

RICE UNIVERSITY'S
BAKER INSTITUTE
FOR PUBLIC POLICY

News, Research and Events

September 24, 2020



2020 Election Series: Challenges in U.S. Middle East Policy

On Tuesday, September 22, Baker Institute Director [Ambassador Edward P. Djerejian](#) outlined the key issues facing U.S. policymakers in the Middle East as part of the Baker Institute's 2020 Election Series. The Ambassador began by indicating that whoever occupies the White House next "will be obligated by the sheer force of events to focus on the Middle East."

To understand the current political landscape of the Middle East, the Ambassador argued, one must recognize the "tectonic shift" of the Arab uprisings that occurred nearly a decade ago. Since that time, many movements have arisen in which citizens have called for greater popular participation in their governments. The ongoing protests against corruption in Lebanon are a major iteration of this trend.

Additionally, American policymakers must carefully address the Iranian threat and manage the instability posed by ongoing armed conflicts in Syria and Afghanistan. The Ambassador underscored that despite President Trump's aversion to "never-ending wars," the U.S. is by no means "withdrawing" from the Middle East. Djerejian indicated that the U.S. maintains a large number of troops and military bases in strategic points, while emphasizing that the next administration must wisely translate this military power into effective policies that promote our national interest.

The Ambassador also critically analyzed the nuances of the recent peace deals between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. Normalization between Arab states and Israel, he stressed, must be comprehensive and not transactional and America must work to advance the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on "land for peace."

In a question-and-answer session moderated by [Colton Cox](#), policy assistant to the Director, the Ambassador touched on a variety of other topics including Turkish foreign policy, Russia and China's role in the Middle East and challenges faced by oil-rich Arab economies. To conclude, he noted that the next administration must take on "a coherent and comprehensive policy approach ... and adopt an effective public diplomacy strategy to explain our interests, values and purpose in the Middle East."

[To learn more, click here for the full webinar.](#)

“When somebody gives you a quick and simple answer to a complex problem like immigration and says, ‘Build a wall,’ you can pretty well be assured that it’s not going to work.”

Gil Kerlikowske, Nonresident Fellow, Center for the U.S. and Mexico,
and former Customs and Border Patrol commissioner,
to [Yahoo Finance](#)



Students’ home environment can hurt education opportunities

Why do some students succeed in school and others do not? While the answer is complex, research demonstrates that life outside of school significantly impacts academic performance, particularly among children living in poverty.

“Determining what factors affect which children is a critical first step in developing equitable solutions that help all children have an opportunity for educational attainment,” said fellow [Quianta Moore](#), who led a recently published study on the issue.

Data from Moore’s two-year survey of students in 78 Harris County schools found that a significant number have faced challenges such as food insecurity, bullying and neighborhood violence. “The brain functions that affect learning and behavior are negatively impacted by such experiences, as well as by challenges like parental divorce or violence in the home,” Moore said.

Moore and her co-authors intend for their report to lead to a better understanding of how the social, emotional and health needs of students impact academic performance — and inform policies and interventions that give all students a chance to succeed in school.

Read the full study, [“Why are Children Underperforming In School? A Comprehensive Needs Assessment of Students In Harris County,”](#) by Quianta Moore, [Christopher F. Kulesza](#), Hannah Bablak and Selena Guo.

Upcoming Events

Annual Energy Summit — Pandemic, Price War And Other Disruptions: Resilience In Energy Systems

For the fourth consecutive year, the Baker Institute [Center for Energy Studies](#) and [Baker Botts LLP](#) are co-hosting their annual energy conference. This year's event will be held virtually across four days and address current issues affecting global energy markets, the oil and gas industry, electricity, renewables and the environment. **September 30 & October 2, 7, 9 | 11:00 am**

Webinar — Inadequate Investment: America, China and the Future of Innovation

Join the American Academy of Arts & Sciences and the Baker Institute at a virtual presentation of their new report, "The Perils of Complacency: America at a Tipping Point in Science & Engineering," and a discussion on policies that could help ensure the United States secures its strong position of global leadership in discovery and innovation. **September 30 | 3:00 pm**

Visit our [events page](#) for a complete list.

Get Involved with the Baker Institute

Become a member of the [Baker Institute Roundtable](#) and [Roundtable Young Professionals](#). Contact [our development office](#) for more information on how you can join the conversation on the relevant issues and ideas that shape our world.



[Unsubscribe](#) | [Privacy policy](#)

Copyright © 2020 Baker Institute for Public Policy
Rice University, MS-40, P.O. Box 1892, Houston, TX 77251-189214