



SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND POPULAR MOBILISATION IN THE MENA

Digest of Current Publications and Events

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CALL FOR PAPERS & CONFERENCES

BRISMES 2018 – New Approaches to Studying the Middle East

25-28 June 2018 | Department of Middle Eastern Studies, King's College London

Deadline: 1 December 2017

The British Society for Middle Eastern Studies and the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at King's College London invite proposals for the 2018 Annual BRISMES Conference on the theme of 'New Approaches to Studying the Middle East'.

Middle Eastern studies has been undergoing a quiet revolution over the past decade. As scholars have grappled with explaining unfolding events in the region, the field has seen a heightened level of reflection on theoretical models, concepts, sources, and methodologies, as well as on the politics and ethics of Middle Eastern studies. The Arab Spring and its aftermath have stirred debate about how we study authoritarianism, regime resilience, protest movements, and the interplay between socio-economic and political dynamics. The unprecedented displacement of Syrians has forced us to think in new ways about movement, trauma and health care, refugee education, and the role of transnational networks. The continued expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land has deepened engagement with the field of settler colonial studies.

In political economy, a renewed focus on the global, the historical and the social have encouraged a more sustained dialogue with international relations, history and historical sociology, while historians of the region have been galvanised by the broader turns to 'world history' and 'global international relations'. Anthropology has built on new conceptualisations of female agency in the context of studying Islamism and expanded its focus on sexuality and youth. Deepening engagement with queer studies has given rise to innovative readings of techniques of subjection and the positionality of the critique itself.

Methodologically, new forms of data and ways of analysing are revolutionising what we know and are allowing us to revisit old debates. The adoption of event database analysis has given social movement scholars a pioneering way to study protests temporally and spatially, while the 'world historical' turn has challenged methodological nationalism and bolstered multi-lingual, multi-site archival research. New disciplines such as digital humanities have introduced novel methods like e-ethnographies, while advances in text analysis have shed light on how people communicate. Quantitative and spatial methods are providing new insights into primary source material from the region, such as census data, maps, newspapers, economic indicators, and other government statistics. Meanwhile, others have sought to use survey experiments to arrive at generalisable inferences about attitudes and opinions. Within literature and the arts, challenging traditional epistemologies and geographies, exploring disciplinary boundaries and studies on new hybrid genres have stimulated innovative research.

The past decade has also seen growing attention to previously neglected sites. Literature on the Arabian Peninsula has flourished, as access to some countries has become somewhat easier and

academic interest has shifted beyond oil and religion. Research on cities has similarly grown in response to the broader shift towards 'seeing like a city', while the global turn has encouraged scholars to relocate the Middle East in relation to other regions, such as the Indian Ocean, the Americas or Europe.

Meanwhile, escalating attacks on academic freedom across the region have brought the politics and challenges of academic research back to the fore. The continuing resource gap between Middle Eastern and Western universities further pressures research in the region, even while initiatives to bridge this gap are increasing. The expansion of digitally available sources and the blurring of private-public boundaries in social media has sharpened discussions about the ethics of research, while the growth of cloud-based research data has heightened debates about data security in the context of increasingly intrusive 'counter-terrorism' strategies.

BRISMES 2018 offers an opportunity to take stock of, celebrate and foster innovations in the field. We encourage proposals that take up the theme in original ways, exploring not only new approaches, but bringing different new approaches into dialogue with each other, including across disciplines and across regions. We similarly encourage proposals reflecting on the ethical and political challenges facing research in and on the Middle East.

In addition, we warmly invite proposals on any topic related to Middle Eastern Studies, regardless of their fit with the conference's main theme. Our aim is to foster dialogue between scholars studying the Middle East and North Africa from all disciplines.

Proposals for complete panel sessions are particularly welcome.

More information [here](#)

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Re-thinking Nationalism, Sectarianism, and Ethno-Religious Mobilisation in the Middle East

(with a Focus Session on Religion and Sectarianism)

26-28 January 2018, University of Oxford

Deadline: 15 September 2017

Nation-states in the Middle East are facing profound challenges. Borders and boundaries are coming under pressure, being (re)made and mobilised owing to a confluence of internal and external factors including war, mass migration, geopolitical competition and domestic struggles. On the one hand, these regional challenges relate to the dynamics of nation-building. Struggles over the questions that were posed in the nation-building era, including the relation between religion and politics, the nature of citizenship and the management of diversity have continued to impact contemporary conflicts. These have gained further salience in the wake of events such as the Iraqi invasion and the Arab uprisings since 2011. On the other hand, new strategies and technologies utilized by diverse actors,

social movements, ethnic entrepreneurs and state elites are producing novel forms of mobilization and politics.

At the centennial of the end of WWI, and as the region appears to be at a new crossroads, this conference intends to reflect on nature of borders and boundaries, to be explored from both historical and contemporary lenses with an aim to draw comparative lessons and identify the dynamics of continuity and areas of change. Focusing therefore on the questions of why, how and in what ways borders and boundaries have and are being (re)constructed and their implications for the management of diversity, the conference invites submissions from different disciplines such as history (late nineteenth century to present), sociology, IR, politics and gender studies among others, alongside interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives.

Focus Session: Religion and Sectarianism in the Islamic World

This special session will explore the role of religious actors, institutions and discourses in making modern sectarianism. Well-meaning critiques of the 'primordial religious conflict' diagnosis often swing all the way to equally easy conclusion that sectarianism is essentially 'about politics, not religion'. What is left uncharted in the rush to define sectarianism as a 'political' rather than 'religious' phenomenon? Specifically, what Islamic or other religious concepts, practices, institutions or social dynamics could shed light on communal boundary-making, mobilisation or conflict?

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- New theoretical thinking on ethno-religious borders and boundary making, including processes of minoritisation and majoritisation, and the role of religion in ethnic mobilisation and conflict.
- The role of intellectuals such as religious leaders, ulama, historians, thinkers, writers, and artists in constructing new sectarian/national identities.
- Colonialism and its influences on the nature of borders and boundary making.
- Challenges to the nation-state framework and management of diversity in an environment of transforming boundaries and borders.
- The dynamics of sectarianism and sectarianisation.
- Interventions and influences of transnational political or religious networks, mass migration and diaspora movements on ethno-religious mobilisation.
- Impact of new technologies and media.
- Official or unofficial representations of ethnic/religious identities as inclusive or exclusive, or of society as deeply divided.
- Theoretical reflections on the utility of 'religion' as a comparative category in studying sectarianism.

Submission Guidelines:

Proposals should be sent to mideastconf@pmb.ox.ac.uk, including:

- Paper title and a 300-word abstract.
- CV including a list of relevant publications.
- Please indicate whether you would like to be considered for travel/accommodation funds.

Proposals must be submitted by 15 September 2017. Accepted participants will be asked to send complete papers (c.2000 words) by 1 January 2017. Participants will be invited to submit papers for publication as part of an edited collection following a peer-review process.

Travel and Accommodation:

Some funding is available for accommodation and travel expenses. We request that participants apply to their home institutions first, and, if this is not possible, we will seek to provide a partial reimbursement subject to availability of funds. Those participating will be informed of how much we can reimburse before they make a final commitment to attend.

Conveners:

The conveners of the conference are Dr. Alex Henley (alex.henley@theology.ox.ac.uk), Dr. Ceren Lord (ceren.lord@area.ox.ac.uk) and Dr. Hiroko Miyokawa (hiroko.miyokawa@area.ox.ac.uk). This conference is funded jointly by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and Pembroke College, Oxford.

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Media Transitions and Cultural Debates in Arab Societies

24 - 26 Nov 2017 | 12 a.m. - 11:59 p.m.

Beit al-Hikma - The Tunisian Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts, Tunis, Tunisia (tbc)

Deadline: 31 August 2017

In the last decades, the Arab world has witnessed the emergence and broad diffusion of 'new' media, most prominently the Internet. The opportunities provided by these new communication technologies have not only inspired and empowered a new generation of youth for political dissent, but have also fostered the emergence of new modes of cultural expression, literary styles and genres as well as new layers of readers and writers.

While the impact of new communication technologies has been mainly studied in regard to social and political movements, this workshop will focus on the relation between medium and cultural, particularly literary, production. In addition, the study of media in the Arab world is predominantly marked by what Walter Armbrust called a 'relentless presentism', which tends to look at digital media from a synchronic perspective, as if it were the first 'new media' to appear in the Arab world. However, the adoption of Internet technologies in recent times could be compared to the transition from oral to script culture that took place in the 9th century, or to the spread of print technologies after several centuries of a flourishing manuscript culture in the 19th century. The transhistorical perspective has proven useful in the field of media studies in general, but requires further exploration with specifics to the Arab region.

With regard to different media at different time periods, we are interested in exploring how the emergence and diffusion of 'new media' or communication technologies in Arab societies have affected the (conditions of) literary and cultural production, distribution, and reception and how cultural debates are shaped by the use of different media. The questions we would like to discuss include:

- Does the emergence of new communication technologies correspond to the emergence of new cultural actors? And do previously existing professions change or disappear?
- What happens to the notion of authority? If existing norms and authorities are overthrown, do new norms and authorities emerge? Where do they draw their authority from?
- How does the emergence of new media create new networks, be it over greater distances or even locally?
- Do media transitions necessarily involve a change in the public and the reception of the 'text'? If so, what are the consequences?
- How do 'old' and 'new' media compete, coexist or complement each other with regard to cultural production?
- Does content and character of public debates change with the emergence of new communication technologies?
- Do form and content change when the medium of production and transmission changes? And if so, how and why?
- Does the spread of a new media entail the emergence of new artistic/cultural forms?
- What is the relationship between media and language and style?

The conference is organized by AGYA members Barbara Winckler (Junior Professor for Modern Arabic Literature, University of Münster), Carola Richter (Professor for Inter-national Communication, Freie Universität Berlin) and Bilal Orfali (Associate Professor for Arabic Studies, American University of Beirut), in cooperation with Teresa Pepe (Associate Professor at the Institute for Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo). It is a project of the AGYA Working Group Common Heritage & Common Challenges.

It builds upon the experiences of an exploratory workshop held in Münster (Germany) in October 2015, where participants have explored preliminary ideas for a transhistorical perspective on the relation between 'new media' and Arabic literature, focusing in particular on 'writing technologies' (writing, print, digital; see www.uni-muenster.de/ArabistikIslam/tagungen/workshop_media_transitions.html). In this second phase, we aim at further exploring issues we discussed in the previous workshop by including other media (e.g., radio, TV, photography, film, cultural magazines, paperbacks) and by discussing how cultural debates are shaped by the use of a particular medium. We invite papers that deal with specific case studies and/or questions of methodology, with a particular focus on (some of) the research questions mentioned above.

The AGYA conference aims at creating a dialogue between scholars from various disciplines, such as Arabic literature, communication and media studies, history, art history, and cultural anthropology, who work on various media in different time periods. Thematic paper presentations will be completed by roundtable discussions which will discuss overarching themes across different periods of time and with regard to different media. By involving practitioners in the cultural field, such as writers, bloggers and journalists, it seeks to reach out to a wider public beyond the academic sphere. Selected papers will be published with an internationally renowned publisher, in an edited volume or a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal.

Speakers will be requested to give a 15 minutes paper presentation, followed by a 15 minutes

discussion. Travel and accommodation expenses of invited speakers will be fully covered by AGYA. Funding is still subject to approval.

More information [here](#)

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TALKS & OTHER EVENTS

Rebel Power: A book event with Peter Krause

18 September 18, 2017, 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Venue: Elliott School for International Affairs, Lindner Family Commons, 1957 E St NW, Washington, DC 20052, USA

Speaker: Peter Krause

Peter Krause will discuss his new book, *Rebel Power Why National Movements Compete, Fight, and Win* (Cornell University Press, 2017) with POMEPS on Monday, September 18, 2017 at the Elliott School for International Affairs, Lindner Family Commons, Room 602. Examining the Palestinian, Zionist, Algerian, and Irish national movements, this book explores why certain groups succeed in their efforts to achieve statehood while others fail and offers novel theoretical framework for understanding the importance of internal power dynamics.

More information [here](#)

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RECENT & FORTHCOMING BOOKS

Rebel Power - Why National Movements Compete, Fight, and Win

Peter Krause

2017 - Cornell University Press

In *Rebel Power*, Peter Krause offers a powerful new theory to explain this variation focusing on the internal balance of power among nationalist groups, who cooperate with each other to establish a new state while simultaneously competing to lead it. The most powerful groups push to achieve states while they are in position to rule them, whereas weaker groups unlikely to gain the spoils of

office are likely to become spoilers, employing risky, escalatory violence to forestall victory while they improve their position in the movement hierarchy. Hegemonic movements with one dominant group are therefore more likely to achieve statehood than internally competitive, fragmented movements due to their greater pursuit of victory and lesser use of counterproductive violence. Krause conducted years of fieldwork in government and nationalist group archives in the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe, as well as more than 150 interviews with participants in the Palestinian, Zionist, Algerian, and Irish national movements. This research generated comparative longitudinal analyses of these four national movements involving 40 groups in 44 campaigns over a combined 140 years of struggle. Krause identifies new turning points in the history of these movements and provides fresh explanations for their use of violent and nonviolent strategies, as well as their numerous successes and failures. *Rebel Power* is essential reading for understanding not only the history of national movements but also the causes and consequences of contentious collective action today, from the Arab Spring to the civil wars and insurgencies in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and beyond.

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JOURNAL ARTICLES & OTHER ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

The origins of Communist Unity: anti-colonialism and revolution in Iran's tri-continental moment

Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi

British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies - Pages 1-27 | Published online: 01 Aug 2017

This article analyses the historical emergence of the Organization of Communist Unity, which coalesced out of the National Front of Iran and its Organizations abroad. In the aftermath of the MI6/CIA-orchestrated 1953 *coup d'état*, a new generation of political activists left Iran for Europe and the United States to pursue their higher education. While politically active in the Organizations of the National Front Abroad, they gradually turned to revolutionary Marxism against the backdrop of the torrential waves of decolonization and resistance to imperial military interventions undulating across the Global South. This same constellation of activists was not only fiercely anti-imperialist, but also opposed any form of dependence on the U.S.S.R. or the People's Republic of China. They would move from Europe and the United States to establish themselves in several locations across the Arab world, and pursue political activism and their advocacy of guerrilla warfare, as part of their ambition to launch a national liberation struggle against the Pahlavi regime. By examining Communist Unity's predecessors and their manifold transnational ideological, political and logistical networks with like-minded revolutionary movements inside the Middle East, this article brings to the fore hitherto under-explored South–South connections, and situates Iran's revolutionary opposition within the global moment of '1968'.

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[Tunisia:] Rapport mai 2017 des mouvements sociaux

Rapport de l'Observatoire Social Tunisien, Mai 2017

Les protestations citoyennes ont continué avec la même intensité au début du mois de Mai, surtout dans le sud tunisien et spécialement dans le gouvernorat de Tataouine et les gouvernorats environnants à des degrés moindres. Ces mouvements ont commencé il y a deux mois environ en connaissant une évolution graduelle pour finir en escalade et affrontements avec les forces sécuritaires. Sans rentrer dans une chronologie des événements et les outils de développement et loin des différentes lectures dans les milieux médiatiques et politiques tunisiens qui ont accompagné l'évolution des événements dans plusieurs régions, le dossier du développement régional continue d'être l'essentiel des différentes problématiques socio-économiques et politiques en Tunisie.

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Egypt and the Middle East: Adapting to Tragedy

Hafsa Halawa

Global Civic Activism in Flux, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 17 March 2017

Civic activism in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) provided much of the momentum for the Arab revolts of 2011. Since then, the trend toward new types of civil society has deepened. The MENA civic sphere is increasingly attuned to local community priorities. The region's civic activists also have come under government fire, and this compounds efforts to move away from traditional nongovernmental organization (NGO) identities. The threat to civil society is especially serious in Egypt, a country that starkly encapsulates both the dynamism and the fragility of new civic activism. Meanwhile, local groups are responding to the humanitarian consequences of violent conflict in parts of the region, and their efforts are giving rise to new forms of volunteerism and civic organization.

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Tunisia: Activism on the Rise

Youssef Cherif

Global Civic Activism in Flux, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 17 March 2017

Since the uprising that ousted then president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011, Tunisia has become a breeding ground for new types of civic activism. While many movements originated before 2011, their overall numbers and influence has grown as the authoritarian state has given way to a more democratic environment. Media liberalization has helped give civil society a higher national

and international profile. The continued vitality displayed in the Tunisian streets has been leading many observers to say that the spirit of the 2011 revolution continues today as civic activism takes on a broader range of organizational forms. If Tunisia represents one of civil society's greatest success stories, however, the state of play for its development is not entirely rosy—the country's new activism exhibits clear weaknesses, as well as strengths. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Where have all the revolutionaries gone?

Sarah Yerkes

Brookings, March 2017

In her paper “Where Have All the Revolutionaries gone?,” Sarah Yerkes asks why young, non-Islamist Tunisians have abstained from participating in formal politics since the Tunisian revolution, and assesses the effect of this trend on the health of Tunisia's democracy. Yerkes begins by analyzing the low level of non-Islamist youth participation in formal politics. She describes what formal political participation looks like and explains why youth participation matters in the context of post-revolution Tunisia. Yerkes then examines the discrepancies between the expected rate of participation and the actual rate of participation, providing several possible explanations for the low level of youth participation in formal politics. Next, Yerkes considers why non-Islamist Tunisian youth have chosen to partake in civil society in lieu of formal politics and describes the potential impact this has on Tunisian democracy and political stability. The paper argues that the absence of non-Islamist youth from the formal political scene impedes Tunisia's ability to consolidate its democratic progress. Yerkes also notes that the phenomenon of citizen disengagement from formal politics is increasing globally, offering that the lessons learned from the Tunisian case can be applied to other democratic countries. The paper concludes with policy recommendations for both the Tunisian government and the international community to help make formal politics more attractive to young Tunisians. Civil society's lack of desire or ability to build alliances with the government, Yerkes argues, prevents civil society from fulfilling its democratic roles. The Tunisian government must work to build mechanisms of trust and cooperation between government and civil society, and should more earnestly address youth grievances. *Download [here](#)*

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NEWS PIECES & COMMENTARY

Lebanon has repealed its 'marry your rapist' law

Bethan McKernan

Independent, 17 August 2017

Archaic legislation contravening women's human rights finally abolished after years of campaigning. The Lebanese parliament has voted to revoke an article of the country's penal code which allows a rapist to escape punishment for his crime so long as he marries the victim. The decision comes after similar moves in Tunisia and Jordan in recent weeks. Article 522 in Lebanon's penal code is a statute from the 1940s which declared rape to be punishable by up to seven years in prison. The penalty for raping a minor or someone with mental or physical disabilities is higher - but the article's loophole said that criminal prosecution is suspended if the rapist and survivor marry for a minimum of three years. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Iranian opposition leader begins hunger strike to demand public trial

Middle East Eye, 17 August 2017

A leading Iranian opposition leader who has been under house arrest since 2011, has begun a hunger strike in a bid to push the authorities to try him in public. Mehdi Karroubi, 79, had been put under 24/7 surveillance six years ago without being put on trial or publicly charged. The cleric and former speaker of the Iranian parliament ran in the disputed presidential election in 2009 which saw the re-election of Mahmoud Ahmedinejad. The release of Karroubi and another former presidential candidate, Mir Hussein Mousavi, who is also under house arrest, was a major demand by supporters of Hassan Rouhani during his re-election as president. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Thousands of workers at Mahalla spinning company escalate strike, bosses refuse to consider demands until they resume work

Mada Masr, 15 August 2017

Thousands of workers at Misr Spinning and Weaving Company in the Nile Delta city Mahalla al-Kubra staged a rally at the company's headquarters on Tuesday, escalating strike action that commenced on August 6 over unpaid bonuses. The rally began as parliamentary representatives for Mahalla and from the nearby town of Samanoud, where many of the workers live, scrambled to resolve the disagreements between workers and the holding company, which has refused to meet workers'

demands unless they return to work first. Sixteen thousand workers have now joined the strike, demanding that they be paid their delayed annual bonuses, and that their share of company profits is increased, among other grievances related to promotions and food allowances. One of the striking workers told Mada Masr that 3,000 workers took part in Tuesday's demonstration, which was planned in response to the holding company's refusal to respond to the workers' demands, and the reluctance of company managers to recognize the interventions of several MPs. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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One Regime, Multiple Revolutions

Ali Bahloul

Al-Jumhuriya, 15 August 2017

Since the consolidation of the Assad state in the 1970s, Syrians have been drowning in a raging sea of authoritarian symbols brought forth by a taboo-generating regime. Many of these symbols unambiguously demanded obedience, such as the iconic leader, his statues, and the reduction of Syria to his name. Other symbols had rather obscure effect on the structure of Syrian society, latently terrorizing them into instinctive, often unconscious obedience to the state apparatuses. A few symbols served the two functions simultaneously. After this immaculate symbolic order was finally transgressed and undermined by the Syrian revolution, we found ourselves once again awash with new sets of authoritarian symbols, which in their majority eerily resemble Assad state symbols in their intent to terrorize and intimidate. This text will attempt to decipher Syrian symbolism, and to identify the intersections between the Assad regime and some of its adversaries in this regard.

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Remembering Rabaa: A survivor's story

Mahmoud Bondok

Middle East Eye, 14 August 2017

Fleeing snipers as bodies fell and bullets ricocheted, Mahmoud Bondok sent a screenshot of his will to friend, then ran. It was 6am, 17 percent power remaining in my phone battery and I couldn't sleep. Within the next hour, I would be making what could have been my last phone call to my brother, before witnessing what was later called the "worst single-day killing of protesters in modern history". The date was Wednesday 14 August 2013 and I was two months into my annual holiday to Egypt. My friends and I had watched the military coup unfold on TV screens just a month earlier. We joined the sit-in in Rabaa Square to add our voices to the thousands of people gathered there who were asking for their democratic rights to be respected. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Witnessing a massacre - Four Egyptian journalists reconstruct the Rabea al-Adaweya sit-in dispersal

Heba Farouk Mahfouz, Lina Attalah, Mosa'ab Elshamy and Sharif Abdel Kouddous

Mada Masr, 14 August 2017

It was inside the hospital adjacent to the Rabea al-Adaweya mosque that I first began to fathom the scale of the killing. In the halls, in every corner, on every floor, the dead and wounded were sprawled; and there was an incessant flow of more being carried inside. The stairs were slippery with blood. It was stiflingly hot. All the windows had been shut to keep the tear gas out and the air, pungent with chemicals and sweat, hung heavy. The cacophony of shouting and moaning and sobbing rose above the mechanical crackle of the machine guns doing their work outside. Mass death assaults all the senses at once. I came across an elderly woman sitting on the floor, her head wrapped in bloodied bandages, her hands drooped to the ground, wrinkled palms facing upward. She was far too old to be in this place. This is where the young die. She looked exhausted, staring into the mid-distance, her eyes vacant, her mouth slightly open. I felt I could see the life seeping out of her. A man was trying to talk to her, to get a name or a phone number, someone to call, but she just stared straight ahead, gazing at something only she could see. A little while later I saw her again. She had crumpled awkwardly to the side, her head on the floor, the commotion around her continuing without pause. She had died unnoticed. I cannot forget her. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Israel moves to curb strike at nuclear plant

Middle East Eye, 14 August 2017

Israel's government approved on Sunday emergency measures to end a "disruptive" months-long strike over pay by scientists working at the country's top secret nuclear research centre. Scientists at the Dimona Nuclear Research Centre have been on a slowdown strike for the past three months after their demand for a wage increase was refused. Israel is believed to be the Middle East's sole nuclear power but has long refused to confirm or deny that it has such weapons, and the Dimona plant officially focuses on research and energy provision. "The government unanimously approved the request of the Israel Atomic Energy Commission head to implement emergency regulations that would enable the issuing of back-to-work orders to employees of the nuclear research centre," the prime minister's office said. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Strikes, protests and Egyptian nights of curfew

Giuseppe Acconcia and Mona Abaza
openDemocracy, 14 August 2017

This is another interview in a series on the dilemmas and contradictions researchers encounter in undertaking research in the Middle East. The idea of interviewing social scientists on the processes of the production of knowledge has been inspired from Michael Burawoy's concept of 'public sociology', which he initiated and was followed by other sociologists who carried out further interviews with social scientists in 'Global Dialogue'. These interviews will attempt to focus on questions of methodology, equally, on the obstacles encountered by researchers when undertaking fieldwork in enduring political upheavals. It will also attempt to highlight the multiple and varied trajectories and voices which a younger generation of social scientists in the Middle East have been confronting. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Italy to return ambassador to Egypt, ending diplomatic pressure over Regeni's death

Mada Masr, 14 August 2017

More than a year after Italy recalled its former ambassador to Egypt amid tension over the investigation into the murder of Italian graduate student Giulio Regeni, Italian Ambassador Giampaolo Cantini will "soon" take up his position in Egypt, Italian Foreign Minister Angelino Alfano said in an official statement Monday. Alfano asserted that the decision was made in light of developments in cooperation between the Egyptian and Italian authorities investigating the student's January 2016 death. "Sending an authoritative liaison (ambassador) will help, through contacts with the Egyptian authorities, reinforce judicial cooperation and as a consequence the search for the truth," Alfano said. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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A presidential phone call and an official's visit later, Warraq residents continue to reject relocation

Mostafa Mohie
Mada Masr, 13 August 2017

After getting off to a rocky start, the state is continuing its attempts to appease residents of the Nile island of Warraq following the deadly clashes that broke out last month when security forces attempted to demolish houses deemed to be built on illegally occupied state-owned land. In a public conference held on Sunday in a tented area on the island and attended by hundreds of concerned

residents, the head of the Armed Forces Engineering Authority General Kamel al-Wazir started by reassuring the residents: "I am bearing a message from the president, reaffirming his commitment to protecting the interests of the residents and ensuring that no citizen will be harmed or treated unjustly under his rule, either on Warraq Island or anywhere else in Egypt." *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Egypt coup plotters tried to overthrow Tunisian democracy, says ex-president

Oussama Kardi

Middle East Eye, 11 August 2017

Tunisia's democratic transition was nearly "liquidated" by the same forces behind the Egyptian coup, former president Mohamed Moncef Marzouki has alleged. Marzouki said that the operation, which worked to thwart the Egyptian revolution, is the same one which tried to destroy the Tunisian democratic process, stating it was "the same mastermind using the same tools, rhetoric and style". In a televised interview aired by Al Jazeera on Sunday, Marzouki - who was elected president between 2011 and 2014 - said that "the deep state in Tunisia tried to repeat the coup d'etat on the revolution that succeeded in Egypt". Egypt's first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood, was ousted by a coup led by then-general - now president - Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in July 2013, following mass protests against his rule. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates provided billions in financial aid to the new regime in the aftermath. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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"I am proud to keep resisting": fighting the occupation in Hebron

Magdalena L and Carolina L

openDemocracy, 10 August 2017

For those well versed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is no secret that Israeli settlers have been encroaching upon Palestinian lands for decades. Yet the case of the Hazem Abu Rajab family is exceptional in that the settlers have gone as far as to forcibly displace the family from their own home. On Thursday morning, 25th of July, settlers, accompanied by the Israeli police, took over the top two floors of the family's house, forcing the family out of this section of their home. The house is situated between area H1 and H2, so that one part exists outside a military checkpoint and the other inside, which for the family means it is unsafe to use one of the entrances of their house. The dispute over the Abu Rajab's house started on the 27th of November 2012, when settlers for the first time occupied two top floors of the house, claiming they bought it. However, according to Hazem Abu Rajab, the house is owned by many people, making it impossible to sell without the approval of every single owner. The family took the matter to court that ruled that the family had the right to keep their home, so the settlers were thrown out until the final verdict takes place. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Egyptian town erupts in strikes in echo of Mubarak protests

Middle East Eye, 10 August 2017

Thousands of Egyptian textile workers are striking over low pay in a northern Egyptian city where protests in 2011 helped spark the revolution against Hosni Mubarak. As many as 16,000 workers at the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company (MSWC) in Mahalla have gone on strike demanding higher wages and benefits, and the payment of delayed bonuses. According to reports, as many as 10,000 people from the company joined the strike yesterday alone in a region of Egypt that is considered the heart of Egypt's textile industry. MSWC is Egypt's largest state-owned company and employs more than 25,000 workers. The strikes broke out as Egypt reported its annual consumer price inflation jumped in July to 33 percent, from 29.8 percent in June - the highest rate since the flotation of the Egyptian pound in November to help meet the terms of the \$12bn IMF loan agreement. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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The Kamour Movement and Civic Protests in Tunisia

Youssef Cherif

Carnegie Endowment for international peace, 8 August 2017

The number of social movements in Tunisia has been growing in recent years. In one noteworthy case, starting in April 2017, hundreds of protesters occupied an oil and gas facility at Kamour in southern Tunisia. After the government accepted the protesters' main demands in June 2017, the protest ended. The success of this movement seems to signify that the decentralized, highly participatory approach that these Tunisian protesters adopted can sometimes achieve tangible but modest gains when participants make specific achievable demands of their government. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Al Jazeera: Far from perfect, but still a symbol of hope

Taner Dogan

Middle East Eye, 6 August 2017

Qatar's capital Doha was once recognised as a gathering place for political and religious figures of all stripes from across the political spectrum in the Middle East. It was classified as the moderate face of the Gulf and the main mediator in the Israel-Palestine dispute. Indeed, after its launch in 1996, Al Jazeera (AJ) played a key role in crafting this image. For the first time in the Middle East, a news channel from the non-Western world challenged the "established" media with its professional, insightful and thorough coverage. The so-called Arab uprisings in the Middle East not only elevated

AJ's role regionally, but also globally. It was an opportunity to challenge dictatorships in the region and create a new narrative. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Egypt: an obsession with the state

Maged Mandour

openDemocracy, 4 August 2017

Ever since the 2011 eruption, the protest movement has vehemently attempted to refute the accusation that its goal is to tear down the state. This accusation continued from 2011, reaching its height with the coup of 2013, where all forms of protest were categorized as attempts to trigger a process of state collapse. Many, especially those with urban middle class origins, rationalize their support for the military regime, despite its many economic and security blunders, as necessary to prevent state collapse. The phrase, "better than Syria and Iraq" are uttered whenever oppositional forces attack the regime or when justifications for state violence and repression are needed.

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Jordan bans rapists from escaping justice by marrying victim

Rebecca Ratcliffe

The Guardian, 2 August 2017

Women's rights groups have welcomed a "historic decision" by the Jordanian parliament to abolish a law that allows rapists to escape punishment provided they marry their victims. The lower house of Jordan's parliament voted on Tuesday to eliminate article 308, which allows rape charges to be dropped as long as the rapist marries their victim and stays married for at least five years. The law stems from a belief that marriage can lessen the stigma associated with rape. In a heated debate on Tuesday, some lawmakers argued that an amended version of article 308 was needed to protect rape victims against social stigma by giving them the option of marriage. However, ultimately they voted to abolish it. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Morocco: the popular movement in the Rif suppressed

Mayssae Ajzannay Ben Moussa
OpenDemocracy, 1 August 2017

The protests began on the night of Mohsin Fikri's death, and soon turned into a popular movement. Mohsin Fikri, was a fish seller killed in a garbage container by the authorities on October 28, 2016. This incident was the first spark for a wide popular movement, in which various segments of society have participated. The movement has and continues to call for peaceful protest. After authorities confiscated his goods and threw them into the garbage truck, the fish seller climbed into the truck to retrieve it where he was crushed without mercy as a video that circulated online shows. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Tunisia's parliament delays vote on amnesty law as protests erupt

Oussama Kardi
Middle East Eye, 29 July 2017

Tunisia's parliament delayed voting on a bill that calls for amnesty for former public officials accused of corruption during the rule of president Ben Ali. Lawmakers decided to delay the vote until September after the newly created High Judicial Council asked for more time to study the bill. Aimed at building reconciliation after Tunisia's 2011 revolution that removed Ben Ali, the bill offered amnesty for high-ranking state officials, including ambassadors and other administrative workers, involved in corruption during the former dictator's rule. At least a thousand people took to the streets to protest the proposal in the capital of Tunis, rights groups said. Protests organised by civil society groups in response to the bill were called on Thursday evening and continued on Friday as part of a wider #Manich_Msemah (I will not forgive) campaign. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Residents of Warraq Island Are Fighting Back Against Forced Displacement

Mariam Elba
Muftah, 26 July 2017

The Egyptian state has yet again proved intent on pursuing its own moneyed interests at the expense of the lives and livelihoods of its most vulnerable citizens. On July 16, security forces attempted to evict hundreds of residents from Warraq, a Nile River island just north of Cairo, and demolish their homes. Hundreds of demonstrators came out to resist the demolitions. One person was killed and 19 were injured, as security forces fired rubber bullets and released tear gas to disperse the protests.

The standoff at Warraq is not an isolated incident and speaks to the debilitating and fatal cost of the state's vision of urban expansion. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Aqsa Crisis Galvanizes Palestinian Activism in Jerusalem

Charlie Hoyle

Muftah, 26 July 2017

Israel's new security measures at Jerusalem's flash-point al-Aqsa mosque compound have led to mass Palestinian protests, unintentionally galvanizing political activism in the city. On July 14, Palestinian gunmen killed two Israeli Druze police officers at the holy site before themselves being shot dead. Israel closed the religious compound to worshippers following the incident, cancelling Friday prayers for the first time in decades. The site, known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims and Palestinians as al-Haram al-Sharif, was shut for two days. When it reopened, Israel had unilaterally installed metal detectors at entry points, a move perceived as challenging the delicate status quo jointly enforced with Jordan's Waqf since Israel's 1967 military occupation of East Jerusalem. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Syrian Youth: Why is Political Action Still Missing?

Adel al-Ayed

Al-Jumhuriya, 25 July 2017

An amalgam of unease and dread overwhelm me as I write this piece, especially after a friend warned me that this issue is infinitely thorny and difficult to tackle. I nonetheless maintained the idea of writing and formulating my own perspective. As a young man who lived through years of revolution, I was amongst those who were overly optimistic in the beginning, then grew dismayed and frustrated as they saw the dreams of their generation awash in blood. How can a revolution, a political act *par excellence*, produce apolitical or even anti-political activists; ones who are skeptical of politics and politicians? This is probably related to our preconceived notions, and to some unsavory imagery and ideas which we often associate with the word "politics." *Continue reading [here](#)*

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'Letting go of every principle': Tunisia's democratic gains under threat

Monica Marks

Middle East Eye, 24 July 2017

It has been a dangerous week for Tunisia's fragile democracy. Two retrogressive bills appear likely to pass parliament, possibly within days. The first would effectively amnesty public officials who committed crimes in pre-revolutionary Tunisia. The second would grant corrupt security forces more leeway to violate human rights. Both bills undermine the quest for dignity and justice embodied in Tunisia's 2010-11 revolution. They will almost surely become law within days or weeks unless Tunisian civil society and international actors, most importantly the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), manage to convince the government to reverse course. Tunisia has debated both pieces of legislation since 2015. That spring, newly elected President Beji Caid Essebsi, who insisted Tunisia must focus on future development rather than on past abuses, proposed the first bill. Called the Reconciliation Law, it initially offered amnesty to two groups: corrupt businesspeople and public officials. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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The "Hirak El-Shaabi" protest movement in Morocco - The uprising of the marginalised

Mohamed Lamrabet

Qantara, 18 July 2017

The well-known activist and regime critic Nasser Zefzafi was arrested in Al-Hoceima in northern Morocco on 29 May. Since then, barely a day goes by without a demonstration of some kind. The authorities are accusing the 37-year-old de facto leader of a series of protests lasting more than seven months in the structurally weak Rif region of having prevented free religious worship in a mosque. He had vehemently contradicted the imam during Friday prayers, after the imam accused the protesters of wanting to divide the nation. The wave of protests began last October following the death of Mohsin Fikri. Police officers had confiscated the fishmonger's catch and thrown it into a rubbish truck. When Fikri jumped into the truck to save his catch, one of the officers allegedly called out: "Than mu" ("crush his mother"). Fikri was crushed to death and triggered the largest series of demonstrations since those that set off the Arab Spring in 2011. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Violence in the Arab world - Born of a barbaric state

Morris Ayek

Qantara, 11 July 2017

"The state of barbarism " was the title Michel Seurat gave to his study of Hafiz Al-Assad's Syria. In 1985, just one year later, he would be kidnapped and murdered in Lebanon, himself a victim of the barbarism he had once investigated. His account pinpointed certain characteristics of a state that acts and exercises its power beyond the rule of law or institutional checks and balances. Its treatment of its own citizens – opponents or otherwise – is marked by unprincipled and unscrupulous behaviour. Another potentially decisive factor is that the power and authority in such a state draws its lifeblood from fanaticism stemming from a group consciousness, described by Ibn Khaldun as taking the form of confessionalism or tribalism. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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POSITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Assistant Professor - Islamic World (History), CUNY Baruch College

Review of applications will begin 16 October 2017.

The Department of History at Baruch College of the City University of New York invites applicants for a tenure-track assistant professorship in the history of the Islamic World to begin August 2018. Specialization is open, but preference will be given to candidates whose research focuses on the Middle East and/or North Africa. Teaching duties include a global history survey and upper level undergraduate electives. Active research, committee participation and service are also expected. For questions about the search, email Katherine.pence@baruch.cuny.edu

QUALIFICATIONS:

Ph.D. degree in area(s) of experience or equivalent. Also required are the ability to teach successfully, demonstrated scholarship or achievement, and ability to cooperate with others for the good of the institution.

COMPENSATION:

CUNY offers faculty a competitive compensation and benefits package covering health insurance, pension and retirement benefits, paid parental leave, and savings programs. We also provide mentoring and support for research, scholarship, and publication as part of our commitment to ongoing faculty professional development.

Candidates should provide a resume, a cover letter and three letters of reference. All applicants are required to have three confidential letters of recommendation submitted electronically by their references as described below. The online system will automatically send your references a request to submit a letter via the system. Full instructions will be provided. Emailed or hard copy applications will not be considered.

More information and application [here](#)

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Assistant Professor, Modern Middle East and/or Modern Africa, Gonzaga University, Washington

Deadline: 16 October 2017.

The History Department at Gonzaga University invites applications for a tenure-track Assistant Professor beginning in fall of 2018. We seek a teacher-scholar of the Modern Middle East and/or Modern Africa (1800 to present) with experience teaching History of World Civilization II. Preference given to candidates who can contribute to interdisciplinary programs, such as International Studies, Women and Gender Studies, Environmental Studies, Art History or Religious Studies. We are searching for candidates who will also contribute to College of Arts and Sciences initiatives, such as Public Humanities, Digital Humanities, and undergraduate research and inquiry. All faculty in the department share responsibilities for teaching lower-division survey courses as well as upper-division courses in area of expertise. The teaching load is 9 credits per semester.

Applicants must complete an online application and electronically submit a (1) cover letter, (2) a curriculum vitae, (3) a two-page statement of teaching philosophy, and (4) three letters of reference. Gonzaga University values its tradition of excellence in undergraduate education and the successful candidate will provide evidence of potential for a successful career in the profession. Candidates should provide strong evidence of teaching excellence and the commitment to scholarship. Inquiries can be directed to Dr. Robert Donnelly, Chair, History Department, donnelly@gonzaga.edu. Position closes on October 16, 2017, midnight, PST. For assistance with your online application, call Human Resources at 509.313.5996.

Qualifications:

- Ph.D. in History, with specialty in the Modern Middle East or Modern Africa. ABD considered, with the expectation the candidate will have the degree in hand by August 1, 2018
- Evidence of teaching effectiveness at the college level.
- Evidence of active research program.

More information and application [here](#)

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British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowships Scheme, King's College

Deadline: 25 August 2017

The Department of Middle Eastern Studies at King's College London welcomes contact from outstanding early career researchers interested in applying for a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship to be held at King's.

Before contacting us, please ensure that you meet the eligibility criteria for the Fellowships. Please note that there is a very high level of competition for these Fellowships and the success rate is low. In order for the Department to consider supporting your application, you will need to demonstrate a track record of excellent research, evidenced through such things as doctoral funding and/or publications in top tier journals.

If you would like to be considered for institutional approval, please send the following materials to Senior Programme Officer Joanna Pauk (dmes@kcl.ac.uk) by 25 August 2017:

- A brief CV, including:
- Your name and current institution
- The date of submission of your doctorate or date of your doctoral viva
- One paragraph summarising your planned postdoctoral research
- One paragraph underlining why you consider yourself to be an outstanding candidate (with details of e.g. funding, publications)
- One paragraph explaining why you consider that the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at King's would be a good fit, as a research environment, for your planned research project
- A note to confirm that you have read the eligibility criteria for the Fellowships in full and that you meet these criteria

Please note that any researchers who secure support from King's to apply to the BA Postdoctoral Fellowships scheme will need to be in a position to upload a full application to the BA's online system by mid-September.

More information and application [here](#)

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Call for participants: Tunisia, Middle East Forum

Deadline: 15 September 2017

openDemocracy is looking for participants for the Middle East Forum for Tunisia.

The Middle East Forum is a project that encourages emerging young voices to express themselves, exchange views and be heard. The project provides participants with a series of workshops to develop writing skills, media presence, and digital security as well as a free discussion space where they have the capacity to debate constructively. Participants in the forum host speakers, acquire skills, share knowledge, and give feedback to one another. We are currently looking for 7 participants in or from Tunisia to join the project. If you are interested in participating in this project and developing your journalistic skills read the information below and send in your application.

We expect that each participant will have the opportunity to achieve the following benefits:

- Career-related experience
- Practical and increased practice-based knowledge of journalistic writing, debate, social media
- Training which enhances digital security and the handling of human rights issues
- Increased knowledge and experience on how to create an online journalistic presence

Participants will be expected to:

- Adhere to policies, procedures, and rules governing professional behavior;
- maintain a punctual and reliable working relationship, abiding by the scheduled sessions and number of articles agreed to;
- communicate regularly with the facilitator, particularly in situations where the participant may need to adjust the terms of the working relationship (e.g., to reschedule a meeting/session);
- respect the opinions expressed and confidentiality of the group;
- take the initiative to volunteer for tasks or projects that the participant finds interesting.

Requirements

In addition to these general expectations, the participant will also be required to meet the following requirements during the program:

- Meet a minimum commitment of 12 sessions;
- develop a working relationship with the facilitator, such that he or she can adequately serve as a mentor;
- actively engage in debate, with a focus on the topics and how the discussions unfold;
- actively take notes during each session, to be shared amongst the group;
- actively engage and participate in developing an online space for debate;
- actively produce a minimum of one article per month, based on the discussions that take place;
- understand how to and actively promote your work;
- evaluate and monitor your own success in terms of reach;
- upon completion of the program, reflect upon and write about your experience during the program.

Who can apply?

You can apply for the position if you fall under any of the following:

Between the age of 21 - 30;

Are an aspiring journalist or blogger;

Possess knowledge in the specific region of the program;

Have an excellent command of Arabic and/or English.

How to apply?

- Send in a sample piece of 1000-1500 words in Arabic or English of something that interests you - a conversation that took place that struck a chord, an observation from your surroundings, a cultural event, an interesting initiative, your point of view on the politics of the region or why you would like to take part in this program.
- Your resume.

More information and application [here](#)

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