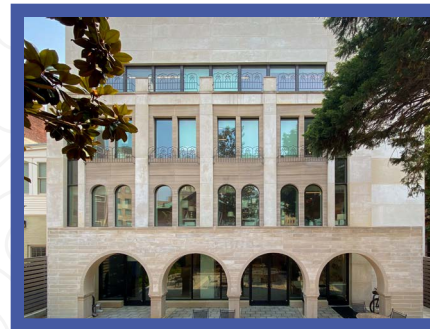
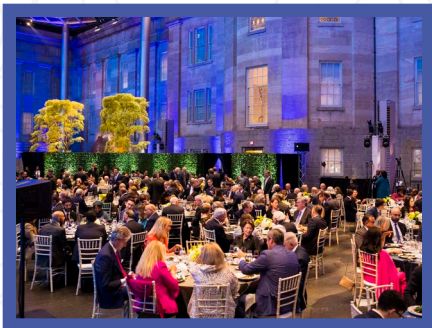




Middle
East
Institute



Annual Report

2024-25



CONTENTS

3	Letter from MEI Leadership
5	Policy Center
11	Arts & Culture Center
13	Corporate Council
14	2024 Contributions
15	Financials

About MEI

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.

Mission

To enhance peace, security, and people-to-people ties between the US and the Middle East by providing actionable foreign policy recommendations, rich cultural and educational programming, and opportunities for dialogue, engagement, and exchange.

Leadership

Stuart E. Jones, *President*
Susan E. Saxton, *Chief Operating Officer*
Kenneth M. Pollack, *Vice President for Policy*
Kate Seelye, *Vice President for Arts & Culture*
Yael Lempert, *Vice President for Outreach*
Courtney Lobel, *Chief Development Officer*
Rick Somarriba, *Chief Financial Officer*

Board of Governors

John P. Abizaid, <i>Chair</i>	Hunter Hunt
Thomas J. Campbell, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Robert Jordan
Marjorie A. Adams	Anne B. Keiser
Waleed Al Mokarrab Al Muhairi	Deborah Lehr
Jomana R. Al-Rashid	Michael Levy
Huda Alkhamis-Kanoo	John Pearson
Patrick Barry	Kerry Propper
Mary McInnis Boies	Michael Ratney
T. Gail Dady	George R. Salem
Robert Fardi	Magnus Schöldtz
Nijad I. Fares	John Serafini
Samia Farouki	Kevin Taweel
Michael Greenwald	Toni G. Verstandig
Brian C. McK. Henderson	Joseph Votel
Keith Hennessey	David Welch
Karl V. Hopkins	Rochdi Younsi
Louis R. Hughes	Susan L. Ziadeh

Middle East Institute
1763 N St. NW
Washington, DC 20036

www.mei.edu
202-785-1141
communications@mei.edu

Letter from MEI Leadership

We are honored to present the Middle East Institute's Annual Report for 2024/25 — a transformative year for MEI. In mid-2024, long-serving President Paul Salem transitioned from the presidency to lead international outreach from Beirut. Dr. Susan Saxton, who joined MEI in January as its first Chief Operating Officer, assumed the role of Acting CEO during this transition and continues to serve with distinction as COO.

In 2024 and 2025, MEI's growing roster of scholars brought decades of regional experience to bear during a tumultuous moment in the Middle East. Following the October 7 terror attack on Israel and the subsequent, multi-year war in Gaza, they offered context and clarity to a fraught public discourse, helping policymakers, journalists, and the public navigate one of the most complex periods in recent memory for the region. This urgent need for depth and accuracy was reflected in heightened demand for MEI's expertise, with our media presence surging as scholars became central voices in critical conversations.

Beyond media engagement, MEI convened key stakeholders and strengthened regional relationships throughout the year. The annual CENTCOM Commanders Council Reception gathered senior US defense officials, diplomats, and regional experts for strategic dialogue, while multiple delegations strengthened our networks and grounded our analysis in direct conversations with the leaders shaping events. Our 2024 annual gala captured this momentum, honoring Rayyanah Barnawi — the first Saudi and Arab woman in space — in a celebration that united thought leaders, diplomats, and supporters around a vision of possibility for the region.

The Arts and Culture Center launched two major exhibits: *The Sea of Life* featured fourteen Bahraini artists exploring their connection to natural and built environments through the symbolism of water, while *Louder Than Hearts: Women Photographers from the Arab World and Iran* showcased deeply personal projects on resilience, creativity, and the impact of social and political conditions on women's lives.

The institutional and scholarly foundation built in 2024 yielded significant benefits for MEI in 2025. As we approach our 80th anniversary in 2026, we are focusing on expanding impact, strengthening operations, and honoring the vision of our founder, George Keiser. With a robust Policy Center, dynamic cultural programming, disciplined stewardship, and an expanding network of supporters and consumers, MEI is well positioned to serve the US-Middle East partnership for generations to come.



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



Amb. (ret.) Stuart E. Jones
President



INVESTING IN SCHOLARSHIP, EXPANDING IMPACT

Strengthening MEI's role as a trusted policy institution



In 2024, MEI's Policy Center emerged as an essential voice during one of the most consequential periods for the Middle East in decades. As the Gaza war erupted and reverberated across the region, MEI Fellows delivered critical analysis on major global media outlets, helping policymakers, practitioners, and the public make sense of a rapidly evolving crisis. The Institute hosted dozens of briefings and roundtables examining the transformation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iran's regional influence, and the cascading humanitarian and political consequences of ongoing hostilities. By the year's end, the Policy Center's publications, media presence, and strategic partnerships had dramatically expanded MEI's reach and cemented its role as an indispensable resource during moments of upheaval and uncertainty.

Building on this momentum, 2025 ushered in a new era under Vice President for Policy Kenneth M. Pollack. Anchored by a scholar-first philosophy that prizes rigor, quality, and practical policy relevance, the Center has expanded its roster with distinguished new fellows, reinforcing MEI's standing as Washington's most trusted, non-partisan source for Middle East policy expertise.

This year the Center welcomed inaugural cohorts of Distinguished Military, Diplomatic, and Leadership Fellows — retired generals, ambassadors, and senior officials with decades of hands-on experience in the region — all of whom bring unparalleled insight to MEI's work.

The Policy Center has also fortified its strategic alliance with US Central Command (CENTCOM). In April, MEI leadership traveled to CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa for high-level consultations, followed by an intensive Gaza reconstruction exercise in Washington that united military commanders, US officials, and leading scholars. These initiatives complemented MEI's annual CENTCOM Commanders Council, a flagship convening where current and former commanders engage in frank, strategic dialogue on US security imperatives in the region.

With its revitalized structure, exceptional roster of senior experts, and deepening ties to military and diplomatic leadership, the Policy Center is positioned to shape policy conversations for years to come.

Speaking to Policymakers

MEI Fellows' expertise routinely translates into tangible outcomes. Notably, Charles Lister's analysis of the deteriorating situation in Syria following the fall of President Bashar al-Assad helped avert a dangerous US aid freeze that would have halted critical counterterrorism and security operations in the northeast. His continued research has also informed international efforts to integrate Kurdish-led forces into Syria's national military.

Jonathan Winer's work on Libya prompted renewed international attention on governance and accountability; and within days of his widely circulated analysis, a detained senior Libyan official was released following quiet engagement from US policymakers.

Gönül Tol has been a vital source of insights and analysis for US lawmakers, ensuring that developments in Turkey remain on the Congressional agenda. Her briefings gave members of the Senate both the insights and the language needed to highlight democratic concerns during a period of political upheaval.

Intissar Fakir has similarly shaped debate in Europe, contributing to the EU High Level Group on Policy Innovation and embedding North Africa as a priority in the EU's 2025-29 strategic agenda.

Media Appearances

The unprecedented and prolonged global focus on the Gaza war and its regional repercussions created

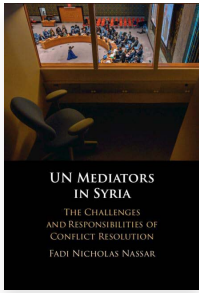
extraordinary demand for MEI's expertise throughout 2024. MEI scholars appeared more than 2,300 times across major outlets, including over 630 television interviews, 1,300 print and online citations, 210 radio appearances, and nearly 100 op-eds and external publications. MEI voices were featured in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, Bloomberg, *The Financial Times*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *Foreign Policy*, among others, as well as across the broadcast spectrum on CNN, BBC, PBS, NPR, Fox News, and MSNBC.

This momentum has only intensified in 2025. As the aftershocks of the Iran — Israel War continue to reshape the regional landscape, MEI scholars are once again at the forefront — delivering the timely, expert insight that audiences and policymakers need to navigate moments of crisis and decision.

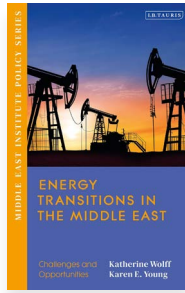
Public Engagement

Since January, the Policy Center has convened more than 37 public and private events and hosted seven high-level delegations, creating space for policymakers, diplomats, and private-sector leaders to engage directly with MEI's Fellows. With over 38,000 podcast downloads and a growing suite of videos explaining key policy issues, MEI is reaching audiences across multiple platforms and reinforcing its role as one of Washington's most trusted sources of insight.

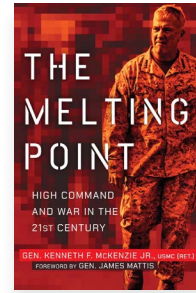




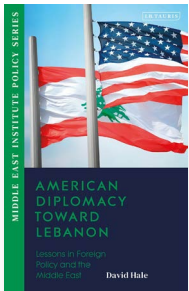
UN MEDIATORS IN SYRIA:
The Challenges and Responsibilities of Conflict Resolution
Fadi Nicholas Nassar



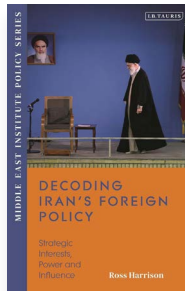
ENERGY TRANSITIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST:
Challenges and Opportunities
Katherine Wolff and Karen E. Young



THE MELTING POINT:
High Command and War in the 21st Century
Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr.



AMERICAN DIPLOMACY TOWARD LEBANON:
Lessons in Foreign Policy and the Middle East
David Hale



DECODING IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY:
Strategic Interests, Power and Influence
Ross Harrison



WEST ASIA:
A New American Grand Strategy in the Middle East
Mohammed Soliman



The Middle East Journal

The Middle East Journal (MEJ), founded in 1947, is charting a new path under its recently appointed Editor, Dr. Ariel Ahram. A leading scholar of Middle Eastern politics and governance, Dr. Ahram brings both deep academic expertise and a forward-looking vision for the publication's role in shaping regional discourse. Under his leadership, the *Journal* will shift its focus to address current policy issues and relevant contemporary history while maintaining its reputation for rigorous, evidence-based analysis. MEI is committed to supporting the *Journal* as it evolves to meet the needs of policymakers, practitioners, and scholars trying to navigate a tumultuous and rapidly changing region.



The world's tallest solar power tower, based at Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum Solar Park, UAE.

FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE

Driving Policy on Emerging Technologies

In 2025, MEI established itself at the forefront of potentially one of the most transformative drivers reshaping the Middle East: the Gulf's rapid investment in artificial intelligence and related technologies. With countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE leveraging abundant energy resources to power vast computing infrastructure, the region has become central to global conversations about AI, space exploration, nuclear energy, and defense technology.

Led by Senior Fellow Mohammed Soliman and Associate Fellow Daniel Benaim, MEI has shaped emerging debates through influential policy reports — including *The Role of the Middle East in the US-China Race to AI Supremacy* — and high-level roundtables with Gulf officials, US policymakers, and private-sector leaders. Forums with UAE Assistant Minister Omran Sharaf on advanced science and technology and HRH Prince Faisal Bin Bandar Al Saud on gaming and AI have positioned MEI as an essential voice on the intersection of Gulf innovation and US policy.



Anticipating the Future of US-Gulf Engagement

This work builds on MEI's Technology and Policy Working Group (TPWG), which has long recognized the growing convergence of US tech policy and US Middle East strategy. With expanded capacity, the TPWG is poised to deepen its influence and deliver practical recommendations on US-Gulf cooperation in AI and emerging technologies — a priority area where regional demand for MEI's expertise continues to grow.



Honoring a Gulf Pioneer

At its 77th Annual Awards Gala, MEI presented its Visionary Award to Rayyanah Barnawi, the first Saudi and Arab woman in space. Her historic journey aboard the International Space Station in 2023 symbolized the region's aspirations in science and technology and reflected MEI's commitment to celebrating innovation and people-to-people exchange.



Pictured: Ebrahim Bu Saad, *The Lovers* (1999)

Building Bridges Through Cultural Diplomacy and the Arts

Led by Vice President Kate Seelye and Director Lyne Sneige, MEI's Arts & Culture Center organized exhibitions, performances, panels, and cultural diplomacy initiatives that positioned it as a unique platform for dialogue, bridge-building, and community engagement.

Advancing Cultural Diplomacy

In 2024, MEI deepened its role in cultural exchange, finalizing a major initiative with the Saudi Ministry of Culture that brought prominent US authors — including CNN's Fareed Zakaria and best-selling biographer Walter Isaacson — to the Riyadh International Book Fair for public engagements. MEI also accompanied a Kennedy Center delegation to the kingdom to explore US-Saudi cultural partnerships.



Showcasing Middle Eastern Voices

The MEI Art Gallery presented landmark exhibitions featuring the region's leading visual artists. *Louder than Hearts: Women Photographers from the Arab World and Iran* highlighted the creativity and resilience of women across the region through deeply personal photographic work. Curated by award-winning photographer Rania Matar and organized in partnership with *Tribe Photo Magazine*, the exhibition drew thousands of visitors, school groups, and national attention, with reviews in *The Washington Post* and *Smithsonian Magazine*.



Expanding Cultural Programming

Beyond exhibitions and diplomatic initiatives, the Center offered diverse public programming that demonstrated culture's power to inform, revive, and connect. Highlights included a comedy festival exploring laughter's healing potential (funded by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities), a performance of the "Gaza Monologues," and a Persian cookbook launch — events that brought together diverse audiences through a shared cultural experience.



“The convening power of the Middle East Institute’s deeply informed geopolitical analysis and unparalleled network of distinguished experts plays a crucial role for informed decision-making and corporate actions in the region.”

Pete Dordal, Jr., President,
GardaWorld Federal Services



FACILITATING ACCESS AND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Council Membership



MEI's Council Membership program has grown into a thriving community of corporate and individual partners who share a commitment to advancing the Institute's mission. Council Members provide unrestricted support that sustains MEI's research, cultural programming, and operations, while enjoying unique opportunities to engage directly with the Institute's experts and networks.

Through bespoke briefings, curated convenings, and exclusive trips, Council Members experience MEI as more than a think tank — they connect with a dynamic network where policy, business, philanthropy, and culture intersect.

Delegations: Engaging the Region Firsthand

Council programming centers around the Institute's annual delegations to the Middle East, led by MEI Distinguished Fellows. These trips offer senior executives and philanthropists unprecedented access to policymakers, business leaders, and cultural institutions across the region.

Delegation participants gain firsthand insights into regional developments, deepen their understanding of US-Middle East ties, and build relationships that shape both business strategies and philanthropic priorities. This high-level engagement is unmatched in Washington and reflects MEI's role as a convener of diverse stakeholders at moments of regional transformation.

The Council Experience

Council Members enjoy access to a tailored suite of benefits, including:

- Invitations to exclusive gatherings, including the Ambassador's Lunch Series, Executive Speaker Series, and gallery openings.
- Complimentary invitations to MEI's Annual Awards Gala and hallmark receptions in Washington, DC.
- Networking opportunities with peers across business, philanthropy, and policy.
- Brand recognition in MEI publications and at major events.

Learn more about Council Membership

mei.edu/corporate-sponsorship

[e. council@mei.edu](mailto:council@mei.edu)

t. +1 202-785-1141 Ext. 203

2024 Contributors

\$1,000,000+

Embassy of the United Arab Emirates

\$100,000 - \$999,999

Embassy of the State of Qatar

Thomas J. Campbell

SRMG

Aramco Americas

US Department of State - Bureau of
Intelligence and Research

Kevin Taweel

International Development Research Centre

Michael Levy

Amb. (ret.) David Welch and Gretchen Welch

Nada Hamadeh and Dr. Gerard Moawad

Rockefeller Brothers Foundation

Anonymous*

\$50,000 - \$99,999

Mary McInnis Boies

Moore Capital Management, LLC

Kerry Propper

University Mohammed VI Polytechnic

United Nations Economic and Social
Commission for Western Asia

Wallenberg Office

General (ret.) John Abizaid

Benaroya Charitable Foundation

Chevron Corporation

Sierra Nevada Corporation

Brian C. McK. Henderson

Joseph C. Geagea

John K. Hurley

Smith Richardson Foundation

Yossi Nasser

Anne B. Keiser

Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Worley

\$25,000 - \$49,999

Toni Verstandig

ExxonMobil

GardaWorld Federal Services

Embassy of the State of Kuwait

George and Rhonda Salem Family Foundation

BP

Mercuria

Mitsubishi Corporation

Dr. Roger S. Shedlin

Marjorie A. Adams

Louis R. Hughes

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

Shafik Gabr Foundation

G42

Deborah Lehr

Ma'aden

\$10,000 - \$24,999

Near East South Asia Center for Strategic
Studies

Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation

General Dynamics Information Technology

The Hogue Family Charitable Giving Fund

Ilili

Rafic Bizri

James K. Holman

RTX Corporation

HawkEye 360

Teresa Barger

Airbus Defence & Space

Eaman Al Roudhan

Ardian

Axiom Space

Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain

Amr Ben Halim

CACI International, Inc.

Tom and Anne Charters

Samia Farouki

Foundation for Middle East Peace

Hillwood, a Perot Company

Amb. (ret.) Robert W. Jordan

Nazee Moinian

Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman

Ghassan Salameh

Squire Patton Boggs

\$5,000 - \$9,999

Law Offices of George R. Salem, PLLC

Japan External Trade Organization

DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities

Patrick Barry

Iranian American Jewish Federation of NY

Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy LLP

REQ

\$1,000 - \$4,999

Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck

René Moawad Foundation

General (ret.) Joseph Votel

Valentine Wilber

Karim Abuhamad

Allen L. Keiswetter

Allan C. Muns

Rhea Space Activity

Edelman Global Advisory

Melinda Kimble

New York Community Trust

Amb. (ret.) Anne W. Patterson

Peter J. Tanous

Nada Salem

Amb. (ret.) Paula Dobriansky

Boeing

Office of DC Mayor Muriel Bowser

Jeffrey D. Feltman

Guardian Centers

LTC (ret.) David Johnson

George Zoulas

Betty Sams

Susan Bastress

DiDi Cutler

Richard Davis

Dream Day Foundation

Wanda Krizek

Amb. (ret.) John Negroponte

Amr Nosseir

Gabrielle Perenchio

James B. Quigley

Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi

SpaceX

* 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)

2024 Financials

ASSETS	2024	2023	2022
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	1,011,434	1,129,255	956,382
Accounts receivable	73,193	57,228	96,393
Grants and contributions receivable	362,259	804,092	1,485,160
Prepaid expenses	37,001	66,216	75,706
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	1,483,887	2,056,791	2,613,641
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, NET	13,310,782	13,695,165	14,056,649
OTHER ASSETS			
Investments in Board-designated account	11,512,762	11,650,080	10,632,568
Endowments	4,929,380	4,573,142	3,934,639
Investments in beneficial interest in perpetual trust	1,422,842	1,364,886	1,243,587
TOTAL OTHER ASSETS	17,864,984	17,588,108	15,810,794
TOTAL ASSETS	32,659,653	33,340,064	32,481,084
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS			
Current Liabilities	925,548	1,741,868	1,103,594
Long-Term Liabilities	4,444,701	4,507,828	4,355,010
TOTAL LIABILITIES	5,370,249	6,249,696	5,458,604
NET ASSETS	27,289,404	27,090,368	27,022,480
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	32,659,653	33,340,064	32,481,084
REVENUE AND SUPPORT			
Contributions	5,744,443	3,672,853	3,825,482
Contracts	1,486,766	1,278,218	923,222
Membership Dues	12,630	39,870	22,145
Center for Policy Studies	653,144	751,844	478,412
Center for Education	93,023	239,404	304,025
Interest and dividends, net	454,775	447,527	329,454
Rental and other income	244,714	217,306	101,478
TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT	8,689,495	6,647,022	5,984,218
EXPENSES			
Program Services:			
Center for Policy Studies	5,229,854	4,465,917	3,972,522
Center for Arts & Culture	774,794	661,618	588,522
Center for Education	968,492	827,020	735,654
Communications	871,642	744,321	662,087
TOTAL PROGRAM SERVICES	7,844,782	6,698,876	5,958,785
SUPPORT SERVICES			
Fundraising	871,642	744,321	662,087
General and administrative	1,275,860	1,145,100	979,602
TOTAL SUPPORT SERVICES	2,147,502	1,889,421	1,641,689
TOTAL EXPENSES	9,992,284	8,588,297	7,600,474
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS FROM OPERATIONS	(1,302,789)	(1,941,275)	(1,616,256)
OTHER CHANGES	1,501,825	2,009,163	(3,859,197)
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	199,036	67,888	(5,475,453)
NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR	27,090,368	27,022,480	32,302,335
NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR	27,289,404	27,090,368	27,022,480



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