

The Middle East Institute @ 75

Peace • Prosperity • Partnership





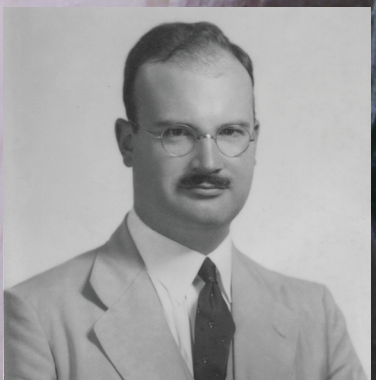
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At left: Al-Qarah Mountain caves at Al-Hofuf, Saudi Arabia, 1964 (MEI Colbert Held Archive)
 Left inset: MEI founder George Camp Keiser

your key to the Middle East...

— ITS PEOPLE
 — ITS POLITICS
 — ITS PROBLEMS
 — ITS PHILOSOPHIES
 — ITS POTENTIAL in
 the world of 1953

A MEMBERSHIP IN THE MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE ENTITLES YOU TO THESE PRIVILEGES



paintings by
MADIHA UMAR

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 WASHINGTON, D. C.

May 4-19 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 except Sunday



The Middle East Institute
NEWSLETTER

Volume 50 Number 1 January 1999

Developments in Iraq: Implications for US Policy

On November 16, MEI hosted a half-day conference on "Developments in Iraq: Implications for US Policy" at the Madison Hotel in Washington, DC. US Senator Chuck Hagel (R-Iowa) addressed a general audience on "US Policy toward Iraq," and James S. Lewis, Executive Director of the Iraq Program, gave the keynote address. Other speakers included Khalid Chahki, Director of the Center for Global Energy Studies, and Richard Murphy, Host 2, National Senior Fellow for Middle East Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Senator Hagel acknowledged that the situation developed in Iraq has, including the invasion in May, is grave. He stated that US interests and stability are both at risk. In light of this, Hagel discussed the need for a comprehensive review of US policy toward the region.

Senator Hagel stated that, in handling the situation, Iraq presents the US with a number of choices. He stated that the US should be prepared to act decisively and that the US should be prepared to act decisively.

Senator Hagel also stated that the US should be prepared to act decisively and that the US should be prepared to act decisively.



This page, inset photos: President Ford, Secretary Kissinger, and MEI President L. Dean Brown in the Cabinet Room; award-winning Lebanese filmmaker Nadine Labaki at MEI's 2019 Gala; a henna artist at MEI's Eid al-Adha event.

Institute for Middle East Studies

Organization of a Middle East Institute with headquarters in Washington will supply a need long felt in the United States among business men, scholars and officers of the Government. The Middle Eastern area, which has been at or near the center of international politics in the new world order, seems clearly destined to remain prominent for a considerable time to come.

The institute, chartered under the Diplomatic Affairs Foundation of New York, was launched a fortnight ago at a meeting in Washington of a group of business men, scholars and experts. Among those who have participated in its organization are: George Allen, United States Ambassador to Iran; Eric Archdeacon, member of the board of directors of Technical Managers, Inc.; Harold W. Glidden of the Library of Congress; George Camp Keiser of Winter Park, Fla.; Halford L. Hoskins, director of the Foreign Service Educational Foundation, and Henry S. Villard and Col. Edwin Wright of the Department of State.

Buildings Constructed

With adequate funds in hand for its initial activities, the institute already is taking shape. Plans have been drawn for a building, embodying characteristic features of oriental architecture, to be constructed as soon as building conditions will permit, to house the institute and its expanding library. In the meantime, the institute offices are located at the School of Advanced International Studies, 1906 Florida Avenue, N. W., Washington, with which it is affiliated.

tention upon the publication of a quarterly Journal of Middle Eastern Affairs, the first issue of which is scheduled to appear in December, 1946. The journal is planned as an authoritative review of contemporary conditions and problems in the Middle East. Its contents will represent a wide range of interests, including economic, political and sociological factors, and will include in each issue a full list of reviews of publications relating to the area.

Rapid Development

For the purposes of the institute, the "Middle East" is defined to include Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Transcaucasia, Afghanistan, India, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, the eastern Mediterranean approaches, the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt and North Africa.

The library of the institute, which includes a substantial collection of materials relating to the Middle East previously acquired by Diplomatic Affairs Foundation, is generously financed and is being developed rapidly by purchases both in this country and at various points abroad.

New accessions are being made with a view to supplementing rather than duplicating the fine collection of the Library of Congress and with the object of providing in Washington one of the principal centers of research in this field. Until its new quarters are constructed, the library is being housed at a special collection at the School of Advanced International Studies.

While major attention will be devoted to the journal during the next several months, the institute soon will extend its activities.



75 YEARS OF HISTORY

Top left: An article in the editorial section of the *New York Times* announcing the establishment of the Middle East Institute, June 4, 1946.

Bottom left: The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, still under repair with dull gray lead-covered dome, 1958 (*MEI Colbert Held Archive*)

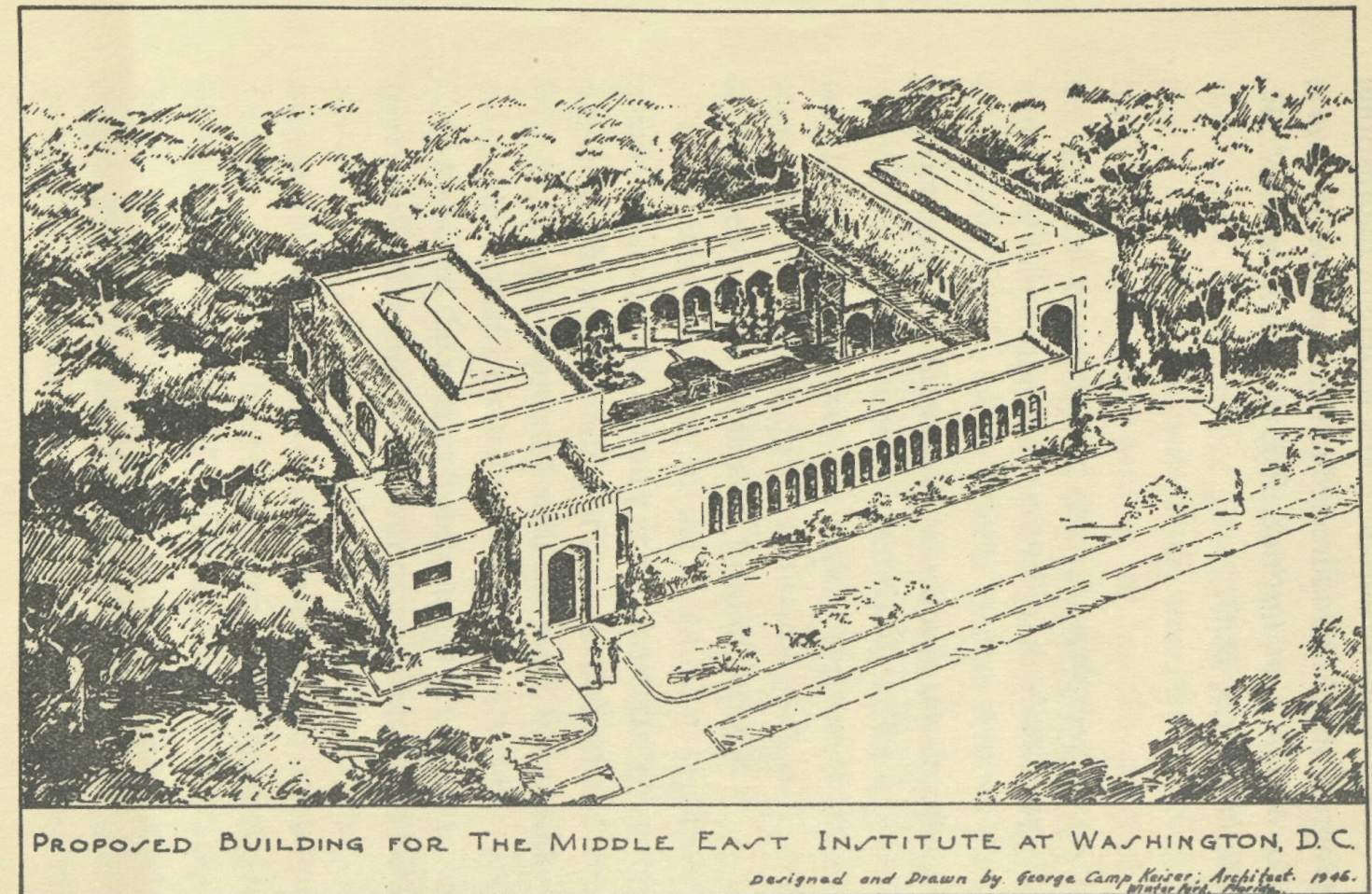
Top right: A young silver engraver in Cairo crafting a tray in Khan el-Khalili, 1962 (*MEI Colbert Held Archive*)

Inset: Newspaper clipping of an MEI conference, 1955

Bottom right: Founder George Camp Keiser's original 1946 design for MEI's headquarters.



An interested audience at the conference listens to a lecture on "Political Evolution in the Middle East" delivered by Farid Hanania, political scientist from the American University of Beirut now visiting professor at the University of Virginia.





ISRAEL and the PALESTINE ARABS
 BY Don Peretz
with a foreword by
ROGER BALDWIN
 CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
 International League
 for the Rights of Man

\$5
 LIST PRICE

Dr. Peretz has written a major work on the relationships between Israel, the Arab refugees from Palestine and its Arab minority. Laws, regulations, United Nations decisions and negotiations, as well as public attitudes are documented fully. This work is the fruit of several years of study and residence in Israel and merits the attention of all who wish to understand what is, perhaps, the most serious problem of the Middle East.

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INTERESTED IN THE MIDDLE EAST? ITS PEOPLE

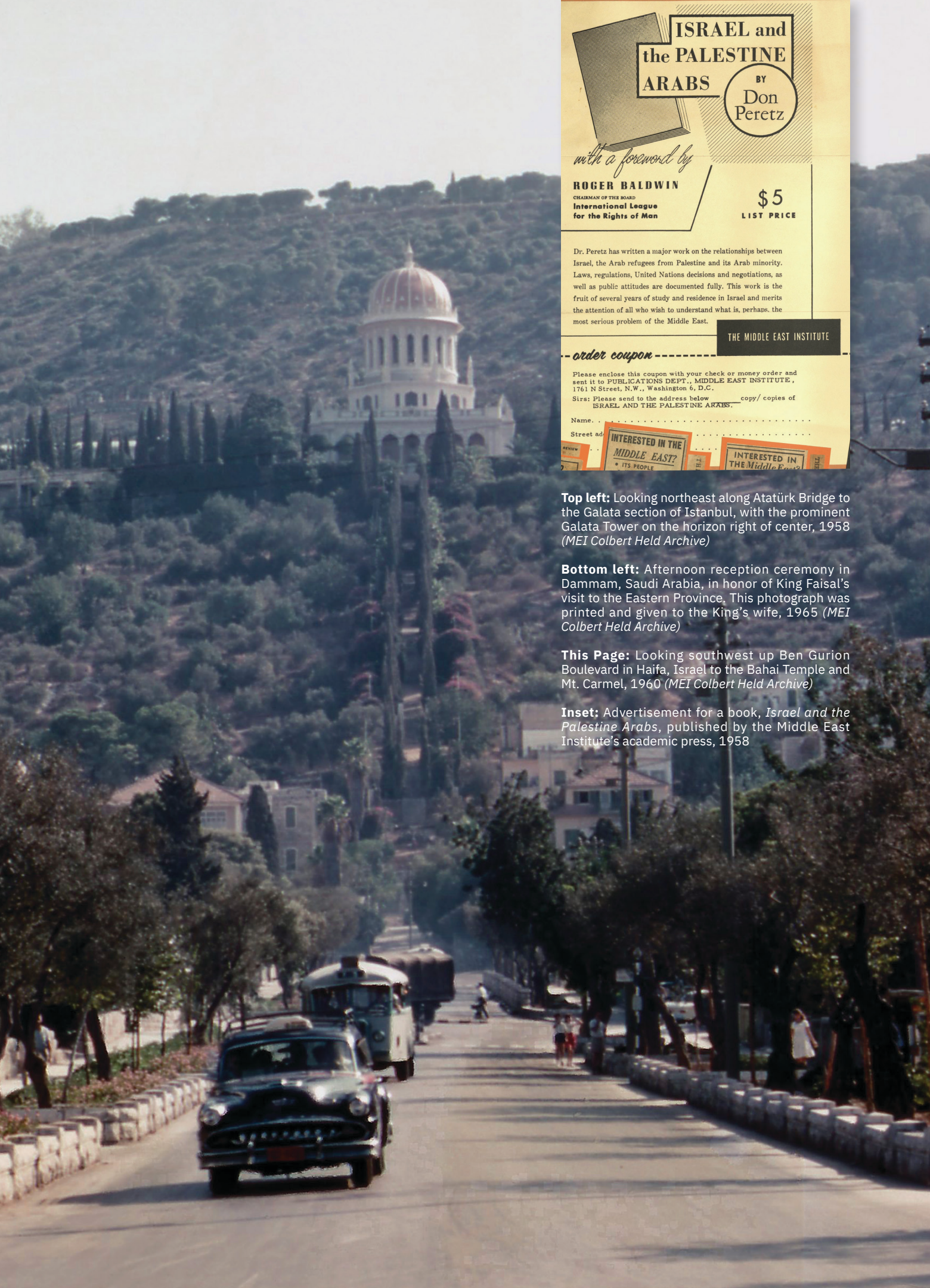
INTERESTED IN THE Middle East?

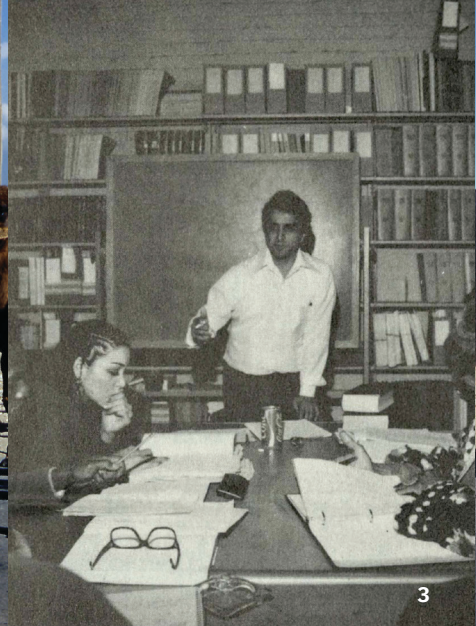
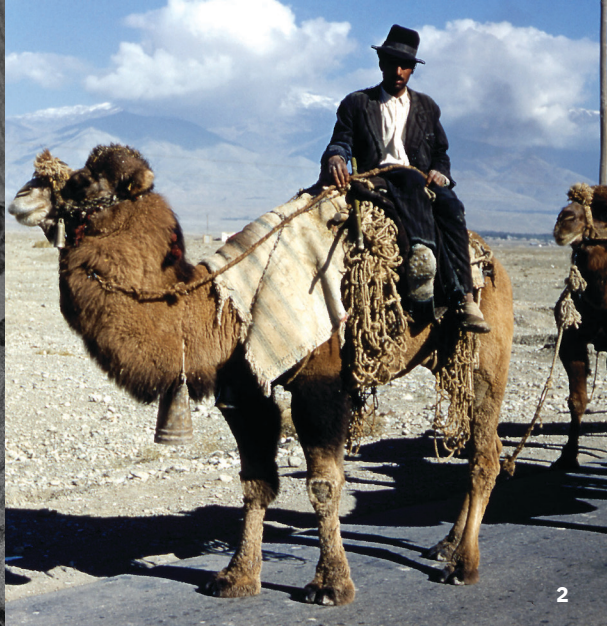
Top left: Looking northeast along Atatürk Bridge to the Galata section of Istanbul, with the prominent Galata Tower on the horizon right of center, 1958 (MEI Colbert Held Archive)

Bottom left: Afternoon reception ceremony in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, in honor of King Faisal's visit to the Eastern Province. This photograph was printed and given to the King's wife, 1965 (MEI Colbert Held Archive)

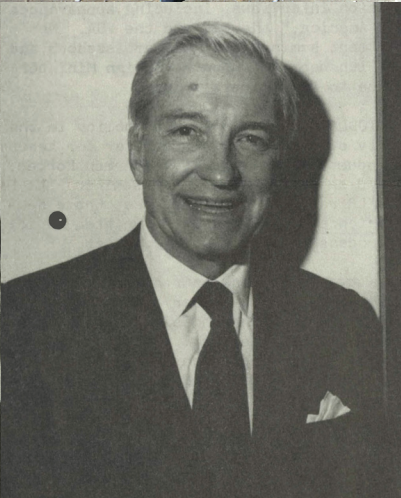
This Page: Looking southwest up Ben Gurion Boulevard in Haifa, Israel to the Bahai Temple and Mt. Carmel, 1960 (MEI Colbert Held Archive)

Inset: Advertisement for a book, *Israel and the Palestine Arabs*, published by the Middle East Institute's academic press, 1958





1. MEI President and former intelligence officer **Kermit Roosevelt**, 1950s
2. Leader of a camel train near Tehran, Iran, 1957 (MEI Colbert Held Archive)
3. An Arabic language class at MEI, 1955
4. MEI President **Raymond Hare** with Senator **Hubert Humphrey** in Cairo, 1957
5. Rey, Iran: Young men at Cheshmeh Ali spring with 1831 Qajar inscription of Shah Fathali and rugs drying after being washed, 1969 (MEI Colbert Held Archive)
6. Senator **J. William Fulbright** with photojournalist **Mathias Oppersdorff** at MEI's *Images of Yemen* exhibit, 1980
7. MEI President **L. Dean Brown** with Senator **Charles H. Percy** at MEI's 39th Annual Banquet, 1980
8. Young Yemeni boy and four girls in village of Suq al-Khamis, Yemen, all in traditional regional attire, 1972 (MEI Colbert Held Archive)
9. **HRH Princess Wijdan Ali** of Jordan with her painting, *Turquoise City*, at a special exhibit organized by MEI, 1979
10. First Lady of Egypt **Mrs. Jehan Sadat** with MEI President **L. Dean Brown** at an opening reception for "Egypt Today," 1981
11. MEI President and Special Emissary to Lebanon **L. Dean Brown** (middle, standing) with CIA Director **George H.W. Bush** and President **Gerald Ford** discussing the evacuation of Americans from Beirut at a 1976 meeting of the National Security Council. Also present were Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, White House Chief of Staff Dick Cheney, Assistant for National Security Affairs Brent Scowcroft, and General George S. Brown, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.





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- 1. Japan's Ambassador to the US **Ryohei Murata** and MEI President **Lucius Battle**, 1990
- 2. Pakistani Prime Minister **Benazir Bhutto** and *Middle East Journal* Editor **Mary-Jane Deeb**, 1997
- 3. Secretary **Madeleine Albright** and MEI President **Roscoe Suddarth** at MEI conference on US policy in Iraq, 1997
- 4. MEI event featuring the Rug Project, a Turkish women's cooperative encouraging conservation of traditional techniques, 2000
- 5. Founding GCC Secretary-General **Abdullah Bishara** speaks at an MEI roundtable, 1990
- 6. Secretary **Madeleine Albright** announces an easing of trade sanctions on Iranian imports during an MEI conference address, 2000
- 7. Former National Security Advisor **Zbigniew Brzezinski** delivers the luncheon address at MEI's Gulf conference, 1991
- 8. Ambassador **Wendy Chamberlin** in her position as USAID Assistant Administrator, 2003. She assumed the MEI presidency four years later.
- 9. President **Bill Clinton** delivers the keynote speech at MEI's 64th Annual Awards Banquet, 2010
- 10. Senator **John McCain** addresses the Syrian crisis at MEI's EU-Washington Forum, 2014
- 11-13. (Left to right) Egyptian satirist **Bassem Youssef** and political speechwriter **David Litt**, 2016; Secretary of the District of Columbia **Kimberly Bassett**, 2019; Ambassador **Deborah Jones**, 2014
- 14. MEI's Board of Governors at the groundbreaking on the new headquarters, 2017
- 15. Ambassador **William Burns**, now CIA Director, on a panel at MEI, 2020
- 16. Director of the Domestic Policy Council and former National Security Advisor **Susan Rice** at MEI's Grand Opening, 2019
- 17. A dance troupe teaches *dabke* to hundreds of attendees at DC's citywide "Art All Night" event, 2019



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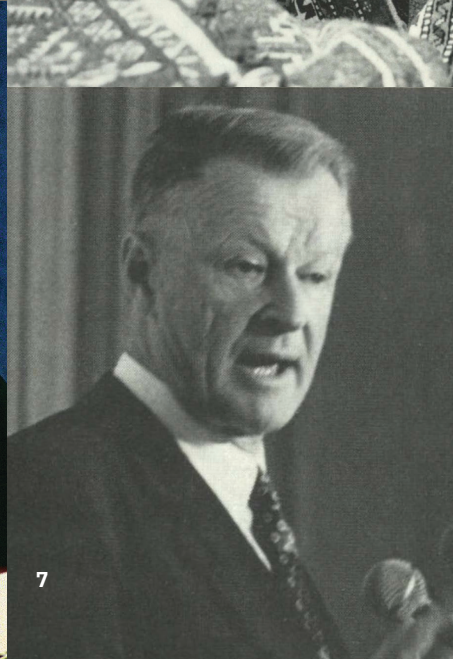
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GRAND OPENING

PLEASE SAVE THE DATE FOR THE VIP
GRAND OPENING OF THE MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE'S
NEWLY RENOVATED HEADQUARTERS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2019
6:00pm-8:00pm



INVITATION TO FOLLOW

1763 N STREET NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20036

For more information, please contact Hayley Smart at hsmart@mei.edu

Letter from the Chairman

2020 was a universally challenging year for individuals and institutions. In many realms, the Covid-19 pandemic has permanently altered the ways in which organizations, governments, and economies will function well into the future. Circumstances over the last year have evinced existing issues and exacerbated others of high, even existential, consequence.

The Middle East Institute proved its resilience from an early point, adapting to the new realities of remote work while ensuring the safety of our colleagues and their families. I give my sincerest thanks to our tireless leadership and staff, who did not merely succeed, but excelled, pushing MEI to have one of the most productive years in its 75-year history. Across the board, MEI's impact through our policy research, education, and elevation of the region's diverse cultures has remained unmatched.

MEI's experts provided policy analysis and recommendations to Congress, federal agencies, and the White House as our nation weathered both a public health tragedy and a presidential election that tested the foundations of American democracy. These thought leaders will now work alongside the new administration, helping chart the course for US policy in a rapidly-changing Middle East.

Bringing together leaders from the United States and the Middle East and North Africa is a key element of MEI's strategic outreach to policy, commercial, and civil society communities. Last year, our deep reach into these sectors and adoption



of virtual event formats drew participation from high-level officials and luminaries worldwide whose circumstances might have previously made travel to DC difficult. Similarly, attendance at these events increased by as much as tenfold from 2019.

It is with humility and renewed drive we announce that, for the third consecutive year, the University of Pennsylvania's Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program has ranked MEI as the top Middle East-focused think tank in the United States, and in the top one percent overall of the more than 2,200 think tanks in America.

The Institute will celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2021 with an ambitious agenda. We will host marquee events throughout the year, including major conferences on US foreign policy, cybersecurity, and climate. We will hold our first-ever Futures Forum this fall, convening leading experts and practitioners in finance, energy, women's and youth issues, security, and more to anticipate challenges and opportunities on the region's horizon. We will also expand our Board of Governors and International Advisory Council to include new members who share our vision and commitment to the sustainable governance of MEI for the next 75 years.

As Chairman for nearly a decade, I harbor both immense pride in what we have collectively achieved and great hope for the exciting possibilities ahead.

With Gratitude,

Richard A. Clarke, Chairman, Board of Governors

Letter from the President

For MEI, 2020 was the worst of years, but also in some ways the best of years. Our diverse team suffered the same challenges and setbacks that everyone did around the world in the face of a once-in-a-century pandemic.

This forced the closure of our new headquarters, the temporary shuttering of our art gallery and teaching classrooms, and the transition to the world of online work from home. But our amazing team adapted quickly and effectively to the new environment, and within weeks the institution was jumping ahead in terms of the quantity and quality of its output. Our events became virtual, our staff worked remotely, yet our impact reached historic levels. We quickly developed an online system to host public and private events. In doing so, we were able to significantly increase the reach of our work globally and include perspectives from speakers previously limited by geographic distances. Attendance at our events increased by 1,000%.

For 75 years, MEI has worked at the forefront of understanding and finding solutions to the pressing challenges of the region. We strive to stay on the cutting edge of policy by anticipating and tackling emergent issues, involving diverse voices, and purposefully elevating the perspectives of next-generation leaders. We prioritize solutions that involve the direct participation of stakeholders on the ground. This year, we reached deep into the region and built a network of think tanks with whom we will partner on a wide variety of projects.

MEI's focus is, and always has been, more than policy. It is our belief that to understand such a large and complex region, it is necessary to examine the languages, art, and cultures of its

many and diverse peoples. This focus sets us apart from organizations in the think tank community, but it is our strength, and at the core of our mission "to promote knowledge of the Middle East in America and strengthen understanding of the United States by the peoples and governments of the region."

The Middle East and North Africa will be the setting for epochal changes in the years ahead. In addition to critical threats, there are exciting opportunities: a young population with new ideas and a thirst for change; new alliances between old foes that could bring about region-wide prosperity and possibly peace; and technological advances that promise a better life for millions.


Going forward, MEI's focus will increasingly be on the future. We will be convening policymakers, business leaders, and a new generation of young thinkers and activists in solutions-driven conversations that illuminate the path toward a brighter future for this long-troubled region.

Sincerely,

Paul Salem, President





 **Amb. Gerald Feierstein**
Senior Vice President



 **Amb. Dina Kavar**
Jordan's Ambassador to the United States

“

It's clear to me that with the headwinds and transformational opportunities we all face today, we cannot afford for the global community to turn inwards. How much we all embrace this is going to shape growth, prosperity, and sustainability as we recover from Covid and, frankly, for generations to come.

— KHALDOON MUBARAK, CEO, MUBADALA

”

2020 VIRTUAL AWARDS GALA

In response to a year defined by crisis, MEI's 2020 Annual Awards Gala celebrated human compassion and ingenuity in the face of great tragedy. The virtual event brought

together distinguished speakers and attendees from all over the world to honor our awardees: the digital health platform Altibbi, whose Covid-19 hotlines provided low-cost and free critical telemedicine to Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, and Lebanon; and the Egyptian Food Bank, which fed 12 million people in 60 days at the height of the pandemic.



 **Khaldoon Khalifa Al Mubarak**
CEO, Mubadala Investment Company



 **Michelle Nunn**
President and CEO, CARE USA

Immediately following World War II, a group of Americans with experience in the Middle East recognized that the region would soon become a critical nexus in the postwar world, and that there existed no organization equipped to address the knowledge gap. They resolved to fill the vacuum. On May 8, 1946, the Middle East Institute (MEI) became the first Washington-based think tank dedicated to the study of the Middle East.

The interdisciplinary concept of area studies was relatively new at the time. It is a testament to our founders' foresight that the vision they laid out, which saw policy, culture, and education as inextricably intertwined, remains relevant and unchanged to this day.

In its nascent stages, the Institute was an informal group where members met to discuss Middle Eastern affairs. These early members included not only established historians, diplomats, legislators, and anthropologists, but also early-career scholars and professionals who would go on to hold positions of great influence in both the US and the Middle East. Within its first year MEI had published the first issue of the *Middle East Journal*, created a robust library, and hosted its first annual Middle East Conference. MEI's membership swelled throughout the 1950s as the Institute started its own scholarly press and began to offer language instruction.

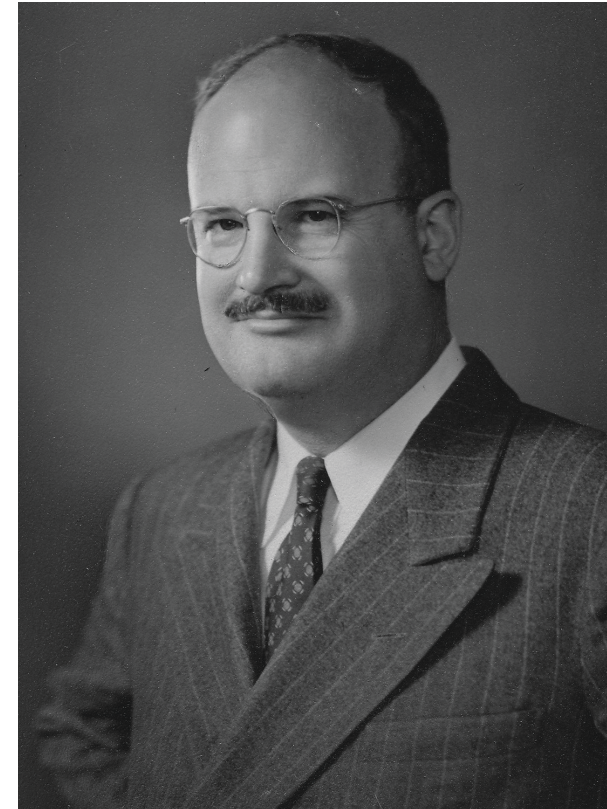
A LEGACY WORTH CELEBRATING

In the 1970s and 80s, American interest in the Middle East reached a new zenith as oil wealth proliferated in the Gulf and a series of regional conflicts commanded global attention. The Institute's vision, scope, and capacity expanded accordingly. As other think tanks began to focus on Middle Eastern affairs and the field of Middle East studies developed into a vibrant and highly policy-relevant academic discipline, MEI distinguished itself by emphasizing its well-established neutrality on political questions and an environment of open debate accessible to both specialists and the general public.

Post-2001, the prevailing tone in coverage of the Middle East shifted. Terrorism and war dominated media attention. Political polarization led to a retreat of neutral voices and fear infected public discourse. The Institute's reputation for providing reliable, accurate information and insight on the region grew over the following decade and through the hopeful years of the Arab Uprisings, particularly as its research gained traction among media outlets.

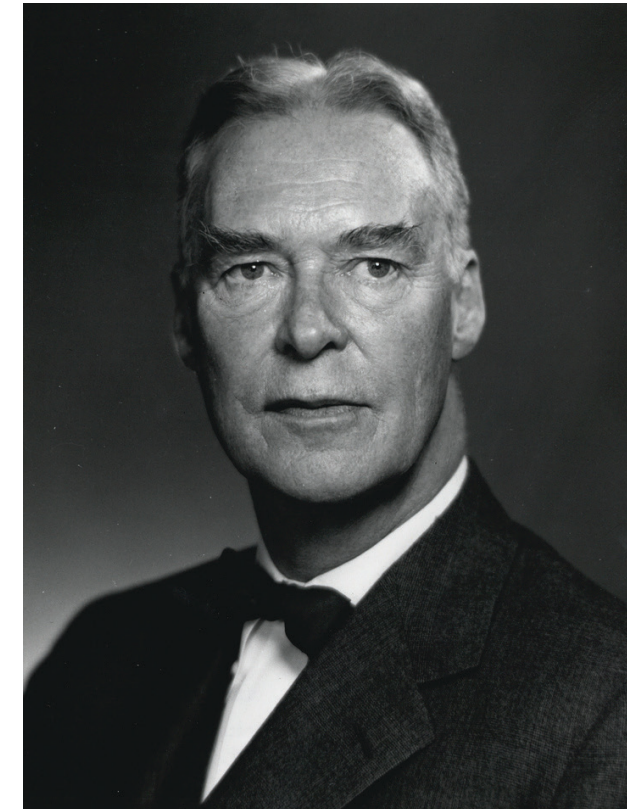
Public interest in the Middle East has waxed and waned since MEI's founding. The role of the United States in the region has evolved, and our collective fates have become ever more intimately entwined. Through it all, MEI has maintained its commitment to objectivity, intellectual rigor, and public service. As shared and uniquely modern challenges—climate change, cybersecurity, social justice, and others—take center stage, Keiser's noble vision will continue to animate our every movement.

The Founders



GEORGE CAMP KEISER (TOP LEFT)

A World War II veteran and scholar of Islamic art and architecture, Keiser was the Institute's primary benefactor until his death in 1956.



CHRISTIAN HERTER (TOP RIGHT)

Herter was a foreign policy-minded Massachusetts congressman who went on to become Eisenhower's Secretary of State, and later Kennedy's US Trade Representative.

HARVEY HALL (NOT PICTURED)

Hall was an instructor at the American University of Beirut who became the first editor of the *Middle East Journal*.



HALFORD HOSKINS (BOTTOM RIGHT)

Hoskins went on to become the founding dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, and the first director of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

MEETING THE MOMENT

This year will mark the 75th anniversary of the Middle East Institute's founding. While we have come a long way since our founders first convened in 1946, we have remained faithful to the mission they set out: to promote knowledge of the Middle East in America, and to strengthen understanding of the United States by the peoples and governments of the region.

Recognizing that the US-Middle East partnership is not only one between governments, but one between peoples, cultures, and civilizations, today we take a uniquely holistic approach—with integrated programming spanning policy, arts and culture, and education—that helps us reinforce common values, build on shared interests, and reduce mutual threats and risks.

In this period of unprecedented turbulence, we aim to take advantage of opportunities to work with the new administration, regional leaders, and other stakeholders to advance productive American engagement with the Middle East. We intend to leverage our expertise and expand on our policy work to meet the needs of today—and anticipate the needs of the future.

The task before us is daunting. So this year, while we will reflect on our legacy and celebrate 75 years of MEI, we are setting our sights on the next 75.



An Integrated Think Tank for the 21st Century

MEI is leading the way for a new kind of think tank: one that thrives at the intersection of policy and culture. Our centers reflect our dedication to promoting a more comprehensive understanding of the region.

Policy Impact

The Policy Center brings unmatched expertise and influence, convening key stakeholders, producing original research, and communicating with decision makers.

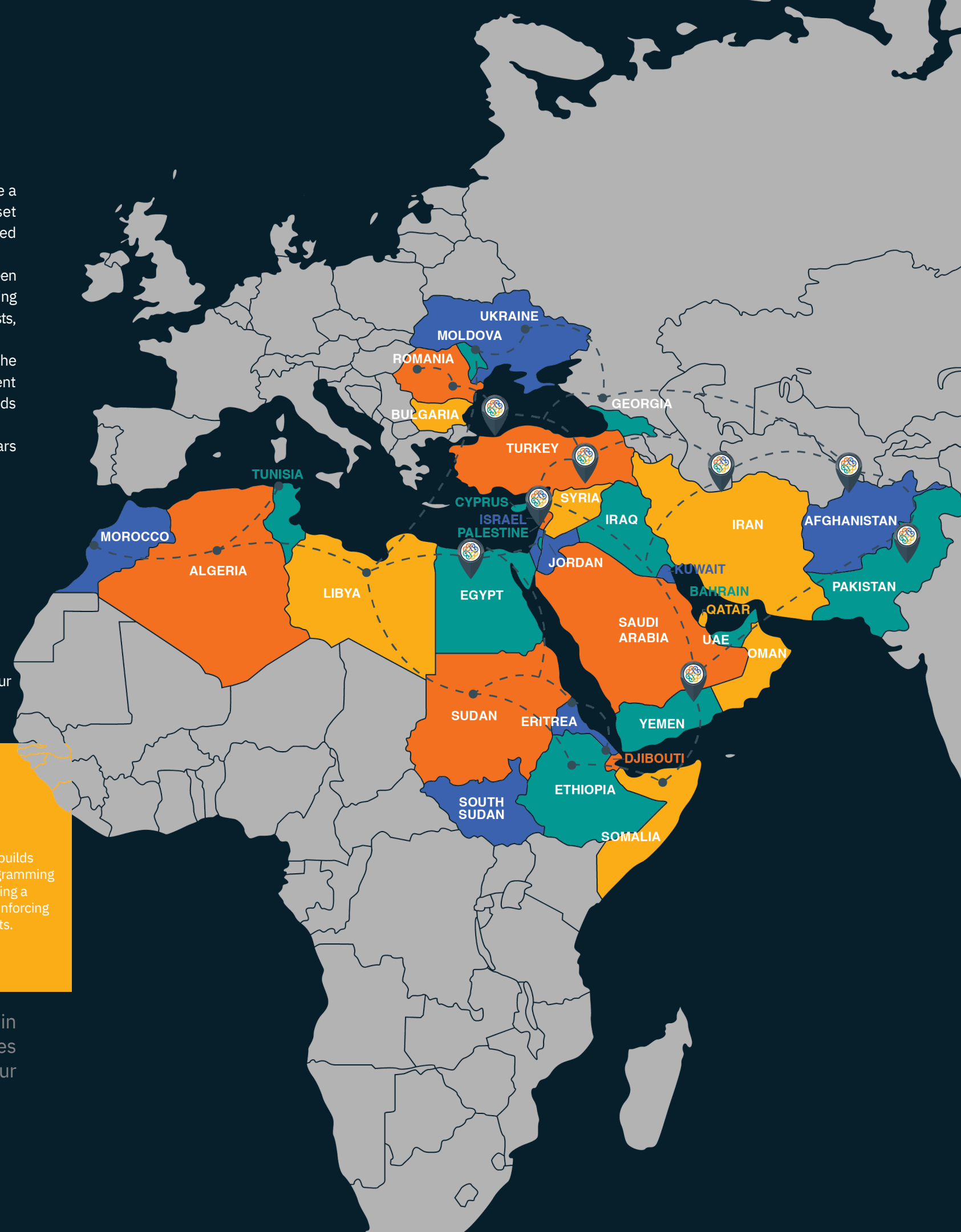
Education

Our Education Center offers a wide variety of resources, including language classes and a library, to increase knowledge of the region and shape the next generation of experts.

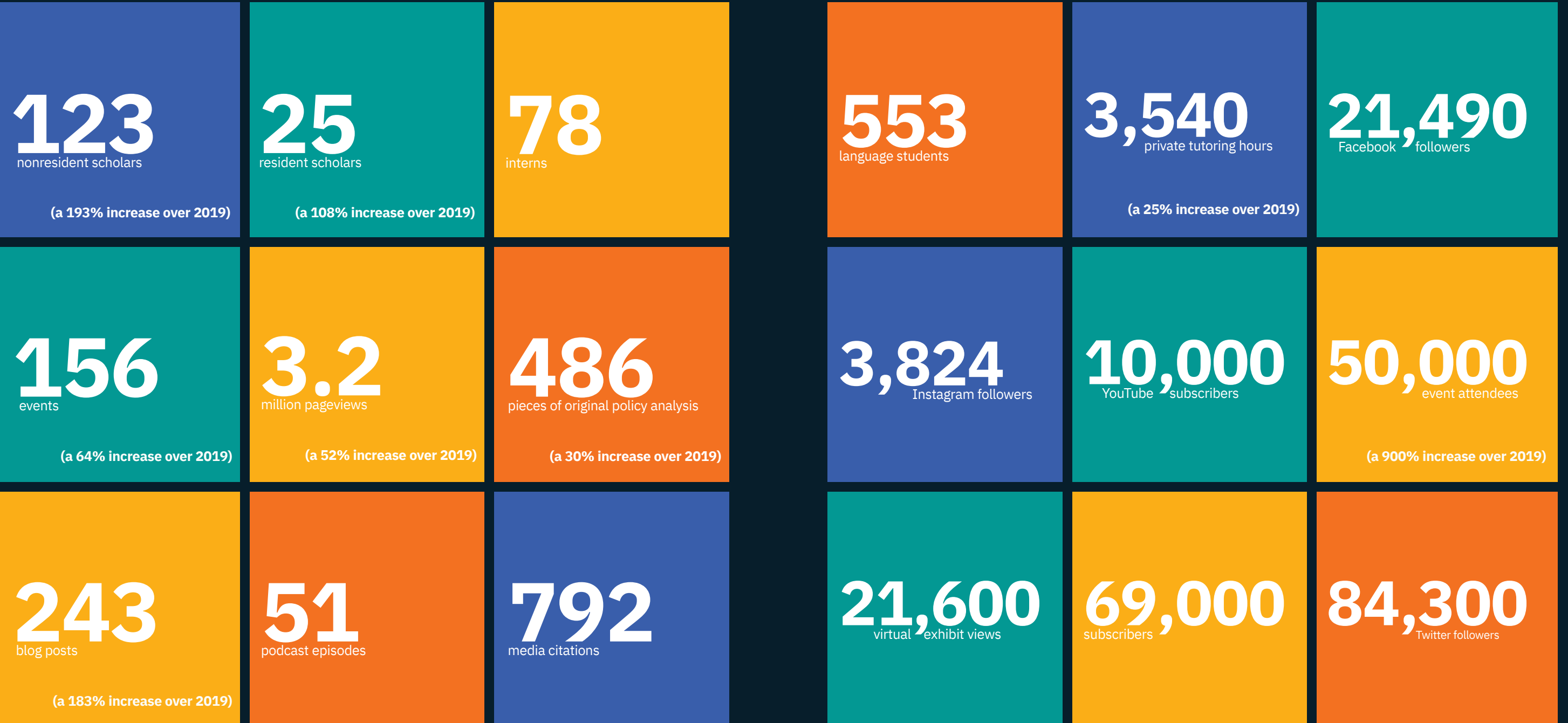
Cultural Diplomacy

The Arts and Culture Center builds bridges through cultural programming for diverse audiences, providing a platform for dialogue, and reinforcing shared values through the arts.

Our MEI@75 programming will include, among other events, a Policy Conference in **April** on the Biden Administration's first 100 days, a weeklong Middle East Futures Forum in **October**, and our 75th Annual Awards Gala in **November**. Please check our website throughout the year for updates.



2020 BY THE NUMBERS





MEI
Policy Center

For 75 years, MEI's Policy Center has been the bedrock of the organization. With 18 dedicated programs, 25 resident and more than 120 non-resident experts, MEI covers the countries of the region as well as emerging and cross-cutting issues such as cybersecurity, climate change, and defense and security, and looks broadly at the region's trajectory through our Strategic Foresight Initiative.



Peace.

1946

The Middle East Institute is chartered under the Diplomatic Affairs Foundation

Like all organizations, MEI responded to the pandemic by shifting to remote work and events. In addition, we connected with organizations on the ground in the Middle East to share national and regional responses and best practices. The Covid-19 pandemic, an ongoing global tragedy, radically changed the lives of people across the Middle East. MEI provided in-depth analysis of the virus's effects across the region, focusing on both the immediate impact and the potential long-term ramifications of this "black swan" event.

The US Presidential Election and New Administration

Leading up to the election, MEI assembled a briefing book for the presidential candidates offering policy insights from scholars on key issues in the Middle East and contributed to broader discussions about the challenges and opportunities for US policy in the region.

The US presidential election in November ultimately had significant ramifications for American policy toward the Middle East. MEI provided robust coverage of how the election was perceived across the region and the potential impact of the transition from the Trump to Biden administrations. In addition, MEI held a number of webinars to elaborate on important topics to brief the next administration.

Building a Regional Think Tank Network

Making the most of the circumstances, the pandemic-driven transition to an all-virtual format gave MEI the opportunity to establish a network of regional think tanks stretching from Morocco to Yemen. Collaborations with these regional partners on new projects in Egypt, Turkey, and the Gulf are already underway; for instance, in fall 2020, MEI coordinated with the Policy Center for the New South in Rabat and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung office in Tunis on a very well-received roundtable discussion that brought together experts from around the world to compare perspectives on the Libya crisis. As a vital part of our strategy for the future, we are excited to partner with these think tanks on a variety of projects.

Launch of the Research Unit

In an effort to lead critical conversations, promote analyses, and define resolutions of the critical cross-cutting issues that will challenge the region and US regional policies, MEI launched a new Research Unit to identify key issues that will drive political, economic, and social developments in the region over the next decade. Drawing on the establishment of the Regional Think Tank Network, the Research Unit will work with MEI resident and non-resident scholars to develop collaborative projects addressing such issues as environment and climate, democracy and governance, macro-economy, demography, and refugees and migration to ultimately present implementable recommendations to regional public and private sector entities as well as the US government and international organizations.

1947

MEI's early membership grows to include such luminaries as Hagop Kevorkian, the famed archaeologist, art collector, and philanthropist; Joseph Grew, the wartime US ambassador to Japan whose strategic diplomacy as Under Secretary of State in 1945 facilitated the Japanese Emperor's surrender; Abdel Moneim el-Kaissouni, who went on to assume posts as the United Arab Republic's Minister of Economy and later Deputy Prime Minister of Egypt; Eliahu Eilat, who would become Israel's first ambassador to the United States; and George Lenczowski, one of the nation's first major scholars of the modern Middle East, who in 1963 founded the Center for Middle East Studies at Berkeley



MEI established several new long-term events series and initiatives in 2020. In partnership with Southern Methodist University and Howard University, MEI is developing a program to bring together university students from the United States and the Middle East to hold a semester-long student-run forum. These include a series on human rights and migration, which has highlighted the work of activists and others on the ground in the region; the "Voices from Turkish Politics" series, bringing prominent figures in the Turkish political sphere to MEI's platform; the MEI Leadership Series, which has to date featured the Foreign Ministers of Jordan and the UAE, the Prime Minister of Palestine, and others; and its companion Defense Leadership Series, which is a forum for current and former high-level military and defense leaders from both the United States and the Middle East.

The following are 2020 highlights from some of our policy programs.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Cyber Program

In 2020, the new Cyber Program published its first book, *Cyber War and Cyber Peace in the Middle East*, bringing together leading cyber scholars from the US and the region to examine the various issues confronting the region in the realms of cyber security, information operations, surveillance, and authoritarian control of cyberspace. The program's study group met in May to discuss promoting stability in cyberspace and regulating the sale of hacking tools, a meeting that formed the backbone of the book's final chapter focusing on policy solutions to create a more secure and safe regional cyberspace.

In September's study group

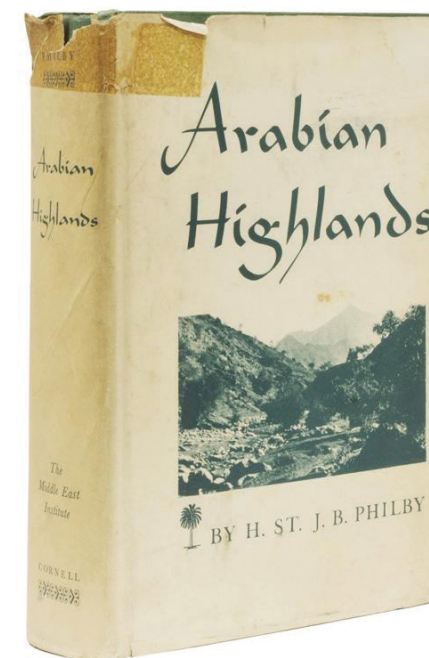
meeting, we focused on how to apply the conclusions of the Cyberspace Solarium Commission to US foreign policy in the Middle East. This led to the development of a cyber addendum to the Abraham Accords prepared at the request of the White House National Security Council. The proposed addendum would promote mutual cooperation and confidence-building between the US and Israel.

Strategic Foresight Initiative

With an eye towards the future, MEI also launched the Strategic Foresight Initiative in 2020. The aim of the Initiative is to look over the horizon at key drivers of change that could create alternative futures for the Middle East region and help decision-makers chart a course forward. The program is led by Steven Kenney, who worked for more than 15 years with world-renowned futurist Alvin Toffler (author of the seminal book *Future Shock*), and counts as collaborators highly-regarded foresight practitioners from Carleton University, the

National Defense University, and the European Union Institute for Security Studies, among others.

The Strategic Foresight Initiative published "Middle East Conflict and Covid-19: A View From 2025," which suggests that the pandemic could potentially be a spur for reimagining regional security cooperation as an "architecture" of institutional mechanisms focused on resilience. The program also worked with MEI's Frontier Europe Initiative, developing a set of alternative future scenarios that will inform recommendations from Frontier Europe on a future US strategy for the Black Sea region.



1952

The Institute's scholarly book program begins with the publication of British Arabist and explorer St John Philby's *Arabian Highlands*. For decades, the press publishes the works of the 20th century's leading Middle East experts—among them Anthony Cordesman, L. Carl Brown, John Badeau, Majid Khadduri, Ruhi Ramazani, and Milton Viorst

Countering Terrorism and Extremism

MEI's Countering Terrorism and Extremism Program recently formed an advisory council, comprising 14

distinguished individuals, to guide the program going forward. It has also secured new program support from Bahrain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Vincent Viola, who established West Point's Combating Terrorism Center. These developments will elevate the program and promote its pivotal work, which in 2020 included outstanding publications like "Rethinking US Counterterrorism Policy" by non-resident scholar and 30+ year CIA veteran Douglas London. London argues that America is long overdue to update its counterterrorism strategy and, perhaps more importantly, how we measure success—while terrorist groups have innovated and adapted, US strategy has remained unchanged, fighting yesterday's war while neglecting both present-day threats and those over the near horizon. To complement this work, we held an accompanying public event featuring Christopher Costa (former NSC, US Navy SEAL) and Karen Greenberg (Fordham University).

Defense and Security

The Defense and Security Program at MEI is one of the fastest-growing and most prestigious defense programs in the US public policy community. With a roster that includes national security luminaries such as former US Central Command (CENTCOM) commander Joseph Votel and former Special Operations Command (SOCOM) commander Michael Nagata, the program is well-positioned to continue its high-impact, policy-relevant work on US defense policy and strategy in the region.

Launched in June 2020,

1955

MEI moves into a rowhouse near Dupont Circle, where it remains today, and holds its first language classes



More than 500 Middle Eastern diplomats, educators, U.S. government officials and private American citizens interested in the area attended the recent seventh annual conference sponsored by the Middle East Institute of Washington. Here, delegates are shown registering. Theme of the conference was "Evolution in the Middle East: Reform, Results and Change." The large number of Americans attending indicates the growing U.S. interest in the people and problems of the area.

The Defense Leadership Series has solidified the Institute's intellectual partnership with CENTCOM, which is unique among US think tanks.

Program Director Bilal Saab penned an October op-ed for *Defense One* on the Pentagon's new initiative to strengthen US alliances and partnerships, which prompted the Department of Defense to invite him to present his thoughts virtually to top US defense leadership. A later analysis for Foreign Policy entitled "Trump's Curious Multilateralism" on US efforts to promote a multi-lateral approach to regional security at sea in the Persian Gulf similarly led to a virtual meeting with NAVCENT.



1970

The George Camp Keiser Library begins to assemble a collection of films that can be rented for educational purposes. New films are screened to the public as they are acquired, and the collection eventually swells to more than 75 films. MEI continues to send films from this library across the United States for over 15 years

the program's ongoing Defense Leadership Series has been a tremendous success, with nine episodes featuring the nation's top defense and military leaders including CENTCOM's current commander, General Kenneth F. McKenzie, and Vice Admiral James Malloy, the Command's new deputy commander who previously served as the commander of Naval Central Command (NAVCENT). Other guests included the current director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), Heidi Grant, and the former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Michele Flournoy.

REGIONAL AFFAIRS

Syria Program

MEI was proud to establish a standalone Syria Program in 2020, which last year recruited 15 world-leading non-resident scholars who now provide expertise on every aspect of the Syrian crisis and accompanying situations. The program convened all 15 scholars from

Additions to the MEI Team



STEVEN KENNEY

COORDINATOR OF STRATEGIC FORESIGHT INITIATIVE

Steven Kenney is the founder and principal of Foresight Vector LLC, an advisory firm he created to help organizations develop the strategies they need to achieve their greatest success. He is widely recognized for his expertise and brings 25 years of experience in technical applications of strategic foresight methods to MEI as the founding coordinator of the Strategic Foresight Initiative.

Steven's work includes advisory engagements for top executives in Fortune 500 and other leading corporations. He has also designed and led engagements for leaders in Cabinet-level departments of the US government, and for dozens of federal and foreign government agencies. Prior to founding Foresight Vector, Steven was a Vice President at Monitor 360 and a Partner at Toffler Associates, the executive advisory firm founded by world-renowned futurist Alvin Toffler, with whom he worked for more than 15 years.



CHRIS KUBECKA

DISTINGUISHED CHAIR, CYBER PROGRAM

Chris Kubecka joined the Cyber Program in November 2020. A cyberwarfare and information security expert best known for her groundbreaking work in 2012 rebuilding Saudi Aramco's network after a devastating cyberattack, Kubecka brings a wealth of expertise to the program. She is the founder and CEO of HypaSec, which provides incident management, ethical hacking training, and cyber advisory services to governments. She is also a USAF veteran, having served as an aircrew member and later in military intelligence with Space Command. Kubecka has published articles and books on offensive security, cyberwarfare, and open source intelligence gathering, and advises EU and NATO member cyberwarfare exercises.

around the world with the US Departments of State and Treasury for a brainstorming session on Syria policy. The State facilitator subsequently labeled the meeting “the best external engagement” of 2020.

The Syria Program also recruited 16 leading experts to inaugurate its Advisory Council, including Ryan Crocker, former US ambassador to Syria and Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient, and Hind Kabawat, deputy head of the Syrian Negotiation Commission’s Geneva office. MEI published more than 110 pieces of analysis and policy research in 2020 focused on Syria—we anticipate growth to continue in 2021.

Egypt Program

While the Egypt Program was subject to the same restrictions that all other programs had to contend with in 2020, it did manage to adapt; the program drew several high-level guests and speakers, among them Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly and almost a half-dozen ministers. Pandemic travel restrictions meant that in-person events were out of the question, but we nevertheless secured the participation of the ministers of International Cooperation and Petroleum, the latter for an oversubscribed invitation-only meeting.

The program held several webinars, among the most successful being “Egypt’s Economy Under Covid: Threats and Opportunities.” Part of the program’s related work was a very well-received report titled “Rethinking Egypt’s Economy,” which examined the inherent weaknesses laid bare by the pandemic and presented solutions for rectifying them.

Additionally, in recogni-

1973

MEI President Lucius Battle creates an Economic Consultant’s Office to assist those intending to initiate commercial relations in the region



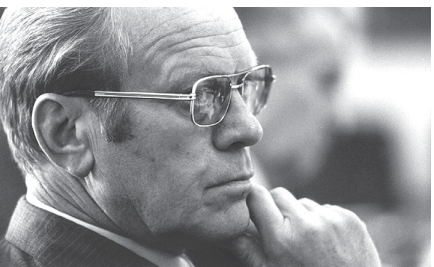
tion of Egypt’s increasingly complex network of geopolitical relationships and their ramifications, the program now also covers the Horn of Africa. We have taken on the highly-respected scholar Guled Ahmed as a nonresident, the first of several planned, to provide regional and local context.

Turkey Program

In 2020, MEI’s Turkey Program launched the “Voices from Turkish Politics” series featuring prominent individuals from Turkey’s Parliament. So far we have hosted the leaders of three opposition parties: Ahmet Davutoglu, the leader of the Future Party; Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the leader of the People’s Republican Party; and

Temel Karamollaoglu, the leader of the Islamist Felicity Party, as well as an independent MP, Cihangir Islam. In the words of a *Washington Post* reporter, the series has been the “most useful Turkey event in town in years” and has provided a “platform for key names in Turkish politics who are not well-known in Western circles.” Heads of Turkey programs at the Center for American Progress, CSIS, and Brookings, as well as Turkey experts at Carnegie and Chatham House, said they found the series “extremely helpful.”

The program’s weekly Turkish-language show *Transatlantik*, hosted by award-winning Turkish journalist Rusen Cakir, became one of Turkey’s top three most-watched online foreign policy shows in 2020. Program Director Gonul Tol’s opinion piece in *Foreign Policy* on Turkey’s generation Z was ranked one of their top five articles of 2020.



1976

US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger sends MEI President L. Dean Brown to Beirut as the administration’s special envoy to Lebanon as the country’s civil war threatens to destabilize the region

Iran Program

After three years of increasing tensions between the Iranian regime and the Trump administration, 2020 opened with the assassination of IRGC Quds Force leader Gen. Qassem Soleimani—a dramatic escalation by the United States that brought us to the brink of war. The dust had hardly settled by March, when it became clear that Iran had become one of the earliest epicenters of the Covid-19 pandemic. From these events to the mysterious summer series of cyberattacks on critical Iranian infrastructure to the ramifications of the US presidential election, the Iran Program covered in detail one of the most turbulent years in recent memory for the US-Iran relationship.

The program’s scope evolved in 2020 with several firsts. It joined several other MEI programs in establishing a dedicated advisory board. The program also held a record number of virtual panels, including MEI’s first joint event with the London’s Royal Institute of International Relations, and an insightful panel that brought a co-founder of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard together with two former CIA clandestine officers who worked on the agency’s Iran file. Finally, Iran Program experts are taking the lead in collaboration on inter- and intra-regional research, working extensively with MEI’s Frontier Europe Initiative as well as launching a project on Iran-GCC environmental cooperation that has seen early success and interest from policymakers.

Afghanistan and Pakistan Program

The Afghanistan and Pakistan Program had its strongest impact during 2020 in two areas: in advocating a more realistic understanding of the prospects of an Afghan peace process, and in its

contribution to a better appreciation of Pakistan’s often difficult relations with the US and Afghanistan. In both, we were able to provide a somewhat different perspective from mainstream analyses. In discussing broad efforts to find a political solution to the Afghan conflict, much of our activity was directed at underscoring the obstacles posed by the Taliban’s motives and core beliefs and arguing for a more realistic view of them.

The program undertook numerous activities in 2020 aimed at improving understanding of Pakistan’s role in Afghanistan and identifying areas of common interest and divergence between the US and Pakistan. The program has been particularly interested in proposing a more balanced and nuanced view of what Pakistan can and cannot be expected to do in support of US policies on Afghanistan. The principal product of our focus on US-Pakistan ties was a report identifying pathways to a more sustainable bilateral relationship, which was supplemented by a public event and wide discussion of its findings in various venues in Pakistan. Program experts also contributed to the aforementioned MEI presidential briefing project and briefed State Department

officials on two occasions.

Finally, the program recruited three new nonresident scholars in 2020, and established an advisory council composed of four former American and Pakistani ambassadors and a leading media entrepreneur in Afghanistan.



1981

MEI hosts “Egypt Today,” a massive international cultural symposium spanning multiple cities. Egyptian First Lady Jehan Sadat gives addresses at inaugural ceremonies held in Houston, Los Angeles, and Washington, DC, President Ronald Reagan issues a special proclamation, and national television and radio cover the events. Exhibits and programming in Washington alone are held in 23 major institutions, including virtually every Smithsonian

THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE WORLD

Frontier Europe Initiative

Having been established less than four months before Covid-19 shut down most of the world, the Frontier Europe Initiative had a challenging but ultimately promising and productive first year. The Initiative covers topics including Black Sea security, regional economies, and democracy and rule of law, gaining recognition in 2020 in the think tank community and within US and regional governments for its unique mandate and scope.

USAF General Philip Breedlove (ret.), former Commander of US European Command and Supreme Allied Commander Europe, joined the Frontier Europe Initiative as distinguished chair in 2020. Since joining the program, he has been published in major outlets covering key issues in the region. Frontier Europe hosted 13 virtual events, published 94 articles, and recruited numerous nonresident scholars in 2020.

The Frontier Europe Initiative also launched a first-of-its-kind Black Sea Security Task Force, which hosted three successful meetings in 2020 and is working to publish a Black Sea security policy document in early 2021.

Additionally, the Initiative launched two fellowship programs: the Frontier Europe non-resident fellowship and Black Sea resident fellowship. Ten individuals were selected, hailing from Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Romania. These fellows will continue to contribute content and attend intensive biweekly workshops through mid-2021. Due to pandemic restrictions, the fellows are completing the program virtually instead of traveling to Washington, DC as planned.

Inset: a still from *Omar Gatlato* (1976), an award-winning Algerian film shown at a festival funded by MEI's United States Outreach Fund



1989

MEI sets up a five-year grantmaking program—the United States Outreach Fund—ultimately awarding 114 grants totaling \$685,000 for small-but-significant educational programs on the Middle East. Projects reach nearly every corner of the U.S. and include traveling exhibitions, teacher workshops, curriculum development, and seed money for “sister city initiatives”

Middle East-Asia Project

MEI's Middle East-Asia Project (MAP), established in 2009, explores the multidimensional relations between the two regions through scholarly analysis of cross-regional economic, political, security, and social/cultural interactions and their implications. It seeks to foster collaborative research on these issues through building an online community of experts and forging institutional partnerships.

In 2020, MAP's many global contributors published 43 essays covering a wide variety of issues like security relations between Israel and Southeast Asia, China's economic stabilization efforts in Afghanistan, migrant laborers in the Gulf, China's Ferghana Railway, Japan's diplomatic efforts in Libya, and de-radicalization programs for foreign fighters returning to Malaysia. In November, MAP launched a series of responses to the Covid-19 pandemic, which will continue into 2021 and cover how national governments, local authorities, civil society actors, and others across the Middle East and Asia have dealt with the public health emergency and its consequent adverse economic effects.

Program Director John Calabrese participated in several off-the-record briefings on China-MENA relations with members of the recently-created “China Watchers” group inside the State Department's NEA Bureau and analysts encompassing both China and the MENA region from various US intelligence agencies. He also provided testimony to the US-China Economic and Security Commission on China-Iran relations in the broader context of growing Chinese involvement in the region.

PALESTINE AND PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI AFFAIRS

In 2020, the future of Palestine and the Palestinian people approached a critical crossroads, as did prospects for a diplomatic settlement. Under the Trump administration, both US-Palestinian relations and Washington's role as a credible mediator reached an all-time low. However, the new Biden administration provides an opportunity to reset US-Palestinian relations as well as create the political space for Palestinians to revive the Palestinian national project. To that end, MEI's new Palestine and Palestinian-Israeli Affairs Program, led by renowned scholar Khaled Elgindy, is uniquely positioned to help shape the policy debate on Palestine and its political and social future.



While most think tanks have tended to view Palestine's internal political affairs through a distinctly Israeli lens or within the context of a now-defunct peace process, the program seeks instead to place Palestinian voices and Palestinian political and economic interests at the center of its research and programming, while promoting a greater appreciation within the policy community for Palestinian rights, security, and prosperity.

In June the program launched a Graduate Fellowship in Palestinian Affairs—the first of its kind in Washington—which is aimed at cultivating a cadre of young scholars interested in pursuing a career in international affairs and/or US foreign policy with a

focus on Palestinian affairs. It also recruited three new nonresident scholars: Zena Agha, Anas Iqtait, and Carol Daniel Kasbari.

Publications during the tumultuous year covered Trump's January “deal of the century,” Covid-19 in the West Bank and Gaza, the Abraham Accords, then-Secretary of State Pompeo's visit to Israeli settlements, and the US presidential election. MEI hosted several related webinars, including a two-part series on “The Future of Palestinian Politics under a Biden Administration,” and hosted virtual roundtables with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and EU Special Representative Susannah Terstal.



Tarek Osman



Ariane Tabatabai



Rime Allaf



Amb. James Jeffrey



Morad Vaisibiame



Alex Vatanka



Charles Lister



Qutaiba Idlbi

Panels featuring robust discussion between MEI scholars and prominent speakers from around the globe have always been a core part of the Policy Center at MEI. Like everything else in 2020, these events were compelled to adapt their programs for the virtual sphere almost overnight.

MEI scholars, guests, and staff were able to make this transition smoothly, continuing to bring in prominent speakers and draw hundreds of viewers for each event, to ultimately host over 150 successful events throughout the year.

Opposite page, top: "After Qassem Soleimani: The Islamic Republic's Strategy for the Arab World," featuring Tarek Osman, Ariane Tabatabai, and Morad Vaisibiame, moderated by Alex Vatanka.

Opposite page, bottom: "Rethinking US Counterterrorism Strategy," featuring Douglas London, Chris Costa, and Karen J. Greenberg, moderated by Charles Lister.

Above: "Assessing the Implications of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act," with Amb. James Jeffrey, Rime Allaf, Qutaiba Idlbi, and Charles Lister.

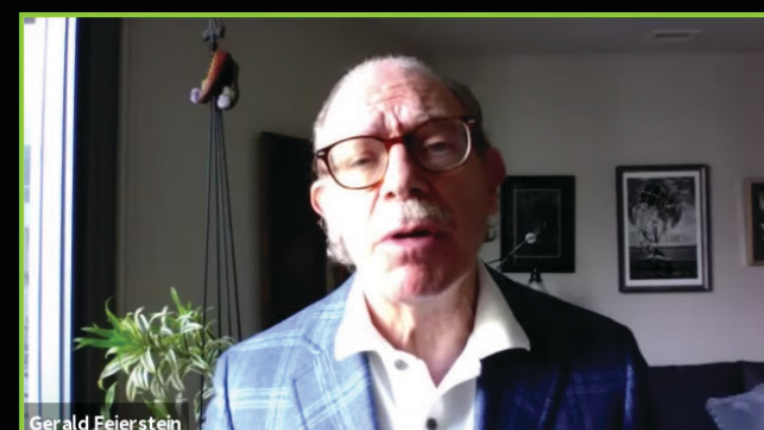
Below: "Iran, Israel, and the Changing Geopolitics of the Middle East," featuring Mark Dubowitz, Meri Javandanfar, and Ksenia Svetlova, moderated by Gerald Feierstein.



Douglas London



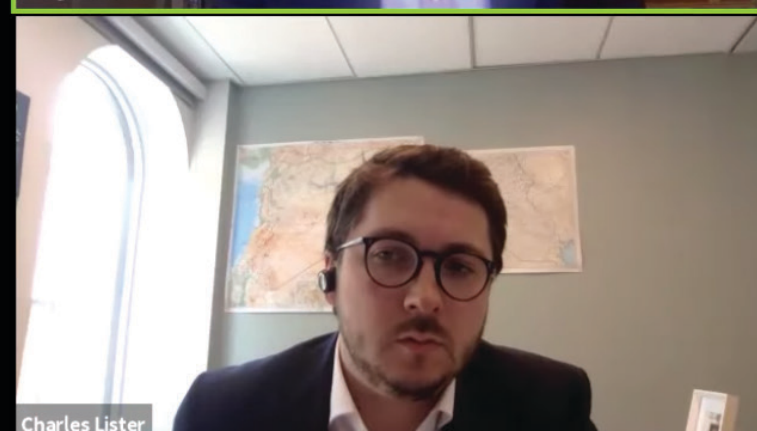
Chris Costa



Gerald Feierstein



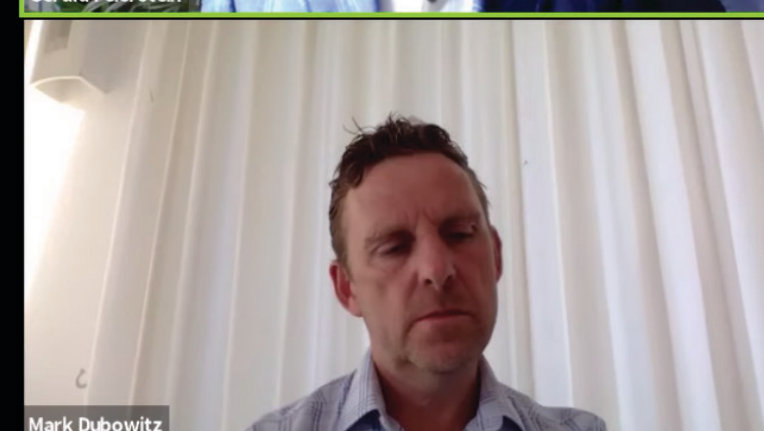
Ksenia Svetlova



Charles Lister



Karen Greenberg



Mark Dubowitz



Meir Javedanfar



MEI
Arts & Culture Center

MEI's Arts and Culture Center elevates the voices of the region's artists, writers, and filmmakers, providing a platform for inclusive dialogue to foster cross-cultural understanding and communication between the Middle East and the United States. The Center has earned a reputation for unique programs introducing audiences to the region's vibrant arts communities and to the pressing issues being addressed by its artists.



MEI's Arts and Culture Center promotes the work of young Middle Eastern artists and connects them with their American counterparts through programs, workshops, roundtable discussions, and events that explore the role of art and artists in social change.

While MEI has a history dating back to its founding of undertaking cultural initiatives as part of its regular activities, the Center's establishment in 2014 gave those activities a focus, an experienced staff, and eventually, a dedicated facility. This allowed us to host dozens of exhibitions, film screenings, musical and dance performances, and poetry readings in partnership with prominent institutions like the Kennedy Center and the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

In 2020, the Center faced significant challenges in order to continue to present the innovative programming it is known for. Our new gallery, which had been open for less than six months, closed to the public in March as Covid-19 guidelines began to shut down American cities. Staff worked hard to find ways to preserve planned exhibitions and support affected artists. By the year's end, we had not only organized a highly successful virtual exhibition, we had also planned and executed our first open call and sale show benefiting artists.

Going forward, the Arts and Culture Center has ambitious plans for the celebration of MEI's 75th anniversary in 2021, including a major exhibit that will showcase some of the great modern and contemporary Arab-American artists producing today. The following are a few highlights from 2020.

EXHIBITIONS

The MEI Art Gallery opened in September 2019 to bring the region's most exciting contemporary and modern art, photography, and video to the United States. When it closed to the public in March 2020, Center leadership quickly shifted gears, postponing two

planned shows and working with international partners to reimagine an upcoming exhibit of Lebanese photography as an innovative virtual 3D experience. The resulting show, *Lebanon Then and Now: Photography from 2004-2020*, struck a chord around the world: nearly 23,000 visitors viewed the online exhibition, with the *Washington Post*



concluding it "couldn't be more timely."

In place of our fall show, we envisioned an exhibit more responsive to the global crisis. *Art in Isolation: Creativity in the Time of Covid-19* sprung from this desire. We launched an open call in June and received more than 200 entries from artists from Morocco to Yemen. The 53 selected works, which were all available for sale, were exhibited

both online and in person by appointment. We are grateful to have been able to provide the majority of the proceeds to the artists in a time of great uncertainty.

1990

MEI hosts the first of several conferences on the United States, Japan, and the Middle East

1998

Zahra Shojaie, Iranian president Mohammad Khatami's adviser on women's affairs, participates in an MEI event on the rights of women and children in Iran—becoming the first Iranian official to speak publicly in Washington, DC since the 1979 Revolution

By the end of 2020, just over a year from its opening, the MEI Art Gallery and its four shows have been covered in 40 articles by major publications, and reached millions of people around the world.

Speaking Across Mountains: Kurdish Artists in Dialogue

CURATED BY HEBA ELKAYAL

Our Winter 2020 show featured ten contemporary artists from Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Through drawing, painting, sculpture, textile, installation, photography, and video, the artists explored themes that have long shaped the Kurdish experience, such as displacement, exile, memory, gender, and autonomy, while giving voice to the resilience of Kurdish communities in the face of decades of persecution.

Lebanon Then and Now: Photography from 2006-2020

CURATED BY CHANTALE FAHMI

MEI's Summer 2020 show was an immersive 360° exhibit that captured both the aftermath of the country's 15-year civil war and the street protests that erupted in October 2019, telling the story of the troubled calm that presaged Lebanon's current storm and the struggle for social justice and democracy that continues to this day. The show was created in partnership with Institut du Monde Arabe, the Beirut Museum of Art USA, the Beirut Center of Photography, and the Association for the Promotion and Exhibition of the Arts in Lebanon.



2000

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright announces an easing of US trade sanctions on Iranian imports during a newsmaking address at an MEI conference on Iran's new parliament

Art in Isolation: Creativity in the Time of Covid-19

CURATED BY LAILA ABDUL-HADI JADALLAH

MEI's first open-call exhibition was a reflection of the lives of

artists in the Middle East and its diaspora during the Covid-19 pandemic. The exhibit revolved around the theme of "sheltering in place" and investigated the emotional and physical impact of confinement on artistic practice.

ARTS PROGRAMMING

In addition to its exhibitions, the Arts and Culture Center programmed film screenings and musical performances prior to Covid, as well as a series of webinars exploring the impact of the pandemic on the arts and culture sectors in the Middle East. During the April webinar "Adapting and Innovating in the Face of Covid-19," Oscar-nominated Lebanese filmmaker Nadine Labaki, award-winning Tunisian artist and activist eL Seed, and Sharjah Art Foundation director Sheikha Hoor al Qasimi joined moderator and

Freer | Sackler Galleries Director Chase Robinson to talk about the role that creative communities can play in the pandemic response moving forward. In a later panel, "Writing Covid-19: Middle Eastern Authors Reflect on the Pandemic," best-selling authors Nezar Afisi, Ece Temelkuran, and Elie Khoury explored how societies in Iran, Turkey, and the Arab world are responding to the crisis, leading Khoury to observe that Covid-19 has underscored how humanity can best survive through "deep human connection ... and exchange."



This page: Gallery patrons surround Khadija Baker's "Coffin/Nest" at the opening of MEI's exhibit *Speaking Across Mountains: Kurdish Artists in Dialogue*.



“Every day is different. One day, I’m happy. One day, I’m sad. One day, I’m anxious. The next, I’m OK. The next, I’m hysterical. The next, I’m scared. But what comforts me is knowing that I and everyone on the planet are going through the same thing.”

CAROL MANSOUR, LEBANESE FILMMAKER
 “A COVID-EO DIARY”

Artwork this page: “Minty, Kayla, Leyah, Leyla, Cambridge Massachusetts,” (Edition 2/8) and “Mia & Jun, Allston, Massachusetts,” (Edition 3/8), both 2020, by Rania Matar



OH TAREKI
 YOU'RE NOT
 WEARING YOUR MASK!





“Photography has the ability to document time and reality. Both our real lives and photography have evolved, and with this revolution, the way the Lebanese people perceive their reality has also changed. In Lebanon, particularly now, we are more appreciative of preserving the memories and the moments captured in pictures. Now, more and more, we have respect for photojournalists—and **this is why we wanted to give them this opportunity as artists to keep our history.**”

CHANTALE FAHMI, CURATOR,
LEBANON THEN AND NOW

Artwork this page: “Strength” by Jack Seikaly



Artwork this page: "The Next Day" by Blanche Eid



MEI
Education Center

Education has been a part of MEI's core mission since our founding in 1946. The Education Center at MEI is home to the Languages and Regional Studies Department, the *Middle East Journal*, the Oman Library, and the Leadership Development Program, which equip the next generation of leaders with the skills necessary for international careers.



Partnership.

2007

Wendy Chamberlin, former US ambassador to Pakistan and UN deputy high commissioner for refugees, becomes the first woman to lead MEI. She serves for 11 years, spearheading the modernization of the Institute

This page: "Hug of Reconciliation" by Ali Abdullah Alsonidar, MEI Photo Contest winner

LANGUAGES AND REGIONAL STUDIES

Like the rest of MEI, the Education Center's language classes and private tutoring were forced to go entirely online in early 2020. The innovative agility of our remarkable languages staff and faculty turned what could have been a crippling obstacle into an unexpected opportunity, expanding course availability and accessibility and drawing students from around the world for the first time. Growth surpassed the last three years. Demand for Persian instruction in particular increased enormously as our reputation for Persian language training grew. The Education Center now offers 20 language courses, with multiple proficiency levels, covering Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, and Turkish. New daytime classes, which now include conversation courses, have been introduced to accommodate international students' schedules.

In light of our newfound virtual success, Education Center Deputy Director Shabnam Jafari is working to create pre-recorded language classes and regional studies seminars to target audiences outside of DC. In 2021, this undertaking will produce several easily-downloadable video series through which students will be able to learn at their own pace.

2015

More than a decade after the establishment of the Policy Center, the Arts and Culture Center is formalized as the second of MEI's three branches, closely followed by the Education Center in 2017



THE MIDDLE EAST JOURNAL

Published continuously since 1947, our flagship quarterly is the oldest peer-reviewed publication in North America dedicated to the study of the contemporary Middle East. Each issue includes five articles, a chronology of current events organized by subject and country, and book reviews that are among the most respected, comprehensive, and up-to-date in the field of Middle East studies. The *Journal* has published the writings of the foremost voices in the field—renowned scholars, historians, foreign policy analysts, and area experts—for 74 years, and will continue to

provide quality research and analysis of the political, economic, environmental, social, and cultural development of the region.

Last year, demonstrating its enduring value to readers, the *Journal* experienced an unexpected increase in readership on our subscriber platform and through direct access despite decreased traffic to main academic platforms and library databases overall due to the pandemic. MEI's shift to fully-virtual operations also prompted *Journal* leadership to innovate on a number of fronts, most notably in its communications strategy. We organized a spotlight panel around our Winter issue, and will increasingly produce *Journal*-relevant content for web media.

We would like to remind you that your subscription to **THE MIDDLE EAST JOURNAL** expired with the January 1949 issue.

Here is a preview of the Articles and Book Reviews appearing in the April issue.

THE MIDDLE EAST JOURNAL

VOLUME 3

APRIL 1949

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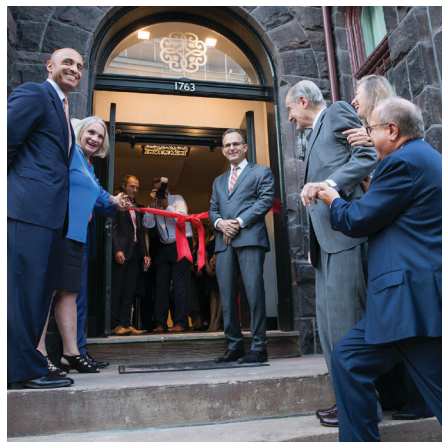
Harvey P. Hall, Editor

If you do not want to miss this important number, the attached card should be cut out immediately and returned to this office.



2019

After two years of construction, MEI's renovated headquarters opens to the public



OMAN LIBRARY

In January 2020, with new librarian Victoria Jacobs at the helm, the Oman Library reopened its doors to the public after a two-year closure during the renovation of MEI's main building. Two months later, the Covid-19 pandemic shut them again. However, as of mid-2020, visits may now be arranged by contacting the librarian via phone or email. MEI members may now set up a library account at no additional charge, which will allow them to check out books, place holds, renew, or create lists via the Online Public Access Catalog. The Digitized Rare Books collection has also been updated and now includes a simple search, where users can filter the displayed books based on the full or partial title. Anyone may visit the library catalog from home at catalog.mei.edu, where curious individuals will also find a growing list of free resource guides, as well as other useful links.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

MEI's internship program has been instrumental to our pursuit of our long-term educational goals for nearly 50 years. In that time, at least 2,500 students and young professionals have completed the program. Intern alumni have gone on to careers in Congress, the US and foreign diplomatic corps, international development, global business, cultural

institutions, intelligence, policy advocacy, political campaigns, and academia around the world.

Last year brought two major milestones for the program. In March 2020, we transitioned our spring interns to remote work mid-term for their safety. The program remained fully virtual for both the summer and fall terms. While the adjustment was challenging, it made the selection process more equitable and inclusive; because applicants no longer had to live in or relocate to Washington, DC, our summer and fall cohorts were some of the most diverse in our history. In an effort to build on this momentum and broaden the group of young people who see international affairs as an appealing and viable career path for themselves, MEI will also offer stipends to interns for the first time beginning in January 2021. We understand that by investing in our young leaders we are laying the foundations for a more peaceful and prosperous future and we intend to continue our efforts.

COLLECTION HIGHLIGHT: THE COLBERT HELD ARCHIVE

Thanks to a generous donation in 2014 from the late Dr. Colbert Held, a former Foreign Service Officer and professor of Middle Eastern history and geography, the Oman Library possesses approximately 18,500 fully-annotated color Kodachrome slides—images of the Middle East taken between 1957 and 2003. Dr. Held's photographs capture the most pivotal time in the region's modern history, systematically documenting the cultural, political, and economic changes that drove the region's unprecedented development in the latter half of the twentieth century and preserving images of heritage sites that are at risk or have already fallen victim to ongoing violence and campaigns of destruction by militant groups.

Top left and right: Two of the local Saudi tribesmen employed as "relaters," guides and sources of information, by the Arabian Research Division of Saudi Aramco, one with henna-dyed beard. Dammam, Saudi Arabia, 1958.

Bottom: Reception ceremony for visiting King Faisal. Left to right: Lt. aide to General Leahy, Eugene Bird, Robert Ames, Michael Young, Bob Hurst. Dammam, Saudi Arabia, 1965.



LOOKING FORWARD

The Middle East of tomorrow must work toward building a more stable and cooperative regional order, ending civil wars, rebuilding failed states, more effectively leveraging economic and technological opportunities, and establishing a region of peace, prosperity and good governance. The US has a vital strategic interest in working through collaborative and sustainable partnerships in the region to advance these goals, and MEI intends to be at the forefront of these efforts for many years to come.

Looking ahead, MEI seeks to set itself apart from the field by building upon its strengths in convening regional policymakers and stakeholders, working across disciplines, and helping to shape a more locally-focused and holistic approach to the future of the Middle East and its people. We must also adopt an approach befitting the cross-cutting and inter-regional nature of future-oriented issues.



Policy Center

For the Policy Center this approach means strategically expanding the scope of our coverage. Our recently-instituted programs on cybersecurity, strategic foresight, and Frontier Europe have already forged excellent reputations. Nascent programs on North Africa and climate change, water, and environment are close behind. In the coming years we intend to establish new initiatives on women's issues, economy and development, the Levant, and the Horn of Africa,

in addition to better leveraging valuable existing programs like the longstanding Middle East-Asia Project. Expertise in these fields will only become more critical as increasing multipolarity adds layers of complexity to growing global interdependence. We also aim to make our new regional think tank network into a permanent, symbiotic association that can quickly mobilize to gather and synthesize local data and insights where they are needed.

Arts and Culture Center

MEI's Arts and Culture Center has similarly ambitious plans for the future. We seek to expand the Center's current mission—promoting the arts of the region through exhibitions and dialogues—to become a convener of cultural leaders from the US and the Middle East. We will create meaningful and sustainable partnerships with major arts institutions both at home and in the region. Through a new annual summit, we aim to deepen ties between Middle Eastern and American

cultural sectors by exchanging capacity-building knowledge, discussing cutting-edge issues relating to the arts, and finding pathways for collaboration. We will also strive to build the Center into a nexus of cultural activity that is deeply rooted in the communities we serve through grassroots initiatives like working with local schools to provide workshops on the arts and cultures of the Middle East to middle and high school students.

Education Center

The programs that are part of MEI's Education Center have long served the nation's capital. In pursuit of our mission, we intend for them to serve the world. The pandemic accelerated plans for new digital operations in every department as we rushed to make our services available to audiences who could no longer come to us. The changes have put us further along the path toward our goals than we could have anticipated a year ago, and we have no intention of slowing our momentum. We aim to provide language and regional studies courses to an increasingly global student body, improving accommodations for

learners abroad and creating a growing catalog of on-demand online courses. We also intend to make as many of the Oman Library's invaluable resources as possible available digitally to support researchers around the world. Finally, inspired by the diversity of our virtual internship cohorts, we will strive to make our intern recruitment process and program requirements more equitable, to build a future for the fields of foreign policy and Middle Eastern affairs that is more truly inclusive and democratic.



At right: "The Lovers in Times of Revolution" by Omar Sfeir, part of MEI's 2020 exhibition *Lebanon: Then and Now*

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"Invisible Memories I" by Sepideh Salehi

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FINANCIALS

Year Ending December 31, 2020 and 2019

	2020	2019	2018
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	2,074,905	301,604	488,082
Accounts receivable	78,160	133,536	138,351
Grants and contributions receivable	-	1,057,000	663,716
Prepaid expenses	83,254	56,912	195,376
Total Current Assets	\$2,236,319	\$1,549,053	\$1,485,525
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, NET	\$14,860,576	\$15,080,572	\$9,242,791
OTHER ASSETS			
Investments in board designated account	11,106,441	11,020,136	16,455,503
Endowments	4,285,546	3,778,591	3,156,624
Investments in beneficial interest in perpetual trust	1,366,208	1,305,032	1,177,232
Total Other Assets	16,758,195	16,103,759	20,789,359
TOTAL ASSETS	\$33,855,090	\$32,733,383	\$31,517,676
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Accounts payable	\$957	\$438,412	\$821,898
Accrued expenses	227,406	146,082	72,788
Deferred revenue	1,324,399	986,265	495,509
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$1,552,762	\$1,570,758	\$1,390,195
NET ASSETS	\$32,302,328	\$31,162,626	\$30,127,481
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$33,855,090	\$32,733,383	\$31,517,676
REVENUE AND SUPPORT			
Contributions	\$2,685,867.0	\$2,605,796.5	\$2,302,606.0
Grants	1,875,359	502,737	400,204
Membership Dues	29,290	32,555	29,885
Center For Policy Studies	275,669	587,435	557,727
Center for Education	347,735	297,253	313,786
Interest and dividends, net	284,390	494,609	526,119
Rental and other income	53,490	41,609	39,847
TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT	5,551,800	4,561,994	4,170,174
EXPENSES			
Program Services:			
Center for Policy Studies	4,028,470	3,166,091	2,972,191
Center for Arts and Culture	303,759	407,054	545,476
Center For Education	367,865	397,433	400,962
Communications	403,425	323,816	362,991
TOTAL PROGRAM SERVICES	5,103,519	4,294,394	4,281,620
SUPPORT SERVICES:			
Fundraising	509,696	624,703	516,771
General and administrative	568,060	612,770	645,485
Total Support Services	1,077,756	1,237,473	1,162,256
TOTAL EXPENSES	6,181,275	5,531,867	5,443,876
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS FROM OPERATIONS	(629,475)	(969,873)	(1,273,702)
OTHER CHANGES	1,769,178	2,005,288	(1,066,775)
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	1,139,432	1,035,415	(2,340,477)
NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR	31,162,896	30,127,481	32,467,958
NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR	32,302,328	31,162,896	30,127,481





We join millions of voices around the world in mourning those we lost in 2020. Leaders, artists, activists; family, neighbors, friends—each and every one a distinct, incalculable sorrow. In a year of staggering human tragedy, we honor the memory of loved ones whose lives were cut short by sickness, injustice, and conflict. Let our shared grief remind us to extend the same compassion to strangers that we would to friends, and let the lessons we learned inspire us to create a safer, more equitable world now and for generations to come.



Our future depends on us.

Artwork at left: “Muffled” by Helen Zughaib, from MEI’s exhibition *Art in Isolation*

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