



ARAB GEOPOLITICS 2020

The Middle East: what kind of future?

Speakers Biographies

WELCOME REMARKS

Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo,

President, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome

He started his diplomatic career in 1969 at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, within the Directorate of Cultural Affairs. After having served at the Italian Embassy in Washington, D.C. and as Commercial Counsellor at the Embassy of Italy in Prague, Amb. Minuto-Rizzo worked as Head of External Relations Office of the EEC from 1981 to 1986. In the next years, his career focused on Europe and Space Policy. In 1997 he was appointed Diplomatic Counsellor of the Minister of Defence Nino Andreatta, then of his successors Carlo Scognamiglio and Sergio Mattarella. In 2000, Amb. Minuto-Rizzo held the position of Italian Ambassador to the Western European Union and to the Political and Security Committee of the EU, of which he was among the founding members. Amb. Minuto-Rizzo was Deputy Secretary General of the Atlantic Alliance between 2001 and 2007. His mandate was mostly carried out in the strategic political-industrial area, in relations with sensitive countries such as those in the Gulf and the Southern Mediterranean. He is the author of the books: *The road to Kabul*, publisher Il Mulino-Arel (2009); *A political journey without maps, diversity and future in the Greater Middle East* (Rubettino2013), and *NATO and the Middle East: The Making of a Partnership* (New Academia Publishing, 2018).

Karim El Aynaoui

President, Policy Center for the New South, Rabat

He is President of the Policy Center for the New South and Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at the Mohammed VI Polytechnic University. He also serves as advisor to the CEO and Chairman of the OCP Group. From 2005 to 2012, he worked at the Central Bank of Morocco, as Director of Economics and International Relations. Prior to this, he served as an economist at the World Bank. Dr El Aynaoui is a board member of the OCP Foundation, a global member of the Trilateral Commission, and member of IFRI Strategic Advisory Board, the Malabo Montpellier Panel and the Scientific Council of the Moroccan Capital Market Authority. He holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Bordeaux.

OPENINGS REMARKS

Gilles Kepel

Scientific Director, Middle East Mediterranean Freethinking Platform, Università della Svizzera italiana, Lugano

Dr Kepel is a French political scientist and Arabist, specialised in contemporary Middle East and the study of Muslim communities in the West. He is Adjunct Professor and Scientific Director of the Middle East Mediterranean (MEM) Freethinking Platform. He is also Professor at the Université Paris Sciences et Lettres (PSL) and Director of the Middle East and Mediterranean Chair at PSL, based at the Ecole Normale Supérieure. Originally trained as a classicist, he started to study Arabic after a journey to the Levant in 1974. He first graduated in Philosophy and English, then completed his Arabic language studies at the French Institute in Damascus (1977–78), and received his degree from SciencesPo in 1980. His research interests focus on the current geopolitical configurations and conflicts in the Middle East, the Mediterranean region; and the impact of Jihadi terror in the wake of the severe attacks on French and European soil. He investigated the developments of Islam as a social and political phenomenon in France, with an innovative approach in Islamic studies in the West. He researched on the 2005 French riots (Émeutes du 2005 dans les Banlieues) in the Clichy-Montfermeil area, north of Paris, whence the events sparked. He also carried out comparative studies of political-religious movements in Islam, Judaism and Christianity. His newest book is *Sortir du Chaos: Les crises en Méditerranée et au Moyen-Orient* (Éditions Gallimard, 2018).

SESSION I

Claire Spencer

Visiting Senior Research Fellow, King's College, London

She is currently an independent consultant with the British Council working on the Hammamet series of conferences that fosters greater links between the UK and North Africa. Prior to this, Dr Spencer was Senior Research Fellow and Head of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Programme at Chatham House, before serving as Head of Policy for the Middle East and Central Asia for the development agency Christian Aid. Until 2001, she was Deputy Director of the Centre for Defence Studies at King's College, where she set up and led the Mediterranean Security programme. Dr Spencer is a member of a number of advisory boards and associations relating to the MENA region. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. Dr Spencer received her BSc in politics from Bristol University and her PhD from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Giovanni Romani

Head, Middle East and North Africa Section, Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, NATO HQ, Brussels

He is a former Italian Navy officer. He has been on active duty from 1985 to 2006. He served as a combat operations electronic warfare and intelligence officer on several Italian and US ships, taking also part in the “Sharp Guard” and “Sharp France” operations in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia. In March 2006, he was appointed Head of NATO’s Naval Armament Unit. From April 2012 to December 2017, he led the Land and Maritime Capabilities Section within the NATO Defence Investment Division. Mr Romani is currently Head of NATO Middle East and North Africa Section.

Youssef Cherif

Deputy Director, Columbia Global Centers, Tunis

Dr Cherif runs the Columbia Global Centers in Tunis. He is a Tunis-based political analyst, specialising in North African affairs, member of Carnegie's Civic Activism Network, and a regular contributor to number of think-tanks and media outlets. He consulted previously for IWPR, IACE, the United Nations, The Carter Center, etc. He is a former expert at the Tunisian Institute for Strategic Studies (ITES). He holds a Chevening Master of Arts in International Relations from the Department of War Studies of King's College London, and a Fulbright Master of Arts in Classical Studies from Columbia University.

Younes Abouyoub

Director, Governance and State-Building Division for the MENA Region, United Nations, New York

He was Former Head of the Political Office of the UN Under-Secretary General for Conflict Prevention and Senior Political Advisor to the UN Secretary General Special Envoy to Burundi. Dr Abouyoub directed the Political Office of the UN Secretary General Special Envoy to Yemen and acted as his Senior Special Advisor. He also was the Senior Political Officer in charge of the regional affairs in the UN political mission to Libya (UNSMIL) and Head of Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Libya. He also served as Senior Regional Expert in the UN Security Council Panel of Experts on Sudan (Darfur) and worked for the United Nations Department of Political Affairs in New York, and the United Nations Environment Program in Nairobi. Dr Younes Abouyoub holds a PhD in political sociology (Paris Sorbonne/Columbia University) and MA in Geopolitics and Law.

Mitchell Belfer

President, Euro-Gulf Information, Rome

He is currently President of the Euro-Gulf Information Centre, Senior Lecturer in International Relations, Terrorism and Security at the Metropolitan University Prague, and Editor in Chief of the Central European Journal of International and Security Studies. Dr Belfer also sits, among other editorial, research and scientific boards, on the Steering Committee of the Global Institute for Cybersecurity Technologies and the Editorial boards of New Perspectives and the International Journal of Humanitarian Studies. In addition to numerous works of scholarship and presentations in academic and political fora, he is also a frequent international media contributor and has appeared on the BBC and CNN, and often speaks on Radio France International (among other outlets). He wrote for the Wall Street Journal, the National Review, the Government Gazette, the Parliament Magazine and an assortment of others.

SPECIAL INTERVENTION**Maged Abdelaziz**

Permanent Observer to the UN, Arab League, Cairo

Under-Secretary-General Abdelaziz was appointed by the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, on the 8th March 2012, after more than thirty years of experience in multilateral diplomacy, security and development. Prior to his appointment, he had been serving as Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations in New York. In that capacity, he co-chaired in 2008 the Review Conference on Financing for Development and, in

2009, he was the Rapporteur, representing Africa, at the Conference on the Economic and Financial Crisis and Its Impact on Development. Having served as Vice President of the Economic and Social Council (2011-12) and Vice President of the United Nations General Assembly (2008-2009), Mr Abdelaziz is endowed with an intimate knowledge of the UN intergovernmental processes and multilateral diplomacy. As Chair of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement since 2009, he chaired the High Officials' meeting of the 15th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in July 2009. He also played a leading role in the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the Peace-Building Commission as well as the elaboration and adoption of the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy. His focus was on revitalizing the entire agenda relating to the special needs of Africa, including through implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development to which the Secretary-General attaches the highest priority.

SESSION II

Maurizio Caprara

Foreign Affairs Commentator, Corriere della Sera, Rome

He is a foreign affairs commentator for the *Corriere della Sera*, where he has been writing since 1979. He was Councillor to the Italian President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, and Director of the Presidential Press and Communication Office. Anchorman, editor and consultant for TV and radio programmes, he has collaborated with RAI Radiotelevisione Italiana, Mediaset and Sky. Author of several books, among them *Lavoro riservato. I cassette segreti del PCI* (Secret Job. The confidential files of the Italian Communist Party, Feltrinelli, 1997), the chapter *The Lockheed case in Parliament* (2001) of the book *Storia d'Italia* edited by Einaudi, and other publications. He wrote during several years for the *Enciclopedia Universale Garzanti* the contemporary history section dedicated to Italian domestic and foreign politics. He is a member of the Steering Committee of the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and of the Scientific Committee of the Centre for Politics and International Studies (CeSPI). Dr Caprara has been awarded the honour of Grand Officer of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

Robert Watkins

Assistant Director; Head of the Middle East and North Africa Division, DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, Geneva

Dr Watkins has more than 35 years of experience working in political, humanitarian, development and post-conflict recovery areas with international organisations principally in the Middle East, Central and South Asia. He served as United Nations Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Lebanon (2011-2014) and Afghanistan (2009-2011); at the level of Assistant Secretary General, as well as UN Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator and UNDP Representative in Bangladesh (2015-17), Djibouti (2014), and Georgia (2006-2009). Before the UN, he worked for the European Commission as Head of the ECHO Regional Office for the Middle East based in Amman, Jordan, focussing on activities in the Palestinian Territories, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, and Syria. After his retirement from the UN, he began working as a Research Associate at the Centre for Conflict, Development, and Peacebuilding at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. Dr Watkins has an MA in International Affairs and holds Canadian and British nationalities.

Brahim Oumansour

Associate Fellow, Center for Studies and Research on the Arab and Mediterranean World, Geneva; and Associate Research Fellow, Institute for international and strategic affairs, Paris

A consultant in geopolitics and global strategy, Dr Oumansour is an Associate Research Fellow at the Center for Arab and Mediterranean studies and research (CERMAM) and at the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs (IRIS) where he currently lectures as an expert in global strategy at IRIS Sup' Master degrees in Defence, Security and Crisis Management, and in Geopolitics and Prospective. He also lectures in Comparing Political Systems at Université Paris-Est Créteil. His main field of research concerns Maghrebi geopolitics and the MENA region in general. He focuses on public diplomacy and the role of non-governmental players (NGOs, unions, lobbies, multinational companies, etc.), about issues mostly related to terrorism and conflict management. Dr Oumansour has published both in French and international academic journals. He is also regularly invited to speak both as a consultant and lecturer by various institutions and various French and foreign media.

Sofia Barbarani

Freelance Journalist, Rome

Dr Barbarani is a freelance journalist with a focus on conflict and humanitarian reporting in the Middle East. From 2013 to 2016 she was based in the Kurdistan Region, during which time she reported on the rise and fall of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, among other topics. In 2016 she moved to Venezuela where she covered the effects of the country's political and economic crises on the civilian population, before moving to Abu Dhabi in 2017 to work on the foreign desk of The National. She has also reported from Tunisia, South Sudan, Cuba and southern Europe. Her words and images have appeared in leading print and online publications, including The Economist, The Telegraph, Washington Post, The Guardian and Al Jazeera, among others. She is also a radio and television contributor, and has appeared on the BBC, Sky News, CNN and i24 News and has been nominated for awards for her work in Syria and Venezuela. In 2015 she researched and wrote the 2015 Lonely Planet Iraq chapter.

Mohammed Loulichki

Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South, Rabat

Ambassador Loulichki is a Senior Fellow at the Policy Center for the New South, focusing on diplomacy, conflicts resolution and human rights. He has an extensive experience of 40 years in diplomacy and legal affairs. He assumed inter alia the functions of Head of the Department of Legal Affairs and Treaties in the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was also Ambassador of Morocco in Hungary, Bosnia–Herzegovina and Croatia (1995-1999), Ambassador Coordinator of the Government of Morocco with MINURSO (1999 – 2001), Ambassador of Morocco to the United Nations in Geneva (2006-2008) and New York (2001-2003 and 2008-2014), as well as President of the Security Council (December 2014). Ambassador Loulichki was appointed President of the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council (2013), President of the working Group on Peace Keeping Operations (2012), Vice-President of the Human Rights Council (2006), Facilitator of the Universal Periodic Review of the said Council (2006 and 2010) and President of the National Committee in charge of the follow up on nuclear matters (2003-2006).