



Middle East  
Centre



2010  
2020

CELEBRATING A DECADE OF RESEARCH ON THE REGION

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# WELCOME

This report celebrates the work of the LSE Middle East Centre since it opened in 2010. Over the past decade, the Centre has grown to become a large, thriving and vibrant research community with deep connections across LSE, within the Middle East and North Africa, and internationally. The Centre's core work is generating research which is: multidisciplinary, rigorous and critical; rooted in the region through partnerships; and effectively disseminated through the Centre's communications. This has all been driven forward by the hard work, brilliance and warm collegiality of the 45 people who have worked for the Centre.

The MEC has been fortunate to have three outstanding academics and colleagues serve as Director over its first decade; Fawaz Gerges, Toby Dodge and Michael Mason. We have benefitted from the wisdom and encouragement of a high-level Advisory Board

of academics and practitioners. Over 60 visiting fellows with rich talents have made a marvellous contribution. Academics around LSE have been immensely supportive, in particular by running research projects and serving on the management committee. We appreciate the strong support of LSE's service divisions, senior management, research centres and teaching departments. The student community, at LSE and elsewhere, has engaged enthusiastically and the career paths of the 47 LSE students who received MEC scholarships are a source of pride.

Foundational support from the Aman Trust and the Emirates Foundation established the Centre and set up the Emirates Chair and student scholarships, as well as the Academic Collaboration with Arab Universities Programme which has been the main engine of research and regional partnerships. The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science has been a major funder since 2014, when the Kuwait Programme and Kuwait Chair moved to the Centre. With funding from the UK government since 2017, we have established a major research programme on the dynamics of conflict in Iraq. 19 other funders have supported numerous research activities and we are very grateful to all for their generous support.

The majority of these projects have been run in full and valued partnerships with universities and other research institutions in the MENA region. We have been privileged to work with colleagues in countries including Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, Iraq, Kuwait, UAE and Yemen. This has contributed to a flowering of research which is reflected in the 70 publications, 600k blog views and over 400 public events held since 2010.

To mark the Centre's 10th anniversary, we are excited to launch an Arabic content project which will encourage and disseminate social sciences research by scholars working in Arabic and for an Arabic-speaking audience. We hope this will make an important contribution to the understanding of the region as we look ahead towards the challenges of the next decade.

**ROBERT LOWE**

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR**



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**OUR PEOPLE**

## CENTRE STAFF

During the past decade, over 45 members of staff have joined the Centre. Some have been part of the Centre's journey since the start, growing and developing in their role as our activities expanded; others have continued their career within academia or moved towards policy work, journalism and the third sector.

### **Dania Akkad**

Centre Administrator

### **Taif Alkhudary**

Research Assistant

### **Nadine Almanasfi**

Events Coordinator

### **Aisha Al-Sarihi**

Research Officer

### **Nesrin Alrefaai**

Arabic Tutor

### **Manmit Bhambra**

Postdoctoral Researcher

### **Basia Borodziejwicz**

BRISMES Conference Coordinator

### **Valeria Cetorelli**

Research Officer

### **Muna Dajani**

Research Officer

### **Filippo Dionigi**

Postdoctoral Leverhulme Research Fellow

### **Toby Dodge**

Kuwait Professor

### **Ferdinand Eibl**

Research Officer

### **Fatima El Issawi**

Assistant Professorial Research Fellow

### **Toby Fenton**

Projects Assistant

### **Courtney Freer**

Assistant Professorial Research Fellow

### **Mariam Ghorbannejad**

Kuwait Programme Publications Editor

### **Fawaz Gerges**

Director

### **Aula Hariri**

Research Officer

### **Athanazia Kalaitzai**

Research Officer

### **Zeynep Kaya**

Research Fellow

### **Yasmine Kerfi**

Projects Assistant

### **Kendall Livingston**

Projects Assistant

### **Robert Lowe**

Deputy Director

### **Kyra Luchtenberg**

Research Assistant

### **Bronwen Manby**

Senior Policy Fellow

### **Michael Mason**

Director

### **Sara Masry**

Centre Administrator

### **Jack McGinn**

Communications Coordinator

### **Chelsea Milsom**

Projects Coordinator

### **Zainab Mehdi**

Research Assistant

### **Cristina Morena Almeida**

Research Officer

### **Aitemad Muhanna-Matar**

Assistant Professorial Research Fellow

### **Sin ad Murphy**

BRISMES Conference Coordinator

### **Haneen Naamneh**

Research Assistant

### **Sophie Olver-Ellis**

Research Officer

### **Alexandra Ostendorf**

BRISMES Conference Coordinator

### **Emma Pearson**

Communications Coordinator

### **Stella Peisch**

Projects Assistant

### **Rosa P rez**

Events Coordinator

### **Sandra Sfeir**

Projects Manager

### **Ian Sinclair**

Kuwait Programme Administrator

### **Ribale Sleiman Haidar**

Communications Manager

### **Jessica Watkins**

Research Officer

### **Polly Withers**

Research Officer

### **Karen Young**

Research Fellow

## VISITING APPOINTMENTS

Through the Visiting Fellowship programme, the Centre has welcomed a large number of young academics, experienced practitioners and established professors who made a significant contribution to our work. Fellows take part in all Centre activities, conducting and disseminating their own research, and enriching the wider research environment.

Pejman Abdolmohammadi  
Abdulkhaleq Abdulla  
Hessah Al Ojayan  
Omar Al Shehabi  
Bader Al-Hashel  
Mariam Alkazemi  
Duha Al-Kuwari  
Khalid Al-Mezaini  
Madawi Al-Rasheed  
Talal Al-Rashoud  
Sharifa Al-Shalfan  
Rahaf Aldoughli  
Dari Alhuwail  
Manuel Almeida  
Abeer AlNajjar  
Sharifa AlShalfan  
Alissa Amico  
Ali Ansari  
Sareta Ashraph  
Shamel Azmeh  
Hannes Baumann  
Carly Beckerman-Boys  
Ian Black  
Virginia Bodolica  
Guy Burton  
Kristian Coates Ulrichsen

Silvia Colombo  
Andrew Delatolla  
Leonardo Davoudi  
Heba El Sayed  
Maryam Ficociello  
Florence Gaub  
Fanar Haddad  
Jonathan Hill  
Ginny Hill  
Martin Howard  
Elizabeth Iskander  
Saad Jawad  
Isabel Käser  
Zelal Kizilkan  
Dunja Larise  
Raphaël Lefèvre  
Davide Luca  
Ruth Mabry  
Malihe Maghazei  
Kamil Mahdi  
Dina Matar  
Toby Matthiesen  
Nadia Mounajjed  
Amer Moustafa  
Jim Muir  
Umut Özkırımlı

Yoav Peled  
Harry Pettit  
Marco Pinfari  
Elie Podeh  
Nicola Pratt  
Benedict Robin-D'Cruz  
Rima Sabaan  
Shirin Saeidi  
Amal Shlash  
Mac Skelton  
Martin Sparaggon  
Rebecca Steinfeld  
Aniseh Bassiri Tabrizi  
Ghoncheh Tazmini  
Priscilla Toffano  
Mandy Turner  
Benedetta Voltolini  
Mai Yamani



Dr Pejman Abdolmohammadi was Visiting Fellow at the Centre in 2015–2018. He is now Senior Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Trento's School of International Studies.

During his stay at the MEC, Pejman published his research in a paper entitled 'The Revival of Nationalism and Secularism in Iran'. Together with Professor Madawi Al-Rasheed, he organised a conference looking at Saudi–Iran rivalry in the region.

**10 MINUTES WITH**

**VALERIA**

**CETORELLI**

**TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY SINCE LEAVING LSE**

I was fortunate to join LSE the year the Middle East Centre was established. I first obtained an MSc in Population and Development and then pursued a PhD in Demography with a focus on the Middle East. Since then, my interests have revolved around the use of demographic methods in the study of conflict-affected, forcibly displaced and other vulnerable populations to inform humanitarian and development policies and advance human rights and international justice. After completing my PhD, I worked as Research Officer at the MEC and at the Johns Hopkins Center for Humanitarian Health, and served as Research Consultant for the UNICEF Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa and UNFPA Regional Office for the Arab States. I was then appointed as Demographer and Statistician at UNESCWA, and more recently

moved to my current position as Head of Refugee Registration and Eligibility Services at UNRWA.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL BE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACED BY THE REGION OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS?**

The region faces major political, socioeconomic, demographic and environmental challenges. Protracted conflicts have fragmented societies, reversed development gains and fuelled severe humanitarian crises. In the absence of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, the region remains unable to generate sufficient employment opportunities for its expanding population. Climate change coupled with population growth aggravates the problem of water scarcity and food import dependency, further increasing the region's vulnerability.

**HOW CAN THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY BE BEST EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH THESE CHALLENGES?**

We should contribute to identify viable solutions to these complex and intertwined challenges and set the ground for a more peaceful and prosperous region. Multidisciplinary societal studies, involving

researchers with different expertise, are particularly suited to provide comprehensive perspectives. The spread of digital technologies in the region brings opportunities to conduct innovative research and produce new knowledge. Intensified engagement between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners is essential in order to translate knowledge into action.





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# KEY RESEARCH THEMES



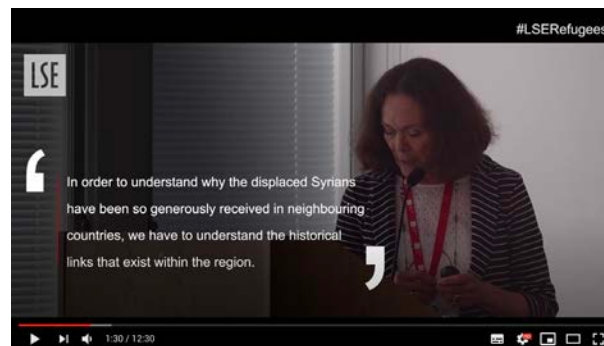
## REFUGEE CRISIS AND INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

Protracted conflict in the region, mainly in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, has caused the biggest humanitarian crisis in modern history. While Europe was concerned about an influx of refugees, the majority of those are actually internally displaced or in another country in the region. Of the 60 million displaced people worldwide, close to 40 percent originate from Arab states. Due to the magnitude and urgency of the situation, many researchers at the Centre have looked at displacement in Syria, Iraq and North Africa in order to understand the causes and effects of these migrations.



Through a Leverhulme Trust funded fellowship, Dr Filippo Dionigi led a research project investigating the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on Arab statehood. The research focused on how Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq have coped with the influx of forced migrants generated by the Syrian crisis since 2011 and what consequences this process had on the state as an institution. In 2016, a workshop brought together a diverse group of policy makers, representatives from international organisations, academics and NGO practitioners. Participants contributed towards the publication of a policy brief presenting a set of recommendations relevant to all stakeholders, published in Arabic and English.

The research project later received further funding from the LSE Knowledge Exchange and Impact (KEI) Fund, which allowed for the production of a short video and a blog series reaching wider audiences. Filippo also published articles in different journals, including *Middle East Law and Governance*, *Global Policy* and *POMEPS Studies*.



UNHCR Representative to Lebanon Mireille Girard speaking at LSE, June 2016.

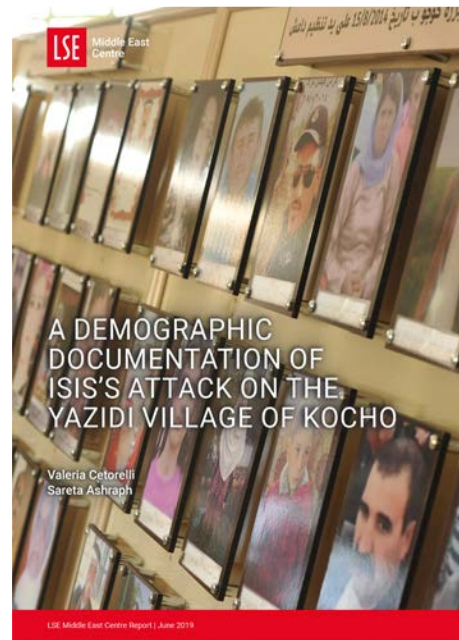
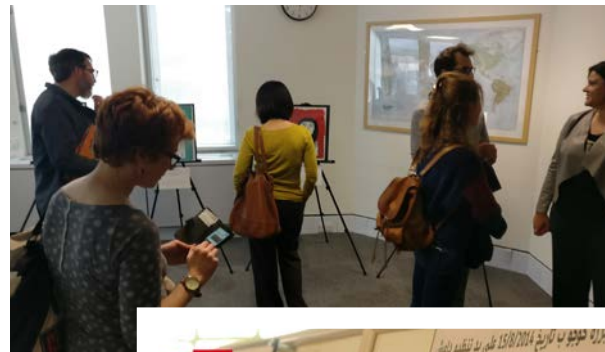


Stills from a video produced following the workshop 'The Long-term Challenges of Forced Migration: Perspectives from Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq', June 2016.

Supported by the Thomas Gerald Gray Charitable Trust, Dr Valeria Cetorelli and Sareta Ashraph employed rigorous demographic methods and individual-level data in order to identify Yazidi victims of ISIS, with categories of victims defined according to the crime(s) suffered. The database that resulted from this documentation project has multiple short, medium, and long-term uses. These include, for instance, a data pool which can assist in identification of remains in mass gravesites. This documentation project served to play a significant role in achieving justice for ISIS's crimes against the Yazidi community of Sinjar in northern Iraq.

Focusing on internal displacement in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), Dr Zeynep Kaya collaborated on a research project with Dr Deniz Gokalp from the American University of Dubai. The research

examined the national and international response to the displacement crisis and the socio-political structure of the KRI. The team visited the KRI on many occasions, organising a training course at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani in 2017.



Launch event of 'A Demographic Documentation of ISIS's Attack on the Yazidi Village of Kocho' by Valeria Cetorelli and Sareta Ashraph, featuring an exhibition by artist Hannah Rose Thomas, June 2019.

Dr Bronwen Manby, a leading authority on nationality law and statelessness in Africa, investigated identification needs of Sub-Saharan African and other migrants in North Africa, focusing on children born outside the country of nationality of their parents. Guidance on providing birth registration and other forms of identification was developed in order to prevent and reduce current and future statelessness. The project involved close collaboration with two universities in Egypt and Morocco, as well as five local NGOs in Egypt. In December 2019, a policy workshop was organised at the University Mohamed V in Morocco, which was attended by representatives of UNHCR, ICRC and IOM, as well as the national human rights commission, civil registration and former senior government officials. A follow-up training for civil registration officials, civil society and consulates took place in February 2020. In January 2020, Bronwen delivered a five-day



Participants at the policy workshop at the University Mohamed V in Morocco, December 2019.

course on statelessness at the American University in Cairo to participants from 11 countries representing 18 institutions, including Medecins Sans Frontieres, UNHCR and the Nigerian government.



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The publications that resulted from our project provide some of the only information available on the complexity of ensuring that these children grow up with the right to a nationality. The project is already feeding into advocacy and training at national levels in Morocco and Egypt, and at international level with UN agencies and the World Bank.

BRONWEN MANBY

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## GENDER AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The Arab Spring at the turn of the decade altered the political and social landscape of the region, bringing with it changes to the concept and practice of women's rights. While some women felt empowered by these revolutionary times, most gender inequalities in the region remain entrenched within legal and social norms. Through its research and publications, the Centre endeavours to understand and address these inequalities.

In 2013, Dr Aitemad Muhanna-Matar received a major grant from Oxfam GB to support her mapping of existing and new emerging forces in women's political participation in five Arab countries – Egypt, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian territory, Tunisia and Yemen. The project took a unique collaborative perspective, employing a local researcher in each country to lead on the research. Aitemad published chapters in two edited volumes, *Emerging Actors in Post-Revolutionary North Africa: Gender Mobility and Social Activism*, edited by Anna Maria Di Tolla and Ersilia Francesca, and *Rethinking Gender in Revolutions and Resistance: Lessons from the Arab World*, edited by Maha El Said, Lena Meari and Nicola Pratt.



Aitemad Muhanna-Matar speaking at a roundtable on 'Gender, Activism and Subjectivity in Contention and Conflict' organised by IICRR, November 2019.

In Egypt, the Takaful and Karama (Solidarity and Dignity) cash transfer programmes are among the country's largest investments in human capital development, launched in 2014 with support from the World Bank. Taking these programmes as case studies, Professor Naila Kabeer explored their impact on gendered identities, as well as on the relationships that shape citizenship for women and families. The project asked why Egypt has failed to deliver on its aims of gender equality and women's empowerment, and suggests what can be done to design and implement more effective initiatives.

While the situation of women in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) has been considered relatively 'better off' than those in the rest of Iraq, women in this region have still suffered equally dramatic forms of subordination before and after the 2003 military intervention. Dr Zeynep Kaya's research developed an understanding of the international community's efforts to improve gender equality and stop gender-based violence. Through organising a workshop at the University of Erbil–Hewler, a number of academics, politicians, activists and experts from the KRI were gathered to exchange thoughts and positions. In 2015, a major conference at LSE resulted in the publication of a policy report and an academic paper, 'Women, Peace and Security in Iraq'.

The success of this project led to further funding from the LSE KEI Fund, which enabled the research to continue and new stakeholders to be brought in, including officials from the Iraqi and Kurdish

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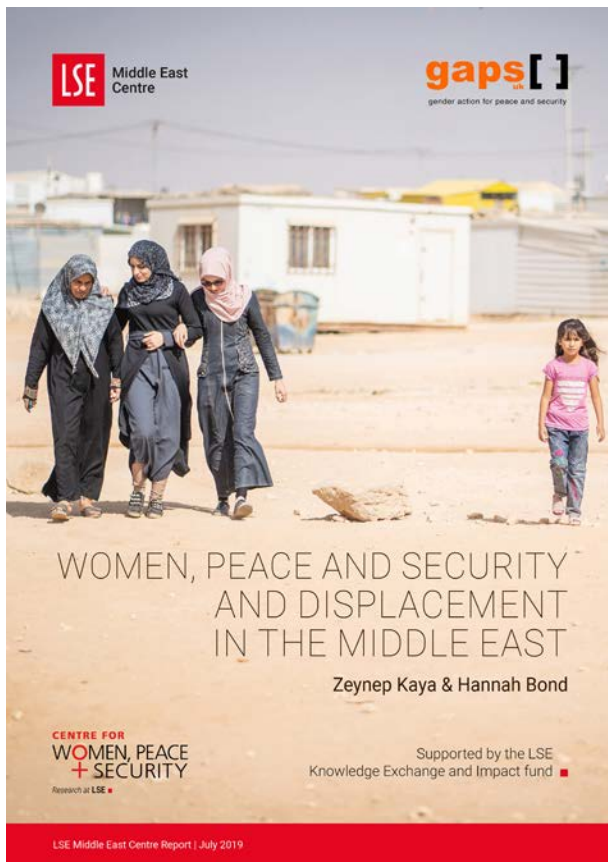
This is very a informative report on best practices for policy implementation as part of the National Action Plan. The report will be very helpful in my work at the Department of Foreign Relations and will inform our decision-making process.

**SIHAM MAMAND**

Assistant Head of the Department of Foreign Relations, Kurdistan Regional Government

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Regional Governments, as well as UN offices, INGOs, local NGOs and various women's networks. The project culminated in the publication of a joint report by the MEC, LSE Women, Peace and Security and women's NGO GAPS, which was launched in Parliament in July 2019.



Participants at the conference on 'Displacement and WPS in the Middle East' in Jordan, September 2018.



## FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

International relations, particularly foreign interventions, have been blamed for many of the region's woes. The past decade has seen some major realignment of relations within the region, such as the Qatar diplomatic crisis, as well as renewed struggle between international powers, such as Russia, the US, Turkey and Iran, for control and influence.



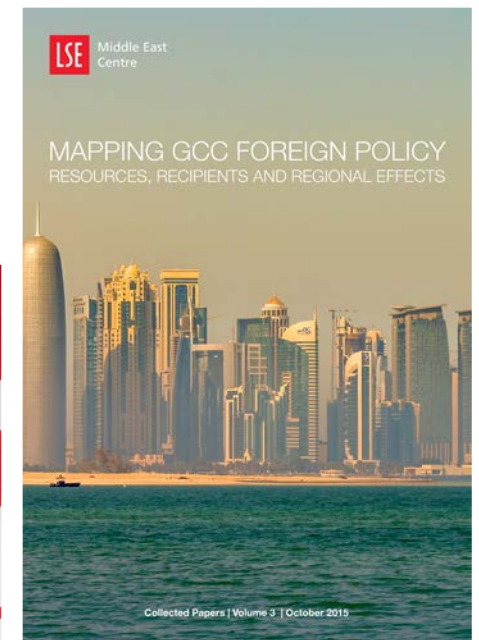


In 2015, the Middle East Centre carried out analytical work to help UNICEF unpack key aspects of the politics, economics and foreign policy of the GCC states. This research was commissioned to enhance UNICEF's understanding of how the GCC countries influence the operating environment for UNICEF country programmes in the region, and to inform programming, advocacy and fundraising approaches vis-à-vis the GCC countries. The team included Dr Steffen Hertog, Dr Courtney Freer, Dr Khalid Almezaini, Dr Karen Young, Dr Zeynep Kaya and Dr Pejman Abdolmohammadi.

The team looked at corporate partnership and funding opportunities in the GCC, the GCC states' development and aid policies in the MENA, trends in the GCC's foreign policies, drivers of foreign policy making towards the GCC in Iran and Turkey, and social policy and decision-making in the GCC. White papers were presented at the UNICEF regional management team meeting in Jordan in May 2016.

While the US's involvement in the region has been the subject of much investigation, the EU's role is often overlooked or underplayed. Dr Benedetta Voltolini spent a year at the Centre, working on the EU's engagement – or lack thereof – with Islamist political parties in North Africa following the Arab uprisings. By delving into the case of Tunisia's Ennahda, her research showed that the party's growing moderation trajectory has been matched by a greater pragmatic engagement by the EU during the period of 2011–16. She argued that this new trend is explained by a partial shift in the frames

that the EU employs to interpret ongoing changes in the MENA region as well as its interests and potential role in the region.



Over past decade, informal ties between the GCC and Israel have also deepened, motivated not only by Israel's desire to bolster relations with Arab states in the absence of an Israeli–Palestinian peace settlement, but also by a shared hostility towards an increasingly assertive and regionally influential Iran.

In order to provide an analytical account of these developments, Dr Ian Black conducted discussions and interviews with Israeli, Arab and western officials, journalists, businessmen and experts, along with private contacts.



Ian Black launching his paper 'Just Below the Surface: Israel, the Arab Gulf States and the Limits of Cooperation', March 2019.



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Looking at the discreet but increasingly visible links between Israel and the Gulf states was a fascinating and extremely topical research project. It wasn't easy to do, given the taboos on the Arab side compared to Israel's official eagerness to flaunt these 'below-the-horizon' relations. Interviews on both sides (often anonymous) clarified their shared interests, in addition to the marginalisation of the Palestinian issue.

IAN BLACK

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## ROLE OF THE MEDIA

The Arab Spring has regularly been referred to as the 'Twitter revolution'. There is no doubt that social media served as a tactical tool of mobilisation, communication and coordination against authoritarian regimes. Simultaneously, traditional media in the region have had to adapt to the changing landscape in order to maintain their standing and engagement.

Taking Morocco, Tunisia Jordan and the UAE as case studies, Professor Shakuntala Banaji and Dr Cristina Moreno Almeida examined young people's changing use of digital platforms to widen the scope of their social, cultural and economic freedoms. They investigated the extent to which the internet and new digital platforms can be, or already are, transformed into networking communities of civic participation.

Working in collaboration with Dr Mohammed Ibahrine of the American University of Sharjah, they organised a large conference at LSE in June 2017. Following this, their research was published in a Centre report, as well as in the journals *Media, Culture & Society* and *Global Media and Communication*.

In Iraq, pockets of 'civiness' are emerging within the media landscape. From individual journalists through to media collectives, a number of innovative actors and activists are beginning to challenge entrenched assumptions about how the media should behave, in spite of the challenging economic and political environment in which they operate. Aida Al-Kaisy mapped out the media landscape, identifying actual and potential 'pockets of civiness' and examining the drivers behind their development.

Choices that young Muslim women make are often regarded as contentious and their representations have always prompted views and opinions from all sides. 'Superhero' Kamala Khan, a 16-year-old

Muslim Pakistani–American girl living in New Jersey, was created in 2013 for Marvel Comics. Dr Jennifer Jackson-Preece and Dr Manmit Bhabra of the LSE European Institute compared the reception of Ms Marvel in non-Muslim majority (UK) and Muslim majority (Lebanon and the UAE) societies. Specifically, they developed a more detailed understanding of how and why different groups of people form perceptions, and what implications this may have for policies intended to support diversity.



The Centre supported me while conducting my fieldwork and provided me with an essential platform from which to speak to both the Iraqi and international media and academic communities. Programmes such as the Conflict Research Programme are vital to support Iraqis in developing good governance, institutions and practices that it needs for a better future.

AIDA AL-KAISY

Participants at the 'Personalised Media and Participatory Culture' conference, June 2017.

## PUBLIC SPACE AND URBANISATION

In contrast to the well-established literature on gentrification in North American and European cities, there is comparatively little research on gentrification in cities in the Middle East.



Directly after the Lebanese Civil War, Ras Beirut, previously the most cosmopolitan district in the city, stood in a state of deterioration and disinvestment. Years later, real estate capital flowed into this quarter, with its combination of gentrified building stock and desirable views of the American University of Beirut (AUB) campus and the Mediterranean.

Working with colleagues at AUB, Professor Fran Tonkiss investigated how gentrification is transforming the physical, social and economic fabric of the area. This research made a significant original contribution in terms of academic research and in its engagement with urban policy and practice. An international conference on gentrification was held in Beirut in March 2015, which was funded through an additional grant from the Ford Foundation with further support from the British Council. It was well attended and publicised, and included speakers from the Middle East, Europe and the US.

The influx of refugees into Lebanon and the subsequent flow of international aid have also affected spatial planning and urban governance in the country. Through adopting a critical approach to policy mobilities, Dr Romola Sanyal answered questions of how aid helps us rethink the forms and entanglements of sovereignty between actors such as the EU, UN, international donors, municipalities, municipal unions, NGOs and political parties; and how this is changing the hegemonic political configurations dominating the Lebanese territory.

Based on her research, Romola published articles in the *Jerusalem Quarterly* and *Geoforum*. In September 2018, a journal article based on the project findings was also published in *Political Geography*.

Similar to Lebanon, Iraq, and Baghdad more specifically, has undergone considerable urban transformations following the 2003 invasion. A great deal of public attention has focused on renewed stability in Iraq's capital city, embodied by Baghdad's new and popular consumer spaces. By investigating the political economy of space in Baghdad's marketplaces, Omar Sirri analysed the mechanisms and drivers behind the city's urban transformation. He examined who was primarily responsible for these changes and whether actors had benefited. He also asked what Baghdad's newly-privatised spaces could tell us about past and present social and political conflicts.

Fran Tonkiss participated in the yearly City Debates conference at AUB, March 2015.

The Graduate Program in Urban Planning Policy and Design (GUPP-MUD) at the Department of Architecture and Design of the American University of Beirut in collaboration with the US Architectural Institute

AUB MUPP-MUD

**CITY DEBATES**  
4|5|6  
March 2015

**Other Gentrifications:**  
Urban Change beyond the Core

Architecture Lecture Hall  
Department of Architecture and Design

**DAY 1**  
THURSDAY 4 MARCH 2015

18:00 **INTRODUCTION CEREMONY**  
18:00 **OPENING SESSION**  
18:00 **SESSION 1**  
18:00 **SESSION 2**

**DAY 2**  
FRIDAY 5 MARCH 2015

18:00 **SESSION 3**  
18:00 **SESSION 4**  
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**DAY 3**  
SATURDAY 6 MARCH 2015

18:00 **SESSION 9**  
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BRITISH COUNCIL

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FORD FOUNDATION

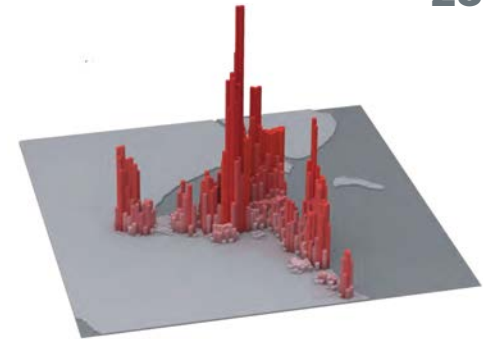
Turning towards resource-rich countries of the GCC, a team from LSE Cities examined how natural resources, urban form and infrastructure affect each other and potentially generate divergent forms of urbanism. They analysed these relationships through a comparative case study approach which considers extreme and divergent city models in Asia. The research included the multi-scale temporal analysis of different types and changes of urban development in Kuwait and Abu Dhabi and two contrasting city types: Hong Kong and Singapore. In November 2017, key findings of the project were published in English and Arabic.



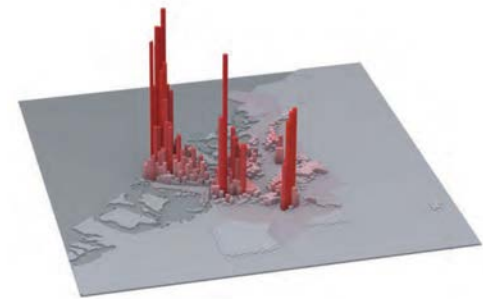
Participants at the 'Resource Urbanisms in Kuwait' workshop, September 2016. © Peter Schwinger.



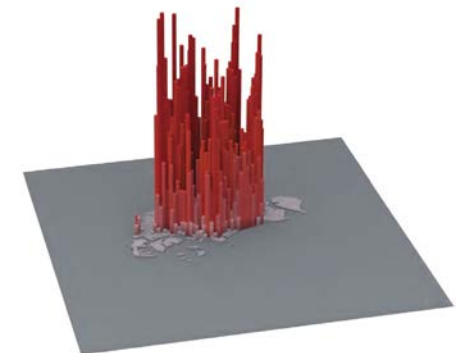
Kuwait City



Abu Dhabi



Singapore



Comparing population density in Asian cities. Extracted from 'Resource Urbanisms' report, LSE Cities, November 2017.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

The Middle East includes some of the poorest and richest countries in the world, whose basic health indicators generally parallel their economic status. While increasing research and resources are going towards the health sector, even the richest countries in the region still spend far more on defence. The growing exposure to western habits and lifestyles, coupled with rapid urbanisation and modernisation, have had an impact on health indicators, including obesity and overweight.





From a gender perspective, data on the MENA region shows that women are more severely affected by the global obesity epidemic than men. Dr Joan Costa-Font of the Department of Healthy Policy led a project on this 'Middle Eastern Health Inequality Paradox', examining the role played by social norms, socioeconomic factors, lifestyle and environmental characteristics, and food prices.

Two projects at the Centre took the occupied Palestinian territory as a case study. On one of them, Dr Tiziana Leone examined links between different forms of deprivation and health and wellbeing, focusing on less tangible and under-researched impacts of conflict, including the links between subjective and objective measures of health, and the roles of political and social determinants. The LSE team visited the West Bank on multiple occasions, where they conducted a training in multilevel modelling and structural equation, provided close mentorship to junior colleagues at Birzeit University and conducted qualitative interviews. Colleagues from Birzeit also visited London to present the findings of their research and attend conferences.

Noncommunicable diseases have become a major health burden in the GCC. The Centre published Dr Ruth Mabry's research looking at how transforming the urban environment to one supportive of physical activity would have wide-ranging benefits. Using the draft WHO technical package on promoting physical activity as a starting point, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders followed by an analysis of the most salient themes that emerged. The published paper was presented in Muscat, Oman to a number of representatives from the Ministry of Health.



Ruth Mabry at the launch of her MEC report 'Urbanisation and Physical Activity in the GCC: A Case Study of Oman' in Muscat, February 2018.



Participants at a research workshop between LSE and Birzeit academics, November 2018.



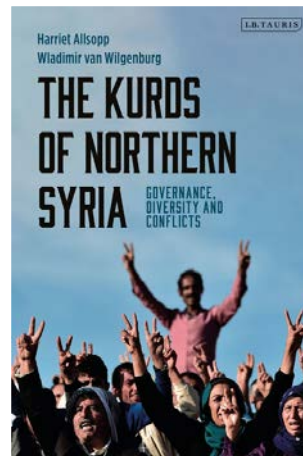
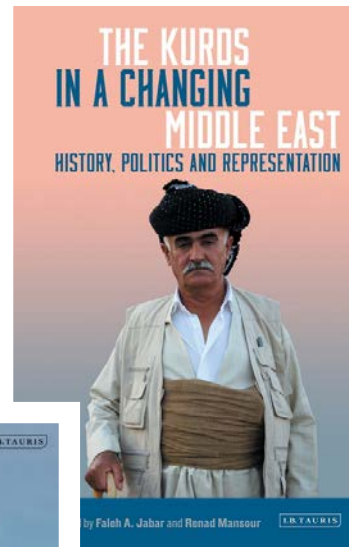
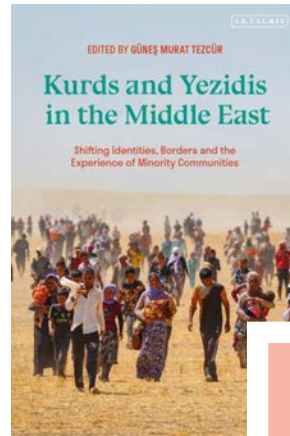


## IDENTITY AND MINORITIES

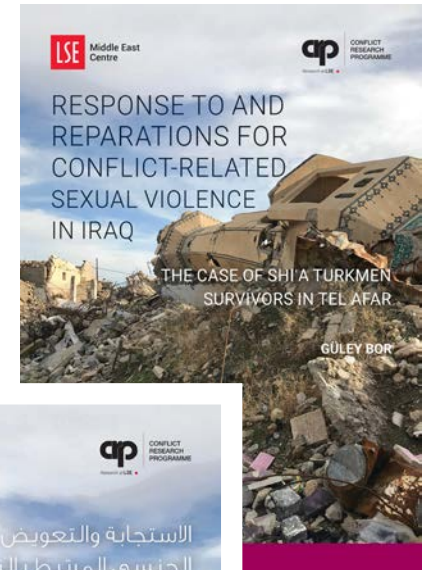
The Middle East can sometimes be perceived as a largely monocultural land, dominated by Arab identity. In reality, many minorities and tribes, with distinct history and identity have long lived in the region.

The salience of Kurdish political, social, economic and cultural developments for the Middle East and for wider geopolitics is being increasingly reflected in the upsurge of research in this area. Convened by Zeynep Kaya and Robert Lowe, the Centre established the Kurdish Studies Series to encourage dissemination and discussion of new research on Kurdish politics and society and provide a network for scholars and students with shared research interests. As part of this, the Centre has partnered with I.B. Tauris to launch a new publications series devoted to Kurdish studies.

Also focusing on minorities in Iraq, Güley Bor published the first ever report analysing the response to and reparations for conflict-related sexual violence against Shi'a Turkmen survivors of Tel Afar. Güley's blog posts written for the Middle East Centre on stigma and the reparation bill were translated to Arabic by the Turkmen Rescue Foundation (TRF) and used as sources for their advocacy to include Shi'a Turkmen survivors in the draft reparation law. Outputs of this study have informed IOM, the Global Survivors Fund recently established by Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Nadia Murad and Dennis Mukwege, and the Coalition for Just Reparations (C4JR) recently established by local civil society organisations to advocate for reparations.



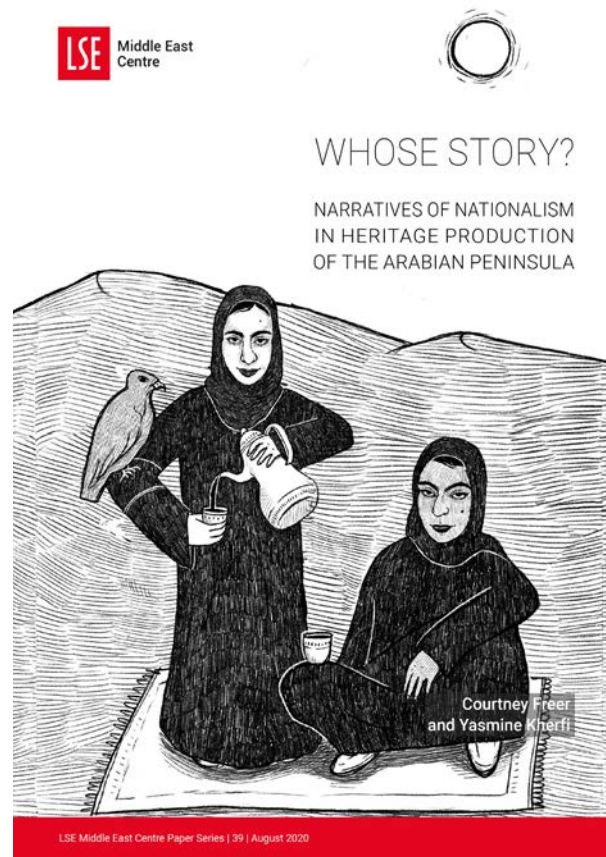
Kurdish Studies Series published by I.B. Tauris and the LSE Middle East Centre



Güley Bor's report was published by the Centre in Arabic and English, October 2019.

While minorities are widely studied and recognised in most of the MENA region, the GCC maintains an image of homogeneity, with heritage defined and constructed by government and civil society. Dr Courtney Freer's research interrogates the socio-political dynamics that underpin heritage-making efforts and national identity construction in the GCC. It provides an important opportunity to archive the rapid expansion of the cultural sectors across the Arabian Peninsula and looks at the ways in which different actors, including grassroots initiatives, and more substantially the state, engage in heritage production to authenticate and promote national history and identity.

Over the last decade, China has become the second largest trading partner of the UAE and an increasingly important strategic player in the MENA region. Dr Aula Hariri and Dr Yuting Wang of the American University of Sharjah examined the global rise of China in the Arabian Gulf through studying of the role of a transnational network of Chinese Muslim entrepreneurs in the UAE.



MEC paper written by Courtney Freer and Yasmine Kherfi following the completion of their project, August 2020.



Participants at 'China and the Arabian Gulf' workshop in Sharjah, November 2019.

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESOURCE SCARCITY

The MENA region is especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to its arid and semi-arid environment, facing climatic challenges such as low rainfall, high temperatures and dry soil. These challenges are putting significant strain on the already scarce water and agricultural resources in the region, threatening its security and stability.



The Jordan river basins, shared between Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, is one of the most physically and politically stressed river basin in the world. In 2013, working with local communities and researchers, Dr Michael Mason led research which aimed at improving policy responses for climate risk management within the region through a better understanding of the linkages between climate change, adaptation and human security.

Three workshops were held, which were attended by local researchers from each of the regions under study. The project produced a final report, in English and Arabic, 'Transboundary Climate Security: Climate Vulnerability and Rural Livelihoods in the Jordan River Basin', offering a summary of activities, research findings as well as policy recommendations. In addition, two of the Palestinian field researchers involved in the project went on to undertake doctoral research in the Department of Geography and Environment at LSE, thus demonstrating the lasting benefits of the project.



Far left: Water storage tanks in Majdal Shams, Golan Heights; left: Participants at a focus group in South of Lebanon, August 2012.

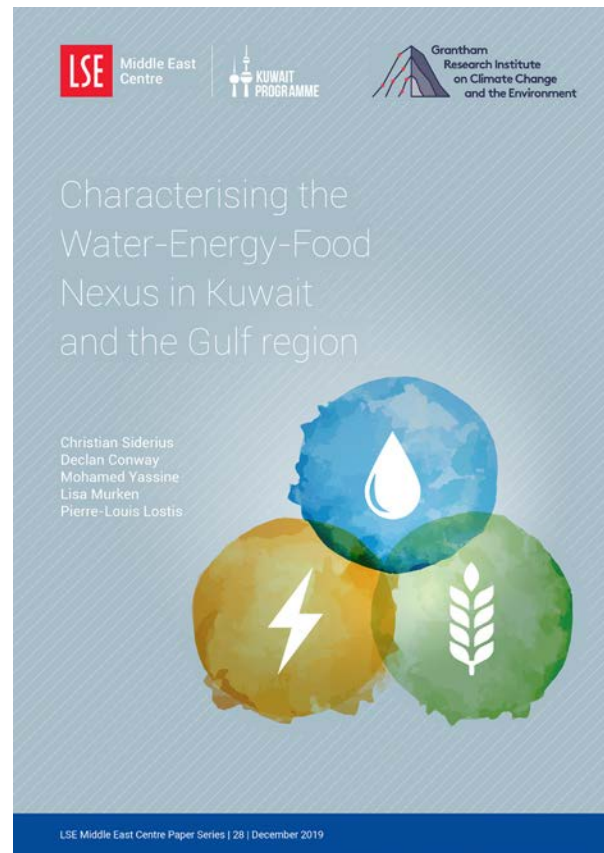
Although food insecurity and 'land grabs' are topical issues for the Middle East, the historical layers that lie behind the conflicts over the capacity to produce food and access to land remain poorly documented. Professor Martha Mundy of the LSE Department of Anthropology, in collaboration with Dr Rami Zurayk of the American University of Beirut, led on a project exploring the relation between secure, long-term access to land for farming households and their capacity to contribute to local, regional and national food security. The project's area of study was Sinay and four neighbouring villages in southern Lebanon. In each village, the research team examined land tenure dynamics, land use changes and landscape transformations. The research team presented their findings at the City Debates conference at AUB in March 2014. They also published the outcome of their research in the online journal *Justice Spatiale*.

FRIDAY MARCH 7		SATURDAY MARCH 8	
09:30 Registration	03:00 Panel 2: Representing Property	09:30 Panel 3: Making Property Property	11:30 Panel 4: Thinking Property Otherwise
10:00 Workshop #1	04:30 Coffee Break	11:00 Panel 3: Making Property Property	01:00 Panel 4: Thinking Property Otherwise
11:15 Coffee Break	05:00 Coffee Break	11:30 Coffee Break	02:30 Lunch
11:45 Coffee Break			04:30 Roundtable: Transition
01:30 Panel 1: Law and Property			05:00 Roundtable: Transition
01:30 Lunch			

Martha Mundy and Rami Zurayk presented the findings of their project at the City Debates conference at AUB, March 2014.

International donors also influence water scarcity in the region. Taking Basra's water supply investments as a case study, Dr Michael Mason and Zainab Mehdi studied the alleged failings of donors, focusing on the extent to which water infrastructure interventions by international donors are sustainable and meet the water supply expectations of Iraqis.

GCC states have enjoyed economic prosperity due to abundance of fossil fuel reserves. However, the economic turmoil as a result of the recent fluctuations in oil prices exposed the unprecedented risks and challenges in securing the long-term sustainability of their water, energy, and food resources in these states. These states rank among the lowest in the world in freshwater resources and soil fertility, but among the highest in water, energy, and food consumption (WEF), and carbon emissions. Looking at the deep connections between these three elements in Kuwait and the GCC, Dr Christian Siderius investigated existing approaches to assess the WEF nexus and their relevance for understanding the nexus in the GCC states. Whilst there is great uncertainty about future international climate policy and its implications for oil and gas revenues in Kuwait and the GCC, the analysis illustrated how implementation of policy measures to account for the social costs of carbon could be significant.



Christian Siderius published an MEC report summarising the research findings of his project, MEC December 2019.

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Many commentators have claimed that climate change is a driver of increasing water scarcity in the Middle East, and therefore a source of political instability and even conflict. By taking to rural communities across the Jordan River Basin, we were able to debunk the climate change–scarcity–conflict thesis. Climate change is less a source of pressure on water and food availability than ecologically destructive political economies and non-democratic governance - including belligerent occupation.

MICHAEL MASON

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## SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND PROTEST

The Arab Spring was the defining event of the past decade. The wave of protest, which swept across Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria and other countries, changed their political and social landscapes for generations to come. The Arab uprisings have also created a surge of interest in social movements and contestation in the region, from the public, from policy-makers, and from students since this uniquely televised, tweeted and mediatised revolutionary process started.





In order to drive forward intellectual development and cutting-edge research in the field, the Middle East Centre established the Social Movements and Popular Mobilisation in the MENA network, bringing together academics and students undertaking relevant research. Led by Professor John Chalcraft from the LSE Department of Government, 19 events have been organised and 9 papers published as part of the network.

In 2011, the Middle East Centre established an academic exchange programme with the Faculty of Economics and Political Science (FEPS) at Cairo University, which contributed to the broader debate on the Arab Spring and particularly the Egyptian transition. Through joint conferences, workshops and publications, the project strengthened the academic profile of both LSE and FEPS PhD students. It introduced LSE PhD students to the academic environment of a key Arab university, and FEPS students to European and British academia.



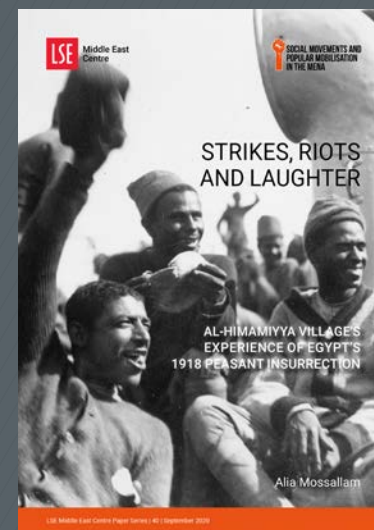
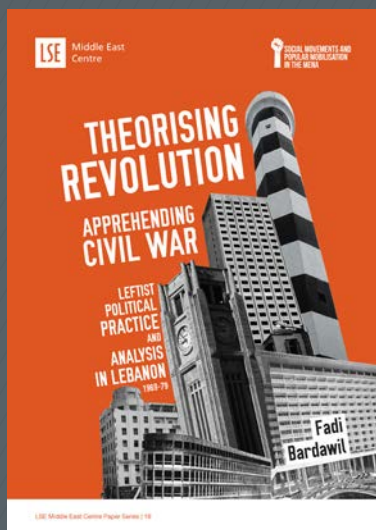
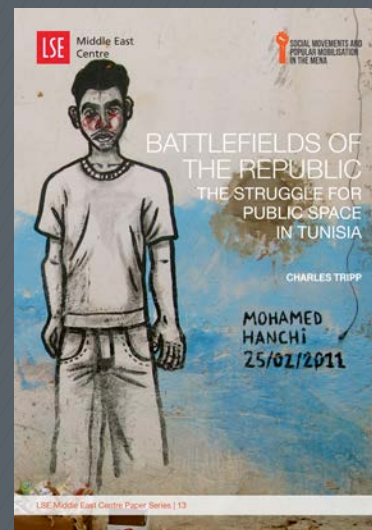
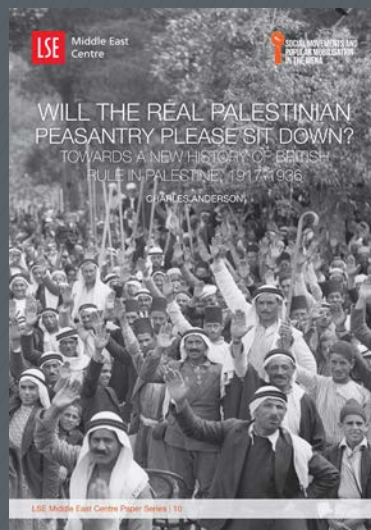
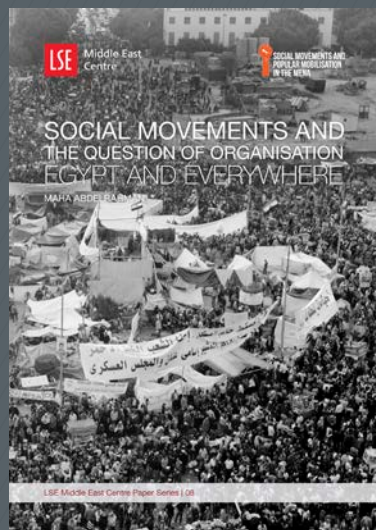
Unlike Egypt, Iraq's upheaval didn't happen until later in the decade. However, what started as a promising uprising against the country's political system and its governing elites in October 2019, quickly died down, raising questions about what comes next. Many have explored the root causes and drivers of Iraq's protest movements; comparatively little attention has been paid to the tactical and strategic decisions made by activists during mobilisation and after protests abate. To address this gap, Dr Benedict Robin D'Cruz led on a research project exploring how sequential phases of mass mobilisation in southern Iraq have led to an evolution in the tactical choices and broad strategic debates between different protest groups in the region.

As an early career researcher, the MEC has provided me with an invaluable source for sharing knowledge and expertise on Iraq and the wider region, as well as practical research support and mentoring from senior colleagues. Policy makers, NGOs and other practitioners will find that my project provides valuable insight into the shifting patterns of protest and counter-protest violence, as well as the socio-demographic composition of protests and their tactical and strategic dimensions.

**BENEDICT ROBIN D'CRUZ**

Participants at the 'Egypt in the Arab Spring' conference at Cairo University, June 2013.

**SOCIAL  
MOVEMENTS  
AND POPULAR  
MOBILISATION  
IN THE MENA  
PUBLICATION  
SERIES**



## POLITICAL ECONOMY

The MENA region has served as inspiration for political economy theories that have proven significant for the developing world at large, notably modernisation theory and theories of rentier states and the 'resource curse'. Western strategic interest in the Middle East remains as high as ever thanks to its energy riches and the global implications of its regional conflicts. The political economy challenges the MENA region faces have, if anything, become more acute in the wake of the Arab uprisings.



Yet, in recent decades, there has been limited comparative political economy (CPE) research on the region and no major political science theories have emerged from it. In 2015–17, Dr Steffen Hertog and Dr Ferdinand Eibl led on a research project which acted as a facilitator to re-energise comparative political economy research on the MENA region. While tackling some of the large political economy issues that are MENA-specific, their primary aim was to put the region into wider comparative context in the developing world. As part of the project, three workshops were organised bringing together leading academics from around the world.

Following the recent fluctuations in oil prices, resource-rich countries have tried to diversify their economies. In general, export growth has been shown to have a positive impact on economic growth. However, in a country like the UAE where primary exports mainly consist of oil, emphasis must be placed on non-oil exports to achieve sustained economic growth.

Since 1981, the UAE has experienced significant export diversification and a high rate of economic growth. However, in her research, Dr Athanasia Kalaitzi asks whether a further increase in the degree of export diversification would foster further economic growth in the UAE. The results of this study contribute to the discourse on the design of future economic policies in the country and are instructive for other countries attempting to emulate a similar economic model.

In non-oil countries, integration in global value chains (GVCs) has been promoted as a key route to achieving diversification and sustainable economic and social development. Over the last two decades, countries such as Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia and Egypt have focused on integrating their economies in such globalised networks of production and trade.

However, the developmental impacts of this increase have been relatively limited. MENA countries largely failed to upgrade their economic and technological position in GVCs and remain specialised in low value-added activities in these chains leading to little overall developments in terms of type of employment and income levels. In this context, taking Egypt and Morocco as case studies, Dr Shamel Azmeh examined the integration of non-oil MENA countries in GVCs, explaining the limited economic and social upgrading in GVC-integrated industries.

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The participation of Dr Shamel Azmeh, Research Fellow at the LSE Middle East Centre, in OECD’s policy seminars with the MENA region in Beirut and Amman was instrumental to better decode the complex relationship between foreign direct investment and global value chains in the region.

**FARES AL-HUSSAMI**

**MENA Trade and Investment Policy Specialist,  
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and  
Development (OECD)**

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3

**MAJOR RESEARCH  
PROGRAMMES**



## ACADEMIC COLLABORATION WITH ARAB UNIVERSITIES PROGRAMME

The Academic Collaboration with Arab Universities Programme has been the central pillar of the MEC's work through its support for collaborative research and capacity-building partnerships in various disciplines and with multiple universities in the region.

## OVERVIEW

The Academic Collaboration Programme promotes high calibre research and strengthens long-term academic collaboration and knowledge transfer. Projects have been led by academics from 12 different departments and centres across the School, including Geography and Environment, Media and Communications, International Development, Human Rights and Government.

To date, the Programme has generated more than 50 publications, including journal articles and numerous Middle East Centre papers and reports.

## BEYOND THE PROGRAMME

Five collaboration projects have secured additional funding from the following external bodies to further support their research: The British Society for Population Studies, the British Institute for the Study of Iraq, Thomas Gerald Gray Charitable Trust and LSE's Knowledge Exchange and Impact Fund.

The Programme has also created important networks and opportunities for collaboration that extend beyond LSE's relationship to the partner universities. For instance, on one collaboration project, five small NGOs worked alongside the American University in Cairo to carry out supplementary research informed by the project's findings. Another collaboration project with Birzeit University saw academics from LSE and the University of

Southampton travel to the West Bank to deliver a training on multilevel modelling. This resulted in capacity strengthening for a much broader audience from Al-Najah University, Al-Quds University, Birzeit University, Hebron Polytechnic University, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, as well as local NGOs. Following the successful completion of a pilot programme during a collaborative project, which strengthened the teaching, assessment and course development capacities of its Business School, the University of Tunis established the first International Relations course in English in the country.

Established in 2010 through a £3.7m grant from the Emirates Foundation, the Academic Collaboration Programme has funded 38 projects in partnership with 21 universities and research institutes in 9 countries.

### PARTNER UNIVERSITIES

Abu Dhabi University

American University in Dubai

American University of Beirut

American University of Cairo

American University of Sharjah

Birzeit University

Cairo University

Canadian University Dubai

Holy Spirit University of Kaslik

Hawler Medical University

Khalifa University

Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government

National Defense College in Abu Dhabi

New York University Abu Dhabi

Qatar University

Sana'a University

United Arab Emirates University

University Mohammed V Rabat Agdal

University of Kurdistan Hewlêr

University of Tunis

Zayed University



## KUWAIT PROGRAMME

The Kuwait Programme was established at LSE in 2007 with funding from the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) with the aim of conducting time-sensitive, policy-relevant research which will inform evidence-based policymaking in Kuwait and the wider GCC.



## OVERVIEW

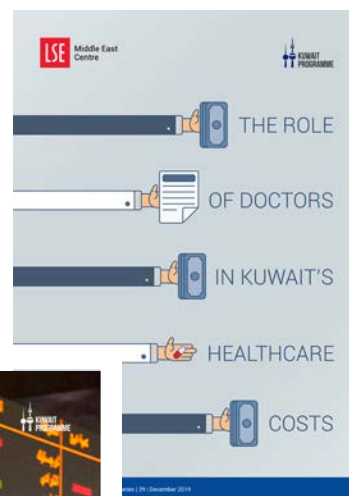
After establishing itself as a world-leading hub for research and expertise on Kuwait and the Gulf, further funding from KFAS extended the programme for a further five years from 2017.

## KEY ACTIVITIES

The programme currently runs long-term collaboration projects between LSE researchers and Kuwait-based researchers, research grants for LSE academics and short-term fellowships for Kuwait-based researchers to spend time at the Middle East Centre. The programme organises regular research seminars, an annual research workshop in Kuwait and a network for Kuwait Programme alumni. The programme is directed by the Kuwait Chair, Professor Toby Dodge.



Courtney Freer on a visit to KFAS in Kuwait, November 2017.



Developing our collective understanding of the connections between Europe and the Middle East is as pressing as ever. The MEC is a welcome focal point for leading scholars to explore some of the most compelling historical and contemporary aspects of these relationships together. The academic environment and resources available at the Centre create an ideal opportunity for scholars to discuss, develop, and disseminate cutting edge research on the broader Middle East and its place within the rich tapestry of humanity.

**FAHED AL-SUMAIT**  
Previous Kuwait Programme Fellow



## THE CONFLICT RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The Conflict Research Programme (CRP) is a four-year programme designed to address the drivers and dynamics of violent conflict in the Middle East and Africa and to inform the measures being used to tackle armed conflict and its impacts.



CONFLICT  
RESEARCH  
PROGRAMME



## ABOUT THE CRP

The Conflict Research Programme (CRP) investigates how different forms of public authority actually function; positing that levels of violence and insecurity tend to depend on the nature of the different logics. The LSE Middle East Centre is leading the research on Iraq and on wider Middle East drivers of conflict. CRP is an international research consortium led by LSE that holds a £6.68m grant from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.



Participants at an Al Bayan CRP conference, December 2018.

## OUR PARTNERS IN IRAQ

American University of Iraq, Sulaimani  
Al Bayan Center for Planning and Studies  
Iraqi Al Amal Association  
Public Aid Organisation  
Iraqi Women Network  
Center of Strategic Studies  
University of Anbar  
University of Mosul  
Al-Tahreer Association



The MEC's commitment to advancing quality scholarship on Iraq has been first class. I was able to publish research on public policy issues that were particularly pertinent to Iraq's current challenges and the expert guidance that I received from the MEC team was invaluable, as well as the opportunity to showcase my work in London among like-minded scholars and experts.

**ALI AL-MAWLAWI**  
Al Bayan Center for Planning and Studies



4

**ENGAGING WITH THE LSE  
STUDENT COMMUNITY**

## EMIRATES MASTER'S SCHOLARSHIP

The Emirates Master's Scholarship was offered to Arab students pursuing their studies at LSE. Over three years, nine students received full scholarships covering their tuition and living expenses. This initiative helped in the education and career development of the brightest Arab state nationals. It equipped them with new skills to continue further in Higher Education or return to their home country and make meaningful contributions towards the betterment of the region.

### 2014–15 SCHOLARS

**Hiba Nuseibeh, Palestine**  
MSc Conflict Studies

**Heba Hesham, Egypt**  
MSc Gender, Development and Globalisation

**Fatma Mahfouz AbdelAziz, Egypt**  
MSc Public Policy and Administration

### 2015–16 SCHOLARS

**Jourie Kolthoum, UAE**  
MSc International Relations

**Amir Jabbarin, Palestine**  
MSc Regional and Urban Planning Studies

**Nader Andrawos, Egypt**  
MSc Sociology

### 2016–17 SCHOLARS

**Faisal Alkhatib, UAE**  
MSc Philosophy and Public Policy

**Maya Mamish, Syria**  
MSc Social and Cultural Psychology

**Nur Turkmani, Lebanon**  
MSc Comparative Politics

## EMIRATES PHD SCHOLARSHIPS

Between 2010 and 2017, the Emirates PhD Scholarship provided support for PhD research at LSE on Middle East topics. The awards, based on need and merit, were offered to students in the final stages of their doctoral degree. The Scholarship supported 38 students from 13 different departments including International History, Government, Anthropology, Law and International Relations.

I have many wonderful memories of the Centre during my time at LSE: the regular seminars on Middle Eastern affairs, the Centre's first conference for doctoral candidates, the engagement at workshops and events, and indeed the scholarship I received from the Centre.

Once I finished my PhD I moved to Geneva and pursued post-doctoral opportunities. I am currently working at and affiliated to the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, the Small Arms Survey, the Peace Research Institute Oslo, Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network and Sciences Po.

The work of the LSE Middle East Centre was always a source of inspiration for me, and it will continue to be. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of the Centre.



**ALAA TARTIR**  
Emirates PhD  
Scholar 2013–14

## CAREERS EVENTS

The Centre organised annual career events for students at LSE and other universities. These involved experts from a range of fields discussing their roles and career paths and offering advice to students. These included the fields of academia, journalism, publishing, diplomacy, third sector and business.

## PHD STUDENTS IN THE MEC COMMUNITY

All PhD candidates at LSE have the opportunity to use Centre facilities and enjoy a welcoming environment where they can meet other students and scholars working on the region. In addition, the Centre runs a lunchtime seminars series, latterly led by Dr Jessica Watkins, at which PhD students and Centre researchers are encouraged to present their work in progress and receive feedback from fellow researchers.

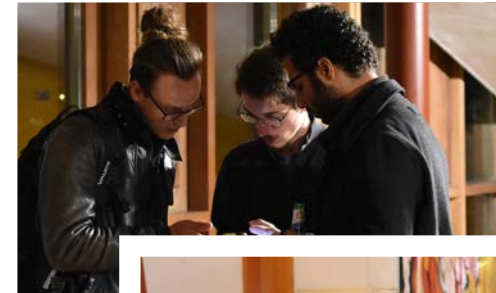
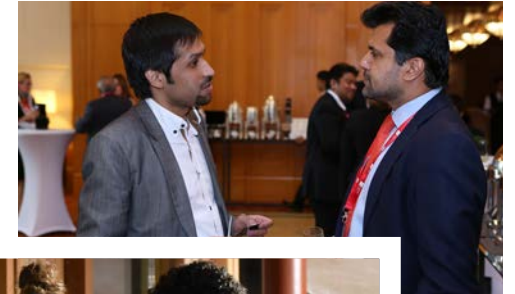
## ALUMNI EVENTS

The Centre complements the work of LSE Alumni Relations in engaging with alumni living in the Middle East. Centre staff and researchers are encouraged to meet alumni groups in country to network and to present their research. In 2014 and 2015, the Centre organised major alumni fora in Dubai to showcase leading research from LSE to

alumni based in the region. Over 500 delegates joined senior academics and School leadership to discuss economic, political and social questions in the MENA region.

## MASTER'S DISSERTATION AWARDS

Since 2018, the MEC has awarded two annual prizes for Master's degree dissertations: the LSE Middle East Centre Master's Dissertation Prize, for LSE Master's dissertations focusing on the Middle East, most recently won by Hood Ahmed (MSc Comparative Politics) and Maya Hammad (MSc International Social and Public Policy); and the Algerian Studies Master's Prize, for any UK university-based Master's dissertation on Algeria, most recently won by Lillian Flemons (Cambridge University) and Charlie Hierons (Oxford University).





5

# IMPACT AND EVENTS

ABDEL RAZZAQ TAKRITI ABDUL GHANI AL IRYANI ABDULHADI KHALAF ABDULKARIM SOROUGH **ABDULKHALEQ ABDULLA** ADAM HANIEH ADAM HOWARD ADEEL MALIK ADEEL MUHAMMAD ADEL ISKANDAR AHMAD KHALIDI AHMED DAILAMI AHMED GALAL AHRON BREGMAN AIDA AL KAISY AISHA AL SARIHI AITEMAD MUHANNA-MATAR AKIL HASHEM ALAIN GRESH **ALEX GOMES** ALEXANDER HAMILTON ALI AL BAYATI **ALI AL MAWLAWI** ALI ANSARI ALI CARKOGLU ALI KADRI ALIA MOSALLAM ALIA MOUBAYED **ALICE WILSON** AMAL JAMAL AMAR ABBA AMEL BOUBEKEUR AMINA BOUBIA **AMNON ARAN** AMNON ARAN ANASTASIA NOSOVA ANDREA TETI ANDREW DELATOLLA ANDREW HAMMOND ANDREW LEBOVICH ANDREW NOBLE **ANISEH TABRIZI** ANNIKA RABO ANOUSH EHTESHAMI ANWAR DARKAZALLY ATEF ALSHAER ATHANASIA KALAITIZI AVI SHLAIM **AZIZ AL AZMEH** BADER ALHASHEL BAHAA ILYAS BAHAR BASER BAHGAT KORANY BARAA SHIBAN BASEM RA'AD BEHLUL OZKAN BEN HUBBARD **BENEDETTA ARGENTIERI** BENEDETTA VOLTOLINI BENNY MORRIS BENOIT CHALLAND BERNA TURAM BRECHT DE SMET BRIAN WHITAKER **BRONWEN MANBY** BULENT ARAS CAROOL KERSTEN CENGIZ CANDAR **CHARLES ANDERSON** CHARLES SHAMMAS CHARLES TRIPP CHERINE HUSSEIN CHOUKRI HMED **CHRIS EMERY** CHRIS SCHOREDER CHRISTOPHER PARKER **CLAIRE BEAUGRAND** CONSTANTIN GOUVY COSKUN TUNCER COURTNEY FREER CRISTINA MORENO-ALMEIDA DANIEL LEVY DANIEL NEEP **DANNY POSTEL** DAVID K KIRKPATRICK DAVID LESCH DAVID LUCA DAVID MCDOWALL DAVID PATRIKARAKOS DAVID ROBERTS DENIZ KANDIYOTI DENNIS SAMMUT DIANA BUTTU DIANE KING DIMA ISSA DIMA SABER DINA ESFANDIARY DINA MATAR DUHA AL KUWARI EBERHARD KIENLE ED MCALLISTER ELHAM SAUDI ELIAN WEIZMAN ELIF SARICAN **ELIF SHAFAK** EPHRAIM KLEIMAN **ERNESTINA COAST** ERVAND ABRAHAMIAN ESKANDAR SADEGHI-BOROUJERDI EVA BEILIN FADI BARDAWIL FALEH JABAR FANAR HADDAD FARAH AL NAKIB **FAREA AL MUSLIMI** FATIMA AL ASRAR FATIMA EL ISSAWI FAWAZ GERGES **FAWWAZ TRABOULSI** FEDERICA BICCHI FEISAL ISTRABADI FERDINAND EIBL FILIPPO DIONIGI FIROOZEH KASHANI-SABET FLORENCE GAUB FRANCESCO DE LELLIS **FRAN TONKISS** FREDERIC VAIREL FREDERIC VOLPI GAGAN SOOD GARY BARKER GEORGE SABRA GHANIM AL NAJJAR GHAYTH ARMANAZAI GIACOMO LUCIANA GIDEON LEVY GILBERT ACHCAR **GILLES KEPEL** GINNY HILL GIRAY SADIK GÖKÇE GÜNEL GREG GAUSE GREG MUTTITT **GÜLEY BOR** GÜNEŞ MURAT TEZCÜR HAIFA ZANGANA HALEH AFSHAR HAMAD BIN JASSIM BIN JABER AL THANI HAMID DABASHI **HANEEN NAAMNEH** HANY BESHAR HAYTHAM MANNA HAZEM KANDIL HENDRIK HICHAM SAFIEDDINE HIND AL SULAITI HORIT HERMAN PELED EHMED IMAD MESDOUA ISABEL KÄSER ISABELLE WERENFELS JAMES MCDOUGALL JAMES SHIRES JAMES ZOGBY JAMIL JENNIFER JACKSON PREECE JENNIFER JENKINS JESPER RAYBURN **JOEY AYOUB** JOHN CALVERT JOHN CHALCRAFT PARRY JOLYON LESLIE JONATHAN HILL JONATHAN WYRTZEN SLUGLETT KAREN YOUNG **KARL SHARRO** KARMA NABULSI HASEEB KHALID ALMEZAINI KHOULOU MASNOUR KIM LAHOUARI ADDI LAHUR TALABANI LAILA EL HADDAD LAKHDAR **SINJAB** LINA WAFAI LINE KHATIB LISA ANDERSON LOLWAH AL RASHEED **MAGGIE SCHMITT** MAHA ABDELRAHMAN MAHA REBAI MALU HALASA MANDY TURNER MANMIT BHAMBRA SCHIFFBAUER MARC VALERI MARIE DUBOC MARISA FOIS MARK FITZPATRICK MARK ZEITOUN **MARTHA MUNDY** MARTIN CHULOV MARTIN EVANS MARWAN BISHARA MARWAN FAROUK MARZOUQ AL GHANIM MASOOD AHMED MATTEO LEGRENZI MEHMET KURT MICHAEL FARQUHAR MICHAEL GUNTER MICHAEL HERB MICHAEL MASON MICHAEL STEPHENS MICHAEL WILLIS **MIREILLE GIRARD** MOHAMED AYOUB **MONA KHECHEN** MORTEN VALBJØRN NADER HASHEMI NADIA MOUNAJJED NADJE AL ALI NAGHMEH SOHRABI NASR AL HARIRI NASSER SAIDI NATALYA VINCE NAZANIN SHAHROKNI NELIDA FUCCARO NICOLA PRATT NICOLE WATTS NIGEL ASHTON **NIR ROSEN** NUR LAIQ NUSSAIBAH YOUNES OMAR NASHABE PAOLA RIVETTI PATRICK PORTER **PATRICK SEALE** PAUL DANAHAR PEJMAN ABDOLMOHAMMADI PETER KOSMINSKY PETER NEUMANN PHILIP ROBINS PHILIPP RODE PHYLLIS BENNIS POLLY WITHERS **PRISCILLA TOFFANO** RABAB EL MAHDI RABAH AISSAOUI RACHED GHANNOUCHI RAJA KHALIDI RAMI SALAMEH RAMI ZURAYK RANA KABBANI RANDA NASSER RAPHAEL ESPINOZA RASHA OBAID RASHID KHALIDI RAYMOND HINNEBUSCH REBECCA STEINFELD RENAD MANSOUR RENE RIEGER RICHARD SCHOFIELD RIMA SABBAN **RITA GIACAMAN** ROB MOGIELNICKI ROBERT FLETCHER ROBERT IRWIN ROGER COHEN ROGER HARDY **ROGER OWEN** ROHAM ALVANDI ROLAND DANNREUTHER ROMOLA SANYAL ROSEMARY HOLLIS ROTHNA BEGUM ROZA SAEED AL QAIDI RUTH MABRY SAAD AL SHARRAH SAAD HARIRI SAAD JAWAD SADIK AL AZM SAID FERJANI SALEH MUSLIM MOHAMED SALMAN SHAIKH SALWA ISMAIL SAM DAGHER SAMI ZEMNI SAMI ZUBAIDA SARA AL SHAREEF SARA SALEM SARETA ASHRAPH SHAFEEQ GHABRA SHAKU BANAJI SHALAN FAROUK SHAMEL AZMEH **SHEREEN EL FEKI** SIAVUSH RANDJBAR-DAEMI SIMON MABON SMADAR LAVIE SOPHIE CHAMAS SOPHIE OLVER-ELLIS SORAYA EL KAHLAOUI SOUAD MEKHENNET STEFFEN HERTOGE STEPHANE LACROIX STEVEN HEYDEMANN SULIMAN AL ATIQUI **SULTAN AL QASSEMI** SUSAN LAMB TALAL AL RASHOUD TAMARA TURNER TAMER ABU GHAZALEH **TARIQ TELL** TEIJE HIDDE DONKER THOMAS PIERRET TILDE ROSMER TIM NIBLOCK TIZIANA LEONE TOBY CADMAN TOBY DODGE TOBY MATTHIESEN VALERIA CETORELLI VALERIE BUNCE WAEEL GHONIM WEEAM HAMMOUDEH WEJDAN NASSIF WENDY PEARLMAN **WILLIAM QUANDT** WLADIMIR VAN WILGENBURG WM ROGER LOUIS YANIV VOLLER YARA HAWARI **YEZID SAYIGH** YOAV KAPSHUK YOAV PELED YOUSSEF CHERIF YOUSRA EL HAWARY YVAN GUICHAOUA ZAHIA SMAIL SALHI ZAHRA ALI ZAID AL ALI ZELAL KIZILKAN ZEYNEP KAYA

**396 SPEAKERS**  
**418 EVENTS**  
**23,760 ATTENDEES**



## MEC PAPER SERIES

Our flagship Paper Series is the primary research outcome produced by the Centre. These peer-reviewed papers allow the dissemination of the work of Centre staff, fellows and other researchers at LSE. In the past 10 years, the Centre has published 40 papers, in addition to 22 reports and events proceedings and 7 collected papers volumes.

The Centre is committed to reaching audiences in the region. Depending on the topic and coverage of the research, we have translated some of our papers into Arabic, Kurdish and French.

## MEC BLOG

The blog makes available analysis of the Middle East and North Africa in an immediately accessible and highly relevant way for a wide readership, drawing primarily on the community of academics and researchers at LSE, but also including outside contributors. This year, the blog has received over 20,000 views each month, with its reach continues to grow.

## PODCAST

Instant Coffee is a new podcast launched by the Centre in response to the Covid-19 lockdown of 2020. The podcast allowed the Centre to reach new speakers and audiences, featuring 20-minute

conversations with activists, artists, journalists and more from the region. The podcast has proved extremely successful, each episode being listened to over 1,500 times.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Since its inception, the Middle East Centre expanded its reach and influence beyond academia. The Centre enjoys an influential presence on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. We established a weekly newsletter, which is today received by over 12,000 subscribers.

In 2020, we launched our new Arabic website which makes our research available in the Arabic-speaking world. With time, it will provide a platform for academics practitioners in the region to publish their research and reach wider audiences around the world.

## SOCIETY FOR ALGERIAN STUDIES

The society promotes academic work on Algeria in the UK and has been affiliated to the MEC since 2014. This fruitful partnership has involved a regular series of public events on Algeria and the Maghrib and the annual award of a prize for Master's dissertations on Algeria.

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I've been consistently impressed by the quality of the research and events coming out of the LSE Middle East Centre and regularly draw on them in my analysis. The website and newsletters make it very easy for me to access them and to recommend to policy colleagues.

HEIDI MINSHALL  
Arabian Peninsula Analyst  
Foreign & Commonwealth Office

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# BRITISH SOCIETY FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES BRISMES

The MEC was privileged to host the BRISMES conference and events office for six years. Working closely with Louise Haysey at the BRISMES central office in Durham, the team helped to expand the society's events and service to members through the annual conference, annual lecture and careers events.

The MEC/BRISMES office ran six annual conferences; twice at LSE, and at the universities of Wales Trinity St David, Edinburgh, Leeds and King's College London.



**8,100**

followers in 2015

**20,000**

followers today

TWITTER

NEWSLETTER

**4,700**

subscribers in 2015

**12,000**

subscribers today

FACEBOOK

**2,880**

likes in 2015

**10,400**

likes today

SOUNDCLOUD

**217,000**

listens since 2017

**OUR**

**COMMS**

**IN NUMBERS**

BLOG

launched in July 2013

**610,000 views**

**400,000 visitors**

‘

I was invited to give a talk at the Centre in 2017, which was without a doubt the best talk I have ever given. The full auditorium was buzzing with energy, the questions were thoughtful and incisive, and the audience were unmatched. I was very impressed with the Centre's excellent team, I will always cherish this event.

**KARL SHARRO AKA KARL REMARKS**



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I was deeply impressed by the quality of the speakers and their cumulative impact. What the School does best is to harness analytics and engagement – the event [Sareta Ashraph, May 2018] did that in spades.

**NICHOLAS BARR**  
Professor of Public Economics, LSE

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# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Since its inception, the LSE Middle East Centre (MEC) has sought to produce rigorous research on societies, economies, politics of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This is in line with the School's core ethos to know the cause of things and generate evidence-based understanding for addressing societal problems. Our commitment to public and practitioner engagement is as important as our pure research. We are always seeking to adapt our communications to a fast-changing media environment; for example, accelerating our online content amidst recent coronavirus constraints. It is a testament to the breadth of the activities undertaken by the Centre, with the involvement of colleagues across the region, that this report had struggled to encompass all that we do. We are proud of our role in fostering those early career researchers and professional services colleagues without whom we would not flourish. This career support has assumed even greater significance in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and will remain a priority for the Centre, as evidenced by recent successful Leverhulme funding.

While not a teaching department at LSE, the MEC will continue to build opportunities for more engagement with students (who are already enthusiastic attendees at our events), e.g. research assistance opportunities, the

hosting of postgraduate students in the Centre, and careers events. We are also keen to re-introduce scholarships to MENA students, and this is a fundraising goal. Furthermore, we rely greatly on visiting colleagues, who help extend our geographical and thematic coverage, whilst bringing us also into contact with new audiences (e.g. from their contributions to events, papers and the MEC blog). In future years, the Centre will enlarge the set of skills, expertise and experience represented by visiting staff.

The widely acclaimed events programme at the MEC has grown considerably over the last decade. We are often asked to respond to sudden developments in the region and can facilitate immediate reactions from relevant experts. However, our core events scheduling – encompassing public lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences – is designed to present deep analysis by launching important research findings and hosting debates between key practitioners (academics, politicians, policy experts and activists). More recently, as we have scaled up online content, we have reached out to activists, artists and other change-makers from the region: the Instant Coffee podcast series exemplifies this strategy to hear new voices – including from younger people – that may not (yet) be registered in

Anglophone academic research on MENA.

The strength of the Middle East Centre is gauged by its shared community of scholarship. As detailed in this report, our successful collaboration programmes with the Emirates Foundation and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences have greatly boosted our capacity to cultivate research partnerships between LSE scholars and Arab universities. It is a priority for the Centre to extend such collaborative research through diverse sources of funding; for example, the UK Government-funded Conflict Research Programme that has facilitated work with Iraqi researchers. We will consolidate scholarly networks in existing areas of Centre expertise (e.g. Kurdish studies) and forge new research collaborations where more research is needed (e.g. Iranian studies).

**MICHAEL MASON**  
**CENTRE DIRECTOR**

## KEY THEMES FOR FUTURE STUDY

There are recurrent themes on political economy and international relations that inform the research and policy outreach of the Centre. We have also developed interdisciplinary insights on such pressing issues as gender-based violence, conflict reduction, sectarianism, popular mobilisation, the displacement of populations, and post-oil economic futures. The following are additional themes identified by Centre staff as worthy of study.



## ECOLOGICAL-DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

A growing number of researchers are preoccupied with understanding and working through the implications of living in the so-called Anthropocene – the idea that humans are now the primary geological force on the planet. Climatic stresses and high biodiversity losses are the lead cases of Anthropocene change, but there is limited work on their impacts in MENA countries, which are linked also to demographic shifts, rapid urbanisation, natural resources depletion and growing pollution. Understanding ecological-demographic change is inseparable from an objective questioning of the livelihood systems and governance regimes which render MENA populations vulnerable.

## HEALTH SYSTEMS IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19

Covid-19 is the second coronavirus outbreak in the MENA region following the MERS-Cov outbreak. However, Covid-19 has caused far greater damage to lives and livelihoods. In the absence of a collective regional response, national measures have amplified inequalities between and within MENA countries in terms of access to adequate health-care. While Gulf states have marshalled substantial resources to combat the pandemic, other countries have struggled: for vulnerable refugee populations,

dependence on humanitarian assistance has intensified. The opportunity to reset health systems is opening debate about the quality of public health infrastructure and its role in countries' social contracts.

## REGIONAL GEOPOLITICAL REALIGNMENTS

The signing in 2020 of the US-brokered Abraham Accords between the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Israel signals a major shift in Arab-Israeli relations, with impacts likely to ripple across MENA. In one respect, this 'normalisation' only makes public what are long-standing Gulf-Israel links, and solidifies a geopolitical coalition against Iran. The proponents of the Accords also point to a new window of opportunity peacefully to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Critics see only the latest, perhaps final, betrayal of the Palestinian liberation struggle. At the same time, powerful external actors are also shifting regional dynamics (e.g. Russian and Turkish interventions in Syria, the China-Iran strategic partnership). These geopolitical changes are likely to cause long-lasting regional realignments.

## DECOLONISING MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

LSE, as with many other universities, is facing calls to recognise and address unexamined legacies of colonial domination, notably around race, gender and sexuality. Students are at the forefront of these demands, which stretch beyond the teaching curriculum to research and university governance. The MEC has welcomed such scrutiny. It was an Orientalist gaze that created the 'Middle East' and other geographical imaginaries (e.g. 'Western Asia') may now be more appropriate. The Centre embraces more inclusive ways of knowing, which address more directly race, gender and sexuality. This means grounding our activities in the languages, landscapes and lived experiences of the region.



# THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

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American Political Science Association

British Council

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Chevron

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John Templeton Foundation

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Fund

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