

THE NEW MIDDLE EAST AND THE RETURN OF GREAT POWER COMPETITION

31 MAY 2023

ORCHARD HOTEL BALLROOM 1, LEVEL 3
442 ORCHARD ROAD SINGAPORE 238879

Conference Statement

In the past year, the world returned in earnest to the logic of great power competition. That competition is taking place between the US, China, and Russia, and though it focuses today on two hotspots – Ukraine in Europe, and Taiwan in East Asia – the policies of Washington, Beijing, and Moscow have ramifications in all other regions of the world, including the Middle East.

But the return of great power competition after the post-Cold War lull does not mean that regions like the Middle East or South-east Asia are solely defined by that global phenomenon. In the past decade, the rise of the US-China rivalry coincided with the growing ambitions of Middle Eastern powers – Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE – to dictate the terms of their own foreign policies.

When considering Russia's invasion of Ukraine or China's forays in the Middle East, the traditional partners of Washington in Riyadh, Tel Aviv, or Abu Dhabi opted for calculated ambiguity, rather than full endorsement of the West's position. In other words, Middle East states are seeking more and more not to align themselves along the lines of great power competition, but rather want to use the competition for leverage to further their interests.

The conjunction of this return to great power competition at the global level with the rising ambitions of Middle East states at the regional one has consequences in all the sectors of international affairs: From the Iranian nuclear issue to the disruption of energy markets; or from the revision of regional security arrangements to the emergence of a new nexus between the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific region.

Taking stock of these ongoing trends, this year's MEI annual conference will unpack them and analyse the future outlook of the Middle East and its implications for Singapore.

Conference Schedule

Wednesday, 31 May 2023

9.30AM

CONFERENCE OPENS

Welcome Remarks

Mr Bilahari Kausikan

Chairman, Middle East Institute, NUS

In Conversation

Mr K Shanmugam, Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law with **Mr Bilahari Kausikan**, Chairman, Middle East Institute, NUS

10.15AM

PANEL 1: THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE SHADOW OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Ambassador Martin Indyk

Lowy Distinguished Fellow, US Middle East Diplomacy at the Council on Foreign Relations

Dr Nikolay Kozhanov

Research Associate Professor, Gulf Studies Center, Qatar University

His Excellency Nickolay Mladenov

Director-General, Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy

Question and Answer Session

Moderated by: **Dr Jean-Loup Samaan**

Senior Research Fellow, Middle East Institute, NUS

Conference Schedule

Wednesday, 31 May 2023

11.45AM

TEA BREAK

12.00PM

**PANEL 2: THE NEW MIDDLE EAST SECURITY
ARCHITECTURE: A MIRAGE?**

Mr Shyam Saran

President, India International Centre and former Foreign Secretary of India

Dr Ebtesam Al-Ketbi

President and Founder, Emirates Policy Center

Professor Wang Zhen

Research Professor & Programme Director of International Relations, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS)

Mr Michael Singh

Managing Director and Senior Fellow, Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Question and Answer Session

Moderated by: **Tan Sri Rastam**

Former Secretary-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia

Conference Schedule

Wednesday, 31 May 2023

1.30PM ● **LUNCH BREAK**

2.15PM ● **PANEL 3: BETWEEN A NEW OIL BOOM AND CLIMATE CHANGE NECESSITIES**

Ms Xiaowei Liu

Director, Special Projects Asia, World Energy Council

Dr Adnan Shihab-Eldin

Senior Visiting Research Fellow, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies

Mr Tan Chin Hwee

CEO Asia Pacific, Trafigura Group Pte Ltd

Question and Answer Session

Moderated by: **Mr Lee Tzu Yang**

Chairman, Public Service Commission

3.45PM ● **TEA BREAK**

Conference Schedule

Wednesday, 31 May 2023

4.00PM

CLOSING SESSION: THE YEAR AHEAD IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Lieutenant-General (Retired) Sir Tom Beckett KCB CBE
Executive Director, Middle East Office, International Institute
for Strategic Studies

Ambassador Yuval Rotem

Former Director-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel

Mr Akitaka Saiki

Former Vice-Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
President, Middle East Research Institute of Japan

Question and Answer Session

Moderated by: **Mr Bilahari Kausikan**
Chairman, Middle East Institute, NUS

5.30PM

SESSION ENDS

In Conversation with Mr K Shanmugam



Mr K Shanmugam

Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law

Mr K Shanmugam was admitted to the Singapore Bar as an advocate and solicitor in 1985 and went into private practice. He became one of the senior partners and head of litigation and dispute resolution at Allen & Gledhill LLP. In 1998, he was appointed a Senior Counsel of the Supreme Court of Singapore at the age of 38, one of the youngest lawyers to be so appointed.

Mr Shanmugam had a successful practice and was consistently recognised in international publications as one of the top litigation, arbitration, and insolvency counsel in Singapore and Asia. He has also acted for senior government leaders in Singapore.

Prior to accepting public office, Mr Shanmugam served in various committees and boards, including the Advisory Board of the Faculty of Law; the Raffles Institution Board of Governors; the Media Development Authority, and Sembawang Corporation Industries Ltd (a company listed on the Singapore Exchange). He was also president of the Singapore Indian Development Association (Sinda) from 2002 to 2009.

In 2008, he was appointed a Cabinet Minister. He is now the Minister for Home Affairs and the Minister for Law.

Panel One: The Middle East in the Shadow of the War in Ukraine

The first panel of the discussion will evaluate the impact of the war in Ukraine on the Middle East. Specifically, the speakers will review topics such as Israeli and Gulf policies towards the conflict, and the ramifications of Russia's war economy on Moscow's presence in the region. The panel will also examine whether Ukraine could serve as a turning point in US disengagement from the Middle East and discuss the possibility of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East in light of the war and the ongoing Iranian nuclear crisis. As other countries around the world reconsider nuclear weapons as a means of self-defence, this is a critical issue to explore in the context of the Middle East.

Speaker



Ambassador Martin Indyk

Lowy Distinguished Fellow

US-Middle East Diplomacy at the Council on Foreign Relations

Martin S. Indyk is currently the Lowy Distinguished Fellow in US-Middle East Diplomacy at the Council on Foreign Relations. Previously, he served as executive vice-president of the Brookings Institution, and prior to that as the vice-president and director of the Foreign Policy Program at Brookings, and is the founder of its Center for Middle East Policy. He was also the founding executive director of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Ambassador Indyk entered government service in 1993 as Special Assistant to President Bill Clinton, and senior director for Near East and South Asian Affairs at the National Security Council. He served as US ambassador to Israel from 1995 to 1997, and again from 2000 to 2001. In between, he served as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. In July 2013, President Barack Obama appointed him as the US Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, a position he held until July 2014.

He is the author of *Master of the Game: Henry Kissinger and the Art of Middle East Diplomacy* (A.A. Knopf, 2021) and *Innocent Abroad: An Intimate Account of American Peace Diplomacy in the Middle East* (Simon and Schuster, 2009). He also co-authored *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*, with Michael O'Hanlon and Kenneth Lieberthal (Brookings Institution Press, 2012).

Speaker



Dr Nikolay Kozhanov

**Research Associate Professor
Gulf Studies Center, Qatar University**

Nikolay Kozhanov is a research associate professor at the Gulf Studies Center of Qatar University. His research interests include the geopolitics of the Gulf hydrocarbons, and Russian foreign policy in the Middle East, as well as Iran's economy and international relations.

Dr Kozhanov has his PhD in economics from St Petersburg State University, and holds an MA degree in Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Exeter.

Speaker



His Excellency Nickolay Mladenov

Director-General

Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy

His Excellency Nickolay Mladenov has been director-general of the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy (AGDA) since February 2022. Since September 2021, he has also served as the director of the Research and Analysis Department, where he oversees the projects that contribute to domestic and international debates on issues relevant to the UAE's foreign policy and diplomacy.

With a career spanning over 20 years in Middle East and European politics, he served as the UN Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Envoy to the Middle East Quartet between 2015 and 2020. He focused on preventive diplomacy, led efforts of the Quartet on the Middle East in issuing a report on concrete steps to help preserve the possibility of a two-state solution, and supported emerging Arab-Israeli ties.

In 2013, he was appointed as United Nations Special Representative for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon. His role involved brokering agreements, including on oil revenue sharing between Baghdad and Erbil, and helping the country form a national unity government in the aftermath of ISIL's takeover of Mosul.

For more than a decade, Mr Mladenov was active in Bulgarian politics, both in government and opposition. He served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2010 to 2013 and as Minister of Defence from 2009 to 2010. In both positions, he dealt with a multitude of international crises, and promoted landmark reform legislation.

His Excellency was also a Member of the European Parliament from 2007 to 2009, where he worked on key consumer protection and internal market dossiers and on increasing the transparency of Europe's defence market. He also led the EU Election Observation Mission to Ghana for the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2008.

Mr Mladenov was educated at King's College London, where he obtained an MA in War Studies. Prior to that, he graduated from the University of National and World Economy in Sofia, where he majored in International Relations.

Moderator



Dr Jean-Loup Samaan

**Senior Research Fellow
Middle East Institute, NUS**

Dr Jean-Loup Samaan is a Senior Research Fellow specialising in Middle East strategic affairs, with a particular focus on the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, and the evolution of the Gulf security system. Prior to joining MEI, he held various positions in the policy sector. He worked as a visiting scholar with the Rand Corporation (2007-2008) and as an adviser at the Directorate for Strategic Affairs of the French Ministry of Defence (2008-2011).

He then gained extensive experience in the domain of military education and training, first as a deputy director for the Middle East Faculty of the Nato Defense College (2011-2016) and as an associate professor in strategic studies with the UAE National Defense College (2016-2021).

Panel Two: The New Middle East Security Architecture: A Mirage?

The second panel will explore the prospects for a new security architecture in the Middle East. In recent years, the region has undergone significant, and often conflicting, changes. While the US-China competition in the region has intensified, the local rivalry between two blocs - one led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and the other by Qatar and Turkey - has diminished, at least for the time being. This era of de-escalation and reconciliation among regional powers has been felt throughout the Gulf and the Levant, resulting in an unprecedented wave of normalisation agreements between Israel and Arab states such as the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan. Gulf states have also engaged with Iran to restore diplomatic ties and prevent clashes, particularly in war-torn Yemen. This phase of Middle East diplomacy has spurred new initiatives that increasingly link the region with other parts of the world, notably the Indo-Pacific. Minilateral groupings such as I2U2 and the trilateral dialogue between the UAE, India, and France reflect this trend. The crucial question is whether all of these developments are sustainable and can contribute to a more stable Middle East.

Speaker



Mr Shyam Saran

President

India International Centre and Former Foreign Secretary of India

Shyam Saran was a former Foreign Secretary of India, and has served as Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Nuclear Affairs and Climate Change. After leaving government service in 2010, he headed the Research and Information System for Developing Countries, a prestigious think-tank focusing on economic issues (2011-2017), and was Chairman of the National Security Advisory Board under the National Security Council from 2013 to 2015. He is currently the president of the India International Centre, and a honorary senior fellow with the Centre for Policy Research. His book, "How India Sees the World", was published in September 2017. He has published a second book, "How China Sees India and the World".

On 26 January 2011, he was awarded the Padma Bhushan by the President of India for his contributions to the civil service. The Padma Bhushan is the third-highest national award in the country.

The Emperor of Japan decorated him with the Spring Order, Gold and Silver Star, on 30 July 2019, for his services in promoting India-Japan Relations.

Speaker



Dr Ebtessam Al-Ketbi

**President and Founder
Emirates Policy Center**

Dr Ebtessam Al-Ketbi is the founder and president of the Emirates Policy Center (EPC), one of the most influential think-tanks in the Arab world. She is a professor of political science at the United Arab Emirates University. In 2015, Dr Al-Ketbi was appointed Consultative Commission Member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

In July 2018, the *Arabian Business* magazine listed her among the 50 Most Influential Women in the Arab world. In 2019, Dr Al-Ketbi received the Women Super Achiever Award during the World Women Leadership Congress. In 2021, she was named Adviser to the Global Commission for Post-Pandemic Policy. In January 2023, she was named an Advisory Board Member of T20 International.

She is currently a member of the board of directors of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, the Global Advisory Board of the Observer Research Foundation in India, the Advisory Council of the Middle East Institute in Washington, and the International Advisory Board of the Italian Med-Or Foundation.

Dr Al-Ketbi has published three books: *The UAE Power Building Model: Mohamed bin Zayed's Vision* (2022), *The UAE Power-Building Model and Foreign Policy Shifts* (2021), and *Iran and the Biden Administration: A Potential Return to Negotiations* (2021).

Speaker



Professor Wang Zhen

**Research Professor & Programme Director of International Relations
Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS)**

Dr Wang Zhen is a research professor and programme director of International Relations at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS), and deputy dean of the Center for Jewish Studies in Shanghai (CJSS).

He received his PhD in international politics from Shanghai International Studies University (SISU), and conducted research as a visitor at Tel Aviv University in Israel, the Woodrow Wilson Center, and Harvard Yenching Institute (HYI) in the United States.

He has authored several publications, including *Nuclear Diplomacy of a Superpower: A Study of US Nuclear Non-proliferation Policy Toward Israel, India, and China's Taiwan* (Beijing, 2013), and *A New Theory on the Global Counter-terror War* (Beijing, 2018), and was chief editor of *Country Studies of BRI: Israel* (Beijing, 2021).

Speaker



Mr Michael Singh

**Managing Director and Senior Fellow
Washington Institute for Near East Policy**

Michael Singh is managing director and senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and interim director of the Institute's Glazer Program on Great Power Competition and the Middle East. Mr Singh is also a Senate-confirmed member of the board of directors of the United States Institute of Peace. He was senior director for Middle East Affairs at the White House from 2007-2008, and a director on the NSC staff from 2005-2007. Earlier, he served as Special Assistant to Secretaries of State Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, and at the US Embassy in Tel Aviv. Mr Singh co-chaired the Congressionally-appointed Syria Study Group, and served on the Congressional Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States. In addition, he co-chaired Mitt Romney's State Department transition team in 2012, and served as Middle East Adviser to the Romney campaign. Mr Singh has been an adjunct fellow at the Belfer Center at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and an economics instructor at Harvard College. He earned his Bachelor's degree in economics summa cum laude from Princeton University and an MBA with high distinction (Baker Scholar) from Harvard Business School.

Moderator



Tan Sri Rastam

Former Secretary-General
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia

Tan Sri Rastam Mohd Isa is a retired senior diplomat who served as Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia from 8 January 2006 to 2 September 2010. He held various posts in the ministry, and at Malaysian diplomatic missions abroad, including as High Commissioner to Pakistan (1994-1996), Ambassador to Bosnia Herzegovina (1996-1998), Ambassador to the Republic of Indonesia (1999-2003), and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York (2003-2005). As the Permanent Representative, he also headed the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Coordinating Bureau at the United Nations.

Tan Sri Rastam was Asean SOM leader for Malaysia in 2006-2010, He participated in numerous ASEAN Summits and ministerial and senior officials' meetings throughout his career. He also led Malaysian delegations in a number of international meetings and conferences, bilateral negotiations, and inter-foreign ministry meetings. Upon retirement from the civil service, he was appointed Special Envoy of the Government of Malaysia to Brunei Darussalam. He also served as Adviser at the Chief Minister's Department, Sarawak, from November 2010 to December 2013.

Tan Sri Rastam was appointed chief executive of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia, a leading Malaysian think-tank, in January 2014. He later became the co-chair of the Council for Security Cooperation and chief executive of ISIS from January 2015 to January 2020. He was elected as co-chair of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) in 2015-2017, and chair of ASEAN-ISIS in 2016-2018. He was chairman of Malaysian CSCAP and MANCPEC, the Malaysian chapter of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), from 2014 to 2020. He was appointed as a member of the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) in 2016-2019, and was an adjunct professor at the Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Laws, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) (2021-2022). He is presently a member of the Executive Committee of the Malaysia-Japan Economic Association (MAJECA).

Tan Sri Rastam has participated in numerous diplomatic, security, economic and business meetings, conferences, seminars and fora in Malaysia, ASEAN, and around the world, including in China, India, and the United States.

Panel Three: Between a New Oil Boom and Climate Change Necessities

The third panel of this discussion will focus on the dynamic energy landscape in the Middle East. Against the backdrop of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the resulting global energy crisis, countries around the world are re-evaluating their consumption patterns and turning to Gulf states as an alternative to Russia's gas supplies. However, Saudi Arabia and other OPEC+ producers have prioritised their own interests, as demonstrated by their recent decision to reduce daily production. This energy crisis has emerged alongside pressing concerns regarding climate change, which have thrust the Middle East into the global spotlight, with Egypt and the UAE hosting COP 27 and 28. The rise in oil prices, and mounting pressure to address climate change, raise questions about the feasibility of economic diversification plans in the Arabian Peninsula.

Speaker



Ms Xiaowei Liu

Director, Special Projects Asia, World Energy Council

Ms Liu joined the World Energy Council on 1 April 2022, as Director, Special Projects, Asia, with the responsibility to build the visibility of the Council and seek commercial opportunities for it across Asia.

Prior to this, she worked for Shell for over 26 years, serving in various elective roles in China, UK, Netherlands, and most recently, in Singapore as the regional vice-president for External Relations, Asia-Pacific, till July 2021.

Currently, she also works for the Conference Board (a US think-tank) as its programme director for the Asia Communications Lead Council; and also serves as a board member of the Marketing Society Singapore, and on the Advisory Board of GGEF, a social enterprise promoting sustainability.

Ms Liu has a Bachelor's degree in art and social science from Beijing Foreign Studies University, China, and a Master's degree in political economy from the London School of Economics and Political Science, UK.

Speaker



Dr Adnan Shihab-Eldin

Senior Visiting Research Fellow, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies

Dr Adnan Shihab-Eldin, is a Senior Visiting Research Fellow, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies (UK), a member of the Board of Sponsors of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, and a board member of the Kearney Energy Transition Institute, (Netherlands).

He was director-general and a board member of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (retired). He served as OPEC's Acting Secretary-General and Director of Research and held senior director positions at the IAEA and UNESCO. He earlier served in Kuwait as director-general of the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs at Kuwait University. He continues to teach as adjunct professor at Vienna Business University, and was a visiting scholar at Harvard University and the University of California, Berkeley.

Dr Shihab-Eldin serves on the board of directors and advisory councils of many regional and international academic and research institutions and organisations, including the American University of Beirut, and Georgetown University - Qatar.

He earned his degrees from the University of California, Berkeley, and has received many prestigious international awards and prizes, including the 2018 Haas Award from UC Berkeley, the 2022 Spirit of Salam Award from the ICTP (Trieste, Italy), and the 2023 Award for outstanding contributions to the profession of energy economics from the IAEE.

Speaker



Mr Tan Chin Hwee

CEO Asia Pacific
Trafigura Group Pte Ltd

Chin Hwee joined Trafigura in 2016 as CEO, Asia Pacific for the group. Prior to joining Trafigura, he was most recently the founder of the Asian operations of alternative investment firm Apollo Global Management, and before that, managing director at hedge fund Amaranth Advisors.

He is a certified accountant (CA) and a chartered financial analyst (CFA) and also holds post-graduate qualifications from Yale University and Harvard University. Chin Hwee was a Young Leader in the World Cities Summit 2014, and one of the Young Global Leaders in the World Economic Forum. He was awarded the Distinguished Financial Industry Certified Professional (FICP) Award in 2013 by the Monetary Authority of Singapore. In 2015, he received the World Outstanding Young Chinese Entrepreneurs Award from business newspaper Yazhou Zhoukan and the World Federation of Chinese Entrepreneurs Organization.

In May 2020, Chin Hwee was appointed to join the Emerging Stronger Taskforce set up under Singapore's Future Economy Council, and in November 2021, was appointed chairman of SGTraDex, a digital infrastructure that facilitates trusted and secure sharing of data between supply chain ecosystem partners. He is a member of the advisory panel for the Monetary Authority of Singapore and the Singapore Maritime Port Authority. He also sits on the boards of Nanyang Technology University and Hwa Chong Institution. He has also been a trustee of the SingHealth endowment fund, and was also a board and advisory member of a number of organisations, including Nayara Energy Ltd, India.

Moderator



Mr Lee Tzu Yang

Chairman, Public Service Commission

Mr Lee Tzu Yang served as chairman of the Management Board of the Middle East Institute at the National University of Singapore from its establishment in 2007 till 2017.

He has been Chairman of the Public Service Commission since 2018, and, concurrently, Vice-President of both the Judicial and Legal Service Commissions from 2022. He chairs the boards of The Esplanade Company Limited, and the Singapore University of Technology and Design. He also chairs the World Cities Summit Science of Cities Knowledge Council.

Mr Lee retired in 2014 as chairman of Shell Companies in Singapore after serving in operational, commercial and strategy functions in a range of markets and countries. He graduated from the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1976, and was recognised by the Institution of Chemical Engineers as an Honorary Fellow in 2016.

He was awarded the Bintang Bakti Masyarakat (Public Service Star) in 2005, the Pingat Jasa Gemilang (Meritorious Service Medal) in 2014, and the Darjah Utama Bakti Cemerlang (Distinguished Service Order) in 2022.

Closing Session: The Year Ahead in the Middle East

Speaker



Lieutenant-General (Retired)

Sir Thomas Beckett KCB CBE

Executive Director, Middle East Office

International Institute for Strategic Studies

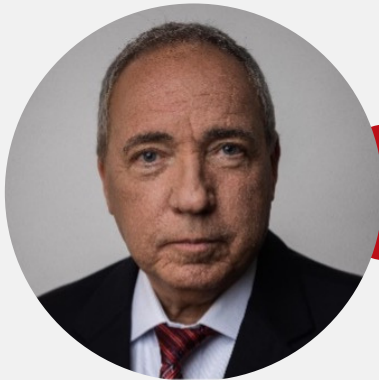
Sir Tom Beckett joined the International Institute for Strategic Studies as the executive director of the Middle East Office in May 2018. He took up the position after a 34-year career in the British Army.

Commissioned into the Queen's Royal Irish Hussars in 1984, he transferred to the Parachute Regiment in 2001. His commands included a parachute battalion, an armoured brigade, and deputy-command of a deployable Corps Headquarters. His notable staff appointments included Deputy Director of the UK's Higher Command and Staff Course, a senior intelligence appointment in the Headquarters Multi-National Forces – Iraq, Director Commitments UK Land Forces, and Chief of Staff of the ISAF Joint Command. His operational experience includes Northern Ireland, Kuwait, Sierra Leone, Iraq and Afghanistan. He attended the Army Staff College at Camberley, and the Higher Command and Staff Course at Shrivenham. He has a MA (Military Studies) and a MSc (Global Security). He is a recipient of the US Legion of Merit and was appointed as a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2010, and as a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath in 2018.

His final appointment in HM Government (2015 to 2018) was as Defence Senior Adviser to the Middle East and North Africa (DSAME), when he was also the Prime Minister's Security Envoy to Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region.

As the executive director of the IISS-Middle East office, Sir Tom plays a leading role in organising the annual IISS Manama Dialogue, as well as lectures and roundtables in the IISS–Middle East office. He contributes to the institute's research on the Middle East and North Africa, and his areas of expertise are the Middle East and North Africa, defence policy and planning, military operations, and the contemporary operating environment.

Speaker



Ambassador Yuval Rotem

Former Director-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel

A 35-year veteran of Israel's diplomatic corps, Yuval Rotem served as the former Director-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, where he oversaw all of the ministry's diplomatic activities, implementation of the government's foreign policy, and its public diplomacy efforts, until July 2020. He was appointed by Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in October 2016.

He previously served as the Senior Deputy Director-General heading the Ministry's Public Diplomacy Division, where he successfully utilised innovative and cutting-edge technologies, including proprietary algorithmic ones developed in-house.

Mr Rotem served as Israel's ambassador to Australia between 2007-2013, and non-resident Ambassador to Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and New Zealand; and was responsible for strengthening relations between the countries on issues of trade, security, technology, and culture. He previously served as Consul General of Israel in Los Angeles, California, between 1999-2004.

He holds a BA and MA in Political Science and International Relations with distinction from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and currently serves as non-executive director (International Relations) at Precision Group of Companies.

Speaker



Mr Akitaka Saiki

**Former Vice Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
President, Middle East Research Institute of Japan**

Ambassador Akitaka Saiki was Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs between 2013 and 2016, and has been president of the Middle East Institute of Japan (MEIJ) since 2017. He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after graduating from the University of Tokyo in 1976, and has held numerous important positions, including Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Japan in the United States of America (2006), Director-General, Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau (2008), Ambassador to the Republic of India, concurrently to the Kingdom of Bhutan (2011), and Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs (2012).

In 2013, he was appointed Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs. He retired from the foreign service in June 2016. Since 2017, Mr Saiki has served as an independent director and member of the board at Mitsubishi Corporation.

Moderator



Mr Bilahari Kausikan

Chairman, Middle East Institute, NUS

Bilahari Kausikan is chairman of the Middle East Institute (NUS). He spent his entire career in Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

During his 37 years in the ministry, he served in a variety of appointments at home and abroad, including as Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, and Permanent Secretary. Mr Kausikan studied at the Raffles Institution, the University of Singapore, and Columbia University in New York.

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