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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IFI and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung hold the third edition of the Beirut Security Debates at AUB

The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at the American University of Beirut (AUB), and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Regional Peace and Security Project, held the third edition of the Beirut Security Debates (BSD) at IFI. The event, titled "A New Era? Scenarios for the Middle East," gathered local, regional, and international scholars, experts, and policymakers to analyze, discuss, and debate critical questions on security-related and geopolitical issues at this pivotal juncture for the region.

In his welcoming remarks, IFI Director Joseph Bahout noted that this year's BSD will reflect on the deep uncertainty faced by both the region and the world, "a world and a region in flux," and part of an international system that is yet to be defined and understood, "with our own region in shambles and partly undergoing a sinuous transition for the best or the worse... this remains to be seen." He believed, however, that hosting such debates at the Institute was a "reflection of our mission, that is to understand and impact our national and possibly our international environments for the better."

Similarly, FES Regional Peace and Security Project Director Marcus Schneider asked if the region was truly at the end of this enormous period of turbulence, whether emanating from Gaza, Lebanon, or other parts of the region, each of which "has the potential to ignite the region that has never quite succeeded in extinguishing the fires." Schneider noted that there remains a considerable disconnect between German political discourse and the reality on the Middle East ground in view of the most recent wars. One thing is certain, he said, that regardless of what new order emerges from all the bloodshed, the "rules-based international order" has died.

Meanwhile, AUB President Fadlo Khuri noted that this year's BSD unfolds "at a time when even as the sound of arms has mostly gone quiet, the threat of violence remains close." We are navigating a period shaped by contradictions, he said, "ceasefires without peace, negotiations without trust, and diplomacy without clarity." He added that this is what makes this year's BSD thematic question not a rhetorical one, but a genuine inquiry to understand "if we are witnessing the beginning of transformation or merely another turn in a long and familiar cycle." Khuri noted that at AUB, and particularly through IFI's work, "we hold fast to the idea that rigorous inquiry, grounded in evidence and lived experience, can offer more than understanding."

The conference featured panel discussions that dealt with the possible scenarios for the Middle East in the years to come, including what U.S. President Trump has in stock for the Middle

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East, the future of the Palestinian question, viable choices for Iran given the regional reconfiguration, how Syria will embark on state-building, and Lebanon's prospects amid uncertainty. BSD also featured a book reflection with Minister of Culture Ghassan Salame, centered around his latest book on war and peace in the 21st century. The discussion expanded into a wider debate about today's world fractures and trends, with a special focus on the Middle East, where war has been reshaping the region for a long while, amidst talks of new dynamics of normalization and redistribution of power.

The recording of the conference and the full conference report will be available on IFI's website soon.

ENDS

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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 790 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 9000 students. AUB currently offers more than 140 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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