



**AMERICAN
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Issam Fares Institute at AUB and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung hold the first edition of the Beirut Security Debates

The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at the American University of Beirut (AUB), in collaboration with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Regional Peace and Security Project, held the first edition of the Beirut Security Debates (BSD) on January 26-27, 2023 at IFI. Titled “Geopolitical Shifts and Global Crises: What Implications for the Middle East?” the closed experts’ meeting gathered local, regional, and international scholars as well as experts and policymakers to discuss issues on regional security, geopolitics, economics, energy security, and so-called soft security and humanitarian issues central to current global affairs and their impact on the Middle East.

In his opening remark, Dr. Joseph Bahout, IFI director, said that to understand the global system and its developments we must not only analyze hard security but also soft and human security. Marcus Schneider, the project director of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Regional Peace and Security Project noted that from a European point of view, the current state of global affairs has paved the way for geopolitics as a “category of analysis”. It is, however, not yet determined whether the Russian war on Ukraine leads to a comeback of the collective “West” and its commitment to a rules-based international order or can be interpreted as a sign of its demise.

The conference’s panel discussions covered six workshops and accompanying discussions, namely: “Middle East Crises amidst Global Shifts and Rise of New Regional Powers”, “Lebanon, How Deep is the Abyss?”, “The Iranian Unknown post-JCPOA: Domestic and Geopolitical Implications of the Current Protest Movement”, “Regional

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Issues of Soft Security”, “MENA Economies and Global Geo-economics”, and “Europe and the MENA Region; Is There a Security Architecture in Sight?”

A special session was dedicated to the Middle East and the Ukraine war's impact on the region. Dr. Abdel Monem Said Aly Abdelaal, Egyptian senator and one of the speakers, argued that “this war is a symptom of revising the world system.” He added that we are witnessing the emergence of a new bipolar world order between the US and China. Special attention was also given to Iran, whose domestic challenges have so far not curbed its appetite for regional and international involvement.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. Joseph Bahout said that the discussions underline that there is no clear definition of the current international system, that the so-called “Middle East” is now in disorder and seems to be left alone for the first time in centuries. Undeniably, the geo-economic shifts in the region are pushing oil-producing countries to diversify their economies; however, these attempts have been halted by ongoing global events such as the war on Ukraine and other regional and global shifts in power.

A full summary report of the conference will be posted on the IFI website soon.

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Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 800 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 8000 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 365-bed hospital.

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