



MEI

The Middle East Institute
2019 Annual Report

GRAND OPENING WEEKEND

On Thursday, September 12, MEI celebrated a milestone many years in the making: the grand opening of our new headquarters. Over 300 people gathered including our members and friends, donors, members of Congress, the Administration, the DC Mayor's office, and the diplomatic community as we cut the ribbon on our new home. 🌐 The next day, 200 people attended the inaugural exhibit in our new Art Gallery. The following night, MEI participated in Washington, DC's "Art All Night," a free public arts festival taking place across eight different neighborhoods, bringing visual and performing arts to indoor and outdoor public spaces throughout the city. More than 1,500 people came through MEI's new building that evening and celebrated with Middle Eastern-style dabke dancers, DC-based DJ Muath spinning rai, chobi and other Arabic dance beats, a pop-up hosted by Adams Morgan bar The Green Zone, and an on-site calligrapher who created unique mini-artworks for guests in real time - an auspicious beginning!





Attendees gather for an event in MEI's newly-renovated conference room.

A STRATEGY FOR A NEW WORLD

During a time of unprecedented global uncertainty, The Middle East Institute is more committed than ever to working towards peace, prosperity and partnership. The region's future remains of great importance to the United States and the world, and MEI is uniquely positioned to exercise the leadership necessary to build resilience in the Middle East and promote close collaboration with the U.S.

CORE VISION AND VALUES

VISION: A world of peace and prosperity where the people of the Middle East and the United States value our shared humanity.

MISSION: To build mutual understanding and cooperation between the people of the Middle East and the United States, based on human security, inclusivity, peace, prosperity, sustainability and good governance.

OUR APPROACH: Engaging experts and policymakers from the region and the U.S.; teaching the region's languages and history; and promoting arts and cultural engagement.



Table of Contents

CHAIRMAN'S & PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE - 8
HOW WE WORK - 16
BY THE NUMBERS - 20
CENTER FOR POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH - 22
CENTER FOR EDUCATION - 44
CENTER FOR ARTS AND CULTURE - 48
BOARD OF GOVERNORS - 58
DONORS - 59

Letter from the Chairman

I have served as the chairman of The Middle East Institute since 2012, and every day it has been an honor to do so. The growth of this institution over these past few years has been nothing short of astonishing, and it is thanks to the many fine people who serve on the board, the dedicated leadership and staff, our hard working interns, and supporters around the world who believe in our mission.

I thank you all.

We have just completed perhaps the most significant year in our history. In September 2019, we opened the doors of our newly and completely renovated offices in Washington. This is the fulfillment of a dream that the board and staff have had for many years and which better enables us to fulfill our

goals of being a resource, a convener, and a destination for all things Middle East in Washington.

But fate always has other plans. The new year started strong, and then COVID-19 brought the world to a halt. Think tanks like ours had to quickly innovate, not only to stay relevant and

learn to do our work in other ways, but to step forward and take the lead on rethinking the world around us. MEI has moved to become a virtual organization, and our signature policy conferences and briefings, language classes, and art events now take place in cyberspace, reaching many more people than we ever could in person. MEI is strengthening its relationships and collaborations with think tanks and organizations in the region, to share ideas, explore and test solutions to an ever-increasing set of challenges around security, climate change, cyber threats, energy, finance, and much more.

I spent many years of my career deeply involved with the Middle East and I know the importance of having institutions like MEI as sources of unbiased analysis, strong on-the-ground contacts and knowledge, and integrity that resists spin and outlasts ever-changing political cycles.

One thing is clear: from now on, the world will never be the same. We must

adapt and we must lead.
MEI will be there.

Richard A. Clarke, CHAIRMAN

Top: Attendees gather outside MEI's headquarters before the ribbon-cutting. Bottom: MEI Chairman Richard Clarke gives remarks at the Grand Opening of MEI's renovated building.





Guests take part in MEI's Grand Opening, exploring the exhibit in the new Art Gallery and hearing remarks from federal and city officials as well as MEI leadership.



Letter from the President

From our perspective here in 2020, the year 2019 seems positively quaint! True, it was a momentous year for The Middle East Institute. We finally realized our long-held dream, opening the doors of our newly-renovated offices in September for thousands of you to join us over a joyous weekend of celebration with art, music, food, and community. We could not have done this without the support of our many friends around the world. You helped us achieve this, and we are forever grateful.

With 74 years behind us and looking ahead to our 75th anniversary next year, we are building innovative programs that break down established paradigms. The challenges of the future will not be confined within borders or even regions—they will be cross-cutting and comprehensive. MEI has chosen

to look outward and across disciplines to discern where tomorrow's risks and opportunities lie.

As we come up on our first full year in our new home, the world has changed. COVID-19 has caused a global re-think of what will come next. Will global institutions and systems hold?

When will we return to normal? What does the new “normal” even look like? And our central concern: what is next for the Middle East? Its 500 million inhabitants awaken every day to a region besieged by unprecedented demographic, economic, and environmental challenges. Regional conflicts, proxy wars, and refugees further stress already-unstable systems and threaten political order. Summer temperatures rise beyond survival thresholds, jobs are scarce, and water is scarcer. Yet the region remains a crucial global nexus: a place of re-emergent Great Power competition, a critical energy powerhouse, and a front line in cyberwarfare—and thus a core policy concern for the United States.

The year ahead has many unknowns. It remains to be seen how the pandemic will impact the Middle East, and how historically low oil prices will affect regional economies and global markets. We have respond-

ed to the crisis by being more active than ever before. We are bringing our programs to the public virtually and have actually increased our programming, almost doubling our previous output and attracting more people than



we could ever accommodate in person.

As we look ahead at our 75th anniversary in 2021, MEI will continue doing what we have always done: serving as an unbiased, trusted source of knowledge on this dynamic and ever-changing region and working for better understanding between the people of the United States and the Middle East. We are very proud that MEI has again been ranked as the #1 Middle East-focused think tank in the United States for the third year in a row by the University of Pennsylvania's Annual Global Go-To Think Tank Index, the industry standard rating of global think tank performance.

We thank our many supporters and friends around the world, without whom we could not be who we are, and could not have come as far as we have. Let us now go together, into our shared global future.

Paul Salem, PRESIDENT





How We Work

CONNECTING

We are a bridge between the Mideast and the United States: a meeting place, a space for dialogue, a networking arena, and a destination for all those interested in the region and its people.

COLLABORATING

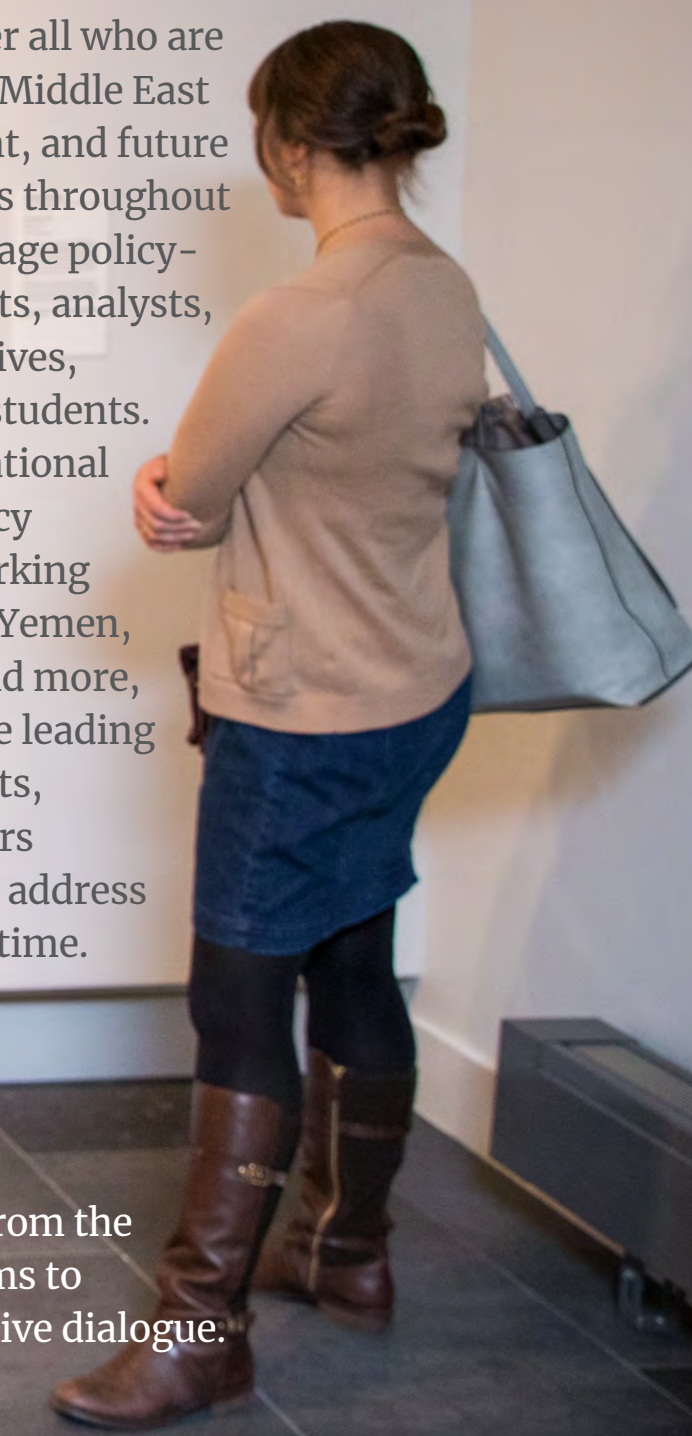
We have built a strong network of Middle Eastern think tanks and scholars who provide MEI with a base from which to speak with credibility and authenticity on the challenges in the region.

CONVENING

We bring together all who are interested in the Middle East – its past, present, and future – in public events throughout the year that engage policy-makers, diplomats, analysts, corporate executives, journalists, and students. From our international Track II diplomacy efforts to our working groups on Syria, Yemen, cybersecurity, and more, MEI convenes the leading diplomats, experts, and changemakers working today to address problems in real time.

AMPLIFYING

We feature the leading voices from the region across all of our programs to encourage informed and inclusive dialogue.





INVESTING

Through language and regional studies courses, academic publishing, and a rigorous internship program, we are preparing the next generation of students for international careers, and helping mid-career professionals gain skills necessary to remain competitive.

INFLUENCING

We put our research and analysis into action by actively engaging policymakers through testimony before Congress and briefings to government agencies and departments, the White House, foreign governments, and international NGOs.



13 Resident scholars

51 Podcast episodes

68 Interns

70 Non-resident scholars

92 Events

140 Pieces of original art exhibited

460 Pieces of original policy analysis

531 Students in language and regional studies classes

2019 BY THE NUMBERS

972 Media citations

1,425 Instagram followers

2,481 Hours of private tutoring

6,843 Event attendees

7,072 YouTube subscribers

19,601 Facebook followers

42,441 Subscribers

72,489 Twitter followers

CENTER FOR POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH

Working for a peaceful, prosperous, and well-governed Middle East, and for better relations between the U.S. and its regional partners



MEI was ranked the #1 Middle East-focused think tank in the United States by the University of Pennsylvania Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program's Annual Global Go-To Think Tank Index.

As U.S. policymakers argued in 2019 over America's role in the Middle East and North Africa and struggled to formulate foreign policy reflecting a consistent view of U.S. commitments abroad, renewed conflict in Syria, contentious elections, and brinkmanship with Iran threatened stability and human security region-wide. Russia capitalized on American uncertainty, stepping into the gaps created by U.S. drawdowns and diplomatic dust-ups to consolidate influence. Mass demonstrations in Algeria, Sudan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Iran marked hopeful moments in an otherwise deeply troubling year. The events of 2019 have only served to emphasize the globally-interconnected nature of the challenges facing the region. Viable solutions will require cross-cutting, collaborative, and even unorthodox approaches.

We put our research and analysis into action by engaging policymakers and influencers directly through testimony before Congress and briefings

to government agencies and departments, the White House, diplomats, and international NGO leaders.

Our work is amplified through



extensive communications outreach. Events are live-streamed or videotaped and available online. Weekly podcasts address ongoing regional developments, and our social media engages people throughout the world. Putting research and policy expertise into practice is part of MEI's goal to be a place where new ideas are generated and tested. From our international Track II diplomacy efforts to our working groups on Syria, Yemen, Cybersecurity, and more, MEI convenes the leading diplomats, experts, and change makers working today to address problems in real time.

HIGHLIGHTS

Navigating New Regional Geopolitics
Geopolitical alliances in the Middle

MEI collaborates with the private and public sector to increase social cohesion and inclusion and to help promote economic opportunity in the region.

the New Middle East, investigated the implications of shifting alliances and conflicting approaches between the “Sunni vanguards” for the greater

East have evolved beyond the Sunni/Shia confines, making complicated issues in the region more contentious. By bringing to light the various ways this emerging regional order affects countries and ongoing conflicts, MEI is working towards building a robust and inclusive regional order.

This past year saw the ever-so-important rise of Egypt and Turkey as key regional players. The Turkey Program's latest book, *Aspiring Powers, Regional Rivals: Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and*

region. Beyond MENA, the importance of the surrounding regions has also risen and become a new battleground for regional and global rising powers. Competition over influence in the Horn of Africa region has pitted powers in the Middle East against those in East Asia, as discussed at MEI's half day conference on Migration, Investment, and Competition: The Middle East and the Horn of Africa.

Questions of Democracy

2019 was a tumultuous year for democracy in the region and beyond. MEI aids political development in the region by examining the impacts of democratic challenges faced by various countries and suggesting ways to manage them.

Israel saw two elections followed by two failed attempts at coalition making, and the possibility of a peace plan seems ever more distant. MEI's webinar “Israeli Democracy at a

Crossroads explored what these developments mean for the future of Israeli democracy and for Israel's broader role in the Middle East. The webinar featured Ari Heistein, Researcher



Ambassador Susan Rice gives the keynote speech at MEI's Grand Opening in September 2019.

and Chief of Staff to the Director, INSS; Dahlia Scheindlin, Co-founder and columnist, +972 Magazine and The Honorable Aida Touma-Sliman Member, Knesset, and was moderated by Khaled Elgindy, senior fellow and director of the Program on Palestine

and Palestinian–Israeli Affairs, MEI.

Tunisia’s second democratically elected president, Kais Saied, is coming to power with a groundswell

Top: Annual Conference on Turkey. Bottom: Roundtable with HE Tarek El-Molla, Egypt’s Minister of Petroleum & Mineral Resources.



of popular support to fulfill the aspirations of the 2011 Jasmine Revolution, and parliamentary elections have demonstrated the continuing trends of anti-establishment voting and shrinking but somewhat resilient support for some establishment parties. MEI’s panel “Observations from the Tunisian Elections” featured the Tunisian Ambassador to the United States and four expert panelists including recently–returned American election observers who brought fresh perspectives from the ground, including both anecdotes from their recent in-country experiences and in-depth analysis of what this means for the future of Tunisian democracy.

MEI and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) were pleased to host the 10th Annual Conference on Turkey. The conference brought together policymakers and experts to discuss the challenges Turkey faces domestically and its relations with the Middle

East and the West.

The first panel dealt with the dynamics of Turkey’s domestic politics, with a focus on the electoral losses of the AKP – the party of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The conference featured Ruşen Çakır, (Journalist, Medyascope), Aykan Erdemir (Senior Fellow, Foundation for Defense of Democracies); Fehmi Kuru (freelance journalist), and Giran Özcan (Washington representative, People’s Democratic Party/ HDP).

Erdemir spoke of the unintended consequences of policymaking: “What laid the groundwork for the 2019 victory of the opposition is actually the odd alliance between the far-right or ultra nationalist MHP (Nationalist Action Party) and the ruling AKP, because if it weren’t for their design for assembling electoral

American election observers brought fresh perspectives from the ground, including both anecdotes from their recent in-country experiences and in-depth analysis

alliances, the opposition would not have had the institutional framework to put together formal alliances.”

Political, Social, and Economic Development
To unleash the untapped potential of a region ripe with talent and resources, MEI collaborates with the private and public sector to increase social cohesion and inclusion and to help promote economic opportunity in the region.

MEI’s panel discussion “Reform, Challenges and Adaptation: Egypt’s

Evolving Economic Outlook” featured Egyptian business leaders offering an on-the-ground perspective on the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35 AFTER THE GALA PHOTO GALLERY





Left: Academy Award-nominated filmmaker Nadine Labaki gives an impassioned plea for the people of Lebanon at MEI's 73rd Annual Awards Gala. Right: Guests mingle at the Annual Gala.





Guests at MEI's 73rd Annual Awards Gala explored the winners of "Untold Stories," the 2019 Photography Contest, and connected with awardees and fellow attendees.





Center: The first prize winner of the 2019 Photography Contest, "Hug of Reconciliation," by Ali Abdullah Alsonidar, is displayed at the Annual Awards Gala. Taken in Sana'a, Yemen, it depicts two septuagenarian brothers setting aside their thirty-year separation caused by a dispute over land inherited from their father.



FIRST PRIZE
Hug of Reconciliation
Ali Abdullah Alsonidar (Yemen)
"A picture of two brothers in their seventh decade embracing all love and peace after thirty years of problems and separation between them because of a dispute over land inherited from their father."



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27 BEFORE THE GALA PHOTO GALLERY

economic, developmental, legal and environmental challenges to achieving economic success. Mirette Mabrouk, senior fellow and director of MEI's Egypt Program, moderated the discussion that featured Sarah El-Battouty, Chairman and founder, EConsult; Girgis Abd El-Shahid, Managing Partner, Shahid Law Firm; Tarek Tawfik, Chairman, Cairo Poultry Group and President, American Chamber of Commerce; and Dalia Wahba, Chairman, CID Consulting.



Migration, Investment, and Competition: The Middle East and the Horn of Africa Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia face a myriad of security and development challenges, including instability in and migration from neighboring Middle Eastern



Visionary Award recipients Othman and Leila Benjelloun (center right) laid out a vision for philanthropy in North Africa at the MEI Gala, and **Issam Fares Award recipient Nadine Labaki (top left)** painted a hopeful image of the changes sought by Lebanon's protests.

countries. Meanwhile, the Horn of Africa region is emerging as a new battleground for competition among rising global powers in the Middle East and

Top: Syrian-Kurdish politician Ilhan Ahmed speaks at a roundtable. Bottom: Lebanese poet Zeina Hashem Beck reads from her acclaimed book “Louder Than Hearts.”



East Asia. MEI’s conference focused on the evolving internal dynamics in the Horn of Africa region, and the ways in which these countries are affecting and being affected by events and conflicts in the broader Middle East.

Regional Financial Markets The Middle East Institute (MEI) and the Atlantic Council’s Global Energy Center’s discussion “The Financial Markets of the Arab Gulf: Power, Politics and Money” featured MEI’s Jean-François Seznec with Samer Mosis, authors of “The Financial Markets of the Arab Gulf: Power, Politics and Money.” The discussion examined the future of Gulf economies and explored how Saudi Arabia’s financial institutions differ from those of other Gulf countries; the different diversification strategies implemented in the Gulf; and how the growth of Gulf markets affect citizens of these countries.

Challenges of Refugee Reintegration Ongoing conflicts have generated one of the largest refugee crises since World War II. As the Syrian, Iraqi, and Libyan conflicts begin to wind down, the people displaced by them will begin returning, however, the post-conflict reconstruction plans need to be strengthened to support the reintegration of returning refugees.

The Return of Syrian Refugees: Social and Economic Considerations MEI hosted the public release of the World Bank’s new report, “The Mobility of Displaced Syrians: An Economic and Social Analysis” examining key factors behind the return of more than 100,000 Syrian refugees, and analyzed

The panel highlighted contributions made by women in Syria’s ongoing political processes, including the nascent Geneva negotiation track...

the various challenges and risks refugees must navigate as they consider a return home. The World Bank Regional Director for the Mashreq Saroj Kumar Jha and lead author presented the report and was joined by Senior Economist Harun Onder U.S. Institute of Peace Senior Advisor Mona Yacoubian. MEI Senior Vice President Amb. Gerald Feierstein moderated the discussion.

MEI’s Second Iraq Conference MEI’s Second Iraq Conference, brought together leading policy voices to explore the key challenges and opportunities confronting current and future generations in Iraq. Four panels and two keynotes explored ways in which Iraqis, the United States, and the international community must adapt to the political, economic, and social changes facing Iraq.



The opening panel examined opportunities for growth in regional cooperation, specifically, economic, security, and trade policies which encourage bilateral and multilateral solutions to systemic regional issues. The second panel, “Rebuilding Iraq’s Social Fabric: A Way Forward for IDPs and Communities Liberated from ISIS” addressed the urgent

humanitarian concerns, economic desperation, and legal limbo facing internally displaced persons in Iraq, and proposed policy solutions regarding livelihoods, safe resettlement, and minority rights protections. Panelists included: Joey Hood, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs; Randa Slim, Director of Conflict Resolution and Track II

Dialogues Program, MEI; H.E. Fareed Yasseen, Ambassador to the United States, Republic of Iraq, and MEI’s Ross Harrison, moderated.

The Role of Women in Syria’s future
The important role of women within Syrian civil society and in local and international initiatives was the focus of this MEI panel discussion aimed

at shaping a better future for Syria. The panel highlighted contributions made by women in Syria’s ongoing political processes, including the nascent Geneva negotiation track, as well as in the recently UN-convened Constitutional Committee. Panelists Rafif Jouejati, Jomana Qaddour and Sarah Hunaidi, joined moderator Charles Lister of MEI.



SPOTLIGHT | FRONTIER EUROPE INITIATIVE

MEI’s Frontier Europe Initiative, launched in November, 2019 explores the evolving connections and interactions between the United States, Europe and Asia. The Initiative focuses on the growing energy, trade, security in Frontier Europe (FE)—i.e. those parts of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus that form a frontier both between western Europe and Russia.

The Initiative has two main strands: Black Sea Security and Caspian Sea affairs. Since the launch, the initiative has brought together experts from the U.S and from the region and continues to diversify its scope and team.

Being one of its kind in Washington, the Initiative sparked interest within the US government, think tanks and the diplomatic corps, conducted numerous meetings and established partnerships with regional organizations, and is rapidly establishing itself as a respected and important part of the regional discussion.



The Way Forward At the precipice of a new decade, the region seems ripe with potential and pitfalls that could transform it by 2030. By facilitating conversations on current trends and future projections, MEI helps policymakers and stakeholders be better prepared to address potential developments.

The Middle East Institute (MEI) and Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) hosted “Shaping the Future: Geopolitics and the Middle East” that explored what’s at stake for the United States, Europe, Russia, and other critical actors in the Middle East. Panelists discussed options for the United States and EU to engage productively in the region, to protect human rights, promote the rule of law, and facilitate an end to the region’s conflicts.

Climate Change

Climate change is already having an outsized effect on the Middle East and projections for the future are dire. Extreme heat, insufficient water, soil depletion, and a rapidly expanding population are all converging to create crisis conditions throughout the region. MEI launched the Climate Change and Environment Program in 2019 to examine the interdependencies among human security, environmental health, and sustainability in order to enhance knowledge of the implications on the stability and prosperity of the region, with special attention on rural populations,

Over the past couple of years, MEI has begun to incorporate future-focused analysis into its research in order to add a unique and valuable perspective.

women, children, and other vulnerable groups.

Cybersecurity Launched in 2019, MEI’s Cyber program studies the intersection of technology, security and governance in the Middle East, with a particular focus on international security, foreign relations, privacy, and human security. The new Initiative seeks to establish a greater understanding of cybersecurity issues among Middle East experts, through regular working groups and roundtable discussions.

The program looks at emerging technologies like blockchain and examines its implication on regional economies and societies and also looks at major regional developments like the Iranian internet shutdown, its impact on protests and the nation’s economy, and what it means for the future of civil liberties in Iran and the wider region.



Amb. Makila James, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Africa and the Sudans, discusses humanitarian challenges in the region.

Strategic Foresight Initiative Over the past couple of years, MEI has begun to incorporate future-focused analysis into its research in order to add a unique and valuable perspective. In 2019, MEI formally launched its Strategic Foresight Initiative, which examines key drivers and dynamics at work in the region, thinks strategically, creatively and rigorously about various scenarios, risks and opportunities, and uses methodologically sound approaches to help decision-makers chart a course forward. Topics include security,

climate, resources, demographics, migration, energy and more.

Led by MEI non-resident scholar Ross Harrison and Steven Kenney, president of Foresight Vector, an independent foresight consultancy, the team conducted its first major event in September: “Future Projections for the Middle East” featured MEI Chairman Richard Clarke and the UAE’s Minister of Climate Change and Environment, H.E. Dr. Thani T Al-Zeyoudi and two panels of experts who looked broadly at trends and trajectories that will have serious effects on the region over the next 10 years.

BOOK REVIEWS

Aspiring Powers, Regional Rivals: Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the New Middle East In *Aspiring Powers, Regional Rivals*, Gönül Tol examines relations between Turkey,

Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, three key aspiring regional powers that have sought to take on a growing role in the Middle East in recent years at a time of declining U.S. influence and involvement. The rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey in the early 2000s under now-President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ushered in a new era in Ankara’s Middle East policy — one that was dramatically reshaped by the Arab uprisings of 2010–12 and their aftermath. Early hopes for a positive transformation gave way to violence, civil wars, and failed states. The uprisings not only transformed the internal dynamics of regional states, but they also led to a new regional order, with powers such as Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia playing a greater role. This book explores the dynamic between these three key actors in detail and examines whether they can reconcile those visions to play a constructive role in addressing regional problems.

Escaping the Conflict Trap: Towards Ending Civil Wars in the Middle East, edited by Paul Salem and Ross Harrison. Currently, the end to the Yemeni, Syrian, and Libyan civil wars seem further delayed by developments over the past year. Augmented tension between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Turkish deployment of troops in Libya, and withdrawal of US troops from Syria are bound to prolong these on-going conflicts. *Escaping the Conflict Trap: Towards Ending Civil Wars in the Middle East* (Middle East Institute, 2019) examines the history of civil wars in the 20th century and delves into the causes, drivers, and dynamics of the ongoing civil wars in Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Afghanistan.

— “This timely volume provides a sober, thoughtful framework for understanding the roots of civil war in the Middle East, as well as ways to mitigate the human tragedy and strate-



Top: Ambassador Joan Polaschik introduces a panel on the future of geopolitics in the Middle East. Bottom: Center for American Progress Senior Fellow Brian Katulis on “Why Think Tanks Matter,” in collaboration with UPenn’s Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program.

gic folly which all too often result.”

– William J. Burns,
FORMER DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE

CENTER FOR EDUCATION

Shaping the leaders of tomorrow and promoting mutual understanding

Education has been part of MEI's core mission since its founding in 1947. The Center for Education at MEI is the home of the Language and Regional Studies programs, a vibrant and competitive internship program, The Oman Library, and The Middle East Journal, which equip the next generation of leaders with skills necessary for international careers.

Language and Regional Studies:

MEI offers courses and private tutoring in Arabic, Dari, Hebrew, Kurdish, Pashto, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu. Through the support of its experienced instructors, MEI teaches students from a variety of academic and professional backgrounds, including part-time language instructors. Our Regional Studies classes feature Middle East experts and diplomats sharing their knowledge and experience with young professionals in small "masterclass" formats.

group classes has increased by over 20% from the previous year, and nearly 30% in private tutoring.

Online Regional Studies Online

Regional Studies offer lessons that allow students to go through the courses at their own pace, and engage with MEI experts directly and via online webinars. Eight sessions were offered in 2019 including;

• **Paul Salem: Introduction to the Modern Middle East**

2019 in Numbers Interest in MEI's programs is growing - enrollment in

• **Ross Harrison: Shifting Power Dynamic in the Middle East**



· **Richard Clarke: The Effect of US Military Intervention in the Middle East**

· **Ahmad Majidyar: Afghanistan in the Post 9/11 World**

· **Alex Vatanka: The Politics and Ideology of Post-Revolutionary Iran**

· **Jerald Feierstein: Yemen's Security and Political Changes**

· **Gonul Tol: Turkey's Evolving Political Dynamics**

· **Charles Lister: Allies, Rival and the Global Struggle for Syria**

Internship and Professional Development: MEI offers an immersive professional development experience through its internship program. The program is competitive: MEI receives hundreds of applica-

tions each term for fewer than 25 slots. Interns work directly alongside MEI experts and professional staff conducting research, writing and editing, producing video and podcasts, fundraising, and more. Professional development workshops on resume writing and interviewing as well as visits to government agencies, media offices, think tanks, and Capitol Hill complete the experience.

Oman Library: Our Oman Library holds thousands of slides, maps, and artifacts, plus over 20,000 volumes in 7 languages by, about, and from the Middle East, including 300 rare books dating as far as back as the early 1700s. We are actively digitizing and sharing our collection with libraries and institutions around the world.

The Middle East Journal: Our flagship quarterly is the oldest peer-reviewed publication dedicated solely to the



study of the Middle East. Each issue includes articles written by renowned scholars, foreign policy analysts and area experts; a chronology, organized by subject and country, maintained continuously since 1947; and book reviews that are among the most respected, comprehensive, and up-to-date in the field of Middle East studies. There are currently approximately 30,000 subscribers to The Middle East Journal.

MEI hired a new Library Director for the Oman Library.

VICTORIA JACOBS obtained her Masters in Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 2012. The first five years of her library career involved working in various roles at the university's Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Library, before accepting a job as an indexer/cataloger for the Digital National Security Archive Database. She joined MEI on January 7, 2020 and is enthusiastically continuing with the Rare Books Digitization project, in addition to reorganizing and modernizing the main floor of the library. Goals for 2020 include increasing the library's online presence and outreach efforts. An official event celebrating the Oman Library's opening is scheduled for mid-March, once the fountain in the courtyard is complete.

CENTER FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

Building bridges through artistic and cultural exchange

The Center for Art and Culture at MEI continues to elevate the voices of the region's artists, writers, and filmmakers and offers a platform for inclusive dialogue about the role of art. The Center has earned a reputation in Washington, DC for unique programs introducing audiences to the Middle East's vibrant arts scene and to the pressing social and political issues being addressed by the region's artists.

MEI not only promotes the work of young regional artists, but we connect them with their American counterparts through programs, workshops, roundtable discussions, and events that explore the role of art and artists in social change. MEI seeks to build connections between the creative communities in the U.S. and the region and pursue cultural exchanges.

Since the program's inception in 2014, MEI has hosted dozens of exhibitions, musical and dance performances, poetry readings, and film

screenings at MEI and in partnership with prominent institutions such as the Kennedy Center, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, American University's Katzen Arts Center, Georgetown University, and others.

MEI Gallery Opening The MEI Art Gallery is the only gallery in the nation's capital dedicated to showcasing contemporary art from the Middle East. With a focus that spans from Morocco to Afghanistan, the gallery supports Middle Eastern artists and



fosters cross cultural dialogue.

“We want to provide a platform for the Middle East’s leading and emerging artists to engage with US audiences and the local DC community,” said Kate Seelye, vice president for arts and culture at MEI. “With thoughtfully curated and accessible exhibitions, free talks and film screenings, it’s a welcoming place for people to discover a new perspective on the region and to celebrate its rich culture.”

Event and Exhibits The inaugural exhibit, Arabicity | Ourouba, spans two decades of contemporary art from the Arab world, curated by renowned London-based curator Rose Issa. The show, which ran through November 22, featured seventeen leading artists who resist stereotyping, challenge the perceived confines of their identity, and reshape the parameters of their artistic traditions.

“The exhibition touches on themes

of memory, identity, war, reconstruction, displacement, and a host of other issues affecting the region at this critical time with sensitivity, depth, beauty, and even humor,” said Lyne Sneige, MEI’s director of arts and culture. “The diverse works on view convey not only the challenges and problems facing the region, but also the incredible humanity, richness, and resilience of its artists and people.”

Across various media, from painting and sculpture to installation and video, the artists draw upon wide ranging influences, such as pop culture, folk art, sufi poetry, everyday found objects and the global environmental movement. Together the works in the exhibition reveal the potential of art to both explore personal, national, regional and international realities and to transform subjective narratives into universal ones. Featured artists include Adel Abidin, Chant Avedissian, Ayman Baalbaki, Said Baalbaki, Khaled

Barakeh, Anas AlBraehe, Tagreed Darghouth, Hassan Hajjaj, Fathi Hassan, Susan Hefuna, Abdul Rahman Katanani, Youssef Nabil, Mahmoud Obaidi, Khalil Rabbah, Raeda Saadeh, Batoul S’Himi and Sharif Waked.

The second exhibit of 2019, *Speaking Across Mountains*, opened in December and features nine contemporary artists from Iraq, Syria and Turkey whose work offers audiences a rare opportunity to connect with Kurdish voices and experiences beyond the headlines. Through painting, video, photography, and installation, the artists reflect on themes that have long shaped the Kurdish experience, such as displacement, exile, memory and gender, while giving voice to the resilience of Kurdish communities in the face of decades of persecution.

Art and Culture in the Region The Art Gallery also serves to facilitate conversation about art and its evolving role in



MEI Vice President for Arts, Culture, and Communications Kate Seelye introduces the new art gallery and exhibition to Grand Opening guests.

the region.

In an era of ongoing deep sectarian and socioeconomic divides in the region, the Middle East’s museums are busy navigating a path from their traditional role as “mirror museums” of the West or archaeological centers to a new goal: to bring people together and engage in difficult conversations. The Middle East Institute co-hosted a panel with the Beirut Museum of Art (BeMA) in April to discuss where Middle Eastern museums are hoping to go, as well as what challenges they might face along the way. NPR Art Desk Reporter Neda Ulaby moderated





Gallery patrons examine artwork from MEI's first two exhibitions, "Arabicity | Ourouba" and "Speaking Across Mountains: Kurdish Artists in Dialogue." "Arabicity," curated by Rose Issa, featured 17 contemporary artists exploring various constructions of Arab identity. "Speaking Across Mountains" reflected on themes that have long shaped the Kurdish experience, such as displacement, exile, memory, and gender.



a conversation between Glenn Lowry, director of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), Taline Boladian, member of the Association for the Promotion and Exhibition of the Arts in Lebanon (APEAL), and Peggy Loar, president of International Museum Planning Consultants. Lowry opened the discussion by noting that museums — especially for contemporary art — are one of the few platforms that are “still available for something like a civic discourse to occur, where opposing, often competing, and contradictory ideas and positions can be put on the table, discussed, debated and

Renowned London-based curator Rose Issa speaks to a reporter about her exhibition “Arabcity | Ourouba.”



examined.” He added that the region is experiencing seismic shifts on its cultural stage, moving away from traditional centers such as Cairo and Damascus to Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. But even as Middle Eastern museums have shifted their focus inward to celebrate the region’s own artists, Loar emphasized that these spaces are also trying to “globalize the local and localized the global.” Not only do curators want to bring art from around the world to places like Qatar, but they also want to export the country’s own artistic achievements and increase international understanding of Qatari culture.

The second panel at MEI’s Annual Turkey Conference investigated the political potential of art; on the opportunities, modes, relevance, and power of art in an authoritarian regime. On the panel were Sarp Palaur (director and musician), Kenan Sharpe (Founder & Co-Editor, Blind

Field: A Journal of Cultural Inquiry), and Ayşe Öncü (Professor in the Department of Sociology, Sabancı University). Lisel Hintz (Assistant Professor of international relations at John Hopkins SAIS) moderated the panel. Palaur uses his music as a platform for dissenting and socially concerned viewpoints and hopes that his music can change or emotionally touch people. Kenan Sharpe added an academic perspective on the origins of Turkish rap music in Germany and explained how other genres have also had a history of expressing dissenting and opposition opinions. Professor Öncü introduced the most

“I think there is a limit to what music can do... I feel like my song somehow contributed to the polarization of the country, so I’m not optimistic.”

recent form of protest culture through independent theatre, well hidden in Istanbul’s arts scene, and executed by young active people: “independent initiatives [in the arts]... are highly heterogeneous, and they define themselves as political. These independent initiatives are a highly important domain.” Political economy and the consolidation of the media since the mid-1990s has radically changed the landscape for culture. Palaur noted the limits of empathy and action in art. “I think there is a limit to what music can do... I feel like my song somehow contributed to the polarization of the country, so I’m not optimistic. [...] The classical terms of economics and politics do not work for our generation. The language does not represent us.”

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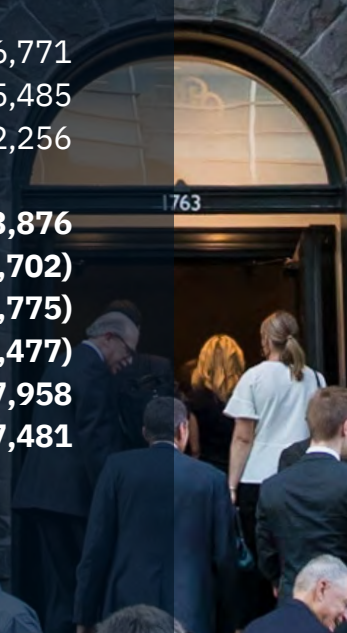
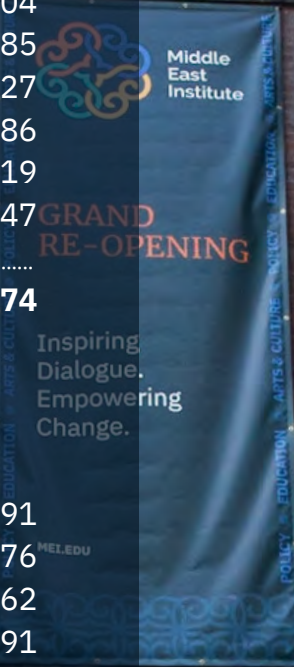


FINANCIALS

Year Ending December 31, 2019 and 2018 * NUMBERS ARE PRE-AUDIT

ASSETS	2019	2018
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents.....	301,604	488,082
Accounts receivable.....	133,536	138,351
Grants and contributions receivable.....	1,057,000	663,716
Prepaid expenses.....	56,912	195,376
Total Current Assets.....	\$1,549,053	\$1,485,525
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, NET.....	\$15,080,572	\$9,242,791
OTHER ASSETS		
Investments in board designated account.....	11,020,136	16,455,503
Investments for endowment.....	3,778,591	3,156,624
Investments in beneficial interest in perpetual trust.....	1,305,032	1,177,232
Total Other Assets.....	16,103,759	20,789,359
TOTAL ASSETS.....	\$32,733,383	\$31,517,676
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable.....	\$438,412	\$821,898
Accrued expenses.....	146,082	72,788
Deferred revenue.....	986,265	495,509
TOTAL LIABILITIES.....	\$1,570,758	\$1,390,195
NET ASSETS.....	\$31,162,626	\$30,127,481
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS.....	\$32,733,383	\$31,517,676

	2019	2018
REVENUE AND SUPPORT		
Contributions.....	\$2,605,796.5	\$2,302,606.0
Grants.....	502,737	400,204
Membership Dues.....	32,555	29,885
Center For Policy Studies.....	587,435	557,727
Center for Education.....	297,253	313,786
Interest and dividends, net.....	494,609	526,119
Rental and other income.....	41,609	39,847
Net assets released from restrictions.....	-	-
TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT	4,561,994	4,170,174
EXPENSES		
Program Services		
Center for Policy Studies.....	3,166,091	2,972,191
Center for Arts and Culture.....	407,054	545,476
Center For Education.....	397,433	400,962
Communications.....	323,816	362,991
TOTAL PROGRAM SERVICES	4,294,394	4,281,620
Support Services		
Fundraising.....	624,703	516,771
General and administrative.....	612,770	645,485
Total Support Services.....	1,237,473	1,162,256
TOTAL EXPENSES	5,531,867	5,443,876
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS FROM OPERATIONS	(969,873)	(1,273,702)
OTHER CHANGES	2,005,288	(1,066,775)
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	1,035,415	(2,340,477)
NET ASSETS, beginning of year	30,127,481	32,467,958
NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR	31,162,896	30,127,481





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