

Middle East and North Africa Program

EWI at a Glance

The EastWest Institute (EWI) is a global network of influential stakeholders committed to and engaged in building trust and preventing conflict around the world. EWI has a 40-year track record of convening dialogue, including back channel, track 2/track 1.5 diplomacy to develop **sustainable solutions for today's security, political and economic conflicts**. Major impacts include but are not limited to: 1) Hosting the first ever military-to-military dialogue between NATO and the Warsaw Pact at the height of the Cold War, 2) Contributing to a peaceful transition toward a new, democratic government in Yugoslavia, 3) Developing ground rules for reducing cyber tensions between China and the U.S., 4) Supporting a 2013 agreement between Russia and the U.S. on cybersecurity cooperation, and 5) Co-launching the Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace.

MENA Program in a Nutshell

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is undergoing unprecedented, historic, complex and rapid transformations. The results are violent and in some cases peaceful shifts, reshaping of state-society as well as inter-state relations and changes to the balance of power, fragmentation, polarization, and contests for power and influence among regional rivals. EWI's MENA Program is recognized for its role as a **bridge-builder between conflicting parties**. It has been providing a platform and safe environment for influential, well-connected experts and officials from the region and beyond to engage in confidential, complex, and constructive conversations that aim at achieving common ground and developing practical solutions for some of the key crises that destabilize the region: 1) Assisting Iraq to become the center of regional cooperation rather than being a theater for proxy wars, 2) Iran-Saudi regional rivalry, 3) Lack of inclusive governance & power sharing in Northeast Syria, 4) Weak economic relations between Algeria and Morocco, 5) Maritime security and preventing incidents at Sea in the Gulf region, and 6) Stemming ISIS & terrorist financing.

Thought Leadership

In addition to implementing track 2 & track 1.5 diplomacy projects, the MENA Program provides thought leadership to policy, media and academic analysis on MENA affairs. Our Vice President of the MENA Program, **Kawa Hassan**, was: 1) The lead-author of the research report "Iraq, Climate-Related Security Risk Assessment" which was used in the July 2018 UN Security Council debate on the nexus between climate change and security, brought forward under the Swedish Presidency of the Council, 2) A member of the Atlantic Council's Task Force Report on the Future of Iraq "Achieving Long Term Stability to Ensure the Defeat of ISIS", 3) Co-leader of Working Group Rights & Protection of Minorities in the Middle East, Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme (FMSH), and 4) Regularly gives speeches, lectures, hearings and briefings at think tanks, universities, government agencies & European parliament, as well as provides media commentary on the developments in the region.

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Our Projects

Dialogues on Governance and Security in Northeast Syria

Disagreements between the two main Syrian Kurdish political blocs-- the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the Kurdish National Council (KNC)-- and between Kurdish authorities and non-Kurdish communities in Northeastern Syria are negatively affecting efforts to reach a sustainable, peaceful solution in the war-torn country. This project aims to facilitate common understandings between these groups on issues affecting security and stability in the region, including inclusive governance and power sharing. *In partnership with Civil Society Research and Development (IMPACT).*

Algeria-Morocco Business Dialogue

This project focuses on multiple business sectors with the aim of overcoming obstacles to bilateral trade between the two neighbors. The project will convene business conferences and engage pragmatic business leaders from both countries. Discussions will center on topics vital to successful entrepreneurship in Algeria & Morocco such as food security, agriculture, healthcare, the impact of digitalization and new technologies, and energy—with a particular focus on how to attract quality investment, ensure environmental protection and empower businesswomen.

Iraq & Its Neighbours: Enhancing Dialogue & Regional Integration in West Asia

The project aims at assisting Iraq to transform from being a theater for proxy wars to become a bridge-builder and center for regional interdependence through improved bilateral and multilateral relations with its key five neighbors: Saudi Arabia, Iran, Jordan, Turkey and Kuwait. Key policy ideas will be developed for regional and bilateral cooperation in the areas of security, politics, people-to-people relations, economy, energy and environmental cooperation. *In cooperation with the Center for Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient (CARPO).*

Iran-Saudi Dialogue

Over the course of the past five years, we have been building trust between a core group of Iranian and Saudi experts that jointly develop policy solutions in very specific areas, including 1) challenges and opportunities for cooperation in the “post-oil” economic era, 2) identifying potential avenues of cooperation in the field of climate change, 3) the role of academic exchange in mitigating conflict, 4) contours of a “non-aggression pact” between both countries, and 5) the role of media narratives and discourses in igniting conflicts, portraying & stereotyping “the other”, and how these narratives could play positive roles in creating change of perspectives. *In cooperation with the Center for Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient (CARPO).*

Previous Projects

Stemming ISIS Financing: Current Policy Gaps & Urgently Needed Actions

The project brought together a select group of experts in counter-terrorism financing (CTF) and anti-money laundering (AML) to address the topic of financing of ISIS and other terrorist groups such as Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (previously Jabhat al-Nusra) in order to enhance cooperation between international and regional actors. EWI and its partners produced a policy paper that was shared with a select group of regional & international institutions and stakeholders. *In cooperation with Quilliam & St George's House.*

Preventing Incidents at Sea (INCSEA) in the Gulf Region

As part of the daily reality in the Gulf region, there have been many dangerous incidents at sea in the recent past. This project developed a protocol—which was shared with key regional and international powers that have navies in the region—that intends to prevent collisions between two or more vessels, enhance mutual knowledge and understanding of military activities, reduce the possibility of conflict by accident, miscalculation or the failure of communication, and to increase stability in times of both calm and crisis. *In partnership with Search for Common Ground (SFCG).*