



News, Research and Events

May 18, 2022



Ambassador Djerejian reflects on 28 years at the Baker Institute

Since arriving in Houston in 1994 as the first director of Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, [Ambassador Edward P. Djerejian](#) has built the institute to become the top university-affiliated think tank in the world. On the eve of his retirement at the end of June, Ambassador Djerejian looked back on the institute's near three-decade history at a May 12 event with Rice historian Professor [John Boles](#).

In the institute's early days, Ambassador Djerejian — whose foreign service career spanned the administrations of eight presidents and included serving as ambassador to Israel and to Syria — worked out of a small office in Rice's Fondren Library. Plans were made to create the institute from the ground up — both Baker Hall itself as well as the body of Fellows and Scholars who would produce the intellectual content. In order to distinguish the institute from other think tanks, the Ambassador focused on the areas of study where Houston has a comparative

Ambassador focused on the areas of study where Houston has a comparative advantage, such as energy, public health and U.S.-Mexico relations, *inter alia*. “The institute’s purpose was the creation of ideas that would serve policymakers, the private sector, public sector, academia and the general public. The idea was to do the public good. We had this terrific base at Rice University, and we built on it,” he said.

Today, Professor Boles noted, all of the hard work is evident. The institute is an internationally recognized forum for world and national leaders alike, and a top producer of independent, fact-based research.

The institute has also become an integral part of Rice University, with its Fellows teaching undergraduate and graduate courses, and a strong educational mission to engage students in public policy. The Baker Institute’s many student programs — including the [Jesse Jones internship program in D.C.](#), the [Baker Institute Student Forum](#) and master’s programs in [global affairs](#) and [energy economics](#) — have opened doors for many Rice graduates, Ambassador Djerejian observed.

Professor Boles asked the Ambassador about the role of think tanks in a time of deep partisan division and widespread discontent with the status quo. “A think tank is an objective forum to analyze existing policies and strategy looking forward. ... We question authority. But we do it on a nonpartisan basis and with data-driven research.”

In today’s hyperpartisan political environment, “We have to get back to talking to one another ... and listening to one another in order to find common ground,” Ambassador Djerejian said. In the years to come, the Baker Institute will remain “a space for people of all political views to express themselves.”

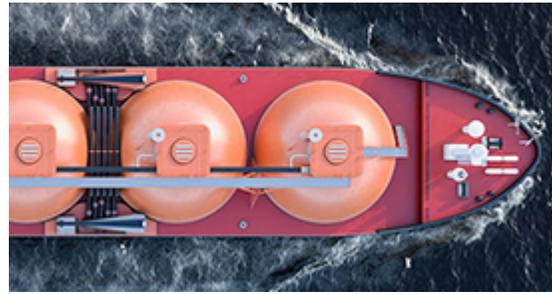
Video of the event, including a Q&A session with the audience, is available on the Baker Institute [website](#).

A focus on the European energy crisis



Is Saudi Arabia quietly trying to help Europe's oil consumers?

The Saudi leadership has repeatedly rebuffed requests from President Biden and leaders of oil-importing countries to accelerate production increases. But recent price differentials could signal an intent to quietly steer crude into Europe to replace Russian supplies, writes [Mark Finley](#), fellow in energy and global oil. Read his post on the [Baker Institute Blog](#).



What can the U.S. do if Russia cuts off all gas to Europe?

After Russia cut off natural gas supply to Poland and Bulgaria, many are wondering if Russia will soon cut its gas deliveries to Europe completely — and if so, what can the U.S. do?

Nonresident fellow in energy studies [Anna Mikulska](#) and fellow in global natural gas [Steven Miles](#) explain that drastic action by the U.S. could prove counterproductive and even harmful for U.S. trade policy. Read their post on the [Baker Institute Blog](#).

“The greatest threat to gun rights is gun violence.”

[Sandra McKay](#), M.D., FAAP, Nonresident Fellow, Firearm Injury Prevention and Safety Program, Center for Health and Biosciences

Latest research



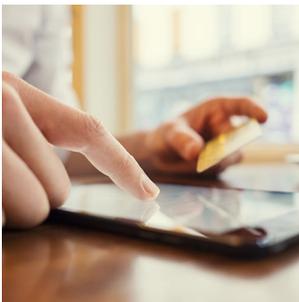
Price transparency of top-ranked hospitals. This report, co-authored by health economics fellow [Vivian Ho](#) and a team from the [Center for Health and Biosciences](#), finds that many highly respected U.S. hospitals are not in compliance with new price transparency legislation, and there are some dramatic differences in prices among those that are reporting them publicly. Read it [here](#).



Five tax considerations for start-up companies and entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs contribute to job growth, innovation and economic resiliency. In this brief, public finance fellow [Joyce Beebe](#) reviews five tax benefits commonly used, and sometimes overlooked, by entrepreneurs. Read it [here](#).



Addressing the WTO appellate body crisis. Many international trade disputes have stalled due to the U.S. government obstructing the appointments process for the WTO appeals court (formally known as the appellate body). What's the solution? [Simon Lester](#) of the [International Economics Program](#) explains on the [Baker Institute Blog](#).



Organized retail crime: Economic impact and policy responses. Public finance fellow [Joyce Beebe](#) reviews recent developments in organized retail crime, as well as federal and state policy responses. Read her post on the [Baker Institute Blog](#).



Coal to power China's energy transition. "Clean" and "low carbon" may be keywords on paper, but Beijing will continue to rely on coal to power its economy and energy transitions, writes [Elsie Hung](#), research manager at the [Center for Energy Studies](#). Read her post for the [Baker Institute Blog](#).

Upcoming events

Webinar — Entrepreneurship and the Energy Transition Part II: The Houston Ecosystem. This webinar, the second of a two-part series, brings together key leaders of the energy entrepreneurship ecosystem in Houston to explore how entrepreneur-driven innovation can help the city maintain its preeminence as the energy capital of the world. **May 23 | 3:00 pm CDT**

The Future of Electric Vehicles: The EV Ecosystem and Society. At this event, fellows [Rachel Meidl](#) and [Michelle Michot Foss](#) sit down with [Robert Kleinbaum](#), a technical fellow at General Motors, to discuss the challenges of electrifying transport and ensuring energy equity. **May 24 | 11:15 am CDT**

Key Challenges for U.S. Policy in the Middle East. At this conference, experts examine the most pressing issues in the Middle East, including the ongoing developments between the Gulf Cooperation Council states and Iran, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Islamist politics, and refugees and migration. **June 1 | 9:00 am CDT**

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