

Leiden University (LIAS) and the Center of Iranian Studies of  
Shanghai International Studies University Present

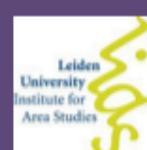


International Conference  
China and Iran's Political and Cultural Relations

Time: December 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
Venue: Lipsius 148 (Leiden University)



For more information please contact Mohammad Forough: [m.forough@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:m.forough@hum.leidenuniv.nl)  
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Asian Modernities and Traditions

## Day one

9.00 Coffee and tea

09.30 Opening: Nira Wickramasinghe (Scientific Director LIAS), Yang Li, (Vice-President of Shanghai International Studies University)

09.45 Introduction: Mohammadbagher Forough (Leiden University)

### **Panel One:**

Chair: Mohammadbagher Forough

10.00 Asghar Seyed-Gohrab (Leiden University)

*China's Image in Persian Culture:  
The Role of Aesthetics in International Relations*

10.30 Ren Jia (Shanghai International Studies University)

*Sino-Iranian Economic and Trade Cooperation  
with the Development of the Belt and Road*

11.00 Cheng Tong (Shanghai International Studies University)

*A Research on the “Bao” Coins of the Salghurids in the Mongol  
Period*

### **12.00 Lunch**

### **Panel Two**

Chair: Asghar Seyed-Gohrab

14.00 Muzaffer Şenel (Director, Center for Modern Turkish Studies, İstanbul)

*Political Implications of Chinese-Iranian Relations on Turkey's  
Foreign Policy*

14.30 Hannah Deinsberger (LIAS, Leiden University)

*The Geopolitical Imagination of Iran in the Chinese BRI: Corridor,  
Hub, or Both?*

15.00 Mohammadbagher Forough (Leiden University)

*Iran at the Intersection of Chinese and Indian Geo-economics*

## **15.30 Coffee and tea**

### **Panel Three**

Chair: Cheng Tong

16:00 Ma Li Rong (Shanghai International Studies University)

*Opportunities, Challenges and Countermeasures of Deepening China-Iran: Partnership under the Belt and Road Initiative*

16:30 Wang Cheng (Shanghai International Studies University)

*Re-Examination of the Authors and the Sources of “Hui Hui Yao Fang”*

17:00 Drinks and Conference dinner for the invitees

**December 19<sup>th</sup>, Vrieshof 2/002 (Leiden University)**

## **Day Two**

### **Panel Four**

Chair: Noa Schonmann

10.00 Agha Bayramov (Groningen University)

*The Multilateral Iran Nuclear Deal:  
the withdrawal of the US and the increasing role of China and EU*

10.30 Yusen Yu (Heidelberg University)

*Emergence of a Canon of Chinese Painting during the Timurid and Safavid Periods*

11.00 William Figueroa (University of Pennsylvania)

*Maoism and The Iranian Left*

## **12.00 Lunch**

### **Panel Five**

Chair: Maaike Warnaar

14.00 Anahita Arian (Erfurt University)

*Encountering the Siamese:  
XVII C. Safavid Practices of Knowledge Formation*

14.30 Simon Theobald (Australian National University)

*'The quality is terrible':  
The Dilemma of Chinese Market Expansion and Iranian middle Class Consumers*

15.00 Guy Burton (Independent Scholar)

*Abandoning “Win-Win”? Chinese strategy in response to the  
Saudi-Iranian rivalry in the Middle East*

15:30 Closing remarks: Mohammadbagher Forough & Asghar Seyed-Gohrab

## Academic Bio and Paper Abstracts

**Prof.dr. YANG Li** is a Professor of Shanghai International Studies University. Dr. YANG holds a Ph.D. degree in Economics. He is a PhD supervisor, Vice President of Shanghai International Studies University, and a standing member of the Board. Dr. YANG holds part-time academic position at Middle East Studies Centre, which is a key research base in humanities and social sciences sponsored by the Chinese Ministry of Education. He is an active member of the Development Research Centre run by Shanghai Municipal People's Government. In the meantime, Dr. YANG is Vice President of Shanghai Association of International Relations. He is also a member of the assessment committee of Economics Discipline under Shanghai Municipal Committee of Academic Degrees. Dr. YANG has done a lot of research projects sponsored by National Ministry Department. Those projects include, but not limited to, Risk Management for Commercial Banks, Impact of the Launch of Euro on Global Finance, Studies of Accommodating Money Supply, Theory and Practice in Regional Finance Integration, Risk Management in National and International Finance, Studies on International Coordination between Quantitative-Easing featured Beggar-Thy-Neighbor Effect, Monetary Policies, and Middle East Sovereign Wealth Fund Studies. Dr. YANG is the author and editor of 10 books and has published more than 40 papers on CSSCI journals. For his excellence in teaching and research work, Dr. YANG has been granted for various fundings. He is also awarded with distinguished honors as: Shanghai Twilight Scholar in 2000, Talent Nurturer in 2001, Bao Steel Out-standing Faculty Member in 2004, and Shanghai Champion Leader in 2011.

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### Asghar Seyed-Gohrab

China's Image in Persian Culture: The Role of Aesthetics in International Relations

This lecture offers an analytic overview of the image of China in Persian culture, examining the construction of the image of China in different cultural domains, from religious texts including mysticism (Sufism), to romances, visual arts and material culture. My hypothesis is that poetic aesthetic lies at the centre of framing China's image in Persian speaking world, which still resonates in contemporary international relations between the two countries. In this line of reasoning, poetry becomes a graphic icon of aesthetic engagement with imagology and politics. In modern Sino-Iranian relations, the common rhetoric points at the two cultures' ancient civilizations, friendly cultural exchange, and mutual impact for more than one millennium. In sum, I will analyze how the image of China is created and why in certain cultural domains, China is represented as the 'other' (sometimes an enemy) while in other contexts, China is represented positively, even as a symbol of artistic and spiritual perfection.

**Asghar Seyed-Gohrab** received his PhD from Leiden University where he has been teaching since 1997. He is currently Associate Professor of Persian at the Department

of Middle Eastern Studies and is the track-leader of the Persian and Iranian Studies program. In addition to many articles, chapters, he has authored, edited, and translated several books on Persian literature and culture, cinema, Sufism, and Persian manuscript tradition. His publications include *The Layered Heart: Essays on Persian Poetry (A Celebration in Honor of Dick Davis)*, (ed. Washington DC: Mage Publishers, 2019); *The True Dream: Indictment of the Shiite Clerics of Isfahan*, London: Routledge, 2017 (together with S. McGlinn); *Soefism: Een levende traditie*, (Amsterdam: Prometheus / Bert Bakker, 2015, third print); *Literature of the Early Twentieth Century: From the Constitutional Period to Reza Shah* (ed., Volume XI of *A History of Persian Literature*, London / New York: I.B. Tauris 2015); *Mirror of Dew: The Poetry of Ālām-Tāj Zhāle Qā'em-Maqāmi*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Ilex Foundation Series 14, 2015); *Conflict and Development in Iranian Film*, (ed. together with K. Talatoff, Leiden: LUP, 2013); *Metaphor and Imagery in Persian Poetry*, (ed., Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012); *The Great Omar Khayyam: A Global Reception*, (ed., Leiden: Leiden university Press, 2012); *Courtly Riddles: Enigmatic Embellishments in Early Persian Poetry*, (Leiden: LUP, 2008, 2010); *One Word – Yak kaleme: A 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Persian Treatise Introducing Western Codified Law* (2008, 2010, together with S. McGlinn); *The Treasury of Tabriz: The Great Il-Khanid Compendium*, (West Lafayette, Indiana, Purdue University Press, ed. together with S. McGlinn, 2007); *Gog and Magog: The Clans of Chaos in World Literature*, (West Lafayette, Indiana, Purdue University Press, together with F. Doufikar-Aerts & S. McGlinn, 2007); *Layli and Majnun: Love, Madness and Mystic Longing in Nizami's Epic Romance*, (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2003). He has translated several volumes of modern Persian poetry into Dutch, including the poetry of Sohrāb Sepehri, Forugh Farrokhzād, Mohammad-Rezā Shafī'i-Kadkani, and (together with J.T.P. de Bruijn) Ahmad Shāmlu, Nāder Nāderpur, and Hushang Ebtehāj. His research concentrate on the triangle of literature, politics and religion, examining the application of classical Persian poetry in modern politics. He is the founding general editor of the Iranian Studies Series at Leiden University Press and Chicago University Press (23 books) and the Modern Persian Poetry Series (15 volumes).

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### **Ren Jia**

Sino-Iranian Economic and Trade Cooperation with the Development of the Belt and Road

China and Iran have a long cooperative economic relationship. In addition to the friendship based on historical trade and investment connection, the two nations share common interests in developing tighter economic ties today. China treats Iran as an important partner in regional political and economic coordination considering its unique geographical location and advantage in natural resources. With massive crude oil demands, China is now the biggest trading partner for Iran. It is rational for Iran authorities to turn eastward and build stronger economic relation with China under the rising pressure sanctions re-imposed by US. Since the Belt and Road Initiative was

proposed in 2013, leaders from both nations have promised to strengthen economic cooperation on many occasions. Bilateral cooperation agreements have been signed in the past years covering variety of fields. People get to deeper mutual understanding, yet not enough, due to increasing cross-border trade and business activities.

This paper focuses on Sino-Iranian bilateral trade and investment cooperation in the process of developing the B&R. Major investment fields and key projects deployed in recent years are analyzed, demonstrating the achievements of bilateral endeavor from policy coordination to facilities connectivity accompanied with trade and financing connectivity. The benefits created in the context of economic cooperation under the B&R are assessed. While opportunities for further cooperation between China and Iran exist in many fields such as energy, infrastructure, manufacturing and hospitality industries, challenges and obstacles remain for Chinese enterprises to enter Iranian market. The withdrawal of United States from the JCPOA escalated the uncertainty of investment. Iran's economy policy turning over towards domestic production is another factor, along with complex business environment. The development of the B&R originated by China will not move smoothly without Iranian participation. However, China bears firmly the basic principle of openness and inclusiveness in deploying the B&R project, which offers Iran a great opportunity to get involved in global market to boost its fragile economy. More efforts need to be made in order to move the comprehensive cooperative partnership ahead.

**Dr. Ren Jia** holds a Ph.D. degree in Laws. She is a lecturer in the School of Economics and Finance of Shanghai International Studies University. Her research interests are international economic cooperation and European economic integration. She is the Principle Investor (PI), or co-PI of several research projects sponsored by the National Research Fund.

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### Tong Cheng

#### A Research on the “Bao” Coins of the Salghurids in the Mongol Period

The “Bao” coins of the Salghurids are special and precious because a Chinese character “ Bao ” (宝) is minted on the obverse of the coin. We have sorted all these



coins into three editions and found out that they were minted during the Islamic years of 660s in Fārs by the name of the last Salghurid Queen Abish Khātun. Two different explanations given by the scholars showed us the reason for this, one of which is that the Mongol governor

Inkiyānū, a Turk had probably ordered to mint the character, so he was called back to the Ilkhanid court and this can be found in the history book written by Vassaf, while another of which is that this was the result of the prosperity of the trade with Chinese

merchants in the Persian Gulf region. The author of this article prefers to the latter explanation, because by comparing the years on the coins with the years mentioned by Vassaf, the “Bao” coins were minted before Inkiyānū’s coming to Fārs. And the demission of him was the result of the conflicts between the local noble group and the Ilkhanid group. The latter explanation can be supported by the deduction from the prosperous trade in the Persian Gulf, especially some islands in the Hormuz such as Kish, which was controlled by the Salghurids and the main part of the revenue of Shiraz was the commercial taxes. In addition to that, from the Tang Dynasty in China, the character “Bao” was mostly minted on the coins and became a sign of money. And the Chaghatay “Bao” coins in Xinjiang of China can also give an additional support for it. So by this sign people were willing to accept the coins in the process of trading, and for the same reason, the “Bao” character on the Salghurids coins can make us imagine what a big share in the trade that the Chinese had at that time. And also, some details of the “Bao” character tells us that it was written by a Chinese or someone who was deeply influenced by Chinese culture and why it was placed horizontally while so is the Uighur inscriptions on the Ilkhanid coins.

**Prof.dr. Tong Cheng** is a Professor of Shanghai International Studies University. Dr. CHENG holds a Ph.D. degree in Persian language and literature from Peking University and was the visiting scholar of Harvard University and Tehran university. He worked in the Chinese Embassy in Tehran as First Secretary from 2012 to 2014. Dr. CHENG is the Dean of SAAS of Shanghai International Studies University and doctoral supervisor of Persian language and literature major. He is mainly engaged in the study of History and Culture of Iran. Dr. Cheng is the author and editor of 3 books and has published about 20 papers on different journals. His representatives include The Idea of Legitimacy and the Shia’ in Iran: From Hulagu to Shah Abbas (The Religious Culture Publish, 2010), The Superstructure of Ancient Iran and its Religions (The Religious Culture Publish, 2016), Jamejam on the Silk Road—a collection of articles for the international conference of sino-iranica cultural exchange on the silk road (Editor, Zhongxi Press, 2016) and etc. For his excellence in teaching and research work, Dr. Cheng is awarded with distinguished honors as: Model Advisor Peking University in 1996 and Bao Steel Out-standing National Model Teacher Award in 2009.

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### **Muzaffer Şenel**

#### Political Implications of Chinese-Iranian Relations on Turkey’s Foreign Policy

The aim of this study to examine the political implications of Chinese-Iranian relations on the Turkey’s quest for regional order especially in the West Asia by focusing on foreign policy discourses and practices. This study will focus on especially four main sub-regions, Gulf, Syria, Horn of Africa and Palestinian-Israeli conflict. How Chinese and Iranian convergent and divergent policies towards these regions will influence Turkey’s position? What are the opportunities and challenges of

“One Belt-One Road Initiative” for Turkey? How Turkey formulate its policies and using various instrument simultaneously to benefit from these relations? What kind of strategies Turkey has been developed to meet the challenges of divergent interests? In the light of these questions, Turkish policy will be analysed by using textual analysis. In this study, I am planning to use the “discourse analysis” as a methodology. Speeches and talks of “the Turkish foreign policy decision makers, i.e., president, prime minister, minister of foreign affairs etc.,” on the mentioned-regions in specific will be examined. As well as the policies and strategies developed by Ankara will be taken into consideration as well.

**Muzaffer Şenel** currently working as lecturer, Department of Political Science & International Relations and serving as Director, Center for Modern Turkish Studies at İstanbul Şehir University. He is a scholar of European Studies and his research interests are concentrated on the geographical juxtaposition of Europe and Middle East, and allow him to maneuver in the both areas of policy interest and explore a rather neglected field of research that not only has the potential to bring different actors together, but also holds the promise for global order, stability, peace, and prosperity. Before joining to ŞEHİR, he worked at Kocaeli (2000-2002) and Marmara University (2002-2010). With EUROMESCO, TÜBİTAK, Hrant Dink Foundation and Regional Jean Monnet scholarships he was a visiting researcher at Teleki Lázsló Institute (Hungarian Institute of International Affairs) Foreign Policy Research Center in Budapest, Hungary; The Center for European Studies at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland, College of Humanities and Social Sciences of the American University of Armenia, and Centre for Islamic Studies at Oxford University. Şenel has written articles on the European Union, Turkish Foreign Policy and Cyprus in the semi-journal *Anlayış* and has articles published in various books and journals. His areas of research are the security-identity-order relationship, Turkish foreign policy, Cyprus, European Union politics and international relations, the Middle East policy of the European Union and neighbour politics. Şenel has a documentary film on “Forgotten Heritage: Waqf/Foundations of Cyprus and edited two books: With Sadık Ünay, (Ed.), he has published a book entitled Global Orders and Civilizations: Perspectives from History, Philosophy and International Relations (Nova Science Publications, New York, 2009); With Mesut Özcan (ed.), *Modernite ve Dünya Düzen(ler)i/Modernity and World Order(s)*, (Klasik Yayımları, İstanbul, 2010).

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### **Hannah Deinsberger**

The Geopolitical Imagination of Iran in the Chinese BRI: Corridor, Hub, or Both?

China and Iran call their bilateral relations a “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership”, a strategic discourse used by China to refer to many bilateral relations. What does this ‘partnership’ mean specifically in the case of Iran, especially in the context of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)? This paper addresses this question by focusing on two possible specific roles that Iran has in the Chinese BRI, namely, Iran as a geo-economic ‘hub’

and Iran as a 'corridor'. The theoretical approach this paper adopts is 'critical geopolitics', which conceives of geopolitics in both practical and formal or discursive terms. Methodologically, this paper investigates the Chinese and Iranian official discourses and practices with regard to two specific concepts: hub and corridor. The objective is to understand what role Iran has in the geopolitical imagination of China and what role Iran imagines for itself in the context of BRI.

**Hannah Deinsberger** is a Master's student at Leiden Institute for Area Studies, Leiden University, Netherlands. Her research is focused on the geo-economic relations between China and Middle East, particularly Iran, in the context of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

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### **Mohammadbagher Forough**

Iran at the Intersection of Chinese and Indian Geoeconomics

The paper examines Iran's government's geo-economic thinking in terms of the position of the country at the intersection of Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Indian geoeconomic initiatives such as North-South Trade Corridor (NSTC). The conceptual framework will be twofold, namely, geopolitics and geoconomics. The paper argues that the Iranian political and economic establishment views the Chinese and Indian initiatives as an opportunity to uplift Iran out of the geopoliticized nature of its position in the world (involved as Iran is, voluntarily or forcibly, in many geopolitical scenarios in the region and beyond). Iranian involvement in such initiatives gives Iran a new geoconomic relevance, that makes Iran a central country (partly due to its central geography in the region among other factors) in both Chinese BRI and Indian SNTC. The paper will also discuss how these new geoeconomic dynamics influence Iranian geopolitics as well.

**Dr. Mohammadbagher Forough** is an assistant professor at Leiden University (Leiden, Netherlands), a research associate at Clingendael Institute (The Hague, The Netherlands), and a co-founder of New Silk Road Group (Rotterdam, The Netherlands).

<https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/staffmembers/mohammadbagher-forough>

<https://www.clingendael.nl/person/mohammadbagher-forough>

<https://www.new-silk-road.org/>

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### **Ma Li Rong**

Opportunities, Challenges and Countermeasures of Deepening China-Iran Partnership under the Belt and Road Initiative

I. China-Iran partnership: connotation, position and objective

1. The interpretation of the connotation of "partnership"

2. The basic position of China-Iran partnership

3. The main objectives of China-Iran partnership

## II. The construction of China-Iran partnership: co-existence of opportunity and challenge

1. The opportunity of mutual benefit and win-win:

The scope of cooperation has expanded.

The cooperation projects have increased

The cooperation has become more effective.

2. The severe challenges from both home and abroad:

a. Iran is faced with challenges such as geopolitical fragmentation, religious extremism spillovers, and intense U.S. pressure.

b. China is faced with challenges of the B&R intentions being distorted by the West, the lack of affinity of China's national image, the insufficiency of public diplomacy input after Chinese companies going abroad, the limitation of Chinese ability to provide public goods, and the lag of academic research on the "Belt and Road".

3. The increasingly complex interference factors:

a. The great-power factors of the United States and Europe;

b. The regional factors of the major countries in the Middle East area, such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Israel;

c. The security factors of the "Belt and Road" project;

d. The risk factors of religious extremism.

## III. Countermeasures for deepening China-Iran partnership under the background of the "Belt and Road" cooperation.

1. Religious exchanges should be regarded as a breakthrough to further strengthen Chinese-Iranian people-to-people exchanges.

2. Traditional and non-traditional security cooperation should be regarded as a growth point for further expanding China-Iran strategic cooperation.

3. The Silk Road community of common future should be taken as a new mission to further deepen the China-Iran partnership.

In short, the history of the peace communication between China and Iran over thousands of years on the Silk Road proves the discipline that the "cultural difference" can be the motivation for civilization exchanges because of tolerance and mutual understanding, and it can also become the resistance of civilization exchanges due to extreme narrowness. This is also the biggest practical impetus for deepening the China-Iran partnership under the "Belt and Road" initiative.

**Prof. dr. MA LI Rong** is the Dean of Silk Road Strategy Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University and doctoral supervisor of International Relations major and postdoctoral supervisor of Country and Regional Studies research field. She is executive director of the China Middle East Studies Society, China Asia and Africa Studies Society, China-Arab Friendship Association, Shanghai International Relations Studies Society, the Belt and Road Branch of China Higher Education Association and Shanghai Religion Studies Society and chief editor of

Journal of New Silk Road Studies. She is mainly engaged in the study of religion and international relations, religion and national security, country and regional studies, Chinese diplomacy and Silk Road Studies. Her representatives include The Study of Arab-Islam in the Context of Western Hegemony (Monograph, 2007), The Research on Mosques Social Functions in Middle East Countries (Monograph, 2011), New Chapter of Silk Road: a Symposium on the 10th Anniversary of China-Arab Cooperation (Chief-editor, 2014), Silk Road Studies: An Interpretation Based on China's Humanistic Diplomacy (Monograph, 2014), The Soft Environment Construction for "the Belt and Road" and China's Humanity Diplomacy towards the Middle East (Monograph, 2016), The Country and Regional Research Series of the Silk Road Studies (10 Volumes, 2017), Silk Road Studies Think Tank Report (3 Volumes, 2018) etc.

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### **Wang Cheng**

Re-Examination of the Authors and the Sources of "Hui Hui Yao Fang"

"Hui Hui Yao Fang" is a large encyclopedia of Islamic medicine compiled in the middle and late Ming Dynasty which includes many medical knowledges such as medical prescriptions, theories and therapies. This paper first makes an review of the existing research results of the authors and the basics of "Hui Hui Yao Fang" and points out that "Hui Hui Yao Fang" is not a Chinese translation of one or several Arabic and Persian medical books, but a new medical literature which was compiled by the authors by rewriting and reorganizing the contents of the Chinese translations of various Arabic and Persian medical books that were introduced to China during that periods. Considering the connection between Chinese medical terms, transliterations of foreign words and their annotations in this work and the author's identity and the original texts, the second part of this paper compares the similar parts of "Hui Hui Yao Fang" with Islamic medical books (Arabic and Persian) and comes to the conclusions by analyzing the language phenomenon in the text of this book as follows: "Hui Hui Yao Fang" is a compilation of the Chinese translations of various Arabic and Persian medical literatures introduced to China during the Yuan and Ming Dynasties which was composed by the Huihui (Muslims from Iran and Arab) assimilated by Han nationality by using their language and medical knowledge and referring to the original texts of Persian and Arabic medical books under the unified guidance by government or other official or non-governmental organizations; The authors' language and pharmacy levels were limited, and this limitation reflects the general problems of Hui medical scientists and even the medical community in China at the time.

**Wang Cheng** is an assistant at the Shanghai International Studies of China (SHISU). He got a Master's degree in art from the department of Persian Language and literature of Peking University in 2012 and then received his master degree in art from

the department of Iran Studies of Tehran University in 2016. His master's dissertation is "The medical science relationship between China and Iran based on the book of "hui hui yao fang"—the prescription of the Islamic herbal medicine" which is devoted to analyze the history of intercommunication between Chinses and Persian medicines and the influences of spread Persian-Islamic medicine in China on Chinses society and translate "Hui Hui Yao Fang" into Persian and make a textual research on the master copy of this book. His has worked in SHISU from 2017. His research interest covers history and culture of Iran and the historical relationship between Iran and China. He attended some international academic conferences in Iran and China in 2016 and 2017. He has published some articles in Chinese and Persian journals.

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**Agha Bayramov**

The Multilateral Iran Nuclear Deal: the withdrawal of the US and the increasing role of China and EU

Over a couple of decades, the US has been one of the important supporters of both multilateral and unilateral agreements. Nevertheless, this strategy has started to change as a new president Trump openly questions America's multilateral foreign policy commitment to its long-standing allies and security partners and even gives a message of radical break with many traditional commitments of the U.S. foreign policy, namely its unilateral withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal. However, for an active supporter of multilateral nuclear deal like the European Union this has created a difficult situation in which it has to re-examine its international strategy and the role of established partnerships. In light of this, the main objective of this paper is to discuss whether and how the retreat of the US and the simultaneous rise of China affect the effectiveness of the multilateral Iran nuclear deal. More specifically, this paper aims to discuss the future of multilateral nuclear deal and the position the EU adopts on this in the wake of the US retreat and China's rise in international relations. In doing so this paper intends to add richer interpretations of previously observed but unexplained and neglected phenomena associated with multilateral arrangements. The paper has three main parts. First, I show that the role of the US in multilateral agreements and in what ways this role has changed since the first day of Trump administration. Second, considering China's growing role in the international system, I discuss whether and how China supports existing multilateral structures. Finally, I explain whether the EU and China can meet Iran's expectations for keeping nuclear deal.

**Agha Bayramov** is a PhD candidate and lecturer at the department of International Relations and International Organization of the University of Groningen. His PhD project focuses on the role of energy resources in conflict management dynamics and actors in cooperation and conflict in the Caspian Sea Region. A dominant theme in his PhD research is the network of actors (e.g. companies, states, financial institutions

and NGOs) in the Caspian Sea Region.

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**Yusen Yu**

Emergence of a Canon of Chinese Painting during the Timurid and Safavid Periods

In the Timurid and Safavid periods, paintings came to be conceptualized in terms of specific modes. My paper focuses on the imported Chinese paintings and the Persian copies, which were categorized as “*Khitā’ī* (Chinese-style) works” in the context of newly compiled albums, as binary to distinguish it from paintings of local and other foreign traditions. An investigation of the album contents and art historical writings of these periods demonstrates that this “Chinese” painterly idiom was manifested in terms of style and subject matter, among which the illusory quality of Chinese painting proved to be most compelling for the court elites of Central Asia and Iran. Starting from the mid-sixteenth century, the European Renaissance art, carried through engravings and later paintings, were brought to the Islamic world by the Jesuit missionaries, which further complicated visual verisimilitude as a key concept in the reception of foreign art in the Persianate world.

**Yusen Yu** works as a doctoral fellow in the Cluster “Asia and Europe in a Global Context” at Heidelberg University, Germany. His areas of research include Asian and Islamic art.

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**William Fegueroa**

Maoism and the Iranian Left

The victory of the Chinese Communist Revolution in 1949 generated enormous interest on the Iranian Left in the experiences of China as a model for revolution. This paper explores the causes and consequences of the clandestine, unofficial ties forged between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and a group of Maoist-oriented Iranian Communists that broke off from the Tudeh Party in 1965. This group, called the Revolutionary Organization of the Tudeh Party (ROTPI), sent members to China for military and political education, distributed Maoist texts in Persian among overseas Iranian students, and was briefly a major player in the Confederation of Iranian Students. This search for a new discursive and ideological program was part of a critical process in which a new generation of Iranian activists embraced internationalism. China played a direct and active role in this process, largely within the context of its evolving foreign policy goals during the Sino-Soviet Split. This largely overlooked episode represents significant developments in the history of the Iranian Left, and in Sino-Persian relations at a time when official contact between the two did not exist. Sources include Chinese newspapers, Persian Communist ephemera, and both published and personally conducted interviews with former ROTPI members.

**William Figueroa** is a History Ph.D Candidate at the University of Pennsylvania who focuses on China's relationship with the Middle East, especially Sino-Iranian relations. He is currently working on his thesis, which explores the development of political, institutional, and intellectual ties between China and Iran over the last 100 years.

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### Anahita Arian

Title: Encountering the Siamese: XVII C. Safavid Practices of Knowledge Formation

Abstract: In 1685 a diplomatic envoy of the Safavid Empire embarked upon a journey across the Indian Ocean to Siam. A relic of this journey is the travel or diplomatic account known as the *Safīna-i Sulaimānī* – the Ship of Sulaimān – written by the scribe of the Persian envoy Muhammad Rabī‘. This paper analyzes how and what knowledge Muhammad Rabī‘ produced about the encounter with the Siamese. More specifically, it explores the knowledge formation about the power of the Siamese kingdom, its king and court, and its society, religion and culture. What is further examined through a discursive analysis of the account are the relations of power that were entrenched in the scribe’s knowledge formation practices next to how this practice was governed by the Safavid political order. Finally, the paper divulges how through the practice of knowledge formation Muhammed Rabī‘ also established a hierarchical relationship between the Safavid Empire and the Siamese Kingdom in which the Siamese were politically and culturally inferiorized.

**Anahita Arian** is since October 2017 a Lecturer (Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin) at the department of International Relations at the Faculty of Law, Economics and Social Sciences of the University of Erfurt. Prior to that she worked for five years as a Lecturer at the department of International Relations at the University of Groningen (Netherlands). She is currently in the process of finalizing her PhD at the University of Groningen. In her dissertation, titled *The XVII C. Safavid Diplomatic Envoy to Siam: A Politics of Knowledge Formation*, she explores what and how a Persian diplomatic envoy to Siam produced knowledge about peoples and cultures it encountered during its journey and how the envoy’s epistemic practices were governed by the Safavid political order. Anahita’s work is characterized by interdisciplinarity as it cuts across the disciplines of International Relations, History, History of Science, Philosophy, Theology, Anthropology and Literature. Her research interests cover a wide range of topics and include International Relations Theory, History of International Relations, Global Connected Histories, Historical Epistemology, Modes of Reasoning, Governance of Empires, Early Modern Global Encounters, Early Modern and Medieval practices of Sovereignty in Asia, Entanglements, Knowledge-Power nexus, Identity-Alterity nexus, Critical Historiography and historiographical approaches, Postcolonialism, Decoloniality, Political Theology and Aesthetics.

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**Simon Theobald**

‘The Quality is Terrible’: The Dilemma of Chinese Market Expansion and Iranian Middle Class Consumers

To-date, most of the research concerning the relationship between Iran and China has focused on macro-level geostrategic engagement cutting across familiar themes of security, energy, and diplomacy, as though the relationship between these authoritarian partners was a pre-given outcome. This paper points to difficulties in that relationship by engaging at a far more localized level. Drawing on fifteen months of qualitative fieldwork, this paper explores consumer practices and the purchase of Chinese-made goods among the Iranian middle class in Mashhad. I argue that even as Chinese goods flood Iranian markets and make up an increasingly large percentage of the total stock in bazars and shops, Iran’s middle class remain deeply sceptic about the quality and value of Chinese materials, continuing to buy where possible Western or other brands with established reputations, like Apple and Samsung. As the rial continues to lose value and more expensive foreign brands move beyond the purview of the middle class, if the Iranian political establishment wants to cement the economic and political relationship between the two countries, significant efforts will have to be made to convince the middle class that purchasing Chinese wares is equivalent to or better than buying US and European brand names.

**Simon Theobald** is a PhD-Candidate in Anthropology at the Australian National University. His thesis focuses on utopianism and the Islamic Revolution in contemporary Iran, with an additional interest in the social and political relationship between China and Iran. He has twice published on the topic in the East Asia Forum.

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**Guy Burton**

Abandoning “Win-Win”? Chinese Strategy in Response to the Saudi-Iranian Rivalry in the Middle East

China’s current global rise occurred in an international system shaped by others, even as it demands reforms that acknowledge its new status. But how does China respond to international systems from which it has benefited but where other, regional powers are making demands for change? Since 2011 the Middle East region has been in transition, with conflicts taking place at local, national and regional levels and across different dimensions (political, religious, economic and identity). Cutting across them all is a region-wide rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, countries that China has strong and growing business and investment links and with whom it has avoided taking sides politically. This paper argues that China’s “honest broker” status is under challenge. Its strategy towards the Middle East and the tensions between its two leading regional powers will most likely occur at two levels. At the sub-regional level,

Chinese strategy will lean towards which power has greater influence or interests over the other (e.g. in the Syrian and Yemeni civil wars and the Qatar boycott). At the regional level, however, it will increasingly incline towards Iran, with whom it shares a preference for the status quo over Saudi Arabia's more revisionist/disruptive approach.

**Dr. Guy Burton** has held research and teaching appointments at the Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government in Dubai, Nottingham University's Malaysian campus, the University of Kurdistan-Hewlêr and Birzeit University. His most recent book is *Rising Powers and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1947* (Lexington Books, 2018).