

International Conference

“Changing Geopolitics and the Emerging Order of the Middle East: Challenges Ahead, What the Future Holds”

Date: January 12-13, 2017

Venue: Middle East Institute
National University of Singapore
29 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
119620 Singapore

January 12, 2017

09:00—10:00 **Welcome Coffee and Opening Remarks**

10:00--12:00 **Panel I**

A Non-Westphalian Regional Order in the Middle East?

Political order in the Middle East since the Second World War has been shaped by the UN states-system, which resurrected a Westphalia-inspired order that multiplied the number of states across the world, and bound those states to not transgress borders on behalf of co-religionists and other affiliates who were minorities within the domains of other sovereigns. Yet today, the pursuit of interstate relations and politics across the Middle East proceeds in exact contravention of the Westphalian dictum of 'whose region, his religion', as sectarian affiliates and proxies extend state and communal influence, and conduct military and other operations, within the territories of rivals and their clients/allies. Is this de facto anti-Westphalian practice of politics destroying order and stability in the region? Does it reflect a different or emergent norm peculiar to the region that is yet to achieve an equilibrium point? Or is such an anti-Westphalian order/disorder symptomatic of dynamics in international relations across the world that are not presently acknowledged, represented or contained by the UN states-system?

Speakers:

- Prof. Bülent Aras (Istanbul Policy Center)
- Prof. Ryoji Tateyama (National Defense Academy Japan)

12:00--13:30 **Lunch**

13:30--15:30 **Panel II**

Shifting Alliances in the Middle East

Longstanding alliances in the Middle East have been shifting, in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, as countries and leaders restructure their positions. Particularly noticeable has been the rise of partial and contingent issue-based alliances, at the expense of longstanding wholesale and

transgenerational loyalties. Such alliance formations are multilayered, being intra-state, inter-state, and include non-state actors, old and new. What are the dynamics of these shifting alliances? Which actors ally with whom --and for what purpose-- in the flux of changing regional geopolitics? Is this a temporary phenomenon, or are we witnessing a new constitutive process of order formation?

Speakers:

- Dr. Altay Atlı (Istanbul Policy Center)
- Dr. Bunn Nagara (Institute of Strategic & International Studies Malaysia)

15:30--16:00 Coffee Break

16:00--18:00 Panel III

The Gulf Moment in the Middle East: Assessment and Prospects

In recent years, the Gulf Co-operation Council countries of Arabia have gained in prominence and influence across the Middle East, while major regional military powers such as Iraq and Egypt, and media and financial centres such as Lebanon, have been emasculated or marginalized. Cracks in the US security guarantee and the fall of longstanding Arab presidents in the Arab Spring challenged the GCC, who responded with dramatic military interventions in the region. Will this "Gulf Moment" in the Middle East continue into the future, with the GCC playing decisive roles? Does this moment signal an emerging new order in the region, or will it be a fleeting one, as regional powers and superpowers rebalance and reconfigure here and elsewhere, and the limits of GCC capacity are reached?

Speakers:

- Dr. Pinar Akpınar (Istanbul Policy Center)
- Mattia Tomba (Middle East Institute, NUS)

19:30 Dinner for participants

January 13, 2017

10:00--12:00 Wrap up and Project Coordination Meeting (all participants)

12:30-14:00 Lunch

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