



Middle  
East  
Institute

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

---

---











Founded in 1946, the Middle East Institute (MEI) is the leading Washington, DC-based institution focused on the Middle East, delivering non-partisan insights, analysis, and recommendations to thought leaders and policymakers.

We aim to strengthen relationships between the United States and the region by convening diverse stakeholders, fostering dialogue, and supporting innovative solutions that promote peace, security, and prosperity.

## CONTENTS

4  
From the Board Chair

6  
Impact Spotlights

12  
Policy Center & Programs

18  
Arts & Culture Center

20  
Corporate Membership

22  
Contributions

23  
Financials

# From the Board Chair

As the Middle East Institute enters its 78th year, it stands resilient and influential, continuing its mission to foster understanding and cooperation between the Middle East and the United States. The past year has been one of significant developments and achievements for our organization.

In 2023, MEI responded rapidly and comprehensively to the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel and the subsequent military campaign in Gaza. Our scholars were highly active in the media, providing expert analysis and insights through top-tier TV and print appearances, rapid press briefings, webinars, and op-eds. This responsiveness solidified our reputation as a vital, trusted source for unbiased, non-partisan information and analysis on the Middle East. We also strengthened our partnership with US Central Command through MEI's Defense and Security Program, bringing together regional analysts and top military practitioners with real-world experience and insight.

The tumultuous and politically sensitive news cycle surrounding October 7 posed significant challenges. MEI leaned on its experts to remain analytical, policy-focused, and centered on exploring solutions to the conflict and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. This event reshaped regional dynamics, exacerbated power rivalries, increased the risk of a broader Middle East conflict, and created a massive humanitarian



crisis. Meanwhile, its outbreak highlighted critical shortfalls in decades-long efforts toward de-escalation, normalization, and socio-economic development.

Our events in 2023 reflected these themes and more. We honored His Excellency Khaldoon Khalifa Al Mubarak at our Annual Gala, co-hosted the "Resolving the Detainee Crisis" conference with the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), participated in COP28, and co-sponsored the 2023 MENA Forum. These gatherings facilitated vital discussions and fostered meaningful connections among thought leaders, policymakers, and cultural figures.

MEI's media presence reached record heights in 2023, driven by the demand for our expertise on the October 7<sup>th</sup> fallout and other major regional events.

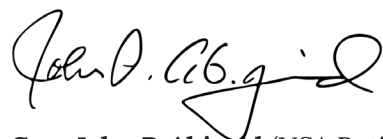
**Right:** MEI's 77th Annual Gala Dinner, held at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC, on April 17, 2024.

Our educational and cultural initiatives continued to bring individuals and communities together, with art exhibitions like “Perceptible Rhythms/Alternative Temporalities,” “A River Flows Downstream,” and “The Sea of Life” highlighting the rich cultural heritage of the region.

Looking ahead, MEI aims to produce high-quality policy analysis and scholarship that is both prescriptive and actionable, all while generating public awareness through media, partnerships, and events. To achieve this, MEI has built a resilient, talented team. Our focus will remain on the Israel-Gaza conflict and its regional impacts, as well as developments in Iran.

We extend our deepest gratitude to outgoing President and CEO Paul Salem for his leadership and vision, and welcome him in his new role as Vice President for International Engagement. We also acknowledge Dr. Susan E. Saxton for her dedication as interim President and CEO, and our staff and scholars who have kept MEI at the forefront of policy discourse during this period of transition.

In this report, I invite you to explore MEI's accomplishments and the ways we continue to reach new heights while staying true to our vital mission.



**Gen. John P. Abizaid** (USA Retired)  
Chair, Board of Governors



## Board of Governors

Gen. John P. Abizaid (USA Retired), *Chair*  
Marjorie A. Adams, *Vice Chair*  
Amb. Robert W. Jordan, *Vice Chair*  
Brian C. McK. Henderson, *Vice Chair*

H.E. Huda Alkhamis-Kanoo  
Patrick Barry  
Thomas J. Campbell  
T. Gail Dady  
Amb. Paula J. Dobriansky  
Robert Fardi  
Nijad I. Fares  
Samia Farouki  
Amb. Jeffrey Feltman  
Joseph C. Geagea  
Fadi Ghandour  
Nada Hamadeh  
George R. Hoguet

James K. Holman  
Karl V. Hopkins  
Louis R. Hughes  
Hunter Hunt  
John K. Hurley  
Robert Kapla  
Anne B. Keiser  
Deborah Lehr  
Michael Levy  
Waleed Al Muhairi  
John Pearson  
Joumana R. Al Rashid  
George R. Salem  
Amb. Magnus Schöldtz  
Kevin Taweel  
Toni Verstandig  
Amb. David Welch  
Rochdi A. Younsi  
Amb. Susan L. Ziadeh





---

## IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

MEI's rapid analysis and prominent media presence helped inform public discourse throughout the critical early days of the war in Gaza.

---

Smoke and flames rise as a result of Israeli illumination flare attacks on Al-Shati refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, on November 6, 2023. (Photo by Ali Jadallah/Anadolu via Getty Images)

## RESPONDING TO A REGIONAL CRISIS

# Providing Critical Analysis on October 7 and Its Aftermath

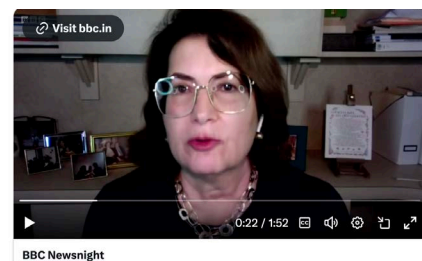
Overnight, the tragic events of Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel and the collateral devastation that soon followed shifted global attention to the Middle East in a way that has not been seen in decades. As these unfortunate dynamics exposed key knowledge-gaps among media, policymakers, and general audiences alike, MEI quickly initiated a whole-of-organization approach, reorienting our publications, engagements, and programs to address the situation. In doing so MEI not only advanced our mission and reaffirmed our reputation, but established an institutional blueprint for how MEI can quickly adapt to the region's most pressing crises, now and in the future.

In the immediate aftermath of October 7, MEI scholars with a diverse range of expertise appeared across national and international media outlets, providing key insights, expert commentary, and informed predictions. In particular, MEI scholars Khaled Elgindy, Nimrod Goren, Brian Katulis, Randa Slim, Charles Lister, and Firas Maksad emerged as go-to sources in

broadcast, print, and digital media alike. In this period, MEI's impact across these mediums nearly doubled, allowing MEI to steer influential conversations on the conflict in a way that showcased our prioritization of non-partisanship and advanced our commitment to fostering dialogue.

Institutionally, MEI responded to the conflict with the launch of our new Weekly Virtual Briefings series. Each week MEI hosted a new scholar or practitioner whose expertise offered a unique vantage point, giving our audience a comprehensive perspective on the conflict. Sustained high attendance, which has collectively numbered in the thousands, demonstrates the value of MEI scholarship and the unparalleled access of the MEI network.

MEI's outputs related to the conflict will continue to emphasize pathways to a lasting resolution. Until then, the dexterity, rapidity, and focus demonstrated by our scholars and staff ensures MEI will remain a go-to source of information for the duration of the conflict, its eventual day-after, and for any future crisis scenario that emerges from across the Middle East.







## IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

MEI deepened its strategic partnership with US Central Command, driving key discussions on US security priorities in the Middle East.

(From left) *Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius, Gen. John P. Abizaid (USA Retired), Gen. Frank McKenzie (USMC Retired), and Gen. Joe Votel (USA Retired) at MEI's annual CENTCOM Commanders Council Dinner held in Washington, DC, on September 14, 2023.



## STRENGTHENING DEFENSE PARTNERSHIPS

# MEI-CENTCOM collaboration brings together top military leaders and analysts

**T**he geopolitical landscape of 2023 underscored the urgent need for increased dialogue and military cooperation between the United States and its partners in the Middle East and beyond. Events such as the war in Gaza and the solidification of the Hezbollah-Iran-Houthi axis raised pressing questions about US military strategy in the region. How will the US and its allies respond to these evolving threats that challenge its regional position?

To help address these critical issues, the Middle East Institute has deepened its strategic relationship with US Central Command (CENTCOM). In May 2023, MEI hosted its third annual MEI-CENTCOM Conference, bringing together top CENTCOM leadership alongside scholars and practitioners to discuss the most pressing security challenges facing the region. This conference continues to serve as a key platform for fostering dialogue and cooperation between military and civilian experts.

Further cementing this partnership, General (Ret.) John P. Abizaid, CENTCOM's longest-serving commander, was elected Chairman of MEI's Board of Governors. His selection reflects MEI's commitment to integrating

Maj. Gen. Sean Salene (J5) outlines CENTCOM's current priorities at MEI's CENTCOM Commander's Council Dinner on September 14, 2023

military expertise into its leadership, ensuring that the Institute remains at the forefront of discussions on US security priorities in the Middle East.

In September, MEI hosted its inaugural CENTCOM Commanders Council Dinner, a significant event that featured a discussion with retired Generals John Abizaid, Joseph Votel, Frank McKenzie, and Anthony Zinni. The evening also included remarks from Maj. Gen. Sean M. Salene, CENTCOM's current Director of Strategy, Plans, and Policy (J5), highlighting the critical role of military leadership in shaping US policy in the region.

Looking ahead, MEI's special relationship with CENTCOM is poised to grow and expand. As this partnership deepens, MEI will continue to lead essential conversations on how to strengthen military cooperation with regional allies, mitigate risks, and deter common adversaries, ensuring that US security strategies remain robust and effective in an increasingly complex geopolitical environment.



## Former CENTCOM Leaders Affiliated with MEI

**Gen. John P. Abizaid (USA Retired)**  
8th Commander, US Central Command  
Chair, Board of Governors, MEI

**Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr. (USMC Retired)**  
14th Commander, US Central Command  
MEI Distinguished Sr. Fellow on National Security

**Gen. Joseph L. Votel (USA Retired)**  
13th Commander, US Central Command  
MEI Distinguished Sr. Fellow on National Security

**Gen. Anthony C. Zinni (USMC Retired)**  
6th Commander, US Central Command  
Chairman Emeritus, Board of Governors, MEI

**Lt. Gen. Michael K. Nagata (USA Retired)**  
Former Commander, SOCENT COM  
MEI Distinguished Sr. Fellow on National Security

**Lt. Gen. Sam Mundy (USMC Retired)**  
Former Commander, MARCENT COM  
MEI Distinguished Sr. Fellow on National Security

**Gen. Michael X. Garrett (USA Retired)**  
Former Commander, ARCENT COM  
MEI Distinguished Sr. Fellow on National Security

**V. Adm. Kevin M. Donegan (USN Retired)**  
Former Commander, NAVCENT COM  
MEI Distinguished Sr. Fellow on National Security

---

## IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

MEI's Turkish Studies Program led critical discourse during Turkey's centenary, shaping international perspectives and policy discussions.

---





# MEI's Turkey Program was a key resource for policymakers during a tumultuous year

The centenary of the Turkish Republic in 2023 was a milestone year for Turkey amid one of the most consequential periods in its history. The Middle East Institute's Turkish Studies Program, under the leadership of its founding director, Gönül Tol, played a pivotal role in shaping the discourse around Turkey's political and social landscape during this critical year.

The highlight of the program's activities was the 12th Annual Turkey Conference, held on December 6, 2023, at the historic National Press Building in Washington, DC. The conference, titled "Turkey at 100," brought together a diverse group of scholars, policymakers, and diplomats to address Turkey's pressing issues. The discussions delved into the aftermath of the February 2023 earthquakes, the

country's ongoing economic challenges, and the high-stakes May 2023 presidential elections.

Gönül Tol's influence extended far beyond the conference. As one of the leading Turkey analysts in Washington, her insights were sought after by major media outlets. She gave numerous interviews and her work was featured in esteemed publications such as *Foreign Policy* and the *Financial Times*. Tol's monthly

columns in FT continue to influence the global understanding of Turkey's evolving political landscape, while her analyses, particularly on the Turkish government's response to the earthquakes and the dynamics of the May elections, have shaped public discourse. Notably, Fareed Zakaria cited one of her articles on his program "GPS," underscoring her impact on informing international perspectives.

Beyond her media presence, Tol actively engaged with US



policymakers, briefing Congress, the CIA, NSC, NIC, State Department, and DoD on Turkey's elections. Her book, *Erdoğan's War*, garnered critical acclaim, further elevating the visibility of MEI's Turkish Studies Program.

Through these efforts, Gönül Tol and the Turkish Studies Program at MEI have solidified their positions as leading voices in the analysis of Turkey's future during a pivotal moment in the country's history.



**Left:** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addresses the crowd as he attends the opening ceremony for a new metro line in Istanbul, Turkey, on April 8, 2023. (Photo by Murat Kula/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images)

# Policy Center

The Policy Center, led by Vice President for Policy Brian Katulis, is the hub for MEI's expert analysis on political, social, security, and economic developments in the Middle East. Hosting 17 distinct programs and nearly 200 affiliated regional experts, the depth and diversity of viewpoints represented sets MEI apart as the leading US think tank on Middle Eastern affairs.



MEI Vice President of Policy, Brian Katulis (right), moderates a discussion with Timothy Lenderking, US Special Envoy for Yemen, at the 2023 MENA Forum held in New York City, September 22, 2023.

## US-Middle East Policy Brian Katulis

Policy Center Vice President Brian Katulis launched a key initiative in 2023 to assess the Biden administration's Middle East policy approach. The multi-year assessment was published as a major report, titled "Treading Cautiously on Shifting Sands," and launched with a high-profile public panel featuring Katulis, along with Middle East experts Kristen Fontenrose, Vali Nasr, and Dennis Ross. The initiative examines Biden administration policies and issues periodic report cards grading the impact of notable decisions and progress toward strategic objectives.

## Iran Alex Vatanka

MEI's Iran Program covers Iranian domestic politics, civil society, and social trends, as well as Tehran's geopolitical competition with other regional countries. In 2023, the program continued to publish expert analysis on a range of key issues both within Iran and the wider region. Coverage included Iran's relations with Hamas and Hezbollah in the aftermath of the 2023 war in Gaza; Tehran's sponsorship of the Houthis in Yemen, including the

supply of weapons; Tehran's ability to overcome Western sanctions by moving closer to Russia, China, and other countries around the world; and the regional implications of the Chinese-brokered Iran-Saudi normalization agreement.

## Lebanon Fadi Nicholas Nassar

The Middle East Institute's Lebanon Program is at the forefront of shaping the policy discourse on Lebanon for both American and international audiences. Dedicated to identifying and promoting viable solutions for Lebanon amidst the multifaceted crises it has faced since 2019, the program made significant strides in 2023. Key initiatives included a series of in-depth articles addressing the presidential vacuum, advocating for an international fact-finding mission into the 2020 blast at the Port of Beirut, and proposing innovative donor strategies to alleviate Lebanon's escalating economic crisis. In light of the increased violence since October, the Lebanon Program has provided timely analysis on the prospects of war and explored diplomatic avenues to prevent broader conflict through a variety of platforms, including articles, podcasts, and webinars.



## Turkey Gönül Tol

The Turkey Studies Program at MEI is a leading source of analysis on Turkey's political, economic, and social developments. This was particularly true in 2023, a pivotal year marking the Republic's centenary, during which the program produced 82 publications, hosted 13 events, and held 9 virtual press briefings in response to Turkey's critical issues, including the May presidential elections and the February earthquakes. Program Director Gönül Tol made numerous media appearances, informing international discourse through articles and interviews. Her work ensured that MEI's perspectives were widely recognized and influential in shaping US and global policy considerations regarding Turkey.

## Syria Charles Lister

MEI's Syria Program aims to remain at the forefront of insightful and grounded research and analysis on all things Syria to better inform a wide range of audiences and to help sustain and shape a more meaningful policy-oriented dialogue. The Syria Program covers the country's internal affairs, ongoing crisis, and domestic conflict — focusing specifically on its political, economic, legal, social, ethnic,

and religious aspects. In 2023, MEI's Syria Program remained the world's leading English-language source of timely and unique policy research into all aspects of the crisis in Syria. This included dozens of publications in English and Arabic as well as numerous high-profile events, notably with famed Syrian political philosopher Yassin al-Haj Saleh, marking his first visit to the United States, and others focused on the catastrophic February earthquake and a decade of regime militias. In recognition of the leading role played by MEI's Syria Program, the Doha Forum invited MEI to be an institutional partner for the first time in 2023, hosting an MEI panel on Syria policy. That panel brought together Hadi al-Bahra (President, Syria's National Coalition), Geir Pedersen (UN Special Envoy for Syria), Brigitte Curmi (French Special Envoy to Syria), and Ann Snow (UK Special Envoy to Syria) and was moderated by MEI Program Director Charles Lister. Late in 2023, MEI's Syria Program entered into a strategic partnership with the Atlantic Council and European Institute of Peace to launch (in early-2024) the Syria Strategy Project — an unprecedented initiative involving more than 100 experts and 30 governments and Syrian governing stakeholders to brainstorm, negotiate, and design a comprehensive multilateral vision to resolve Syria's crisis.

## Palestine & Palestinian-Israeli Affairs Khaled Elgindy

MEI's Palestine and Palestinian-Israeli Affairs Program looks at the future of Palestinian politics and the Palestinian national movement, prospects for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as Palestine's role in the stability of the broader Middle East. During the first half of 2023, the program produced numerous publications and events on the widening violence in the West Bank and growing extremism within Israeli politics. In the second half of the year, the program focused on convening a major conference as well as responding to the October 7 attack and its aftermath. In September, the program, together with the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), convened a special two-day conference, titled "Oslo at 30: Legacies, Hard Realities, and Alternatives for Israel-Palestine," which examined the aftermath of the Oslo process, ways to address today's difficult realities on the ground, and alternative strategies and outcomes for the future. In the wake of the October 7 attack and the ensuing war on Gaza, the program put out numerous publications, including a major op-ed in *Newsweek* on the dangers of dehumanizing Palestinians in the US media and political discourse and a widely circulated essay in *Foreign Affairs* on the prospects for a Palestinian political revival following the Israeli assault on Gaza.

## Defense and Security

MEI's Defense and Security Program provides rigorous, multidisciplinary analysis of current and emerging defense and security challenges facing the United States and its regional partners. The program serves as a unique, credible platform for defense and security stakeholders from the US and the Middle East to interact, exchange views, and share experiences on national security



MEI Syria Program director Charles Lister moderates a panel on Syria policy at the Doha Forum, December 10, 2023.



In March 2023, due to the impact of its “Resolving the Detainee Dilemma” initiative, MEI’s Syria and Counterterrorism Program Director Charles Lister was invited by CENTCOM Commander General Erik Kurilla (above, left) to travel with him to northern Syria. They visited the US military’s primary base in Rumeilan, the al-Roj and al-Hol camps (above), as well as Ghweiran Prison to assess the situation and discuss policy options for the US and its partners.

matters. In 2023, the program deepened its strategic collaboration with US Central Command (CENTCOM), hosting the third annual MEI-CENTCOM Conference in May, which brought together top CENTCOM leadership, scholars, and practitioners to address key security challenges.

## Countering Terrorism and Extremism

### Charles Lister

MEI’s Countering Terrorism and Extremism Program generates locally rooted insights into today’s and tomorrow’s security threats — understanding their origins, motivations, and how to effectively counter them. In 2023, the program hosted two major international conferences as part of its Resolving the Detainee Crisis Initiative, a collaboration with King’s College London. This initiative addresses the ongoing crisis of detaining 10,000 ISIS militants and 50,000 family members in northeast Syria. Notably, in June, MEI convened Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) member states in Vienna to enhance coordination on repatriations and improve security in detention facilities. In October, MEI hosted closed-door negotiations in Washington, DC, bringing together 25 governments, the UN, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and human rights

groups to discuss solutions. Program Director Charles Lister’s expertise was further recognized when he accompanied US CENTCOM Commander Gen. Michael E. Kurilla to inspect detention camps and military bases in Syria. Following Hamas’ assault on Israel, the program also became a leading source of analysis on Hamas and Iran’s network of militant proxies across the region.

## Israel

### Nimrod Goren

MEI launched its Israel Initiative in 2023, led by the Institute’s first Senior Fellow for Israeli Affairs, Nimrod Goren. The initiative aims to enhance understanding of Israel’s domestic politics and foreign affairs, focusing on national governance issues, Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking, and Israel’s regional relations. Key topics

in 2023 included the country’s judicial overhaul and the pro-democracy protests, the impact of Israel’s far-right coalition, and the October 7 Hamas terror attack. MEI published reports on Israel’s evolving democracy, regional relations, and environmental cooperation. Israeli scholars contributed to policy papers, webinars, and briefings, and MEI’s commentary was featured in top-tier media.

## Black Sea

### Iulia-Sabina Joja

MEI’s Black Sea Program (BSP) explores interactions among countries in the extended Black Sea area — Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine — with the Middle East, Russia, and China. The BSP examines security, political, economic, and energy relationships as

MEI staff and scholars meet with Black Sea Program fellows during a week of seminars and presentations at the Institute’s DC headquarters.





well as trends that are likely to grow in strategic importance. In 2023, the program focused on the implications of war in Ukraine and unrest in the South Caucasus. The BSP managed the second and third iterations of a State Department grant, hosting US researchers who traveled to the wider Black Sea region and conducted research relevant to US regional policy. Program director Iulia Joja obtained a large book grant over two years from the Smith Richardson Foundation to analyze strategic competition between Russia, China, and Iran in the Black Sea region.

## Afghanistan & Pakistan Studies

Marvin G. Weinbaum

The Afghanistan and Pakistan Studies Program at MEI provides a nuanced understanding of the economic, political, social, and foreign policy dynamics of these two countries. The program produces opinion pieces, articles, and in-depth reports to promote dialogue and knowledge about Afghanistan and Pakistan in the United States. In 2023, the program provided regular commentary about major developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan, publishing 28 briefings, 14 articles, and 4 reports. Through interviews and meetings, the program also informed the media and policymakers in the Washington community.

## Arabian Peninsula Affairs

Gerald Feierstein

MEI's Arabian Peninsula Affairs Program analyzes major issues and opportunities in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states to broaden American understanding of the region. In 2023, the program organized an MEI delegation trip to Qatar and hosted a group of Qatari diplomats in the US on a study program. The program also examines developments in the broader neighborhood, including Yemen and Iran. In 2023, the program launched, in collaboration with the Iran Program, a new series of analyses focusing on the Houthi-Iran nexus, which is challenging regional security and stability. Moreover, it hosted a half-day conference on "Building a New Yemen." Program Director Amb. Feierstein continued to lead



## The Middle East Journal

*The Middle East Journal* is the oldest peer-reviewed publication in North America dedicated to the study of the modern Middle East. First printed in 1947, the *Journal* continues to present readers with original and objective academic research and analysis on the area from Morocco to Pakistan, as well as expert reviews of new works in regional scholarship. In 2023, the *Journal* published issues spotlighting problems facing democracy in Israel, oil-driven development in

Oman, Turkish-Syrian relations, and diplomacy and media in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Other articles included studies of sectarianism and Islamism in Egypt, political parties in Iran and Lebanon, the causes of the Iran-Iraq War, Arab media coverage of China's repression of the Uyghurs, and the potential for green urban reforms in Cairo. Contributors included up-and-coming scholars in the region and around the world as well as established names in North America like former Middle East Studies Association president Laurie Brand, Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer, Rice University's Jim Krane, the American Enterprise Institute's Kenneth Pollack, *Washington Post* columnist Shadi Hamid, and Temple University's Sean Yom.

MEI's Ambassador Series Program, which, in 2023, hosted ambassadors from Bahrain, Israel, Algeria, Qatar, Tunisia, and Pakistan.

## Egypt & the Horn of Africa

Mirette Mabrouk

MEI's Egypt & the Horn of Africa Program focuses on economic, political, and security developments in Egypt and the Horn as well as this region's role and relevance to US policy. The program also examined Egypt's domestic affairs, geopolitical ties to its African neighbors, and priority relations with the United States. The program is working to develop the same reputation for incisive, non-partisan coverage and analysis of the Horn

as it has already earned for its work on Egypt, and it has seen a steady uptick in media coverage and cooperation with peer organizations abroad. That reputation also resulted in Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry choosing MEI to host an exclusive roundtable at its office.

## North Africa and the Sahel

Intissar Fakir

In 2023, the MEI's North Africa and Sahel (NAS) Program prioritized policy engagement on the region's key trends, offering concrete recommendations for pressing issues. Working with policy makers in the EU and the US and civil society groups, the program's director and



MEI Senior Fellow Dr. Karen Young moderates a panel titled “Structural Reforms to Reinvigorate Growth in MENA,” held October 10, 2023 in Marrakech, Morocco, as part of the International Monetary Fund’s Annual Meetings.

## Conflict Resolution and Track II Dialogues

Randa Slim

MEI’s Conflict Resolution and Track II Dialogues Program helps to maintain the lines of communication on issues critical to inter-state relationships and provides platforms for independent, open discussion on political and security issues with participants from the public and private sectors. The program hosts three Track II Dialogues annually. The Middle East Dialogue (MED) brings together policymakers, academics, and experts from across the MENA region, including the Gulf states, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. MED runs parallel to two separate Dialogues that convene stakeholders with material investment and involvement in the region, namely the United States, Russia, and Turkey, in separate spaces. These three concurrent discussion platforms seek to inform each other and provide spaces for analysis and problem solving.

non-resident fellows engaged in a series of initiatives, such as a high-level advisory group on EU policy innovation, private briefings, and advisory sessions with EU officials, including the special envoy for the Mediterranean and German, US, Spanish, and French policymakers, diplomats, and military leadership. The program participated in various international forums, including the Middle East Dialogue’s (MED) landmark annual meeting. The program’s director and scholars presented their research on thematic priorities of energy transition and security, migration, domestic stability and political regression, and geopolitical competition in North Africa and the Sahel. NAS continues to bring novel and innovative perspectives to audiences with the potential to build closer ties, promote shared peace and prosperity, and have a meaningful impact on policy outcomes.

## Economics and Energy

Colby Connelly

The Economics and Energy Program at MEI continues to focus on the evolution of the energy sector across the Middle East region as it increasingly seeks to adapt to both changes in global markets and unique, evolving needs in each country. The program began 2023 by holding a full-day conference on natural gas developments in the Eastern Mediterranean, which was attended by figures from the energy industry, diplomatic community, and academia. It also held a webinar on the ongoing impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on MENA economies with the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) and the Policy Center for the New South. In addition, the program completed work on “Energy Transitions in the Middle East: Challenges and Opportunities,” an edited volume published in January 2024.

Panel discussion on US-China policy in the Middle East during MEI’s third annual MEI-CENTCOM Conference on May 24, 2023.





Roundtable with H.E. Mohammed Haneche, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to the United States, held April 27, 2023, as part of MEI's Ambassador Series.

## Strategic Foresight Initiative

Steven Kenney

MEI's Strategic Foresight Initiative (SFI) examines key drivers of change, developing and analyzing alternative future scenarios across a wide range of issues and topics relevant to the region. The program employs a variety of methods to help regional and US decision-makers chart courses that can lead to preferred MENA futures. In 2023, the program conducted a major analysis for the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on alternative future pathways for how "the Metaverse" will transform the Arab region between now and 2040. SFI was invited by the Dubai Future Foundation (DFF) to join its Global Futures Society, which convenes futurists and foresight analysts from multiple regions and sectors for multi-institutional collaborations. The program also partnered with the National Council on US-Arab Relations on a two-day conference entitled "The Road to 2050: An Assessment of Arab Regional Possibilities and the Future of US Cooperation" and facilitated a convening of Arab region civil society organizations as part of a futures project being conducted by the Canadian government.



## Strategic Technologies and Cyber Security

Mohammed Soliman

MEI's Strategic Technologies and Cyber Security Program examines the impact of emerging technologies on the Middle East, focusing on the rise of new tech powers and fostering opportunities for US-regional tech cooperation. In 2023, the program covered a range of critical topics, including the implications of smart city development in the Gulf, the global governance of artificial intelligence (AI), and the strategic importance of the Middle East's critical minerals for the clean energy transition. Key publications also analyzed the US National Cybersecurity Strategy and the growing Indo-Israeli strategic cyber partnership. The program hosted a high-profile discussion on navigating the US-China tech cold war, and it facilitated dialogues on leveraging climate tech and the global semiconductor industry.

## Climate and Water

MEI's Climate and Water Program seeks to assess and understand the broader impacts of climate change in the region, with emphasis on water resource management, sustainability, and environmental protection. The program also explores the use of water and environmental policy, climate adaptation and mitigation, and green initiatives to enhance the climate resilience of the Middle East and North Africa. In 2023, the program hosted Climate Week 2023, a virtual conference building off the outcomes of the 2022 UN Climate Change Conference (27<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties, COP27) meeting in Egypt and setting the stage for the COP28 climate meeting held in November in the UAE. The program also participated in several side events set around COP28.



## A Sanctuary for Scholarship

With more than 20,000 items in multiple languages, the Oman Library at the Middle East Institute holds the largest collection of materials on the Middle East in the Washington area outside of the Library of Congress.

# Arts & Culture Center

Led by Vice President for Arts & Culture Kate Seelye and Arts & Culture Center Director Lyne Sneige, MEI's Arts & Culture Center facilitates cross-cultural understanding by promoting the work of Middle Eastern artists, hosting them in conversation, and connecting them with American audiences.



## 2023 MEI Art Gallery Exhibitions

### Perceptible Rhythms/Alternative Temporalities

CURATED BY MAYA EL KHALIL

Organized in partnership with the Abu Dhabi Festival

"Perceptible Rhythms/Alternative Temporalities" featured 12 artists from the Middle East and South Asia who examine the impact of conflict, urbanization, and the climate crisis on their environments and the ways in which humankind can better care for the planet. Using multimedia, installation, photography, drawing, and painting, they explore ways to live in harmony with the planet by reconnecting with past cultural histories, remembering extinct plant species, and imagining alternative ways for humankind to attune to nature.

### A River Flows Downstream

CURATED BY ROÏ SAADE

Organized in partnership with Tribe Photo Magazine

"A River Flows Downstream" explored the concept of a river journey into the disparate world of ecosystems in different space and time. While drifting downstream through the various works on display, the viewer was invited by each of the eight participating artists into their lived world to witness the shifting ecological and cultural landscapes that they inhabit. Through the lens of each artist, the photography exhibition narrated the diversity and complexity of these ever-changing landscapes interconnected by their reliance on the abundance of water.

### The Sea of Life: Modern and Contemporary Art from The Kingdom of Bahrain

CO-CURATED BY HAYFA ALJISHI AND LYNE SNEIGE

Sponsored by the National Arts Council of Bahrain and the RAK Art Foundation

"The Sea of Life" featured the works of 14 artists spanning different art forms and generations, exploring their connection to their natural and built environment and the symbolism of water in their lives. The title plays on the concept of "The Tree of Life," a widespread symbol among some cultures and religions. On Bahrain Island, water has been this life force. Both the sea and the island's freshwater springs are linked to its prosperity and regarded as precious commodities to cherish and preserve, creating a powerful connection between the people of Bahrain and their natural environment.



---

In 2023, MEI's Arts & Culture Center focused on engaging with local Washington, DC, communities through a rich program of concerts, films, comedy shows, and exhibition-related programming such as open houses and artist talks. Audiences packed musical performances at the Barns at Wolf Trap and joined MEI for film screenings and a Middle Eastern comedy show, underscoring the important role the Center plays as a bridge between two cultures.

---



# MEI Corporate Membership



- 1) Jessica Obeid (Think Research and Advisory) and H.E. Mariam Almheiri, Minister of Climate Change and Environment, United Arab Emirates, at the 2023 MENA Forum in New York.
- 2) MEI's Annual Gala Dinner at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC, April 17, 2024.
- 3) MEI Board Chair John P. Abizaid answers audience questions at the CENTCOM Commanders Council Dinner, Sept. 14, 2023



H.E. Khaldoon Khalifa Al Mubarak, Managing Director and Group Chief Executive Officer of Mubadala Investment Company, speaks to David Rubenstein, co-founder and co-chairman of the Carlyle Group, at MEI's Annual Gala, March 16, 2023.

**M**EI revitalized its corporate membership program in 2023 in order to cultivate a thriving community of private-sector partners who share a commitment to MEI's mission. Through our Corporate Council, MEI provides unique resources to senior executives and private-sector firms who find our geopolitical analysis directly relevant to their business and philanthropic interests.

Corporate Council members have the opportunity to forge

close relationships with MEI scholars, participate in exclusive MEI convenings hosted in Washington, DC, and around the world, and connect with the broader MEI community through the Institute's robust calendar of bespoke corporate programming.

Corporate Council members make an annual, tax-deductible donation to the Middle East Institute that supports our work to advance prosperous US-Middle East partnerships.



**Pete Dordal, Jr.**  
President,  
GardaWorld  
Federal Services

“

*In a region rich with strong US allies and persistent adversaries, the convening power of MEI's deeply informed geopolitical analysis and unparalleled network of distinguished experts plays a crucial role to GardaWorld for informed decision-making and corporate actions in the region.”*





A delegation of MEI supporters and Corporate Council members visits Ambassador Timmy Davis at the US Embassy in Doha, Qatar.

## Benefits of Corporate Council Membership Include:

- Bespoke, on-demand, private briefings with MEI experts from across our networks
- Opportunities to participate in MEI-led delegations to the Middle East
- Complimentary invitations to MEI's Annual Gala Dinner and other flagship events
- Subscription to MEI's biweekly virtual briefing series, which focuses on business-relevant emerging developments in the Middle East
- Invitations to exclusive Corporate Council events: networking receptions, private dinners, off-site tours, gallery openings, and more
- Brand recognition on our website, in print publications, and at our awards dinner

Learn more at [mei.edu/corporate-sponsorship](https://mei.edu/corporate-sponsorship)

## Become a Corporate Member Today

Our Corporate Council has three ascending levels of membership, each of which offers increasing degrees of access and engagement with the Institute and its leadership. For more information on how to get involved, please reach out to:

### Development Department

E. [development@mei.edu](mailto:development@mei.edu) | T. 202-785-1141 x.205



Gen. (ret.) Frank McKenzie, Jr. responds to audience questions at the CENTCOM Commanders Council Dinner, September 14, 2023.



H.E. Yasir Othman Al-Rumayyan, Chairman of Saudi Aramco and Governor of the Kingdom's Public Investment Fund, receives guests at a VIP reception during MEI's 75th Annual Gala.

# 2023 Contributions

## \$1,000,000+

Embassy of the United Arab Emirates

## \$100,000 - \$999,999

Think Research and Advisory / SRMG  
(Event sponsorship)

Smith Richardson Foundation

Embassy of the State of Qatar

Aramco Americas

International Development Research Centre

DC Capital Partners

US State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research

Mubadala

Royal Commission for Al Ula

Anonymous\*

Chrest Foundation

Foundation to Promote Open Societies

## \$50,000 - \$99,999

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Chevron Corporation

Swiss Embassy

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

Henrietta Goelet

Nada Hamadeh and Dr. Gerard

Moawad

Kevin Taweel

Michael Levy

Paladin Capital Group

Silver Lake Capital Management, LLC

## \$25,000 - \$49,999

Edelman Global Advisory

ExxonMobil

Hillwood, a Perot Company

Anne Keiser

Marjorie Adams

Moore Capital Management, LP

Wallenberg Office

John Abizaid

Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Festival

Lockheed Martin

Occidental Petroleum

Sierra Nevada Corporation

Apollo Global Management

Zain Kuwait

Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Samia Farouki

Iranian American Jewish Federation of New York

Shafik Gabr Foundation

Foundation for Middle East Peace

## \$10,000 - \$24,999

KKR

Fadi Ghandour

National Arab University for Security Sciences

Joseph Geagea

Khalidoun Baghdadi

The Raymond Debbane Family Foundation

RBC Capital Markets, LLC

Brian C. McK. Henderson

Rafic Bizri

George and Marie Hoguet

Toni Verstandig

New York Community Trust

David Welch

US-UAE Business Council

Bassam Yammine

Nagpal Family Fund

Koret Foundation

George and Rhonda Salem Family Foundation

Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain

James B. Quigley

Squire Patton Boggs

James Holman

Hunt Consolidated, Inc.

First Abu Dhabi Bank

Amr Ben Halim

Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck

BP

Nijad Fares

Ghassan Salameh

DLA Piper LLP

## \$5,000 - \$9,999

EBSCO Subscription Services

Hawkeye 360

Japan External Trade Organization

Beijing Book Company

Joe and Sandy Englehardt

Bruce Miller

Manal Fakhoury

Robert W. Jordan

## \$1,000 - \$4,999

Prenax

Joseph Votel

Jayne Ritchie

KINOKUNIYA Publications Service

Elias Aburdene

FlowServe

Anne W. Patterson

Jahan Jewayni

Allen L. Keiswetter

Harrassowitz GmbH & Co KG

Teresa Barger

Odeh Aburdene

Jeffrey D. Feltman

OCS America, Inc

Celdes s.r.l.

Maruzen Gaikoku

Paul Salem

Laura Pennington

Amr Nosseir

Michael Thomas

Robert Fardi

Maysoune Ghobash

William L. Nash

Zineb Drissi-Kaitounni

John and Alixandria Lapp Charitable Fund

Chris Goulakos

Bassem Bitar

Ali Tulbah

\* MEI has granted this contributor's request to remain anonymous. The individual or entity is not among those required to be disclosed under House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)(5)





# 2023 Financials

ASSETS	2023*	2022	2021
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	1,129,254	956,382	661,531
Accounts receivable	9,796	96,393	128,247
Grants and contributions receivable	918,924	1,485,160	1,040,620
Prepaid expenses	73,784	75,706	78,453
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>2,131,758</b>	<b>2,613,641</b>	<b>1,908,851</b>
<b>PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, NET</b>	<b>13,695,163</b>	<b>14,056,649</b>	<b>14,457,316</b>
<b>OTHER ASSETS</b>			
Investments in Board-designated account	11,629,040	10,632,568	12,494,035
Endowments	4,573,142	3,934,639	4,720,058
Investments in beneficial interest in perpetual trust	1,364,886	1,243,587	1,457,951
<b>TOTAL OTHER ASSETS</b>	<b>17,567,068</b>	<b>15,810,794</b>	<b>18,672,044</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>33,393,989</b>	<b>32,481,084</b>	<b>35,038,211</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>			
Current Liabilities	1,936,700	1,103,594	1,016,993
Long-Term Liabilities	4,507,828	4,355,010	1,523,285
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>6,444,528</b>	<b>5,458,604</b>	<b>2,540,278</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>26,949,461</b>	<b>27,022,480</b>	<b>32,497,933</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>33,393,989</b>	<b>32,481,084</b>	<b>35,038,211</b>
<b>REVENUE AND SUPPORT</b>			
Contributions	3,543,022	3,825,482	3,379,162
Grants	1,403,772	923,222	1,243,987
Membership Dues	39,870	22,145	34,300
Center for Policy Studies	610,921	478,412	539,859
Center for Education	238,404	304,025	327,060
Interest and dividends, net	571,472	329,454	341,318
Rental and other income	130,532	101,478	96,527
<b>TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT</b>	<b>6,537,992</b>	<b>5,984,218</b>	<b>5,962,213</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Program Services:			
Center for Policy Studies	4,325,980	3,972,522	3,899,992
Center for Arts & Culture	705,821	588,522	577,777
Center for Education	656,512	735,654	722,221
Communications	571,419	662,087	649,999
<b>TOTAL PROGRAM SERVICES</b>	<b>6,259,732</b>	<b>5,958,785</b>	<b>5,849,989</b>
<b>SUPPORT SERVICES</b>			
Fundraising	874,573	662,087	649,999
General and administrative	1,480,393	979,602	846,679
<b>TOTAL SUPPORT SERVICES</b>	<b>2,354,966</b>	<b>1,641,689</b>	<b>1,496,678</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>8,614,698</b>	<b>7,600,474</b>	<b>7,346,667</b>
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS FROM OPERATIONS	(2,076,706)	(1,616,256)	(1,384,454)
OTHER CHANGES	2,003,691	(3,859,197)	1,580,052
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	(73,015)	(5,475,453)	195,598
<b>NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>27,022,480</b>	<b>32,497,933</b>	<b>32,302,335</b>
<b>NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR</b>	<b>26,949,465</b>	<b>27,022,480</b>	<b>32,497,933</b>

\* Financial figures for 2023 are internally compiled and have not undergone Audit Review.



Middle  
East  
Institute

1763 N STREET NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20036

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

info@mei.edu  
202-785-1141

**DEVELOPMENT**

development@mei.edu  
202-785-1141 x203

**MEDIA INQUIRIES**

communications@mei.edu  
202-785-1141 x241

**EVENTS**

events@mei.edu  
202-785-1141 x202

