

Center for the Middle East Strategic Studies in cooperation with the Geneva Center for Security Policy and University of Shahid Beheshti will be hosting the International Conference of

## **“New Transnational Threats Towards Regional Cooperation in the Middle East”**

Contrary to the fact that the Middle East bears common potentials and elements including cultural, religious and lingual similarities, compared to other parts of the world especially Europe or Latin America it has experienced less regional cooperation in today's world.

Seeking the cause of this permanent imbalance leads us to issues such as open-ended conflicts in the region, the role and influence of great powers, clashing norms and identities, the absence of a collective identity and also the structure of international system and its limits. Broadly speaking the main reason behind the formation of regional cooperation in the Middle East is rooted in security concerns.

The security concerns have formed organizations and alliances that were primarily under the influence and leadership of foreign powers to meet their regional security concerns and considerations. Some other organizations were born out of domestic concerns reflecting regional fears, alongside domestic, political and local patterns. This could be taken as the other reason for the futility of the regional interactions in the middle east. Based on experience within this context states find themselves impotent and paralyzed to reach a common path and a long-term understanding due to lack of conformity between domestic norms and orders of member states with other states and the international system.

According to this scenario, it seems emergencies and low politics are the keys to bring the states in the region together and build a path towards cooperation. As for emergencies we can mention common threats which many neighboring countries are struggling with. Unfortunately, in the Middle East, there are many common threats such as the extremist groups, water crises and wars. One of the transnational common threats which has spread recently is terrorism and the extremist groups and what they entail.

It is worth noting that these threats have been dealt with in many parts of the world for some time but what makes it crucial for the Middle East is the spill over into regional neighbors. State failure, threat against human security and social health, a surge in migration, are only some of the repercussions.

Therefore, in spite of the existing harmony between the states in terms of identity and cultural norms, due to clashing historical narratives and threat perceptions it seems the stability, territorial governance and the security of the states and their people are under attack by a transnational threat. For that regional cooperation makes sense and taking a collective approach seems inevitable in order to confront hybrid, intertwined multidimensional organizations that have network structures, (such as Daesh). At this moment in time considering the need and possibility of turning threats into an opportunity for reaching collaboration among the states in the region, one that is free from norms and national identities provides us with a perspective where we can rethink and contemplate the regional policies of the countries in the Middle East.

### **Conference Objectives:**

**Roots of extremism and terrorism emergence in the Middle East**

**New trans-regional terrorist threats in the Middle East**

**New threats as instrument towards regional cooperation in the Middle East**

**Date: Tuesday July 5<sup>th</sup> 2022**

**Time: 14.30 Tehran Time**

**Opening Remarks: 14.30 Tehran Time**

**Ghadir Nasri**

**Director of the Center for the Middle East Strategic Studies**

**Farhang Rajaei**

**Professor of Carlton University**

**Panel 1: Roots of extremism and terrorism emergence in the Middle East**

**13 -15 Tehran Time**

**Hoda Rizk**

**Professor and Researcher, Lebanon University**

**The Roots of terrorism emergence in the Middle east**

**Paul R. Pillar**

**Non-resident Senior Fellow, the Brookings Institute**

**Interstate Conflicts and Middle Eastern Terrorism**

**Amir M. Haji Yousefi**

**Professor, University of Shahid Beheshti, Tehran – Iran**

**Terrorism in West Asia: Roots or Expansion, what is the Real Story?**

**Moderator: Somaye Morovati, Head of AFPAK Chair, Abrar Institute, Tehran**

**Panel 2: New trans-regional terrorist threats in the Middle East**

**15-17 Tehran Time**

**Serge Stroobants**

**Director of Europe & MENA Region, Institute for Economics & Peace**

**Current and future terrorist threats in the Middle East, a systemic risk analysis based on the Global Terrorism Index**

**Fabio Bernardi**

**Senior Researcher on Organized Crime Studies**

**Old and new strategies to tackle trans regional threats in the Middle East**

**Louise Shelley**

**Professor, George Mason University**

**Transnational Crime as a Regional Threat**

**Moderator: Ana Yousefian, Researcher at Center for the Middle East Strategic Studies**

**Panel 3: New threats as instrument towards regional cooperation in the Middle East**

**Abdolrasool (Farzam) Divsallar**

**Visiting Professor, European University Institute**

**The age of securitization and alliance for containment: steps for conflict prevention**

**Marc Finaud**

**Faculty Member, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP)**

**New Opportunities for Arms Control and Disarmament in the Middle East**

**Mehran Kamrava**

**Professor, Georgetown University**

**Critical Security in the Persian Gulf**

**Moderator: Armina Arm, Chair of Russia Studies Committee, Center for the Middle East Strategic Studies**