The New Global Trade Order
Highlights from the Asia House conference in Dubai
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More than 300 figures from business and diplomacy assembled for the major Asia House dialogue, The New Global Trade Order, in Dubai on 22 April 2018.

Held in partnership with DMCC, the conference tackled the biggest issues facing global trade, from shifts in policy to the disruptive forces of technology.

Featuring speeches and panel discussions with government ministers, World Trade Organization officials, and senior business leaders, the conference aimed to help delegates better understand – and capitalise on – the emerging global trade order.
Speaking about the dialogue, His Excellency Abdulla Al Saleh, Undersecretary for Foreign Trade at the UAE Ministry of Economy, said: “The objective is clear; discuss, debate and explore the issues that will help business leaders and policymakers better understand - and capitalise on - the new global trade order.

“As such, announcing our support at UAE Ministry of Economy for this signature event made perfect strategic sense.”
Speeches from influential figures in global trade

“ There can be nothing more important to all of us in the 21st century than the rise of Asia, which is changing the balance of world power. 

“The Middle East is an increasingly important element in that rise.”

Lord Green, Chairman, Asia House

“I am delighted to be here and pleased to share the view from the WTO on regional trade agreements and the multilateral trading system.”

Yonov Agah, Deputy Director General, World Trade Organization

“ Some of the world’s leading thinkers on global trade and investment are taking part in this conference. 

“This conference has added value and importance because it is taking place at a time when the global trading order is changing rapidly.”

His Excellency Abdulla Al Saleh, Undersecretary for Foreign Trade at the UAE Ministry of Economy

“ Despite attempts of some around the world to close the doors to trade, many remain wide open if you just look in the right places – especially in Asia. 

“Asia consistently proves to be an open and willing partner to do business.”

Ahmed bin Sulayem, Executive Chairman, DMCC
Three compelling panel discussions

The conference featured three panel discussions focusing on the most pressing issues in global trade. Thought-leaders from diplomacy and business discussed The Future of Trade, The Belt and Road Initiative, and The Digitalisation of Global Trade.

Delegates heard the latest thinking, analysis and predictions from those at the heart of global trade.
Panelists

Doug Lippoldt, Chief Trade Economist, HSBC Global Research

Wolfgang Ischinger, Chairman, Munich Security Conference and former German Ambassador to the US and UK

Anthony Gardner, Senior Counsel, Sidley Austin LLP and former US Ambassador to the European Union

His Excellency Hamad Baumm, President and CEO, Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Kapil Chadda, Vice Chairman, Global Banking, Middle East and North Africa & Turkey, HSBC Bank Middle East

Anne Ruth Herkes, Former State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy

Neil Cuthbert, Partner, Dentons & Co

Ravi Suri, Global Head of Infrastructure Finance, KPMG

Kaiser Naseem, Head of Banking & Digital Finance Advisory Service MENA, IFC

Abhijit Prasad, Managing Director, Global Head of Product Management, GTRF, HSBC

Xitong Wang, Gulf Regional Manager, China Energy Engineering Corporation

Anthony Butler, Chief Technology Officer for IBM’s blockchain practice in the Middle East and Africa

Michael Lawrence, Chief Executive, Asia House
Going forwards, important developing countries, especially India and China, need to have more reforms to deal with tariff barriers and to allow more investments.

His Excellency Hamad Baumim, President and CEO, Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Countries must “join forces” to combat US protectionism, while emerging markets must “do more” to address inequities in the global trading system, delegates heard during a forthright discussion on the future of trade chaired by Michael Lawrence, Chief Executive of Asia House.

President Trump’s ‘America First’ agenda was a key focus, with former US Ambassador to the European Union, Anthony Gardner, labelling current US trade policy “erratic and counterproductive,” adding that it puts American exporters at a “competitive disadvantage.”

Wolfgang Ischinger, Chairman of the Munich Security Conference and former German Ambassador to the US, analysed the potential motives behind President Trump’s policies. Either it’s about helping the US to get a better deal within the current system, or it’s about making bilateralism “the new norm.” In response, “US trade partners should join forces to protect the trading system,” he proposed, adding that markets should work together to create “a WTO minus America, similar to what Japan achieved with the TPP.”

Looking beyond the US-China rivalry, His Excellency Hamad Baumim, President and CEO, Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, took a wider view of the factors at its core; the “over-promises” that were made around globalisation. “Everybody expected that, with globalisation and more openness, many developing countries would engage with the global trading system.” That hasn’t happened, and emerging markets need more reforms to open their economies further, His Excellency suggested.

Doug Lippoldt, Chief Trade Economist, HSBC Global Research, was positive about the future of trade. “I don’t think it’s too late to have a ‘win win’ outcome at the end of this,” he said. Reflecting on a recent visit to the US in which he spoke with high-level staff on Capitol Hill, he said, “the commitment to the multilateral trade system that the US has helped build up over several years runs very deep in Washington.”
The Belt and Road Initiative

“We in Europe underestimate the long standing history of how the Middle East, and the Gulf countries in the Arabian peninsula in particular, traded in Asia. China for a long time before the Belt and Road had been a commercial and seafaring trading partner for the GCC.”

Anne Ruth Herkes, Former State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy

China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is one of the hottest issues in global trade and investment, promising huge opportunities for businesses and challenging questions for policymakers.

The Middle East is particularly important to the BRI, being both crucial to Chinese energy security and occupying a strategic position on the Maritime Silk Road. Panel moderator Kapil Chadda, Vice Chairman, Global Banking, Middle East and North Africa & Turkey, HSBC, was therefore interested to know how the BRI is playing out in the region.

“Energy is clearly a theme here,” Neil Cuthbert, Partner, Dentons & Co, said, outlining a number of recent BRI deals involving energy companies across the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Cuthbert highlighted an increasing interest in Public Private Partnerships (PPP) and associated legislation, suggesting the PPP model is a likely direction of travel. But there are major opportunities for non-Chinese companies looking to capitalise on the BRI, said Xitong Wang, Gulf Regional Manager, China Energy Engineering Company. Chinese companies need to collaborate with “international law firms, international consultation firms and the banks, so we become more skilled and more prepared for the competition and risk in GCC countries.”

The BRI raises new questions from a policy perspective. This was something Anne Ruth Herkes, Former State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, addressed. “I think we will be winning this game if the Middle East Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Union converge on giving the initiative its right interpretation. It’s an opportunity for us in Europe and the GCC to grasp, and to turn into a positive agenda.”

For Ravi Suri, Global Head of Infrastructure Finance, KPMG, that shouldn’t be too difficult. “The Belt and Road Initiative is not only a good thing. It’s an excellent thing. It’s an excellent thing for the world,” he said.
The dramatic changes taking place in global trade through innovations in technology were explored by leading industry figures, with one panelist saying the world is at an “inflection point.”

Abhijit Prasad, Managing Director, Global Head of Product Management, GTRF, HSBC, said rapid innovations in tech promise to revolutionise the trading system. “We’re at an inflection point now where digitalisation is going to completely transform how trade and trade finance gets offered.”

Perhaps the most dramatic change will come from blockchain – something Anthony Butler, Chief Technical Officer for IBM’s blockchain practice in the Middle East and Africa, said will bring “more visibility, more transparency and ultimately more trust and more efficiency in our global supply chains.” The cost of trade is roughly US$1.8trillion, Butler said, with 20 per cent of that cost related to paper such as certificates of origin and customs documents – all of which could be redundant if blockchain is embraced.

But what about products that don’t physically cross borders? The rise of ecommerce and 3D printing are driving major change in the trade landscape, Kaiser Naseem, Head of Banking and Digital Finance Advisory Services, MENA, IFC, pointed out. “The boundaries of these trade flows and the inefficiencies of these trade flows are also disappearing,” as e-commerce grows, he said. “That’s a big factor in the way trade flows are going to develop.”

This was a point Prasad presented as among the biggest game-changers in the future of trade; it will be data, not containers, crossing borders. This will, of course, present new challenges around regulation – an issue that is “a big piece of the puzzle,” Michael Lawrence, Chief Executive of Asia House and panel moderator, said.
300 delegates from more than 150 organisations and 10 governments represented

Organisations included:

| Linklaters | S&P Global Ratings | Deutsche Bank | Standard Chartered Bank |
| De La Rue | Duracell Middle East | Al Tamimi & Co. | DLA Piper |
| OCO Global | Frost & Sullivan | Yingke Legal Consulting | HSBC |
| Nikkei | Tata International | DP World | CEEC |
| Berwin Leighton Paisner | China National Petroleum | Emirates Airlines | IBM |
| De Beers | UPS | Arup | Dentons & Co |
| Huawei | Olam International | First Abu Dhabi Bank | Gulf International Finance LTD |
| KPMG LLP UK | PwC Middle East | Mashreq Bank | ACCA |
A top level forum took place in Dubai on Sunday under the auspices of Asia House, a UK-based think tank, and the Dubai Multi Commodities Center, the UAE’s fastest growing free zone, which decided that actually, quite a few people in the early 21st century were turning increasingly against the very idea of global free trade.

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Businesses in the UAE should expect to be among key beneficiaries of any anticipated boost to economic activity generated by the development of China's Belt & Road Initiative through the Middle East, said HSBC UAE CEO Abdul Fattah Sharaf at a conference on “The New Global Trade Order”.
Dubai Increasing Nexus for Growth as Rise of Asia Trade Continues

Welcoming participants to this landmark event, Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint, Chairman, Asia House, said: “There can be nothing more important to all of us in the 21st century than the rise of Asia, which is changing the balance of world power. The Middle East is an increasingly important element in that rise.”

Asia is changing the ME trade equation

The Middle East is an increasingly important element in the rise of Asia, which is changing the balance of world power in the 21st century, Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint, Chairman of Asia House, said on Sunday. Welcoming participants to the New Global Trade Order conference, hosted by DMCC, the world’s leading free-zones for commodities trade and enterprise, in partnership with Asia House, Lord Green said the pivot by the Middle East towards Asia raises new questions and challenges, but brings a new balance of opportunities. “It is changing the trade equation for every country in the Middle East.”

Dubai conference probes new global trade order

More than 300 policymakers and leading figures from the global trade and investment industries gathered to discuss ways to better understand the emerging world trade system given the current challenges to free trade.

TRADE ARABIA
Networking

Delegates had the chance to network with representatives from more than 150 organisations, including governments, major businesses and the media.
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Asia House also organises major conferences on highly relevant themes aimed at moving the global debate on trade and investment forward.

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