Center for the Middle East renamed in honor of Ambassador Edward P. Djerejian

Rice University President David Leebron recently announced that “with the approval and endorsement of Rice University's Board of Trustees, the Baker Institute's Center for the Middle East will henceforth be known as the Edward P. Djerejian Center for the Middle East,” in recognition of Ambassador Djerejian’s role as founding director of the Baker Institute and of his “extraordinary leadership and deeply impactful foreign service career.”

The Edward P. Djerejian Center for the Middle East pursues key regional policies in areas including Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolution, the political economy of the Persian Gulf, refugees, human rights, U.S.-Iranian relations and Islamist movements. The center collaborates with other think tanks and with other experts within the institute as well as with Rice academics studying the history, politics and societies of the Middle East, thereby fostering informed, policy-relevant dialogue.

The first event to be hosted by the center under the new name will be a one-day conference with four panels on June 1. Experts will examine some of the most pressing issues in the region — including the ongoing developments between the Gulf Cooperation Council states and Iran, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Islamist politics and refugees. Click here to learn more or to register.

Recent commentary
The war in Ukraine and geopolitics

The war in Ukraine is many things, including an egregious act of Russian aggression and a tragedy for the Ukrainian people. But the war also marks a decisive moment for global politics in the case of European security architecture and in terms of the Far East — both of concern to the United States. Fellow Joe Barnes explains in the Baker Institute Blog.

Climate lessons from the faltering Texas power grid

Even before the high heat of summer, the Texas power grid is struggling. Only by transitioning away from the fossil fuel plants that exacerbate warming can we build back better grids and achieve a more affordable and resilient power supply, writes Baker Institute Rice Faculty Scholar Daniel Cohan. Read his post on the Baker Institute Blog, via The Hill.
Solutions needed to protect children, communities from gun violence

Tuesday's school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, is the latest horrifying example of gun violence in the United States. As the details continue to emerge, “we must look for solutions to ensure that all children are protected, and work collaboratively and without hesitation to improve upon policies and procedures to keep children safe within their schools and communities,” said Dr. Sandra McKay, the Baker Institute's nonresident fellow in firearm injury prevention and safety. “The kids need help now, and it is our ethical duty as physicians, researchers, parents and policy influencers to act.”

McKay, an associate professor of pediatrics at UTHealth Houston, and Baker Institute fellow Dr. Bindi Naik-Mathuria are part of the Center for Health and Biosciences' Firearm Injury Prevention and Safety Program, a new initiative spearheaded by CHB director Dr. Rola El-Serag. “Firearm injury prevention and safety is both critical and timely in addressing one of the most imminent public health crises we face today,” said El-Serag.

On Tuesday, June 21, the program will hold its first event at Baker Hall, a one-day symposium on firearm injury and prevention. Co-hosted by the Center for Health and Biosciences in collaboration with Baylor College of Medicine and The University of Texas Health Science Center, the event will highlight local research efforts and public health-based community interventions and strategies, culminating in a panel discussion with local health leaders to inform policy and community-based solutions. Click here for more details and to register.

In response to supply chain disruptions caused by the pandemic, “the U.S. Senate has unanimously approved the Ocean Shipping Reform Act of 2022 [but] the act may be a classic case of proposing a cure that is worse than the disease.”

Edward M. Emmett, fellow in energy and transportation, in the Baker Institute Blog, via The Hill

Newly published
UK, Texas should proceed carefully with, but not abandon, bilateral trade deal. The United Kingdom recently announced that it will pursue commercial arrangements with up to 20 individual U.S. states, beginning with Texas. In this brief, international trade fellow David Gantz explores what these arrangements could achieve and the potential legal and constitutional constraints that may limit their reach. Read it here.

War and tech. Following its invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent sanctions from Western governments and private corporations, Russia has become almost entirely disconnected from the technology supply chain, writes Baker Institute Rice Faculty Scholar Moshe Vardi. “In one fell swoop, the efficient (almost) unified world of global technology has come apart.” Vardi explains here.

OPEC is ignoring its mission statement — has it lost its way? Why is OPEC sitting on spare capacity that would reduce oil prices, rather than responding to global turmoil in energy markets? Center for Energy Studies fellows Mark Finley and Jim Krane suggest a potential rationale behind the lack of action, which they call a missed opportunity. Read their commentary here.

Upcoming events

Webinar — What’s Up with Prices at the Pump? U.S. gasoline and diesel prices have hit record levels. At this webinar, panelists discuss what’s driving prices at the pump and what we can expect next. May 26 | 3:00 p.m. CDT

Key Challenges for U.S. Policy in the Middle East. At this conference, experts examine the most pressing issues in the Middle East, including the ongoing developments between the Gulf Cooperation Council states and Iran, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Islamist politics, and refugees and migration. June 1 | 9:00 a.m. CDT

Preventing Firearm Injury in the Greater Houston Area Through Purpose and Policy. This symposium highlights local research efforts in firearm injury prevention, public health-based community interventions and innovative strategies to address firearm injury and violence in the greater Houston area and beyond. June 21 | 8:00 a.m. CDT
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Become a member of the Baker Institute Roundtable, Corporate Roundtable or Roundtable Young Professionals. Contact our development office for more information on how you can join the conversation on the relevant issues and ideas that shape our world, or text BAKER to 243725 to donate today!