



SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND POPULAR MOBILISATION IN THE MENA

Digest of Current Publications and Events

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10.06.2016

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CALLS FOR PAPERS & CONFERENCES

Historical Materialism Annual Conference

Deadline for abstracts: 15 June 2016

In the Grundrisse, Marx diagnosed the effort to turn unsurpassable limits into transcendable barriers as one of capital's defining features, what permitted it either to avert crises or to employ them to its own advantage. Ecological critique and activism is increasingly identifying the endurance of capitalist imperatives as a limit of a different kind, a limit on the reproducibility of human livelihoods, a limit both to and of nature, which is not necessarily a limit to capital. HM 2016 seeks to address from a multiplicity of angles the question of the relationships between the limits and barriers of capital and those of its human and non-human "others". Or: its limits and ours, their barriers and ours. How does Marxist theory address the so-called 'spatial turn' and various geographies of capital? We hope to investigate the theoretical and practical challenges to capital's increasingly disastrous or desultory forms of crisis-management, from the COP21 agreements on climate change to the sinister responses to mass migration and civil war. We hope that this theme of limits will not be taken simply in a systemic sense – as the limits to capital, or to nature, or to the capitalist state, etc. – but also in a strategic one, as an occasion to reflect on the limits (or barriers) of current socialist, communist and emancipatory political movements. From public outcries against financial scandals to the rise of populist anti-elitism, are movements redrawing the limits of politics?

HM 2016 welcomes papers addressing the question of capital's limits, barriers and borders and their relation to Marxist theory and anti-capitalist politics. Though we envisage it as a theme running throughout the conference, we will devote a day to the critical question of the relation between the limits to capital and the limits to nature (see separate CFP) below. We continue to welcome papers on ALL general topics of interest to readers of Historical Materialism, but also encourage papers on the following themes:

- Limits and borders: the migration 'crisis', the European state-system and racism
- One-Day Themed Conference CFP: The Limits to Capital and the Limits to Nature [here](#)
- Stream: Marxist Feminist stream CFP: Environment, Nature and Technologies [here](#)
- Stream: The Politics of Identity [here](#)
- Stream: (Re-)Conceptualising Marxist Theories of Racism [here](#)
- Stream: Latin America and Marxism(s) [here](#)
- Stream: Marxism, Sexuality and Political Economy [here](#)
- Social reproduction, the reproduction of capital and the reproduction of nature
- Historical-materialist geography and the limits to capital
- 'Marx in his limits': Marxist traditions of theoretical self-criticism
- Environmental racism
- Feminism and the limits to capital
- 'Race' and the limits to capital
- Art, aesthetics, culture and the limits to capital
- Marxist aesthetics and ecology

- Ecological Marxism and crisis theory
- The law and ethics of capital's borders
- The geographies of finance capital

In ALL cases papers must be submitted to the main website

<http://conference.historicalmaterialism.org> clearly making evident in your proposal if your paper belongs to a specific stream and/or panel. Abstracts should be between 250 and 350 words. Panels should include abstracts for all individual presentations.

More information [here](#)

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Beirut Institute of Critical Analysis and Research (BICAR) Historical Materialism Conference

The Beirut Institute of Critical Analysis and Research (BICAR) is hosting a Historical Materialism Conference (HM) in Beirut from March 10 to March 12, 2017. BICAR is organizing this event in collaboration with the Center for Arts and Humanities (CAH) at the American University of Beirut (AUB); Jnanapravaha Mumbai (JP); and the *Historical Materialism Journal* in London.

Debates around historical materialism have evolved in the wake of the collapse of ‘actually existing’ socialist states, particularly since the fall of the Soviet Union, where historical materialism was the officially sanctioned method for understanding the dynamics of revolutionary reality. Socialist states in Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa, as well as South and South East Asia also claimed to follow historical materialism, whether officially or semi-officially, as part of the Cold War battle against the ideology of positivist neutrality. However different the outcomes of these historical attempts and experiments were, they prove the futility of turning states into an exclusive embodiment of historical materialism and treating the latter as an empty signifier serving the purposes of ideological state apparatuses. Post 1989, these contexts are no longer the historical embodiments of the method and historical materialism has been taken up and debated by the Left during the past three decades. Scholars around the world have attempted to rethink historical materialism in a post Cold War world where the end of history has been simultaneously proclaimed and perpetuated, both descriptively and normatively. Here we encounter a double fissure, the first triggered by the collapse of the very historical experiences that gave rise to historical materialism as a method, and the second by the schism between the realities of global capitalism today – the political status quo it generates – and the immanent imperative of the historical materialist method – the need to politicize theory despite the depoliticizing effects of capitalist ideology.

What happens when historical materialism, because of the historical conditions in which it is situated today, becomes a theoretical endeavor rather than a political weapon? Is it possible to reconnect method and practice, critique and practice, when the structural conditions – the untimely absence of a political avant-garde, mass mobilization movements with emancipatory agendas, and revolutionary political programs on a large scale – makes praxis difficult, even impossible?

This conference invites scholars, activists and other invested members of the public to think the possibility of praxis today by taking Beirut as both a critical site of the troubled legacies of communism, socialism and Stalinism, and as a site for critique. At the same time, Beirut is the dumping ground for neoliberal, authoritarian, and theocratic policies that date back to Lebanon's role during the Cold War era. This ideological wasteland has a material base, articulated by the contradictions of global capitalism in today's Lebanon: Beirut is the future past of the national state, a state without a state, run by sectarian neoliberalism. Despite this present, the short history of Beirut and Lebanon in the 20th century tells the untold story of what could have been: the unredeemed desire for a non-capitalist modernity, neither secular nor religious, neither "Western" nor "Eastern." Among the themes we would like to explore:

- The False Promise of the Victim and the Desire for the Revolution
- Primitive Accumulation
- The Capitalist Unconscious: Lacan and Marx
- Marxist and Materialist Feminism
- Capitalism, Alienation, Authenticity
- World History Without a Worldview
- The Invisibility of the Class Struggle in the Aftermath of Colonialism
- History and Repetition, or the Temporalities of Capitalism
- Capitalism and Barbarism
- What is Praxis?
- Materialist Aesthetics
- Deprovincializing Marxism

(This is a non-exclusive list – other subjects are of course welcome too. Pre-constituted panels are welcome but we reserve the right to disaggregate them and create new panels with some of the speakers proposed.) The submissions (300 word abstracts) should be sent to info@bicar-lebanon.org, by **August 15, 2016**.

More information [here](#)

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Left-Wing Trends in the Arab World (1948-1979): Bringing Transnational Back in

International Workshop, 12 - 13 December 2016

Date: 12 - 13 December 2016

Venue: Orient-Institut Beirut

This workshop aims at shedding light on the transnational dynamics in which Arab left-wing trends have been embedded, especially during the 1960-70s, the glorious period of left-wing revolutionary movements throughout the world, in one word: the Tri-Continent moment.

The radical left that emerged after 1967 mainly took a critical stance towards the USSR, the Arab communist parties, and the Arab regimes, which have proved unable or unwilling to take the bull by the horns. But how did left-wing syntax and revolutionary imaginaires become a driving force throughout the world? And how have they opened the path to revolutionary romance and revolutionary violence? Violence, however, does not constitute the main criteria defining radicalism. By radical, we point to the desire to initiate social and political change involving the transformation of cultural practices and ethical principles, of man itself.

Strangely enough, the sparse scholarship devoted to the Arab left in the 1960-70s has long remained restricted within a national framework. But the national scale of analysis does not allow one to take into account the revolutionary passions involved, which were shaped by a transnational interpretative framework inspired by Marxism and embedded within the wider context of the struggles for decolonization and the Cold War. Thus, this workshop welcomes communications that shed light on circulations and transnational networks, at the regional and global scales, as well as on ideas, emotions, practices, and models diffusion and transformation, although it does not exclude the national framework, which remains a relevant scale of analysis.

In so doing, this workshop aims to contribute to four fields of research. Firstly, it will allow a better understanding of the dynamics of continuities and ruptures in intellectual and activist trajectories in the Arab world. Possible topics include the study of activists' trajectories and experiences, as well as the left-wing turn of the Arabist and, especially, Nasserian discourses. Secondly, by placing the strategies and discourses of radical left-wing trends in the Arab World in the broader dynamics of a transnational reference framework, it will push further in the direction opened up by the pericentric approaches of the Cold War and, thirdly, it will contribute to a better understanding of the emergence of a Third World. In this regard, it welcomes studies on the impact of the Chinese, Vietnamese, Cuban, and Algerian models on Arab revolutionary thought, practices, and strategies, especially on three pivotal local revolutionary struggles, namely that of Palestine, Yemen, and the Dhufar. Finally, this approach also invites us to think about the impact of colonization and decolonization on the "center." The workshop would therefore like to integrate one or two studies on the interplay between European-North American and Arab left-wing revolutionary trends or, at least, organize a discussion on this issue.

Abstracts: 300 words, **Deadline: 26 June 2016**

Contact: arableftproject@gmail.com ; Guirguis.laure@gmail.com

More information [here](#)

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The "Dangerous Classes" in the Middle East and North Africa

Conference: 26 January 2017

Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, University of Oxford
Deadline for submission of abstracts is 30 June 2016.

The concept of the "dangerous classes" was born in mid-nineteenth century Europe and became famous after the publication in 1872 in New York of a book with the same title by the American social reformer Charles Loring Brace. The "dangerous classes," the lumpenproletariat of Marx and Engels, described all those who had fallen out of the working classes into the lower depths of the new industrial and urban social environments, and survived there by their wits and by various amoral, disreputable or criminal strategies. They included beggars and vagrants, gypsies, pickpockets and burglars, prostitutes and courtesans, discharged soldiers, ex-prisoners, tricksters, drug-dealers; the unemployed or unemployable, indeed every type of the criminal and marginal, and were drawn from among women as well as men, and juveniles as well as adults. Such representatives of the "dangerous classes" were well-represented in literature, notably by Zola, Dickens and Victor Hugo in the nineteenth century and Brecht in the twentieth, and in popular culture of all kinds.

The "dangerous classes," sometimes barely distinguishable from the new working class recently concentrated in the urban industrial centres, were a constant preoccupation of the emerging bourgeoisie. Fear of both permeated social policy, including among reformers, and was central to the establishment of new methods of control, policing and judicial, and even medical and psychiatric systems. Although the term fell into disuse in the twentieth century West, it is often argued that the concept remains embedded in elite discourses of connections between propertylessness, poverty, immorality, criminality and the "underclass."

This conference takes as its central theme this notion of the "dangerous classes" and invites abstracts examining its explanatory power when applied to the Middle East and North Africa in the period from around 1800 to the present. Topics include but are not limited to: narratives of the lives of members of the "dangerous classes"; the social conditions in which they emerged; their relationship with "respectable" society and especially with the police; their political inclinations and potential; the attitudes towards them of elites; their role in shaping elite formulations of systems and institutions of discipline and control, legal/judicial, prison/asylum, medical; notions of the biological basis of criminality; their representation in literature and in popular culture. Abstracts which examine both collectivities (eg *lutis* or *baltagiya*) as well as individual strategies, and colonial/imperial as well as indigenous discourses and policies are welcome.

Abstracts of papers of no more than two hundred and fifty words are invited for consideration for inclusion in the conference. Abstracts and enquiries should be addressed to Stephanie Cronin <Stephanie.cronin@orinst.ox.ac.uk>

More information [here](#)
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CfA: History and Theory in the MENA Region Research Group

The LSE Middle East Centre (MEC) seeks to establish a multidisciplinary '*History and Theory in the MENA Region*' research group to support scholars working at the intersection between history and theory with regards to the MENA region. The research group will provide a forum for early career researchers and others to present their research and develop intellectual networks with those working at the nexus between historical and theoretical scholarship.

The main activities of the group will revolve around monthly lunchtime seminars at which researchers can present their work. Lunch will be provided courtesy of the LSE MEC. The monthly date of the seminar will be confirmed at a later stage.

The research group is open to all scholars, especially early career researchers – those who have completed their PhD within the past few years, or are in the final stages. Researchers are welcome from any disciplinary background or university so long as they work at the nexus between history and theory in relation to the MENA region. However, to ensure that a continuous and engaging intellectual network evolves, the research group will be limited to members who commit to the monthly format.

If you are interested in participating in the research group, please write to **Aula Hariri** (a.hariri@lse.ac.uk) by **Friday 22nd July**. You should include a brief (max. 250 words) introduction into your research project/interests and what you hope to get out of the group.

More information [here](#)

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TALKS & OTHER EVENTS

Capital, Coercion, and Migration in the Making of Maritime Infrastructure in the Middle East

Tuesday, 14 June 2016, 6 – 8 pm

Location: Senatsaal, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Unter den Linden 6, 10099 Berlin

Speaker: Professor Dr. Laleh Khalili, SOAS

In this lecture, I will reflect on the echoes and traces of colonial practices that still arise when we consider the making of maritime transport in the Arabian Peninsula. These echoes and traces are most visible in the emergence and decline of ports, in the massive movement of capital, people and coercive organisations that support maritime and mercantile enterprise, and in the language that celebrates these vast movements. Today's megaships, supply chain logistics, and the electronic and industrial apparatuses and processes that animate them, may seem like a far cry from the commodity and

indentured labourers' ships of old. Yet, something about the synchronicity of neo mercantilist practice, "free-trade" bromides, and neoliberal celebrations of entrepreneurialism and enterprise disturbs the clear periodisations of colonial and post-colonial eras. Whether it is route making and enduring trans-oceanic connections of labour and trade and war, or it is the geography of ports and inland transportation crossroads and hubs, today's transportation sector bears echoes and traces of these colonial pasts.

More information [here](#)

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Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: A turning point?

Wednesday 15 June 2016, 17:30-19:00

Speaker: Mireille Girard, United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees (UNHCR) Representative, Lebanon

Location: Wolfson Theatre, Lower Ground Floor, New Academic Building, LSE

Lebanon hosts the highest number of Syrian refugees relative to its local population. This poses many challenges to a state known for its fragility and instability. UNHCR Representative to Lebanon Mireille Girard discusses the impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon and the responses of international and local institutions. This event launches our workshop on the long-term challenges of forced migration in the Middle East.

More information & registration [here](#)

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Palestine Ltd: Neoliberal Peacebuilding and Statebuilding in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Wednesday, June 29 at 6 PM - 8 PM

Location: Auditorium of the Jacob-und-Wilhelm-Grimm-Zentrum, Geschwister-Scholl-Straße 1/3, 10117 Berlin.

Speaker: Dr. Toufic Haddad, Post Doctoral Research Fellow, the Arab Council for Social Sciences, Occupied Palestinian Territory

Despite more than twenty years of international peace-building and state-building interventions by Western donor states and international finance institutions, neither peace nor statehood are closer to realization across the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Instead a violent and fragmented reality has emerged characterized by asymmetric containment measures with both neocolonial and settler-colonial dimensions. This talk explores how a dystopian vision of 'Palestine' emerged from the contradictory interactions within and between the main protagonists animating this arrangement - namely, Israel, the Palestinian leadership and the Western donor community. It specifically

investigates how neoliberal precepts informed the peace-building and state-building paradigms in operation across the OPT, unleashing dynamics that would effectively aim to restructure the nature of Palestinian relations with their occupiers and themselves. As utopian modeling sought to reconstitute Palestinian social relations and mould elites in specific ways, the dynamics these processes unleashed would ultimately prove too unstable to sustain the contradictions they generated and continue to generate. Based on recently de-classified and leaked sources, extensive field interviews and an in depth examination of twenty years of policy making, this talk seeks to add new insight and information to the history and political economy of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

More information [here](#)

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The Middle East Migration Crisis - Genesis and Responses

Monday 20 June – Thursday 23 June 2016

Location: Initiatives of Change - 24 Greencoat Place, London, SW1P 1RD

By: Initiatives of Change and Next Century Foundation

This conference seeks to increase public awareness of the ongoing Migration Crisis and provide a forum for informed debate. It will offer insights into the genesis, challenges and possible opportunities that arise out of this complex situation. The conference will be held over four days, each with a different theme.

The first three days will focus on Libya, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. The day will start with an in-depth examination of what has brought about the situation in that country. Speakers will include experts from within and outside the country as well as hearing from refugees. The second session will address current in-country and international initiatives. These sessions, as well as lunchtime working group meetings, will inform participants about what is happening on the ground. This knowledge will equip them to engage in solution-focused sessions in the afternoon. The first of these will look at what can be done in country, and the second at what can be done in the UK and other host nations. Experts will describe current humanitarian responses, and refugees living in the UK will share their experiences of such interventions. Participants will be challenged to evaluate what a 'good response' from a host nation might be. The fourth day will look at the ideologies that have contributed to the crisis. Once again, it will start with information and analysis from experts in the field and move on later in the day to look of what is being done, or contemplated, to counter these ideologies.

Each of the four days will finish with an optional session of facilitated quiet time and sharing.

More information & registration [here](#)

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Photo Exhibition: On Palestine

Photographs by Annie Pfingst 2007-2014

An Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies exhibition

Date: 24 May - 25 June 2016, 5pm

Place: The Walkway Gallery, Exeter Phoenix, Gandy Street, Exeter EX4 3LS

Supported by the European Centre for Palestine Studies, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies as part of the AHRC project on Gender and Settler Colonialism: Women's Oral Histories in the Naqab.

More information [here](#)

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Study day : The 1916 Arab Revolt

Saturday 2 July 2016, 10.30–16.30

Location: The British Museum, BP Lecture Theatre

Chaired by Professor Eugene Rogan, University of Oxford, contributors include author of *Setting the Desert on Fire*, James Barr, KCL, Mehmet Tutuncu, Director of SOTA (Foundation for Research on the Turkish and Arabic World), and Ali Allawi, author of *Faisal I*.

July 2016 marks the centenary of the Arab Revolt, made famous to British audiences through the involvement of T E Lawrence – Lawrence of Arabia. In this study day a panel of experts will explore the many perspectives on the reasons and course of the Revolt.

More information & registration [here](#)

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RECENT & FORTHCOMING BOOKS

Morbid Symptoms: Relapse in the Arab Uprising: The Arab Uprising Five Years on

Gilbert Achcar
2016 - Saqi Books

Since the first wave of uprisings in 2011, the euphoria of the "Arab Spring" has given way to the gloom of backlash and a descent into mayhem and war. The revolution has been overwhelmed by clashes between rival counter-revolutionary forces: resilient old regimes on the one hand and Islamic fundamentalist contenders on the other. In this eagerly awaited book, foremost Middle East and international affairs specialist Gilbert Achcar analyzes the factors of the regional relapse. Focusing on Syria and Egypt, Achcar assesses the present stage of the uprising and the main obstacles, both regional and international, that prevent any resolution. In Syria, the regime's brutality has fostered the rise of jihadist forces, among which the so-called Islamic State emerged as the most ruthless and powerful. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood's year in power was ultimately terminated by the contradictory conjunction of a second revolutionary wave and a bloody reactionary coup. Events in Syria and Egypt offer salient examples of a pattern of events happening across the Middle East. *Morbid Symptoms* offers a timely analysis of the ongoing Arab uprising that will engage experts and general readers alike. Drawing on a unique combination of scholarly and political knowledge of the Arab region, Achcar argues that, short of radical social change, the region will not reach stability any time soon.

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The Egyptians: A Radical Story

Jack Shenker
2016 – Allen Lane

In early 2011, Cairo's Tahrir Square briefly commanded the attention of the world. Half a decade later, the international media has largely moved on from Egypt's explosive cycles of revolution and counter-revolution - but the Arab World's most populous nation remains as volatile as ever, its turmoil intimately bound up with forms of authoritarian power and grassroots resistance that stretch right across the globe. In *The Egyptians: A Radical Story*, Jack Shenker uncovers the roots of the uprising that succeeded in toppling Hosni Mubarak, one of the Middle East's most entrenched dictators, and explores a country now divided between two irreconcilable political orders. Challenging conventional analyses that depict contemporary Egypt as a battle between Islamists and secular forces, *The Egyptians* illuminates other, far more important fault lines: the far-flung communities waging war against transnational corporations, the men and women fighting to subvert long-established gender norms, the workers dramatically seizing control of their own factories, and the cultural producers (novelists, graffiti artists and illicit bedroom DJs) appropriating public space in defiance of their repressive and increasingly violent western-backed regime. Situating the Egyptian revolution in its proper context - not as an isolated event, but as an ongoing popular struggle against a certain model of state authority and economic exclusion that is replicated in different forms around the world - *The Egyptians* explains why the events of the past five years have proved so threatening to elites both

inside Egypt and abroad. As Egypt's rulers seek to eliminate all forms of dissent, seeded within the rebellious politics of Egypt's young generation are big ideas about democracy, sovereignty, social justice and resistance that could yet change the world.

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Do Muslim Women Need Saving?

Lila Abu-Lughod

2013 - Harvard University Press

Frequent reports of honor killings, disfigurement, and sensational abuse have given rise to a consensus in the West, a message propagated by human rights groups and the media: Muslim women need to be rescued. Lila Abu-Lughod boldly challenges this conclusion. An anthropologist who has been writing about Arab women for thirty years, she delves into the predicaments of Muslim women today, questioning whether generalizations about Islamic culture can explain the hardships these women face and asking what motivates particular individuals and institutions to promote their rights. In recent years Abu-Lughod has struggled to reconcile the popular image of women victimized by Islam with the complex women she has known through her research in various communities in the Muslim world. Here, she renders that divide vivid by presenting detailed vignettes of the lives of ordinary Muslim women, and showing that the problem of gender inequality cannot be laid at the feet of religion alone. Poverty and authoritarianism--conditions not unique to the Islamic world, and produced out of global interconnections that implicate the West--are often more decisive. The standard Western vocabulary of oppression, choice, and freedom is too blunt to describe these women's lives.

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Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here: Untold Stories from the Fight Against Muslim Fundamentalism

Karima Bennoune

2013 - W. W. Norton & Company

In Lahore, Pakistan, Faizan Peerzada resisted being relegated to a "dark corner" by staging a performing arts festival despite bomb attacks. In Senegal, wheelchair-bound Aissatou Cissé produced a comic book to illustrate the injustices faced by disabled women and girls. In Algeria, publisher Omar Belhouchet and his journalists struggled to put out their paper, *El Watan* (The Nation), the same night that a 1996 jihadist bombing devastated their offices and killed eighteen of their colleagues. In Afghanistan, Young Women for Change took to the streets of Kabul to denounce sexual harassment, undeterred by threats. In Minneapolis, Minnesota, Abdirizak Bihi organized a Ramadan basketball tournament among Somali refugees to counter the influence of Al Shabaab. From Karachi to Tunis,

Kabul to Tehran, across the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and beyond, these trailblazers often risked death to combat the rising tide of fundamentalism within their own countries.

But this global community of writers, artists, doctors, musicians, museum curators, lawyers, activists, and educators of Muslim heritage remains largely invisible, lost amid the heated coverage of Islamist terror attacks on one side and abuses perpetrated against suspected terrorists on the other.

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OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Capital of Pariahs

Ian Birchall

Left Review 98, March-April 2016

Review of: Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism*, Cambridge University Press: New York, 2015

In 1945 France ruled a vast colonial empire, second only in size—and in brutality—to the British. But whereas Britain disposed of its empire without any serious repercussions for domestic politics, France fought two savage colonial wars, in Indochina and Algeria, before withdrawing defeated in the early 1960s. [\[1\]](#) Between 1946 and 1962, France was permanently at war, apart from a brief interval of a few months. Those conflicts dominated and eventually destroyed the Fourth Republic, and gave France the constitution it retains today. The country still lives in their shadow: the Front National would be quite incomprehensible without the Algerian background. When ignorant demagogues blame ‘immigrants’ for all of France’s ills, they forget that many French Muslims are descended from those who came to the metropolis when Algeria was still part of its national territory. One important aspect of this history, which Michael Goebel’s fascinating study brings to our attention, is that the revolts which finally brought an end to the French empire were to some extent prepared in the very heart of French imperialism, the city of Paris. Goebel, who teaches at Berlin’s Free University, has a background in Latin American history: his first book, *Argentina’s Partisan Past* (2011), addressed the role of Argentine historiography in the construction of a national identity. Here, he argues that migration to France’s colonial metropolis was the ‘social bedrock’ for the formation of an anti-imperialist consciousness that transformed the world after 1945. Indeed, he goes so far as to claim that the very concept of the ‘Third World’—a term coined in the 1950s, which had an enormous influence on political thought in the following decade—actually originated among the migrant activists of the 1920s and 1930s, with the ‘idea of an anti-imperialist solidarity spanning several continents’. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Shenker, *The Egyptians*

Joshua Stacher

MER278

Review of: Jack Shenker, *The Egyptians: A Radical Story* (London: Penguin, 2016).

Jack Shenker's book is the definitive account of the 2011 Egyptian uprising to date. Many scholars and journalists have taken as their point of departure the notion that the uprising was a one-off democratizing experiment that failed. With his on-the-ground reporting, Shenker offers a compelling alternative view of a historical process—a revolution—that is still unfolding. *The Egyptians* weaves the voices of ordinary people into an analysis of social movements and crumbling governance as vampire-like capitalism sinks its fangs into the largest Arab society. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Mobilizing in Exile - Syrian Associational Life in Turkey and Lebanon

Killian Clarke , Gözde Güran

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The neighborhood of Narlıca sits on the outskirts of the small city of Antakya, Turkey. A spread of low-rise, brick-and-cement buildings separated by unpaved roads, Narlıca was a lightly populated working-class suburb prior to the outbreak of civil war across the border in Syria. Today, with that war dragging into its sixth year, the neighborhood has taken on a new identity as Antakya's "little Syria." The population has more than doubled, with Syrian residents now outnumbering Turks; most of the storefront signs are in Arabic; and newly opened schools teach the Syrian curriculum. Initially attractive for its affordable rents and proximity to downtown, Narlıca now offers its Syrian residents something less tangible, but no less significant—a sense of community and place...

Into this vacuum emerged the Narlıca Association. The initiative was formed during Ramadan of 2012, when community volunteers began preparing iftar dinners for needy families. These efforts soon expanded. Today, the Association is a thriving charity, with modest funding from Turkish and regional philanthropies that provides the refugees in Narlıca with a range of services including health care, food aid and vocational training. It is the only NGO operating in the district, which is home to the greatest concentration of Syrian refugees in the city. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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North Africa's Invisible Refugees

Alice Wilson

MER278

It is December 2014, and on a chilly desert night in a refugee camp, a family sits in a circle inside their tent. Each family member wraps as much of his or her person as possible in a shared blanket. The mother, Almuadala, is making tea on a charcoal furnace. All are listening to Mohamad Fadel, the father, who is telling the story of how he identified the body of his father, who was killed in the conflict that caused thousands of families like this one to become refugees forty years ago. Mohamad Fadel was taken to an unmarked collective grave, just discovered in 2013. There he was able to recognize his father from the clothes he had been wearing the last time that Mohamad Fadel saw him alive. At a time of great public attention to refugees displaced by violent conflict in the Middle East and North Africa, refugees like Mohamad Fadel, Almuadala and their family know that the window of visibility will not be open indefinitely—nor to all. They are Sahrawis, from the disputed territory of Western Sahara in North Africa. Moroccan forces killed Mohamad Fadel's father when Morocco partially annexed Western Sahara in 1976. Thousands of Sahrawi families fled to Algeria, where they have lived in camps governed by the liberation movement for Western Sahara, the POLISARIO Front. For over three decades, the sands obscured the two graves that contained Mohamad Fadel's father and seven companions. Over the course of four decades in exile, as the Western Sahara conflict has become synonymous with stalemate, political-economic factors arguably even harder to dislodge than the desert have tended to obscure Sahrawis as refugees in the international arena. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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[Egypt:] Tactical demonstrations

Al-Ahram Weekly

Issue No.1297, 26 May, 2016

Members of the Popular Campaign to Protect the Land continue to act against the Egyptian-Saudi maritime border demarcation agreement. During a press conference on Tuesday held at the headquarters of the Socialist Popular Alliance members of the Popular Campaign to Protect the Land announced the suspension of their week-long sit-in to protest the Egyptian-Saudi maritime border demarcation agreement signed last month but announced a raft of alternative measures. "We will concentrate on lobbying MPs not to endorse the agreement in parliament. We already have meetings with some MPs planned at which we will hand over the signatures we have collected from citizens opposed to the agreement," campaign member Khaled Dawoud told Al-Ahram Weekly. Continue reading [here](#)

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Hizbullah's mission in Syria

Marie Kostrz

Le Monde Diplomatique April 2016

The 'party of God' has grown directly involved in fighting ISIS and Sunni rebels in Syria. This is raising tensions with Sunnis back home in Lebanon. Hizbullah is paying a heavy price for its involvement in the Syrian conflict. On street corners in Dahiyeh, Beirut's southern offshoot, and along roads in the Bekaa Valley, portraits of fighters killed in Syria have become part of the Lebanese landscape. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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How to Understand ISIS

Malise Ruthven

NYRB June 23, 2016 Issue

Reviews of: Marc Lynch, *The New Arab Wars: Uprisings and Anarchy in the Middle East*; and Fawaz A. Gerges, *ISIS: A History*

In his best-selling *History of the Arab Peoples*, published two years before his death in 1993, the Anglo-Lebanese scholar Albert Hourani remarked on the surprising levels of political stability prevailing in the Arab world at that time. Despite the rapid growth of its cities, and many disparities of wealth between the governing elites and newly urbanized masses who were calling for social justice, calm seemed to rule, at least on the surface. Since the military coups of the 1950s and 1960s in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere there had been remarkably little change in the general nature of most Arab regimes or the direction of their policies. Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Jordan, Tunisia, and Morocco had seen no dynastic changes for more than two generations; in Libya and Syria the regimes that came to power around 1970 were still in place. In 2000 in Syria, nearly a decade after Hourani's book was published, leadership passed smoothly from father to son, while in Egypt and Libya the issue of dynastic succession was being widely discussed. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Nonviolent strategies to defeat totalitarians such as ISIS

Maciej Bartkowski

Open Democracy, 11 March 2016

Military might has little success against violent terror organizations. If nonviolent strategies seem impractical, it is an even greater naiveté to think armed solutions can be the answer. The anti-ISIS coalition is preparing a major ground offensive against ISIS to recapture Mosul and, eventually, ISIS-declared capital Raqqa. However, any armed victories will come with enormous costs for the locals and are unlikely to bring mid- or long-term stability to the region. What will be won through arms is likely to be kept by further violence afterwards. But what other long-term strategies could be considered? What lessons do other historical struggles against totalitarians offer for fights with more contemporary violent radicals? Do past struggles provide insights into strategies other than military response? If so, what is the likelihood for their application on the ground today and how? *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Strike by West Bank Teachers Gains Momentum, Challenging Government

DIAA HADID and RAMI NAZZAL

The New York Times MARCH 7, 2016

BEITIN, West Bank — Children are watching television all night and lolling in pajamas until late afternoon. Parents are scraping together savings to hire tutors. Day care centers have extended their hours. Laith Zeidan, 17, is spending his days working in his uncle’s carwash because, as he put it, “my dad said I had to stay off the streets.” Public schools across the West Bank have been shuttered since Feb. 7, in an unprecedented teacher strike against the ossifying Palestinian government. A dispute that began with the teachers’ demand for a pay raise has spiraled into the largest demonstrations in the West Bank in years, and a broad challenge to the Palestinian Authority, which is facing a severe budget shortfall and has responded with threats of arrests and mass firings. The strike was organized through social media under a hashtag that translates to #dignity_for_teachers, and is a protest against the educators’ official union as well as the government. Palestinian leaders have refused to speak to the group’s representatives, and are accused of forcing a Palestinian legislator who tried to mediate an end to the crisis into early retirement. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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'We'll burn you like we burned the Dawabshehs' - life as a video activist in Hebron

Imad Abu Shamsiyya

Open Democracy, 29 March 2016

The video camera allowed us to document attacks. The whole family started to film, and much of the neighbourhood. As Palestinians, we try to do things and speak for ourselves. Last Thursday, a video emerged, shot by ‘a local Palestinian activist’, which showed a Palestinian youth called Abdul Fatah al-Sharif being shot in the head. If you haven’t had the unpleasant experience of watching that video, here is what it shows. There are two young Palestinians lying on the ground, having recently been shot after one of them inflicted a light knife wound on an Israeli soldier. Two Magen David Adom ambulances rush to the scene (Magen David Adom is Israel’s branch of the Red Cross). They offer no assistance to the two critically injured Palestinians (one of them was in fact probably dead at this point), and do not even attempt to assess their situation. All their efforts focus on the soldier, whose condition can be easily seen (and has subsequently turned out to be) far from critical. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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[Palestine:] Hunger striking as a form of non-violent resistance

Yasmina Allouche

Middle East Monitor, March 10, 2016

Our second Palestine Remix video takes a look at hunger striking as a form of protest by Palestinian prisoners against the injustice of their sentencing and the conditions they are forced to endure. This has been an effective non-violent tool adopted by Irish prisoners over the course of history; most notably the IRA prisoners in the 1980s who Palestinians have cited as important influences. Last summer, Khader Adnan was released from prison after his 56 day hunger strike in protest against his detention. This record was recently surpassed by Mohammed Al-Qeq, a journalist imprisoned without charge or trial, who underwent a hunger strike of 94 days; the longest recorded hunger strike undertaken by a Palestinian to date. Israeli authorities have started to become immune to this type of pressure and are seeking new ways to end this strategy that does not succumb to the prisoner's demands. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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[Palestine:] The manipulation of non-violent resistance

Ramona Wadi

Middle East Monitor, March 15, 2016

It is indeed opportune for the Palestinian Authority that Palestinians excel in academia and pedagogy. The 2016 Global Teachers Award won by Hanan Al-Hroub provided the perfect opportunity for Palestinian leaders to engage in generic rhetoric and, as a result, impose their defunct politics upon the victory and the education system. Consider what Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah said: "Teacher Hanan Al-Hroub accomplished the impossible despite all of the obstacles put in front of every Palestinian by the Israeli occupation; she makes us proud." In contrast, Al-Hroub's simple yet powerful statement was devoid of any grandiose political claims: "Teachers work hard to free the children's minds from violence and turn it into dialogues of beauty." *Continue reading [here](#)*

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G4S leaving Israel shows that the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign is winning

Sara Apps

The Independent, 11 March 2016

The Foreign Office and the Business Department have issued guidance to UK businesses warning them of the reputational risk of operating in illegal settlement. G4S has finally announced that it will be selling its subsidiary, G4S Israel, “in the next 12 to 24 months”. The news has been greeted with jubilation from campaigners who have led a sustained boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign against the organisation over the last four years. According to a G4S spokesperson: “G4S provides and maintains technical equipment such as access systems, cameras and baggage screening machines in some Israeli prisons and at some crossing points along the separation barrier.” The domination of G4S’ annual general meetings over several years by protests against the company’s involvement in Israeli prisons was undoubtedly a factor in the company’s announcement two years ago that it intended to pull out of Israeli prisons. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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[Palestine:] Banning boycotts: is history repeating itself?

William Eichler

Open Democracy, 25 March 2016

The UK government's recent attempts to legislate against Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions are reminiscent of Thatcher during South African Apartheid. Mark Twain once wrote: “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it rhymes.” He was right. In the 1980s the Conservatives attempted to neuter local authorities, and recently they tried again. In 1988 Margaret Thatcher introduced the Local Government Act which, as well as being deeply homophobic (section 28 prohibited councils from “promoting homosexuality”—and was only repealed in 2003), also banned town halls from factoring in political criteria when deciding who to award contracts to. It was a law designed to prevent councils from flexing their economic muscles for non-economic ends. It was, in other words, an anti-boycott law. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Massive protests in Sanaa mark the anniversary of Yemen’s civil war

Ali al-Mujahed and Sudarsan Raghavan

The Washington Post, 26 March 2016

SANAA, Yemen — Tens of thousands protested in the Yemeni capital Saturday on the anniversary of a U.S.-backed, Saudi-led coalition’s entrance into a civil war that has killed thousands and strengthened the Islamic State and al-Qaeda in this strategic Middle Eastern nation. As coalition jets roared overhead, some demonstrators carried the Yemeni flag and chanted “End the siege!” while others vowed to “fight the Saudi aggression and its agents until their last man.” The conflict in this nation, which straddles the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula and borders key oil shipping routes in the Red Sea, pits the government, supported largely by Saudi-led airstrikes, against the rebel Houthis and forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. The Houthis seized control of Sanaa, Yemen’s

capital and largest city, in the fall of 2014, prompting the government to flee. Today, the U.S.-backed government, led by Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, has been largely relegated to the southern port city of Aden. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Three Million Moroccans Protest in Rabat against Ban Ki-moon's Stance

ASHARQ AL-AWSAT, March 14, 2016

Rabat- Protesters on Sunday packed the streets of Rabat after political parties, unions and non-governmental groups called for a national demonstration. Authorities claimed there were up to three million people taking part. The march departed from Bab Chala, one of the most emblematic areas of the Moroccan capital. Waving portraits of King Mohammed and Moroccan flags, protesters chanted the "The Sahara is ours, the King is ours" as they packed the streets near the parliament building in a rally supported by the government. Ban Ki-moon made statements that, according to Moroccan government, have nothing to do with the impartiality and neutrality he should show as Secretary General of the United Nations. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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A vision for Western Sahara and the Moroccan protest movement

Mohammed Ben Jelloun
Open Democracy, 25 March 2016

If autonomy is to prevail then it should be an autonomy within a fully and strictly democratic Morocco, and if confederation is to prevail then a confederation within a fully and strictly democratic Western Sahara. Some claim Morocco's 20 February protest movement has largely failed as a transformational social movement capable of articulating an alternative discursive and coherent challenge to the regime. They say that a striking constant feature of the movement was its fragmented centrifugal leadership and horizontal mobilisation. These observers are correct in claiming the protest movement did not manage to articulate a strong alternative discourse to that of the monarchy, especially in its traditional and religious appeal. However, they fail to correctly assess what they describe as the ideological fissures that amplified the 20 February movement's weakness. Indeed, the fissures are not only those between radical leftist Marxists and the banned Islamist al-Adl wal Ihsane, but also predominantly between the annexationist nationalists (PSU) and the separatist internationalists (pro-Polisario voices), via the Islamist neutralists (AWI). More importantly, the critical fissure is not between diverse philosophical orientations but one between ideologies as such and a strictly pro-democratic politics. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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The Syrian Revolution Lives Again

Ali Melhem

News Deeply, Mar. 8, 2016

After nearly five years of civil war, the temporary cease-fire has brought a return of popular protests to Syria's streets. But now that civil society is finally back, writes Ali Melhem, it is time for activists to rethink past mistakes and speak out against the Islamist groups that kidnapped the spirit of the uprising. The decrease in violence, especially in opposition-controlled areas, due to the implementation of the U.S.-Russian-led cessation of hostilities, was accompanied by a return of scenes and activities that had not been seen for a long time. Protests against the Syrian regime, like those that used to occur at the beginning of the Syrian revolution, have made a strong return to opposition-held areas. The revolutionary spirit has, as some activists believe, risen from the ashes of five years of death and violence. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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A revolution for our times: Rojava, Northern Syria

[Rahila Gupta](#)

Open Democracy, 4 April 2016

Travelling in Rojava is to witness a revolution experimenting with a form of stateless, direct democracy with women's liberation, race and class equality at the heart of it. When the 'Arab Spring' spread to Syria in 2011, Bashar Al Assad withdrew most of his forces from the predominantly Kurdish areas of Northern Syria to concentrate his firepower on the rebel forces in the South. The political freedoms of the Kurds had been heavily restricted by Assad, expressions of Kurdish identity were criminalised and their demographic density was diluted by Assad's 'Arabisation' policy in which Arabs were resettled in Kurdish areas. The Kurds took advantage of Assad's distractedness; under the direction of PYD (Democratic Union Party) which was influenced by the ideology of 'democratic confederalism' propounded by Abdullah Öcalan, jailed leader of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) across the border in Turkey, the Syrian Kurds set up a secular and ethnically inclusive, genuinely bottom-up democratic system. It is valiantly defended by men and women soldiers (YPG/YPJ) against ISIS which is unsuccessfully attempting to erode its Southern border. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Hypocrisy and Resistance: Interactions With the Political in Tunisia

Emily Cunniffe

Brown Political Review, March 11, 2016

While the Arab Spring uprisings ignited simmering discontent across many nations in the Middle East, Western media was quick to celebrate them for symbolizing a ‘hope for democracy.’ Five years after the upheavals that transformed the political landscape of the region, Tunisia, where it all began, seems to be the last-standing token of this ‘hope’ in the eyes of the West, as Egypt slides back into autocracy while and Libya and Syria are steeped in conflict. It comes as no surprise, then, that Western countries and international organizations are eager to support what they see as democracy’s last outpost in the region, with the EU pledge of €500 million in aid, France’s offer of €1 billion, and an ongoing visit by the International Monetary Fund hinting towards new credit line negotiations. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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POSITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Professorship in Transnational Governance at the Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy

The Scuola Normale Superiore (SNS) invites expressions of interest from qualified scholars in the field of **Transnational Governance**, in view of the possible opening of a position at the Associate Professor level at the Istituto di Scienze Umane e Sociali in Florence, for the new curriculum on *Transnational politics, society and institutions* within the PhD in *Political Science and Sociology*.

In particular we seek candidates with specialization in Transnational Governance and Norms. We welcome candidates with a strong research experience on the interactions between domestic, supranational and transnational dynamics on issues such as norms, organizations and institutional development.

SNS looks for candidates with a proven record of achievements at an international level, a clear potential to promote and lead research activities and a specific interest in teaching at the graduate level to a small set of particularly skilled students. English is the working language.

As a result of this enquiry, SNS will decide whether or not to fill a position, on the contract to offer or procedure to activate.

Deadline for the receipt of applications: **May 31st, 2016**

Applications (in Italian or English) should include a CV, a description of current research interests and all relevant information about the applicant. Working knowledge of Italian is appreciated but not required. *More information [here](#)*

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PhD fellowships by the Global Studies Institute at Paris Sciences et Lettres Research University (PSL)

PSL Research University Paris (<https://www.univ-psl.fr/en>) and the Program Global Studies offer two doctoral fellowships, to start in 2016-7. Candidates can be from every field in the humanities and social sciences. Their projects must express a clear global topic and analysis related to the main axes of the program (hereafter).

Global studies is an international program lead at PSL Research University Paris a community of 25 Parisian Universities, Research Centers and Institutes among which the Collège de France, ENS, EPHE, EHESS, EFEO, Paris Dauphine, Mines ParisTech, CNRS). Global studies stimulates ways of thinking about humanities and social sciences and their methodologies in new ways, across conventional boundaries. It acknowledges a broad variety of different perspectives and aims to explore non-Eurocentric or multi-centric views of the global past and present. Global studies includes both research and teaching in all fields in the humanities and social sciences; it recasts global studies as a global enterprise, creating a space for graduate students to formulate ideas and refine research strategies collaboratively across institutional boundaries and national traditions. Global studies associates an international board made of scholars from Princeton, Columbia, Harvard, Oxford, SOAS, London, Humboldt, the University of Tokyo (Todai), the German Historical Institute in Paris, Delhi University, Dakar University, the Graduate Institute, Geneva, the Institute of Human Science, Wien, the City University of New York, the University of Michigan.

Selected students will formally prepare their PhD at PSL in one of the members Universities and Institutes and will receive a PhD entitled 'Doctorat PSL (PSL PhD) prepared at xxxx University (the name of the institution belonging to PSL) at which they prepared their PhD'. All PSL PhD candidates, regardless of their home institution, have access to the full scope of PSL services (student and campus services, events, sports, culture, etc). To this aim, candidates must identify a potential supervisor in one of the institutions members of PSL, contact her/him for potential agreement to accept to supervise in case of successful candidature. List of the Institutions: <https://www.univ-psl.fr/en/main-menu-pages/3801> (then click on the web site of the selected one to identify professors and scholars).

Priority will be given to students with a master degree from outside France and from the “Global South” in particular. Students are required to have a good level in both English and French (written, spoken). Applications include:

- Cv
- Master degree certificate
- Summary of the master dissertation
- Research project, about 10-15 pages max
- Time schedule
- Letter from a PSL supervisor.

Applications must be sent to
etudes.globales@listes.univ-psl.fr
By June the 15th.

Results: by July the 10th.

Contacts: Alessandro.stanziani@ehess.fr

More information [here](#)

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LSE Kuwait Programme Short-Term Visiting Research Fellowship 2017

The Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) wishes to announce the availability of a Short-Term Visiting Research Fellowship. Based in the LSE Middle East Centre, the Fellowship will enable the successful candidate to pursue research relevant to the Kuwait Programme for a period of up to three months. Applications are invited from GCC nationals who have a PhD or equivalent and wish to develop their research capacity and output.

The successful candidate will have access to the library, and will receive desk space at the LSE and administrative support. The Fellowship includes accommodation at the LSE, a living allowance and a return economy flight to London. The Fellow will be required to write a research paper for publication by the Kuwait Programme, and to contribute to the work of the Kuwait Programme more generally.

The application deadline is 5 September 2016. Applicants can undertake their Visiting Fellowship at any time in 2017. Applicants should submit a curriculum vitae, proposed dates of the Fellowship and a 2,500-word proposal (including bibliography) for a research paper, which explains its relevance to the work of the Kuwait Programme and the contribution it would make to the field.

To apply or for further information please contact Ian Sinclair: i.sinclair@lse.ac.uk.

More information [here](#)

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