Inside the Middle East: Intelligence Perspectives Program – a New Educational Praxis
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For the past generation, America’s Middle East policy has primarily been a chronology of failures.

US intelligence agencies did not foresee significant developments in the Middle East such as the Arab Spring, the downfall of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, or the severe deterioration in Yemen. The United States’ proactive promotion of democracy in Iraq, the Palestinian arena, and Egypt has resulted in increasing instability. The “Leading from Behind” policy has failed as chaos in the Middle East deepens. The U.S. outreach to Iran has raised tensions and increased instability throughout the region.

Failed US policies diminish the United States’ image and influence in the Middle East - and as the leading super-power in the world.

These failures and many others do not stem from lack of resources, capacity, or dedicated and committed professionals. They stem from a systemic flaw resulting in a failure to accurately interpret the Middle East reality.

Western mediators of knowledge, guided by a Western mindset and Western codes of thinking – developed concepts, narratives and theories regarding the Middle East. Viewing the complex reality of the Middle East through Western lenses such as Colonialism, Imperialism, Orientalism Relativism; or Western concepts like, freedom, tolerance, civil rights, individual rights, and Western narratives like good and bad, war and peace, problem and solution, friend and foe etc.; combined with buzzwords such as diversity, global warming, personal freedom, pluralism, social justice, tolerance, transparency, etc. thwarts their ability to accurately understand and thus analyze and present unfolding events.

Furthermore, most of the western influencers of public opinion and policy regarding the Middle East do not speak the languages of the Middle East. Lacking the language skills, they are dependent upon mediated, translated, and sometimes deliberately manipulated
information. This prevents them from having their finger on the pulse of events and compromise their ability to apply critical thinking regarding the information they are provided.

The above has led to an environment in which a complex multi-layered Middle East is flattened into a two-dimensional Westernized soundbite, discussions about the Middle East scarcely reflect the complex reality on the ground, critical thinking and media literacy is not encouraged, and conveyors of knowledge are exempted from professional accountability for the validity of their theories and analyses.

Therefore, concepts, narratives and theories about the Middle East were developed and a “looping echo chamber” emerged in which Concepts became “facts” - Narratives became “reality” - Theories became “truth.” And based upon these almost non-controversial facts, realities, and truths – US Middle East policy was created.

The challenge was that the concepts and narratives were based upon a false reading of reality which simply did not dialogue with or reflect the Middle East reality. The reality on the ground was quite different. Therefore, inevitably the policies failed.

For the United States to achieve its strategic interests, the US needs to design a policy that will dialogue more accurately with the Middle East reality.

Improving America’s ability to have a more accurate reading of the Middle East requires revolutionizing the educational methodology through which information regarding the Middle East is gathered, analyzed, processed, assimilated, and evaluated.

The core of that educational methodology is developing and nurturing a critical thinking, media literate mindset based upon professional intelligence tools and analytical methodologies which are subject to professional standards of evaluation.

Inside the Middle East – Intelligence Perspectives, (ITME) now in its fifth year, under the auspices of the Eisenhower Institute embodies that new educational methodology.

ITME is a disruptive and empowering educational praxis which equips students and practitioners with the professional ability to interpret and analyze the contemporary Middle East - and make predictions regarding the direction of events in the region.
ITME

✓ Transforms the way information about the Middle East is gathered, processed, analyzed, presented, and evaluated

✓ Advances a critical thinking, media literate mindset which demands facts-based analysis

✓ Trains future leaders to independently and accurately decipher the Middle East

To achieve the above ITME:

➢ Provides a distinct, non-partisan education on the contemporary Middle East using primary Middle Eastern sources

➢ Cuts dependence on Western and mediated sources of information, allowing participants direct and unfiltered access to Middle Eastern sources to constantly - and in real-time - keep their finger on the pulse of the region

➢ Advances a praxis to use OSINT (Open Source Information) to produce professional intelligence analysis from fragmented information

➢ Offers the analytic tools and the media literacy skills to look beyond Western narratives to build an objective view of the Middle East

➢ Teaches the practical application of professional intelligence methodology to gather, process, analyze, predict and present information

➢ Instills ethics of professional accountability through the development and presentation of professional Information Platform Evaluations, Intelligence Bulletins and Intelligence Reports which include predictions

➢ Offers the right lenses to look at the Middle East - lenses made up of Critical Thinking, Media Literacy, and Hard Work.

In a short, methodological and structured process ITME provides an intelligence analysis praxis offering 360-degree predictive skills, transforming students and practitioners into knowledgeable, media literate, critical thinkers who question information and apply professional intelligence skills of thinking and analysis equipping them to successfully navigate a complex, challenging global reality and furthermore, to accurately analyze and
foresee directions of events, and predict possible outcomes. The result is a leader that thinks and operates differently, questions popular narratives, looks at information more critically, and acts upon that information more responsibly.