NY Times Columnist Thomas Friedman engages with AUB at IFI

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The New York Times’ award-winning international affairs columnist Thomas L. Friedman met with AUB professors, senior administrators and students for a two-hour roundtable discussion sponsored by the Issam Fares Institute on April 27 at AUB.

Friedman discussed his latest book and the implications of its subject matter for the Middle East and other parts of the world. The book, entitled "That Used to Be US" and co-authored with Michael Mandelbaum, analyzes the decline of the U.S.' economic and technological edge vis-à-vis other regions of the world, and argues that the U.S. faces four significant challenges: globalization, the information technology revolution, domestic deficit and debt, and energy consumption.

Friedman highlighted the speed and force of the IT revolution, which transformed a connected 2.0 world into a "hyper connected world," in just a few years. The merger of globalization and the IT revolution has raised the global education curve and sharpened technological competition.

He argued that the U.S. needs to enhance its national education level and performance in order to compete with global standards. In a labor market where skills are increasingly similar, he stressed the importance for youth to re-think, re-create and re-engineer their jobs. In response to critics of globalization, he argued that globalization is its opposite: it can be empowering yet disempowering, standardizing as well as particularizing.

The AUB professors and senior administrators engaged Friedman in a lively discussion on current affairs in the Middle East, especially the ongoing Arab uprisings, the situation in Syria, Arab-Israeli issues, and perceptions of the region within the United States during this presidential election year.