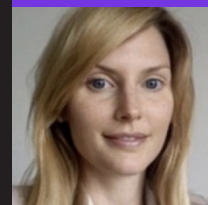
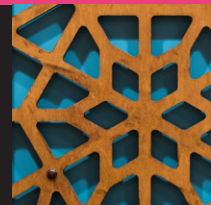


MOSAIC

Middle East Initiative
Harvard Kennedy School
2019-2020



HARVARD Kennedy School
BELFER CENTER
for Science and International Affairs
MIDDLE EAST INITIATIVE

Greetings مرحبا سلام Merhaba

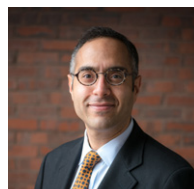
This issue of MOSAIC, the annual publication of the Harvard Kennedy School’s Middle East Initiative, is a report on a year cleft asunder by one of the greatest public health crises of the last fifty years. A year that had begun like any other—with a new class of research fellows and a dizzying array of on-campus research seminars, public talks, and study groups—ended with all of us huddled in our homes, settling in for a lockdown of unknown duration, staring not just into our computer screens, but into a future that truly seemed unknowable.

The impacts of the global coronavirus pandemic have been grave—a quarter of a million lives lost in the United States, and ten times as many worldwide, with untold livelihoods and educational trajectories ruined or disrupted. It will be many years before we have anything close to a full accounting of the losses wrought by the coronavirus, but when that accounting of the pandemic’s costs is completed, it is my belief that intellectual life at the Middle East Initiative of the Harvard Kennedy School will not figure among its casualties. Although the document you now hold in your hands reports on activities that took place in the 7 months before and 5 months after Harvard’s move to virtual operations, it tells a story not of retrenchment, retreat, and withdrawal, but of resilience, creativity, and commitment.

In fact, thanks to the energy, optimism, and drive of our 16 faculty, 19 fellows, and our intrepid staff led by Assistant Director Julia Martin, one could be forgiven for concluding that the pandemic not only failed to disrupt the Middle East Initiative’s activities, but actually gave them new life. You will see in this report a program that moved quickly from a busy fall and winter on campus to a busy remote spring and summer. We conducted public seminars on the effect of the pandemic in the Middle East, and undertook a new, multi-country study—based on nationally-representative surveys of adults in Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia—that seeks to provide hard data on the economic and social impacts of the pandemic. And while we mourned our inability to gather together on campus, we found ourselves thrilled by the opportunities that Zoom provided us to connect our work to much larger, global audiences. Research presentations that previously attracted relatively small, dedicated audiences of Harvard-based social scientists were now attended by hundreds, with many joining us from the region. In fact, so great is the benefit of being able to speak with scholarly and public audiences in the region that the Middle East Initiative will likely continue to conduct many of its events online long after the pandemic is over.

Although the pandemic is front of mind as I write this introduction, our adaptations to it should not completely eclipse the Middle East Initiative’s accomplishments before the coronavirus dramatically transformed our world. In this report you will read about our impressive class of research fellows, drawn from among the most gifted young social scientists who study the contemporary Middle East, and dozens of public events, research projects (including a study of Kuwaiti public opinion, page 6), and publications completed when the prospect of a global pandemic was unimaginable. Although I will always celebrate the ways in which our program adapted to the challenges of the pandemic, reading about the things we were able to do before it fills me not just with nostalgia, but with hope. Although the pandemic continues to exact its costs around the world, each day also brings news of more vaccinations and signs of a return to normalcy. God willing, the world will soon emerge from this difficult period. In the meantime, I pray for your health and safety, and look forward to seeing you again soon—in person or online.

Tarek Masoud
Faculty Director, Middle East Initiative



Middle East Initiative
MOSAIC 2019-2020

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This year, the Middle East Initiative (MEI) hosted 33 events with speakers and attendees from across the globe. 23 of those events took place in person during the fall semester and the early weeks of the spring semester. In March 2020, as the novel coronavirus spread across the globe, Harvard University closed its campuses for what was meant to be several weeks of remote operations. With campus closures extended through the end of the spring semester, MEI pivoted to a series of fully virtual events, which continued through the 2020-21 academic year.

Daniel and Patrick Lazour (below), co-writers of the musical *We Live in Cairo*, joined MEI in October for a concert and conversation hosted by MEI Faculty Director **Tarek Masoud**. They performed songs from the play and discussed translating the story of Egypt's 2011 revolution and its aftermath for the stage.



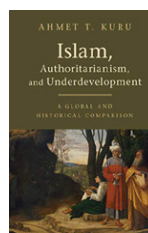
In the wake of the Israeli elections on September 17, 2019, MEI hosted a panel event, “The September 2019 Israeli Elections: What Does the Future Hold for Israelis and Palestinians?” with Hebrew University Assistant Professor of Sociology & Anthropology **Yael Berda**, former Deputy Speaker of the Knesset **Ruth Calderon**, Palestinian writer and cultural activist **Rami Younis**, and Harvey M. Meyerhoff Professor of Israel Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison **Nadav Shelef**.



In November 2019, as anti-government protests erupted in both Iraq and Lebanon, MEI hosted the panel “Understanding the Protests in Lebanon and Iraq: Why Now?” with MEI

Pre-doctoral Fellows **Marsin Alshamary** and **Christiana Parreira**, the Lebanese American University’s **Jeffrey G. Karam**, and Boston University’s **Shamiran Mako**.

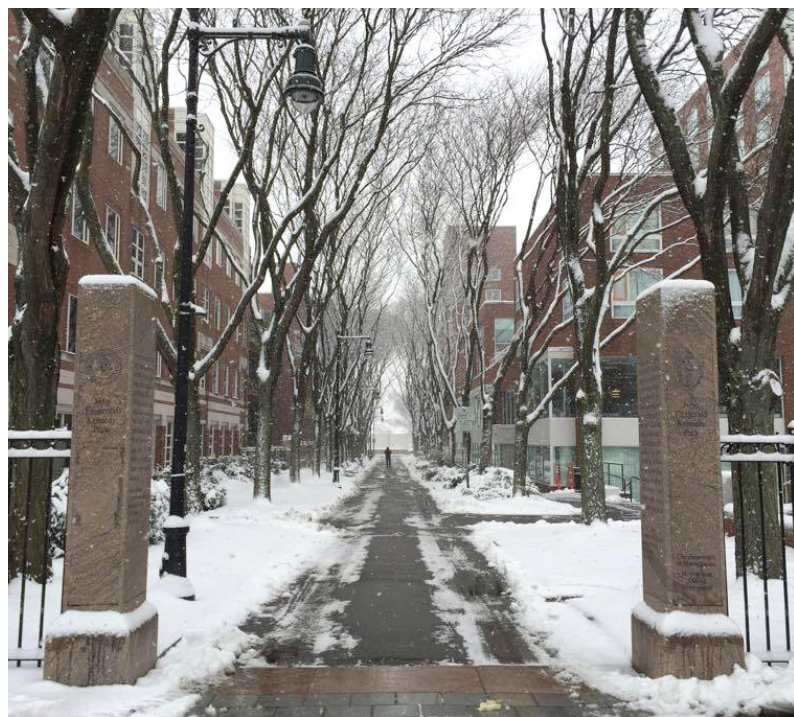
On October 31st, the Middle East Institute’s **Randa Slim** discussed the civil war in Syria and its lasting implications for regional power politics in a seminar moderated by MEI Faculty Director **Tarek Masoud**.



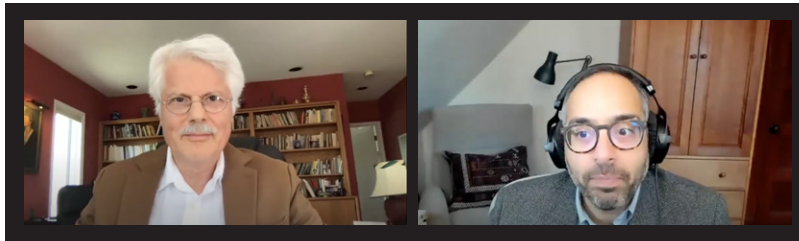
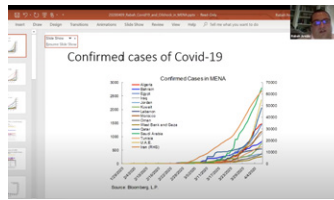
On November 12th, **Ahmet Kuru**, Bruce E. Porteous Professor of Political Science at San Diego State University, presented his new book, *Islam, Authoritarianism, and Underdevelopment: A Global and Historical Comparison*, in a seminar moderated by **Ousmane Kane**, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Professor of Contemporary Islamic Religion and Society, Harvard Divinity School.



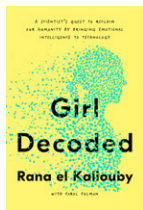
On February 6th, MEI hosted **Lisa Weeden**, Mary R. Morton Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, who discussed her new book, *Authoritarian Apprehensions: Ideology, Judgment, and Mourning in Syria*. This seminar was moderated by MEI Faculty Director **Tarek Masoud**.



On April 10th, MEI Senior Fellow and World Bank Chief Economist for the Middle East and North Africa Region **Rabah Arezki** discussed the ramifications of COVID-19 and the oil price crash on an already floundering regional economy in a virtual seminar moderated by MEI Faculty Director **Tarek Masoud**.

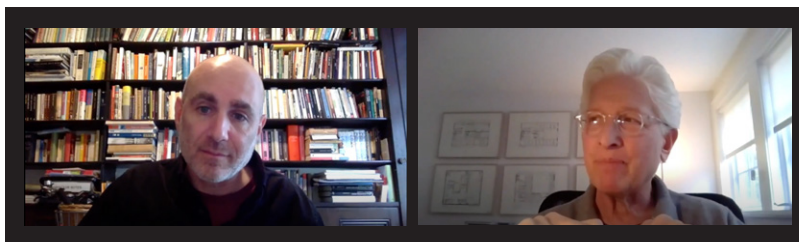


On April 21st, MEI Associate and Professor of Economics at Virginia Tech **Djavad Salehi-Isfahani** explained the implications of the pandemic and economic sanctions for the Iranian citizenry in a virtual seminar moderated by MEI Faculty Director **Tarek Masoud**.



Rana El-Kaliouby, the founder and CEO of artificial intelligence startup Affectiva, discussed her new memoir, *Girl Decoded: A Scientist's Quest to Reclaim Our Humanity by Bringing Emotional Intelligence to Technology*, with MEI Faculty Director **Tarek Masoud**.

MEI Senior Fellow and Jerusalem Foundation Executive Chairman **James S. Snyder**, MEI Faculty Director **Tarek Masoud**, and Israeli director **Joseph Cedar** discussed Cedar's new HBO series, *Our Boys*, which is based on the series of violent events that led to the outbreak of the 2014 Gaza War.



REMEMBERING

Saeb Erekat

(APRIL 28, 1955 – NOVEMBER 10, 2020)



In April 2020, the Middle East Initiative (MEI) and the Belfer Center's

Future of Diplomacy Project (FDP) co-hosted a discussion with the late Dr. Saeb Erekat, then FDP Fisher Family Fellow and former Chief Palestinian Negotiator and Secretary General of the Palestine Liberation Organization, on the Trump administration's Middle East peace plan. In this conversation—moderated by FDP Faculty Chair Professor Nicholas Burns and MEI Faculty Director Professor Tarek Masoud—Dr. Erekat shared his firsthand experiences negotiating with Israel and the United States and his analysis of the prospects for peace. He also lodged an appeal to the global community to address the spread of COVID-19 in Gaza. Dr. Erekat passed away in November 2020. MEI pays tribute to him and his many contributions to the search for peace and self-determination for the peoples of Palestine and Israel.

Understanding Kuwaiti Public Opinion:

A new project analyzes Kuwaitis’ views on economic and social policies

In his December 2020 speech to the newly elected National Assembly of the State of Kuwait, His Highness the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah, explained, “Our country’s future faces serious problems and great challenges that require the urgent development of a comprehensive reform program” in order to launch Kuwait’s “march toward sustainable development” (Kuwait News Agency, December 2020). Of the many challenges facing Kuwait, one of the most pressing is adjusting to a future of declining oil revenues. Kuwait is one of the most oil-dependent economies in the world, and for much of its recent history was able to use its oil wealth to provide citizens with extensive subsidies and social protections. The coming fossil fuel transition puts the sustainability of that system in doubt.

In 2014, HH Sheikh Nawaf’s predecessor, His Highness Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah—who passed away in September 2020—warned that Kuwait faced “a new cycle of low oil prices as a result of economic and political factors that have hit the global economy and started to negatively impact our national economy,” and called for diversifying the economy and reining in spending (Agence France-Press, October 2014). In recent years, the government has made progress toward these goals—cutting fuel subsidies and planning for the introduction of a value added tax, among other measures—but more remains to be done. In March 2021, Kuwait’s Minister of Finance, His Excellency Khalifa Musaad Hamada, explained that current oil prices were insufficient to stave off a liquidity crunch and urged Kuwaiti lawmakers to undertake “radical economic and financial reforms that contribute to reducing expenditures and increasing non-oil revenues” (Reuters, March 2021).

To what extent have citizens absorbed these messages of the need for fiscal reform and economic transformation? The Kuwait Public Policy Opinions Project, a multi-year initiative launched in the fall of 2019 to measure Kuwaitis’ opinions on key issues of social, economic, and national security policy, offers some preliminary answers. Led by the Middle East Initiative’s Faculty Director **Tarek Masoud** and Research Fellow **Yuree Noh**, the first wave of that survey, which canvassed a representative sample of 2,000 Kuwaiti nationals, presents a picture of a society still grappling with the hard choices imposed by the coming post-oil economy.

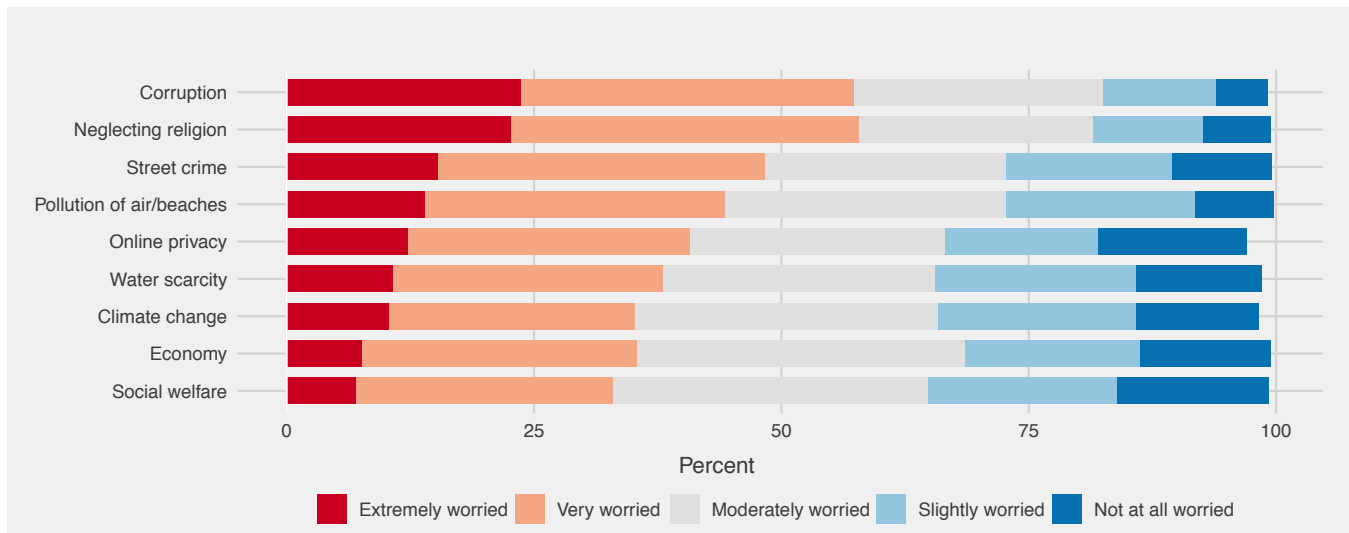


MEI Faculty Director Professor Tarek Masoud



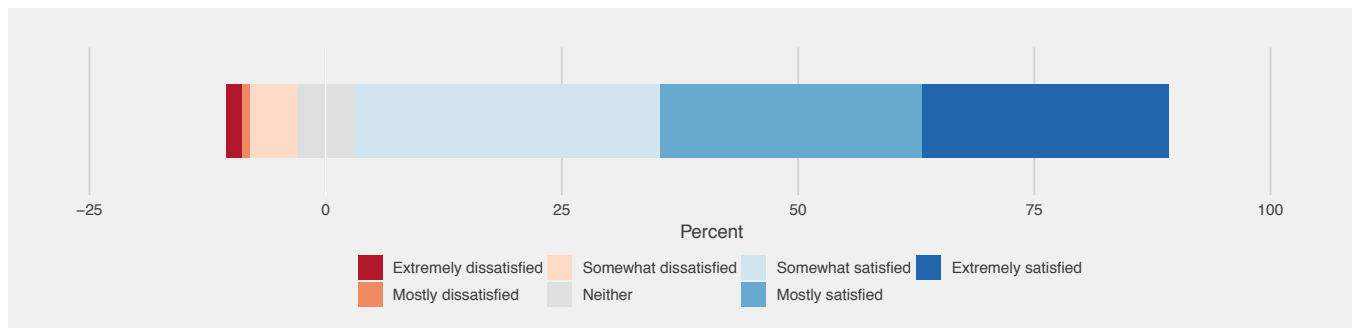
Rhode Island College Assistant Professor and MEI Research Fellow Yuree Noh

Figure 1: Domestic Concerns: *How worried are you about the following?*



One of the first goals of the survey was to ascertain the degree to which ordinary citizens share their leaders' sense of urgency regarding the state of the economy and the need for change. In order to determine the salience of economic concerns to the average Kuwaiti, the survey asked respondents how worried they were about a number of policy issues, including the economy, social welfare, corruption, street crime, pollution, water scarcity, climate change, neglect of religion, and online privacy. The two issues for which Kuwaitis reported feeling the highest levels of worry were corruption and neglect of religion (Figure 1). More than half (57.4%) of Kuwaitis reported that they were "extremely worried" or "very worried" about corruption; similarly, 57.9% were at least "very worried" about the neglect of religion. Respondents also reported high levels of concern over street crime (with 48.3% reporting feeling "extremely worried" or "very worried") and pollution (44.3%). The economy, however, did not appear to be a top concern for most Kuwaitis, with only 35.4% reporting that they were "extremely worried" or "very worried."

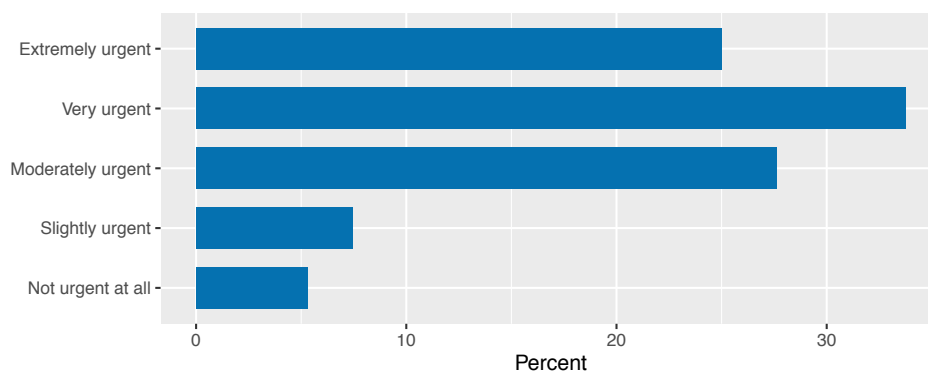
Figure 2: Perception of the Economy: *How dissatisfied or satisfied are you about the financial situation of your household these days?*



In order to further probe Kuwaitis' sense of urgency regarding economic matters, the survey asked respondents: "How satisfied or dissatisfied are you about the financial situation of your household these days?" Answers ranged on a six-point scale from "extremely dissatisfied," to "extremely satisfied." Consistent with the general lack of anxiety regarding the overall economy that was revealed in responses to the prior question, the overwhelming majority of respondents (86%) reported that they were at least "somewhat satisfied" with their household economy, with 26% reporting that they were "extremely satisfied" and 27.7% reporting that they were "mostly satisfied" (Figure 2).

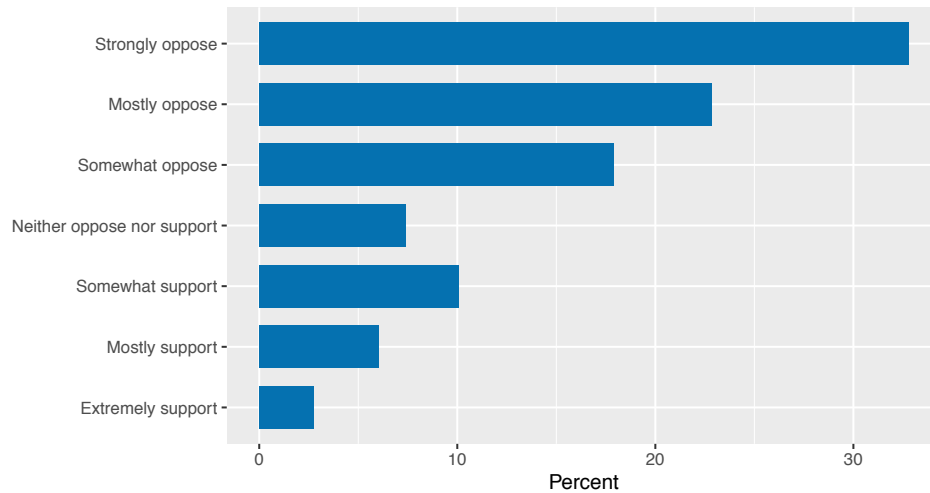
It would be a mistake, however, to conclude from these indicators of economic satisfaction that the average Kuwaiti has been unmoved by the Kuwaiti leadership's testimonials regarding the need for economic reform and diversification. The survey also asked citizens: "To what extent is it urgent for Kuwait to reduce its dependency on oil revenue?" As shown in Figure 3, the majority (58.8%) say that it is "extremely urgent" or "very urgent" that Kuwait reduce its dependency on oil revenues.

Figure 3: Economic Diversification: *In your opinion, to what extent is it urgent for Kuwait to reduce its dependency on oil revenue?*



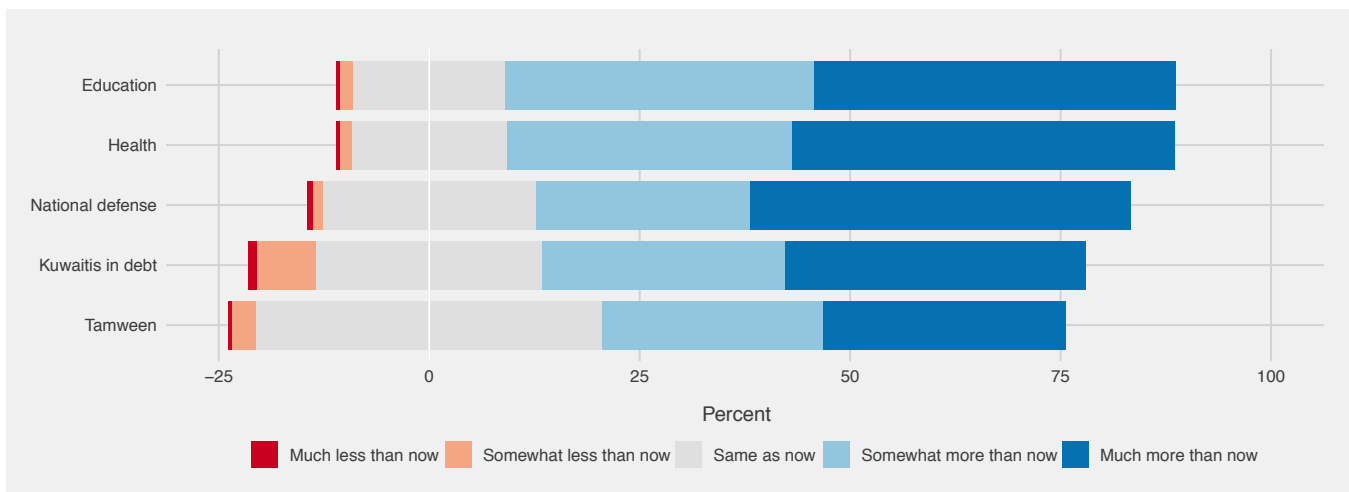
That said, although citizens appear to understand the need to diversify their economy, they appear at present less willing to accept that this might also require a revision of the country’s existing social contract. Respondents were asked how much they “oppose or support the view that government should try to reduce spending even if it means fewer subsidies?” We found that the overwhelming majority (74%) still “strongly oppose” or “mostly oppose” government subsidy and spending cuts (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Reducing Spending and Subsidies: *How much do you oppose or support the view that the government should try to reduce spending even if it means fewer subsidies?*



In fact, far from recognizing the need to cut spending in response to the country’s new economic reality, the vast majority of respondents report that they actually want more public spending. Respondents were asked whether they believed that public spending should increase or decrease across five policy areas: health, education, food subsidies, debt relief, and national defense. They were reminded that more spending “may require an imposition of taxes.” As shown in Figure 5, we found a healthy desire for more public spending across all sectors, particularly education and healthcare (79.3% and 79.6%, respectively).

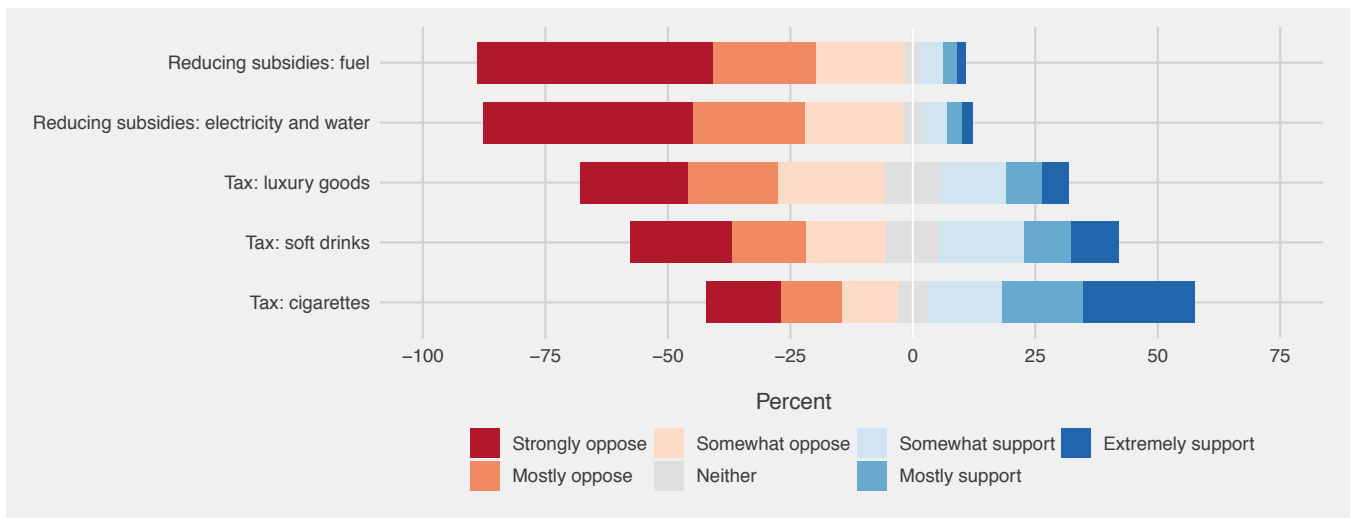
Figure 5: Government Spending: *Thinking about public spending on...Should it be...?*



If Kuwaitis are unwilling to cut public spending, are they open to paying more in taxes to cover the cost of these services? In order to answer this question, the survey presented respondents with a variety of taxes currently being debated in the Kuwaiti legislature and asked about the extent to which they support or oppose them. Responses could range from “strongly oppose” to “strongly support.” The taxes presented were “a tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products,” “a tax on soft drinks,” and “a tax on luxury goods.” We also asked two questions about subsidies, specifically about their support for “reducing subsidies on electricity and water” and their support for “reducing subsidies on fuel.” In order to ensure that respondents understood that reduced subsidies would make these items more costly, we specified that respondents “would have to pay more for formerly subsidized items.”

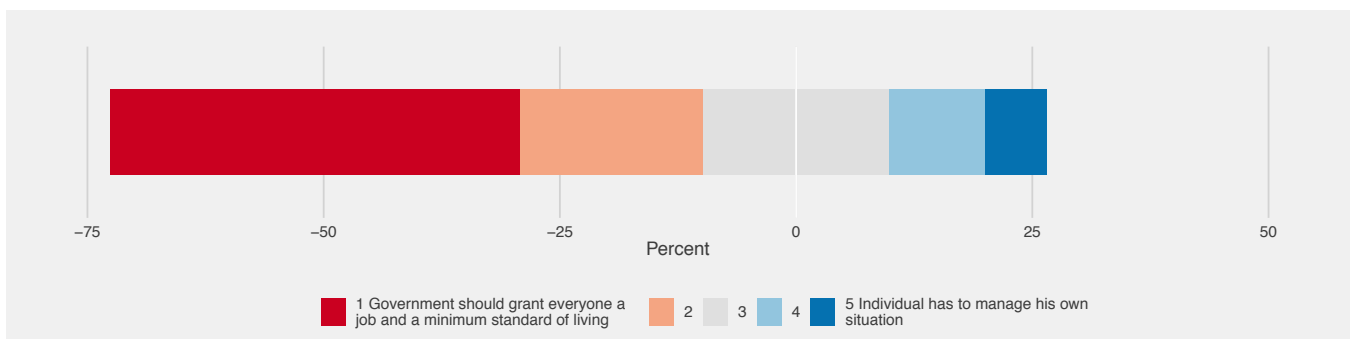
As shown in Figure 6, most respondents were opposed to raising taxes on things like luxury goods or soft drinks, although we did find the majority (54.4%) to be willing to entertain a tax on cigarettes, with 22.8% of respondents saying that they “strongly” support such a move. Alas, with respect to subsidies, consistent with their expressed preference for greater public spending, respondents reported that they are largely opposed to reducing subsidies for fuel (87.4%) as well as for electricity and water (85.7%).

Figure 6: Taxes and Subsidies: *How much do you oppose or support them?*



The data suggest that these opinions will not change overnight, as they appear to be deeply rooted and tied to Kuwaitis’ basic views about the proper role of government. To explore this, we asked respondents to place themselves along a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represented the view that “government should grant everyone a job and a minimum standard of living,” and 5 represented the view that “individuals have to depend on themselves even if they lack a job or money.” The vast majority of respondents placed themselves on the far left, with very few declaring a belief in individual responsibility (Figure 7). It remains to be seen whether these views will constitute a serious obstacle to reform, and future research will explore the factors that shape citizens’ views about the correct balance between government welfare commitments and individual responsibility. ❏

Figure 7: The Role of Government: *Some believe that the government should grant every Kuwaiti a job and provide him with a minimum standard of living. Suppose these people are at one end of a scale, at point 1. Others believe that the individual Kuwaiti has to manage their own situation even if the individual has no job and no money. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 5. There are some people who have intermediate views. Where do you place yourself?*



Refugees and Racism: Anti-Migrant Attitudes in North Africa

Since 2001, MEI has awarded 61 research grants to faculty across Harvard University for proposals on major policy issues affecting the region, including three in fall 2019. These research grants were generously supported by the Kuwait Program and the Emirates Leadership Initiative at Harvard Kennedy School. Priority topic areas include education reform, economic development, improving governance, energy policy, and science, technology, and innovation, among others.



MEI Faculty Affiliate and Harvard Business School Associate Professor **Kristin Fabbe**, former MEI Research Fellow and University of Tennessee Assistant Professor **Matt Buehler**, and University of Tennessee Associate Professor **Kyung Joon**



Han investigated citizen prejudice towards Arab and sub-Saharan African migrants in North Africa.

Until recently, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region was one of outward emigration, rarely considered a destination for migrants and refugees. But conflict, poverty, political instability, and climate change have driven millions to seek temporary refuge in MENA countries. North African states have received waves of sub-Saharan migrants, refugees, and other displaced persons en route to Europe or North America.

How have North Africans reacted to these new waves of foreign migrants? Have they embraced their presence or opposed their arrival? If the latter, what are the underlying sentiments that drive this opposition? Do citizens express greater prejudice against certain categories of migrants?

To answer these questions, Fabbe, Buehler, and Han launched a study to explore variation in public opposition toward migrants and refugees in the MENA region. Supported by MEI through the Emirates Leadership Initiative, the research team conducted an original, nationally representative survey of 2,700 Moroccan citizens. To the

best of the team’s knowledge, this is the largest survey of migration topics ever conducted in North Africa. Past research on citizens’ opposition to migrants, refugees, and other displaced persons concentrated on Western Europe. Studies from the 1950s and 1960s emphasized the “materialist threat”: citizens opposed migrants due to their perceived negative economic consequences and the heightened job competition they posed. Studies from the 1990s and later stressed the importance of cultural, rather than economic, differences. These more recent studies found that citizens feared an influx of migrants—whose languages or religious practices differed—would threaten their society’s heritage and cultural traditions. However, it was difficult to know whether and to what extent these studies apply to North Africa. Given the high levels of unemployment, poverty, and religious homogeneity in North African societies, these citizens could express opposition to migrants and refugees for systematically different reasons than citizens of Western European countries.

Before executing their larger survey, the research team administered a pilot study in 2017, which was statistically representative of Morocco’s largest subnational region—the Casablanca-Settat region, home to nearly seven million citizens. Preliminary results from the pilot, published in the *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* and the *Review of Middle East Studies*, indicated that concerns about economic pressure primarily drove citizens’ opposition to migrants, modeling results from the studies of Western Europe that stressed the “materialist threat” of migrants. Yet it was unclear to what extent findings from one delimited geographic area would generalize to other areas of Morocco.

“[North African] citizens could express opposition to [sub-Saharan] migrants and refugees for systematically different reasons than citizens of Western European countries.”



picture alliance/AP Photo

“In effect, the level of economic development of the community in which a citizen is embedded seems to inform the reasons behind their opposition to sub-Saharan migrants.”

Indeed, the nationally representative survey results differed from the pilot, revealing dynamic and diverse reasons behind anti-migrant sentiments. Upon analyzing the larger survey data against micro-level data on poverty, the results showed that citizens living in wealthier, more developed communities expressed prejudice against

sub-Saharan migrants for cultural reasons. In contrast, citizens in poorer, less developed communities opposed them for economic reasons. In effect, the level of economic development of the community in which a citizen is embedded seems to inform the reasons behind their opposition to sub-Saharan migrants.

The research team published these findings in *International Studies Quarterly* in May 2020. Additional follow-up publications include a paper concerning public attitudes toward border externalization policies with Dr. Eleni Kyrkopoulou, Athens University of Economics and Business in Greece, and a paper analyzing the phenomenon of contextualized racism, showing how prejudice from Moroccan citizens against sub-Saharan migrants intensifies in certain social circumstances. ■

PUBLICATIONS

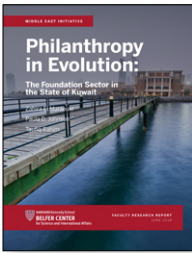
Insecurity and Political Values in the Arab World



Supported by an MEI grant made possible through the Emirates Leadership Initiative at Harvard Kennedy School, **Melani Cammett**, MEI Faculty Affiliate and Clarence Dillon Professor of International Affairs at Harvard University, and her collaborators, **Ishac Diwan**, Former MEI Visiting Scholar and Professor

of Economics at Paris Sciences et Lettres, and **Irina Vartanova**, Institute for Future Studies, conducted research on the correlation between perceived insecurity and political values. They published their findings in the article, “Insecurity and Political Values in the Arab World,” in the February 2020 edition of *Democratization*

Philanthropy in Evolution: The Foundation Sector in the State of Kuwait



With support from an MEI grant through the Kuwait Program at Harvard Kennedy School, **Christine Letts**, former Rita E. Hauser Senior Lecturer in the Practice of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership at HKS, **Paula Doherty Johnson**, Senior Research Fellow at the Kennedy

School’s Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, and their collaborators, **Zahira El Marzouki** and **Taufiq Rahim** of Globesight, completed a qualitative study on philanthropy and social investments in Kuwait. This project culminated in the report, *Philanthropy in Evolution: The Foundation Sector in the State of Kuwait*, which provides new data on the scale, priorities, and practices of philanthropic institutions and reflects on emerging trends.

Middle East Initiative Senior Fellows

Rabah Arezki, Chief Economist for the Middle East and North Africa Region at the World Bank, spoke at the Arab Conference at Harvard Business School in November 2019. In April 2020, Arezki presented his research on the impact of COVID-19 in the Middle East and discussed policy approaches to mitigate the risk of economic depression, drawing insights from his *VoxEU* paper, “Coping with a Dual Shock: COVID-19 and Oil Prices,” co-authored with World Bank Senior Economist Ha Nguyen.

In fall 2019, **Rami Khouri**, Issam Fares Institute & Journalist-in-Residence, American University of Beirut, led a four-part study group, *Reporting to and from the Heart: The Craft of Anthony Shadid’s Journalism and Why It Matters More than Ever Today*. Participants studied “narrative reporting,” a journalistic style of the late Anthony Shadid, two-time Pulitzer Prize winner for international reporting and former foreign correspondent for *The New York Times*.

At a roundtable discussion in fall 2019, **Hanan Morsy**, Director of the Macroeconomic Policy, Forecasting, and Research Department at the African Development Bank and Associate Editor of *World Development*, shared insights from her career. During her visit, she met with faculty and fellows and explored areas of collaboration. Morsy authored the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) working paper, “Access to Finance: Mind the Gender Gap,” which investigates the underlying factors that inhibit women’s inclusion in the financial sector. She was recently recognized by *Amwal Al Ghad Magazine* as one of the 50 most influential women in Egypt.

James S. Snyder is the Executive Chairman of the Jerusalem Foundation, Inc. and Director Emeritus of the Israel Museum. An art historian and global leader in museum curation and development, Snyder began a public MEI event series in 2020 that explores the intersection of art, culture, and politics in the Middle East. The series, *James Snyder in Conversation*, will continue into the 2020-2021 academic year.

2019-2020 Middle East Initiative

Research Fellows and Scholars

Marsin Alshamary



Marsin Alshamary joined MEI as a pre-doctoral research fellow and spent her time working on the final chapter of her dissertation. Her work expands academic understanding of Iraqi Shiite clerics and links historical behavioral patterns with the actions of modern clerics during present day anti-government protests. Her fieldwork shows that most clerics tend to avoid political confrontation in order to uphold their religious institutions, and that the firebrands who define popular imagination are a minority of the religious establishment. In June 2020, Alshamary obtained her Ph.D. from the Department of Political Science at MIT. She will join the Brookings Institution as a postdoctoral fellow in fall 2020.

M. Tahir Kilavuz



M. Tahir Kilavuz joined MEI as a postdoctoral research fellow, having earned his Ph.D. in political science from the University of Notre Dame. During his fellowship, Kilavuz made progress writing a book on the breakdown of authoritarian regimes in the MENA region and the conditions that make democratic transitions succeed or fail. His findings suggest that when opposition actors create a consolidated coalition, they will be more likely to overcome ideological differences, build trust, and may ultimately be more successful in leading a stable transition from autocracy to democracy. Kilavuz plans to continue researching and writing his book at Mamara University in Turkey, where he will also teach.

Amy Austin Holmes

American University of Cairo Associate Professor of Sociology **Amy Austin Holmes** joined MEI as the fall 2019 Kuwait Foundation Visiting Scholar. Holmes spent much of her time at MEI processing complex survey data she collected from the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northeast Syria. Holmes is the first person to conduct a field survey of the SDF and her data has illuminated its ethnic diversity. This project will comprise one section of her forthcoming book. While at Harvard Kennedy School, Holmes presented her research at Harvard, MIT, the European Parliament in Brussels, and at a bi-partisan event on Capitol Hill with U.S. senators.



Stephen L. Monroe



Stephen L. Monroe joined MEI as a postdoctoral research fellow, having earned his Ph.D. in politics from Princeton University. During his fellowship, Monroe worked on his project on the relationship between ethnic politics and neoliberalism. Monroe's research shows that due to the legacy of colonialism or conflict, one ethnic group can come to dominate the private sector while the other dominates the public sector. The elites in countries with such a rift have a harder time implementing trade liberalization policies than those in countries where the public and private sector elites are not divided by ethnicity. This research demonstrates the importance of studying non-economic group identities and economic outcomes. Monroe will join Yale National University in Singapore as a tenure-track professor. He hopes to continue strengthening his book with the dataset he created at MEI.

Christiana Parreira



As a pre-doctoral MEI research fellow, Stanford University Ph.D. candidate **Christiana Parreira** examined the ways in which relationships between local and national governments influence the stability of incumbent political parties and their ability to reproduce power. She observed that local governments and daily interactions between local officials and their constituents are more significant than previously recognized by political scientists. In the case of Lebanon, Parreira's work shows that local governments play an enabling role—distinct from sectarian politics—in allowing elites to reproduce their power. Parreira will continue her work as a postdoctoral research associate at Princeton University's Department of Near Eastern Studies.

Eoghan Stafford

Eoghan Stafford earned his Ph.D. in political science at the University of California Los Angeles during his year as an MEI research fellow. While at MEI, Stafford researched the relationship between opposition media and authoritarian regimes. His work shows that the strongest authoritarian leaders tend to allow opposition media while the weakest regimes are likely to restrict it. His findings have expanded current conceptions of media liberalization in authoritarian regimes. Stafford also studied a state-run Algerian newspaper with peer MEI fellow Yuree Noh and co-author Muatasam al-Rahabi. Stafford will pursue a postdoctoral fellowship at Oxford University's Future of Humanity Institute, where he will study international competition around developing military applications for advanced artificial intelligence.



Erin York

After completing her Ph.D. in political science at Columbia University, **Erin York** joined MEI as a postdoctoral research fellow. York's focus at MEI was the complex dynamic between democratic legislatures and the authoritarian regimes under which they operate, particularly in the case of Morocco. Her results indicated that legislatures in authoritarian regimes will pass policies unfavorable to the ruling regimes. York is moving on to pursue a postdoctoral fellowship at Princeton University and will join Vanderbilt University as an assistant professor of political science in the fall of 2021.



Khalid Adnan Saeed

American University of Kuwait Assistant Professor of Economics **Khalid Adnan Saeed** joined MEI for the spring 2020 semester as a Kuwait Visiting Research Fellow. During his time at MEI, Saeed applied the principles of sustainable economic growth to oil-dependent Gulf economies. His research sought to identify feasible and sustainable paths to structural transformation and economic diversification, with initial findings suggesting efforts must begin with government-backed research and development.



Junior Scholars Book Development Workshop

In November 2019, MEI co-hosted the eighth annual **Junior Scholars Book Development Workshop** with the Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS). Organized by MEI Faculty Director Professor **Tarek Masoud**, POMEPS Director Professor **Marc Lynch** of The George Washington University, Professor **Jillian Schwedler** of Hunter College, CUNY, and Professor **Sean Yom** of Temple University, this two-day workshop provided emerging Middle East scholars the opportunity to prepare their manuscripts for submission to an academic press. Of the six authors who received comments on their work, two were former MEI research fellows: **Dr. Jonas Bergan Draege** and **Dr. Allison Hartnett**. Former MEI research fellow **Dr. Lihi Ben Shitrit** participated as a discussant, along with other invited junior and senior scholars.



Middle East Initiative Research Fellowship Program

Alumni Highlights

Lihl Ben Shitrit (2018-2019 Postdoctoral Fellow) was promoted to Associate Professor (with tenure), School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Georgia. She was selected for the ACLS/Luce Foundation Fellowship in Religion, International Affairs and Journalism for the 2019-2020 academic year.

Matt Buehler (2016-2018 Postdoctoral Fellow) received the 2019 Southeast Regional Middle East & Islamic Studies Society (SERMEISS) book prize for *Why Alliances Fail: Islamist and Leftist Coalitions in North Africa*, as well as the 2019 SERMEISS best article award (honorable mention) for “The Autocrat’s Advisors: Opening the Black-Box of Ruling Coalitions in Tunisia’s Authoritarian Regime.”

Lillian Frost (2018-2019 Pre-Doctoral Fellow) received the Joan Ridder Challinor Meritorious Award for Overall Excellence from the Cosmos Club Foundation, as well as a Professional Development Award from The George Washington University (GW) Shenkman Career Services Fund. She also received several grants, including an Institute for Middle East Studies Research Grant from GW, a Cosmos Scholars Grant from the Cosmos Club Foundation and Grant Program, a Travel Research Grant from Boston Consortium for Arab Region Studies, and an Annual Meeting Travel Grant from American Political Science Association (APSA). Dr. Frost published two book chapters: “Beyond Citizenship: Host State Relations with Protracted Refugees” in *Forced Migration, Reception Policies and Settlement Strategies in Jordan* and “Constitutions and Citizens” in *Handbook of Citizenship in the Middle East and North Africa*.

Diana Greenwald (2017-2018 Postdoctoral Fellow) was awarded the APSA MENA Politics Section Best Paper Presented at the 2018 APSA Annual Meeting for “Coercion and Extraction Amid Constraints: Theorizing the Functional Coherence of Aspiring States.”

Kimberly Guiler (2018-2019 Postdoctoral Fellow) completed a fellowship with the Baker Institute for Public Policy at Rice University and published her article, “From prison to parliament: Victimhood, identity, and electoral support,” in *Mediterranean Politics*.

Jean Lachapelle (2014-2015 Pre-Doctoral Fellow) was a Postdoctoral Fellow with the Varieties of Democracy Institute at the University of Gothenburg, where he participated in the PanDem project, which tracked democratic backsliding during the COVID crisis. Dr. Lachapelle also published an article, “No Easy Way Out: The Effect of Military Coups on State Repression,” in the *Journal of Politics* and a book chapter, “Repression of Islamists and Authoritarian Survival in the Arab World: A Case Study of Egypt,” in the *Oxford Handbook of Politics in Muslim Societies*.

Davide Luca (2016-2017 Postdoctoral Fellow) received the Best 2018/19 Paper Award from the Quality of Government Institute at the University of Gothenburg, and the Best Conference Paper Award (2020) and an Early Career Grant (2019) from the Regional Studies Association.

Elizabeth R. Nugent (2017-2018 Postdoctoral Fellow) is in her third year as Assistant Professor of Political Science at Yale University. Her article, “The Psychology of Repression and Polarization,” which was published in *World Politics* (2020), won the 2018 Best Paper Award from APSA’s Comparative Democratization section and was shortlisted for the 2017 ECPR’s Rudolf Wildenmann Prize. Dr. Nugent also published two additional articles: “Exclusion and Violence after the Egyptian Coup” in *Middle East Law and Governance* (with Steven Brooke) and “Poverty and Divine Rewards: The Electoral Advantage of Islamist Political Parties” in *American Journal of Political Science* (with Sharan Grewal, Amaney Jamal, and Tarek Masoud).

Amanda Rizkallah (2015-2016 Pre-Doctoral Fellow) published “Transcending Sectarian Politics: The Case of Beirut Madinati” as part of the 2019 RAND Corporation report, *Countering Sectarianism in the Middle East*. Dr. Rizkallah is in her fourth year as Assistant Professor of International Studies, Seaver College at Pepperdine University.

Reimagining MENA Policy Through Evidence-Based Design

In fall 2019, MEI supported a student-run study group, created and led by Sarah Mousa MPP 2020 and Rahaf Safi MPP 2020, on institutional and policy reform in the Middle East and North Africa.

Sarah Mousa MPP 2020 and **Rahaf Safi** MPP 2020 arrived at Harvard Kennedy School with the shared experience of working on policy issues in the Middle East and North Africa and a mutual commitment to evidence-based policy as a tool for improving lives in the region. With the support of MEI, they set out to generate engagement on campus around economic and social policy issues in the region by creating opportunities for students to explore and discuss evidence-based strategic solutions.

“We wanted to create a platform where students with similar aspirations could delve more deeply into discussions of institutional and policy reform within the Middle East and North Africa,” Mousa and Safi wrote. “The overall aim of the study group was to generate engagement on economic and social policy issues in the region and to create opportunities for students to delve into evidence-based strategies using discussions.”

Mousa and Safi designed a four-part series, commencing with a discussion of challenges to existing social contracts and implications at the institutional level. Highlights included sessions led by Shanta Deverajan, former World



Sarah Mousa



Rahaf Safi

“The study group was one of the highlights of our time at HKS. We learned tremendously from both invited experts and our peers ... [we] are eager to continue the conversation and apply these insights in our work for years to come.”

Bank Chief Economist for the MENA region, on the current Arab social contract, and by Adam Osman, Director of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Lab, MENA, on re-thinking the design of social safety nets. The series concluded with a session led by Safi on how countries in the Levant are approaching the Syrian refugee crisis.

“The study group was one of the highlights of our time at HKS,” they wrote. “We learned tremendously from both invited experts and our peers ... [we] are eager to continue the conversation and apply these insights in our work for years to come.”

Reconstructive Surgery for the War Wounded: Health Diplomacy in the Middle East

MEI provides support for an annual field study course on humanitarian negotiations in the Middle East, led by MEI Faculty Affiliate Professor Claude Bruderlein.

After nearly a decade of conflict across the Middle East, the needs of the region's citizens have become ever more complex while demands for political, economic, and social reforms continue to resound. It was against this backdrop that MEI Faculty Affiliate Professor **Claude Bruderlein** and Harvard Humanitarian Initiative Advanced Training Program on Humanitarian Action Program Manager **Anaide Nahikian** brought 12 Harvard students to Lebanon for the January 2020 Winter Field Study course, "Humanitarian Negotiations on the Frontlines." Supported by MEI, this course explored public policy challenges and negotiation strategies involved in facilitating war-affected civilians' access to reconstructive surgery. Its focus included the broader response to the burden of war injury in the region, particularly in Yemen, Syria, Libya, and Iraq. Students attended lectures, participated in workshops, and met with policymakers, civil society actors, health professionals, and other stakeholders. Through the intensive, experiential study of this critical issue, students gained a deeper understanding of strategic approaches for navigating long-term challenges and dilemmas in complex humanitarian negotiations.



Belfer Summer Research Internships

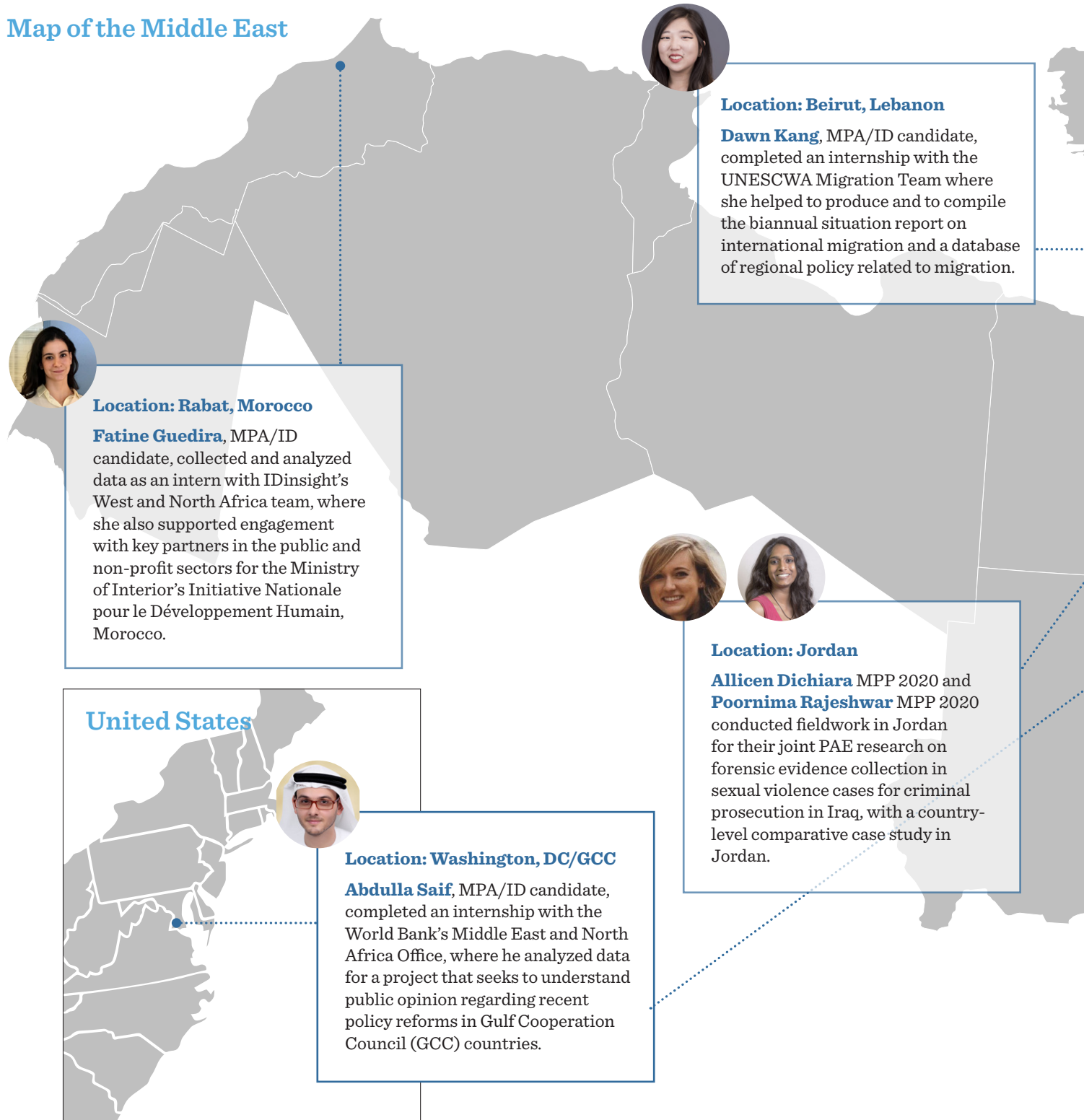


As part of the Belfer Center's inaugural Belfer Summer Research Assistants cohort, MEI welcomed two research assistants in the summer of 2020, **Kareem Emara**, MPP candidate, and **Rahaf Safi** MPP 2020. Emara, an Egyptian physician and a fellow with HKS's Center for Public Leadership, is interested in leadership in conflict resolution and economic development in the Middle East. Safi, a Syrian American and a 2019 Topol Fellow at HKS's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, is particularly interested in human rights protection and ending violent conflict. As research assistants with MEI, Emara and Safi worked under the direction of MEI Faculty Director Professor **Tarek Masoud** and MEI Research Fellow **Yuree Noh**. Emara contributed to a project on the economic and social impacts of COVID-19 by designing a survey on governmental response to COVID-19 and by researching and documenting pandemic-related policies in Tunisia, Morocco, and Kuwait. Safi conducted several literature reviews: one involved identifying studies of attitudinal and emotional characteristics associated with the propensity to protest and analyzing past methodological approaches; the second considered governmental response to natural disasters and their potential to spark civil unrest.

Student Research and Internship Funding

During the 2019-2020 academic year, the Middle East Initiative (MEI) awarded grants to nine students to participate in internships or conduct research for their Policy Analysis Exercise (PAE) or Second-year Policy Analysis (SyPA) capstone projects related to Middle East public policy.

Map of the Middle East





Location: Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey

Can Soylu MPA/ID 2020 conducted fieldwork in Turkey for his SyPA research project on alternative policy options for overcoming the effects of agglomeration from transportation and housing limitations.



Location: Istanbul, Turkey

Kaan Inan MPA/ID 2020 conducted fieldwork in Istanbul for his SyPA research project, which aimed to develop methods for the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's Social Services Unit to remove disincentives from its social assistance system, and to design a feasible monitoring system for the municipality.



Location: Syria and Jordan

Rahaf Safi MPP 2020 worked with Oxfam America to explore the potential impact of an organizational strategy shift in conflict zones, using Syria as a case study for her PAE.



Location: Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Sarah Mousa MPP 2020 conducted fieldwork in Saudi Arabia for her PAE research project on a 2012 de-facto minimum wage policy that aimed to increase employment of Saudi nationals, particularly in the private sector.

Learning to LEAD

The Middle East Initiative is proud to support students in their efforts to promote dialogue and engagement around issues of gender equity and inclusion at Harvard, and beyond. The MEI team spoke with Rawabi Fellowship for Leaders from Palestine recipient **Majd Steitieh** MPP 2022 and Kuwait Foundation Fellowship for Outstanding Emerging Leaders recipient **Rumaiitha Al Busaidi** MC/MPA 2020 about leadership and their experiences organizing the 2020 Women In Power (WIP) conference. Steitieh and Al Busaidi served as conference co-chairs alongside fellow Harvard Kennedy School students Jamie Mittelman MPA 2021 and Kyndal Feinman MPP 2020.



Rawabi Fellowship for Leaders from Palestine recipient Majd Steitieh (left), MPP candidate, worked with government entities on public safety as a Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) management consultant in Abu Dhabi and Jeddah prior to coming to HKS. Steitieh also founded a socially motivated women's fashion brand that blends traditional and modern Middle Eastern dresses to raise money for Syrian and Palestinian refugees. Made possible by the generous support of Bashar Masri, a Palestinian business executive, the Rawabi fellowship provides financial support for Palestinian students to earn degrees or attend Executive Education courses at HKS.

Kuwait Foundation Fellowship for Outstanding Emerging Leaders recipient Rumaiitha Al-Busaidi MC/MPA 2020 (right), is an Omani marine scientist, multi-award-winning radio presenter, and former vice-chair of food manufacturing for Oman's National Program for Enhancing Economic Diversification. She is also an Atlantic Council Millennium Fellow, a World Economic Forum Global Shaper, an Institute for Economics & Peace Ambassador, and a One Young World Peace Ambassador. Generously supported by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, the Kuwait Foundation Fellowship provides financial support to emerging leaders from Kuwait and other Arab Countries.

MEI: As two of the Conference Leadership Co-Chairs for the 2020 Women in Power Conference, you were faced with a difficult and unexpected challenge due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Can you share your experience as leaders managing that challenge?

MS: Because it was supposed to be a two-day conference beginning on April 24th, we were faced with a very difficult decision: cancel the conference or move it online. We decided to pivot to the online format because we didn't want to lose out on those conversations. It became really interesting because we could take what was happening in that moment; we didn't have to stick to a theme anymore.

RB: I am so thankful that all the co-chairs were on the same page when it came to thinking quickly on our feet to see how we could pivot to something online. There was a lot that went into the mix, but in the end, we relied on each other and ended up with something we were all very excited to deliver.

MEI: Did the series of online talks reflect or diverge from the original lineup for the conference?

MS: We had an original theme, "The Body as a Battleground." We tried to stick to as many of the original speakers as we could, but we also decided to take this opportunity to expand our horizons. When the murder of George Floyd happened, we thought, "Why don't we talk more about women and race?" So, we added that element. We ended up with more content than we originally planned, and that's an unexpected benefit that the online pivot gave us.

Leading to

SERVE

RB: We've had so many people from different parts of the world joining in, which has been amazing.

MEI: Did your HKS training prepare you to lead and make decisions in the face of uncertainty, and if so, how?

MS: In the class "Policy Design and Delivery," we're taught that most things are not going to go according to plan. So, what's your backup plan? What's your backup-backup plan? What's the backup to the backup-backup plan? That class prepared me to always have different options available, even if you're not going to exhaust them, and to have criteria for each one to determine when you go to plan B. That prepared us to not be afraid of uncertainty but to just treat it like any other risk.

RB: The "Exercise in Leadership and Politics of Change" class is quite a heavy class to go through, but you reap the rewards after the class. You see how to step out of the dynamics of a situation, affect change, and influence decisions.

MEI: The WIP Conference involved working with a diverse leadership team; how do you balance leadership and teamwork?

MS: I feel like they go hand in hand. Most of the WIP leadership team are collaborative leaders anyway. Jamie, one of the other co-chairs, always says, "Teamwork makes the dream work." That is our philosophy.

RB: The inclusive approach of the co-chairs was something I had never experienced before. I've been in leadership positions before where people just waited for instructions and did what they were told. This was a very different dynamic. It could be because we all came from different backgrounds and were allowed to be creative, make suggestions, and speak up without anyone shaming us or making us feel inferior.

MEI: Do you feel that your experience as Arab women affects your perspective on leadership?

MS: I think as Arab women, we're typically the minority in a lot of settings when it comes to being at the discussion table. Oftentimes, we might not be invited to speak. Being an Arab woman leader makes me more conscious regarding whether we hear from everyone at the table. It extends beyond including women; I feel we're internally trained to make sure that the quietest voice at the table is heard. Or, if they weren't comfortable speaking, you make the effort to talk to them one-on-one to get their ideas.

RB: In my time at HKS, I realized something about myself, and it is 100% because of my experience as an Arab woman. During negotiation class I learned that I am more aggressive with men than women, and it's because I am used to men not listening to what I have to say. I think I'll be more conscious now to communicate in a way that the other gender would listen to what I have to say.

MEI: What do you feel is the most memorable lesson you have learned from your experience in leadership positions?

MS: I interned this summer with an NGO, and as part of that work there were multiple stakeholders to talk to. I went into it thinking I'm going to talk to these senior stakeholders, because they've been here for 25 years, they clearly know what's going on. During the survey, I also spoke to some students. I realized very quickly that the students had more valuable insights than any of these experts. My conclusion from that experience is: don't underestimate people who are lower down in the organization, and don't assume that just because someone is young or less experienced, that they don't have valuable insight.

RB: I would say perspective-taking is very important, especially when you're building a team. I think many of our leaders are not putting themselves in the shoes of the people that they serve. I think we need more of that to happen. 🦋

STUDENT FELLOWSHIP PROFILES

Abdulla Saif

MPA/ID Candidate

Emirates Leadership Initiative Fellowship



Abdulla Saif, MPA/ID candidate and recipient of the Emirates Leadership Initiative Fellowship, discusses his Harvard Kennedy School experience. Generously supported by a gift from the Government of the United Arab Emirates, the Emirates

Leadership Initiative Fellowship provides advanced training in public management and leadership development to emerging leaders from the United Arab Emirates and other Arab countries.

A native of Abu Dhabi, Abdulla Saif came to HKS with a background in finance and a dream of serving his country and region through a career in policy analysis. By bridging the gap between economic and policy analyses of public and private initiatives, he aspires to inform policies that effectively address the region's economic and social challenges. Saif's experience working both in government and at a sovereign wealth fund prepared him for the MPA/ID program's rigorous

curriculum, particularly in econometrics, machine learning, and coding. With these skills, he is better equipped to pursue his dream and contribute to workforce development in the region. Through MEI, Saif connected with experts and opportunities to enrich his learning experience. He spent the summer of 2020 interning with the World Bank under MEI Senior Fellow and Chief Economist for the Middle East and North Africa Region Rabah Arezki and Senior Economist Ha Nguyen, and alongside ELI alumnus Haytham Abushaban MC/MPA 2018. Saif presented his research from this internship at the fall 2020 joint World Bank-Harvard Kennedy School webinar, "Big Data Analyses on Economic Reforms: The Case of the GCC Countries," co-sponsored by MEI.

When asked about advice for the incoming class, Saif encourages students to invest in their connections with the HKS alumni community. To proactively support this type of student-to-alum engagement, he hosted recruitment discussions with prospective HKS students in the UAE. Reflecting on his own student experience, Saif remarked, "HKS primes students in not only understanding what the major policy issues are, but also how they are actually tackled... Because of the HKS experience, I have formed tangible ideas as to how I can dovetail my ideas with government capability and [have] expanded my view of what is possible."

Kholoud Hilaneh

MPA 2020

Rawabi Fellowship for Leaders from Palestine



Kholoud Hilaneh MPA 2020 received the Rawabi Fellowship for Leaders from Palestine. Made possible by the generous support of Bashar Masri, a Palestinian business executive, this fellowship provides financial support for Pales-

tinian students to earn degrees or attend Executive Education courses at Harvard Kennedy School.

Studying at Harvard was a lifelong dream for Kholoud Hilaneh, made ever more significant by her fellowship. "It was particularly meaningful to receive [the Rawabi] Fellowship," she said. "It is an enormous responsibility to fulfill the hope that others have placed in me." As a student, Hilaneh participated in the MC/MPA Social Committee, Mason Committee, and Palestine Caucus. She also spoke in a webinar for new admits and in the Women 2 Women/Empower Peace event. When asked what her favorite course was, she quipped, "This question sounds equivalent to asking my mother, 'which of your seven children

is your favorite?' I assume she will answer 'all!'" But two courses did stand out: Professor Julia Minson's course, where she began to uncover the depth of her capabilities, and Professor Brian Mandell's January Term, where she learned "how to stay alive" in Multiparty Negotiations and Conflict Resolution.

While learning "how to listen" and think independently in the classroom, Hilaneh was also learning how to live independently in Cambridge. She advises incoming HKS students to "study, but socialize more," emphasizing the value of one-on-ones with classmates and professors alike. Above all else, she encourages students to share their identities and homes with their new community and described the diversity of the HKS community as invaluable. "Through my interactions with people with different perspectives and experiences, I became more open-minded...[HKS] granted me a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to forge deep friendships with exceptional people from diverse backgrounds."

Hilaneh sees a direct correlation between her HKS education and her ambitions to serve. "Every day I get to employ what I learned from Harvard to make the world a better place," she said. "When you graduate from [HKS], you are not just given a diploma but an obligation." Hilaneh's sights are now set on her next ambition, "to someday represent Palestine at the United Nations."

Nirit Gadasi

MC/MPA 2020

Sammy Ofer Fellowship for Emerging Leaders from Israel and Palestine



Nirit Gadasi MC/MPA 2020, a recipient of the Sammy Ofer Fellowship for Emerging Leaders from Israel and Palestine, reflects on her time on campus and plans after graduation. The Sammy Ofer Fellowship was established

to support promising students from Israel and Palestine. Sammy Ofer, the Israeli businessman for whom the fellowship is named, believed that education is an integral component of sound leadership and of promoting peace and coexistence in the region.

After starting her career in the Israeli government where she led the Financial Education Initiative, Nirit Gadasi shifted to the private sector and later established her own FinTech startup. She observed firsthand the “inequities and barriers preventing people from making smart decisions about their finances,” noting in particular that “disadvantaged groups, such as Israeli Arabs, [face] greater barriers in language and

low resource availability.” She hoped studying at Harvard Kennedy School would allow her to “explore new ways of utilizing technology and financial services to better serve people and to increase financial inclusion.”

At HKS, Gadasi learned to apply a methodical framework to these issues and found inspiration from others. She is particularly proud of her work with the City of Chelsea, Massachusetts, where she helped set up a new method for detecting social problems and directing assistance to residents. Since graduation, Gadasi and her collaborators designed a digital occupational skills assessment tool to prepare employees and the unemployed to compete in a rapidly changing job market by assessing potential areas for professional development and suggesting methods for making progress.

As a student, Gadasi was also a member of the Israeli Caucus and the Center for Public Leadership’s Behavioral Insights Student Group Committee. She spoke at length about the importance of making connections with others on campus, particularly her Arab classmates. Reflecting on her identities as a woman of Yemeni and Moroccan heritage and as a first-generation pursuer of higher education, Gadasi remarked, “one of the most valuable lessons I learned at HKS was about the importance of leading with the power of my own story...how negotiating assumptions embedded in [my] identities and using my story of origin authentically may lend vital credibility that can boost my leadership skills.”

MIDDLE EAST MATTERS

A New Podcast by MEI

Conversations with newsmakers, scholars, intellectuals, and activists on the challenges and opportunities facing the Middle East, brought to you by the Middle East Initiative at Harvard Kennedy School.

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