

Kenneth Pollack

Resident Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute

Dr. Kenneth Pollack is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), where he works on Middle Eastern political-military affairs, focusing particularly on Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf countries. Before joining AEI, Dr. Pollack was affiliated with the Brookings Institution, where he was a senior fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy. Before that, he was the Center's director and director of research. Dr. Pollack served twice at the National Security Council, first as director for Near East and South Asian affairs and then as director for Persian Gulf affairs. In this role he was the principal official for U.S. policy toward Iraq, Iran, Yemen, and the Gulf Cooperation Council States at the White House. He began his career as a Persian Gulf military analyst at the CIA, where he predicted the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and was the principal author of the CIA's classified postmortem on Iraqi strategy and military operations during the Persian Gulf War. With an extensive background in national security, intelligence, and foreign policy, Pollack is an expert on Middle Eastern political-military affairs with a particular emphasis on Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Exclusively represented by [Leading Authorities, Inc. speakers bureau](#), he addresses foreign policy, international relations, geopolitics, and the Middle East.

Dr. Pollack also worked on long-term issues related to Middle Eastern political and military affairs for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, where he was a senior research professor at the Institute for National Security Studies at National Defense University. Witty, brilliant, and slightly irreverent, Dr. Pollack discusses hard-hitting issues with refreshing clarity, brevity, and humor, provoking audiences to engage in a thoughtful yet relaxed dialogue. He looks at the root problems behind the Middle East's turmoil—citing historic cultural and geopolitical stressors—and looks at modern day “spillover” problems including the rise of refugee populations, terrorism and radicalization, and economic dislocation. He also discusses America's role in the Middle East, the presence of other nations including Russia in the region, and the potential for eventual peace and stability.

He is the author of nine books on the Middle East including *Unthinkable: Iran, the Bomb and American Strategy*, which explains the history and strategic threat of Iran's nuclear program and examines various options to address it. It was named one of the “Best Books of 2013” by the *Economist* and *Foreign Affairs* and was picked by *The New York Times* as an “Editor's Choice” and one of its “Notable Books of the Year.” His book, *A Path Out of the Desert: A Grand Strategy for America in the Middle East*, published three years before the Arab Spring, warned of a coming wave of “revolutions, civil wars, insurgencies and terrorism” in the Middle East if the leaders of the region did not reform. It was a *Washington Post* and *Foreign Affairs* best-seller, and was chosen as one of *The Washington Post's* “Best Books of the Year” for 2008 and as an editor's choice of *The New York Times Book Review*. Dr. Pollack has written myriad articles that have been published in major international publications including *The Washington Post*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *The Atlantic*, among others.

Dr. Pollack was formerly the director for national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and a research fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He received the CIA's Certificate of Distinction for Outstanding Performance of Duty for work before and during the Persian Gulf War. He also twice received the CIA's Exceptional Performance Award.

He received his bachelor's from Yale university and a doctorate in political science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.