

**Inside The Middle East: Intelligence Perspectives
Training Future Leaders To Independently & Accurately Decipher The Middle East**

A systemic flaw which has evolved over the last generation within Western circles of influence and among Western mediators of knowledge **harms the United States geostrategic interests, inhibits critical thinking and media literacy, and compromises the future generation's ability to navigate an increasingly complex global reality.**

The flaw stems from a combination of two primary factors:

- 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 compromises their ability to apply critical thinking regarding the information they are provided.
- Western mediators of knowledge, guided by a Western mindset and Western codes of thinking developed concepts, narratives and theories regarding the Middle East which were exempted from the test of reality and professional accountability. A looping echo chamber was created in which Concepts became “facts” - Narratives became “reality” - Theories became “truth.”

The result is that a complex multi-layered Middle East is flattened into a two-dimensional Westernized soundbite and discussions about the Middle East scarcely reflect the complex reality on the ground.

The **damage to the United States strategic interests** emanates from the fact that based upon these “facts”, “realities”, and “truths” – US Middle East policy was created. However, the self-developed Western narratives were based upon a false reading of reality; the situation on the ground was quite different. Therefore, inevitably the policies failed. Failed US policies diminish the United States' image and influence in the Middle East - and as the leading super-power in the world.

The echo chamber has resulted in another negative outcome, an **educational failure** which **compromises the future of young people, and their ability to productively address an increasingly complicated global reality.** In a 2018 RAND report titled “Truth Decay” they identified the **crisis of critical thinking** as “Severe and dangerous...A threat to policy making and democracy.” In a world overwhelmed and suffocated by a flood of information, combined with the increasing proliferation, sophistication, and threat of “fake news”, there is an urgency to cultivate an educational methodology - and an environment - that nurtures a critical thinking media literate mindset.

Inside the Middle East – Intelligence Perspectives, (ITME) a non-profit initiative, now in its sixth year is an educational praxis uniquely poised to address these intertwined challenges.

What is ITME?

ITME is an empowering educational modular program that provides a distinct, non-partisan education on the contemporary Middle East, while using professional intelligence analysis methodology to teach critical analysis in an innovative and engaging fashion.

An optional – yet very effective element of ITME is an Educational Field Seminar to Israel, including one or two days in the Palestinian Authority areas. Participants view the Middle East from a myriad of perspectives and meet people from professionals to peers - from all walks of life and backgrounds.

The ITME approach has proven effective on the high school, undergraduate, and Congressional level and has resulted in a paradigm and lasting shift in the way a growing network of participants and alumni look at the Middle East specifically, and the way they approach information in general.

Improving the United States' ability to have a more accurate reading of the Middle East, and thus being able to create productive and constructive policy, requires revolutionizing the methodology through which information is gathered, analyzed, processed and evaluated.

Ensuring the next generation to be in positions of influence will be equipped to address the challenges of the future, can only be achieved through **non-partisan education** and developing and nurturing a **critical thinking media literate** mindset that subscribes to higher and stricter professional criteria and standards.

ITME can make a significant and sustainable shift in the discourse about the Middle East through providing a framework that cultivates an environment which emphasizes the rigorous gathering of facts, the constant pursuit of knowledge, adherence to the rules of logic and consistency, based in contextualized, factual dialogue, rooted in original source material, putting beliefs, perspectives theories and concepts under the microscope of reality. ITME is a platform for constructive and productive conversations which will result in a more accurate reading of reality. Our data confirms that throughout the ITME process participants internalize that the complex picture of the Middle East is quite different than the flat picture they have been presented.

The ITME educational praxis has an enduring **educational impact**. A sustainable change is achieved through providing a non-partisan Middle East education, breaking dependence on Western Media, and offering a lifelong universally applicable critical analysis skillset.

The ITME Praxis creates a paradigm shift in the way participants view the Middle East and information in general. ITME graduates do not accept “narratives” as fact. The result is a leader uniquely equipped to successfully navigate a complex, challenging global reality, one that thinks and operates differently, looks at information more critically, and acts upon that information more responsibly. ITME graduates will be better leaders, more informed and responsible policy makers and positive influencers of public opinion.

ITME trains future leaders to independently and accurately decipher the Middle East. The ultimate goal of ITME is to ensure that the next generation to be in positions of influence will be more knowledgeable about the Middle East and will apply methods of critical thinking regarding Middle East Affairs which will result in a more accurate reading of reality and a better understanding of the future direction of events which will better serve the United States – and the entire region’s interests.

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