



The Challenge

The media industry is currently in a state of crisis. The rise of social media has wiped out the profitability of traditional publishing models. The result has been the drastic contraction of many media operations. All this has taken place at a time of great instability in world affairs, when the public need for accurate, professionally presented information and analysis has never been greater. Nowhere is the absence of stable models for media more apparent, and the results more concerning than in the Middle East. The region is in the midst of a historic upheaval which is far from over.

Global publics and policymakers are faced with debates, issues and decisions of vital importance. At the same time, the crisis in media produces a situation in which the mechanisms both for collecting information and for cogently analyzing it in the public sphere are deficient.

The traditional media's teams of foreign correspondents, adequately staffed, given ample time and budgets, and with sufficient knowledge and

experience to professionally seek out and process information, are hardly to be found anymore. Observation of media coverage of, for example, the Syrian civil war indicates that the main stories of the war were nevertheless 'broken' by traditional news organizations – such as the regime use of chemical weapons (*Le Monde, the Times*) and the internal security structures of ISIS (*Der Spiegel*) etc. Many other stories were likely missed because of the lack of resources at the disposal of journalists. Policymakers and analysts were left in the dark regarding trends and developments on the ground in the region.

Since traditional models of coverage cannot be revived, there is a need for new structures ensuring that individuals engaging in systematic reporting of the region, based on language and area knowledge and long term commitment, are able to combine with analysts possessing relevant skills to produce cogent and coherent regional coverage.

The vacuum left by the decline in legacy media has been filled by state-sponsored media operations in the Middle East. From Qatar to Turkey and Iran, resources are being devoted to spreading the agendas of various regimes and groups whose goals are generally at odds with those of policymakers and pose a threat to regional stability.

The Response

The Middle East Center for Reporting and Analysis (MECRA) is an attempt to address this issue. It is our intention to bring together the most committed and intrepid reporters operating in key sites in the Middle East at the present time, with some of the most skilled and deeply knowledgeable analysts, and in particular to showcase the work of writers whose skill set combines both elements, enabling them both to observe the unfolding realities from close up, to know where to look within the huge canopy of unfolding stories in the region today, and to correctly interpret what they have seen. To combine action and the insightful contemplation of action. Our unique focus will be on recruiting and disseminating the views of people who are in the field and possess language skills from the region, who have access to influencers and local power structures and who provide original views on the dynamics that are changing on the ground so as to identify trends that will affect the region and the global interconnected world. This will help provide the public and policymakers with information to help confront threats and understand trends and developments.

The purpose of this is to present a picture of key regional stories both accessibly, but with unrivaled detail and rigor. We will provide the space for both reported stories, long-form writing, interviews and the presentation of analysis that will leverage the information to increase its impact in media and policy circles. We will also identify and develop new local writers and analysts who are doing work that is of importance but who have been unable to make an impact outside their local circle. It is our intention

that our product will be of use to policymakers and lay people alike, as well as to NGOs and businesses operating in the Middle East space, and will enrich and deepen the discussion of these vital issues. We are also available for specific tailored projects.

The Middle East Center for Reporting and Analysis is a 501(c) 3 non-profit registered in the United States.

We look forward to hearing from you,

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