

A Northern Tier in West Asia?

States

Networks

Informal Diplomacy

A Full Day Conference

Organized by

MEI Arabia Asia

Research Cluster

Conference Statement

The recent rapprochement among Iran, Turkey, and Russia over Syria has given this trio greater diplomatic weight in the Middle East as compared to their Arab and American counterparts to the south. Astana, the Kazakh capital in Central Asia, is where the trio regularly meet and learn to manage conflicting agendas without stepping on each other's toes. Lessons learned there may embolden these old neighbours to collaborate on a variety of other issues in the future, consolidating a new geopolitical tier that reshapes the Middle East from the North. Such a rise of what we call "the Northern Tier" urges us to rethink the Middle East within a larger West Asian frame that connects the Arab world to Turko-Persia, Russia, and Central Asia.

This conference brings around the table historians, anthropologists, political scientists, and practitioners to examine the historical conditions and future possibilities of the Northern Tier as an interconnected political landscape. It will address questions such as:

- ◆ What are the historical relations between states in the northern tier of West Asia?
- ◆ Is there a common social basis shared by these states?
- ◆ How do states use transnational and diasporic networks to collaborate and communicate beyond the confines of formal diplomacy?
- ◆ What are the historical and contemporary links that bridge the northern and southern tiers of West Asia?



Conference Schedule

09.00 - 09.30 AM Registration

09.30 - 10.00 AM Welcome Remarks

Engseng Ho

Professor, Director, Middle East Institute, NUS

Serkan Yolaçan

Research Fellow, Middle East Institute, NUS

10.00 - 11.15 AM Opening Roundtable

A Two-Tiered West Asia?

Chair: Serkan Yolaçan

Research Fellow, Middle East Institute, NUS

Elena Suponina

Advisor, Institute for Strategic Studies, Moscow

Hamidreza Azizi

Assistant Professor, Regional Studies Research Institute
Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran

Brandon Friedman

Director of Research, Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and
African Studies, Tel Aviv University

11.15 - 11.30 AM Coffee Break

11.30 - 01.00 PM Panel 1

History as Infrastructure:

Does the Northern Tier Have a Shared Past?

Chair: Engseng Ho

Professor, Director, Middle East Institute, NUS

Masha Kirasirova

Assistant Professor, New York University Abu Dhabi
Institutionalizing Russia's Administration of the "East" before and after 1917

Sabri Ateş

Associate Professor, Clements Department of History,
Southern Methodist University, Dallas
Sectarian Affiliations and Turkish-Iranian Relations

Davood Moradian

Founder and Director General, Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies
(AISS), Kabul
Afghanistan: The Myth of the Graveyard of Empires

Conference Schedule

01.00 - 02.00 PM Lunch

02.00 - 03.30 PM Panel II

Human Infrastructure: Rediscovery and Reconstruction since the Soviet Collapse

Chair: Anthony Teo

Board Member, Middle East Institute, NUS

Magnus Marsden

Professor of Anthropology, School of Global Studies, and Director, Asia Centre, University of Sussex
Muslim Circulations and Networks in West Asia: Ethnographic Perspectives on Transregional

Yunlong Jia

PhD Candidate, School of Global Studies, University of Sussex
Entwined Worlds: Networks and Conviviality among Iranians in Turkey

Siarhei Bohdan

Analyst, Ostrogorski Centre, Minsk; London
"When, after all, will these polar bears awake?!" Transnational Shi'ite Islamist Networks' Interaction with the Soviet Union/post-Soviet States

03.30 - 03.45 PM Coffee Break

03.45 - 05.15 PM Panel III

Infrastructures Underground: Pipelines & Politics

Chair: Michelle Teo

Deputy Director, Middle East Institute, NUS

Andrey Kovsh

Associate Professor, Department of International Relations
Saint Petersburg State University
Geopolitical Consequences of Natural Gas Market Structural Shifts in the Asia-Pacific Region

Serik Orazgaliyev

Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Public Policy,
Nazarbayev University, Astana
Competition For Pipeline Export Routes in the Caspian Region: The New Great Game or the New Silk Road?

Sim Li-Chen

Assistant Professor, College of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Zayed University, Abu Dhabi
Russia-Gulf Relations: Beyond Pipelines and Tankers

Conference Schedule

05.15 - 05.30 PM **Coffee Break**

05.30 - 06.30 PM **Closing Discussion**

06.30 PM **End of Conference**





Elena Suponina
Advisor, Institute
for Strategic
Studies, Moscow

Elena Suponina is an advisor to the Director of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS). She is also an expert of the Russian Council on International Affairs and Head of Scientific Reviews for the Problems of National Strategy journal published by RISS. Prior to this, she was the founding director of RISS' Middle East and Asia Center from 1992 to 2013.

Dr Suponina holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, with her dissertation entitled "The religious and philosophical doctrine of Druses". She has published more than ten research papers and a number of articles on Middle Eastern and Asian issues including cooperation between Russia and countries in the region; Islam in Russia; international mediation in the Middle East settlement; counter-terrorism strategies; foreign policy and international affairs.

Dr Suponina has had extensive experience as correspondent and columnist in various Russian newspapers including *Novoe Vremya* (1996-1998), *Vremya Novostei* (1998-2002) and *Moskovskie Novosti* (2011). At *Vremya Novostei* she also headed the International News Department from 2002 to 2011. During this period, she conducted and published interviews with many international leaders, foreign and energy ministers, heads of the security services and political parties around the world. As a member of the analytic and press groups appointed by the Kremlin and Foreign Ministry, she traveled with the Russian president and several Russian foreign ministers during their trips abroad.

Dr Suponina was bestowed an Award for Courage from the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry by its previous president, Evgeny Primakov.



Hamidreza Azizi
Assistant Professor,
Regional Studies
Research Institute
Shahid Beheshti
University, Tehran

Hamidreza Azizi is an Assistant Professor at Regional Studies Research Institute, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran. He is also an adjunct lecturer at the Department of Regional Studies, University of Tehran and a member of the scientific board of Iran and Eurasia Studies Institute (IRAS). Azizi obtained his PhD in Central Asia and the Caucasus Studies from the University of Tehran and has many publications both in Persian and English, including two books. His research interests include: security and geopolitical issues in Central Asia and the Caucasus, Iran's foreign policy and Iran-Russia relations. His latest published articles are "Iran–China Cooperation in the Silk Road Economic Belt: From Strategic Understanding to Operational Understanding" [co-authored] and "Analyzing the Impacts of Drug Trafficking on Human Security in Central Asia."



Brandon Friedman
Director of
Research,
Moshe Dayan
Center for Middle
Eastern and
African Studies,
Tel Aviv University

Brandon Friedman is the Director of Research at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies (MDC) at Tel Aviv University. He is also the Managing Editor of the Dayan Center's journal, *Bustan: The Middle East Book Review*. He teaches on the history of the Middle East during the modern period in the BA Liberal Arts program, which introduces students to important themes and issues in the region during the last two hundred years. His scholarly research focuses on the political history of the states of the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula, with a particular focus on Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

**Masha Kirasirova**

Assistant Professor,
New York
University Abu
Dhabi

Institutionalizing Russia's Administration of the "East" before and after 1917

This paper will trace the evolution of Russia's administration of "Eastern" affairs from the late imperial to the early Soviet periods. It will follow the development of imperial Asiatic Sections of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the General Staff into early Bolshevik Eastern Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Comintern. These early communist "Eastern Sections" inherited imperial portfolios that included strategic interests and commitments in the Near, Middle, and Far East, including in Ottoman territories and in parts of Central Asia. While some of these commitments were renounced with the publication of secret agreements made by Russia and other European powers during World War I, others were maintained. This paper will use secondary literature, memoirs, and Comintern archival records to explore the breaks and continuities in how revolutionary communist officials imagined Russia's mission in "Western Asia," including the interrelationship between Central Asia and the Middle East, which remained significant for Russia's relationship with Britain and France and for the Bolsheviks' priorities to spread revolution around the world.

Masha Kirasirova is an Assistant Professor of History at New York University Abu Dhabi where she specializes in the political and cultural history of the Soviet Union and the modern Middle East. She received her PhD from the NYU joint program in History and Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies. Her most recent articles have appeared in *Kritika* and *Iranian Studies*, and she is a co-editor of the 2018 Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties: Between Protest and Nation- Building.



Sabri Ateş

Associate
Professor,
Clements
Department of
History,
Southern
Methodist
University, Dallas

Sectarian Affiliations and Turkish-Iranian Relations

Iran and Turkey are on the opposing sides of the Syrian conflict. The first has been a staunch supporter of Assad, and the second a staunch supporter of the opposition. Their religious affiliations played a significant role in this alignment. However, through the mediation of Russia they have recently been closely cooperating. No doubt, their shared antagonism towards USA and its presence in Eastern Syria draws the three closer. However, there is another factor that makes this cooperation possible: Iran and Turkey's shared antagonism towards the Kurds, and the Kurdish demands in the larger Middle East. With sizeable Kurdish populations that they both deny political and cultural rights, Iran and Turkey watch each and every Kurdish movement with grave suspicion. This became clearer in their cooperation in chocking the Kurdish referendum movement in Kurdistan region of Iraq. Another temporarily autonomous Kurdish region in Syria, Afrin, with blessings of Russia and Iran, is now under Turkish and FSA control. These developments have put a temporary break on the intense anti-Shia, anti-Iranian rhetoric of the pro-government press in Turkey.

Sabri Ates argues that sectarian animosity between a decidedly Sunni Turkey and the Shia Iran makes this cooperation untenable in the long run. His presentation will provide a historical background on the role of sectarianism in Turkish-Iranian relations, and show how this background provides them with a repertoire of contention that is only momentarily silenced.

Sabri Ates is an Associate Professor at Southern Methodist University's Department of History at Dallas, Texas. Ates' research focuses on Ottoman-Iranian relations, Kurdish history, borderlands and the borderland peoples, and the history of sectarianism in the Middle East. His first book is *Tunali Hilmi Bey: Osmanlıdan Cumhuriyet'e Bir Aydın*, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009). Partially based on his award-winning dissertation, his second book, *Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary* (Cambridge University Press, 2013) discusses the process of the making of the boundaries that modern states of Iraq, Turkey and Iran share. At present, Ates is working on his new project, *Sheikh Abdulqadir Nehri (d. 1925) and the Pursuit of an Independent Kurdistan*. The book explores the quest for a Kurdish state between 1880-1925, when the creation of such a state emerged as a distinct possibility and then quickly unraveled.

**Davood Moradian**

Founder and Director General, Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS), Kabul

Afghanistan: the Myth of the Graveyard of Empires

Construction of myth is a feature of any socially/politically-constructed identity and polity. While the role of myth is widely recognized at individual and group levels, the role and extent of myth-making in international politics, including in matters of wars and conflicts, is an understudied phenomenon. The Afghan conflict as one of the longest and complicated modern conflicts presents a superb opportunity to study the role of myth in understating international conflict. While, many actors have their own myths, this presentation focuses on the Western myths and how such myths influence their policy choices on the ground. In this context, there are two myths: Afghanistan as the graveyard of empires and Western intervention as a humanitarian and civilizing mission. A closing reading of history challenges both myths and the presentation will provide some examples to this end. The paper will offer a critical view on the construction and partition of geographical and civilizational space into mutually antagonistic spheres/tiers such as the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia and/or East Asia. Connectivity requires challenging and demystifying colonially-constructed space and identity at the regional level.

Davood Moradian served as Chief of Presidential Programs at President Hamid Karzai's Office, Afghanistan's Senior Policy Adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and he also worked as Head of the Strategic Studies Center under the Foreign Ministry in Kabul, Afghanistan. He is currently the General Director of Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS).

He completed his undergraduate studies at the University of London, in the fields of International Relations and International Law. He obtained his Ph.D. degree from University of St. Andrews (Scotland), where he also taught International Relations. His thesis focused on a comparative study of the conception of punishment in the traditions of ancient Greece, Islam and international criminal justice. He is fluent in Persian as well as English and also knows some Pashto.

**Magnus Marsden**

Professor of Anthropology, School of Global Studies, and Director, Asia Centre, University of Sussex

Muslim Circulations and Networks in West Asia: Ethnographic Perspectives on Transregional

This article explores the concept of West Asia in relationship to recent work in the global history of Islam that points toward the existence of transregional arenas of historic significance that incorporate many of Asia's Muslim societies. This approach is most explicitly developed in work by historians such as Shahab Ahmed and Gagan Sood on the connections between diverse parts of Muslim Asia. Recent anthropological work has also brought attention to the dynamic nature of the relations and cultural connections between peoples living in regions that once formed part of expansive arenas of interaction yet were divided by imperial and national boundaries, as well as the ideological conflicts of the Cold War. This paper build on these studies and deploys West Asia as a geographical scale that brings to light forms of interconnectedness that have been silenced by traditional area studies scholarship. Its argument is that while expansive realms such as the Balkans-to-Bengal complex and Islamicate Eurasia are helpful in conceptualizing the connected nature of life and culture in Muslim Asia before the onset of the nation-state and national ideology, in the contemporary context 'West Asia' brings attention to influential connections, communities and circulations that both bear the imprint of deeper pasts as well as the influence of emergent and shifting transregional dynamics in the present. In addition, by emphasizing connective dynamics that move beyond the rather conventional focus on east-west relationships, the category West Asia also allows and encourages scholarship to dwell on multiple north-south connections.

Magnus Marsden is Professor of Social Anthropology and Director of the Asia Centre at the University of Sussex. He specialised initially in the study of Islam in Central and South Asia and the lived experience of Islamizing processes in northern Pakistan. He has subsequently worked on the Afghanistan-Pakistan-Tajikistan borderland as a setting for complex interactions between Muslims from across Cold War boundaries and Afghan trading networks in inter-Asian contexts. He has conducted fieldwork among diasporic Afghani merchants, from a diverse range of social, ethnic and political backgrounds, and who work in a range of settings across the breadth of the former Soviet Union, including the Muslim-majority states of Central Asia, Russia and Ukraine, as well as in China. His most recent monograph is *Trading Worlds: Afghan Merchants across Modern Frontiers*.



Yunlong Jia
PhD Candidate,
School of Global
Studies,
University of Sussex

Entwined Worlds: Networks and Conviviality among Iranians in Turkey

This paper explores the relationship between locality and mobility through the case of Iranian people living in and travelling between Iran and Turkey. While conventional thoughts on West Asia tend to fragment the region into either geographical categories or sovereign states, interactions between countries such as Iran and Turkey epitomise a history shaped by interstate conflicts, territorial claims, sectarian tensions and different scales of warfare. Focusing on the trans-regional entanglements among the Iranian traders, tourists, asylum seekers, I examine the ways in which networks create and maintain connections by investigating into the mediated sites, experiences and processes of interaction that shape the connectivity and movement of people and goods between two of the major countries in West Asia. To be more specific, I situate the transnational networks of the Iranians in Turkey today into a shared translocal composition of relations which took origin from the sustained historical connections between the Ottoman and Safavid empire, so as to zoom into the Iranians of various kinds in contemporary Istanbul, which display the interactive, relational and convivial dispositions. By tracing the mobile and interactive trajectories of these different actors, I wish to display the productive and generative attribute of the transnational forms of space that sheds light on the connections and interactions in the region.

Yunlong Jia is studying for a PhD in Social Anthropology at the School of Global Studies, University of Sussex, where he holds a Sussex/China Scholarship Council joint scholarship. Before joining Sussex, Yunlong studied Anthropology and the Middle East at SOAS, University of London, and Persian Language and Literature in Beijing. His research currently focuses on the transnational experiences of Iranian migrants, refugees and traders in Turkey, especially Istanbul. Yunlong held the visiting PhD position at Koç University, Istanbul.



Siarhei Bohdan
Analyst,
Ostrogorski
Centre,
Minsk; London

“When, after all, will these polar bears awake?!” Transnational Shi’ite Islamist networks’ interaction with the Soviet Union/post-Soviet states

The quotation in the title of this paper belongs to a prominent Shi’ite Islamist Mohsen Rafiqdust who in exasperation allegedly exclaimed so because of the Kremlin’s unwillingness to respond to the overtures of revolutionary Tehran. That motive of hope and subsequent bitter disappointment with each other kept returning in the relationship between Shiite Islamists and the USSR/Russia, although their relations contained all kinds of interaction: from violent confrontation to tacit cooperation and looking for an alliance. The paper deals with relations between transnational Shiite Islamists and the Soviet Union/post-Soviet states beginning in the 1970s and following the collapse of the Soviet Union through Russia’s recent intervention in Syria.

On the one hand, the paper, by focusing on interlinked groups and organisations which adhered to some Khomeinist ideologies, investigates how Shi’ite Islamists dealt with Soviet/post-Soviet challenges and opportunities. On the other hand, it analyses how Soviet/post-Soviet actors handled the issues related to the Shi’ite Islamism. Geographically, the respective activities of Shi’ite Islamist groups and organisations based in Iran, as well as Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon shall be examined. While after the 1979 revolution, Shi’ite Islamists could establish a full-fledged state in Iran, the paper argues that transnational Shi’ite Islamist networks continued to exist after that date, and their cohabitation and interaction with the Iranian state require considering them an autonomous actor.

Siarhei Bohdan is an analyst at the Ostrogorski Centre. He defended his doctoral thesis in Political Science at the Freie Universität Berlin in Germany and is also an alumnus of Belarus State University and European Humanities University in Lithuania. In 1999-2011, he worked with Nasha Niva, a Belarusian independent weekly. Siarhei comes from Maladechna, Belarus.



Andrey Kovsh
Associate
Professor,
Department of
International
Relations,
Saint Petersburg
State University

Geopolitical Consequences of Natural Gas Market Structural Shifts in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Natural gas and geopolitics have never been apart. The long-term nature of international gas transactions not only require more significant government involvement on both the producer and consumer end, but may also stir up wider political interest. The flow of natural gas expanded across national and regional borders and geopolitical dynamics were part of the course. For all regions, there is a striking difference between the geopolitical context of pipeline and LNG business. Pipelines have always required more government involvement. LNG trade, on the other hand, offers more flexible supply routes and new business models capitalizing on this flexibility.

The fact that fossil fuels will be the lifeline of modern economies for some time to come, combined with the scale of future energy demand, has elevated control of and access to these resources on the strategic agenda of industrialized and industrializing countries. The fossil fuels and their transport will continue to be the single dominant factor in international politics in the years to come. In a world where the need for versatility and environmentally friendly sources of energy is high, gas stands a good chance of becoming a fuel of choice for many economies, despite the geopolitical dimensions of gas trade.

From a geopolitical perspective, each region has tensions and characteristics that could have an impact on international natural gas markets, particularly when changing trade flows shift dependency from one strategic region to another, and because geopolitical relations themselves are changing across traditional gas flows.

Kovsh Andrey is an Associate Professor at the Department of International Relations at Saint Petersburg State University. His current research projects focus on liquefied natural gas market analysis and geopolitical issues of natural gas market structural segmentation in the Asia-Pacific Region. Prof. Kovsh areas of expertise include energy policy, inter-Korean relations and the DPRK's issues. Dr. Kovsh has authored and co-authored journal publications, conference articles and book chapters in the aforementioned topics, and has received several awards and grants from various funding agencies. Among his latest publications are: Kovsh A., Belov A. "What will bring the New Eastern Policy of Russia. Geopolitical approach of Putin's Government" in "The Korean Peninsula. Geopolitical Crisis" (in Japanese language), Ed. Japan Center for Economic Research, Japan, 2017; Kovsh A., "Mid-term increasing of Russian LNG export to the Republic of Korea" in "Society: Politics, Economics, Law" Journal (in Russian), Ed. Hors Publishing House, Russia, 2017.



Serik Orazgaliyev
Assistant Professor,
Graduate School
of Public Policy,
Nazarbayev
University, Astana

Competition for Pipeline Export Routes in the Caspian Region: The New Great Game or the New Silk Road?

It has often been argued that since 1991 Central Asian and Caspian region had become a playground for the New Great Game between the global superpowers. Analysing the geopolitical competition for Caspian energy resources, this article argues that the New Great Game framework has its limitations as it fails to incorporate the active role played by the Newly Independent Caspian (NIC) states. One cannot deny the fact that the strategic competition among the geopolitical powers for hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian shaped the trajectories of the new pipeline routes. At the same time, the NIC states, namely Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan benefited from the competition as they managed to diversify their export options, achieving greater political and economic independence. In the end, the interaction between the NIC states and energy consumers has led to strengthened energy cooperation along the same area where the ancient Silk Road crossed East Asia, Central Asia and Europe. The findings support the theoretical argument of the paper, which stipulates that in exploring the developments in the Caspian region both realist and liberal theories of international relations should be applied in conjunction.

Dr Serik Orazgaliyev is Assistant Professor at Graduate School of Public Policy, Nazarbayev University. He received his doctoral degree in Politics and International Studies from the University of Cambridge. In 2017 (fall semester), Dr Orazgaliyev was a visiting Assistant Professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore.

Dr Orazgaliyev's areas of research include: Caspian energy geopolitics, governments and multinational enterprises (MNEs), institutions and development policies, Central Asian Studies and transboundary water management. His recent publications include:

1. Orazgaliyev, S. (2018). 'Reconstructing MNE-host country bargaining model in the international oil industry.' *Transnational Corporations Review*, 10:1.
2. Orazgaliyev S. (2017) 'Competition for pipeline export routes in the Caspian region: The new great game or the new Silk Road?' *Cambridge Journal of Eurasian Studies* (1:5B75G8).

**Sim Li-Chen**

Assistant Professor,
College of
Humanities and
Social Sciences,
Zayed University,
Abu Dhabi

Russia-Gulf Relations: Beyond Pipelines and Tankers

Russia's relations with the Gulf have been an under-studied topic. On occasions when they are analyzed, the context is often their interaction in the global oil and gas markets. While cognizant that the Gulf is not an area of vital national interest for Russia, this paper nevertheless contends that an appreciation of the diversity of Russia-Gulf relations is long overdue. The first part of the paper will analyze the significance of the Gulf for Russia's pursuit of great power status, its war on terrorism, trade and investment opportunities, and energy market interests. In the light of Russia's military intervention in Syria and the gradual withdrawal of the US as the traditional security guarantor for the region, the second part of the paper will examine the extent to which Russia seeks an expanded military role in the Gulf.

Li-Chen Sim is a specialist on contemporary Russian politics, and in particular the Russian oil industry and its impact on the country's politics, economic development and foreign policy. Her concurrent area of research centers on the political economy of energy in the Middle East. Her publications include *The Rise & Fall of Privatization in the Russian Oil Industry* (Palgrave), *Economic Diversification in Russia: Nuclear to the Rescue* (Routledge), and most recently, *External Powers and the Gulf Monarchies* (Routledge). Dr Sim is currently working on the impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative on Central Asia as well as on the politics of nuclear energy exports.



Engseng Ho

Professor, Director, Middle East Institute, NUS

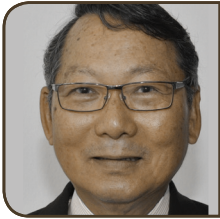
Engseng Ho is also Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Visiting Professor of Arabia Asia Studies at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. At Duke University, he is Professor of Anthropology and Professor of History. He is a leading scholar on transnational anthropology, history and Muslim societies, Arab diasporas, and the Indian Ocean. His research expertise is on Arabia, coastal South Asia and maritime Southeast Asia



Serkan Yolaçan

Research Fellow, Middle East Institute, NUS

Serkan Yolaçan Serkan Yolaçan studies mercantile and religious networks as channels of informal diplomacy across West Asia. His book project "The Azeri Triangle: Informal Diplomats across Iran, Turkey, and Russia" connects the modern histories of three major states through an ethnographic and historical study of a diasporic society and its cross-border engagements. The project reveals the Azeris' historic role in West Asian politics and parallels it to that of the Arabs in the Indian Ocean and the Chinese in Southeast Asia. Yolaçan holds a PhD in Cultural Anthropology from Duke University and an MA in Sociology and Social Anthropology from the Central European University. Prior to obtaining his doctoral degree, he worked as a projects officer at the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) in Istanbul.



Anthony Teo

Board Member, Middle East Institute, NUS

Anthony SC Teo was Lead Independent Director of SGX-Listed Innovalues Limited till its \$350 million buy-out. He was also the founding Independent Director of Greenship Holdings Limited a subsidiary of global Jaccar Holdings of Paris whose business is strategically positioned in custom-built gas carriers with state-of-the-art economic green features serving amongst others, SABIC of Saudi Arabia. He did business earlier in 1980s in Jeddah and was a banking advisor with Gulf International Bank BSC in Bahrain.

Additionally, Mr Teo is a graduate of the Harvard Business School and has always been active in academia. He was Secretary to the University at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and concurrently an exofficio member of the Senate and a member of the University Cabinet. In 2006, he worked with the NTU president and provost to corporatise and reposition the university. He has received various notable awards and fellowships including the Chevalier of the French Order of the Palmes Académiques in 2010; Visiting Fellow at Wolfson College, Cambridge University in 2009; and NTU's Pioneer Educator Medal Award in 2015. Currently in semi-retirement, Mr Teo is also Adjunct Professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore; at the Business School & SR Nathan School of Human Development at Singapore University of Social Sciences; and Convenor and Editor of the Univer-Cities Conference and Proceedings (Volume I-III) since 2013.



Michelle Teo


Deputy Director, Middle East Institute, NUS

Michelle Teo has more than 20 years' experience in both the government and private sectors. Her career has spanned international relations, corporate and digital communications, and the globe. Michelle's career with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken her to Europe, Australia and the Middle East. She then joined IBM, first as Communication Leader with IBM Singapore and later with IBM ASEAN.

NOTES

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