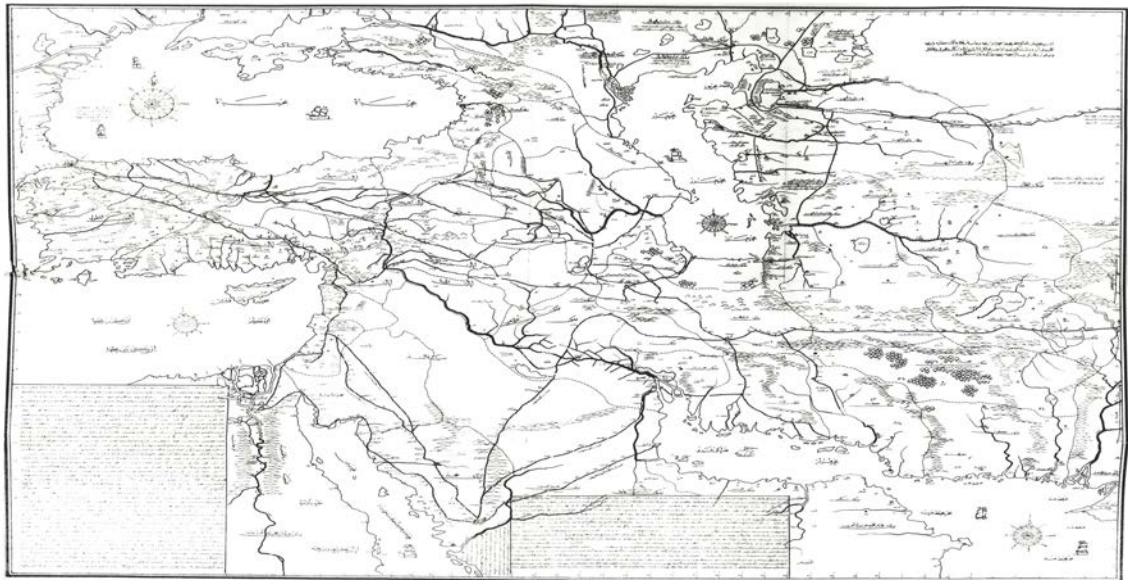


# Welcome to the **Winter 2017 Speaker Series** of the **Indian Ocean World Centre**

Speaker: Prof. Ariel Salzmann  
History Department, Queen's University  
16 March 2017  
5: 45 pm, Peterson Hall, Room 116

## **After the Safavids: State Failure in Iran in an Early Modern, Global Perspective**



This paper reconsiders the course of early modern world history from the perspective of the geopolitical events on and around the Iranian plateau during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. An Ottoman map dated 1727 puts the region of Eastern Europe, and West, Central and South Asia, in an unusual perspective: rather than, as today, relegating Iran to one of this area's minor geopolitical and economic players, the mapmakers in Istanbul situated Iran at the centre of the geopolitical architecture of what Frank Perlin called "Euro-Asia." The Treaty of Zuhab (1639), concluded between the Ottoman sultan and the Safavid shah, ushered in nearly a century of peace, stable frontiers, and increased commercial exchange. However, the ultimate consequences of that agreement for Euro-Asia as a whole, only became apparent after the Safavid state's collapse. The Afghan occupation of Isfahan (1722), Tahmasp-Quli Khan's regency (1722-36), and the ensuing "Wars of the Safavid Succession" (1736-1796), not only destabilized Iran itself, but the military exploits engaged in by two short-lived dynastic regimes – those of Nadir Shah (r. 1736- 47) and Karim Khan Zand (r. 1751-79) – shattered the territorial balance of a West Asian state system in formation. By destroying mercantile networks, increasing the autonomy of frontier polities at the expense of political centres, and draining men and resources from Iran's more powerful neighbours, the failure of the Safavid state opened the region as a whole to increased intervention from the North (Czarist Russia) and from Western mercantilist powers in the Indian Ocean.