

# (R)EVOLUTION

Strategic Studies Summit

Bangkok, Thailand

23 - 25 February 2014



# (R)EVOLUTION

## Strategic Studies Summit

Change is the only constant in strategy. Most of the time it takes the form of evolutionary adjustment—variations that alter but do not fundamentally disrupt the geostrategic environment. Sometimes, however, revolutionary moments occur that transform political systems within states, societies, and nations that thereby alter the global strategic landscape. Shifts in relative power among actors in the international system can also have profound implications as well—mostly evolutionary but occasionally revolutionary.

Each kind of change—evolutionary and revolutionary—requires a different set of responses, but it is not always clear what type of change is occurring at any given moment. Clarity is often gained in retrospect, but policymakers do not have the luxury of time. They must make decisions today that shape the strategic environment of the future.

The contributors to *(R)EVOLUTION*—the theme of the 2014 Strategic Studies Summit—aided global decision-makers by shedding light on the most pressing issue of the day: whether we are in the midst of revolutionary change in the international system or whether current events are symptoms of more evolutionary change that leave the basic structures of the system intact. *(R)EVOLUTION* explored phenomena that drive this global political, economic, and environmental change. It examined key shifts in the global system and debated whether they constitute revolutionary or evolutionary changes. Most importantly, however, it explained the strategic implications of these changes and the associated policy responses.





# CONTENTS

Introduction to (R)evolution.....2  
 Note from the Director.....3  
 Plenary Sessions.....4

Strategic Conversations.....7  
 Research Task Forces.....11  
 Contact Us.....15

## Note from the Director

The Strategic Studies Summit is the premier regional forum for opinion-leaders from across North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia to discuss frontier thinking about issues of strategic importance, build relationships, and interact with international scholars and policymakers. The Strategic Studies Network (SSN) hosted this year’s Summit—**(R)evolution**—in Bangkok, Thailand from 23 to 25 February and provided multiple avenues for the exchange of ideas within the policy and academic communities.



Strategic Studies Network Director  
 Tyler Rauert

The Conference explored the changing nature of the global political and economic system and provided insight into the issues that accompany a new global equilibrium. Over the course of three days it examined changes in global and internal power structures as well as the strategic implications of the changing dynamics of global energy supply and demand. In bringing together over 100 key strategists from some 61 institutions around the globe, the Network enabled spirited dialogue inside and outside the formal meetings on sensitive challenges facing the region as well as collaborative research among regional strategic studies institutions.

### BY THE NUMBERS

- **106** key strategists from
- **28** countries and
- **61** institutions across North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, East Asia, and Europe.

The Network continues to provide a confidential and secure forum where views, analyses and recommendations can be shared among a diverse membership and select outside observers. The frank and respectful exchange of differing opinion and perspective is invaluable to both participants and their colleagues at home. Our regular meetings provide useful opportunities for candid dialogue among colleagues, some of whom may not otherwise have such opportunities. Our ongoing efforts at greater inclusion of all voices from across the region are aimed at fostering concrete contributions to understanding and addressing critical issues from diverse regional perspectives. This requires a great deal of hard work and commitment from all institutions involved and it has been inspiring to witness the increasing accomplishments of the Strategic Studies Network over the past several years. I look forward to even greater advances in the years to follow.

# Power (R)evolution

Launching the event in typically insightful form, Amb. Dr. Senen Florensa, President of the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) in Barcelona, Spain, and Dr. Wang Suolao, Director of the Center for Middle East Studies at Peking University in Beijing, China, analyzed a world coping with the changes that have convulsed the Middle East and Asia in recent years. Ambassador Florensa emphasized the shared threats and opportunities present in the current international milieu and suggested that any progress toward the bettering of the human condition will require cooperation within the region and with extra-regional partners such as the European Union. He focused on the constructive role of social, political and economic cooperation in the region as well as the continuing requirement of good governance in all the nations of the world.



Panel on “Power (R)evolution” (l - r): Dr. Wang Suolao, Prof. Tyler Rauert, and Amb. Dr. Senen Florensa

Dr. Wang then gave a Chinese perspective on the changing power dynamics in the Middle East. His presentation touched on the Syrian crisis, Iranian nuclear talks, Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts, the Arab political transition, and the relationship between China and the U.S. in the Middle East. Dr. Wang emphasized that Chinese policy in the region is characterized by development, stability and unity and underscored the recurring theme in Chinese foreign policy discussions of the need to “develop a new model of major-country relations between China and the United States.” Quoting Foreign Minister Wang Yi’s speech to the Brookings Institution, Dr. Wang asserted that “China is ready to shoulder international responsibilities commensurate with its national strength and realities, and together with the United States, offer more quality public goods for the international community.”

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Professor Tyler Rauert added his thoughts on the increasingly important role of non-state “micro-powers” in both international relations and in power relations within states before moderating a lively discussion among the panel and Summit delegates. This opening session set the stage for two days of discussions in the plenary hall and throughout the event as speakers and Network members explored a range of other strategic issues.

# Energy (R)evolution



Inspired by the geopolitical uncertainty caused by the North American shale gas boom, the growth of environmental concerns and renewable energy development, continuing reliance on fossil fuel production and consumption throughout the Middle East and Asia, and the expansion of pipeline projects throughout the region, the Summit's second plenary session featured Dr. Jonathan Moyer, Associate Director of the Pardee Center for International Futures at the University of Denver in the U.S.; Dr. Adnan Shihab-Eldin, Director General of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences; and Dr. D. Suba Chandran, Director of the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies in New Delhi, India.

Dr. Moyer opened the panel by using an analytical model to touch on the breadth of relevant issues, including global energy production profiles, climate change, potential OPEC policy options, the Saudi Arabian strategic outlook, and the implications of shale energy on the U.S.-China relationship and global power transition between the two states. Dr. Chandran addressed oil and gas pipeline options linking South and Central Asia as well as the Middle East. He focused on opportunities and obstacles and advocated a position that is, on balance, positive toward both the likelihood and benefits of various pipeline projects throughout the region.



# Energy (R)evolution

Dr. Shihab-Eldin provided instructive insight on the perspectives and concerns of GCC states and the changing geopolitics of the energy landscape. He noted that the economies of the Arab Gulf nations remain predominantly dependent on oil revenues and that increased wealth distribution following the Arab Spring has combined to create a relentless increase in the “Fiscal Oil Price” needed to balance the budget. This price is now near or above current market values in many producing states and shows little sign of easing in the short to medium term. Moreover, the contest for influence between Saudi Arabia (and the GCC more broadly) and Iran, exacerbated by proxy conflicts in the region and concerns over nuclear capacity, will continue as a source of friction in the region, threatening the coherence of OPEC and the economic growth tied to the institution.

Dr. Shihab-Eldin also addressed the reduction in North American dependence on imported energy and the potential for that region to become a net gas exporter. His assessment was that such a scenario would likely see continued U.S. engagement in protecting Middle Eastern supply security in order to secure its enduring interest in stable global energy prices. He noted, however, that the U.S. will be less willing to act alone in the region and may rub up against India or China as these nations, among others in Asia, increasingly focus foreign-policy attention on the Middle East as their energy dependence on the region deepens.



# Strategic Conversations

A uniquely successful component of **(R)evolution** was the addition of six simultaneous topic sessions dubbed “strategic conversations” that focused on Middle East regional security, Arab political transitions, Asian dynamism, water and food security, economic security, and the future of education.

The conversation on **“Regional Security in the Middle East”** covered the waterfront of security issues in the region. It addressed the Syrian crisis, Gulf security, the Iranian nuclear program, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the Arab Spring, political Islam, sectarianism, and how each of these distinct security issues dynamically interact with and influence the others.



One key thread that ran through all of the topics discussed was the role of outside powers in the region, particularly the role of the United States and the impact of its “pivot to Asia.” While there was some discussion of a Russian reassertion of influence in the region and the potential for increased Chinese attention, both of these factors were seen within the context of a perceived U.S. strategic realignment toward Asia. Some viewed the “pivot” as an attempt to disengage from the region, but this view was countered by the observations that: (1) no other credible guarantor of Gulf security exists, and (2) while Russia seems objectively to be more influential in the region, China is exhibiting little interest in a physical regional presence, preferring to maintain an “apolitical” role that does not require great expenditure of military or diplomatic resources.



Another key thread was the impact of the political transitions in the Arab world on regional security. There was a general sense that the Arab Spring has run its course, certainly in terms of its horizontal expansion to other countries in the region but also as a project for democratization. While the vertical processes of political change are ongoing within some countries in the region, the external ripple effects of these changes seem to have diminished or stopped entirely. Moreover, the rise of sectarianism that the Arab Spring seems to have brought about is deeply troubling in the region and is seen by many as a profoundly destabilizing force.

# 24 and 25 February 2014

Meanwhile, the discussion of **“Arab Transitions”** reinforced and expanded on many of the themes first addressed in the earlier session on Middle Eastern regional security. Dr. Saban Kardas, President of the Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM), discussed the Syrian crisis in general but focused primarily on its regional implications. He argued that the Syrian conflict has been poorly managed since its outbreak and that the delayed response is indicative of a collective failure on the part of the international community. Dr. Christian Koch, Director of International Studies at the Gulf Research Center and chair of the Strategic Studies Network working group on the **“Geopolitical Implications of Political Transitions in the Middle East and North Africa,”** then discussed the findings of the group’s collaborative research. He gave an insightful assessment of the impact of the Arab Spring, noting the changes in the balance of power between state and society, the role of religion in transitional processes, the persistence of elite penetration, the issue of republican governments versus monarchies, the powerlessness of external actors, and the rising emergence of geopolitics as a factor that cannot be ignored. Finally, Dr. Koch analyzed the geopolitical implications of transformation for the region—including the Arab states (particularly the GCC), Iran, Turkey, and Israel—as well as the geopolitical implications for the European Union and the U.S.



Also addressing some of the challenges associated with socio-political changes in the region, the panel on **“The Future of Education,”** featuring Watson University scholar Momal Mushtaq, focused on the gap between education and employable skills and how this chasm might be bridged through alternative education models around the globe.



# Strategic Conversations...

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The conversation on **“Asian Dynamism”** focused on the regional implications of Myanmar’s reintegration into the international community and then shifted its focus to China’s developing strategic interest in the Middle East. Ambassador Ranjit Gupta of India discussed Myanmar’s strategic shift away from a closed system toward one that is highly integrated and open, both politically and economically. He argued that Myanmar’s previous lack of interaction with the outside world will limit its engagement in the Middle East. However, he noted that Myanmar matters greatly for South and South-east Asia with inevitable Indian and Chinese competition in the country. He further argued that while its future trajectory remains an unknown, Myanmar’s transformation towards a more open political system will heavily impact geopolitical scenarios in Asia because it is the second largest country in Southeast Asia, it is rich in natural resources, it has a large military, and is located in a geo-strategically significant position.

Dr. Junhua Zhang of China shifted the panel’s attention to the west where he argued that China has a difficult balancing act in the Persian Gulf and Central Asia, particularly if it continues to pursue a “neo-mercantilist” strategy focused on developing its national economy without paying sufficient attention to the development of its partners. He noted significant changes in Chinese foreign policy in recent years in East Asia, but drew a sharp distinction between that component of Chinese strategy and its Middle East policy which remains more traditional in approach. In particular, he noted that China’s relations with Israel center on arms sales and advanced technology while the core of Sino-Saudi and Sino-Iranian relations is oil. It is here where China’s balancing act is the most difficult to maintain. Dr. Zhang nevertheless predicted that increasing Chinese dependence on energy supplies from this region over the next decade will fail to alter its “free-ride” approach to American primacy in Gulf security affairs. Finally, he noted that the relationship between China and the United Arab Emirates centers on trade, with the UAE acting as a hub for Chinese business operations in the Gulf and the wider Middle East, but also in Africa and the world beyond.





The panel on **“Water and Food Security”** focused the Summit’s attention on the security implications of environmental issues. The conversation began with Dr. Uttam Sinha’s presentation of the collaborative research findings of the “Water Dispute Resolution Mechanisms” working group. In overcoming water challenges in the Middle East and Asia, Dr. Sinha fleshed out eleven recommendations from the group, including best practices in river basin-sharing agreements, institutional development, mediation, transparency and hydrological data-sharing, as well as technological developments in the area. He was followed by Dr. Hussein Amery of the Colorado School of Mines who addressed how the Arab Gulf states might go about mitigating their diverse and potentially severe vulnerabilities to water and food scarcity, noting in particular that farming abroad is a more complex undertaking than many originally anticipated.

Meanwhile, the panel on **“Economic Security”** featured a lively discussion of regional economic integration and the monetary component of national power from Ambassador Farooq Sobhan, President of the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, and Dr. Paul Viotti, Executive Director of the Institute for Globalization and Security at the University of Denver. Amb. Sobhan discussed the collaborative research findings of the working group on “South Asian Economic Integration” and discussed the variety of opportunities in economic integration in the region as well as the obstacles to achieving them. Dr. Viotti focused his comments on the often under-appreciated national security consequences for the United States of the status of the dollar as the world’s reserve currency.

# Research Task Forces

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The task force on **“Iran in Regional and Global Perspective”** is chaired by the *Russian Center for Policy Studies (PIR Center)*. Under the leadership of Dr. Vladimir Orlov, the group is a continuation of the previous academic year’s fine efforts on Iran. Dr. Orlov noted that: “Whereas the last meeting of the Strategic Studies Summit in November 2012 was characterized by skepticism on a resolution of the Iranian nuclear program, this time the working group was able to discuss practical recommendations on how to make the program globally and regionally sustainable. There were discussions within the working group on how to include Iran in regional security cooperation arrangements. There was a consensus that, through nuclear cooperation, security cooperation in the region can be achieved.” Task force members will finalize their respective country-perspective memos by 31 March. Those memos will be posted on the PIR Center website. The group will have first draft of the report completed by 30 June.

**“Transformation in Afghanistan”** is the focus of the task force co-chaired by the *Bangladesh Enterprise Institute* and the *Afghanistan Justice Organization*. Under the direction of Amb. Farooq Sobhan and Ms. Mariam Safi, the group will focus on the following topics: political transition and the upcoming Presidential elections; the peace process; security transition; economic transition; and finally, regional perspectives and shared visions. Each member of the working group will provide a written analysis of these topics which are intended to reflect their countries’ unique perspectives, concerns, and recommendations. Ms. Mariam Safi will present the analyses provided by the regional representatives in a seminar that will be held in Kabul where the analyses will be shared and debated amongst various local stakeholders from throughout Afghanistan. A policy brief will be created combining the perspectives of regional representatives and local stakeholders in Afghanistan. This effort continues the Strategic Studies Network’s ongoing efforts to assist the transitions in Afghanistan that began with its work on **“Reconciliation, Reintegration, and Reconstruction in Afghanistan”** that was presented to President Karzai in 2011.

# Academic Year 2013–2014



The task force on **“The Arab Spring in a Comparative Perspective”** is chaired by the *European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)*. Bringing together experts from the Strategic Studies Network and the EuroMeSCo Network, members will produce a joint edited volume on comparative perspectives of democratic transitions in the Arab World. The papers produced will be policy-oriented and will also include analyses on the best practices of past transitions to democracy in the Euro-Mediterranean area. The comparative perspective and lessons learned from previous democratic transitions will be included in the different working packages and will be limited to the experiences in the Arab World and the Mediterranean. The working group was split into six task-forces that will focus on the following work packages: state-building processes and reforms; security sector reform; the role of religion in transitional processes; socio-economic reforms in transitional processes; the role of the European Union in supporting democratic transitions in the Southern Mediterranean; and regional integration.

The **“Post-Conflict Reconciliation”** task force is chaired by the *Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute for International Relations and Strategic Studies (LKIIRSS)*—Sri Lanka. The group will produce a white paper, entitled, “Post-Conflict Reconciliation: Lessons Learned.” The first draft of the paper will be completed by April 30, and the final product will be finished by May 31. The first part of the paper will focus on background and literature review, with an emphasis on lessons learned from two similar experiences: Northern Ireland and South Africa. The paper will then focus on 3 post-conflict situations: Sri Lanka, Israel-Palestine, and Libya, with the aim of producing a guiding matrix for dealing with aforementioned present and future post-conflict situations.

# Research Task Forces

The task force on **“Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)”** is co-chaired by the *National Defence University*—Pakistan. With representatives from India, Pakistan, the United States, China, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, the working group will identify and analyze the primary threats and challenges to maritime security in the IOR. It will produce a set of policy recommendations for international and regional policymakers aimed at progressing maritime security cooperation in the IOR. The working group will address the primary threats and challenges facing the IOR, including considerations for maritime trade, energy issues, littoral-state political considerations, and sea lines of communication, among others. The members of the working group were split into three task forces to allow for greater member collaboration.



The **“Trends in Peacekeeping”** task force is chaired by the *Regional Centre for Strategic Studies*—Sri Lanka. An experienced group of twelve representatives from nine countries was split into five sub-groups focused on: 1). an assessment of peace operations; 2). an assessment of recent peace operations in post-conflict contexts; hybrid operations; and the role of media and social media; 3). an assessment of the challenges at three levels: strategic, operational and tactical; 4). an analysis of how to overcome any aforementioned challenges; and 5). policy recommendations to key stakeholders (the UN, troop-contributing countries, and host countries). Each sub-group will produce a paper that will be edited into a final volume by August 2014.



# Academic Year 2013-2014

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# Strategic Studies Network

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