THIS ISSUE: IRAN’S ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

- MENA, climate change and COP21
- Environmental sustainability in Iran
- Complexities in addressing water security in Iran
- Tehran and its mountains
- Air pollution and public health in Tehran
- Learning to value greenish spaces
- Tourism and the environment
- Environmental policymaking in Turkey

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Dear Reader

Hamid M. Pouran, IHF Visiting Fellow in Iran’s Environmental Sustainability

In March and April 2015 we published the first issue of The Middle East in London dedicated to the environment. The importance of environmental sustainability in the MENA region and the wide spectrum of challenges faced was reflected in that issue, which covered subjects from the Nile Basin hydrosolidarity to depleted uranium pollution in Iraq.

In this issue we focus on Iran on the eve of its opening up after last year’s nuclear agreement with the P5+1 countries to draw attention to its neglected environmental challenges.

To talk about environmental problems in Iran – or any other country, for that matter – we must first discuss the 2015 COP21 Paris Climate Change agreement. In Insight I describe what the 21st Conference of Parties (COP) in Paris has achieved and how MENA countries have committed themselves to reducing their greenhouse gases emissions.

Janet Blake’s article explains how geographical location and climate variations have made Iran’s ecology rich: the country is habitat to a vast array of different animal species. While she mentions some positive aspects of Iran’s environmental policies, she also notes the myriad of challenges that still need to be addressed.

Iran’s water shortage is arguably as old as its history. Ali Nazemi discusses the roots of this complex problem and notes the uncertainty in existing scientific knowledge as well as the unsustainable culture of socio-economic development.

Two articles focus on Tehran. In the first, Ali Madanipour explains how the city’s rapid urbanisation has changed its relationship with its immediate environment. The depletion of aquifers and air pollution are among the major challenges that Tehran faces. My second article expands on this theme looking at air pollution. I explain the Air Quality Index (AQI) and talk about some of the causes and consequences of air pollution that Tehran suffers from.

James Hitchmough sheds light on Iran’s urban greenspace by looking at increasing urbanisation and the ability to provide beneficial urban landscape infrastructure. The connection between cultural aspects of such spaces and their function in an ecosystem are also part of this discussion. Minoo H. Esfehani informs us how an expected surge in tourism to and within Iran may negatively impact the environment. Iran is not prepared and does not have the proper infrastructure in place – in particular with respect to its natural landscapes – to successfully manage the environmental consequences of a predicted ‘tsunami of tourists’.

As the magazine is going to press, Nowrouz celebrations and Easter are around the corner. We’d like to take this opportunity to wish all of our readers a Joyful Nowrouz and a very Happy New Year and Easter!
Climate change will disproportionately impact MENA countries. Hamid M. Pouran examines the forecast in light of the Paris climate change agreement, COP21

MENA, climate change and COP21

The Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) is blessed with abundant natural resources, in particular oil and gas. Nevertheless, the arid and semi-arid climates of this region have imposed risks and limitations on these countries, particularly in regard to available water resources.

Population growth in the MENA countries has been amongst the highest in the world for the past half a century. The total population of this region is estimated to be around 430 million today, which amounts to a 420 per cent increase since 1950, with a projected population of 692 million for 2050; such high growth levels in general pose severe environmental challenges including water shortages, land degradation and pollution.

Another unique feature of this geopolitically strategic region, especially in its recent history, is heightened political tension, violent conflicts and distrust among neighbouring countries. Survival, then, is a top priority for many of these governments; environmental sustainability receives low priority.

Rapid urbanisation, the absence of proper legal frameworks to protect the environment and a failure to implement national and international environmental protection guidelines have all put MENA’s environment in a fragile state. This condition is expected to deteriorate further given current climate change observations and future forecasts. Here we describe what climate change means for MENA countries and what we hope will come from the recent Paris climate change agreement (COP21).

Conference of Parties’ (COP) roots go back to 1992 when, during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the importance of recognising climate change as a common threat was accepted and the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) was drafted, which became effective in 1994. In 2015 the parties to this agreement gathered in Paris for the 21st time – hence, COP21 – to develop an agreement on climate change that aimed to significantly reduce greenhouse gases emissions (GHG) to prevent further increases of Earth’s mean temperature.

Since the start of the new millennium we are experiencing an unprecedented level of temperature increases on a global scale. 2015 was the hottest year on record (since the late 19th century). We have already passed the 1°C increase in global mean temperature and are on a fast track to experience 2°C mean temperature increases (compared to the pre-industrial era), which is considered a point of no return for climate change. This may not seem like a critical increase on the local scale (i.e. microclimate), but at a global level it will lead to existential threats for many countries and regions. Frequent, extreme heatwaves, droughts and floods are some of the expected, irreversible and devastating impacts of climate change.

Implementing the COP21 agreement is the last chance to curb current levels of greenhouse gases emissions; otherwise, in only 30 years, we will inevitably pass the 2°C level. Drastic changes by all countries are required to deviate as much as possible from the current trajectory, which, some say, could even cause increases up to 5°C in global temperature levels. It is worth
The question is not if the MENA region will be affected by climate change, but how severe the impacts will be.

MENA countries, along with other nations, have agreed to limit their greenhouse gases emissions by submitting their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). These countries constitute a small portion of global emissions compared with China, India and the USA, which account for 50 per cent of the global greenhouse gases emissions. In 2014, Iran ranked 8th and Saudi Arabia 9th with respectively 1.71 and 1.67 per cent of world total emissions. However, in terms of emissions per capita and vulnerability against the impacts of climate change they occupy very different positions. Some of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have the highest emissions per capita, namely Qatar, Kuwait, the UAE, Oman and Bahrain, which respectively occupy the 1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th positions in the global ranking. Saudi Arabia and Iran are respectively 7th and 35th in this ranking. On the other hand, people in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco emit approximately 1/10th of the greenhouse gases per capita compared to Qatar, Kuwait and UAE.

MENA countries’ commitments to the COP21 agreement, as asserted in their submitted INDCs, vary notably from rather vague statements about avoiding CO2 emissions to detailed pledges with clear implementation periods. Nevertheless, where a mitigation target has been expressed two different targets have been offered: conditional and unconditional.

The unconditional commitment is under the current circumstances of the countries and based on existing resources within them, while the conditional target depends on external financial investment and technology transfer. For example, Iran has pledged 4 per cent unconditional and 12 per cent conditional targets. Accordingly, Iran will reduce 12 per cent of its greenhouse gases emissions by 2030 and start implementing related frameworks from 2021 if its sanctions are lifted (this document was submitted to COP21 on 21 November 2015, before the nuclear agreement implementation day). Algeria is another country that has set two targets: 7 per cent unconditional and 22 per cent conditional (2030 target year). Algeria’s ability to meet the conditional target is based on receiving external support in terms of finance, technology transfer and development and capacity building. Qatar’s INDC document sets a series of policies and intentions and does not clearly quantify a mitigation target.

With COP21 – as was previously agreed in Copenhagen in 2009 and in Cancún in 2010 – developed countries agreed to provide external funding for developing countries to speed up the transition towards renewable energy resources and to build resilient infrastructure to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The allocated fund is $100 billion USD per year provided to developing countries to meet their goals and to stay on the correct trajectory. Some MENA countries, specifically those with lower GDPs, expect to receive a portion of this available support to meet their commitments.

Despite the overall relatively small contribution of MENA countries to global warming, these countries are among those that would be most affected by climate change. The arid and semi-arid climates of this region have already put water resources under stress. The anticipated, prolonged and hotter summers expected, along with extreme heatwaves, will make these countries suffer disproportionately compared to others. This means that the already inefficient agricultural systems of these countries will face new challenges; for instance even less grazing lands will be available for livestock. New studies suggest that, towards the end of the century, severe heatwaves combined with humidity in countries in the Persian Gulf region will make it impossible for people to stay outside for more than a few hours at a time. The conditions will be beyond the human adaptability threshold to tolerate; sweating and ventilation would not be enough to mitigate the heat. This means that outdoor professions would face major restrictions and that the required infrastructure and the built environment need to be drastically adapted to cope with such radical climatic changes.

The main question thus is not if the MENA region will be affected by climate change, but how severe the impacts will be. At least some of these countries have prosperous economies, which allow them to invest in new industries, diversify their economies and better adapt to the inevitable risks imposed by climate change.

Hamid M. Pouran has a PhD in Environmental Engineering. Before joining the LMEI as an IHF Visiting Fellow in Iran’s Environmental Sustainability, he was a Senior Research Associate at Lancaster University and a member of the Transatlantic Initiative for Nanotechnology and the Environment.
Environmental sustainability in Iran: the bumpy road ahead

Iran’s amended post-Revolution Constitution (1989) considers the preservation of the environment ‘a public duty in the Islamic Republic.’ Accordingly, economic and other activities that inevitably involve pollution of the environment or cause irreparable damage to it are forbidden. Thus, officially at least, we see a commitment to the sustainable management and protection of the country’s environment and, in particular, the need to balance economic development with environmental quality and inter-generational justice.

When the Environmental Protection Organization (EPO) was established in Iran in 1971 its main priorities were: studying the factors for environmental degradation, including pollution; employing environmentally-friendly technologies; ensuring environmentally-sound land use policies; identifying wildlife habitats of a high ecological value in a critical situation; adopting environmental standards for the correct management and use of environmental resources; enhancing public environmental awareness; and monitoring the enforcement of environmental legislation to prevent further environmental degradation. These priorities are little changed today.

Due to its sheer size and varied ecosystems and climatic variations, the conservation of biological diversity in Iran is a monumental task. Iran is a monumental task (the total land area of Iran is 164.8 million hectares). The country is located at the meeting point of three climatic zones: the Mediterranean, the arid West Asian and the humid/semi-humid Caspian zone. As a result, the habitat and ecosystem diversity found in Iran is vast: its coastal zones alone encompass 25 ecological types and units, and its deserts cover 53 per cent and forests more than 10 per cent of the country. Iran also possesses over 1,000 wetlands of various types, and its deserts enjoy a relatively high level of animal species diversity with, for example, as many as 517 species of...
The regional situation has led to a number of important environmental challenges for Iran which are not wholly within the country's power to control

A further project that demonstrates a positive use of the natural and human resources of the country concerns carbon sequestration in the desertified rangelands in southern Khorassan, using a community-based management approach. This last demonstrates a willingness on the part of Iran’s Department of Environment to employ participatory approaches to environmental management issues.

With regard to the urban environment too, projects are underway in the areas of industrial energy efficiency (in key sectors), including policy reforms and market transformation for energy efficient buildings and reduction in Tehran transport emissions.

A further important consideration that must not be underestimated is the regional situation in which Iran is located. It is a country surrounded by political instability and even armed conflict (in Iraq, Afghanistan and Northwest Pakistan). Moreover, there are tensions with its neighbours in the Persian Gulf region that further hinder cooperation. In the Caspian Sea region, as well, reaching compromises on regional cooperation for the protection of the environment of this highly polluted sea has proven very difficult. The regional situation has led to a number of important environmental challenges for Iran which are not wholly within the country's power to control, ranging from dust storms as a result of the increasingly dry and desertified land of Iraq, pollution of the Caspian Sea and the drying up of the shared water basins with Afghanistan.

As a result, the lacuna in terms of any comprehensive regional agreement for the protection of the environment and its natural resources (testament to the lack of regional cooperation generally) is a major challenge to Iran and other regional countries in terms of sustainable environmental protection.

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Isfahan's bird garden. Iran's climate and geographical location has made it the habitat of a wide range of animals species. Byفلوراں
IRAN’S ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Ali Nazemi examines the scientific, socio-economic and cultural challenges to achieving water security in Iran

Complexities in addressing water security in Iran

Water is among the most essential requirements for human life and society. Water availability – in the right quality, quantity and timing – directly translates to human and ecosystem welfare. This, however, is just one side of the coin: deviation from the ‘rightness’ of the water availability can also result in a wide range of vulnerabilities in socio-economic activities and can consequently endanger food, energy and environmental security. Considering the ever-increasing human water use, warming climate and growing variability in hydroclimatic extremes, there is an urgent need for addressing ‘water security’ across various scales.

Looking at the current state of water security on county-wide scales, Iran certainly stands out due to a wide range of long-standing issues and emerging threats due to the changing socio-economy, population growth and warming climate. The creeping effects of water insecurity in Iran have started to be noticed, not only by experts but also by the general public, thanks to a number of recent environmental catastrophes across the country such as the critical conditions of lakes and aquatic ecosystems, the severe decline in groundwater storage and the translation of middle-intensity rainfall events to deadly floods to name but a few.

Addressing water security involves studying the behaviour of both natural and human water systems with the larger goal of diagnosing, describing and managing current and future vulnerabilities in optimal anthropogenic and ecosystem states. This is an extremely complex problem in general, and in Iran in particular. Here it is argued that the complexity involved is not only due to the epistemic uncertainty in scientific knowledge, but also due to the unsustainable culture of socio-economic development within the country as a whole.

But why does addressing water security exhibit a complex problem? Based on system theory, any system that shows self-organising and emerging behaviours is complex. As drivers and processes that determine the states of natural and human water systems are massively interconnected and evolving, rather substantially during the recent past, addressing water security is essentially a complex problem. There are various examples of catastrophic behaviours occurring in regional water systems that had been previously unknown and unseen. The current state of the Lake Urmia is a vivid Iranian example for such complex responses to changing anthropogenic interventions in a natural water system.

The complexity in addressing water security is well recognised in the scientific...
Natural and anthropogenic mechanisms that determine current and future water availability and use are not fully understood, and therefore, any projection of future water security is inherently uncertain.

discourse. We are fully aware of various sources of uncertainty in our data, theories and models that are used to understand the current and future states of natural and human water systems at local, regional and global scales. Let us consider the hot topic of addressing the climate change impacts on natural water availability. We are still not able to reproduce historical hydroclimatic observations using mathematical models and further bias adjustments and/or downscaling are required. As a result, using mathematical models for future hydroclimatic projections requires assuming that the model parameters and/or relationships between model simulations and gauged observations remain unchanged in time. This assumption is highly questionable and ignores the dynamic relationship between large-scale weather patterns and local hydroclimate.

Similar arguments can be raised for the anthropogenic dimension of water security, particularly the magnitude and extent of land and water resource management. For instance, we are currently unaware of exact human water abstraction and use, because the majority of human interventions in surface and ground water are still not measured. In addition, the mechanisms that determine current and future water use are not fully understood, and therefore, any projection of future demand is inherently uncertain. Moreover, there are various socio-economic and cultural elements that drive human water use. These qualitative variables are hard to quantify, and hence, cannot be readily captured in mathematical models for current and future projections.

These complexities are much more pronounced in Iran due to its semi-arid climate, large heterogeneity in its natural and human water systems, poor data availability and particular conditions within the socio-economic and cultural narratives that lead to extremely complex responses in natural and anthropogenic water systems. Indeed, Iran has been historically a water-scarce country with substantial temporal and spatial differences in hydroclimatology, population and socio-economy. Facing these conditions through developing socio-economy requires strict policies for optimal water resource management, which have not been and still are not in place. The key challenge here is the fact that characteristics of both natural and human water systems have substantially changed and will vary more in the future due to emerging behaviours in both natural and human systems.

Unfortunately, the level of data availability and the quality of existing information do not allow a thorough understanding of the current and future vulnerabilities in response to water scarcities, and therefore do not delineate a set of operational management decisions for mitigation and/or adaptation. As a result, we are not only dealing with a complex natural system with a variety of ‘unknown’ emerging behaviours; we also do not have enough information to fully quantify the conditional relationship that links the historical characteristics of natural and anthropogenic systems to already ‘known’ water insecurities.

These scientific challenges are exacerbated by Iran's population growth, inefficient water and land management and penchant for ‘quick-and-easy’ development. Since the late 1970s, the population of Iran has increased more than twofold. This trend is expected to continue in the future as the result of an agenda that calls for increasing the rate of population growth in order to mitigate the impacts of an ageing population. This population growth has not really promoted the need for improved land and water management practices across the country. Ineffective management and a lack of careful study prior to land use change and/or development of new water infrastructure have all played a crucial role in the state of water insecurity throughout the country.

Considering the current water insecurities in conjunction with the mismanagement of other natural resources in Iran, it seems that the virtue of sustainable development as a whole has been broadly ignored in the country. While climate change will most likely add to the water insecurity in Iran by perturbing the natural patterns of water cycles across the country, current manifestations of water insecurity in Iran are mainly the result of the overexploitation of natural resources, without considering the essential need for developing sustainably within nature. To understand the anthropogenic roots of unsustainable development in Iran, we urgently need critical inputs from a range of social scientists including sociologists, political scientists, economists and psychologists.

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Lake Urmia in Iran is experiencing a drastic loss of water and now holds only approximately 5 per cent of its known, high-stage volume. Created by the Image Science & Analysis Laboratory of the NASA Johnson Space Center.
In its rapid development and expansion in recent decades, the relationship between the city of Tehran and its mountains has changed from an embrace to a tension, as if the mountains have changed from a source of life and security to a source of threat and an obstacle to health, all owing to our disregard for the environment.

The location of Tehran in the natural landscape has been highly symbolic and strategic in history. This is reflected in its place on the historic Silk Road, which gave it strategic importance as an intercontinental crossroad. The city is spread on the southern slopes of the Alborz mountain range, with its nearby highest peak, Mount Damavand, a dormant volcano which at 5,670 metres is the highest in the country with a longstanding presence in its mythology. The mountain range embraced the city, providing defence and fresh water. In recent decades however, this relationship between the city and the mountain has radically changed, with negative implications for air quality, water supply, and residential safety.

Tehran has grown northwards towards the mountains, climbing ever higher in its search for cooler and cleaner air. Its selection as the capital city two centuries ago first led to the development of lush, large gardens surrounding the city and summer residences nearer to the mountains. In its restless growth, however, the city has devoured these gardens and turned the foothills into high-density residential areas, increasingly losing its vegetation. Gardens and green spaces continue to be eradicated and trees cut in the name of urban development by the public authorities eager to build wider and longer roads, and by the private developers driven by high land prices and the demands of a growing middle class. The air quality suffers from the disappearance of these green spaces. It also suffers from heavy traffic, industrial pollution and urban heat islands.

The incidence of air pollution has grown to become the primary environmental concern of the citizens. Motor vehicles are the main source of air pollution in the city: as the mayor announced recently, 800,000 tons of pollutants enter the city’s air each year, of which 82 per cent is produced by motor vehicles. Old cars and substandard fuels have been identified as the main cause, as the residential heating systems – which had been formerly blamed for much of the air pollution – are shown to contribute only 4 per cent. Manufacturing industries are located on the western and southwestern

In 2011, Tehran suffered from 230 days of air pollution. On many days vulnerable citizens are advised to stay indoors.
Depletion of the aquifers causes massive land collapse: as Iran’s Geological Survey has shown, the southern plains of Tehran have subsided by 36 cm
Tehran has a serious air pollution problem. *Hamid M. Pouran* discusses the causes and effects

**Air pollution and public health in Iran**

The Air Quality Index (AQI) often reaches alarming levels in Tehran. Nowadays the city’s residents pay close attention to the AQI, though they may not quite understand the science behind it. The AQI is a yardstick to measure air quality. It is inversely proportional to how clean the ambient air is: the higher the AQI, the more serious the associated health effects are for people who breathe the (polluted) air. These effects include a wide range of both short-term (coughing, asthma-like symptoms) and long-term (impacting breathing passages, causing chronic disease) health problems. The AQI is usually reported for five key air pollutants: (1) carbon monoxide, (2) ground-level ozone, (3) nitrogen dioxide, (4) sulphur dioxide and (5) particulate matter (PM) measured at 2.5 and 10 micrometres. Among these pollutants, PM is one of the most hazardous.

The AQI in Iran is comprised of five different levels, which span from 0 to 300. They are also colour-coded. The air is considered clean when the AQI is below 50; for this range the index is highlighted green. An AQI of 50-100 is indicated by the colour yellow and is considered a healthy level. An AQI of 100 is the threshold. AQI measurements of 100-150, indicated by the colour orange, mean that the air quality is unhealthy for sensitive groups (e.g. children, pregnant women and those with cardiac and respiratory system problems). When the AQI goes above 150 it is unhealthy for all people. Thus, AQI measurements of 150-200 are displayed in red. Such levels of air pollution require that specific measures be implemented. For instance, emergency services and hospitals are put on full alert and paramedics are deployed to busy areas of the city. People are advised to stay home, air polluting industries are ordered to put their activities on hold and traffic restrictions are imposed. When the AQI is red, visibility is significantly reduced and a thick layer of smog covers the city. The highest level of air pollution, 200-300 AQI, is defined as very unhealthy and indicated by the colour purple.

The AQI is a product of scientific measurements for each of the above-mentioned pollutants, which are recorded in different units. For example carbon monoxide is reported as parts per million (ppm) and particulate matter in micrograms per cubic metre. A sub-index is calculated for each of the pollutants, and then the highest sub-index of the five major polluters is used as the air quality index. AQI is often reported for a specified average period (often 24 hours).

Airborne particulate matter or PM is a complex mixture of extremely small sized particles that may have different natures (e.g. solid, liquid, organic and inorganic chemicals). These particles can be natural, manmade or a combination of both. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), smaller particles increase the potential risk of causing health issues. Industrial activities, such as cement manufacturing or petrol and diesel combustion engines, are examples

In the 12 months from 21 March 2014 the people of Tehran experienced 16 clean days, 233 healthy days, 113 unhealthy days for sensitive groups and 3 unhealthy days for everyone.
of anthropogenic sources of air pollution. Soil and dust particles are among natural causes of PM. Particles smaller than 10 micrometres are often not trapped in the nose and throat and can therefore enter the lungs. In terms of health impacts, the associated risks with PM 2.5 are notably higher than PM 10. Well-documented research shows both short and long-term exposure to PM has negative impacts on human health, from asthma aggravation to lung cancer. Hospital admissions notably increase when the AQI reaches the unhealthy level (above 150). As mentioned earlier PM 2.5 imposes stronger risk factors than PM 10. It is now well established that exposure to PM 2.5 negatively affects children’s lung development and generally causes irreversible damage to the lungs. At the moment the data available is not sufficient to establish a safe level of exposure with no adverse health impacts.

Tehran, with a population of more than 8 million as of 2011, has one of the worst air quality records in the world. Though Tehran does not have the highest level of air pollution in Iran – particularly when compared to Ahwaz and Sanandaj, which are often among the top 10 most polluted cities due to the high concentration of PM, as Iran’s capital it dominates the news and receives substantially more attention. In 2012 an advisor to Iran’s Health Minister announced that, in a period of one year from March 2011, 4,460 people had died from air pollution in Tehran. According to the AQI records, in the 12 months from 21 March 2014 the people of Tehran experienced 16 clean days, 233 healthy days, 113 unhealthy days for sensitive groups and 3 unhealthy days for everyone.

Tehran’s air pollution is not a new concern; it has been publicly discussed during the past four decades. Even among developed countries air pollution is a major problem. But the frequency and intensity of the air pollution in Tehran makes it stand out among other cities. Thermal/temperature inversion is a phenomenon that often occurs in winters. It happens when the temperature close to the ground is colder than the temperature above it. In such atmospheric conditions we have limited natural air movement, so atmospheric pollutants are not completely dispersed and removed and instead remain in their place. This leads to sharp increases in AQI levels. The geographical location of Tehran and the presence of the Alborz mountain range in the north only exacerbates this problem. Rapid urban development, including the construction of a number of high-rise buildings that limit natural air movement corridors in Tehran, also contributes to this problem.

Mobile pollution sources – petrol and diesel cars and motorcycles – are thought to cause 80 per cent of Tehran’s air pollution. About two years ago, due to nuclear-related sanctions, it was virtually impossible for Iran to import high standard fuel. Reverse engineering combined with the use of indigenous technology and existing systems for producing petrol led to the production of nonstandard, low quality fuel in Iran that compounded the problem. These days high standard fuel is imported, which has helped produce a notable reduction of nonstandard carcinogenic products emissions.

The incomplete combustion of fuels by cars and motorcycles, regardless of the fuel standard, leads to the formation and emission of air pollutants including PM 2.5. Many of the vehicles in Tehran do not pass minimum standards; some do not even have a catalytic converter. Regrettably these nonstandard vehicles also form a big part of Tehran’s public transport systems; taxis and buses contribute disproportionately to the problem.

Solving Tehran’s air pollution problem is not easy, but it is achievable. London and Mexico City have succeeded before. Investing in public transport, especially by replacing old vehicles with new ones, adopting green technologies like electric and hybrid cars, raising people’s awareness and increasing their understanding of the role they play in air pollution, and implementing efficient regulations are some of the essential steps that must be taken in order to address this challenge.

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**Mobile pollution sources – petrol and diesel cars and motorcycles – are thought to cause 80 per cent of Tehran’s air pollution**
Vegetation in urban greenspace in Iran combines the traditions of indigenous design with a Western European and North American overlay that originated in the 1970s, at a time when there was little real awareness of water as a scarce resource. One challenge facing Iran at a time of increasing urbanisation is how to provide an urban landscape infrastructure that provides positive cultural services to people and equivalent ecosystems services to flora and fauna (and people) without increasing water consumption.

This is a challenge faced by many countries around the world. Normally the first step taken to address it involves a technological approach: to look at how water can be used more efficiently. This typically entails investigation into different types of irrigation delivery system, such as substituting drip irrigation for sprinklers and highly inefficient open furrow irrigation. Installing electronic controllers that monitor the actual water content of the soil before switching the sprinklers on and off is a key part of this strategy. This is a constructive and positive response, but, depending on the degree of water shortage and the scale of the problem, it is generally insufficient to resolve the crisis.

Some cultures find it very difficult to move beyond this technological phase as the next steps requires more cultural adaptation and change, which is much more difficult to implement. By step two a vested interest irrigation constituency often develops that lobbies for the maintenance of the status quo.

Step two involves rethinking the norms by which irrigation is managed and, in particular, moving away from agriculturally founded notions that irrigation management of greenspace should be based on the avoidance of stress. The latter is strongly developed in agriculture and productive horticulture as a means of maintaining high levels of photosynthesis in order to maximise yield and economic return. However, rapid levels of growth are not necessary as a permanent characteristic in urban greenspace. Here excess growth is a problem, requiring more maintenance for its control. So the goal is to cultivate plants that look satisfactory (i.e. not wilting or dying back) but do not grow rapidly.

To achieve this, greenspace planners, designers and managers need to embrace what is known as stress management, which entails working out how infrequently...
Poorer people experience very undeveloped public and private greenspace while richer people live in verdant green bubbles

A given species can be irrigated before it ceases to look acceptable in its role in urban greenspace.

Applied research is very useful in informing these decisions, but very little of this work has been published. In studies that have been undertaken the authors often find that most plants can be irrigated far less frequently than normal without adverse visual and functional impacts. Once you question irrigation frequency, the next step is to question the type of plants used; this could mean moving away from tradition. Ultimately, the goal is to find species which look good with very infrequent or no irrigation at all. At a scientific level scientists have refined techniques – using an instrument known as an osmometer – to rapidly assess the fundamental stress tolerance capacity of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants.

The idea of substituting new species for ones that were traditionally used in irrigated greenspace has been widely adopted over the past 30 years elsewhere in the world. In dry parts of the USA, for example, Arizona, Colorado and California, botanic gardens and other institutions have established plant evaluation schemes to provide the greenspace industry and home gardeners with less-water demanding plants. Given the extremely rich Iranian flora, there is huge potential to undertake this process in Iran, but this will require research leadership by people who both understand Iranian flora and cultural attitudes towards the unfamiliar.

Step three builds on and is integrated with the second. It is mainly concerned with public reception and involves evaluating psychological responses based on normative cultural positions about the appearance of moisture stress in urban places. If you can get urban people to be more comfortable with the visual symptoms of moisture stress and plants of more xerophytic appearance, the possibilities for having more green, or greenish or seasonally brown-space in cities would increase. Under current approaches in Iran it is difficult to expand ‘greenish’ space to parts of cities where wealth levels are too low to allow water to be purchased.

This leads to the familiar urban inequality: poorer people experience very undeveloped public and private greenspace while richer people live in verdant green bubbles.

We know from environmental psychology research that it is normal for people to value big wet leaves over small dry ones. These values may even be hard wired into our heads as part of our shared biological and cultural evolution. Places with bigger ‘moist-looking’ leaves and vigorous growth inform us that water and resources are nearby, that this is a good place. On the other hand, places with small dry, xerophytic-looking leaves say the opposite. These cultural and perhaps even biological attitudes seem to be just as strong in cultures that have lived in dry landscapes for millennia as they are in cultures that have lived in much wetter landscapes. It does however seem as if these attitudes can be moved. Perhaps the best examples of this are some cities in Arizona – specifically Phoenix and Tucson. Annual rainfall there is about 200-300mm per annum, mainly distributed in the summer when high temperatures are experienced but are mediated by the altitude, similar to the Iranian plateau. The dry, sunny and mild winters made these cities very attractive to North Americans from the NE and Midwest as retirement destinations from the early 20th century on.

Initially the landscape of these cities was an attempt to pretend Phoenix was really the same place the retirees had left only with a lot more sunshine. Over the past 40 years there appears to have been a major cultural shift, and there is at least anecdotal evidence of a move to embrace the dryness of the desert as beautiful rather than ugly. You see this in plantings in public space that use plants that are extremely drought tolerant and are either not irrigated at all, or irrigated very little. In many cases these plants are native species. These changes seemed to have occurred through the activism of individuals and various subgroups, mostly, I suspect, drawn from the Phoenix middle class. There has been a re-branding of what it means to live in a semi-arid, near desert environment. Dry has become culturally cool, making Phoenix a desirable place to live and worthy of celebration. The dry vegetation that naturally occurs in Arizona often provides a very colourful show of annuals, herbaceous plants and shrubs in spring, and this has probably helped greatly in generating a real sense of pride in the Arizonan landscape.

So what about Iran? Might it be possible in the 21st century to meld the processes (but not the same plants and planting) evident with Arizona, with its new/old cultural traditions applied to Iran’s own, highly drought tolerant flora?

James Hitchmough is Professor of Horticultural Ecology in the Dept. of Landscape, University of Sheffield. His interests lie in rethinking the use of native flora for sustainable urban environments
According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), new tourist destinations are expected to emerge worldwide. About a decade ago many developing countries began campaigns to present themselves as emerging and attractive destinations for travellers, attempting to carve out space in the highly competitive global tourism market which serves mostly high income and developed countries.

Now – after the nuclear-related sanctions levelled against it were lifted – Iran finds itself in a very specific situation regarding tourism development. As one of the most ancient countries in the world with numerous attractive natural and cultural landscapes, it has recently opened its doors to tourists from all over the world. A country in heart of the Middle East, Iran has remained somewhat of a mystery to people for quite some time. Economists say that, as a flourishing market, tourism can bring the country’s economy out of recession, and Iranian officials are anticipating a ‘tsunami of tourists’ now that sanctions have been removed. Likely it is correct that this ‘tsunami of tourists’ will soon arrive in Iran, but one must wonder: is Iran prepared to deal with and mitigate the potential negative impacts that tourism could have on existing resources and the environment?

Although Iran is considered mostly a cultural destination for tourists, that doesn’t mean that nature in Iran is not appealing to them. On the contrary, it seems that some specific aspects of Iran’s natural resources – such as its deserts, mountains and some species of its wildlife – have been very attractive for nature-based tourism. The uniqueness of the tight links and mutual relationship between the old culture of this country and its various natural landscapes is a powerful draw. Thus, it is expected that more foreign tourists will visit the natural attractions of Iran in the near future.

Tourism brings huge benefits to countries along with a set of socio-economic advantages, however this is not without complications. The impact tourism has on the environment is an old and ongoing topic that sparks fierce debates. One of the more widely accepted repercussions for many is that unplanned tourism development and mismanagement can cause irreparable destruction to different parts of environment. Yet others believe that in comparison with other big industries tourism has much less of a negative impact on the environment. In reality the story is not that simple; a sudden burst in mass tourism in a short period of time

In the face of an expected ‘tsunami of tourists’ in Iran, one wonders if the country is prepared to deal with and mitigate the potential negative impacts of tourism on the environment.
The uniqueness of the tight links and mutual relationship between the old culture of Iran and its various natural landscapes is a powerful draw in a region with a limited environmental carrying capacity that lacks an efficient management system will disturb the well-being of all ecosystems. Water, soil and air pollution, water and food resource shortages, the threatening of wildlife (flora and fauna), the damaging of once pristine geographical landscapes and unnecessary land use change are only some more visible environmental impacts of unplanned and mismanaged tourism.

Potential Threats and Solutions

The potentially destructive aspects of tourism can be considered from different perspectives. Regarding the post-sanction tourism conditions in Iran, some aspects require urgent attention. First, the fragile ecosystems of protected areas in Iran – such as national parks – are more at risk from tourism development. Most of these areas are managed via traditional management systems; tourism, then, has not been foreseen or accounted for as an accepted activity. Thus these areas suffer from a shortage of the basic required infrastructure – such as access and accommodation facilities, interpretation and security – to make them ready to receive even a few visitors.

Second, uncontrolled growth of domestic tourism to the natural areas in Iran has already caused many problems. The most obvious example of this is the air, water and soil pollution, forest deteriorations, land use change, and cultural change in local communities that domestic mass tourism has caused along the southern coastline of the Caspian Sea. The arrival of foreign tourists – combined with the already failing infrastructure – is going to generate even more pressure on these ecosystems to survive.

Ecotourism (which is defined as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people and involves interpretation and education tourism), if planned and practiced correctly, can be a tool to mitigate the environmental problems that tourism can cause. But in Iran, ecotourism and other types of environmental-friendly tourism are mostly just ‘words on paper’. Some Iranian tour operators claim that they are promoting more eco-friendly tours, but the total number of these types of activities and their effectiveness is not considerable in comparison with the size and variety of natural attractions in Iran.

Lack of public awareness is another problem. Neither the public nor many of the tourism decision makers and stakeholders have been trained enough about tourist behaviour in natural environments. Surprisingly, the shortage of this type of knowledge is also present at the academic level because of a lack of up-to-date, tourism-related academic resources in either English or Persian.

Notably, the majority of the environmental issues caused by tourism are explained by the fact that tourism in Iran is not following any special plan or practical strategy. In other words, no expert-based and reliable tourism development master plan or strategic development plans have been prepared in Iran. This means that even if Iran is meant to accept 20 million tourists in 2025, the strategies and resources required to meet this goal are undetermined and completely vague.

Much of the recent tourism news from Iran is very inspiring. However, there is no doubt that any type of development needs correct planning. Therefore, in order to achieve the economic and socio-cultural benefits of tourism, Iran is in crucial need of a systematic, tourism development master plan that determines the strategies that should be adopted in order to promote sustainable tourism that has a minimal impact on natural resources. A tourism master plan could be designed by applying current global knowledge in the tourism field and learning from the guidelines and experiences of sustainable tourism development from developing countries. Finally, and more importantly, this plan must take into account aspects of geographical, cultural and socio-political features of the country in order to make it practical.

Minoo H. Esfahani is a PhD candidate in Tourism at the University of Otago, New Zealand

Pollution in Bandar Torkaman, a port on the Caspian Sea, Northern Iran. Photograph by Mostafa Hasanzadeh
Environmental policymaking in Turkey: a triumph of conviction over evidence

'To air, to water
To mountains and soils
To all the friends
I gladly sacrifice myself
To the country, every corner of which is paradise'

So begins a patriotic song from my childhood. When I listen to it today from the distance of London, it reminds me of how things have changed since then.

The latest Environmental Performance Index (EPI), prepared by Yale University, places Turkey 99th out of 180 countries in 2016. This position is the result of improvements in infrastructure, like public water supply and wastewater and waste collection systems. However, these successes seem to have come at the cost of a significant decline in biodiversity and habitats (especially in respect to species protection at national and global levels), for which the country ranks 177th in the same index.

Turkey’s vast size and the richness of its natural resources are a source of pride for her people. But how to use them is a source of constant division. This division is, of course, not unique to Turkey, manifesting itself whenever and wherever one group’s interest lies in conflict with another’s. What I find particularly challenging in Turkey is that the conflict is not only between different groups in society, but also between society and the government and sometimes even between different functions of the state. Three topical examples are presented below.

The hydropower stations – Alakır Valley

Turkey strives for energy security and one way to achieve this is to utilise the country’s hydropower potential, favoured for being a renewable energy source. The conflict arises with the scale of the investments and how they are managed: there are tens of dams permitted on some of the rivers, raising serious concerns about their environmental impact as well as the medium to long-term productivity and profitability of the dams.

One of many such catchments is the Alakır Valley, home to abundant flora and fauna within its 20 km width and 70 km length, spreading from the Kumluca district in Antalya to the Mediterranean Sea. From the source of the Alakır River to the coast, eight hydroelectric plants have been designed: four are in operation, one is under construction, two are awaiting the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) reports and another is in the project development phase. The projects require the river water to be channelled into pipes and transported downstream. Such drastic reduction in the river flow means that the animals and plants the river habitat

Turkey has made improvements in infrastructure, like public water supply and wastewater and waste collection systems. However, these successes seem to have come at the cost of a significant decline in biodiversity and habitats
supports cannot survive; the whole ecology along the valley and the estuary has been affected. This, in turn, could affect the tourism potential of the area, as well as ecological functions like nursery habitats for fish, forestry and so on. The loss of more intangible benefits, like culture and heritage, must also be noted.

Alakır Valley has been designated by the State Council as a Grade 1 Natural Site Area to be protected under law. But like many similar decisions, this designation has been ignored by the executive agencies. Rather than government action, it seems to have been left to a small NGO to lead the legal opposition by raising grass roots awareness and organising protests.

**Mining – Artvin**

Mining is an important sector for creating jobs and export opportunities, but it can have a devastating environmental impact: the degradation of land, loss of habitats in mined areas and the surrounding regions, pollution of soil and water systems with consequences for human health and plant and animal life. At the time of writing this article, residents of Artvin (in the Northeast corner of Turkey bordering Georgia) are in the streets and up in the mountains trying to stop copper and open cast gold mining operations in Cerattepe, 1,700 metres above sea level, known for its natural beauty and cultural importance for the Caucasian people’s festivals and general way of living.

Despite failing to fulfil the necessary legal requirements, the mining company is pushing ahead with its operations, and riot police have been deployed to suppress the protests. While the residents are objecting to the mine itself, lack of consultation by the government during the licensing and environmental impact assessment process and disrespect for rule of law are the main cause of their frustrations.

**Major infrastructure projects – the third bridge across the Bosphorus**

Transport is becoming unbearable in Istanbul as seen in a report by The Independent newspaper in April 2015 which reveals it as ‘the most congested city in the world’. One’s daily commute can take up to four hours or more and the romance of crossing continents during the commute wanes quickly.

One would expect a large and comprehensive study to be undertaken to investigate a variety of possible solutions to this problem, including expanding public transport and other social and security-related policies. Instead, the main solution presented is the third bridge connecting Asia and Europe over the Bosphorus. In fact, the bridge seems to be part of an even larger development vision that includes a new, six-lane motorway cutting through the forests in the north of the city, a third airport and even a canal to the west that will be more or less parallel to the Bosphorus. All of these are likely to contribute to enlarging the city even further, simply postponing the current problem rather than solving it. The bridge was considered, on its own, to be of major public interest and, as such, was exempt from the EIA process. Although bypassing the EIA without sufficient evidence should be against the law, this has been overridden by political will.

Indeed, there should be greater transparency about the analysis of evidence, consultation of the people and consideration of the wider, long-term impact of and mitigation/restoration options for major projects like the third bridge. Turkey does not lack the legal and institutional structures nor the technical capacity to conduct analyses like the EIA. Many of its environmental laws are in line with those of the European Union due to the country’s application for membership.

The problem is that existing laws and regulations are not executed as intended, and gaps in laws are exploited against the interests of the environment and other social concerns.

The problem is that existing laws and regulations are not executed as intended, and gaps in the laws are exploited against the interests of the environment and other social concerns. The way public interest is defined is mistakenly and dangerously biased towards short-term financial gains. Analysis, if undertaken, does not include evidence on the environmental damage and its long-term economic and social impact on the profitability of such development projects.

As an economist, I prefer to collect evidence about all sides of an argument before weighing them against each other and making recommendations. I would, for example, compare the financial benefits from mining to the company and to the local and national population with the environmental, economic and cultural costs of the choice of site and technology to be used for mining. The result of such an analysis is as robust as the information that goes into it and the assumptions that have to be made. Including the views of the population affected by the decision (and not only of the politicians and experts) adds legitimacy to the analysis. Such an analysis is surely a more sound and unifying exercise than the current opaque procedures which can prove to be against the long-term interests of society.

With thanks to Alpar Sargın for the information on Alakır Valley

Ece Ozdemiroglu studied Economics in Istanbul and Environmental Economics in London, where she has been advising public, private and third sector clients since the early 1990s

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The Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge (the third Bosphorus bridge) under construction on 6 October 2015 in Turkey. US Navy photograph by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Sean Spratt

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The only book of its kind on the market, Peter Clark’s Damascus Diaries: Life Under the Assads is exactly what it says on the cover: a diary of the time he spent in Damascus between 1992 and 1997 as director of the British Council. As such it offers a unique insight into life as a British official inside Syria, conveying all the frustrations – and sometimes unexpected rewards – of having to interact with the notorious bureaucracy of Syrian officialdom under Hafiz al-Assad, father to Syria’s current president Bashar al-Assad.

Thanks to the extensive index carefully put together by the author himself, the book is more than just an amusing snapshot of life as an expat in an Arab country. It is also a useful source of historical reference. Key players of the time make appearances, as these are people he meets regularly through his work. There are politicians like Bouthaina Shaaban, still today Bashar al-Assad’s political and media advisor, and Najah al-Attar, Minister of Culture for 20 years, who held a PhD from Edinburgh and was a close friend of Hafiz’s wife Anisa al-Assad (died early 2016 in Damascus), and also literary figures like Ulfat Idilbi, whose novel Clark is translating in his spare time.

A keen Arabist, he was only sent for one year, like all British Council personnel, to MECAS, the British government’s Middle East Centre for Arabic Studies in Shemlan, Lebanon. Most had had enough by the end of that year and were happy to stick at what was called the ‘Intermediate’ level, but Clark worked at the language by himself, raising it to a standard well beyond the ‘Advanced’ level which Foreign Office diplomats notionally attained.

This energy and enthusiasm for the Arabic language and its literature comes through in the diaries, enabling him to make long-term friendships with many Syrians in a way that was unusual for an expatriate official. One also gets the sense that for Clark, these friendships with Syrians – some at an elevated level of society, others lower down – were what made all the bureaucratic frustrations worthwhile. In that respect it is also a diary of human relationships. One of the most striking aspects of the society described in the diaries is how prominent women were in Syrian public life during the 1990s. Many of his closest Syrian friends were also women.

For those who knew Syria before the 2011 uprising against the Assad regime, these diaries will forever serve as a snapshot of life as it could often be there: full of life, laughter and enterprise in spite of the ever-present tentacles of the state security apparatus which employed, by some reckonings, up to a tenth of the population. Clark is well aware of these undercurrents – ‘I realise that the Ba’ath party is all-powerful in day-to-day decision making’ he writes – but like most Syrians who knew what was good for them, he steers a careful course through the often labyrinthine corridors of power and learns how to stay out of trouble while still getting things done. His embassy diplomatic colleagues come across as a far more cautious bunch, with the exception of what he calls ‘the embassy spook’.

As well as the key personalities whom Clark met over the course of his five years inside Syria, the diaries also give interesting windows onto locations inside the country, places whose names are much in the news today – like Aleppo, Homs, Latakia and Palmyra. Thanks to his tireless efforts, the British Council was able to open an office in Aleppo in 1997 towards the end of his posting, a fitting climax to his career, and something beyond imagining given the conditions inside that city today.

Diana Darke is a Syria specialist and Middle East cultural expert who has lived and worked in the Arab world for over 30 years. An Arabic speaker, she is also the author of the highly acclaimed My House in Damascus: An Inside View of the Syrian Crisis (Feb 2016)
The 2011 Arab uprisings precipitated the relatively quick collapse of a number of Middle Eastern states once perceived as invincible. The Tunisian and Egyptian states succumbed to revolutionary upheavals early on, followed by that of Qaddafi’s Libya. Yemen’s President Saleh was also eventually forced to give up power. A bloody civil war continues to rage in Syria. These uprisings highlighted weaknesses in the capacity and legitimacy of states across the Arab Middle East. This book provides a comprehensive study of state weakness – or of ‘weak states’ – across the Greater Middle East.

Fragile Politics

Fragile Politics: Weak States in the Greater Middle East
Edited by Mehran Kamrava

The 2011 Arab uprisings precipitated the relatively quick collapse of a number of Middle Eastern states once perceived as invincible. The Tunisian and Egyptian states succumbed to revolutionary upheavals early on, followed by that of Qaddafi’s Libya. Yemen’s President Saleh was also eventually forced to give up power. A bloody civil war continues to rage in Syria. These uprisings highlighted weaknesses in the capacity and legitimacy of states across the Arab Middle East. This book provides a comprehensive study of state weakness – or of ‘weak states’ – across the Greater Middle East. Fragile Politics begins with laying the theoretical framework for the study, examining the theoretical controversies surrounding the topic, the causes and characteristics of weak states, and their consequences for the Middle East, before examining a series of case studies.

March 2016, Hurst, £25.00

Violence and the City in the Modern Middle East

Violence and the City in the Modern Middle East
Edited by Nelida Fuccaro

This book explores violence in the public lives of modern Middle Eastern cities, approaching violence as an individual and collective experience, a historical event and an urban process. Violence and the city coexist in a complicated dialogue, and critical consideration of the city offers an important way to understand the transformative powers of violence – its ability to redraw the boundaries of urban life, to create and divide communities, and to affect the ruling strategies of local elites, governments and transnational political players. The essays included in this volume reflect the diversity of Middle Eastern urbanism from the 18th to the late 20th centuries, from the capitals of Cairo, Tunis, and Baghdad to the provincial towns of Jeddah, Nablus and Basra and the oil settlements of Dhahran and Abadan.

March 2016, Stanford University Press, £19.30

Poetry and Politics in the Modern Arab World

Poetry and Politics in the Modern Arab World
By Atef Alshaer

The representation in poetic form of political events and ideas in the Arab world since the 19th century is this book’s principal theme. Atef Alshaer demonstrates an integral connection between poetry and politics, reflecting the holistic character of Arab culture as well as the longstanding embodiment of poetry in the socio-political life of the Arabs. Poetry as the essence of language served as an illuminating, and often mobilising, medium of expression which brought the tensions and aspirations of each age to the fore. Beginning with the colonial empires and their colonialisation of the Arab world, Alshaer illuminates the perennial concerns of major Arab poets with their societies. He discusses the poetic representation of the end of the Ottoman Empire, the onset of Arab nationalism, French and British colonialism, Palestine and the struggle against Zionism, as well as Arab inter-relationships, the emergence of Islamism and Islamist movements, and finally the Arab Spring.

April 2016, Hurst, £35.00
Based on accounts of her interactions with Saudi and Iranian politicians and rich archival material, Banafsheh Keynoush unravels the mysteries of a contentious relationship. She shatters the myth of the inevitability of sectarian conflict and that the diplomacy between Saudi Arabia and Iran is exhausted. Instead, Banafsheh Keynoush argues that it has yet to be explored, by recasting the partnership from a US-centered point of view to one based on how Saudi Arabia and Iran see their roles. Who is to blame and how to fix it are both part of this account which offers readers an accurate, non-sensational and objective analysis.

February 2016, Palgrave Macmillan, £68.00

Why do the states of the Arab world seem so unstable? Why do alliances between them and with outside powers change? In The Struggle for the State in Jordan, Jamie Allinson argues that the answer lies in the expansion of global capitalism in the Middle East. Drawing out the unexpected way in which Jordan’s Bedouin tribes became allied to the British Empire in the 20th century, and the legacy of this for the international politics of the Middle East, he challenges the existing views of the region. Using the example of Jordan, this book traces the social bases of the struggles that produced the country’s foreign relations in the latter half of the 20th century to the reforms carried out under the Ottoman Empire and the processes of land settlement and state formation experience under the British Mandate.

January 2016, IB Tauris, £69.00

In July 1815, six Iranian students arrived in London under the escort of their chaperone, Captain Joseph D’Arcy. Their mission was to master the modern sciences behind the rapid rise of Europe. Over the next four years, they lived both the low life and high life of Regency London, from being down and out after their abandonment by D’Arcy to charming their way into society and landing on the gossip pages. The Love of Strangers tells the story of their search for love and learning in Jane Austen’s England. Drawing on the Persian diary of the student Mirza Salih and the letters of his companions, Nile Green vividly describes how these adaptable Muslim migrants learned to enjoy the opera and take the waters at Bath.

November 2015, Princeton University Press, £24.95
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 info@britishmuseum.org

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

APRIL EVENTS

Saturday 2 April

7:30 | Marcel Khalifé (Performance) Starting as a performer of protest songs, Marcel Khalifé has become one of the biggest popular musicians of the Arab world. Join the Lebanese composer, singer and oud master as he is joined by the Al Mayadine Ensemble. Using his position to spread a message of peace and freedom, he has faced blasphemy trials, funded music education in Palestine and performed in bombed-out concert halls. Tickets: £20-£30. Hall, Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London EC2Y 8DS. T 020 7638 8891 W www.barbican.org.uk

Monday 4 April

6:00 pm | Yemen: What went Wrong (1990-2016) (Lecture) Brian Whitaker. Organised by: British-Yemeni Society in association with the London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Brian Whitaker is a former Middle East editor of the Guardian. He first visited Yemen in 1991 and wrote about the country regularly for the now-defunct Middle East International magazine between 1993 and 2005. Admission free. MBI Al Jaber Conference Room, London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI), University of London, MBI Al Jaber Building, 21 Russell Square, London WC1B 5EA. T 020 7731 3260 E sec@b-ys.org.uk W www.al-bab.com/bys/ / www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

Tuesday 5 April

1.15 pm | The Conservation of Footwear from the Islamic world (Gallery Talk) Barbara Wills (BM) and Bronwen Roberts (BM). Organised by: BM. Admission free. Room 34, BM. T 020 7323 8299 E information@britishmuseum.org W www.britishmuseum.org

Wednesday 6 April

8:00 pm | Scenes from 68* Years (Performance) Until Saturday 30 April. Saturday matinee at 3:30pm. No performances Sunday. An epic snapshot of life in Palestine, then and now. Palestinian-Irish playwright Hannah Khalil draws on stories from family and friends’ lives to paint this alternative picture – one rarely glimpsed in mainstream media and told with typical Palestinian black humour. Tickets: £12-£17. Arcola Theatre, 24 Ashwin Street, Dalston, London E8 3DL. T 020 7503 1646 E boxoffice@arcolatheatre.com W www.arcolatheatre.com

Thursday 7 April

4.00 pm | Being imperial: Egyptians at home and in the Levant in the New Kingdom (Gallery Talk) Linda Hulin (University of Oxford). Organised by: Palestine Exploration Fund and the Egypt Exploration Society in association with Middle East Department, BM. Hulin explores the social impact of the Egyptian empire upon Egyptians during the New Kingdom, when Egypt commanded an empire that stretched from modern Lebanon to Sudan. Admission free. Pre-registration required T 020 7323 8181 BP Lecture Theatre, BM. T 020 7323 8299 E information@britishmuseum.org W www.britishmuseum.org

7:00 pm | This Orient Isle (Book Launch) Jerry Brotton, Queen Mary University of London. Organised by: The Mosaic Rooms. Event to mark the launch of Jerry Brotton’s This Orient Isle: Elizabethan England and the Islamic World in which Brotton shows that England’s relations with the Muslim world were far more extensive, and often more amicable, than we have appreciated. Admission free. E rsvp@mosaicrooms.org The Mosaic Rooms, A.M. Qattan Foundation, Tower House, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW. T 020 7370 9990 W info@mosaicrooms.org http://mosaicrooms.org/

Sunday 10 April

7:30 | Mohammed Assaf (Performance) Palestine’s biggest pop star sings material from his newest album alongside familiar favourites from his time on TV talent show, Arab Idol. Overcoming incredible odds to get an audition – travelling from the Gaza Strip to Egypt, navigating difficult checkpoints along the way, Assaf has become an inspiration and figure of unity for the whole of Palestine, and a human face of Gaza for the rest of the world.
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For further details, please contact:
Dr Adam Hanieh
E: ah92@soas.ac.uk

www.soas.ac.uk
Monday 11 April


Tuesday 12 April

9:30 am | BRAIS 2016 (Two-Day Conference: Monday 11 - Tuesday 12 April 2016) See event listing above.

Wednesday 13 April

7:00 pm | The Smouha City Venture; Alexandria 1923–1958 (Book Launch) Organised by: The Spiro Ark. The story of how Joseph Smouha came to buy, build, and eventually lose Smouha City to the Egyptian State, is told by his grandson Richard (Dicky) Smouha. Tickets: £10. Central Synagogue, 36, Hallam Street, London W1H 6NW. T 020 7794 4655 W www.spiroark.org

Thursday 14 April

6:00 pm | Arabian Nights: Volume 3 – The Enchanted One + Q&A (Film) Dir Miguel Gomes (2015), France/Portugal/Germany/Switzerland, 125 mins. The final part of Gomes’s Arabian Nights trilogy focuses on Scherezade, drawing on aspects of the Arabic folk tale to create a portrait of Portugal in the wake of economic crisis. In Portuguese with English subtitles. Includes Q&A with the director. Tickets: £8-£12. Cinema 1, Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), The Mall, London SW1Y 5AH. T 020 7930 3647 W www.ica.org.uk

Friday 15 April

9:00 am | The Past in the Present of the Middle East (Two-Day Conference: Friday 15 - Saturday 16 April 2016) Organised by: Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL) and London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI). Conference showcasing the work of the CBRL and its

ALEPPO

The Rise and Fall of Syria’s Great Merchant City
Philip Mansel

Aleppo now lies in ruins, its population decimated - but it was once a major world city. Philip Mansel reveals its vibrant history as one of the world’s oldest continuously inhabited cities. Collating a rich array of contemporary accounts Mansel uncovers a cultural melting pot, famed in the Ottoman Empire for its souks, food and music. He reveals how Aleppo was a crossroads of East and West, where Muslims, Christians and Jews lived and traded together in peace for five centuries.

‘Elegant and elegiac, Aleppo is a precious monument to a once-splendid city that has been reduced to abject ruin and misery’ - Justin Marozzi, The Spectator

‘A compelling portrait of one of the Middle East’s greatest cities, by one of the finest modern historians of the Levant... An important and outstanding book’ - Eugene Rogan

‘Characteristically concise and elegant... as tragic as it is timely, this book succeeds magnificently in showing what we should mourn the fall of Aleppo’ - William Dalrymple

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February 2016
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www.ibtauris.com
partners in the region, it will present sessions on a number of themes linking the past to the present day in the Middle East. Tickets: £50/£30 (Students who register before 7 April may attend for free and should e-mail lh2@soas.ac.uk). Pre-registration required W www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/ Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS. E CBRL@britac.ac.uk W http://cbrl.org/

12:00 pm | Islamic & Indian Arts Auction Organised by: Roseberys London. Admission free. Roseberys London, 70/76 Knights Hill, London SE27 0JW. T 020 8761 2522 W www.roseberys.co.uk

Saturday 16 April
9:00 am | The Past in the Present of the Middle East (Two-Day Conference: Friday 15 - Saturday 16 April 2016) See event listing above.

Sunday 17 April
11:00 am | Digital Workshop: Explore Islamic Patterns Organised by: BM. Also at 2:00pm. Use smartphones to explore beautiful and complex patterns on the objects in the Islamic world gallery (Room 34) and then create your own design inspired by what you’ve discovered. Admission free. Samsung Digital Discovery Centre, BM. T 020 7323 8299 E information@britishmuseum.org W www.britishmuseum.org

Monday 18 April
6:00 pm | Democracies with Large Muslim Populations: Reflections on Indonesia, India, Senegal and Tunisia (Lecture) Alfred Stepan (Columbia University and British Academy). Organised by: International Relations Speaker Series and the Department of Politics and International Studies, SOAS. Democratic successes in such Islamic-majority countries as Indonesia, Senegal, and Tunisia have been under-documented and under-theorised. India, with its huge Muslim population, could also be included in the "success" category. This SOAS Centennial Lecture will attempt to expand our imaginations about the multiple ways democracy can be crafted. Admission free. Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 020 7898 4724 E mb107@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/politics/events /

Wednesday 20 April
7:00 pm | Travelling in Style along the Great Khurasan Road: ‘Palatial Caravanserais’ in Northeastern Iran 10th-13th Centuries CE (Lecture) Paul Wordsworth (University of Oxford). Organised by: Islamic Art Circle. Chair: Scott Redford (SOAS). Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 07714087480 E rosalindhaddon@gmail.com W www.soas.ac.uk/art/islac/

7:30 pm | Clocks 1888: the greener (Performance) Until Friday 22 April. Produced by Brolly Productions. A brilliant young migrant girl is single-handedly running the towering clock that is the beating heart of the East End. When she is discovered by a gentleman explorer they are forced to choose between the worlds they know or each other. Tickets: £10-£20. Hackney Empire, 291 Mare Street, London E81 JEJ. T 020 8985 2424 W www.hackneyempire.co.uk

Thursday 21 April
5:45 pm | Dress and Identity in the Sultanate of Oman (Lecture) Aisa Martinez, BM. Organised by: MBI Al Jaber Foundation. Talk by Martinez, who is currently a project curator at the BM working on the content development of the Zayed National Museum Project, exploring how regional styles of Omani dress reveal the individual wearer’s age, wealth, socio-economic status, and other aspects of the wearer’s identity. Part of the MBI Al Jaber Foundation Lecture Series. Admission free. Pre-registration required E info@mbifoundation.com 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.mbifoundation.com

6:00 pm | Oman’s unique position in the archaeology of pre-Islamic Arabia (Lecture) Carl Phillips. Organised by: British Foundation for the Study of Arabia (BFSA) and the Anglo-Omani Society. Doors open 5:30pm for a drinks reception. Tickets: Pre-registration required E manager@angloomanisociety.com Anglo-Omani Headquarters, 34 Sackville Street, London W1S 3ED. E AMartinez@britishmuseum.org W www.theblsa.org

6:00 pm | The Concept of Iran in Zoroastrian and Other Traditions (Lecture) François de Blois (UCL). Organised by: Department of Religions and Philosophies, SOAS in association with The World Zoroastrian Organisation. Nineteenth Dastur Dr Sohrab Hormasji Katar Memorial Lecture. People calling themselves Iranians (Avestan ariya-, Old Persian ariya-, Middle Persian ēr), and their country Ērānšahr, play a prominent role in religious and secular texts from the Avesta onwards. The changing implications of these terms for the political and religious self-definition of Zoroastrians, and of others, will be discussed. Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. E ah69@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/religions-and-philosophies/events/

6:30 pm | Beyond the Chador: Iranian Dress for Women (Lecture) Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood (Leiden University). Organised by: The Iran Society. Doors open 6:30pm. For centuries Iran has been producing textiles and garments, especially for women, which reflect the complexity of its cultural history. Vogelsang-Eastwood looks at how urban and regional dress have responded to each other over time. 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@iransociety.org W www.iransociety.org / www.therag.co.uk

Tuesday 26 April
5:30 pm | Social Movements and the Future of Politics from Below in the Middle East (Book Launch/Panel Discussion) Stephanie Cronin (Oxford), Sameh Naguib (activist) and Tara Povey (SOAS). Event to mark the publication of Povey’s book Social Movements in Egypt and Iran (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) in which she analyses the reform movement in Iran and the groups and organisations that form the basis of the Egyptian opposition movement in their historical contexts. Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary 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/

Wednesday 27 April
7:00 pm | William Morris’s Fascination with Carpets from the Middle East (Lecture) Anna Mason (William Morris Gallery). Organised by: Oriental Rug and Textile Society, UK (ORTS). Doors open 6:00pm. William Morris was intrigued by historic carpets from the Middle East and started to collect as early as the 1860s, Mason explores Morris’s interest in Middle Eastern carpets and how they influenced his own practice as a designer. Tickets: £7/£5 students. The Conference Room, St James Piccadilly, 197 Piccadilly, London W1J 9LL. E membership@orientalrugandtextilesociety.org.uk W www.orientalrugandtextilesociety.org.uk

Thursday 28 April
5:00 pm | Sustaining Conflict: Apathy and Domination in Israel- Palestine (Book Launch) Katie Natanel (SOAS). Organised by: Centre for Gender Studies, SOAS. Admission free. DLT, SOAS. T 020 7898 4547 E n.s.al-ali@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/genderstudies/events/

7:00 pm | The Voice of a Kurdish Troubadour (Concert) Organised by: Department of Music, School of Arts, SOAS. Part of the SOAS Concert Series. With Ali Baran accompanied by Zafer Demir (percussion) and Arsen Doğaner (bass). Admission free. Brunei Gallery Lecture, SOAS. T 020 7898 4500 E musicevents@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/music/events/concerts/

Saturday 30 April
11:00 am | Digital Workshop: Exploring Egyptian Mummies
SOAS, University of London, is pleased to announce the availability of several scholarships in its Centre for Iranian Studies (CIS).

The Centre, established in 2010, draws upon the range of academic research and teaching across the disciplines of SOAS, including Languages and Literature, the Study of Religions, History, Economics, Politics, International Relations, Music, Art and Media and Film Studies. It aims to build close relations with likeminded institutions and to showcase and foster the best of contemporary Iranian talent in art and culture.

**MA in Iranian Studies**

In 2012/13 CIS members successfully launched an interdisciplinary MA in Iranian Studies, the first of its kind, which will be offered again in 2015/16.

Thanks to the generosity of the Fereydoun Djam Charitable Trust, a number of Kamran Djam scholarships are available for BA, MA and MPhil/PhD studies.

**For further details, please contact:**

**Scholarships Officer**
E: scholarships@soas.ac.uk
T: +44 (0)20 7074 5091/5094
W: www.soas.ac.uk/scholarships

**Centre for Iranian Studies**
Dr Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (Chair)
E: aa106@soas.ac.uk
T: +44 (0)20 7898 4747
W: www.soas.ac.uk/lmei-cis

**Student Recruitment**
T: +44(0)20 7898 4034
E: study@soas.ac.uk
Organised by: BM. Explore digital techniques used by Museum scientists to uncover the secrets of the ancient Egyptians. Admission free. Samsung Digital Discovery Centre, BM. T 020 7323 8299 E information@britishmuseum.org W www.britishmuseum.org

EVENTS OUTSIDE LONDON

Sunday 3 April


Saturday 9 April

10:00 am | BATAS 2016 Spring Symposium Organised by: British Association for Turkish Area Studies (BATAS). Tickets: Various. The Queen's Building, Emmanuel College, St Andrew's Street, Cambridge CB2 3AP. T 0115 848 2908 E events@batas.org.uk

Thursday 14 April

9:00 | Sufis and Mullahs: Sufis and their Opponents in the Persianate World (Three-Day Conference: Thursday 14 – Saturday 16 April 2016) Organised by: Centre for Persian and Iranian Studies, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter. Bringing together scholars and specialists on Sufism from around the world, this conference, focused geographically on the Persianate world of greater Iran, Anatolia, the Ottoman Empire, and Central Asia, aims to examine the theological, philosophical, and literary dimensions of the Sufi/anti-Sufi conflict. Tickets: See contact details below for tickets. Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter, Stocker Road, Exeter EX4 4ND. E M.J., Williams2@exeter.ac.uk W http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iiais/

Friday 22 April

Time TBC | Arabs Are Not Funny! (Performance) An evening of comedy with British Nigerian comedian and actor Nabil Abdul Rashid, Welsh-Egyptian comic and BBC Radio 2 presenter Omar Hamdi and Tunisian comedian and opener for the evening Marouen Mrahi. Prelude to the Liverpool Arab Arts Festival 2016 which will take place 16 - 24 July. Tickets: £6/£5. Bluecoat, School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BX. T 0151 702 7765 E admin@arabicartsfestival.co.uk W www.arabartsfestival.com

MAY EVENTS

Sunday 1 May

7:30 | Beyond Any Form: Homayoun Shajarian with Sohrab & Tahmoures Poornazeri (Performance) One of Iran’s most popular young vocalists, Homayoun Shajarian, son of traditional Persian singer Mohammad-Reza Shajarian, joins an ensemble led by multi-instrumentalist composers Sohrab and Tahmoures Poornazeri in a concert that captures the sound of a new generation of Persian musicians. Tickets: £25-£70. Hall, Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London EC2Y 8DS. T 020 7638 8891 W www.barbican.org.uk

Tuesday 3 May

5:45 pm | The Struggle for the State in Jordan: The Social Origins of Alliances in the Middle East (Lecture) Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI), Lecture by Jamie Allison (University of Edinburgh). Organised by: London Middle East Institute, SOAS (LMEI), Lecture by Jamie Allison on his book The Struggle for the State in Jordan: The Social Origins of Alliances in the Middle East (IB Tauris, 2015). Allison’s book, based on original research in Jordan, addresses the question of the instability of international alliances in the Middle East and argues that the source of this instability lies in the expansion of global capitalism in the region. Part of the LMEI’s Tuesday Evening Lecture Programme on the Contemporary 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/

Wednesday 4 May

11:00 am | Members Visit to William Morris Gallery Organised by: Oriental Rug and Textile Society, UK (ORTS), Following Anna Mason’s talk the previous week (see event listing Wednesday 27 April), the curators of the William Morris Gallery will lead a guided tour of the museum and show the group a selection of textiles from the reserve collection. Tickets: Members only event with £7 tour fee (Membership of one year for 11 events at £20). William Morris Gallery Lloyd Park, Forest Road, Walthamstow, London. E membership@orientalrugandtextilesociety.org.uk W www.orientalrugandtextilesociety.org.uk / www.wmgallery.org.uk

7:30 pm | The 2016 Edward W. Said London Lecture – Let Them Drown: The Violence of Othering in a Warming World (Lecture) Organised by: A.M. Qattan Foundation/The Mosaic Rooms, Southbank Centre and London Review of Books. The award-winning journalist and author Naomi Klein will be giving this year’s lecture in memory of Edward Said. Klein, introduced by Shami Chakrabarti, will build on Said’s legacy to examine how the tools of racial hierarchy, including Orientalism, have been the silent partners to climate change since the earliest days of the steam engine. Tickets: £20/£15/£10 W www.southbankcentre.co.uk Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX. T 020 7730 9990 E info@mosaicrooms.org W http://mosaicrooms.org/

Friday 6 May

5:30 pm | Friday Tonic: Yazz Fentazi Trio (Performance) A blend of Gnawa, Chaabi, and Andalusian Music. Yazz Fentazi ( oud), Samir Nacer (percussion) and Robyn Hemmings (upright bass) perform music that draws on the rich musical traditional of jazz, blues and North African music. Admission free. Central Bar at Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX. T 020 7960 4200 W www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Saturday 7 May

9:30 am | Communication and Conflict: Iraq and Syria (Conference) A one-day conference bringing together scholars from a variety of disciplines to address one of the most hotly debated topics in contemporary public life - the role of media in the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, in political violence and extremism as well as in global narratives of forced migration and the related phenomena of racism and exclusionary politics in Europe and elsewhere. Confirmed keynote speakers: Philip Selb (University of Southern California) and Lilie Choubiraki (LSE). Organised by Centre for Media Studies and the London Middle East Institute, archaeological analysis of Yemen using satellite imagery. He will also talk about recent issues of heritage damage in Yemen. Admission free. B102, SOAS. T 020 7731 3260 E sec@b-ys.org.uk W www.al-bab.com/bys/ / www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/

8:00 pm | Yazz Ahmed Quartet performs Alhaan Al Siduri (Concert) Organised by: The Mosaic Rooms. Music performance by the Yazz Ahmed Quartet of music inspired by traditional Bahraini pearl divers songs, a genre known as fi djeri, or sea music which, despite the decline of the Pearl industry, has survived and become closely associated with Bahraini national identity. Tickets: £10 E rsvp@mosaicrooms.org The Mosaic Rooms, A.M. Qattan Foundation, Tower House, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW. T 020 7370 9990 E info@mosaicrooms.org W http://mosaicrooms.org/
**Sunday 8 May**

11:00 am | how to: Sunday Morning Live from the Tabernacle: Bernard-Henri Lévy on Islam, Islamic State, Kurdistan and the Peshmerga (Lecture) Organised by: How To Academy. Spanning more than two decades, the French philosopher Bernard Henri Levy’s exploration of Islam led him in 2015 to Erbil, Kurdistan, where he witnessed the tiny army of the Kurdish Peshmerga standing up against the growing forces of Islamic State. Tickets: £30/£25 Earlybird. The Tabernacle, 35 Powis Square (off Portobello Road), London W11 2AY. E john.gordon@howtoacademy.com W www.howtoacademy.com

**Wednesday 11 May**

7:00 pm | Tughra-mania and Calligraphy During the Reign of Sultan Ahmed III (r. 1703-1730) (Lecture) Bora Keskiner. Organised by: Islamic Art Circle. Chair: Scott Redford (SOAS). Admission free. Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS. T 07714087480 E rosalindhaddon@gmail.com W www.soas.ac.uk/art/islac/

**Tuesday 10 May**

6:30 pm | The Mesopotamia Campaign from both sides of the trenches, 1914 - 1917 (Lecture) Eugene Ragan (University of Oxford). Organised by: British Institute at Ankara (BIAA). The Ottomans and the Anglo-Indian Army both approached Mesopotamia as hostile terrain. This lecture explores the common experiences of all soldiers who fought on the Mesopotamian front, a campaign which marked the end of Ottoman rule and the beginning of Britain’s moment in the Middle East. Tickets: £10 non-members/free for BIAA Members. British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH. T 020 7969 5204 E biaa@britac.ac.uk W http://biaa.ac.uk/events

**Tuesday 17 May**

6:30 pm | Young Iranian Women: Narratives of Strife and Triumph in the Urban Space (Lecture) Mehrz Honarbin-Holliday (Author and Artist). Organised by: Iran Heritage Foundation (IHF). Iranian women have been at the heart of civil society debates and political development in Iran for over a century. Today, Iranian women are a force to be reckoned with in the deeper discourses of the civil society movement and a better developed democracy in Iran. Tickets: £10. Asia House, 63 New Cavendish Street, London W1G 7LP. T 020 3651 2121 W www.iranheritage.org

**Wednesday 18 May**

6:00 pm | Agrippa II: The Last Jewish King in Jerusalem (Lecture) Martin Goodman (Oxford University and Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies). Organised by: Anglo Israel Archaeological Society and King’s College, London. Followed by refreshments. Admission free. King’s College, Safra Lecture Theatre, Ground Floor, King’s Building, Strand, London WC2R 2LS. T 020 8349 5754 E sheilarford1@sky.com W www.ias.org.uk

**Thursday 19 May**

5:45 pm | Understanding Syria’s

**Friday 13 May**

9:30 am | Soundspaces of the Middle East and Central Asia: Exploring the Intersection of Sound Studies and Ethnomusicology in the Middle East and Central Asia Middle East and Central Asia Music Forum. The day will include a roundtable discussion on the intersection of Sound Studies and Ethnomusicology and a film screening. Convenors: Laudan Nooshin (City University London) and Rachel Harris (SOAS). Admission free. Pre-registration required W www.city.ac.uk/events/2016/may/middle-east-and-central-asia-music-forum

**Civil War: Revolution, Regime Resilience, and Stalemate (Lecture) Michael Kerr (Institute of Middle Eastern Studies and the Centre for the Study of Divided Societies, King's College London). Organised by: MBI Al Jaber Foundation. Part of the MBI Al Jaber Foundation Lecture Series. Admission free. Pre-registration required E info@mbifoundation.com 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.mbiboundation.com

7:00 pm | Patriotism and Dissent in the Global South (Talk) Organised by: The Mosaic Rooms. Authors Pankaj Mishra and Vijay Prashad in conversation about the rise of authoritarianism in Egypt, Turkey and India; the germination of cultures of resistance; and important questions surrounding the intellectual and solidarity. Admission free. E rsvp@mosaicrooms.org W The Mosaic Rooms, A.M. Qattan Foundation, Tower House, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW. T 020 7370 9990 E info@mosaicrooms.org W http://mosaicrooms.org/

**Tuesday 24 May**


**EXHIBITIONS**

Until 24 April | ARE WE ALL HUMAN (E)? Exhibition of mixed media work by Susan Boulter. Unscrupulous exploitation - culturally, morally, economically; the denial of human rights and the absence of the rule of law, both internationally and nationally, is endemic: are we not all being used

Susan Boulter, HOME, 2011, Embroidery Thread. Are We All Human (e)? (see Exhibitions pp. 30-31)
as pawns for the benefit of those in power? Deliberately placing herself within this exhibition as an activist, an amateur and a provocateur, Boulter challenges the audience to think and to act, to become more than audience. Admission free. P21 Gallery, 21 Chalton Street, London, NW1 1JD. T 020 7121 6190 E info@p21.org.uk W www.p21.org.uk

Until 21 May | Sea Change – Chapter 1: Character 1, In the Rough First UK presentation of the ‘first chapter’ from Hajra Waheed’s Sea Change – an ongoing visual novel and multimedia archive, commenced in 2011, which revolves around the journey and disappearance of nine persons in the name of salvation, a better life or new one. Admission free. The Mosaic Rooms, A.M. Qattan Foundation, Tower House, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW. T 020 7370 9990 E info@mosaicrooms.org W http://mosaicrooms.org/

Friday 15 April

Until 25 June | World Ikat Textiles...Ties that Bind Exhibition celebrating the rich legacy of Ikat, an age old textile technique stretching across the continents of the world, which includes over 200 items of unique Ikat textile from regions such as: Asia-Pacific, Latin America, the Middle East, West Africa and Europe. Two-day symposium on Ikat Textiles-Ties That Bind (Past, Present and Future) on Saturday 14 - Sunday 15 May, see contact details below for more information. Admission free. Brunei Gallery, SOAS. T 020 7898 4023/4026 E gallery@soas.ac.uk W www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/

Wednesday 4 May

Until 21 August 2016 | Mona Hatoum Hatoum’s work highlights the condition of displacement, shared by many in the modern era. The first UK survey of her work reflects 35 years of consistently poetic and radical thinking expressed through a diverse range of media and presents over 100 works from the 1980s to the present day, from early performances and video, sculpture, installation, photography and works on paper. Tickets: £16/£14 conc. Tate Modern, Level 3 West, Bankside, London SE1 9TG. T 020 7887 8888 W www.tate.org.uk

We are pleased to announce the launch of a new, dedicated website for The Middle East in London: https://www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/meil/

Among the added features and pages, you will find:

• **Featured articles**: Thinking about obtaining a copy of the latest issue? Here readers can get a preview of the current issue of the magazine in the form of a featured article.

• **An archive of past issues of the magazine**: Past issues can now be downloaded as PDFs by anyone. The archive pages are organised by publication year.

• **A photo competition page**: Here we showcase winning and commendation photos from past photo competitions. We will also post the announcement for the 2016 photo competition on this page in the spring, so check back for details then!

• **A contact page**: Have a question about the magazine or wish to make a comment for consideration of the Editorial Board? This page contains the contact details of the magazine staff, lists the member of the Editorial Board and includes information about letters to the editor and theme selection.

The magazine covers a wide variety of themes and topics related to the Middle East, written in a non-technical style for our informed readership.

Please support us by signing up for a subscription, or renew yours by visiting the LMEI affiliation webpage.

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An intensive five-week programme which includes a choice of two courses: a language one (Persian or Arabic, the latter at two levels) and another on the 'Government and Politics of the Middle East' or 'Culture and Society in the Middle East'.

**Beginners Persian (Level 1)**
This is an introductory course which aims to give the students a reasonable grounding in the basics of Persian grammar and syntax as well as to enable them to understand simple and frequently used expressions related to basic language use. They will be able to hold uncomplicated conversations on topics such as personal and family information, shopping, hobbies, employment as well as simple and direct exchanges of information related to familiar topics. By the end of the course they will also progress to read simple short texts.

**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.

**Timetable**
Courses are taught Mon-Thu each week. Language courses are taught in the morning (10am-1pm) and the Politics and Culture Courses are taught in two slots in the afternoon (2:00-3:20 and 3:40-5:00pm).

**FEES**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Session (5 weeks)</th>
<th>Programme fee*</th>
<th>Accommodation fee**</th>
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<tr>
<td>20 June-21 July 2016 (two courses)</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
<td>from £300/week</td>
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* An early bird discount of 10% applies to course fees before 30 April 2016.

** 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