



PROGRAM ON THE MIDDLE EAST

Foreign Policy Research Institute

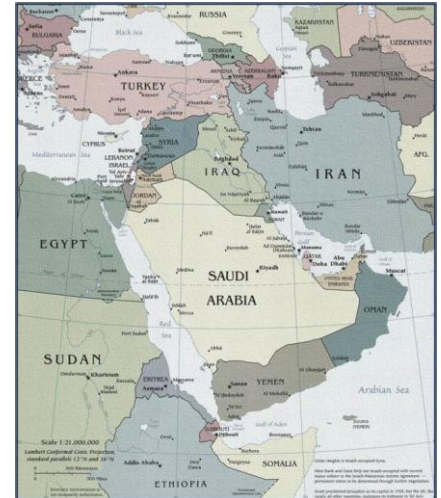
OVERVIEW 2017



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Director: Tally Helfont

Despite the clamor for America's foreign policy to pivot toward Asia and away from the Middle East, events in the region over the past several years require sustained American attention. The region has become more complicated than ever. The days of state power being held in a single hand, or iron fist depending on the locale, are fading. The internal political chaos which now consumes Middle Eastern capitals from Damascus to Sanaa will likely be with us for some time. The stakes remain high for the United States and therefore necessitate sustained engagement based on new thinking. The challenges at hand are many, including Iran's regional destabilizing ambitions, the rise of the greatest terrorist threat this world has seen in the form of ISIS, the ostensible collapse of the old state order in the Greater Middle East, and ever entrenched conflict between Israelis and Palestinians and among Syrians themselves that continues to claim the lives and the futures of generations.

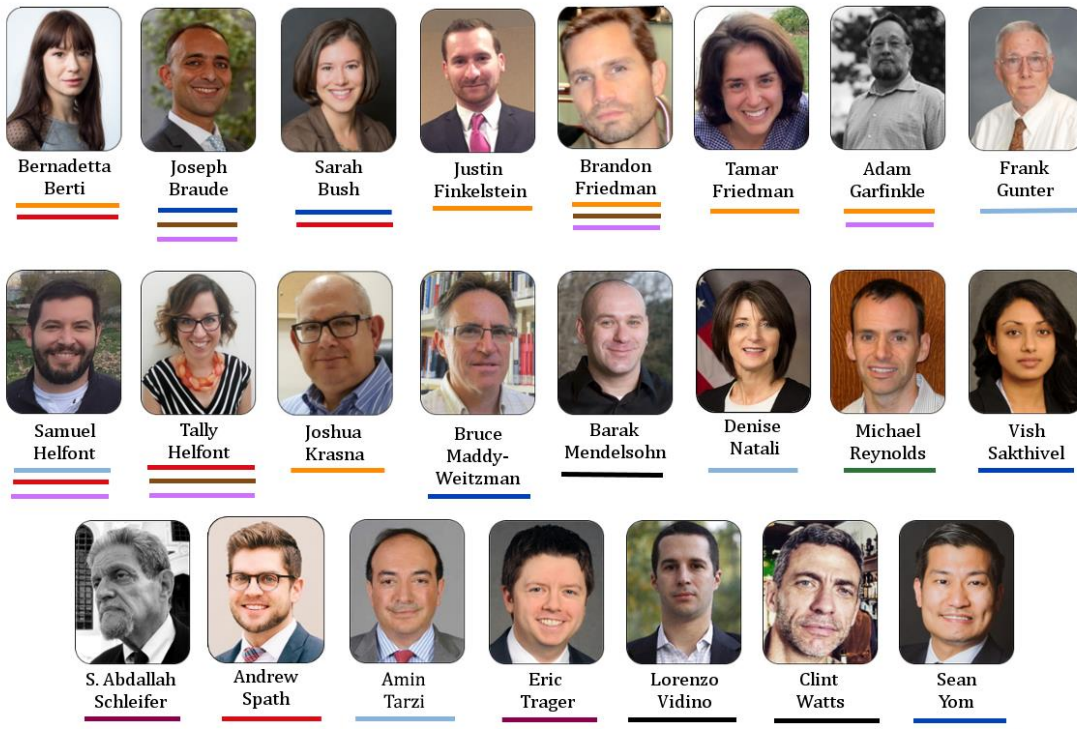
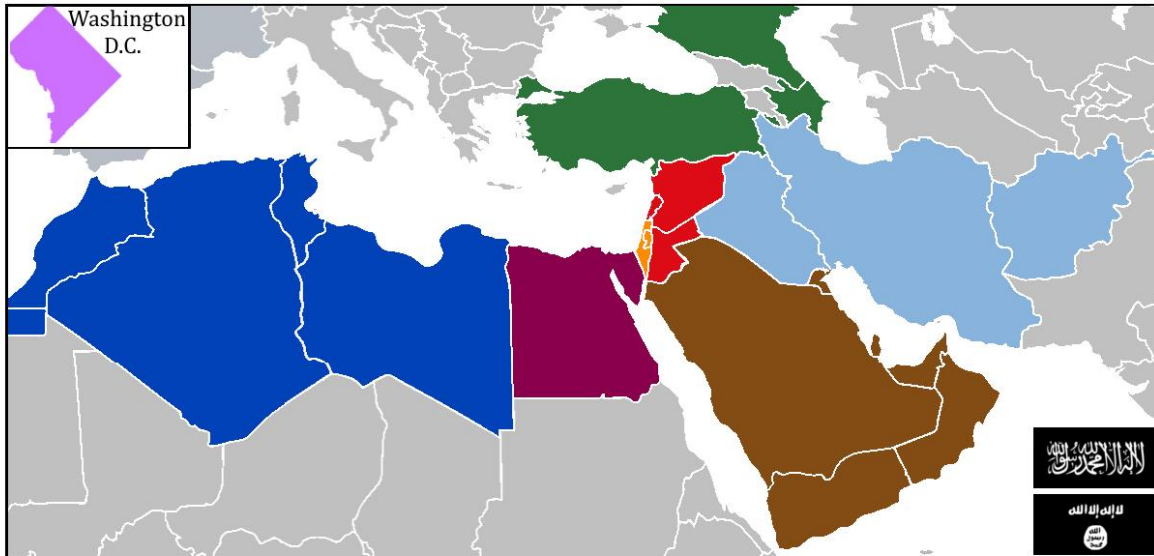


FPRI's Middle East program is uniquely positioned to provide the kind of strategic thinking and thoughtful analysis required to heed this call. FPRI has been known for its focus on geopolitics since its founder Robert Strausz-Hupé popularized the term for Americans in the mid-20th century. This geopolitical outlook has served the Institute well for over a half century. Following in that tradition, the Program on the Middle East brings together both established and emerging scholars from the academic, military, and policy worlds in an effort to develop a new cadre of strategic policy thinkers, versed in the geography, history, culture, and politics of the region. This geopolitical outlook is particularly important when analyzing the Middle East. In fact, the term "Middle East" was coined in 1902 by one of America's great devotees of geopolitics – U.S. Navy Captain, Alfred T. Mahan. For Captain Mahan in the early 20th century, the region's importance was rooted in its geopolitics. As fleeting intellectual fads have come and gone in Western capitals, the geopolitical bedrock of geography, history, and culture continue to shape Middle Eastern politics. These factors do not transform with every street demonstration and even in these fast changing times, they continue to frame some of the most prudent analysis of the American interest in the region.

Accordingly, FPRI's Program on the Middle East offers context, content, and policy recommendations based on a holistic view of American strategic interests in the region. Its analysis transcends headlines and catch phrases. Throughout its research, publications, and educational outreach, the program focuses on key themes such as authoritarianism and reform; the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings; radicalism and regional threats; sectarian divisions; and the Arab-Israeli conflict and peace efforts. FPRI's Program on the Middle East is dedicated to ensuring that its vital and time-tested geopolitical approach continues to bear fruit. Therefore, the Program seeks to provide its particular brand of informed analysis on regional developments to policymakers, academics, journalists, educators, and others interested in the Middle East. It also seeks to build relationships with like-minded institutions and individuals from the region, in an effort to both enrich the Program's perspectives and to provide a platform for indigenous analyses and critiques from within the Middle East itself.

FPRI'S MIDDLE EAST SCHOLARS AND REGIONAL COVERAGE

The Program on the Middle East boasts a diverse array of 20+ accomplished scholars, based locally, nationally, and globally. Between them, their expertise spans the region and the pressing issues that bear upon it. Meet the team:



* Colored lines under each scholar correspond to their regional expertise on the map

Director



Tally Helfont is the Director of FPRI's Program on the Middle East. Her current research focuses on regional balance of power, the Levant and the GCC, and U.S. policy therein. She is also a Contributing Analyst for Wikistrat's Middle East Desk, a crowd-sourcing consultancy. Ms. Helfont has instructed training courses in Civil Information Management to U.S. Military Civil Affairs Units and Human Terrain Teams assigned to Iraq and Afghanistan. A frequent commentator in the media, her writings have appeared in English, Hebrew, and Arabic in publication such as *Orbis* (US), *The American Interest* (US), *INSS Insight* (IL), *al-Mesbar* (UAE), and *al Majalla* (UK/KSA), as well as in FPRI's *E-Notes* and *Geopoliticus* blog. She holds an M.A. in Middle East Studies from Tel Aviv University, and is proficient at various levels in Hebrew, Arabic, and French.

Robert A. Fox Fellows (2017-2018)

Sponsored by Robert A. Fox, these Fellows have been chosen on the basis of their erudite scholarly contributions, and their ability to respond to contemporary developments in the region in a sound and timely fashion, based on FPRI's focus on geopolitical analysis.



Joshua Krasna is a well-respected analyst specializing in Middle East political and regional developments and forecasting, as well as in international strategic issues. He recently retired after 30 years of service in Israel, including postings as an Israeli diplomat in Jordan and Canada. His last assignment before retirement was as an Instructor at Israel's senior professional military education school, the Israel National Defense College. While there, he mentored and led teams of senior military and civilian students, taught courses on intelligence and on national security, and served as lead instructor for the economic and social tracks of the program. He has published articles in the *Journal of Conflict Studies* and *Contemporary Security Policy*, and is proficient in Hebrew and Arabic. Dr. Krasna holds a Ph.D. from the Bar Ilan University and is a graduate of Columbia University and the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.



Clint Watts is a consultant and researcher modeling and forecasting threat actor behavior, and developing countermeasures for disrupting and defeating state and non-state actors. As a consultant, his research predominately focuses on terrorism forecasting and trends seeking to anticipate emerging extremist hotspots and to anticipate appropriate counterterrorism responses. More recently, Mr. Watts used modeling to outline Russian influence operations via social media and the Kremlin's return to Active Measures. Alongside his FPRI affiliation, he is also a Senior Fellow at the Center for Cyber and Homeland Security at The George Washington University. Watts has served as a U.S. Army infantry officer, as an FBI Special Agent on the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), as the Executive Officer of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point (CTC), and as a consultant to the FBI's Counter Terrorism Division (CTD) and National Security Branch (NSB). He earned a B.S. from the United States Military Academy and an M.A. from Middlebury Institute of International Studies.

Senior Fellows



Joseph Braude is a Middle East scholar, broadcaster, and author whose research appears in print and on air, in Arabic as well as English. He studied in the departments of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Yale and Near Eastern Studies at Princeton. He developed his Arabic to broadcast quality through years of living and working in the Gulf states and North Africa, and added fluency in Farsi to his knowledge of Persian literature as a graduate student at the University of Tehran. He is also an advisor at the Al-Mesbar Studies and Research Center in Dubai, which specializes in Islamist movements across the Middle East and North Africa.



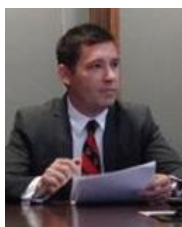
Sarah Bush is an Assistant Professor of political science at Temple University. Her research focuses primarily on democracy promotion, non-state actors in world politics, and gender and human rights policy in the developing world. She is author of *The Taming of Democracy Assistance* (Cambridge University Press, 2015). Her work has also appeared in journals such as *Comparative Political Studies*, *International Organization*, *Journal of Politics*, and *Perspectives on Politics*. She has held fellowships at Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and the Miller Center for Public Affairs at the University of Virginia. Dr. Bush earned a Ph.D. in Politics from Princeton University in 2011.



Brandon Friedman is a Research Fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University. Brandon is also the Managing Editor of *Bustan: The Middle East Book Review*, which is published by Penn State University Press. Dr. Friedman teaches modern Middle Eastern history in Tel Aviv University's International programs. His research focuses on the political history of the Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf States. Prior to beginning his academic career in Israel, Brandon spent seven years working for a risk advisory consulting firm in the U.S.



Frank R. Gunter is a Professor of Economics at Lehigh University. His primary area of research is economic development in conflict and post-conflict states, though he also focuses on the economics of corruption, capital flight, and microfinance. Having served 35 years on active and reserve duty, Dr. Gunter retired as a Colonel from the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves in 2008. His most recent book, *The Political-Economy of Iraq: Restoring Balance in a Post-Conflict Society* (Edward Elgar Publishing, May 2013), on post-2003 Iraq is based on his 25-months of work as the Senior Civilian Economics Advisor for Multi-National Corps to the U.S. government in Baghdad.



Samuel Helfont is a Post-Doctoral Lecturer of International Relations at the University of Pennsylvania. His research focuses on Iraq, the Iraq Wars, and the nexus between religion and state. Helfont is the author of *Compulsion in Religion: Saddam Hussein, Islam, and the Roots of Insurgencies in Iraq* (Oxford University Press, Forthcoming 2018), and of *Yusuf Al-Qaradawi: Islam and Modernity* (The Moshe Dayan Center/Tel Aviv University Press, 2009). Dr. Helfont has also been quoted and has written widely in publications such as *The Middle East Journal*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Orbis*, *The New Republic*, and *The Jewish Review of Books*, among others. Dr. Helfont earned a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University.



Bruce Maddy-Weitzman is an Associate Professor in the Department of Middle Eastern and African History and a Senior Research Fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University. Maddy-Weitzman's research focuses on contemporary Middle Eastern history, inter-Arab relations, and the modern Maghreb. He is the author of *The Berber Identity Movement and the Challenge to North African States* (University of Texas Press, 2011), which was awarded the L. Carl Brown Prize by the American Institute for Maghreb Studies in 2013.



Barak Mendelsohn is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Haverford College, where he teaches courses on the Middle East and on jihadi movements. His research interests include terrorism and counter-terrorism; radical Islamic movements; hegemony and interstate cooperation; and the politics of the Middle East. He is author of *The al-Qaeda Franchise: The Expansion of al-Qaeda and Its Consequences* (Oxford University Press, 2016), and *Combating Jihadism: American Hegemony and International Cooperation in the War on Terrorism* (University of Chicago Press, 2009). He received his Ph.D. in Government from Cornell University.



Michael A. Reynolds is an Associate Professor of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University. His Research focuses on Ottoman and Russian empires and their successor states as well as contemporary issues related to Turkey, the Kurds, Azerbaijan, and the North Caucasus. He is the author of *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), co-winner of the American Historical Association's George Louis Beer Prize, a Financial Times book of the summer, and a Choice outstanding title. He holds a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton University.



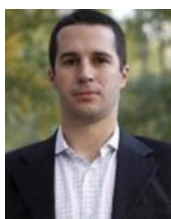
Abdallah Schleifer is Professor Emeritus and Senior Fellow at the Kamal Adham Center for Television Journalism at The American University in Cairo. Schleifer was the founder and first director of the center (1985-2005). Schleifer is also chief editor of *The Muslim 500*; Adjunct Scholar at the Middle East Institute; member of the Board of Trustees of the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (Washington DC), and Senior Fellow at the Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought (Amman).



Amin Tarzi is the Director of Middle East Studies at the Marine Corps University (MCU) in Quantico, Virginia. His area of expertise is in Middle East and South/Central Asia. His prior experience includes the post of Political Advisor to the Saudi Arabian Mission to the United Nations dealing with the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans and Somalia; the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty extension; Iranian behavior in the United Nations; and Security Council expansion. Dr. Tarzi is the author of *The Iranian Puzzle Piece: Understanding Iran in the Global Context* (MCU Press, 2009), and has appeared frequently in national and international media outlets. He holds Ph.D. in Middle East Studies from New York University.



Eric Trager is the Esther K. Wagner Fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, focusing on Egyptian politics and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. He is the author of *Arab Fall: How the Muslim Brotherhood Lost in 891 Days* (Georgetown University Press, 2016). His writings have also appeared in numerous publications, including *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Foreign Affairs*, *The Atlantic*, and *The New Republic*. From 2006-2007, he lived in Egypt as an Islamic Civilizations Fulbright Fellow. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania.



Lorenzo Vidino is the Director of the Program on Extremism at George Washington University's Center for Cyber & Homeland Security. His research focuses on Islamism in Europe and North America; the mobilization dynamics of jihadist networks in the West; and governmental counter-radicalization policies. He has held positions at Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, the U.S. Institute of Peace, and the RAND Corporation, among others. The author of several books and numerous articles, Dr. Vidino's most prominent work is *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (Columbia University Press, 2010). Vidino holds a law degree from the University of Milan and a Ph.D. in international relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.



Sean L. Yom is an Associate Professor of Political Science (Comparative Politics) at Temple University. His research focuses on political stability, democratic reforms, economic development, and U.S. strategic interests in the Arab world, and especially Jordan, Morocco, and the Gulf. He has authored numerous academic works, including *From Resilience to Revolution: How Foreign Interventions Destabilize the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); and has been quoted or featured in the *BBC News*, *Financial Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Voice of America*, *Time Magazine*, *NPR*, and the *Associated Press*, as well as overseas media. He holds a Ph.D. from Harvard University.

Fellows

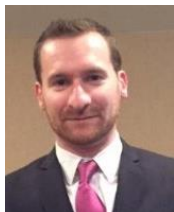


Vish Sakthivel is a doctoral candidate in Modern Middle East Studies at Oxford University, where she is writing her dissertation on Islamist politics in Algeria and Morocco. She is also a Nonresident Adjunct Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), and is the author of the WINEP monograph, "Al-Adl wal-Ihsan: Inside Morocco's Islamist Challenge." Her work has appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, *World Politics Review*, *Al-Monitor*, and the *Oxford University Press Islamic Encyclopedia*, among other outlets.



Andrew Spath is an Instructor at American University's School of International Service. He is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science at Rutgers University, where he has taught courses on authoritarian regimes, Middle East politics and security, and Model United Nations. His current research examines the effects of leadership succession on the relationship between government and society in Jordan and Syria. Spath was awarded both a Fulbright fellowship and a David L. Boren fellowship for 2012-13.

Associate Scholars



Justin Scott Finkelstein is Associate Scholar in FPRI's Program on the Middle East, and the inaugural Harvey Sicherman Scholar in 2013. His research focuses on issues related to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israeli and Palestinian public opinion on the two-state solution, and Israeli domestic politics. Finkelstein received a Master's degree in Near Eastern Studies from New York University, where he was awarded a Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship to study Arabic at the Middlebury Arabic School.


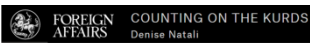




Tamar Friedman is currently working as the Marketing Associate at the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel. Her research focuses on electoral politics in the Middle East. She is a recent graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, where she earned her B.A. in Political Science, with a minor in Modern Middle Eastern Studies. She completed her senior thesis under the direction of Dr. Brendan O'Leary entitled "Negotiating Identities: The Strategic Adoption of Gender Quotas but not Ethnic Quotas in Post-Conflict Iraq and Afghanistan."

SCHOLARS' MID-YEAR PRODUCTIVITY

In the first half of 2017, the activities of FPRI's Middle East Program significantly raised the Institute's profile by engaging with key foreign policy debates taking place in government, in the think tank world, in academia, and in the media. Its scholars regularly [published](#) and [commented](#) on critical developments and trends in the Middle East, and participated in a diverse array of [Middle East-related programming](#) that bear upon American foreign policy and national security priorities.

The spotlight below of **Dr. Denise Natali**, the newest member of FPRI's Board of Advisors and a Distinguished Research Fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) at the National Defense University, is but one illustration of the broad reach our scholarship has across multiple platforms spanning the globe.

<p>TELEVISION INTERVIEWS</p>  <p>THE KURDISH QUESTION FUELLING THE DESIRE FOR INDEPENDENCE INTERVIEW FRANCE 24</p>	<p>PUBLICATIONS</p>  <p>Counting on the Kurds The Peshmerga's Prospects Against ISIS By Denise Natali</p>
<p>RADIO INTERVIEWS</p>  <p>MIDDLE EAST Turkish President Criticizes U.S. Arming Of Kurds In Syria 4:03 May 16, 2017 · 4:30 PM ET Heard on All Things Considered</p>	<p>CITATIONS & QUOTES</p>  <p>Iraqi Kurds to hold independence referendum in September The Iraqi Kurds will hold a independence referendum in September that is sure to pass.</p>

IN SIX MONTHS:



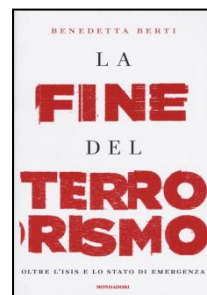
200+ CONTRIBUTIONS

100+ OUTLETS

10+ COUNTRIES



NEW BOOKS BY PROGRAM SCHOLARS

- **2016-2017 Robert A. Fox Fellow [Benedetta Berti](#)** published *The End of Terrorism: Beyond ISIS and the State of Emergency* (Mondadori, January 2017) in Italian, in which she argues that terrorism—namely the indiscriminate use of civilian violence adopted by armed groups to achieve political or military goals against a stronger foe—is a tactic that is here to stay. Rather, it is the myriad of complex drivers that lead to the use of this tactic that must be examined and addressed.



Dr. Berti has been described as a “rising star” by FPRI’s President Alan Luxenberg. Alongside her FPRI affiliation, she is an Eisenhower Global Fellow, a Fellow of Israel’s Institute for National Strategic Studies, a TED Senior Fellow, and a Nonresident Fellow at the Modern War Institute at West Point, among others. In just the past six months, Berti has written and been quoted on a variety of topics from the strategic implications of the growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza to Syrian siege warfare and ISIS resilience, in publications such as *Foreign Affairs*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *OpenCanada*, and *The Times of Israel*.

SCHOLAR-RELATED NEWS

- **2015-2018 Robert A. Fox Fellow [Clint Watts](#)** testified on March 30 in front of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, providing a groundbreaking account of [Russian Active Measures and Influence Campaigns against the United States](#). Watts’ report of mass Russian hacking, trolling and honeypotting brought increased attention to the Russian cyber threat. Then, on April 27, Watts testified in front of the Senate Committee on Armed Services’ Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, providing further insight into [Russian Cyber-Enabled Information Operations](#) and offering four areas in which the United States should work to counter these cyber operations. Both testimonies were the subject of countless articles, and Watts was cited, interviewed, and featured in dozens of media outlets.
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- In early March, **2015-2017 Robert A. Fox Fellow [Samuel Helfont](#)** attended the influential “Sulaimani Forum” at the American University of Iraq–Sulaimani (AUIS) alongside government leaders, international experts, and respected commentators to tackle the complex issue, [Beyond DAESH: Ending the Cycle of Conflict toward Durable Solutions](#). Dr. Helfont then met with senior Peshmerga political and military leaders to discuss the United States’ role in meeting the difficult challenges facing Iraq, and the Kurds in particular. In May, FPRI and the Institution of Regional and International Studies (IRIS) at AUIS then co-published Helfont’s resulting report outlining fresh policy recommendations for [Peshmerga Reform in Post-ISIS Iraq](#). Not only was this report read in influential policy circles in Washington, D.C., but its writing also facilitated a burgeoning relationship with a foreign institution that will help to expand FPRI’s policy influence globally.
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FACT SHEET

ABOUT FPRI

The Foreign Policy Research Institute is dedicated to bringing the insights of scholarship to bear on the foreign policy and national security challenges facing the United States. It seeks to educate the public, teach teachers, train students, and offer ideas to advance U.S. national interests based on a nonpartisan, geopolitical perspective that illuminates contemporary international affairs through the lens of history, geography, and culture.

Educating the American Public: FPRI was founded on the premise that an informed and educated citizenry is paramount for the U.S. to conduct a coherent foreign policy. Today, we live in a world of unprecedented complexity and ever-changing threats, and as we make decisions regarding the nation's foreign policy, the stakes could not be higher. FPRI offers insights to help the public understand this volatile world by publishing research, hosting conferences, and holding dozens of public events and lectures each year.

Preparing Teachers: Unique among think tanks, FPRI offers professional development for high school teachers through its Madeleine and W.W. Keen Butcher History Institute, a series of intensive weekend-long conferences on selected topics in U.S. and world history and international relations. These nationally known programs equip educators to bring lessons of a new richness to students across the nation.

Training the Next Generation of Thinkers: At FPRI, we are proud to play a role in providing students – whether in high school, college, or graduate school – with a start in the fields of international relations, policy analysis, and public service. Interns gain experience in research, editing, writing, public speaking, and critical thinking.

Offering Ideas: We count among our ranks over 120 affiliated scholars located throughout the nation and the world. They are open-minded, ruthlessly honest, and proudly independent. In the past year, they have appeared in well over 100 different media venues – locally, nationally, and internationally.

FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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AND IN OUR NATION THROUGH RESEARCH, PUBLIC EVENTS,
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**HELP SUPPORT OUR MISSION AND OUR WORK. FPRI'S MOTTO
HAS ALWAYS BEEN, "A NATION MUST THINK BEFORE IT
ACTS," AND IN THESE TIMES, WE ARE NEEDED MORE THAN
EVER.**

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