THIS ISSUE: ENVIRONMENT

- Water resources in the Middle East
- Wars, depleted uranium and soil pollution
- Iran’s looming water crisis
- Cultural heritage and the environment
- Can desalination provide a sustainable source of water?
- The Nile Basin and hydrosolidarity
- Nanotechnology
- PLUS Reviews and events in London
About the London Middle East Institute (LMEI)

The London Middle East Institute (LMEI) draws upon the resources of London and SOAS to provide teaching, training, research, publication, consultancy, outreach and other services related to the Middle East. It serves as a neutral forum for Middle East studies broadly defined and helps to create links between individuals and institutions with academic, commercial, diplomatic, media or other specialisations.

With its own professional staff of Middle East experts, the LMEI is further strengthened by its academic membership – the largest concentration of Middle East expertise in any institution in Europe. The LMEI also has access to the SOAS Library, which houses over 150,000 volumes dealing with all aspects of the Middle East. LMEI's Advisory Council is the driving force behind the Institute's fundraising programme, for which it takes primary responsibility. It seeks support for the LMEI generally and for specific components of its programme of activities.

Mission Statement:

The aim of the LMEI, through education and research, is to promote knowledge of all aspects of the Middle East including its complexities, problems, achievements and assets, both among the general public and with those who have a special interest in the region. In this task it builds on two essential assets. First, it is based in London, a city which has unrivalled contemporary and historical connections and communications with the Middle East including political, social, cultural, commercial and educational aspects. Secondly, the LMEI is at SOAS, the only tertiary educational institution in the world whose explicit purpose is to provide education and scholarship on the whole Middle East from prehistory until today.

LMEI Staff:

Director Dr Hassan Hakimian
Executive Officer Louise Hosking
Events and Magazine Coordinator Vincenzo Paci
Administrative Assistant Valentina Zanardi

Disclaimer:

Opinions and views expressed in the Middle East in London are, unless otherwise stated, personal views of authors and do not reflect the views of their organisations nor those of the LMEI and the MEL’s Editorial Board. Although all advertising in the magazine is carefully vetted prior to publication, the LMEI does not accept responsibility for the accuracy of claims made by advertisers.

Letters to the Editor:

Please send your letters to the editor at the LMEI address provided (see left panel) or email lmei@soas.ac.uk

Subscriptions:

To subscribe to The Middle East in London, please visit: www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/affiliation/
Contents

4  EDITORIAL

5  INSIGHT
Water resources in the Middle East: scarce, emotional, politicised and misunderstood
Tony Allan

9  ENVIRONMENT
Wars, depleted uranium and soil pollution
Hamid Pouran

11  Culture and the environment
John Curtis

13  Can desalination provide a sustainable source of water?
Hassan Arafat

15  The Nile Basin and hydrosolidarity
Karin Aggestam, Dan-Erik Andersson, Ronny Berndtsson and Kaveh Madani

17  Nanotechnology is a big risk if decision-makers think small
Hamid Pouran

19  REVIEWS
BOOKS
Understanding the Political Economy of the Arab Uprisings
Hassan Hakimian

20  The Hizbullah Phenomenon: Politics and Communication
Seyed Ali Alavi

21  Gaza: A History
Atef Alshaer

22  BOOKS IN BRIEF

24  EVENTS IN LONDON
EDITORIAL

A thick dust plume over Kuwait and the north-western tip of the Persian Gulf. The plume, some 100 kilometres in width, extends from Saudi Arabia across eastern Kuwait and into Iran, where the dust appears to mingle with clouds. NASA image created by the MODIS Rapid Response Team © Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain

The countries of the Middle East suffer from major environmental problems. Although mismanagement and a disappointing track record of implementing the correct policies contribute to their environmental issues, other factors too worsen the region's environmental status: namely their arid and semi-arid climates and military conflict.

This is the first issue produced by The Middle East in London dedicated solely to the environmental concerns of the region. The articles here provide a tangible image of the major environmental problems that these countries are facing: from the scarcity of water in the region to pollution to the impact the environment has on cultural heritage to the negative environmental effects of emerging technologies.

Particularly salient – and dominant within this issue – is the matter of water.

Tony Allan, who has coined the concept of 'virtual water', explains in Insight the current status and expected future of the availability of water resources in the region. He differentiates between food-water and non-food water needs and tells us how this may impact the food import policies of Middle Eastern countries.

In my piece, I describe how military conflicts in the Middle East have caused irreparable damages to environmental quality. Soil pollution by depleted uranium (DU) and oil and their long-term impacts on the ecosystem are highlighted. Iran's emerging water crisis is the focus of Kaveh Madani's article. He examines major drivers that are pushing Iran's water resources towards the edge and suggests some strategies that may help mitigate the issues.

Hassan Arafat's piece sheds light on concerns about the sustainability of water supplies in the rapidly urbanising GCC countries, with particular focus on the UAE. He informs us that purifying seawater to feed the population, apart from its economic costs, can have a large negative impact on the ecosystem. The Nile

River Basin and competition to access its invaluable water supply in North Africa is the subject of Karin Aggestam, Dan-Erik Andersson, Ronny Berndtsson and Kaveh Madani's article. They talk about how securing a large share of the Nile has caused tension among the 11 countries that use its water and explain why cooperation between them is a necessity. In another article I consider the GCC countries' thirst to import nanomaterial incorporated high-tech products. While nanotechnology has started to become commercialised and a number of relevant products are available, their environmental impacts and health and safety aspects are not yet clear. I suggest how to avoid introducing new contaminant agents into the environment that might have severe unknown consequences.

For the magazine this issue is the first, small step towards a long journey which considers a subject that not only affects the environmental quality and the health and well-being of the region's people, but also potentially affects the security of the region and its long-term stability.

Hamid Pouran, IHF Visiting Fellow in Iran's Environmental Sustainability

Dear Reader

Hamid Pouran, IHF Visiting Fellow in Iran's Environmental Sustainability

The countries of the Middle East suffer from major environmental problems. Although mismanagement and a disappointing track record of implementing the correct policies contribute to their environmental issues, other factors too worsen the region's environmental status: namely their arid and semi-arid climates and military conflict.

This is the first issue produced by The Middle East in London dedicated solely to the environmental concerns of the region. The articles here provide a tangible image of the major environmental problems that these countries are facing: from the scarcity of water in the region to pollution to the impact the environment has on cultural heritage to the negative environmental effects of emerging technologies.

Particularly salient – and dominant within this issue – is the matter of water.

Tony Allan, who has coined the concept of 'virtual water', explains in Insight the current status and expected future of the availability of water resources in the region. He differentiates between food-water and non-food water needs and tells us how this may impact the food import policies of Middle Eastern countries.

In my piece, I describe how military conflicts in the Middle East have caused irreparable damages to environmental quality. Soil pollution by depleted uranium (DU) and oil and their long-term impacts on the ecosystem are highlighted. Iran's emerging water crisis is the focus of Kaveh Madani's article. He examines major drivers that are pushing Iran's water resources towards the edge and suggests some strategies that may help mitigate the issues.

Hassan Arafat's piece sheds light on concerns about the sustainability of water supplies in the rapidly urbanising GCC countries, with particular focus on the UAE. He informs us that purifying seawater to feed the population, apart from its economic costs, can have a large negative impact on the ecosystem. The Nile

River Basin and competition to access its invaluable water supply in North Africa is the subject of Karin Aggestam, Dan-Erik Andersson, Ronny Berndtsson and Kaveh Madani's article. They talk about how securing a large share of the Nile has caused tension among the 11 countries that use its water and explain why cooperation between them is a necessity. In another article I consider the GCC countries' thirst to import nanomaterial incorporated high-tech products. While nanotechnology has started to become commercialised and a number of relevant products are available, their environmental impacts and health and safety aspects are not yet clear. I suggest how to avoid introducing new contaminant agents into the environment that might have severe unknown consequences.

For the magazine this issue is the first, small step towards a long journey which considers a subject that not only affects the environmental quality and the health and well-being of the region's people, but also potentially affects the security of the region and its long-term stability.
We need water ecosystems; water ecosystems do not need us. We have become too many.

**Scarce water – food-water is very scarce but non-food water need not be scarce even in 2050**

Water is certainly scarce in the Middle East. It doesn't rain much: very rarely it rains in the summer, and the winter rains are useful but not reliable. Its water ecosystems are not water rich. Between 1950 and 1970 all the economies of the region ran out of water not because of climate change or reductions in levels of rainfall. Water scarcity was the result of the doubling of population every 25 years across the region. Some economies are having to provide water and food for populations that have increased almost tenfold between 1950 and 2010.

The Middle East has lost the battle to be food-water secure. Food-water is the water needed to raise crops and livestock. It accounts for about 90 per cent of the water needed by an individual or an economy.

We need about 5.0 cubic metres per day if we eat a lot of beef. We only need 2.5 cubic metres if we are vegetarian. Food consumers and their politicians are not yet aware enough of these metrics. Perversely, urbanised consumers in the Middle East – like those in rich OECD economies – also throw away and waste about 30 per cent of the food they purchase.

The region’s current food-water deficits have been silently and very effectively mitigated by international trade. The trade is not in water but in food. Each tonne of imported wheat needs about 1,000 tonnes (cubic metres) of water from the environment of another economy. Each

Tony Allan sheds light on water (in)security in the Middle East

Water resources in the Middle East: scarce, emotional, politicised and misunderstood

Circles of irrigated vegetation, Saudi Arabia. NASA image
A tonne of beef requires 16,000 tonnes. This ‘trade’ in virtual water since the 1950s and increasingly since the 1970s has proved to be very rational. The economies of the region have been able to protect their own water ecosystems. They have used the water environments of the US, Australia, Brazil, Argentina and Europe and recently those of Russia and the Ukraine. Virtual water ‘trade’ was environmentally rational. It was also an economic no-brainer. The US and the European Union have been driving down the price of traded food staples since the 1950s. Traded staple food commodity prices have been running at half production costs. This half cost food has mitigated two major strategic regional insecurities – water and food.

Other numbers are important. Non-food water – that is the water we drink, use at home and for our jobs – only accounts for about 10 per cent of the water we consume. 150 litres per day is a widely used estimate. The region’s water ecosystems will always have enough water to meet non-food water needs. There are three reasons. First, by 2050 when the region’s population will be about 600 million it will need about 600 cubic kilometres of food-water annually. It will only have about 200. The rest will have to come from outside the region. The food-water battle has been lost. But the non-food water needed will only be about 60 cubic kilometres annually. The region’s economies can provide this volume from its water endowments. Some economies will, however, find it more difficult than others. Secondly, recently developed water recycling technologies are beginning to enable the affordable re-use of urban and industrial water. 50 per cent recovery rates will be feasible and higher levels seem possible. Thirdly, most of the population of the region live near the sea or a major river. Since 2000 the costs of desalinated water have been driven down to about $US 60 cents per cubic metre. If desalination could be based on clean energy – that is energy generated by solar or wind power – non-food water would be doubly secure. Researching and developing these technologies is a high priority in the region and very significant environmentally.

Emotional and easily politicised

Water scarcity is not well understood by those who use water to raise crops and livestock, by those who drink water and especially by those who have to make water related environmental policies. Water itself is also very emotional. It has an iconic place in all the religions of the region. It is, as a consequence, very easily politicised. This is especially the case if people believe that their water and food security depend on having sovereignty over sufficient water for both their food and their non-food needs.

That water insecurity and food insecurity are so very tightly linked increases the emotional temperature of any discourse on the topic. Food is even more emotional than water and volatile food prices are a nightmare for any politician who has to ensure that cheap food is available for poor urban communities. Food price spikes make for very frightening politics.

Misunderstood

The main water resource delusion relates to the nature of the region’s water scarcity. The region is not non-food water insecure. It is very food-water insecure. To be self-sufficient in food and water the economies of the Middle East currently need water ecosystems that could provide about 30 per cent more water. They will need about three times the region’s water endowment when the population doubles by about 2050. If the water environments of the region are to be protected the region’s political economies will have to continue with three policies that have served them well for the past half-century. First, they will have to ‘import’ virtual water and the water ecosystems from other countries. Secondly they will have to accelerate the adoption of recycling non-food water and desalination, preferably with clean energy. Thirdly and most importantly, they will have to accelerate the diversification of their economies so that they can afford the importation of virtual food-water. They will also have to address the impacts of climate change which will reduce the availability of water. The region will remain non-food water secure.

Finally, it will also have to address food-water insecurity with the policies that have successfully addressed the problem for 50 years – virtual water ‘imports’ and economic diversification.

Tony Allan is Emeritus Professor at KCL and SOAS

© High Contrast, Wikimedia Commons

Water trucks, like the one pictured here in Jordan, are an important source of drinking water for areas of the Middle East
Hamid Pouran examines the environmental impact of military conflicts, focusing particularly on sources of soil pollution

Wars, depleted uranium and oil pollution

Air, water and soil are the key components of any ecosystem. Introducing contaminants into any one of these environmental compartments adversely affects the whole system, a phenomenon known as environmental pollution. However, while all these three key components are important and interconnected, the long-term sustainability of any ecosystem relies on soil. In the Middle East too, soil pollution is a major problem which jeopardises the region’s environmental health and sustainability.

Soil regulates the availability of life-sustaining resources, from vegetation to groundwater tables, and provides an environment in which humans can thrive. Soil – a porous medium that is made of extremely complex mineralogical compositions, organic matter, water and oxygen – is the bedrock of terrestrial life. Plants growing in contaminated soil accumulate toxic chemicals. Subsequently, all of their consumers, including humans, are affected. Polluted soil might also infect available water resources as its contaminants leach into the ground water or air through dust storms or particle suspension.

Soil pollution is a global challenge. A report by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggests that, based on current regulations, an estimated 350,000 contaminated sites exist in the US and will require remediation (clean up) by about 2035. The estimated costs are as high as $250 billion.

In the Middle East, soil pollution mainly stems from the region’s drive to establish new industries, in particular those that are related to the petroleum industry (such as petrochemicals and chemicals). Accidental oil spills, intensive farming, landfill and illegal dumping, pesticides and buried wastes are among the major causes. However, the region’s geopolitical importance is also a significant contributor and exacerbates this problem. The consequences of military conflicts – in particular depleted uranium and oil pollution – are important examples and should not be discounted.

Depleted uranium (DU), a by-product of uranium enrichments, is 1.7 times denser than lead and can penetrate heavily

In Fallujah (Iraq), which saw heavy US military operations, babies born with multiple birth defects are a common phenomenon
Armoured vehicles. Allied forces used DU weapons for the first time in the 1991 Gulf War. In total it is estimated that 1,200 tonnes of DU weapons were deployed during the wars of 1991 and 2003 in Iraq. DU has the same inherent chemical properties of uranium with similar chemical toxicity behaviours. If internalised, which mainly happens through inhalation and ingestion, DU will cause adverse health effects similar to lead and cadmium. Ingestion of contaminated soil by children is a major pathway of exposure to this chemical.

Most of the deployed DU weapons are expected to remain buried in the soil, and over time their corrosion will contaminate it. DU in contaminated soil could then leach into water supplies and/or end up in the food chain via the local vegetation. This is apart from the chemically toxic dust that was created at the time of the weapon’s deployment. DU also decays over time and its disintegration products emit alpha, beta and gamma radiations that result in internal and external exposure of those who encounter DU-contaminated soil. These radiations, if absorbed (received) at any level above zero, are thought to increase risk of cancer.

Lack of public knowledge about the irreparable damage that these war remnants might cause means that locals often recycle these metals and use them as building materials, resulting in continuous exposure to their contaminants. The number of reported cancer cases in Iraq has risen from 40 per 100,000 prior to the 1991 war, to more than 1,600 per 100,000 in 2005. The trend is increasing, and, due to lack of documentation, the actual number of cancer cases could be considerably higher. In Fallujah (Iraq), which saw heavy US military operations, babies born with multiple birth defects are a common phenomenon rooted in the region’s environmental pollution. Iraq’s toxic chemical dusts – which include carcinogenic elements like uranium, lead and mercury – do not remain in one place. A sand storm or even simple airflows can move these toxic substances, sometimes thousands of miles away from their origins. Remediation of contaminated soils is possible, but it requires at least multimillion-dollar investments and may take decades. Raising public awareness to prevent people from handling these materials is the only immediately available option to minimise the damage. More importantly, countries that use DU in their munitions should consider the long-term environmental health impacts of these materials.

Petroleum pollution is another common and widespread problem in the Middle East. It occurs often mainly due to mismanagement, leakages from storage tanks and accidents. Chemicals in crude oil can have disastrous effects on soil making it unusable for years or even decades and rendering it toxic to plants and animals.

The latest example of an accidental oil spillage was near Eliat in Israel in December 2014. Thousands of gallons of crude oil spilled when a pipeline ruptured during maintenance work. But damages caused by mismanagement, though significant, are considerably less harmful than large-scale environmental pollution caused by military conflicts. In 2006 during Israel’s war with Hizbullah, the Israeli air force attacked the oil storage tanks of a power station in Lebanon. Approximately 15,000 tonnes of oil were released into the environment.

The most dramatic deliberate act of oil pollution – indeed it was one of the largest oil pollution incidents in history – occurred during the Iraq–Kuwait War in 1991 when more than 600 oil wells were set alight by Iraqi military forces. Oil lakes were formed and burned before they withdrew from Kuwait as part of Iraq’s scorched earth policy.

Compared to air and water contamination, the severity of soil pollution is usually underestimated. Nevertheless, entire ecosystems and the correct functioning of their different compartments depend on soil. Although the focus here has been on soil pollution as a result of military conflicts, unfortunately, the region also has a disappointing track record in soil pollution through waste mismanagement.

Countries that have caused irreparable damages to the region’s environment must be held accountable, and international financial and scientific support should be garnered to deal with the fallout. If the pollution stems from local and regional mismanagement or inadequate environmental policies, then these countries need to take responsibility and pay the high price of implementing tougher environmental regulations to stop the institutions that do not comply.

Hamid M. Pouran has a PhD in Environmental Engineering. He was a member of the Transatlantic Initiative for Nanotechnology and the Environment and is currently an Iran Heritage Foundation Visiting Fellow in Iran’s Environmental Sustainability at the London Middle East Institute.
Iran, once the pioneer of sustainable water management in the arid region of the world, is now experiencing a serious water crisis, reflected by its drying lakes and rivers, declining groundwater resources and deteriorating water quality. Water supply rationing and disruptions are becoming more frequent, agricultural losses are increasing and ecosystem damages are expanding. While decision-makers prefer to blame the current crisis on droughts, climate change and international sanctions, the dramatic water issues of Iran are rooted in decades of shortsighted and disintegrated planning.

The public, experts and media continuously warn about the major water crisis symptoms without seriously discussing the causes. But, what are the main drivers of Iran’s water crisis?

Crisis driver 1: population growth and spatial distribution

Iran has experienced a significant population growth in the last century. Its population almost doubled within the last two decades of the 20th century, right after the 1979 Revolution, which promoted different socio-economic, cultural and ideological changes in Iran. In addition to a sudden population growth, rapid urbanisation and inappropriate spatial population distribution are challenging Iranian water managers. The urban population is currently about 70 per cent, compared to 44 per cent in the 1970s. Eight Iranian cities have a population of greater than one million while the population in metropolitan Tehran has surpassed 14 million (18 per cent of the country’s population).

Despite the consequences of population growth policies, the government of Iran is now showing a strong interest in boosting the current population growth rate of 1.3 per cent. This interest is rooted in concerns about the projections of age distribution in the future. What is clear though is that Iran definitely lacks the required water resources and infrastructure to satisfy increased water demand. Without strong spatial population distribution adjustments and water consumption reduction measures, population growth can have catastrophic effects.

Crisis driver 2: inefficient agriculture

With an oil-based economy, Iran has always suffered from a seriously inefficient agriculture, which heavily relies on irrigation and consumes most of the country’s limited water resources. While only 15 per cent of the country’s area is cultivated, this sector is responsible for 92 per cent of the water consumption in Iran. Since the 1979 Revolution, the government has tried to be supportive of this sector to achieve food security and increase non-oil revenues. Nevertheless, the economic...
efficiency of this sector has decreased significantly. Currently, this sector provides 23 per cent of the jobs and its contribution to GDP is only about 13 per cent.

Without a comprehensive plan for the empowerment of farmers and rural communities, the populist actions of Iranian decision-makers – such as substantial subsidisation of water and energy to support the farmers – have failed to increase welfare in this sector. The significantly cheap prices have not provided any motivation for increasing production efficiency. The average irrigation efficiency is less than 35 per cent and rain-fed agriculture has remained unproductive. The crop pattern does not match the regional water availability conditions and has remained more responsive to the traditional crop choices and farming practices as well as the government-guaranteed crop purchase prices.

Crisis driver 3: mismanagement and thirst for development

Bad management is the most important driver of Iran’s water crisis. Given that the other two drivers can be also attributed to bad management within and outside the water sector, bad management can be recognised as the ‘cause of the causes’ of the water crisis. Iran has gone through significant socio-economic and political changes in the last century. The Revolution and the international pressure on Iran strengthened the thirst for development and the desire to prove independence to the world. Iranians have been more successful than most nations in the developing world in maintaining their independence and relying on national expertise under major sanctions by the West. However, rapid development and the construction of major infrastructure with minimal concern for their long-term non-economic impacts have created significant water and environmental problems that call this success into question.

It is true that serious international sanctions have slowed down development in Iran by limiting access to new technologies. But, Iran’s water crisis is not due to a lack of access to technology or technical expertise. Indeed, Iran is suffering from disintegrated decision-making and problem-solving by knowledgeable experts who act independently. One major cause of such disintegration is the water governance structure. It involves too many stakeholders and creates an undesirable hierarchy in water resources management. Water management in Iran relies on a crisis management paradigm: actions are taken only after the problems have become so serious that they can hamper further development.

What to do?

The water problems in Iran are far too many and significant to leave any doubt about the fact that Iran is experiencing a looming water crisis. Immediate mitigation is required to address the existing water problems throughout the country. There are encouraging signs that the current administration recognises water security as a national priority and is trying to address some of the more evident water problems on an urgent basis. Nevertheless, fundamental changes in the current Iranian water management paradigm are essential to prevent the development of similar problems in the future and to secure sustainable water resources for Iran.

Taking advantage of the West’s experience during and after its development peak in the 20th century, Iran must consider adopting the following ten major strategies to end the current crisis: (1) revisiting the new population growth policy, paying careful attention to the spatial distribution of population and limiting urbanisation growth; (2) modernising agriculture and empowering farmers and rural communities; (3) revising the crop pattern across the country with respect to national food security priorities as well as regional resource availability and economic efficiency conditions; (4) increasing the water and energy prices together with technological improvements to prevent socio-economic pressure on rural and farmer communities; (5) promoting and developing regional farming cooperatives and water management institutions; (6) implementing water markets and setting up environmental water accounts; (7) shifting from reactive to proactive management of the water sector; (8) optimising the distribution of water management efforts to solve the existing water problems and to prevent emerging ones; (9) reorganising the current water governance structure and empowering the Department of Environment; and finally, (10) raising environmental awareness and educating the public.

Kaveh Madani is an Environmental Management Lecturer in the Centre for Environmental Policy at the Imperial College London and an expert in water resources planning management in arid areas including the Middle East and California

Rapid development and the construction of major infrastructure with minimal concern for their long-term non-economic impacts have created significant water and environmental problems

Shushtar is an island city from the Sasanid era with a complex irrigation system
Cultural heritage and the environment

The connections between environmental degradation and damage to cultural heritage, specifically monuments and archaeological sites, may not be immediately clear, but in fact they are very real.

As highlighted by Morad Tahbaz in a recent issue of this magazine (vol 10, no 1), air pollution in Iran is at a dangerously high level, with four of the ten most polluted cities in the world being in Iran. Visitors to Tehran will be familiar with the pall of smog hanging over the city, so that nowadays Mount Damavand is rarely visible, and it is chilling to think that there are other places in Iran that are even worse. According to Tahbaz, this is a direct result of the ‘lack of refining capacity, modern fuel additives, catalytic converters and the prevalent use of antiquated fleets of buses, trucks and cars continually belching out terrifying amounts of toxic fumes’. In recent years the problem has been exacerbated by sanctions which prevent the importation of modern equipment and technologies that could help improve the situation. This high level of pollution undoubtedly has an adverse impact on historical buildings and archaeological monuments. Some of the best-known sites in Iran have been affected, including even the jewel in Iran’s crown and arguably the most impressive site in the ancient world, Persepolis.

The problem here is that there is a petrochemical refinery at Marvdasht, a little more than ten kilometres to the south-west of Persepolis, putting the ancient site right in the path of the prevailing winds from the refinery. The wind and rain coming from the direction of the refinery carry acid particles that cause damage to the limestone monuments at the site. As long ago as 2002 Dr Mohammad Hassan Talebian, now in charge of cultural heritage within the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHHTO), warned that increasing pollution in the Marvdasht Cultural heritage and the environment

The adverse effects of acid rain, sandstorms and atmospheric pollution can be clearly seen on some of the best-known rock-cut monuments in Iran

John Curtis explains how Iran’s worsening environmental crisis is damaging the country’s cultural heritage
Each time a dam is constructed it causes incalculable damage to the archaeological heritage, with many archaeological sites being submerged or washed away.

Plain, due to the growing number of new industrial projects, was having a damaging effect on Persepolis. Little or nothing has been done, however, to protect the site.

Apart from chemical pollution, sandstorms have also become a major hazard in Iran, notably in the south-west of the country. The city of Ahvaz has been particularly affected. Often these storms are whipped up in areas outside Iran, particularly in southern Iraq, where the draining of the marshes has contributed to the problem, and on the east side of the Persian Gulf, but the effect in Iran is very serious. The airborne particles of sand are very abrasive and can cause considerable damage to monuments and reliefs carved in soft stone.

The adverse effects of acid rain, sandstorms and atmospheric pollution can be clearly seen on some of the best-known rock-cut monuments in Iran, which have visibly deteriorated in the last 40 years or so. This is certainly the case with the wonderful Sassanian reliefs carved on the side of a river gorge close to the ancient city of Bishapur. The most remarkable of these shows the Sassanian emperor Shapur I (240-272 AD) triumphing over three Roman emperors. The famous rock relief at Bisitun, carved by Darius in 520-519 BC high up on a cliff overlooking the Great Khorasan Road, is also now in a perilous state, and it is to be hoped its recent nomination as a World Heritage Site will help to arrest any further decline. Some of the Sassanian reliefs at Taq-i Bustan near Kermanshah are on the sides of a grotto carved out of the rock and therefore to some extent protected, but a nearby relief showing Shapur II (309-79 AD) and Ardashir II (379-83 AD) with the god Mithra is in the open air and fully exposed to the elements. There are signs here of deterioration, but even worse is the fact that the pavement in front of the relief has been removed, allowing the waters of the artificial lake to lap up almost against the base of the relief.

Management of water resources is an area of great concern for archaeological sites. There are already more than 200 dams in operation in Iran and a further 85 are in the planning stage. Each time a dam is constructed it causes incalculable damage to the archaeological heritage, with many archaeological sites being submerged or washed away. This is a particular problem in a country such as Iran with a very rich archaeological heritage stretching back almost 10,000 years, and it is no accident that many of the more important sites are close to water courses and therefore especially vulnerable. A very high profile case has been the construction of the Sivand Dam in the Bolaghi Gorge between Persepolis and Pasargadæ. The dam is right in the centre of the Achaemenid heartland and many important Achaemenid period sites (but not actually Pasargadæ) are at risk or have already been destroyed. This is a very high price to pay – many people would say an unacceptably high price – to increase the agricultural potential of a previously arid region.

Apart from air pollution and water mismanagement, archaeological sites can also be badly affected by soil erosion and land degradation. These come about because much of the land in Iran is being overgrazed, and, lacking the opportunity to regenerate, it gradually turns into desert. In these cases the topsoil is washed away by rain or blown away by the wind to create dust storms. In this way, many traces of ancient occupation disappear and some archaeological sites are lost forever.

To sum up, very often problems are caused by lack of understanding or lack of respect for cultural heritage. A good example of this is the site of Nush-i Jan near Malayer, which is arguably the most important Median site in Iran, dating from the 7th century BC. Here, an industrial complex has recently been built a few hundred metres to the north-west of the site. The extent of any possible pollution is unknown, but it is clearly highly irresponsible to have built such a complex so close to an important archaeological site. If nothing else, the presence of this complex will surely prevent Nush-i Jan from becoming a world heritage site if the Iranian authorities decided to nominate it for that status.

John Curtis was a Keeper at the British Museum 1989-2013, and since January 2014 has been CEO of the Iran Heritage Foundation (IHF). Recently, in association with the Soudavar Memorial Foundation, he organised a conference dedicated to the protection of Iranian cultural heritage which was held in Asia House on 16-18 January 2015.

The Bridge of 33 Arches over the Zyandeh Rud in Isfahan. The drying up of the river is causing damage to the foundations of the bridge.

© Anton Ivanov, Shutterstock.com
Dubai, when often spoken of, is mentioned for its glittering skyscrapers, fine dining and luxury hotels among other extravagances. However, like many other cities in the region, its economic prosperity has been largely attributed to the exploitation of fossil fuel resources in the past, with more recent contributions from other sectors such as tourism and finance. Such oil wealth transformed the once impoverished small desert principalities into the modern and wealthy states of today.

The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, boast some of the highest per capita incomes and the fastest growing economies in the world. However, such drastic growth and development could not occur without the availability of a secure freshwater resource, a scarce commodity in the MENA region. Population growth coupled with increased urbanisation, industrialisation and agricultural output has placed tremendous pressure on the region’s scarce groundwater resources. GCC countries are all using hundreds to thousands times more water than sustainable natural aquifer recharge would allow. Their water footprints, among the highest in the world, are sustained by unconventional sources of water such as fossil aquifers, desalination, wastewater re-use and the import of ‘virtual’ water embedded in agricultural goods.

Given the water stress the region faces, it is not surprising that up to 99 per cent of potable freshwater in the GCC comes from desalinated seawater. This expensive process involves the separation of total dissolved solids (TDS), including salts, from the seawater to produce freshwater. The process is achieved through membrane-based technologies such as reverse osmosis (purifying water by using high pressure to drive it in the opposite direction of osmotic pressure), or thermal-based methods such as multi-stage flash and multiple-effect distillation. There are numerous environmental concerns associated with desalination, especially in the Gulf region, which can be broken down into input and output concerns. In terms of inputs, they include seawater intake and energy intensity and type; while output concerns include greenhouse gasses and brine discharge.

Seawater intake is a concern because organisms living within the vicinity of a desalination plant’s intake pipe can collide with the intake screens (impingement) or...
be trapped within the feed-water into the plant (entrainment). The threat from intake pipes on the marine environment is highly variable but can be minimised significantly by the technology employed for seawater intake and how far the intake pipe is from the shore.

Another input concern is energy consumption. The current use of fossil fuels as an energy supply is problematic for both its carbon output, as well as the longevity of the energy source. Given the heavy reliance on desalination for supplying the freshwater needs of GCC countries, a sustainable source of energy for desalination would ensure greater water security. It is estimated that when desalination is coupled with renewable energy sources, the environmental load can be reduced by 80-85 per cent thanks to the elimination of the harmful effects associated with fossil fuels.

It is worth noting that the desalination technology employed, regardless of the energy source, plays a crucial role in the overall environmental load, as desalination technologies differ in energy intensity, land requirements and chemical usage, among many other variables. In general, reverse osmosis as a technology has the lowest environmental impact followed by multiple-effect distillation and then lastly multi-stage flash distillation. Among the most important factors affecting the environmental load is energy intensity. The use of natural gas or oil as a fuel source for desalination plants results in millions of metric tonnes of greenhouse gases being spewed into the atmosphere annually in the Gulf.

Lastly, one of the most significant areas of environmental concern when it comes to desalination plants is brine discharge. The discharged brine is often a mixture of saline concentrate, along with thermal and chemical pollutants. All the aforementioned by-products can negatively impact the Gulf’s native biota – be they mangroves, corals or other aquatic species – particularly given the brine's density which makes it sink to the bottom of the seabed where most ecological activity takes place.

Coral and mangroves species in the Gulf are unique as they are among the most versatile corals and mangroves, being able to tolerate both high temperatures and salinity. Nevertheless, these habitats are still vulnerable to brine discharge. Mangroves rely on a delicate balance of inland freshwater and seawater: if the seawater becomes too saline from brine discharge, then their growth can become stunted or they may die all together. Similarly, corals exposed to high temperatures will undergo coral bleaching, effectively destroying the coral.

Furthermore, while considerable research has been done on the negative effects of brine discharge in the Gulf, the cumulative impact of discharge remains widely unknown. Given that 50 per cent of the world’s desalination occurs in the small, semi-enclosed Gulf, the effects of brine discharge on the environment must be looked at collectively and cumulatively, as opposed to singular environmental impact studies.

Ultimately, the environmental impacts associated with desalination are determined by technology choices and government policies, which also correlate with the final cost of the desalinated water. While the environmental costs of desalination can be mitigated to a large extent, it often comes at a considerable financial cost. Consequently, it is important to highlight that when it comes to environmental and financial sustainability of water in the region, the most cost-effective unit of water produced, is the one avoided. Although it is not possible to completely eliminate the need to generate desalinated water, water conservation and re-use and recycling measures can help offset the deficit in any country’s water balance and should be seriously considered.

Hassan Arafat holds a PhD in Chemical Engineering from the University of Cincinnati. He is currently an Associate Professor in the Chemical and Environmental Engineering Department at Masdar Institute of Science and Technology, Abu Dhabi.
The Nile Basin and hydrosolidarity

The Nile is a source of life that plays a crucial role in the economics, politics and cultural life of 11 countries and their more than 370 million inhabitants. The population of these countries is expected to double within the next 30 years. This means that an astounding three-quarters of a billion people will depend on a single river with dwindling flow for their livelihood.

Moreover, the Nile has had a long and complex history. It extends through Egypt and further south, flowing through some of the poorest countries in the world such as Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan. The area is confronted by severe problems due to both climatic conditions and socio-economic factors. From an ecoclimatic point of view, most of the region extends across semi-arid and arid zones. The semi-arid belts have been particularly affected by cycles of drought and desertification in the past decades. Socio-economically, the Nile region is characterised by a rapidly increasing population (especially in Egypt and Ethiopia), which has resulted in a sharp decline of per capita water availability during the last decades. The socio-economic problems are severe in many of these countries and rely heavily on the availability of water from the Nile for irrigation.

Thus, the Nile River is one of the most important river basins with regard to the socio-economic conditions and climate change for a major part of the global poor. The historical use of the river water still very much determines present day water use and hydropolitical problems. Historically, Egypt and Sudan have decided water allocations within the basin. The 1929 Agreement between Egypt and Britain gave Egypt the right to use 48 cubic kilometres and Sudan 4 cubic kilometres of water per year. The annual flow of the river is about 84 cubic kilometres (14 per cent from the White Nile and 86 per cent from the Blue Nile). The 1959 agreement between Egypt and Sudan allocated 75 per cent to Egypt and 25 per cent of the river water to Sudan. In 1999 the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) was initiated with a broad agreement. The NBI is a regional inter-governmental partnership led by the ten Nile riparian countries, namely Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. Eritrea participates as an observer.

Several occasions since 2011 have added to the complexity of the situation. The Arab Spring brought hope for improvement on aspects of democracy and human rights. But it also opened up new negotiations on established agreements, and the expected improvement in living standards will increase the demand for water resources. In 2011 Sudan was divided into two countries. Potentially this could have led to a more peaceful situation in the two countries and in the region as a whole, but it has already created tensions that have to be met with cautious conflict handling. In 2011 Ethiopia started the debated construction of the Grand Millennium Dam (now known as the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam). Earlier,

In 30 years, an astounding three-quarters of a billion people will depend on a single river with dwindling flow for their livelihood.
Water cooperation is a key to security, poverty eradication, social equity and gender equality

Egypt had threatened war if Ethiopia tried to block the Nile flow. Ethiopia responded that no country could prevent it from using Nile water (about 85 per cent of the Nile river flow originates in the Ethiopian highlands). Egypt countered that it would not give up its share of Nile water.

Egypt’s only sustainable water source is Nile flow. At the same time Ethiopia’s economic development requires better use of the hydropower and irrigation potential of the Nile water. Historically, Egypt used to be the most populous country of the Nile Basin. At present, Ethiopia has surpassed Egypt in terms of population. The upstream countries represent 240 million and the downstream 130 million people. Clearly, the upstream majority has some moral right to use water for improved living conditions. Hydrologically, just 3.5 per cent of the incoming sustainable water remains at the level of the Aswan Dam. At the outflow point in to the Mediterranean only about 1 per cent remains. This is an exceptional condition and shows the degree of severity of water use within the basin. What are the possibilities, then, to resolve the water problem and prevent extended conflict?

Judging from the above, the potential for conflict over water appears to be overwhelming. The escalating water problems and the risk of an ecoclimatic collapse with resulting famine and possible conflict appear valid. Even so, however, a future agreement could encompass peaceful co-use of the Nile water resources. Evaporation at Lake Nasser in Egypt is about 10 cubic kilometres per year while only about 2 cubic kilometres per year in the Ethiopian highlands. Consequently, water for Sudan and Egypt could be more effectively stored in Ethiopia. Countries with significant hydropower potential could sell power to Sudan and Egypt. Upstream dams could trap sediments thus reducing storage losses due to silt sedimentation. These measures could reduce the potential for conflict and increase the effective sustainable water volume. There are also opportunities to increase irrigation efficiency, especially in Egypt, that traditionally uses water-wasting border and flooding irrigation. Rainwater harvesting could be used to decrease the risks for failure in crop production and use marginal lands more effectively. Industrial and domestic water should be treated and re-used a number of times before being discharged into the Mediterranean Sea. Virtual water through food imports could be applied to save water for drinking purposes. These measures are quite obvious and could easily save many tens of cubic kilometres every year. There are also signs and plans for solving and handling the scarce water resources in the region. One example is the above-mentioned Nile Basin Initiative. Even so they are not implemented on a larger scale. Why is that? What are the obstacles that prevent politicians and administrators from implementing even very simple and inexpensive measures to reduce water waste and improve the water situation in the Nile Basin?

The concept of hydrosolidarity has been brought forward as a way to improve water management and to share scarce water resources in an equitable way. Water cooperation is a key to security, poverty eradication, social equity and gender equality. Water cooperation instead of water dispute could generate economic benefits, preserve water resources, protect the environment and build peace. The hydrosolidarity principle thus means broad cooperation or solidarity around water use and management. The goal of hydrosolidarity is the cooperative, unified management of shared water resources, whether at the national or the international level. Consequently, hydrosolidarity is based on ethics between water consuming sectors (agriculture, industry and domestic use), between humans and ecosystems, between present and future generations and means cooperating over administrative, political, religious and cultural borders. The fundamental concept is that water is not only an economic resource that can be developed by technology, but, more importantly, water also has important political, ethical, religious, legal, health and democratic dimensions. A better understanding of water’s transdisciplinary function can thus improve the efficiency of water use via an improved upstream and downstream collaboration.

Karin Aggestam is an Associate Professor in Political Sciences and the Director of Peace and Conflict Studies at Lund University. Dan-Erik Andersson is a Senior Lecturer in Human Rights with a background in ethics and Co-director of the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, Lund University. Ronny Berndtsson is a Professor at Department of Water Resources Engineering, Lund University. Kaveh Madani is a Lecturer in Environmental Management at the Centre for Environmental Policy, Imperial College, London.
There is plenty of room at the bottom’ – this was title of Richard Feynman’s famous talk to the American Physical Society more than half a century ago. The Nobel Laureate, in his historic lecture, discussed the possibility of the direct manipulation of materials on the atomic and molecular level to unleash novel functions. Now, after decades of research, nanoscience faces a historic moment: moving from fundamental research towards a publically available technology, a turning point towards commercialisation.

Since the Millennium, developed and even some developing countries have heavily invested in fundamental nanoscience and technology research. The US government has directly invested over $US 20 billion in nanoscience research over the past 13 years, while China, Japan, Russia and European countries are not far behind.

Amongst the Middle East countries Iran is the most successful and is ranked number seven in the world based on the annual number of published nano-related articles, with 4,555 articles as of November 2014 according to statnano.com. The second country in the region is Saudi Arabia ranked 19th with 1,423 articles followed by Turkey 21st (1,301 articles), Egypt 26th (907 articles) and Iraq 54th (126 articles).

While fundamental research to explore new frontiers in nanoscience is important and critical, it is not the major force behind these investments. Rather the aim is to capitalise and commercialise the practical applications of nanoscience, known as nanotechnology. This technology is envisaged as one of the major factors that shape a country’s economy and sustainability in the 21st century. The number of patents granted in 2014 (up to September) by the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), as an indication of a country’s position in respect to commercialisation of nanotechnology products, depicts an interesting picture.

Only in the past few years has the potentially hazardous nature of manufactured nanomaterials been highlighted...
smaller than a strand of a human hair. A material’s surface plays a crucial role in its interactions with the ambient environment: the surface is where the first contacts occur. The extremely high surface area of nanomaterials is the main reason for their novel properties. For instance, Graphene – a pure, one-atom thick sheet of carbon – is 100 times stronger than steel and has surface area of more than 1,000 square metres per gram. Generally speaking, considering the surface area to volume ratio, the smaller the size the higher this ratio and the greater the likelihood of interactions with the surrounding environment. While the new properties of nanomaterials have excited scientists and the industry, these same features make our existing knowledge of toxicity, environmental risks and health effects unreliable.

A Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) provides important information about associated potential hazards and instructions for the safe handling of a product including disposal, storage, health and environmental concerns. Available MSDS information for nanomaterials is very limited. Only in the past few years has the potentially hazardous nature of manufactured nanomaterials been highlighted, with attempts being made to study their toxicity and possible negative impacts. These investigations are mainly focused on human health and direct exposure, and much less progress has been made in examining the fate and behaviour of nanomaterials in the environment; a concern that, if neglected, could adversely affect the environment and create unforeseen barriers towards achieving environmental sustainability.

Currently a number of manufactured nanomaterials are publicly available and widely used. However, when they enter the environment they can potentially disrupt the life cycles of many living organisms and ecosystems. Here we mention three prime examples. (1) Zinc oxide nanoparticles used for manufacturing electrical equipment and suntan lotions are among the most toxic nanoparticles. They can inhibit the root growth of plants and embryonic development of fish species. (2) Titanium dioxide nanoparticles have extensive applications in a range of industries, including surface coatings and paints, cosmetics and printing inks. It is known that they pose hazardous ecotoxicological effects, especially among bacteria, algae and invertebrates. They can suppress photosynthetic activity of microorganisms, inhibit their growth and, in mammals, damage cells. (3) Silver nanoparticles have antibacterial properties and are incorporated in textiles, refrigerators and washing machines to eliminate bacteria and odour. These nanoparticles can be washed down over time and discharged into the environment. They can be biocidal and disrupt ecosystem cycles. It is known that silver nanoparticles can kill or mutate some species of fish embryos.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lists many nanoscale materials under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). Currently, developed countries are in the process of establishing a comprehensive regulatory approach to minimise health and environmental risks associated with the applications of nanotechnology. Some of these countries are already among the major producers of manufactured nanomaterials. However, because of existing environmental risks, only specific and limited applications of these materials are allowed in their territories.

Countries in the Middle East, especially those rich GCC economies, are keen to be considered developed by embracing new technologies. However, as mentioned earlier, existing data suggests they will likely remain nanotechnology users not contributors. The environmental sustainability statuses of these nations are currently not promising, but the problems that they face are well-recognised and have known solutions. With respect to nanotechnology, however, there is no reliable understanding of what happens to nanomaterials when they enter the environment. If Middle Eastern countries recklessly deploy the latest nanotechnology products they will pay for new environmental risks with unknown consequences. When it comes to using commercialised nanoscience products, these countries should strictly follow regulations, and, if no regulations exist, they should avoid potential risks by banning or at least minimising the application of these products. If the relevant nanotechnology environmental health and safety research infrastructures are lacking, investing in collaboration with prominent countries to develop application guidelines is preferable to investing money to be a major advanced-technology user.

Hamid M. Pouran has a PhD in Environmental Engineering. He was a member of the Transatlantic Initiative for Nanotechnology and the Environment and is currently an Iran Heritage Foundation Visiting Fellow in Iran’s Environmental Sustainability at the London Middle East Institute

Scientists in a cleanroom at the London Centre for Nanotechnology. The room is lit with orange lighting to avoid damage to the photoresist (light sensitive materials) which could occur if there were ambient light at short wavelengths
Analysing the root causes and consequences of the recent Arab uprisings is the subject of a burgeoning literature. In this recent addition to a challenging subject, Ishac Diwan’s edited volume – *Understanding the Political Economy of the Arab Uprisings* – brings together a rich collection of diverse contributions. Most of the ten chapters in the book had previously appeared under different publications of the Economic Research Forum for the Arab countries, Iran and Turkey (ERF) in Cairo. However, their re-assembly here, with a preface by Roger Owen and enriched by a reflective introduction by the editor, adds much to our understanding of the rapidly changing political economy of the region.

As Diwan observes, recent developments dispel ‘any remaining notion of exceptionalism’ for the region, but they also open up the space to new uncertainties or ‘less deterministic theoretical considerations.’ Such an open-minded and candid approach is indeed a strong virtue of the book, highlighting at times an agenda for future research as well.

The book is organised along three principal themes: the root causes of the uprisings, hurdles in their transitions to democracy and drawing lessons from other countries. A fourth, minor theme – Arab capitalism in crisis – is cross-cutting and the two chapters here (Nugent on corruption and Atiyas on competitive markets) could have been subsumed under the above themes given their links to either the roots of the crisis or challenges ahead and lessons from elsewhere.

The book’s main theoretical strength is arguably its political economy approach, which anchors its methodology on the interaction between the economic and political dimensions of the uprisings. Thus the roots of the revolts are firmly located in the economic liberalisation experience which Arab countries experienced since the 1980s without a parallel process of liberalisation taking hold in the political sphere. In his chapter, Diwan demonstrates painstakingly how the emergent Arab ‘crony capitalism’ fuelled the alienation of middle classes, who – led by their youth – came to resent the rise of a class of well-connected elites with privileged access to economic opportunities.

Owen goes further by elaborating how in the political sphere cronyism became intertwined with family dictatorships in a republican setting where ‘elected’ Arab rulers and their sons became *de facto* monarchs with powers and privileges preserved for what he describes as ‘Presidents for life.’

Putting the ‘Arab Spring’ in a wider context, Caroline Freund and Melise Jaud’s quantitative study finds that of the 90 countries experiencing regime change in the past 50 years, 39 per cent led to failure. Their study highlights success factors as being low natural resources, high female literacy and a tradition of parliamentary democracy – factors that arguably only bode well for Tunisia in her quest for transition to democracy.

Other chapters too add depth to and extend this comparative perspective: Ersel on the transformative role of Political Islam in Turkey, Esfahani and Gürakar on a comparative study of social orders in Turkey and Iran and a last chapter by Shidiq and Vermonte on the early years of democracy in Indonesia. The result is sobering indeed for anybody who expected the ‘Arab Spring’ to be short or have a happy ending.

Overall, the book is a strong contender for inclusion on a highly select reading list on the subject. Its scope and coverage is excellent and quality of analysis hard to improve. This is notwithstanding the fact that the book leaves unresolved a number of pertinent issues: why, for instance, has the combination of revolts with crony capitalism been limited to the Arab region so far? A second ‘mystery’ – as Diwan puts it – is why did the uprisings affect countries that were doing relatively better economically?

The answers to both these are likely to lie as much in the recent Arab uprisings as in the wider context of understanding revolutions at large. But the latter would require a more general theory of social upheavals, for which the book undoubtedly offers initial steps and invaluable insights.

*Hassan Hakimian is the Director of the London Middle East Institute*
The Hizbullah Phenomenon: Politics and Communication

By Lina Khatib, Dina Matar and Atef Alshaer

Hurst, August 2014, £19.99

Reviewed by Seyed Ali Alavi

The development of Hizbullah's communication strategy is a compelling subject, particularly given its monumental influence on the politics of the Levant. This book offers a discerning account of Hizbullah's socio-political strategies and promises to be a staple academic reference. Early on, the authors clarify their task of narrating Hizbullah's successful strategies since its emergence in the early 1980s. Specifically, they detail the transformation of its image from a local Shi'a movement into a major contributor to Lebanese politics and an influential actor in the Levant. The authors deliberate over the trajectory of Hizbullah's political evolution. However, the success of this organisation cannot be assessed without an appreciation of its methods, resources and practices since its founding. Unlike other literature on political Islam, the authors argue that Hizbullah's mobilisation resulted from the agency of its elites and ideologues and their implementation of a political communication strategy engineered to broaden its support base and to increase its influence. Thus, the organisation's exploits should not be seen as knee-jerk reactions to accumulated grievances.

Having set the scene in a robust introduction, in the first chapter Lina Khatib analyses Hizbullah's political communication strategy within its short and long-term political targets. She draws a picture that elaborates a number of external enablers and barriers that have a profound impact on the group's political strategy, and she argues that some elements have a dual role. Although this is not a mathematical formula, it is an interesting take on the debate. The author's analysis of Hizbullah's enablers and challenges casts much-needed light on local and regional developments within and beyond Lebanon.

In the second chapter, the authors trace the rhetorical framework used in Hizbullah's communication strategy from its emergence in 1982 to 2000, arguing that the movement successfully transformed itself from an exclusivist Islamic movement into a more inclusive political party contributing directly to the Lebanese political system. Having provided a comprehensive chronological account, this chapter proceeds to introduce four interlinked pillars that buttress Hizbullah's image: the organisation's alliance with Iran, its image as a resistance group to Israel, its commitment to Palestine and its portrayal as the legitimate Shi'i leader. The argument is that these pillars have remained constant throughout its history and are pivotal in the construction of Hizbullah's identity. Chapter three leads on to discuss the period between 2000 and 2012, highlighting a new era of challenges for Hizbullah. The chapter posits that the death of Lebanese PM Rafic Hariri, the Arab Spring and Hizbullah's stance towards the Syrian uprising put the group at a crossroad, testing its credibility in the Arab world. While the analysis in this section is intriguing, the author's elaboration of Hizbullah's rationale for supporting the Syrian regime is limited. This section runs the risk of overlooking any long-term benefits Hizbullah may acquire for expanding its influence in Syrian politics.

In the fourth chapter, Atef Alshaer takes us on a journey through the poetry of Hizbullah, suggesting that this is another method with significant mobilisational reach for constituents across Lebanon and the Arab world. The chapter concludes that Hizbullah's poetry sheds light on the language and sentiments that underpin its ideology and its close ideological relationship with ordinary people.

In chapter five, entitled 'Hassan Nasrallah, the Central Actor in Hizbullah's Political Communication Strategy', the author examines the significance of Hassan Nasrallah's leadership and role in the movement's implementation of political strategies. This chapter effectively chronicles the institutionalisation of Nasrallah's persona and suggests that his charismatic authority and engaging image were an intended outcome of the movement's political communication strategy. The book concludes with a short summary of the present challenges that the movement is facing as a result of the Arab Spring and Syrian uprising.

The merit of this volume lies in its rigorous and engaging probing of Hizbullah's political communication strategies. It pays attention to the substance and style of this movement rather than merely its infrastructure. Succinct and lucid, this is a book for both the expert and the general audience, for the scholar and the policy analyst.

Seyed Ali Alavi is a PhD student at SOAS. His research focuses on Iran’s relations with Palestine. He has been interviewed by the BBC Radio Four and RT on recent developments in Syria and Iraq and his article about Iran and Syria was published by Open-Democracy.
Gaza: A History is an excellent new book by the French academic Jean-Pierre Filiu. Though published originally in French in 2012, the book reads fluently in its English translation by John King. With Gaza at the heart of violent and longstanding Palestinian struggles for freedom from Israeli occupation and military onslaughts, it is refreshing to read such an insightful and detailed account of its history now. Amidst the modern cycles of carnage, many forget that Gaza has a long history under several empires and administrations and as part of a Mediterranean world later torn into disjointed pieces by colonialism and nation-statist separatists. As Filiu shows, Gaza was an indispensable link between Africa and Asia and important for powerful empires, including those of the Ancient Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Ottomans and the British before Israel violently occupied it in 1967.

As the book explains, Gaza’s rootedness in history is enshrined further in the passing of the great grandfather of Prophet Mohammad Hashem Ibn al-Manaf who died there while his trading caravan was en route from the Arabian Peninsula. From the 7th century, with the population of Gaza embracing Sunni Islam and later the Shafi‘i school of law, ‘Hashem’s Gaza oscillated between the authority of various Muslim governments in the Middle East and Egypt during the 13 centuries that followed.’ Yet as can be inferred from Filiu’s narrative, one stark pattern in Gaza’s history prevails: a longstanding record of being subject to outside powers intent on exclusive control of it, culminating in several rounds of destruction. Moreover, it was the resistance of its people that often resulted in Gaza being laid to waste. When Gaza finally fell to the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century, the Ottoman conqueror Sultan Selim I carried out massacres reducing the population to less than 1,000 families.

Relying on comprehensive archival, primary and secondary materials, the author takes a factual and interpretive approach to narrate the socio-political facets of Gaza as demonstrated throughout its history, presenting a vivid picture of its continuous isolation and destruction.

Following the British Mandate, when Israel was finally founded on 14 May 1948, Gaza was flooded with more than 200,000 Palestinian refugees who were added to the 80,000 natives. Egypt took over Gaza after 1948, and in the period that followed Gaza led Palestinian resistance activities against the nascent colony of Israel to reclaim historic Palestine. Israel repeatedly laid waste to Gaza while under the Egyptian administration, culminating in Israel’s formal occupation in 1967 and the subjugation of Gazans to measures of merciless control.

Filiu depicts the following years as punctuated with massacres, perpetrated by the likes of Ariel Sharon, and periods of relative calm underpinned by economic dependency. Meanwhile, the nationalist resistance continued to develop towards the First Palestinian Intifada of 1987. The Intifada, as led by the Palestine Liberation Organisation whose core members hailed from Gaza, depicted the Palestinians as victims and people of resistance to the occupation that violated their dignity. Several factions grew in Gaza, including Fatah, the PFLP, Islamic Jihad and Hamas. These factions, particularly Fatah and Hamas, projected different societal and political orientations that continue to play out in Gaza within the context of Israel’s devastating siege.

Gaza’s complexity yet indispensability to Palestine makes it unique to the Palestinian struggle for freedom. As Filiu writes, ‘the Gaza Strip, the womb of the fedayin and the cradle of the Intifada, lies at the heart of the nation-building of contemporary Palestine.’

It remains to be said that the book is detailed, perhaps overbearingly at times; but it is starkly true that there is no account of Gaza – in French and English at least – that is as complete, rigorous and compelling as Filiu’s Gaza: A History.

Atef Alshaer is a Lecturer in Arabic Language and Culture at the University of Westminster, and a member of the Middle East Institute. He has several publications, including his forthcoming book, Poetry and Politics in the Modern Arab World.
Half Past Ten in the Afternoon: An Englishman’s Journey from Aneiza to Makkah

By James Budd

Much of this book is a record of the time the author spent between 1965 and 1970 as an English teacher in Aneiza – a provincial town in central Saudi Arabia. In an entertaining series of anecdotes, he describes the daily life and customs of its people, his relations with colleagues and students at the local secondary school, and the events leading up to his 'removal' from the town he had come to regard as home, his transfer to Riyadh and final departure from the country. Budd also writes about his transition from agnosticism to Islam, giving readers an account of his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1996 in the company of one of his old students from Aneiza, and describes Aneiza’s 21st-century incarnation.

May 2014, Arabian Publishing Ltd, £20.00

Heirs to Forgotten Kingdoms: Journeys into the Disappearing Religions of the Middle East

By Gerard Russell

The Middle East has long sheltered many distinctive and strange faiths: one regards the Greek prophets as incarnations of God, another reveres Lucifer in the form of a peacock and yet another believes that their followers are reincarnated beings who have existed in various forms for thousands of years. These religions represent the last vestiges of the magnificent civilisations in ancient history: Persia, Babylon, Egypt in the time of the Pharaohs. Their followers have learned how to survive foreign attacks and the perils of assimilation. In Heirs to Forgotten Kingdoms, former diplomat Gerard Russell ventures to the regions where these religions still cling to survival. Drawing on his extensive travels and archival research, he provides a record of the their past, present and perilous future.

November 2014, Simon & Schuster UK, £20.00

Gendering Culture in Greater Syria: Intellectuals and Ideology in the Late Ottoman Period

By Fruma Zachs and Sharon Halevi

The Nahda was one of the most significant cultural movements in modern Arab history. By focusing on the neglected role of women in the intellectual Islamic renaissance of the late Ottoman Period, Fruma Zachs and Sharon Halevi provide an interdisciplinary exploration of gender and culture in the Arab World. Focusing mainly on ‘Greater Syria’, this book re-examines the cultural by-products of the Nahda – scientific debates, journal articles, essays, short stories and novels – and provides a framework for rethinking the dynamics of cultural and social change in today’s Syria and Lebanon. The interpretation of the lasting impact of the Nahda is unique, providing necessary perspective to studying the nuanced roles of the construction and development of gender ideologies in the 19th-century Middle East.

November 2014, IB Tauris, £58.00
Qatar and the Arab Spring

By Kristian Coates Ulrichsen

Qatar and the Arab Spring offers a frank examination of Qatar’s startling rise to regional and international prominence, describing how its distinctive policy stance toward the Arab Spring emerged. In only a decade, Qatari policymakers catapulted Qatar from a sleepy backwater to a regional power with truly international reach. In addition to pursuing an aggressive state-branding strategy with its successful bid for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, Qatar forged a reputation for diplomatic mediation that combined intensely personalised engagement with financial backing and favourable media coverage through Al-Jazeera. These factors converged in early 2011 with the outbreak of the Arab Spring revolts in North Africa, Syria and Yemen, which Qatari leaders saw as an opportunity to seal their regional and international influence, and this guided their support of the rebellions against the Qaddafi and Assad regimes in Libya and Syria.

November 2014, Hurst, £35.00

Social Media and the Politics of Reportage: The ‘Arab Spring’

Edited by Saba Bebawi and Diana Bossio

Social Media and the Politics of Reportage explores the role of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs, within the field of global journalism with a focus on the recent protests during the ‘Arab Spring’. The book deals with the transforming media landscape during crisis reporting as a result of the rise of social media news coverage and usage. Specifically, it focuses on the journalistic challenges, issues and opportunities that have arisen as a result of social media increasingly being used as a form of crisis reporting. The ‘Arab Spring’ has been represented in the mainstream media as a ‘social media revolution’; the hyperbole of headlines claims a seismic shift away from the traditional news correspondence and towards an era of citizen journalism and social media reporting.

September 2014, Palgrave Macmillan, £60.00

Access to Justice in Iran: Women, Perceptions, and Reality

By Sahar Maranlou

Access to justice incorporates various conceptions of justice and of its users. This book evaluates the historical development of the justice sector in Iran and discusses issues including the performance of the justice sector, judicial independence, efficiency and accessibility, and normative protection, together with an analysis of barriers. It explores the legal empowerment of users, with a specific focus on women, and presents the findings of a survey study on the perceptions of Iranian women. This study is designed to focus on women’s basic legal knowledge, their familiarity with legal procedure, perceptions of cultural barriers, issues that influence their preference for mechanisms of formal or alternative dispute solutions and their level of satisfaction with their chosen courses of action.

November 2014, Cambridge University Press, £65.00
THE EVENTS and organisations listed below are not necessarily endorsed or supported by The Middle East in London. The accompanying texts and images are based primarily on information provided by the organisers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the compilers or publishers. While every possible effort is made to ascertain the accuracy of these listings, readers are advised to seek confirmation of all events using the contact details provided for each event.

Submitting entries and updates: please send all updates and submissions for entries related to future events via e-mail to mepub@soas.ac.uk

BM – British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG
SOAS – SOAS, University of London, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG
LSE – London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2 2AE

FEBRUARY EVENTS

Monday 2 February

5:15 pm | The Citadel between Seljuks and Ayyubids (Seminar) Scott Redford, SOAS. Organised by: Department of History, SOAS. Near & Middle East History Seminar. Admission free. Room B104, Brunei Gallery, SOAS. EBf7@soas.ac.uk W: www.soas.ac.uk/history/events/

6:30 pm | Hezbollah, Islamist Politics and International Society (Lecture) Filippo Dionigi, LSE Middle East Centre. Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Event to mark the publication of Dionigi’s latest book Hezbollah, Islamist Politics and International Society in which he uses the example of Lebanon’s Hezbollah to reflect on the role of international norms in influencing Islamist politics in the Middle East. Admission free. Wolfson Theatre, New Academic Building, LSE. T 020 7955 6198 E: s.sfeir@lse.ac.uk W: www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/

Tuesday 3 February

7:00 pm | Nizâmî: Mirror of the Unseen World (Lecture) Michael Barry, Princeton University. Organised by: Centre for Iranian Studies, SOAS. Kamran Djam Annual Lecture at SOAS. The first of two lectures (second lecture on Tuesday 3 February) by Barry on the Persian poet Nizâmî, whose “Brides of the Seven Climes” composed in AD 1197, may be regarded without any doubt as one of the crowning glories of world literature. Lecture to be preceded by a reception in the Brunei Suite at 6:00pm. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4330 E: vp6@soas.ac.uk W: www.soas.ac.uk/lmei-cis/events/

Wednesday 4 February

1:00 pm | Making and Unmaking – Double Bill (Film) Ethnographic Film Series. Final Fitting, OT Prov Akhar, Reza Haeri, Nilooofar Haeri (2008), 30 mins. Mr Arabpour is the master tailor and craftsman, and the proprietor of the most famous tailor shop in Qom, Iran. In his eighties, for the last several decades he has been the official tailor to the most important religious leaders of the country + Unravel, Meghna Gupta (2012), 14 mins. Unravel follows the Western world’s least wanted clothes as they are recycled back into yarn. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. E: mm97@soas.ac.uk W: www.soas.ac.uk/anthropology/events/

3:00 pm | Negotiating Home, Redefining Belonging (Panel Discussion) Rasha Chatta and Hanna Ali, SOAS. Organised by: Centre for Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies, SOAS (CCLPS). Ali unpacks the construction of ‘home’ and ‘belonging’ to East(ern) African migrants in Britain while, drawing on contemporary Arab migrant writing, Chatta’s paper explores the possibilities for reconsidering notions of home and (un)belonging within the unique literary phenomenon of migrant literature. Admission free. Room L67, SOAS. E: k19@soas.ac.uk W: www.soas.ac.uk/cclps/events/

6:30 pm | Why do we need a Fourth Expedition to Lachish? (Lecture) Yossi Garfinkel, Hebrew University Jerusalem. Organised by: Palestine Exploration Fund and the King’s College London Department of Theology and Religious Studies. Admission free. Safra Lecture Theatre, King’s Building, Strand, King’s College London, London WC2R 2LS. T: 020 7935 5379 E: ExecSec@pef.org.uk W: www.pef.org.uk

6:30 pm | The Iranian Jewish community: A short survey of their history from the Achaemenid to the Qajar (Lecture) Mehr Niknam, MBE, Joseph Interfaith Foundation. Organised by: Iran Heritage Foundation (IHF). Iran is the only country in the Middle East where there has been a continuous Jewish community since 500 BCE. Niknam will explore the history of the Iranian Jews with reference to their culture and religion. Tickets: £10. Asia House, 63 New Cavendish Street, London W1G 7LP. T: 020 3651 2121 E: astrid@iranheritage.org W: www.iranheritage.org

7:00 pm | A Reconstruction of the Great Mosque of Damascus in Umayyad Times (Lecture) Alain George, Edinburgh. Organised by: Islamic Art Circle at SOAS. Part of the Islamic Art Circle at SOAS Lecture Programme. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Room, Brunei Suite at 7:00pm. Admission free. Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T: 020 7898 4330 E: vp6@soas.ac.uk W: www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/
Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East
Spring 2015

3 February 7:00pm start*
*Nizâmi: Mirror of the Unseen World*
Annual Kamran Djam Lecture
Michael Barry, Princeton University
Organised by the Centre for Iranian Studies

10 February
*Reading Week*

17 February
*Contemporary Art from the Middle East: regional interactions with global art discourses*
Hamid Keshmirshekan, LMEI

24 February
*Manichean Aesthetics: Observations on the Poetry of the Iranian Revolution*
3rd Leverhulme Lecture
Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, University of Maryland and SOAS
Lecture organised jointly with the Centre for Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies (CCLPS), SOAS
and the Centre for Iranian Studies, SOAS

3 March 6:30pm start*
*The Caliphate: back to the future*
Madawi Al-Rasheed, King’s College London
Reza Pankhurst, academic and author
S Sayyid, University of Leeds

10 March 5:00pm start*
*The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity Allah and His People*
Aziz Al-Azmeh, Central European University

17 March
*Traditional building practices influencing the shaping of Iranian Architectural Language from the 10th century onwards*
Stefania Petralla, former Iran Heritage Foundation (IHF) Visiting Fellow, Centre for Iranian Studies, SOAS
Lecture organised jointly with the Centre for Iranian Studies, SOAS

TUESDAY 5:45 PM (unless otherwise stated)
KHALILI LECTURE THEATRE, MAIN BUILDING, SOAS

The Lectures are free and open to all. Tea and biscuits are available from 5:15 pm.

For further information contact:
London Middle East Institute , SOAS, University of London, MBI Al Jaber Building, 21 Russell Square, London WC1B 5EA
T: 020 7898 4330 E: lmei@soas.ac.uk W: www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/
Thursday 5 February
12:30 pm | Economic Diversification in the GCC: Past, Present, and Future (Seminar) Timothy Callen, International Monetary Fund (IMF). Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Callen looks at how increased diversification in the GCC economies will require realigning incentives for firms and workers and that fixing these incentives is the “missing link” in the GCC countries’ diversification strategies. Admission free. MBI Al Jaber Conference Room, London Middle East Institute, SOAS, MBI Al Jaber Building, 21 Russell Square, London WC1B 5EA. T 020 7898 4330 E j.hakim@uel.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

Friday 6 February
12:00 pm | Wars and the Fate of Empires: The Ottomans and their Rivals before 1800 (Seminar) Gabor Agoston, Georgetown University. Organised by: SOAS Modern Turkish Studies Programme, LMEI. Sponsored by Nurol Bank. Part of the Seminars on Turkey series. Convened by Benjamin Fortna, SOAS. Admission free. Room 116, SOAS. T 020 7898 4431 E bfortna@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

Sunday 8 February

Monday 9 February
9:00 am | Anti-Jewish and Anti-Muslim Racisms and the Question of Palestine/Israel (Conference) Organised by: University of East London’s Centre for research on Migration, Refugees and Belonging, SOAS’s Centre for Palestine Studies (London Middle East Institute), the Runnymede Trust and the LSE Centre for the Study of Human Rights. Conference seeking to explore the multiple, complex and inter-related ways that anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim racisms are being constructed in relation to the question of Palestine/Israel. Tickets: £20/£15 conc. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4330 E j.hakim@uel.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/cps/events/

Wednesday 11 February
6:30 pm | The Other Middle East (Lecture & Photographic Presentation) Richard Wilding, Gulan. Organised by: Kensington Society, Gulan and the Mansoojat Foundation. Through his photographs of Saudi Arabia and Iraqi Kurdistan, Richard Wilding shows that the architecture, archaeology and costumes of these ancient cultures reveal more colour and diversity than the stereotypical media stories of sand, sheikhs and sectarianism. Followed by a reception in the Arab Hall of Leighton House. Tickets: £15 W www.kensingtonsociety.org/events. Leighton House Museum, 12 Holland Park Road, London W14 8LZ. E info@gulan.org.uk W www.richardwilding.com / www.gulan.org.uk

Thursday 12 February
8:00 pm | Arabic Music Sessions @ SOAS (Performance) Organised by: Ed Emery, SOAS. Monthly music sessions. Pre-session practice and discussion at 6:30pm in L67. Admission free. DLT, SOAS. E ed.emery@soas.ac.uk W www.youtube.com/maqamproject

Saturday 14 February
10:00 am | The Arab Uprisings (Two-Day Conference: Friday 13 – Saturday 14 February) Organised by: MENA Solidarity, Egypt Solidarity Initiative and BahrainWatch. Four years after uprisings swept the Middle East millions of people still struggle for freedom and social justice. This conference addresses the achievements of the revolutions and the challenges that now confront them. Tickets: £10/£5 students and the unwaged. SOAS. W http://egyptsolidarityinitiative.org/conference2015/

Sunday 14 February
6:30 pm | The Middle East in Crisis: how Turkey is affected and what role can it play? (Panel Discussion) Yaşar Yağış, former Foreign Minister of Turkey; Rosemary Hollis, City University; John Peet, The Economist. Chaired by Sir David Logan. Organised by: British Institute at Ankara (BIAA). A panel of experts will examine the emergence of the Islamic State, the violence in Syria and Iraq, and the risks to the stability of Kurdistan. How can Turkey manage these security threats and how can it play a role in re-establishing peace and stability in the Middle East. Tickets: £10 non-members/free for BIAA members. British Academy, Wolson Auditorium, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH. E biaa@britac.ac.uk T 020 7969 5204 W www.biaa.ac.uk/events

Monday 16 February

5:15 pm | Mongol News: Qutb al-Din Shirazi's Chronicle of the Early Ilkhkans (Seminar) George Lane, SOAS. Organised by: Department of History, SOAS. Near & Middle East History Seminar. Admission free. Room B104, Brunei Gallery, SOAS. E bf7@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk /history/events/

7:00 pm | The BBC Persian Service (Lecture) Annabelle Srebrney, Centre for Media Studies, SOAS. Organised by: The Iran Society. Professor Srebrney discusses the development of the BBC Persian Service from WW2 to 2009. Admission free for Society members and one guest. Pall Mall Room, The Army & Navy Club, 36-39 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5JN (Dress code calls for gentlemen to wear jacket and tie). T 020 7235 5122 E info@iransoasociety.org W www.iransoasociety.org

Tuesday 17 February

5:45 pm | Contemporary Art from the Middle East: Regional Interactions with Global Art Discourses (Book Launch) Hamid Keshmirshaken, LMEI. Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Event to mark the publication of Contemporary Art from the Middle East: Regional Interactions with Global Art Discourses (I.B. Tauris, 2015) with the editor Hamid Keshmirshaken. Drawing on their unique expertise, the book’s contributors offer new perspectives on the most recent cultural, intellectual and socio-political developments of contemporary art from the Middle East. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

6:30 pm | Iraq After America: strongmen, sectarians, resistance (Lecture) Colonel Joel Rayburn, National Defense University. Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Rayburn presents his book Iraq After America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance, in which the author explores the government and the sectarian and secular factions that have emerged in Iraq since the US invasion of 2003, presenting the interrelations among the various elements in the appearance of new borderland spatialities in Syria and Iraq, as well as recent instances of formal state boundary-making such as the Aybeii arbitration. Schofield asks what constitutes a borderland in the Middle East. Admission free. New Theatre, East Building, SOAS. T 020 7955 6198 E s.sfeir@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk /middleEastCentre/

Thursday 19 February

4:00 pm | From Elephantine to Idumea: Contract and Commerce in the Persian Empire (Lecture) Bezalel Porten, Hebrew University Jerusalem. Organised by: Palestine Exploration Fund in association with the BM’s Department of the Middle East. Admission free - Pre-booking required T 020 7723 8181 W www.britishmuseum.org BP Lecture Theatre, BM. T 020 7935 5379 E ExecSec@pef.org.uk W www.pef.org.uk

5:45 pm | Does Britain Have a Strategy in its Middle East Relations? (Lecture) Chris Doyle, Director, Council for Arab British Understanding (CAABU). Organised by: MBI Al Jaber Foundation. Part of the MBI Al Jaber Foundation Lecture Series. Once again, Britain is militarily involved in Iraq and continues to face a threat from Islamist extremism. But does it have a clear strategy to handle this crisis? Admission free - Pre-booking required. MBI Al Jaber Conference Room, London Middle East Centre, SOAS (LMEI). University of London, MBI Al Jaber Building, 21 Russell Square, London WC1B 5EA. E info@mbifoundation.com W www.mbfoundation.com

Monday 23 February

5:15 pm | Title TBC (Seminar) Elizabeth Shalala, LSE. Organised by: Department of History, SOAS. Near & Middle East History Seminar. Admission free. Room B104, Brunei Gallery, SOAS. E bf7@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk /history/events/

7:00 pm | Language, Landscape and Identity in Palestine (Discussion) Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. LSE Literary Festival conversation. Raja Shehadeh, a Palestinian lawyer and writer who lives in Ramallah, the West Bank, in conversation with Craig Calhoun, Director of LSE, will discuss his new book Language of War, Language of Peace: Palestine, Israel and the search for justice which explores the politics of language and the language of politics in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Admission free - Pre-booking required. Sheikh Zayed Theatre, New Academic Building, LSE. T 020 7955 6043 E events@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk

Tuesday 24 February

5:30 pm | Globalizing the


5:45 pm | Manichean Aesthetics: Observations on the Poetry of the Iranian Revolution (Lecture) Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, SOAS and University of Maryland. Organised by: Centre for Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies, SOAS (CCLPS) and the London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Professor Karimi-Hakkak’s 3rd Leverhulme Lecture. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4330 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk /cllps/events/

6:30 pm | Middle East Border Geopolitics: established and emerging themes (Lecture) Richard Schofield, King’s College London. Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. In trying to make sense of the spontaneous appearance of new borderland spatialities in Syria and Iraq, as well as recent instances of formal state boundary-making such as the Aybeii arbitration, Schofield asks what constitutes a borderland in the Middle East. Admission free. New Theatre, East Building, SOAS. T 020 7955 6198 E s.sfeir@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk /middleEastCentre/

Wednesday 25 February

7:00 pm | Raja Shehadeh: Language of War, Language of Peace (Book Launch) Organised by: The Mosaic Rooms and Profile Books. Event to mark the launch of Raja Shehadeh’s new publication Language of War, Language of Peace in which the author explores the politics of language and the language of politics in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Admission free - Pre-booking required. The Mosaic Rooms, A.M. Qattan Foundation, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW. T 020 7370 7272

February – March 2015 The Middle East in London 27
Thursday 26 February

6:00 pm | Jonathan Watkins on Welcome to Iraq (Lecture)
Jonathan Watkins, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham. Organised by: The British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI). Annual Mallowan Lecture. An illustrated talk by Jonathan Watkins about his experiences as curator of the Iraqi Pavilion for the 2013 Venice Biennale and his selection of artists whose work exemplifies extraordinary inventiveness in the face of the challenges that can characterise everyday life in Iraq. Admission free - Pre-booking required. The British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AH. T 020 7969 5274 E bisi@brit.ac.uk W www.bisi.ac.uk

Saturday 28 February

7:30 pm | The Voice of Daf: A Concert of Kurdish Classical and Folk music (Concert) Doors open at 7:00pm. An evening of instrumental and vocal music from the four parts of Kurdistan in Sorani, Kurmanji and Kalhor dialects with santur virtuoso, Peyman Heydarian on santur, vocalists Suna and Avan and musicians of the Kurdish band at SOAS. Tickets: £12/£10 conc. St Ethelburga’s Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, 78 Bishopsgate, EC2N 4AG London. E events.santur@yahoo.com W www.thesantur.com

EVENTS OUTSIDE LONDON

Tuesday 10 February

5:00 pm | Film and Art in Israel-Palestine (Panel Discussion) Yael Friedman, University of Southampton; Stefanie Van de Peer, University of Stirling; Akkas Ali, University of Exeter. Organised by: Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge & the Woolf Institute. Panel Series: Muslim-Jewish Relations. Chair and introduction by Yaron Peleg, University of Cambridge. Admission free. Rooms 8-9, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (FAMES), Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge CB3 9DA. E enquiries@woolf.cam.ac.uk W www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/events

Thursday 12 February


Thursday 26 February

5:15 pm | The new Arab cold war and the future of authoritarianism in the Middle East (Seminar) Moulay Hicham Alaoui, St Anthony’s College, University of Oxford. Part of the seminar series Turbulent World: Maghrib, Mashriq and Gulf in the New Era of Uncertainty. Organised by: Centre of Islamic Studies, Cambridge. Admission free. Outer Parlour, Pembroke College, Cambridge. E cis@cis.cam.ac.uk W www.cis.cam.ac.uk

MARCH EVENTS

Sunday 1 March

Until 14 March | Fireworks (Performance) See listing for Thursday 12 February.

Monday 2 March

5:15 pm | Aşıkpaşazade, the Fifteenth-century Ottoman Writer, from a Modern Perspective (Seminar) Lale Özdemir, Marmara University.

One woman’s journey as a hesitant revolutionary through the eighteen days of the Egyptian uprising in 2011

‘Prince’s prose is experientially unsettling and yet irrationally jovial, much like the iconic eighteen days she so vividly help us to relive.’
Adele Iskandar, Georgetown University

Bringing together the best writing from the Arab revolutions

‘If you want to understand the extraordinary happenings in the Middle East through the eyes of those who have lived through them you must read this book. These stories of horror and bravery read like testimonies to history as it was made.’
Saira Shah, producer and writer of Death in Gaza

The prescient Egyptian novel that described the January 2011 Revolution before it happened

‘engaging, provocative’
Lucy Popescu, Huffington Post

www.ibtauris.com
Organised by: Department of History, SOAS. Near & Middle East History Seminar. Admission free. Room B104, Brunei Gallery, SOAS. E b7f@soas.ac.uk W www. soas.ac.uk/history/events/

6:30 pm | The Unexpected State: British Politics and the Creation of Israel (Lecture) Carly Beckerman-Boys, Durham University. Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Beckerman-Boys challenges the traditional historiography of the Palestine Mandate, revealing how intrigues and political manoeuvring in Westminster inadvertently forged Britain’s formative relationship with Zionism. Admission free. Room 2.04, New Academic Building, LSE.

Tuesday 3 March

6:30 pm | The Caliphate: back to the future (Panel Discussion) Madawi Al-Rasheed, King’s College London; Reza Pankhurst, academic and author; S Sayyid, University of Leeds. Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4300/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

7:00 pm | In the Picture with Lynsey Addario: It’s What I Do (Talk) Organised by: Frontline Club. From Afghanistan to Iraq, Darfur to Libya, Lynsey Addario has spent the past decade and a half capturing life on the frontline. In her new book It’s What I Do she details the journey. Tickets: £12.50/£10 conc. Frontline Club, 13 Norfolk Place, London W2 1QJ. T 020 7479 8940 E events@ frontlineclub.com W www.frontlineclub.com

Wednesday 4 March

1:00 pm | Al-Risala al-Mufida: A 6th/12th Century Isma‘ili Commentary on Avicenna’s Poem on the Soul (Seminar) Toby Mayer, Institute of Ismaili Studies. Organised by: Centre of Islamic Studies, SOAS. Admission free. Room B111, SOAS. E n26@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk /islamicstudies/events/

3:00 pm | Framing Dissent: Music, Political Discourse, and Narratives of Resistance in the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa (Panel Discussion) Cristina Almeida, Natalie Abou Shakra, Nate Mannone, SOAS. Organised by: Centre for Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies, SOAS (CCLPS). Panel exploring the music of resistance which will attempt to untangle the processes and the unfortunate results of the renewed academic love affair with resistant culture. Admission free. Room L67, SOAS. E L19@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/ccclps/events/

6:30 pm | Inaugural Lecture of Professor Scott Redford: Ways of Writing in Medieval Islam (Inaugural Lecture) Scott Redford, SOAS. Organised by: SOAS. Redford will address the many functions that the Arabic alphabet assumed in the medieval period. Admission free - Pre-booking required. Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4013 E events@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/about/events/inaugurals/

6:30 pm | Master Builders in Qajar Tehran: The Mirza Akbar Drawings (Lecture) Moya Carey, IHH Curator, Iran Collections, Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A). Organised by: Iran Heritage Foundation (IHF) in conjunction with BIPS and the V&A. Admission free. V&A, Cromwell Road, London SW7 2RL. T 020 7439 4766 E info@iranheritage.org W wwwiranheritage.org

Saturday 7 March

9:00 am | Rediscover Hadhramaut (Conference) Organised by: Hadhramaut Research Centre in association with the London Middle Institute, SOAS (LMEI) with the support of MENARC and the British-Yemeni Society (BYS). Tickets: TBC. DLT, SOAS. T 020 7898 4330 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.hadhramautresearchcentre.com/

Monday 9 March

5:15 pm | Enslaved and Emancipated Africans in Ottoman Izmir: The Calif Festival, 1880-1927 (Seminar) Michael Ferguson, McGill University/ SOAS. Organised by: Department of History, SOAS. Near & Middle East History Seminar. Admission free. Room B104, Brunei Gallery, SOAS. E b7f@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/history/events/

Tuesday 10 March

5:00 pm | The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allah and His People (Lecture) Aziz Al-Alzmeh, Central European University. Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Al-Azmeh discusses the subject of his book The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allah and His People (Cambridge University Press, 2014) in which he presents a comprehensive and innovative reconstruction of the rise of Islam as a religion and imperial polity. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4300/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

5:30 pm | Early Persian Painting (Lecture) Yves Porter, Aix Marseille Université. Organised by: The Courtauld Institute of Art and supported by Friends of The Courtauld and the Iran Heritage Foundation (IHF). Spring 2015 Friends Lecture Series. Admission free. Kenneth Clark Lecture Theatre, The Courtauld Institute of Art, Somerset House, Strand, London WC2R 0RN. T 020 7848 2163 E susan.babaie@courtauldd.ac.uk W www.courtauld.ac.uk

Wednesday 11 March

6:30 pm | Inaugural Lecture of Professor Laleh Khalili: Sinewes of War and Trade (Inaugural Lecture) Laleh Khalili, SOAS. Organised by: SOAS. Khalili will be reflecting on the foundational role of maritime transportation and logistics in the transformation of the Middle East into a global node of war and trade. Admission free - Pre-booking required. Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4013 E events@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/about/events/inaugurals/

7:00 pm | Sultan-Abu Sa‘id’s Nahj al-Faradis: an Illustrated Timurid Manuscript of the ‘Interim Period’ (Lecture) Eleanor Sims, Independent Scholar. Organised by: Islamic Art Circle at SOAS. The Fourth Bahari Foundation Lecture in Iranian Art and Culture. Part of the Islamic Art Circle at SOAS Lecture Programme. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 0771 408 7480 E rosalindhaddon@gmail.com W www.soas.ac.uk/art/islac/

Thursday 12 March


Friday 13 March

7:00 pm | A Musical Celebration of Nowruz with Iranian Classical and Folk Music (Concert) Organised by: Peyman Heydarian of the Voice of Santur and the SOAS Iranian Music Society. Doors open at 6:30pm. Tickets: £25/£15 conc./£10 students. DLT, SOAS. E events.santur@yahoo.com W www.thethesantur.com

Saturday 14 March


Monday 16 March

5:00 pm | Secular Domesticities,
Shiite Modernities: Reflections on Iranians’ Ordinary Lives in Extraordinary Times (Seminar) Pamela Karimi, Iran Heritage Foundation (IHF) Visiting Fellow, Centre for Iranian Studies, SOAS. Organised by: Centre for Iranian Studies, SOAS. Admission free. T102, SOAS, 22 Russell Square, London WC1B 5EA. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei-cis/events/

Tuesday 17 March

5:45 pm | Traditional building practices influencing the shaping of Iranian Architectural Language from the 10th century onwards (Lecture) Stefania Petralia, former Iran Heritage Foundation (IHF) Visiting Fellow, Centre for Iranian Studies, SOAS. Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI) and the Centre for Iranian Studies, SOAS. Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary Middle East. Lecture by Petralia investigating the notion that vernacular architectures are conditioned by the materials employed for construction with reference to buildings realised from the 10th century onwards until the first Qajar era. Admission free. Khalli Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4330/4490 E vp6@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

Wednesday 18 March

6:30 pm | The Origins of Kuwait’s National Assembly in Comparative Perspective (Lecture) Michael Herb, Georgia State University. Organised by: LSE Kuwait Programme. Despite recent setbacks, Kuwait’s parliament remains the strongest amongst the GCC states. Michael Herb delves into Gulf history to explain why Kuwait’s political system differs from those of its neighbours. Admission free. Wolfson Theatre, New Academic Building, LSE. T 020 7955 6639 E l.sinclair@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/

Thursday 19 March

5:45 pm | The Promotion of Euro Arab Dialogue through Public-Private Partnership: Challenges and Opportunities (Lecture) Mir Asghar Husain, European Education Adviser to the MBI Al Jaber Foundation. Organised by: MBI Al Jaber Foundation. Part of the MBI Al Jaber Foundation Lecture Series. Admission free - Pre-booking required. MBI Al Jaber Conference Room, London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI), University of London, MBI Al Jaber Building, 21 Russell Square, London WC1B 5EA. E info@mbifoundation.com W www.m bifoundation.com

Friday 20 March

11:30 am | ORTS Members Visit to the British Museum Textile Centre at Blythe House Organised by: The Oriental Rug and Textile Society (ORTS). A visit to see selections from the British Museum’s Middle Eastern and Central Asian Collections led by Helen Wolfe, Textile Collections Manager and Fahmida Suleman, Phyllis Bishop Curator for the Modern Middle East. Tickets: £20 for membership with one year of 11 events). Blythe House, 23 Blythe Road, London W14 0QX. T 020 7639 7593 E membership@orts.org.uk W www.orientalrugandtextilesociety.org.uk / www.orts.org.uk

12:00 pm | Title TBC (Seminar) Sinan Kuneralp, ISIS Press, Istanbul. Organised by: SOAS Modern Turkish Studies Programme, LMEI. Sponsored by Nuriol Bank. Part of the Seminars on Turkey series. Convened by Benjamin Fortna, SOAS. Admission free. Room 116, SOAS. T 020 7898 4431 E bf7@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

1:15 pm | Along the Watchtower: Making a Chateau amongst the Vineyards of Kefraya, Lebanon (Seminar) Elizabeth Saleh, Goldsmiths, University of London. Organised by: SOAS Food Studies Centre. SOAS Food Forum. Admission open to members of the SOAS Food Studies Centre only, to become a member see contact details. Room 4426, SOAS. E soasfoodevent@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/foodstudies/forum/

Saturday 21 March

9:45 am | Study Day on Seafaring Organised by: The British Foundation for the Study of Arabia (BFSA) and the MBI al Jaber Foundation in association with the Petrie Museum Friends. Tickets: £35 BFSA members; £40 guests; £15 students - Pre-booking required E info@mbifoundation.com Institute of Archaeology, UCL, Gordon Square, London WC1. W www.thebfsa.org / www.m bifoundation.com

Monday 30 March

TBC | International Statebuilding and Gender in the Middle East (Conference) Organised by: LSE Middle East Centre. Keynotes by Brendan O’Leary, Pennsylvania University and Nadje Al-Ali, SOAS. Conference which aims to look at the impact of the relationship between international, national and local actors on the level of incorporation of gender in the processes of statebuilding in the Middle East. Tickets: TBC. LSE. E z.n.kaya@lse.ac.uk / rsliman-haidar@lse.ac.uk W www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/

EVENTS OUTSIDE LONDON

Wednesday 18 March

6:00 pm | The Art of Collecting (Lecture) David Khalili, scholar, collector and philanthropist. Organised by: The British Foundation for the Study of Arabia (BFSA) and the MBI al Jaber Foundation. Since 1970 Professor Khalili has assembled eight of the world’s finest art collections with items from the collections exhibited in museums worldwide including the BM and the V&A. Admission free - Pre-booking required E info@mbifoundation.com Corpus Christi College, Oxford. W www.thebfsa.org / www.m bifoundation.com

EXHIBITIONS

Sunday 1 February

Until 21 March | Maps of Persia 1477–1925: A graphical journey through the history of Iran Exhibition featuring a selection of Maps – urban plans, topographic maps, and sea charts – taken from the ‘Dr Cyrus Ala’i’s Map Collection of Persia’ of over 250 maps that was gifted to SOAS in 2013. The collection includes important printed general maps of Persia and more specialist items from the early editions of Ptolemy, at the end of the 15th century, up until the end of the Qajar dynasty in 1925. Admission free. Brunei Gallery, SOAS. T 020 7898 4046 E gallery@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/maps-of-persia/

Until 27 March | Songs of the Deserts Exhibition by the artist Elaine M. Goodwin inspired by her overland desert travels between 1977–2013 comprising 50 small works – ten on each of 5 deserts: the Great Sand Sea Desert of Libya, the Sahara in Morocco, the Dasht-e Lut desert of Iran, the Baluchi Desert of Pakistan, and the Sinai in Egypt. Admission free. The Wolfson Gallery, SOAS Library, SOAS. E wofssongallery@soas.ac.uk / studi o@elainemgoodwin.co.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/wolfsongallery / www.elainemgoodwin.co.uk

Tuesday 3 February

Until 12 April | Dor Guez: The Sick Man of Europe Entitled ‘The Painter’ this new installation is the first of five from a new body of work, The Sick Man of Europe, by Dor Guez, an artist of Christian Palestinian and Jewish Tunisian descent, living in Jaffa, and considered a leading and critical voice from the Middle East. Guez’s project reflects on the military history and current political climate of the Middle East through the creative practices of individual soldiers from the region. Tickets: Day Membership £1 (except Tuesdays). Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), The Mall, London, SW1Y 5AH. T 020 7930 3647 W www.ica.org.uk

Thursday 19 March

Throughout March | Iranian Urban Art Exhibition of top Iranian graffiti artists from around the world with free documentary film matinees, rap graffiti workshops and academic panel discussions with luminaries such as Ala Ebtekar. Tickets: TBC. Graffik Gallery, 284 Portobello Road London W10 5TE. T 020 8354 3592 E art@graffikgallery.co.uk W http://graffikgallery.com
An intensive five-week programme which includes two courses: an Arabic Language Course (introductory or intermediate) and another on ‘Government and Politics of the Middle East' or "Culture and Society in the Middle East'.

Beginners Arabic (Level 1)

This is an introductory course in Modern Standard Arabic. It teaches students the Arabic script and provides basic grounding in Arabic grammar and syntax. On completing the course, students should be able to read, write, listen to and understand simple Arabic sentences and passages. This course is for complete beginners and does not require any prior knowledge or study of Arabic.

Beginners Arabic (Level 2)

This course is a continuation of Beginners Arabic Level 1. It completes the coverage of the grammar and syntax of Modern Standard Arabic and trains students in reading, comprehending and writing with the help of a dictionary more complex Arabic sentences and passages.

To qualify for entry into this course, students should have already completed at least one introductory course in Arabic.

Government and Politics of the Middle East

This course provides an introduction to the politics of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It gives on a country by country basis, an overview of the major political issues and developments in the region since the end of the First World War and addresses key themes in the study of contemporary Middle East politics, including: the role of the military, social and economic development, political Islam, and the recent uprisings (the ‘Arab Spring').

Culture and Society in the Middle East

This course examines the major cultural patterns and institutions of the MENA region. It is taught through a study of some lively topics such as religious and ethnic diversity, impact of the West, stereotyping, the role of tradition, education (traditional and modern), family structure and value, gender politics, media, life in city, town and village, labour and labour migration, the Palestinian refugee problem and Arab exile communities, culinary cultures, music and media, etc.

FEES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session (5 weeks)</th>
<th>Programme fee*</th>
<th>Accommodation fee**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 June-23 July 2015 (two courses)</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
<td>from £300/week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* An early bird discount of 10% applies to course fees before 15 April 2015.

** Rooms can be booked at the Intercollegiate Halls which are located in the heart of Bloomsbury: www.halls.london.ac.uk.

For more information, please contact Louise Hosking on LH2@soas.ac.uk. Or check our website www.soas.ac.uk/lmei
MAPS of PERSIA

A graphical journey through the history of Iran

23 January – 21 March 2015
Presented by the Centre for Iranian Studies
at the London Middle East Institute
Brunei Gallery, SOAS, University of London
Thornaugh Street, Russell Square, London, WC1H 0XG
t. 020 7898 4046 (Recorded Info)
e. gallery@soas.ac.uk w. soas.ac.uk/gallery
Admission Free, Open Tuesday – Saturday 10.30 – 17.00
Late night opening Thursday until 20.00
Closed Sunday, Monday & Bank Holidays