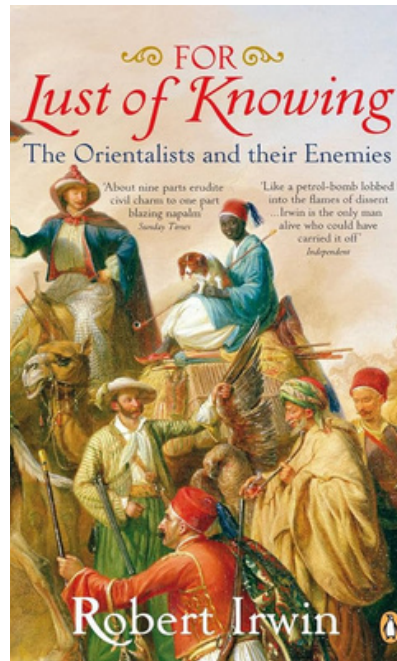
CHAIRMAN'S RECOMMENDATIONS

BOOKS YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS



The Weaponisation of Everything

The Weaponisation of Everything: A Field Guide to the New Way of War, Russian affairs expert Mark Galeotti argues that traditional warfare has become less viable. Instead, countries now engage in a new form of "permanent low-level conflict," where they weaponize a wide array of non-military tools to destabilize their adversaries.



For Lust of Knowing

For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies (2006) is a non-fiction book by British historian Robert Irwin that offers both a history of the academic discipline of Orientalism and a sharp rebuttal of Edward Said's influential 1978 book, *Orientalism*. It was published in the United States under the title *Dangerous Knowledge: Orientalism and Its Discontents*.

MOVIES & DOCUMENTARIES



Our Kind of Traitor (2016)

Our Kind of Traitor is a 2016 British spy thriller film based on the 2010 novel of the same name by author John le Carré. The story follows an ordinary English couple who get entangled in a high-stakes conspiracy involving the Russian mafia and the British Secret Service.



Official Secrets (2019)

Official Secrets is a 2019 political thriller film directed by Gavin Hood and starring Keira Knightley as real-life whistleblower Katharine Gun. The movie chronicles the events leading up to the 2003 Iraq War, when Gun, a British intelligence analyst, leaked a top-secret memo revealing an illegal joint U.S.-U.K. spying operation.

September 2025

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO OUR SEPTEMBER FELLOWS!



Jack Gordon
2017 Gabr Fellow
September 3



Nourhan Moussa
2014 Gabr Fellow
September 5



Hala Abdelgawad
2016 Gabr Fellow
September 12



Shady Saleh
2018 Gabr Fellow
September 12



Ahmed Mostafa
2018 Gabr Fellow
September 15



Haroun Habib
2013 Gabr Fellow
September 16



Michael Goff
2014 Gabr Fellow
September 17



Mohamed Hassan
2022 Gabr Fellow
September 24



Marielle Becker
2022 Gabr Fellow
September 28



TIMELY READS FOR UNCERTAIN TIMES

One Bank

Egypt's First Fully Digital Bank

LYDIA KAMIEL - 2025 FELLOW



In 2026, OneBank, a subsidiary of Banque Misr, will launch as Egypt's first fully digital bank, offering a seamless 24/7 experience with no branches, no paperwork, and no queues.

Formerly known as Misr Digital Innovation (MDI), OneBank is designed to bring speed, security, and convenience to Egyptians who increasingly expect banking to match the simplicity of ordering online.

OneBank Leadership

The bank's leadership reflects its ambitious vision. Khaled El-Attar has been appointed Chairperson, with Sherif El-Behiry as CEO and Managing Director. Together with board members Amal Anan, Anwar Zeidan, Nada Elshazly, and Ayman Ismail, they are tasked with reshaping the country's financial landscape.



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Digital Bank License

In July 2023, The Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) introduced regulations for licensing digital banks. These include a minimum of EGP 2 billion in paid-up capital, 30% ownership by a financial institution, and comprehensive IT and business strategies.

To move forward, OneBank is waiting for the issuance of full operational regulations, as well as the finalization of eKYC (electronic Know Your Customer) systems. eKYC will not only serve banks and financial institutions but will also form the foundation for creating digital identities (Haweya) for all citizens, identities that will eventually be linked across government institutions.

The Central Bank of Egypt CBE:

Some see the CBE as slow to embrace global technological change. However, its risk-averse approach has made Egypt's banking system one of the most stable worldwide. No Egyptian bank has collapsed, and depositors have always been protected. That same caution is now shaping the path to digital banking, ensuring innovation is introduced without compromising trust.



Lydia Kamiel is a Fintech and Tech-Enabled Partnerships Lead at CIB, dedicated to building bridges between corporates and startups for mutual growth. Working with more than 100 startups across diverse industries, she has guided founders through different stages of growth, from identifying market opportunities and shaping business models to securing strategic partnerships.

Her career journey, spanning event management, marketing, acceleration program management, and building partnerships, gives her a comprehensive perspective on the startup ecosystem.

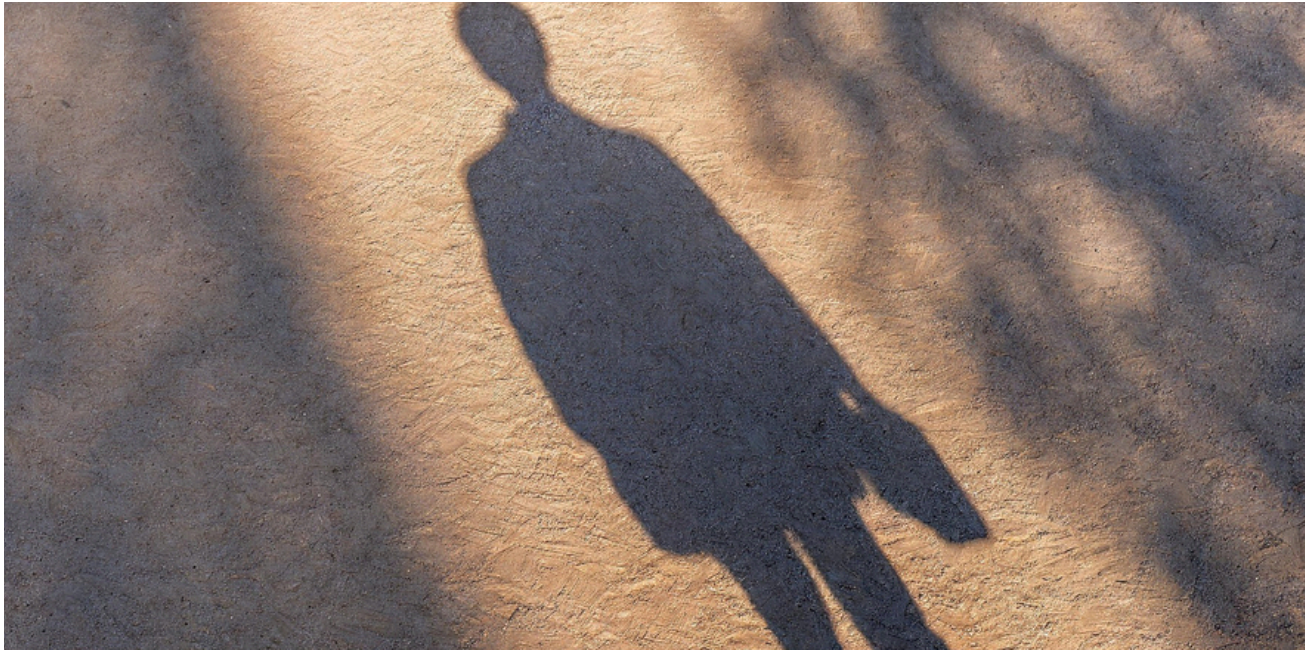
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A Shadow That Walks Ahead

MOHAMED SOBHY



I was standing before a hall filled with young people gathered in the Youth Parliament of Egypt. The faces before me were like varied mirrors: eyes shining with hope, others blazing with doubt, and some extinguished as if stolen from a night without a moon. Then I realized that the word spoken in such a place is not a mere passing sentence, but a responsibility laid into hearts looking toward tomorrow.

So I said to them: Every time you raise your hands to vote, whether here in the Youth Parliament or tomorrow in the Parliament of elders, remember that this hand is not yours alone. It is the hand of your fathers who toiled to build you a better future, and your mothers who prayed that truth not be lost among interests. It is the hand of a generation that wishes to rise, and the hand of a nation that fears falling. Voting is not a bodily motion, but a trust of history.

And when I left the hall that day, I felt my shadow walking a step ahead of me. As if reminding me that when the academic addresses youth, he does not speak to himself, but is judged at every moment—before history, before the people, and before his own inner silence.



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And here I remembered that academics are the commentators on judgments, experiences, and theories, and that they are responsible for uttering the word with a clear voice, not a faint one, and not—alas—with no voice at all. For the word unsaid is lost just as truth is lost if not defended.

Then I attended a youth conference outside Egypt, and there the matter seemed more complex. I delivered my intervention on environmental justice and the role of international law, and when I finished, the applause rose in the hall. For a moment, it seemed to me full endorsement, but I quickly realized that some of the applause was a protocol courtesy, some of it relief that the speech had ended, and only a few clapped with true conviction. Afterwards, a young man from one of the attending countries stood and said in a tone that combined sharpness and innocence: “How can we demand that our states abandon their industrial power or slow its pace, while this very power grants them their standing in the international order? Is not pollution, whatever its danger, a lesser price than the loss of influence and international weight?”

The question was more revealing than opposing. For I realized at that moment that pollution—whether in the environment or in the conscience—is not a secondary matter as it is sometimes portrayed, but a direct threat to both life and justice. And that our generation’s belief that it is “the savior” is not enough unless translated into serious action and a vision that transcends narrow interests. For setting aside private interests is the first condition for achieving a true balance between the power of states and the human right to live in a clean environment and a dignified life.

And between the village I came from, the university lecture hall that refined me, the grand hotels of Cairo conferences, and the regional platforms beyond them, I did not lose that thin thread that ties me to the canal and the soil. The thread that reminds me that everything we say in gilded halls must have an echo heard in the distant fields.

For the true politician or academic remains captive to a constant contradiction: between what he wants to say and what he can say, between what he believes and what he is permitted to declare. He lives as one walking a narrow bridge over a deep valley; if he looks right or left, he tumbles, and if he wishes to survive, he must step forward with steady stride, even if his heart trembles.



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And yet, I have not lost my faith that politics, however polluted, and science, however narrow its scope, can be means of salvation. For the international law that I teach and speak of was never a mere academic luxury, but an attempt to translate the dreams of the simple into a language that defends them in the face of the crises of both war and peace.



MOHAMED SOBHY

Mohamed Sobhy Hassan is an Assistant Lecturer of Public International Law at the Faculty of Law, Zagazig University, and a Ph.D. researcher in International Law. He holds an Advanced Nanodegree in Data Analysis from Udacity and has extensive experience in preparing policy papers and developing data-driven policies. He has published several peer-reviewed articles on international organizations, governance, digital rights, and universal jurisdiction, with a particular interest in the intersection between law and technology.

Beyond academia, Mohamed is also a chess player registered with the International Chess Federation (FIDE)

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*Charles Vacher, Bedouin encampment before the
Temple of Hathor at Dendera, Egypt, 1867 Pencil,
watercolour and bodycolour on paper*

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