

Programme of the Valdai Discussion Club's Middle East Conference

“Middle East: New Stage, Old Problems?”

February 19-20, 2019

February 19, Tuesday

10:00 – 12:00 **Opening of the conference**

Andrey BYSTRITSKIY, Chairman of the Board of the Foundation for Development and Support of the Valdai Discussion Club

Vitaly NAUMKIN, Full Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, President of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences.

Plenary session. Russia's interests in the Middle East and combatting radicalism on the new stage

Since mid-2010s, the situation in the Middle East has changed dramatically. One of the factors that contributed to these changes is the reinvigoration of Russia's policy in the region culminating in its direct military participation in the Syrian conflict settlement. As a result, the so-called Islamic State was dealt a decisive blow and ceased to exist as a territorial entity. However, radicalism has not disappeared. It is taking new shapes and spreads across various parts of the region and the world.

- *What strategies should governments and societies pursue in order to counteract this plague?*
- *What are Russia's tasks/capabilities in this sphere?*

Speakers:

Mikhail BOGDANOV, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

Bouthaina SHAABAN, Minister, Political and Media Advisor, Syrian Presidency

Mohamed ELBADRI, Assistant Foreign Minister of Egypt for Arab Affairs

Abdulkarim Hashim MOSTAFA, Chief of Staff and Advisor to the Prime Minister of Iraq

Seyed Kazem SAJJADPOUR, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran; President of the Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS)

Nabeel SHAATH, Advisor to President of State of Palestine

Moderator: **Fyodor LUKYANOV**, Research Director of the Foundation for Development and Support of the Valdai Discussion Club.

12:30-14:00 **Session 1. War and Diplomacy in the Middle East: the Lessons of the 2018-2019 Crises**

The second decade of the 21st century has become a time of upheavals in the Middle East, whose effect is noticeable globally and will continue to grow. The region has inadvertently become a laboratory of various destructive processes, a quintessence of problems faced by the whole world as the old global order is falling apart. At the same time, it is here that regional and international actors are trying to discover mechanisms of solving these problems. They have accumulated vast experience – both positive and negative – which requires reflection and analysis

- *What parts of this experience can be seen as the prototype of institutions and mechanisms for the whole world?*

Speakers:

Mustafa AYDIN, Professor at the Kadir Has University

Hrair BALIAN, Director of the Conflict Resolution Program, the Carter Center

Vitaly NAUMKIN, Full Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, President of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences

Moderator: **Daniel LEVY**, President of the U.S./Middle East Project.

15:00-17:00 **Session 2. The reconstruction of Syria: constitutional arrangement, political structure, return of refugees**

After the most horrible stage of the violent civil war with large-scale external interference, the Syrian conflict has moved to a new stage. Once the fundamental military missions are complete, the issue of re-creating Syria's postwar statehood will be on the table with the crucial tasks being the constitutional and political arrangement, economic revival and return of refugees. The success of internal reconstruction will depend on whether external actors will be able to take concerted measures, while coordination of the donors will depend on how flexible and ready for interaction Damascus will be.

Speakers:

Amal ABOU ZEID, Member of the Lebanese Parliament, Free Patriotic Movement

Vladimir BARTENEV, Director of the Centre for Security and Development Studies (CSDS), School of World Politics at the Lomonosov Moscow State University; Senior Research Fellow of the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences

Maria KHODYNSKAYA-GOLENISCHEVA, Senior Advisor, Department of Strategic Planning Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Nir ROSEN, Syria and Iraq Advisor at the Humanitarian Dialogue Centre

Moderator: **Mohammed IHSAN**, President at the Erbil International University

17.30-19.00 **Session 3. A system of collective security in the Middle East: Is Regional Order Achievable amid Global Chaos?**

The peculiarity of the Middle East is that extreme divergence of the regional states' interests is accompanied by a high degree of mutual dependence, first of all, in the security sphere. Hence the inability to build a collective security system when it is indispensable. Individual actors' measures to enhance their security not only decrease security on the whole but also aggravate their own vulnerability. The task of this session is to discuss the options put forward for the region by various actors (nuclear-free zone, a Gulf states' alliance or other regional blocs), and to understand where these ideas are compatible and if a common approach is feasible.

Speakers:

Kayhan BARZEGAR, Director of the Center for Middle East Strategic Studies (CMESS)

Nabil FAHMY, Dean of the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the American University in Cairo; Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt (2013 – 2014)

Robert MALLEY, President & CEO of the International Crisis Group

Moderator: **Vasily KUZNETSOV**, Director of the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences; Associate Professor of the Faculty of World Politics at the Lomonosov Moscow State University

February 20, Wednesday

10:30-12:30 **Session 4. The Future of OPEC and the Prospects of World Hydrocarbon Markets**

Changes are underway on the oil markets. Price volatility combined with permanent and growing instability in a number of producing regions almost preclude long-term planning. They also pose the question of new mechanisms of market management taking to a new level the need in international cooperation to ensure a fair and justified price

- *What is the future of OPEC in this context?*
- *Is creation of another international bloc in this sphere possible and what principles should guide it?*
- *What are the alternatives to hydrocarbons in the mid- and long-term prospects?*

Speakers:

Abdullah ALFARAJ , Senior Researcher of the Center for Research & Intercommunication Knowledge

Marc-Antoine EYL-MAZZEGA, Director of Ifri's Centre for Energy

Leonid GRIGORYEV, Chief Advisor to the Head of the Analytical Centre under the Russian Federation Government; Head of the School of World Economy, Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, National Research University Higher School of Economics

Moderator: **Marco CARNELOS**, Senior Consultant of the Future Group Holdings.