



Middle East PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

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JON B. ALTERMAN, DIRECTOR

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The CSIS Middle East Program concentrates on understanding the processes of social and political change in the Middle East, paying particular attention to the drivers of change.

Themes that run through our work include: governance and democratization, economic reform and development, workforce change and migration, media and the spread of ideas, and regime political strategies.

The Middle East Program draws heavily on the expertise of more than 100 CSIS experts in other fields, enriching its work by collaborating with functional experts in areas like demography and technology and partnering with experts on other regions to do rigorous and innovative comparative research.

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP & STAFF

The Program is directed by Dr. Jon Alterman, who came to CSIS from the Policy Planning Staff at the U.S. State Department. An award-winning teacher, Dr. Alterman has a distinguished record of academic research, has written for leading publications such as the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Financial Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, and is a frequent guest on CNN, BBC, and other international news outlets. The program also hosts a permanent fellow, Haim Malka.

REGULAR PUBLICATIONS

Middle East Notes & Comment is the program's monthly electronic newsletter, designed to provide insight into developments in the region and to alert readers to program events and recent publications. It is available for subscription by email.

The *Middle East Note* is a periodic report that offers in-depth analysis of timely policy in the Middle East. It is available for subscription by mail.

AGENDA

The CSIS Middle East Program covers all aspects of U.S. policy toward the region, concentrating especially on identifying new voices, framing emerging challenges, and developing opportunities for positive change in the Middle East. To the greatest degree possible, we seek to be "opportunity driven" rather than "threat driven."

Our work is intended to:

- **Identify and understand** the drivers of social and political change in the Middle East, concentrating on relatively poorly understood issues such as information and communications technologies, demographics, and the regional media.
- **Create partnerships** between academics and policy professionals in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East to frame and address questions in such a way as to promote the creation of new, constructive, and innovative solutions to problems.
- **Focus on activities that add value**, follow from CSIS's regional and functional strengths, build on its comparative advantages over other think tanks and government efforts, and extend CSIS's core competencies.

In addition, the Middle East Program pursues an active, "traditional" think tank agenda of concentrating on key states (**Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq**) and key conflicts (**Arab-Israeli, U.S.-Iranian**), holding periodic meetings and seminars, appearing on leading national and international news outlets, and publishing in both the academic and popular press.

CURRENT PROJECTS

Arab Media

In partnership with the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies and other organizations, the Middle East Program has established a dialogue between Western and Arab news professionals on matters of common concern. Discussion focus on issues like bias, news judgment, and responses to external pressures on newsgathering. Among other outcomes, the discussions will feed into the creation of a set of multimedia teaching materials in Arabic and English for use in journalism schools and training programs.

China-Middle East

In cooperation with the CSIS Freeman Chair in China Studies, the program is studying the implications of China's increasing role in the Middle East. As China becomes a global power and many Middle Eastern countries look for a counterweight to the United States, Chinese approaches to energy security, export markets and military ties have an important impact on global diplomacy. At the same time, the Chinese experience of economic growth without significant political liberalization remains an interesting, if not outright attractive, example for some Middle Eastern regimes. Through seminars in China, the Middle East and the United States, the Freeman Chair and the Middle East Program will evaluate emerging trends and opportunities in China's evolving relations with the Middle East.

North Africa

Morocco's Free Trade Agreement with the United States, combined with Tripoli's recent rapprochement with Washington, suggests a period of new opportunities in North Africa,

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both for regional integration and U.S. involvement. The program is organizing a series of roundtables, led by Fellow Haim Malka, to evaluate emerging trends and opportunities in a rapidly changing North African political and social environment.

U.S.-European Cooperation in the Middle East

In partnership with the CSIS Europe program, the Middle East program is analyzing U.S. and European efforts to promote political and economic reform in the Middle East. The efforts will culminate in a report to be issued in mid-2006.

IT in the Middle East

The program is forming a working group, to meet monthly, to combine first-hand field research with political and social analysis to understand the ways people are using information technology to create new forces for change in the region. Emphasis will be placed not only on new technologies, but also how old technologies are being used in new ways. Attention will also be paid to how non-Western-oriented, non-elites are adapting information technology to their own purposes.

Internal Reform and the Corporate Sector

The program is investigating how multinational corporations can use leadership, their contacts with local governments, charitable contributions, and other means to help advance prospects for moderation and reform in the Middle East. Emphasis will be placed on identifying new opportunities, best practices, and strategies for greater coordination. After a series of interviews and in-depth field research, the program will produce actionable recommendations for corporate partners.

Prodigal States

The program is exploring ways to reverse adversarial relationships between the United States and third countries. Particular attention is paid to the reasons why adversarial states decide to end activities that the U.S. government finds objectionable, and aspects of the process of rapprochement that help encourage the target state to continue along a path of conciliation. Specific attention will also be paid to the inhibitors of this process. The program has already begun programming on Libya, and anticipates continuing work on that country, as well as Iran, Syria and the Sudan. Building out of a program of small working groups, the program anticipates publishing a monograph in 2006.

UPCOMING PROJECTS

Saudi Arabia

The program seeks to establish an ongoing bi-national working group, including Americans and Saudis, to work together on key issues of common concern. Utilizing Digital Video Conferencing technology, the group will meet regularly to analyze issues of strategic, political, economic and social import, as well as the bilateral relationship between the two countries. The program intends to issue a series of publications bringing the deliberations of the working group to public attention.

Iran

The Middle East program is planning work to analyze the future direction of Iranian politics and society. Issues to be considered include political transition, the durability of clerical rule, proliferation, and strategic posture.

PONAMES

The Middle East Program hopes to establish a Program on New Approaches to Middle East Security, building on highly successful models at CSIS directed at Russia and Central Europe. PONAMES will establish an ongoing network of young scholars and professionals, all proficient in both Arabic and English, who share analysis and seek to develop common frameworks for understanding global political and security relationships.

RECENT PROJECTS

Charting a New Policy Toward the Arab World

The program assembled a bipartisan Advisory Committee, chaired by former U.S. Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen, in a year-long effort to reexamine U.S. policies and relationships in the Arab World. The committee produced a report recommending a range of initiatives, concentrating on strengthening bilateral relationships with regional governments and investing in the next generation of Arab leaders and citizens. The report built on focused discussions between the project leadership and Arabs in seven countries. It also reflected the findings of a specially commissioned Zogby International poll of public attitudes toward the United States in the Arab world. While the report acknowledged the importance of addressing the Arab-Israeli conflict and improving conditions in Iraq, it highlighted the extent to which securing U.S. interests in the Arab world will require an even more ambitious and broadly conceived agenda. The full text of the report is available online at http://www.csis.org/mideast/0503_conflictcooperation.pdf.

Philanthropy in the Arab and Muslim Worlds

The Middle East Program held a series of seminars in cooperation with the CSIS Islam Program and the U.S. Agency for International Development to explore "The Idea of Philanthropy in the Arab and Muslim Worlds". The report from this activity is available on the Middle East Program website: www.csis.org/mideast.

The CSIS Middle East Program

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