

Politics, History, Economy and Society of the Middle East

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Organised Panels

Crossed Memories and Ambiguous Regimes of Historicity: Debating the Public Use of History

Panel conveners: Ulrike Freitag, Habib Kazdahli, Nora Lafi

Historians, writers, and intellectuals belonging to former colonial countries and those of now independent countries are often led, either directly or unwillingly, to study the reconstruction of identity, the cross-fertilisation or the wounds of memories resulting from the colonial era and its echoes in different strata of successive presents. The political, intellectual, and ideological stakes often weigh on a common but divergent heritage and carry contradictory representations and horizons of expectations. This panel proposes to examine these questions from three complementary angles, corresponding to scientific fields that are currently being explored by researchers: the crossed history of memories, studies on the public uses of history and the connections between history and the present through the concept of regimes of historicity. Among the themes that panel participants might wish to address are the following:

- The narratives and memories of colonisation between suffering, appeasement, instrumentalization and persistent ambiguities.
- The manifestations in successive presents of the notion of colonial heritage: between history and representations.
- The impact between public, ideological, political, and societal expectations of rereading and interpreting the past and historians' research practices.
- The difficult distinction between reflections on memory and the practice of historical research.

Narratives of Violence and Repression (I): Official Stories and the Legitimation of Repression

Panel conveners: Jannir Grimm, Maria Josua, André Bank

Political violence has been a concomitant feature of the processes of mobilization and social transformation in West Asia and North Africa (WANA). WANA states routinely employ repression to contain challenges to their authoritarian rule. Especially since the Arab uprisings the extent and scope of state violence have increased dramatically and targeted domestic and diaspora populations alike. Accordingly, authorities as the main producers of violence have also faced an unprecedented need to communicate their rationales for repression to their constituents. Their official communication varyingly justifies, denies, or diverts from state violence. These narratives on repression all intend to shape the way how citizens and observers think of and feel about state violence. For this purpose, official stories have drawn on a variety of legitimizing sources, including religion and nationalism. Wherever these narratives were successful, they have not only reduced repression costs and alleviated potential backlash effects, but they have also generated significant support for repressive actors and policies on the domestic or international level.

As one of two twin panels, this session adopts a top-down perspective on the narratives by which repression and violence are legitimized, justified and negotiated in WANA today. Rather than considering states as monolithic actors, it focuses on a variety of different knowledge construction processes about repression and violence at the meso- and micro-levels, including court trials and legislation, public discourses pertaining to identity questions, and transitional justice mechanisms.

Narratives of violence and repression (II): Violent experiences and bottom-up politics

Panel conveners: Jannis Grimm, Maria Josua

Political violence has been a concomitant feature of social transformation processes in West Asia and North Africa. Albeit not an integral part of contentious politics, armed conflict and repression often emerged from initially peaceful collective action. Accounts of the 2011 revolutions and more recent uprisings in the region echo conflict scholars who have highlighted the link between repression and oppositional violence and their relation to affective interactions on the micro-level. At the same time, both during and after the Arab uprisings, violent experiences from physical abuses at the hands of police forces to the suffering from structural violence and state neglect functioned as drivers of resistance themselves. Violence and repression have thus assumed a double role as both causes and consequences of contentious dynamics. Equally ambiguous is their socio-political and cultural impact. Embedded into resonant stories that traveled across borders and social strata, violent experiences have varyingly informed or constrained new contestation processes. Up to date, narratives about violence and repression continue to shape the conditions of possibility for mobilization processes and political demands across the region. This panel interrogates these different roles and functions of violence narratives for bottom-up politics in the WANA region today. By adopting a fine-grained perspective on violence and repression as multidimensional and culturally mediated phenomena, the panel transcends the binary view of violence as either a driver or an outcome and supports an orientation towards the narratives by which civic actors make sense of violent experiences – as motives for mobilization, markers of identity, or sources of civic empowerment.

Affective Authoritarianism, Resistance and Media in Egypt and Turkey

Panel convener: Cilja Harders

The mass protests of 2011 in Egypt and of 2013 in Turkey represented a major challenge to the ruling elites and the authoritarian (Egypt) and illiberal (Turkey) systems of governance which were in place at that time. The multidimensional processes of authoritarian restructuring which unfolded since the protests attracted a lot of valuable scholarship both in political science and media studies. Still, the affective dimensions of authoritarian rule as they play out in authoritarian repression and in discourses of regime media so far have not been discussed in detail. This panel addresses this lacuna and critically re-examines how affect and emotions are used in order to feed into strong feelings of despair and defeat (Matthies-Boone) and into “othering” of protestors and the affective (re)construction of a lovable nation. Nadia Leihs’ paper looks into the institutionalized barriers to critical change in Egypt’s media system and thus elucidates the structural conditions of the production of media frames. Ricarda Ameling compares the media discourses of the 2011 uprisings with the framings of the summer of 2013. It is followed by bahar firats analysis of Turkish media discourse in 2013. Both papers discuss how affect and emotion work in the framing of the inimical “other”. Vivienne Matthies-Boone analyses the establishment of a political order in Egypt which inflicts “multileveled traumatic status subordination”.

Identities and Beliefs in the Maghreb I: Muslim Identities and the Politics of Solidarity

Panel convener: Alyssa Miller

The nations of the Maghreb stand at a crossroads of civilizations. Situated between two major systems of transregional connection—the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara Desert—the Maghreb has long played host to diverse identities and beliefs. In a contemporary moment marked by persistent inequalities and rapid political and socio-cultural change, this double-panel examines how identities and beliefs have shaped life-worlds in the Maghreb, past and present. We ask: which identities and beliefs are available and dominant in specific national and transregional contexts? How have disparities around identities and beliefs evolved in the Maghreb's recent history and up until the present, and which visions for the future emanate from them?

Panel I examines how Muslim identity intersects with solidarity politics at a variety of scales. Islam forms a part of hegemonic national identity across the Maghreb, enshrined in national constitutions and founding documents of state. Yet, despite its universal message, Islam cannot be reduced to a singular identity or belief system. The capacity of Muslim networks to connect across borders and transcend socio-cultural difference has often put them at odds with national and imperial governments. We ask what forms of solidarity politics are fostered under the rubric of Islam at local, national, and transnational scales. How do the claims of Muslim identity in the Maghreb engender relational bonds of friendship, kinship, or anti-colonial solidarity? How, on the other hand, has Muslim identity been invoked to diminish movements for gender equality and other liberatory claims?

Identities and Beliefs in the Maghreb II: Imaginaries of the Other

Panel convener: Hakki Taş

The nations of the Maghreb stand at a crossroads of civilizations. Situated between two major systems of transregional connection—the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara Desert—the Maghreb has long played host to diverse identities and beliefs. In a contemporary moment marked by persistent inequalities and rapid political and socio-cultural change, this double-panel examines how identities and beliefs have shaped life-worlds in the Maghreb, past and present. We ask: which identities and beliefs are available and dominant in specific national and transregional contexts? How have disparities around identities and beliefs evolved in the Maghreb’s recent history and up until the present, and which visions for the future emanate from them?

Panel II considers how political, social, and cultural imaginaries mediate the encounter between self and other. Understandings of identity are never formed in a vacuum; they emerge from relational processes of comparison with others. Postcolonial scholarship teaches that epistemology is inseparable from power, which dictates who has the authority to “know” the other and speak on their behalf. While the experience of colonization has had a formative impact on North African identities, emergent relationships among political elites, as well as newer south-south migratory trajectories, have significantly reconfigured these understandings today. We ask: How does the legacy of colonization affect the perception of racialized difference, and how do vernacular race categories shift to accommodate newcomers? How are perceptions of self and other confirmed, stabilized, doubted or abandoned when confronted by the implicit or explicit expectations of third parties?

Policies for the Margins? The Everyday Politics of MENA Peripheries

Roy Karadag

The unequal spatial distribution of life chances, political power and social infrastructures has been a powerful reality in modern Arab politics. Despite many pushes toward improving rural development, toward representing peasant interests and fighting rural poverty and exclusion, this reality has rarely been effectively addressed. In recent years, debates on the socio-political origins of the Arab uprisings of 2010/11 have put the role of everyday rural politics, of agricultural transformations and the dynamics of the rural vulnerabilities into the center of contemporary Arab and MENA politics. Doing that, scholars reinvigorate the explanatory power of older and formerly established paradigms of rural change, peasant politics, center-periphery relations and urban-rural divides in the Middle East and North Africa.

This panel aims to investigate contemporary aspirations to address these spatial inequalities. It covers both national and international reform ideas and highlights the predominant narratives and understandings of root causes and challenges which are usually represented in those ideas. Furthermore, it aims toward better understanding of the manifold political logics of such problem-solving attempts. How international organizations, transnational epistemic communities and national elites in MENA capitals articulate their commitment to improve rural life chances and how they interact with local and marginalized actors and communities will be the main themes of this panel's contributions. Given the broad range of such reform and improvement ideas, it will cover decentralization policies, the relationship between water governance and socio-political stability as well as contemporary rural development ideas and how they play out in the MENA region.

Building Synergies: The Future of Middle Eastern Regional Research Centers (Round Table)

Panel convener: Peter Wien

On the occasion of the opening of its research facilities in Baghdad, TARI (The Academic Research Institute in Iraq) proposes a panel to bring together a group of scholars and leading administrators affiliated with European research centers located in the Middle East or with deep networking ties to researchers in the region. We will discuss the role of overseas research centers in promoting the Humanities and Social Sciences in the past, present and future. The panelists will present their respective institutions' histories and present activities with an outlook to the future of their leadership structures, funding, and training and promotion of next-generation researchers. A particular emphasis will be on local and regional networking, national orientation versus international diversity, and benefit for the host countries. The goal of this panel is to consider the persistence of national research structures and whether they continue to make sense in times of budget reductions and growing demands for international collaboration, and to weigh the resulting questions in the light of a commitment that Western sponsored research should benefit local communities and empower them with regard to diversity and the promotion of justice and democracy in the public sphere. In this, debates are particularly relevant that concern difficult historical memories and the challenges that today's societies are facing. Potential participants who have shown interest in taking part in the panel next to TARI represent German, French, Dutch, Belgian, and Danish research institutes.

Branding Products, Persons and Places in, from and through the Middle East and North Africa

Panel convener: Steffen Wippel

The panel investigates branding in the Middle East and North Africa, including the wider Islamicate world. While branding in the Western world and many emerging economies has been meticulously analysed, comprehensive investigations are still missing for the MENA countries (except for some Gulf countries). The panel goes beyond simply presenting logos and slogans, instead critically analysing processes of strategic communication and image building under general conditions of globalisation, neoliberalism and postmodernity and, in a regional perspective, of increased endeavours for “worlding” and widespread authoritarian rule. In particular, it looks at actors involved in branding activities and their motives and strategies, and investigates tools and forms of branding, including the messages conveyed to the addressees. Historical case studies will supplement the focus on contemporary branding efforts.

The panel covers three major objects of branding – consumer brands, place brands and personal brands. The main focus is on place branding. Often following the example of Dubai, project sites, cities and nations are also trying to enhance their public reputation by means ranging from creating novel architecture and organising attention-drawing cultural and sport events to announcing strategic urban and national visions. “Green” and “sustainable” branding have been added to this in recent years. Ruptures and reconfigurations that repeatedly happened on the local, regional and global levels shook up established images of persons and places, but also allowed to reposition existing and to establish new brands. The papers for the panel are based on contributions to an edited volume currently in progress.

Oman: Soziale Dynamiken und gebaute Umwelt – Praktiken und Materialität seit 1970

Panel convenor: Johann Büssow

Nach tiefgreifenden Entwicklungs- und Modernisierungsprozessen während der sogenannten Nahda („Renaissance“)-Ära unter der Herrschaft von Sultan Qaboos (1970-2020) steht das Sultanat Oman in der dritten Dekade des 21. Jahrhunderts, nach dem Amtsantritt von Sultan Haitham bin Tarik – wie zu Beginn der Regierungszeit von Sultan Qaboos – erneut vor komplexen wirtschaftlichen, sozialen und demographischen Herausforderungen. Dazu gehören insbesondere niedrige Ölpreise, und mangelnde Diversifizierung der Wirtschaft, Jugendarbeitslosigkeit, hohe Staatsausgaben aufgrund aufgeblähter Administration, sowie die unkoordinierte Zersiedlung, unter anderem durch das gesetzlich verankerte Recht eines jeden omanischen Bürgers auf Zuteilung eines Baugrundstücks. Zur Bewältigung dieser und weiterer Herausforderungen wurde jüngst die Vision 2040 und die Oman National Spatial Strategy (ONSS) mit entsprechenden Szenarien und Lösungsstrategien erarbeitet, bei denen nicht nur Siedlungsstrukturen und Raumplanung, sondern auch Fragen nach Staatsbürgerschaft, Identität und nationalem Kulturerbe von hervorragender Bedeutung sind.

Vor dem Hintergrund dieser Transformationsprozesse und Gestaltungsvisionen fragt das von uns vorgeschlagene multidisziplinäre Panel nach sich wandelnden sozialen Strukturen und Praktiken im Hinblick auf die gebaute Umwelt – von den im Verlauf der Nahda allmählich aufgegebenen Siedlungsquartieren in Lehmziegelbauweise, den wehrhaften, tribal geprägten und dicht bebauten harat, hin zur modernen Bebauung außerhalb der alten Stadtkerne. Das Panel vereint Perspektiven u.a. aus Archäologie, Bauforschung, Ethnologie und Geschichtswissenschaft, um ein möglichst vielseitiges und historisch tiefenscharfes Bild des Wandels der alten Siedlungszentren des Sultanats zu zeichnen. Die übergreifende Fragestellung aller Beiträge gilt der methodischen Frage, inwieweit Daten zu sozialen Dynamiken und zur gebauten Umwelt wechselseitig zum Verständnis der Transformationsprozesse beitragen können.

Against the Walls – Virtual and Physical Borders for Palestinian Culture

Panel convener: Detlev Quintern

Walls, high-tech fences, check-points, zones: everyday life in occupied Palestine experiences permanent segregation, separation, restriction and oppression. Not only do social relations suffer, but medical and health care are restricted, hindered and often made impossible. In addition to the physical borders, there are virtual and invisible walls that besiege Palestinian art, literature, film, and the material and immaterial cultural heritage of Palestine. The open panel welcomes contributions that address the heritage and creativity of Palestinian culture in history, in the here and now, and in future horizons. Panel languages are primarily English and German.

Doing Research in Times of Crisis: Displaced Scholars, Dangerous Fieldwork, and the Role of the University. A View from Berlin

Panel convener: Sarah Wessel

Discussant: Ertug Tombus

The increase of violent conflicts, persisting authoritarianism and the rise of populist governments and movements, as well as encroachments on academic freedom constitute major challenges for academic inquiry, especially for area specialists. While the Middle East and North Africa is not the only region affected by these phenomena, the past decade has moved the region again into the center of attention. On the one hand it has become increasingly difficult to conduct fieldwork in the region. On the other hand, many scholars from the region had to leave their home universities and look for shelter in European and especially German universities as refugee or at-risk researchers. Both developments harm research on, from and with the region, especially in the humanities and social sciences, and may widen the existing gap in knowledge production. How do universities react to these developments? How can they support scholars at risk? How can they protect their students and faculty members? And what are the effects in university partnerships, joint research projects and faculty mobility? The panel discusses different Berlin-based university strategies that have been established in response to the above-mentioned phenomena. It highlights the politics of hosting at-risk researchers by taking Academics in Solidarity, a transnational peer-to-peer mentoring project, as an example. It presents Freie Universität's Strategy on Internationalization and Academic Freedom as a tool to renegotiate partnership relations in time of crisis, and it presents the Berlin Center for Global Engagement and its strategy to strengthen research collaboration with the Global South.

Making Sense of Climate Change – Models, Cosmologies and Practices from North Africa and the Middle East

Panel conveners: Katharina Lange, Juliane Schumacher

The Middle East and North Africa are, according to recent predictions, one of the regions most affected by global warming (IPCC 2014). Nonetheless, although some social scientists focusing on the MENA have addressed the issue, climate change is still widely absent in Middle Eastern studies and other disciplines relating to the region. The issue has so far been researched and assessed mainly by international organizations like the World Bank, development organizations or policy-oriented think-tanks, often linked to development projects and/or schemes of financialization. On the other hand, scholars have warned against adopting such a “security-focused scholarship” and urged to take into account the complex and multi-dimensional nature of the subject.

This panel aims at a critical reflection on the knowledge produced on these issues while neither neglecting the importance of the impacts of global warming nor uncritically adopting catastrophic scenarios or calls for technological solutions and increased control. How is the issue discussed in the region at different scales such as academic research, policy-making or on an everyday basis, and how do different social actors relate to climate change discourses? Which impact do scenarios and predictions of global warming have on their lives and future-making practices? Taking up recent calls to decolonize climate knowledge, we will also reflect on and think beyond ‘western’ expert knowledge of climate science: How are we ourselves dealing with the complexity and abstractness of computer-based models predicting and ‘fixing’ the future? What could other approaches to ‘climate science’ look like?

The Islamic Republic of Iran at 43: Authoritarianism and Foreign Policy

Panel convener: Ali Fathollah-Nejad

This panel looks at important developments within and surrounding the Islamic Republic of Iran by examining trends that are consequential for the country's internal as well as external developments. First, it will examine the Islamic Republic's nationalistic discursive as a kind of authoritarian upgrading. Second, it will critically examine the widely accepted binary of moderates versus hardliners in Iranian foreign policy and its dealings with the West. Third, it will analyze the nature of Iran's regional trade, which is considered to be an increasingly important dimension for a country under sanctions. And fourth, it will offer a realistic assessment of the nature of Iran's much-debated relations with China and their impact upon Tehran's regional policies.

Din – Dunya – Akhira: Muslim Life Concepts from a Transregional Perspective

Panel convener: Abdoulaye Sounaye

Muslims in various contexts resort to and produce conceptualizations of life that center on their being in and part of the world, subject to its laws and conditions. *Din*, *duniya* and *akhira* are three concepts that have become central to many Muslims as they shape their ideas of self, belonging, life styles, and interactions with others. Orientation within the lifeworld itself, one may say, depends on these concepts whose dialectical relationship introduces us to metaphysical claims and principles intended to guide everyday life. Both Muslim self-making (cultivation of knowledge, moral citizenship, socialization, etc.) and commerce (trade, politics, interactions, social engineering, etc.) are shaped by this dialectical relationship that brings to the fore concerns about here and now, the *quotidian* and the temporal, but also the *tomorrow* and afterlife, i.e. the eschatological. How are these concepts used across Muslim communities to inform, guide and legitimize particular attitudes, relationships, orders and perspectives on life, both at the individual and collective levels? What are the moral regimes that emerge out of these concerns? How does the examination of these concepts help us understand not only how people coproduce their contexts, relate to their lifeworlds, but also experience humanness? How do *din*, *duniya* and *akheera* pave the way for political and moral orders, produce social institutions and set life in motion? In other words, how are they mobilized and invested in ideas, values and practices that shape existence ?

This transregional panel welcomes analysis of texts, songs, poems, novels, ethnography-based discussion of personal narratives and life trajectories. Since making sense goes beyond simply explaining and historicizing, the panel encourages contributors to pay a particular attention to the ways in which perspectives on *din*, *duniya* and *akheera* add to attempts (religious or not) at *speaking of* and *having a take* on life and the world?

Quo Vadis, Geschlechtergerechtigkeit im Islam? Neue Herausforderungen für maskulinistische Deutungen in Theorie und Praxis

Panel convener: Doris Decker

Das Feld der Orientalistik und der orientalistischen Diskurse zeigt sich nach einer anfänglichen eurozentrischen und anglozentrischen Ausrichtung heute diverser denn je: Es kommen viele Gesprächspartner*innen aus verschiedenen Kontexten mit unterschiedlichen Blickwinkeln und Ansichten zusammen, von denen einige - auch in identifizierender Weise - ihr Augenmerk auf den Islamischen Feminismus legen und sich in diesem Zusammenhang kritisch mit Orientalismus, Traditionalismus und anderen Denkrichtungen auseinandersetzen. Im Panel werden von der Gegenwart ausgehend Einblicke in den Stand der Diskurse über Geschlechtergerechtigkeit im Islam aus verschiedenen Perspektiven gegeben und mögliche zukünftige Ausrichtungen diskutiert. Der besondere Fokus liegt dabei auf maskulinistischen Deutungen von Geschlechterverhältnissen im Islam im Kontext Gerechtigkeit. Die die Beiträge verbindende und grundlegende Fragestellung ist, wie es seit dem 20. Jh. um Geschlechtergerechtigkeit im Islam steht und wo sie aktuell hinsteuert. Darüber hinaus wird erörtert, wo sich anhand einer Auseinandersetzung mit maskulinistischen Deutungen neue Forschungsfelder eröffnen und der Fokus der Geschlechterforschung im Kontext Islam selbst zukünftig liegen könnte oder auch sollte. In den Beiträgen werden Theorie und Praxis, die Welt der Ideen und die Realitäten ihrer Anwendung sowie verschiedene Orte, an denen solche Diskurse produziert werden, aufgegriffen und dargelegt.

Reflexions on the Historicity of Democracy in the Arab and Muslim Worlds

Panel convener: Nora Lafi

This panel intends to present some of the results of the international research programme HISDEMAB (funded by the Leibniz-Association), dedicated to the question of the historicity of democracy in the Arab and Muslim Worlds. The aim is to offer a historical analysis of democracy, considering both the complexity of local societies and the early ambiguities of their relationship with Europe. Reflections on this question have often been the object of culturalist reifications. The aim here is to explore this crucial issue starting with an examination of political forms that were inherent to societies of the region and that belonged to the dimensions of debate, deliberation, vote, representation, and negotiation. This posture accepts to examine the hypothesis that democracy had its own roots in the region, that it was not only imported from the “West” and that the impact with European forms of democracy was more complex than often thought. This might help understand both failures and possibilities under a different light. The intent is also to discuss the interaction of these early forms with various forms of modernity, including late-ottoman, colonial and national, in challenging, through a use of the notion of historicity, the multiple layers of euro-centred, colonial and post-colonial interpretations that have accumulated since the 19th century and to propose a critical examination of this heritage and its historical evolution between the accommodation of translocally circulating forms, the negation of local forms, the dilution of local governance schemes and the ambiguous resurgence of old forms in new political contexts.

Coexistence, Confrontation and Cooperation: Local and Trans-local Dynamics in the Syrian Conflict

Panel conveners: Muriel Asseburg, André Bank

Since the Russian direct military intervention in the Syrian (civil) war in 2015 and the Russian-initiated Astana Process, a fragile calm has been established in the country through a series of local ceasefires and so-called reconciliation arrangements. At the same time, a complex set-up of zones of influence of external forces and territorial control has emerged in Syria. In the center and south of the country, the Government of Syria, Russia, Iran, the Lebanese Hizballah and other (Syrian and foreign) pro-regime and/or pro-Iran militias wield influence; northwest Syria is under the control of the Salafi National Salvation Government linked to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, while in several enclaves in the north Turkish forces and their Syrian allies (the so-called Syrian National Army) hold sway; in the northeast, the Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria has been established with US support. In each of these areas, a variety of models of control and local governance have come into being. Yet, beyond the de facto partition of the country, local actors have not only had adversarial and coercive but also cooperative relationships across front lines and areas of control.

The contributions to this panel focus on trans-local, trans-regional and trans-national interlinkages between actors in territories under different control as well as within them. In particular, the contributions center on the interplay of military, governance, socio-economic and "identity" dynamics between local actors.

Knowledge Production in and from the Middle East: Contesting Authoritarianism

Panel convener: Dina El-Sharnouby

Panel chair: Erol Saglam

The revolutionary uprisings in the Middle East since 2010 have effectively toppled dictators in Tunisia (2011), Egypt (2011) and Sudan (2019). Although the counter-revolution has mostly repressed the uprisings, resistance to authoritarianism, capitalism, and neoliberalism is still unfolding in the region and beyond. The uprisings resulted in new forms of mobilization, resistance, and knowledge production necessitating to re-think, -evaluate, and analyze the Middle East in new ways. Going against notions of authoritarian durability and resilience, this panel will highlight, on the one hand, renewed political struggle in the region, particularly in Palestine and Egypt, while simultaneously assessing current forms of resistance to authoritarianism, corruption, and sociopolitical dysfunction in Turkey and Lebanon. Authors in this panel will present the results of their research of The International Research Group on Authoritarianism and Counter-Strategies (IRGAC) which is an initiative of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung.

The After-Life of War

Panel convener: Marika Sosnowski

Panel chair: Bente Scheller

Conventionally, the end of large-scale armed violence has legally and politically denoted the end of war. However, recent scholarship on the complex and contested nature of war-to-peace transitions has shown that regardless of levels of violence, pre-war and wartime dynamics continue to manifest in the aftermath of armed conflict. This panel looks at these contested dynamics from three angles: citizenship rights, transitional justice and questions of legality and belonging. All three presentations show that the after-life of war is neither simple nor straight-forward and that many of the drivers of conflict live on, not as ghosts but as concrete manifestations of dispossession and disenfranchisement.

Negotiating Future/s in the MENA Region and Beyond

Panel convener: Tim Epkenhans

The research on future/s in the Middle East and especially Muslim societies has not been explored in its multiple facets and can be considered as a lacuna in the academic discussion. However, we consider the discussion of future/s in the MENA Region as a fruitful instrument for scrutinizing historical and contemporary individual or societal self-positioning in a relational context, for instance to analyze the trajectories of political systems, identity politics or concepts of anticipated (religious) normativity. Therefore, the panel “Negotiating Future/s in the MENA Region and Beyond” will discuss this key concept of modernity – the future – and how it is negotiated both in historical and contemporary perspectives. The pluralization of future allows us to explore the multiple imaginations, practices and discourses with regards to the anticipation of future societal, economic and political challenges, the development and the inherent power relations within the societies of the Middle East as well as on a global scale.

Modern Iraqi History Reconsidered

Panel convener: Achim Rohde

20 years after the US invasion and the fall of the Ba'thist regime, this panel examines ruptures and continuities in recent Iraqi history as well as in academic knowledge production on Iraq. It takes stock of developments in the country after 2003: what is different today as compared to earlier periods since the inception of the Iraqi nation state, what long running historical trends remained the same? At the same time, scholarship on Iraq has evolved greatly over the last two decades due to the increasing accessibility of the country and its connection to the world as well as due to the emergence of formerly inaccessible sources. New approaches to long running research themes and a new generation of scholars have broadened the field of research on Iraq. The panel therefore also examines trends in recent scholarship on Iraq and perspectives for future research concerning economic, social, cultural and political questions.

Drivers of Change in Social Contracts

Panel convener: Markus Loewe

For many years, most countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) had relatively stable social contracts: In addition to *protection* (security against internal and external), governments delivered *provision* (socio-economic benefits) rather than political *participation* in exchange for citizens' recognition of government legitimacy. After the 1980s, the social contracts started to change – first slowly, later more rapidly, especially after the uprisings in 2009-2011. Political *participation* increased in hardly any of the MENA countries (exceptions being Tunisia and Sudan) while many governments reduced on the delivery of provision (especially Egypt) or even protection (Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya). And only some of them reverted this trend partially. We invite papers investigating the causes of these changes: What has driven changes in social contracts in the MENA and beyond in the past? Which factors might bring about change in the future? Foreign powers, changes in the economic or environmental framework conditions, changes in the awareness of citizens, changes in the composition of societies or elites, power struggle in the political elite or changes in other countries? Answers on these questions may also help to understand how external actors can change social contracts intentionally for the better or worse of citizens in MENA countries.

Authoritarian Power: Energy Systems & Scales of Authoritarianism in the MENA Region

Panel convener: Natalie Koch

“Authoritarian power” typically refers to a political relationship, defined by univocality and subordination of difference to a central authority or vision. Alongside the standard political significance, this panel explores another meaning of power: energy systems themselves. Uniting the two meanings, we investigate how authoritarianism cuts across space, time, and scale in the energy landscapes of the MENA region. Much of the recent academic scholarship and media accounts of “post-oil” energy transitions has celebrated the democratic potential of renewable energy systems, especially in the Euromerican West. But just like those liberal democratic contexts, many countries of the Middle East and Northern Africa have touted top-down, mega-projects as the best “solution” to quickly reimagine their energy systems – and meanwhile entrench authoritarian relationships at diverse scales and social sectors. Accordingly, this panel rejects the fallacies of energy determinism that inflect much of the literature on the energy-politics nexus to instead investigate the multiplicity of authoritarian practices that are taking shape in the MENA region, as its power grids and power economies are increasingly reconfigured in light of the world’s shifting climate geopolitics. Including case studies from many different scales, regions, places, and time periods, the panel unites scholars working on energy systems and authoritarianism to showcase how studying the MENA region’s energy landscape can open up new perspectives on *authoritarian power* that move beyond the “territorial trap” of statist thinking about authoritarianism.

The Gulf Monarchies in a Post-Pandemic Era: Old Rules, New Game?

Panel conveners: Thomas Demmelhuber, Julia Gurol, Tobias Zumbrägel

Discussant: Hürcan Aslı Aksoy

The regional organization of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) that includes Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman constitutes a dominant regional arena in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Particularly, the political transformation of the Arab Uprisings accelerated a development of major geopolitical shifts and have been described as a “Gulf moment” (Abdulla 2012; Gaub 2015). The decline of other traditional Arab powerhouses such as Iraq, Egypt or Syria due to internal turmoil, paved the way for the Gulf Arab states as a new ‘gravity centre of power’ (Beck 2015; Saouli 2020). Thus, the Gulf Arab monarchies have come to represent one of the most significant players on a regional but also on a global level. Their sensitive geostrategic location between Europe, Asia and Africa, their abundance of resources, involvement in the global political economy and proactive foreign policies are key elements in this power game of influence. Since several years, however, the Gulf Arab monarchies experience changing dynamics on various fronts: This includes declining oil prices, a looming climate collapse, reconfigurations in leaderships, growing social contestation and socioeconomic pressure as well as shifting geopolitical conditions. It all reshapes deeply entrenched traditional patterns of regime resilience such as a rentier-based economy, “monarchical inviolability” or reliance on US patronage. The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a booster and has further exacerbated the tense situation. In light of this multi-dimensional crisis the panel takes a deeper look on the repercussions of an external shock such as the COVID-19 pandemic towards intra- and extra-regional dynamics within the GCC monarchies. Building on a multi-layered assessment of the GCC’s recent policy behavior, it seeks to better understand the kaleidoscopic nature of regionalism since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

How Not To Do Harm: Reflections on Ethics and Methods in Shii Studies (Round table)

Panel conveners: Fouad Gehad Marei, Minoo Mirshahvalad

Discussants: Karen Ruffle, Alison Scott-Baumann

In this two-part roundtable, we examine some of the ethical and methodological issues pertaining to the scholarly study of Shiism and arising from the intellectual trajectories of Shii Studies as a specialized subfield. The roundtable brings together a group of early-career, more established, and senior scholars with an interest in the study of Shii Islam, Shii political groups and piety movements, Shii religious scholarship and scholarly networks, armed resistance groups, and Shiism in the diaspora. We present insights based on our experiences as scholars and academicians working in, on, and from diverse sociopolitical and geographical contexts, including Germany, Iraq, Iran, Italy, Lebanon, Syria, and the United Kingdom. While we focus on ethics and methods in Shii Studies, we draw on and engage with questions relevant to other disciplinary fields, including Islamic Studies, Middle Eastern and Area Studies, sociology, anthropology, history, and political science.

We organize our interventions around a set of guiding questions categorized in four themes:

Part I – Shii Studies

1. Why Shii Studies? What motivates the separation of Islamic and Shii Studies and the emergence of the specialization field of Shii Studies? What are the methodological and intellectual gains and challenges that result from the specialized study of Shiism? And, in what ways can processes of sectarianization and the specialization of Shii Studies impact one another, and to what effect?
2. Shii Studies and the scrutinizing gaze: How can scholars navigate the politicization and securitization of Islamic and Shii studies in Western and Middle Eastern scholarly circles? How can scholars circumvent social stigmas and the political and legal designations of Shii religious groups, congregations and movements as, for example, 'terrorist', 'extremist', 'homophobic', 'anti-Semitic'? What challenges do these designations pose for researchers and research subjects? And, (how) should scholars of Shiism engage with governmental and nongovernmental policy research?

Part II – Ethics and methods

3. Ethics and methods in social and ethnographic research: How can scholars of Shii Studies conduct *longue durée* ethnographic research methodically? And, how should they account for it? Should they disclose their identities/intentions as researchers and seek permissions when researching congregations to which they 'belong' or which they also frequent for non-research (social, devotional, personal) purposes?
4. Ethics and methods in digital research: How can researchers ensure methodological rigor while also accounting for contextual nuances when conducting online, digital and distance ethnographic research? And, how can they distinguish between open-source and public material when conducting digital and social media research?

The roundtable discussion will be moderated by Prof. Alison Scott-Baumann, Professor of Society and Belief at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Scott-Baumann has received grants from Leverhulme, ERSC and AHRC to pursue her world-class research on Islam and Islamic studies in British higher education and the role of universities in the democratic state. Her work has addressed the impact of the U.K. Government's counter-terror strategy, PREVENT, on Islamic Studies, representations of Islam on campus, and the role

of freedom of expression and higher education in Britain. She has been consulted by the U.K. government and has co-authored the Siddiqui Report (2007) and the Review of Imam Training reports in 2008-2010.

Background:

An interest in the specialized study of Shiism gained momentum in the 1980s following the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 and the emergence of Shii Islamist movements with a strong presence in the Middle East and activist agendas spanning the globe. This interest motivated academicians, foreign policy researchers and practitioners, and security study specialists, eventually giving rise to an interdisciplinary subfield now commonly referred to as Shii Studies. This nascent field gained new relevance in the twenty-first century as Shii Muslims became increasingly visible among Middle Eastern diasporas in Europe, North America and Australia. This corresponded to mass migrations and forced displacements resulting from violent conflict and economic inopportunities in countries of the Middle East with significant Shii populations since the 1980s as well as sectarianized violence targeting Shiis regionwide since the 2000s. Scholars and policy researchers have often (over) emphasized Shii Islamists' enmity to Israel and opposition to U.S.-led global politics of hegemony as part of a political worldview that has been interwoven in activist interpretations of Shii hagiography, eschatology and ritual cultures since the mid-twentieth century. Moreover, as Shii Muslims born in the global North 'come of age' and diasporic Shiis embark on organizing the affairs of their communities and congregations independently of the more established, Sunni-dominated diasporic Muslim organizations, Shiis have found themselves subjected to the scrutinizing gaze of academic researchers and policy analysts as well as the disenfranchising policing practices of state and society in the global North.

Elusive Peace. Current Israeli-Palestinian Dynamics and Trends

Panel conveners: Muriel Asseburg, Peter Lintl

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been downgraded on the list of priorities of international and regional actors. Some Arab countries have started to normalize their relations with Israel even though the conditions formulated in the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative have not been met. Peace seems to be ever more elusive: The Israeli government of change that replaced a series of Netanyahu-led governments (2009-2021) has adopted an approach aimed at improving living conditions in the Palestinian territories through limited measures of cooperation. At the same time, it has accelerated settlement construction and increased its facto control in the occupied territories. The Palestinian leadership has remained divided ever since 2007, giving birth to separate areas of governance in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and competing approaches to cooperation with and resistance to the occupation authorities. The Palestinian Authority (PA) has lost legitimacy and governed in an ever more authoritarian fashion. The two leaderships have been either unwilling or unable to engage in peace talks. The PA has increasingly pursued alternatives to negotiations. At the same time, Israel has advanced de facto annexation, making a two state settlement or any negotiated solution ever more unlikely.

This panel investigates current dynamics and discourses within Israel and Palestine as well as their implications for peace making, conflict transformation and Palestinian state-building and governance.

New Perspectives on Nasserism

Panel convener: Simon Conrad

Following the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, ‘Nasserism’ re-emerged both as a contested period and a concept in Egyptian public memory: while for some, the figure of Nasser embodies achievements in the realm of social policy and national liberation, others see in his rule modern Egypt’s descent into authoritarianism. Against this backdrop, and despite reappraisals of the period in the scholarly literature (Yunis, Kandil, Gordon)—most pertinently a shift towards cultural history that relies mostly on published material (Shechter, Abaza, Bier, Watenpaugh)—historians of Nasserism have more often than not focused on questions that relate to the postcolonial state at home and abroad, not rarely in explicit contrast with periods preceding or following the rule of Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser. This focus has marginalised approaches to the period that seek to understand it on its own terms and explore not only ruptures, but also continuities.

This panel brings together scholars whose papers shed new light on Nasserism. Each panelist provides a new perspective: institutions; age and generation; and mysticism and political theology. Besides relating each perspective to understandings of Nasserism, an emphasis will be put on methodologies and sources that can contribute to a more multi-layered history of the period. Amongst other things, we ask: What can these perspectives tell us about Nasserism understood both as a historical period and a set of ideas and practices? How can they change our understanding of Nasserism in the context of 20th century Egyptian history? What can and cannot be understood as ‘Nasserist’ during and after the reign of Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser, and what sources can historians use to write the history of this period in light of the difficulty of accessing official state archives?

To answer these questions, each paper looks at Nasserism from a hitherto underexplored perspective. Paper 1 shows how government officials and intellectuals shaped discussions over ‘mysticism’ (*tasawwuf*) and revolutionary citizenship in the journal *al-Islam wa-l-tasawwuf* (1958-1961). Paper 2 examines generational conflict within the Cairo middle classes, between the descendants of the 1930s-1940s’ *effendiyya* and the emerging intermediate strata of the 1952 “new society” (*al-mujtama‘ al-jadid*). Paper 3 shows how *al-Ahram* became a platform for public opinion making in the 1950s and 1960s by promoting Muhammad Hassanein Heikal’s “easy” journalistic accounts at the expense of “rigorous” academic research.

Refugees, Labour and Self-Reliance Strategies in the Middle East – Continuities and Change

Panel convener: Katharina Lenner

Protracted Syrian displacement to Syria's neighbouring states, and other states in the MENA region, since the beginning of the Syrian conflict has led to large-scale rethinking of strategies of governing refugees in the region. Recent years have witnessed major restructuring regarding types of assistance provided to refugees and host communities, as well as an increasing expectation for refugees to stop relying on recurrent assistance as soon as possible and become 'self-reliant'. These forms of resilience humanitarianism (Hilhorst 2018) have not only had profound effects on Syrians in other states in the region, but also on other refugees, labour migrants and host populations in hosting countries. Yet despite superficial government commitments to promoting refugee self-reliance, actual policy changes have often been limited or ambivalent, and refugee labour has continued to be precarious, albeit under different conditions. In other countries in the region, economic crisis, changes of government or other political events have been more consequential to (Syrian) refugees' changing status and livelihood strategies than interventions in the name of the humanitarian-development nexus. Presentations in this panel review changes and continuities in refugee governance as well as in lived experiences among particular groups of refugees, focusing on Syrian refugees and other populations they live and work with. It does so by focusing on specific sectors or programs, and by giving special consideration to gender and age, as well as the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keynote

Beyond Academia: Transnational Feminist and Queer Perspectives on the Middle East

Nadje Al-Ali (Brown University)

This talk will address and challenge binaries linked to academic and activist knowledge production in and about the Middle East and North Africa. Employing both a transnational feminist and queer lens, my aim is to illustrate not only the centrality of gender and sexuality in understanding power, violence and forms of resistance but also the potential to disrupt militarized normativities in every-day lives. Based on my own ethnographic research in Egypt, Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon and the Kurdish movement, as well as my involvement in feminist activism, I will highlight the entanglement of academic and activist trajectories and knowledge production. I will reflect on the question of positionality in shaping our epistempologies and methodologies and interrogate the complexities of political solidarity.

Presentations

Not so strong after all: regime incapacity of implementing a new labour law in Egypt post-2014

Nadine Hani Abdalla (The American University in Cairo (AUC), Egypt)

In Egypt, discussions surrounding a new labour law, which should replace the law 12/2003, started after the 2011 uprising and were taken up by the Sisi regime in 2014. Yet, this law still has not been promulgated until today. How can this delay be explained in a highly repressive autocratic regime, often seen as highly effective in implementing reforms? This article argues that the delay reflects the difficult position the Sisi regime found itself in and the difficult choices that it had to make. The political regime was torn between its unwillingness to fully repress the labour movement on the one hand and its incapacity to fully ally with the business representatives on the other. The regime, in the end, preferred to further delay the promulgation of the new law. Building on a systematic reading of Egyptian media from 2014 to 2020, the article reconstructs the discussions of different versions of the draft law and identifies the dilemmas the Sisi regime faced: it wanted to limit the arbitrary power of employers over workers that had led to wild-cat strikes under Mubarak. Furthermore, it faced pressure from multinational companies that threatened to withdraw from Egypt because of violations of international labour standards. It thus presented concessions to labour unions that were rejected by the employer representatives. This led to the postponing of the decision regarding the law – revealing that the Sisi regime was, in fact, different than the widespread image of an omnipotent leviathan in its political economy decisions.

The bidirectional relationship between refugee entrepreneurship and social contracts

Musallam Abedtalas (German Development Institute, Germany)

Entrepreneurship is determined by individual and institutional factors. Formal and informal institutions determine the rules of the economic game and act as facilitators or obstacles to entrepreneurship (Santamaria-Velasco et al., 2021). As social contracts constitute a large part of the institutions for a given society, it is not unreasonable to expect a kind of bidirectional relationship between social contracts and entrepreneurship (Loewe et al., 2021), for example through the 3Ps that might be obstacles or opportunities to be exploited or challenged. However, refugees entrepreneurs are subject to host states' and international institutions and have links with their country of origin (Betts et al., 2017). This means multilevel attachment; transitional, partial, or mixed (national and international); to social contracts, with its own kinds of 3Ps. This raises the overarching question of our research: What kind of obstacles and opportunities do social contracts bring along for refugee entrepreneurs and how do refugee entrepreneurs exploit and challenge them (as compared to local entrepreneurs)? To the best of our knowledge, this is a gap has not been dealt with till now. To answer the research question and explore which opportunities and challenges drive changes in social contracts, elementary qualitative data will be collected using semi-structured interviews with 20 entrepreneurs, both successful and failed, refugees and locals, who are doing (did) business in Domiz town's market and Domiz Syrian Refugee camp's market in Iraqi- Kurdistan region. The elementary data will be supplemented by secondary data from NGOs and government agencies.

Morocco and the climate: a two-speed environmental policy

Yousra Abourabi (International University of Rabat, Morocco)

Seeking to integrate itself into multilateral decision-making spheres and to assert itself as an emerging African power, including on environmental issues, Morocco has developed a climate diplomacy. This is based on the promotion of an ambitious energy transition policy since 2009. It commits to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 32% by 2030, by increasing the share of renewable energies in the energy mix to 52% by 2030, exceeding European objectives. The organisation of the Cop22 in Marrakech in 2016 was seized as an opportunity to inaugurate the largest solar power plant in the world and to launch pan-African climate initiatives, such as the African Action Summit. However, Morocco's environmental policy remains incomplete. Many polluting sectors are left out. This is illustrated by agricultural policy, which is based on strong industrialization while the organic farming sector is relegated to the status of a niche for exports to Europe. The Green Morocco Plan in particular, is part of a vision of "green" capitalism that is incoherent with Moroccan climate diplomacy.

Through the two examples of energy policy and agricultural policy, this presentation shows how Morocco's environmental policy has two speeds, and why. We will analyze the representations and interests of decision-makers in both sectors to understand their approaches. To understand how some public policies are more effective than others, we will consider them in the light the Moroccan monarchical system and conclude on the impact of low citizen participation in environmental debates and policies.

Egyptian Foreign Relations Under al-Sisi: External Alignments Since 2013

Christian AchRAINER (Independent, Germany)

Since the military coup in 2013, Egypt's foreign relations have changed substantially. This paper explains the emerging diversified alignment patterns in the period 2013-2017 by developing and applying a unique analytical approach. The model of 'two-staged alignment formation' assumes that regime interests and national interests are not always identical, and that any regime's prime interest is to secure its own survival.

In the first stage of the model, domestic threats to the Egyptian regime's survival (the Muslim Brotherhood, terrorism, a frustrated people, economic decline, military decline) determined specific needs the regime tried to meet by approaching external partners. Yet, the regime was, of course, not entirely free in making choices, but, in the second stage, characteristics of the global environment (globalization, neoliberalism, security threats, core-periphery relations, power shifts, power struggles, multipolarity) and of the regional environment (fragility, state weakening, security threats, economic crisis, transstate identities, power struggles, dividing lines, multipolarity) defined opportunities and constraints and therefore the regime's options and logical choices.

In sum, the study finds that the interplay between domestic threats to regime survival and the regional and global environments resulted in a diversification of Egypt's external alignments, with China and Russia joining the EU and the US as Egypt's main global alignment partners, and Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates emerging as the regime's prime regional partners.

Taxing the rich Real-estate taxation in Sisi's Egypt

Amr Ismail Adly (American University in Cairo, Egypt)

Why do authoritarian regimes target some social constituencies for direct taxation more successfully than others? This article addresses the recent surge in Egypt's real-estate tax revenues since 2014 that has almost exclusively fallen on the shoulders of rich property-owners in urban areas.

Counterintuitively, it proved easier to tax the property of the rich rather than that of the poor. I argue that rich property-holders in urban areas could be pressed for direct taxation because they lacked voice and exit options altogether, using Hirschman's paradigm. Whereas rich and poor property owners lacked the exit option given the immobile nature of taxed assets, the latter's voice was significantly louder than the former, risking large-scale economically-motivated protest. Conversely, the real-estate property of the rich was easier to target with significantly lower actual and potential resistance, also given the immovable nature of real-estate in contrast to assets of capital holders. This might indicate that authoritarian regimes like Sisi's can adopt progressive redistributive measures in some areas like property taxation despite the overwhelming regressive fiscal reforms that they adopted, as well as the limited ability to effectively collect direct taxes on capital holders, due to the heightened risks of exit.

Journalism and the University in Nasser's Egypt: The Case of Hassanein Heikal's al-Ahram

Hussam R. Ahmed (National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Ireland)

In 1954, Egyptian academics deemed inimical to Nasser's regime were fired. The Universities Supreme Council and the Ministry of Higher Education then firmly put the university under government control. In the early 1970s, Egypt's iconic academic-intellectual Taha Hussein lamented that the university had been turned into a secondary school. Decades later, Nasser's spokesperson Hassanein Heikal claimed that the purge was the Revolution's first real mistake.

Despite Heikal's remorse, this paper explores his role in promoting journalistic accounts at the expense of rigorous academic research. Through his intimate ties to Nasser and control of the daily al-Ahram (1957-1974), Heikal had unrivaled access to information and the institutional platform necessary to propagate the regime's views. By analyzing Heikal's editorial role in al-Ahram and his initiative to offer Egypt's most renowned intellectuals such as Tawfiq al-Hakim positions in his newspaper, this paper shows how Heikal turned al-Ahram into a mouthpiece for the regime claiming it was a space for critical thinking while engendering a journalistic school drawing on undisclosed sources and privileged connections with decision-makers.

While this paper does not oppose journalism to the university, it is informed by intellectual discussions probing into the consequences of easy journalism overshadowing serious academic research. By exploring institutional changes that contributed to transferring public opinion making from Taha Hussein (who refused an office in al-Ahram) to Hassanein Heikal, this paper explores the impact that shift has had over knowledge and cultural production in Egypt, traditionally seen as one of the prominent hubs of Arab culture.

Repealing Jordan's Penal Code Article 308

Ibtesam Al Atiyat (St. Olaf College, United States of America)

The controversy surrounding the repeal of law article 308 of Jordan's Penal Code, also known as marriage rape law, in 2017 invites a critical assessment of women's activism in the Kingdom. Women's activists, to whom the law was a violation of human rights and a reward to rapists instead of punishment, were opposed by critics who demanded the marriage provisions within the law be retained. Such provision resolved children's legitimacy problems, and above all reduced the threat of honor killings. Their objections humble the women's activists' claims to women's emancipation, by emphasizing their failure to consider that as a result of repeal rather than amendment, certain women, particularly the poorer, are worse off. This controversy renewed the enduring critique of class bias in the women's movement. Liberation projects inspired by middle class women's interest are distinct from and even opposed to those of working class women, leading this campaign to be yet another missed opportunity for women's liberation.

Politischer Wandel in der arabischen Welt zwischen Realität und Unumgänglichkeit

Emad Alali (Institut für Islamwissenschaft, Freie Universität Berlin)

Die Umbrüche des Arabischen Frühlings konnten mittlerweile keine politische Transformation in Richtung der Abschaffung des Autoritarismus und Etablierung eines neuen politischen Systems entfalten. Aber allein die Massenerhebungen haben deutlich angezeigt, dass die arabischen Regimes sich in einer Krise befinden. Selbst die politische Stabilität, die vorher stark aussah, erwies sich nun als leicht verwundbar. Da die arabischen Herrschaftseliten weder für die Einführung echter politischer Reformen bereit sind noch eine politische Transformation zulassen, bleiben ihre Länder innen- und sicherheitspolitischen Risiken ausgesetzt, denn sie sind aufgrund ihrer autokratischen Natur und Struktur nicht in der Lage, den Bedürfnissen ihrer Gesellschaften angemessen zu entsprechen. Dies verzeichnet ein politisches Dilemma, welches die gesamte Gesellschaftsordnung herausfordert. Vor diesem Hintergrund möchte ich in meinem Beitrag für die Annahme plädieren, dass die Umwälzungen in den letzten Jahren in der arabischen Welt eine Verschiebung in dem arabischen Politischen signalisierten, die die seit Jahrzehnten dominante Alleinherrschaft stark erschüttert und für zunehmende Integration der Öffentlichkeit in den politischen Bereich sorgt. Abgesehen von der Bewertung, ob der Arabische Frühling erfolgreich ist/war oder nicht, konnte er sowohl die politische Legitimität als auch die Steuerungsfähigkeit der arabischen Regimes in Frage stellen. So gesehen, möchte dieser Beitrag auf dieses angedeutete arabische Dilemma eingehen, es aus verschiedenen Blickwinkeln und in Anlehnung an einige theoriepolitische Ansätze beleuchten und schließlich Lösungsvorschläge hervorheben, mit denen eine neue zukunftsfähige und friedfertige politische Ordnung gebildet werden kann. Dabei wird ein besonderes Augenmerk auf relevante Argumente gegenwärtiger arabischer Denker zu diesem Sachverhalt gerichtet.

Marching for God and Fatherland: Contentious politics, urban violence und public space in British Mandate Jerusalem

Mara Albrecht (Universität Erfurt, Deutschland)

This paper takes a closer look at contentious politics and urban violence in Jerusalem during the early Mandate era. Tracing the routes and locations of political demonstrations, contentious religious processions and rituals as well as rioting during phases of communal violence, it reveals a shift of attention from the political to the religious sphere that took place during the 1920s. The new focus on the religious mainly centred on the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount area with the Western Wall and was promoted by both Muslim and Zionist leadership. Clubs and associations launched conflicts in the symbolic landscape of the city, e.g. by local and international newspaper campaigns, political speeches and demonstrations. While new secular holidays of emerging Zionist and Arab Palestinian nationalist calendars played a significant role in focussing these tensions, the politization of sacred space and religious festivals increasingly fostered conflicts and often initiated riots. Concentrating on how these conflicts were connected to sacred and mundane urban space (and time), I interpret the conflicts in Jerusalem in the 1920s as manifestations of rivalling claims of belonging and ownership. I argue that British imperial policies were a main reason for the politization of religion and the imbueement of sacred space with nationalist aspirations. British religious imaginations of Jerusalem and their colonial practices of rule emphasized religious identities, which allowed for the mobilization of masses during religious festivities, initiating a period of protests and riots in the 1920s, which ultimately led to the nationalist and anticolonial violence of the 1930s and 40s.

Consociationalism and Civil Resistance in Lebanon

Jinan Al-Habbal (London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE))

In October 2019, mass protests spontaneously erupted against the sectarian elite and political system in Lebanon. Hundreds of thousands of protestors from all walks of life demanded an end to rampant corruption and persistent clientelism that have exacerbated the economic struggles in the country. The protests gave hope to those seeking change as they transcended sectarian identities and socioeconomic statuses. A few months later, the protests decreased in size and frequency and eventually fizzled out, shattering the dreams of political change, especially after the government imposed the first COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020. Although new governments have been formed as a result of these protests, no reforms have been implemented. This paper examines the resilience of the Lebanese political system against the October 2019 protest movement and the regime's counter-revolutionary characteristics that impede prospects of political reform and change. It builds on the notions of constructive resistance – a form of prefigurative action that creates new societies while simultaneously resisting oppressive regimes and challenging structures of power and dominant discourses – and infrapolitics – the strategies of resistance that oppressed groups use without being detected by dominant groups – to inspect other means and strategies of civil resistance and everyday forms of dissent that activists and social movements utilize following the stagnation of the protests and their inability to be an effective method of activism.

The Politics of Continuity in Modern Iraqi Fiction

Hawraa H Al-Hassan (University of Cambridge, United Kingdom)

To speak of continuity in the context of Iraqi literary production is to perhaps imply thematic continuity, and more specifically to imply a body of writing that is constantly attempting to respond and process the dramatic political changes that have unfolded in the country under the rule of Saddam Hussein and the years that have followed his fall. This paper argues that 'continuity' forms part of a nationalist narrative which informs much of what has been written in Iraq post 2003. This includes emphasis on the circularity of history and the ongoing struggle against the many faces of oppression: from American imperialism, ISIS, to a sectarian political system. It also encompasses various dystopian discourses that feature the collapse of minority communities and the critique of a tenuous collective memory destined to repeat the mistakes of the past. In this sense, texts written after 2003 represent a rupture with previous politically engaged writing, be it propaganda, didactic nationalist or religious texts or oppositional literature preoccupied with documenting and bearing witness to the horrors of Saddam's regime. What ultimately characterizes newer texts, however, is not necessarily content, but form, genre ingenuity and hybridity. This paper will use the idea of continuity as a conceptual framework to highlight the innovative ways in which Iraqi writers revisited chapters from Ba'thist history and made sense of the political upheaval that ensued his fall.

Dīn and Dunya in Colonial Muslim South Asia – A Traditionalist Perspective

Sohaib Ali (Freie Universität Berlin Germany; Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient)

The curtailment of religious law's jurisdiction that began in Bengal in 1772 under the British East India Company, had gradually led to a crystallization of the category of personal law by the 1860s under British Crown rule. Pursuing territorial sovereignty through orchestration of jurisdictional monopoly, the British introduced a modern form of colonial governance and education based on newly-defined dichotomies such as: secular/religious, rational/irrational, state/community and market/family. Ashraf Ali Thanawi (1863-1943), the most prolific Islamic scholar of colonial India, had vociferously advanced the traditionalist case in an age of rapid modernization. Some of his seminal works served to mobilize the discursive tradition of spiritualist Sunni Islam around the key theological constructs of Dīn and Dunya. Through these interventions, Thanawi sought to rehabilitate traditionalist epistemology and modes of reasoning – foundational debates that had taken different trajectories in the thought of Muslim modernists. He argued for extending the jurisdiction and normativity of Dīn to all mundane human activities that constitute Dunya. For Thanawi, affairs of Dunya are to be subordinated to the aims of Dīn, and harmony is to be achieved between the two by restoring and foregrounding concerns of ākhira in worldly pursuits. Religious authority and leadership, both for individuals and institutions, are to be acquired by ensuring such harmony through a stringent scrutiny of intentions and due prioritization of aims.

Place Branding as a Political Act: Approaching Saudi's NEOM beyond its Shiny Façade

Hend Aly (UN Habitat, Egypt)

NEOM is a Saudi mega project. It expands over an area of 26,500 km²; by the Red Sea, adjacent to the Egyptian and the Jordanian border. NEOM is short for new future: neo is Latin for new and m is the first letter of mustaqbal, Arabic for future. The mega city was first announced in 2017 by the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS). My analysis shows that NEOM, as the brainchild of the Crown Prince, cannot be understood in isolation from his aspirations and argues that NEOM's place branding is utilised by MBS as a spatial realisation of self-branding and power reaffirmation. Hence, the chapter foregrounds place branding as a political act which is composed of processes, actors and narratives, and triggered by its creator's aspirations, local and international dynamics and implies political and socioeconomic consequences. Importantly, the chapter propagates the importance of broadly approaching place branding as a political act, through systematically applying this lens on branding NEOM.

The chapter is based on analysing NEOM's branding documents and platforms, including the launch event, official website neom.com, NEOM YouTube channel and statements by the involved actors. It first engages with academic debates on branding the city in a neoliberal context. It then explores NEOM's branding processes, involved actors and main branding narratives, as constituting pillars of the political act of place branding. The last section gives two solid examples of how NEOM's branding narratives reflect the Crown Prince's power aspiration and spatially realise his self-brand.

Framing Revolution(s): A comparative look at the emotional and affective dimension in Al Ahram's reporting during the '25 January Revolution' in 2011 and the Coup d'état in 2013

Ricarda Ameling (FU Berlin, Germany)

The role of media discourse during times of transition should not be underestimated, as (state) media is a crucial tool in building (cultural) hegemony - one of the pillars besides repression that authoritarian regimes heavily rely on. While much has been said about Egypt's return to authoritarianism after the '25 January Revolution', the dimension of affect and emotion during this transformation has not been considered much. In this paper, I address this gap by comparing the role of affect and emotion within the discourse of the Egyptian state-owned newspaper Al Ahram during two moments of fundamental change: the 25 January Revolution in 2011 and the coup d'état under the lead of then Minister of Defense Abdel Fattah Al Sisi in June 2013.

My analysis shows how affective arrangements and emotional repertoires that emerged and/or were manifested during the coverage of the Tahrir protests were adopted and/or re-interpreted in Al Ahram's reporting in 2013. This supported the new military regime's legitimization narrative of the coup d'état as a 'second revolution' or as the fulfilment of the revolution in 2011 and it was used for the discursive construction of the regime's own enemies.

Building on a discourse analysis of the media coverage in January/February 2011 and during the summer of 2013, this paper shows how the affective and emotional framing of the revolution in 2011 was archived and manifested through state-media discourse and played a crucial role in mobilizing the people and building the new regime's legitimacy in the summer of 2013.

Political and Administrative Decision-Making Processes Under Colonization: The National Governance Experiment During the British Mandate Over Iraq (1920-1932)

Abdel Qader Naim Amer (ZMO\ Berlin, Ifpo\ Amman, University of Jordan\ Amman)

Many historical studies on colonialism have given attention to its effects and legacies, especially the long-term political and economic repercussions. On the other hand, recent studies worked on shedding light on the internal dynamics of colonial administration and colonial state-building processes. This paper falls within this trend: it studies Iraq's political and administrative decision-making processes during the Mandate period and how power was distributed between the national authority and the Mandate authority that was ruling with *de facto* control. The study seeks to draw a picture of the relationship between these two authorities and understand the possible limits of the role played by colonial authorities in managing and influencing Iraq. The paper seeks to answer questions on political and administrative decision-making mechanisms as well as on if and how the Iraqi national authorities were able to exert their powers on the ground. Specific attention is also dedicated to the forms of deliberation and negotiation, sometimes inherited from previous practices that were enacted between members of the sphere of power, society in general and colonial authorities. Sources for this study are the Minutes of the Iraqi Constituent Assembly's sessions (1924-1925), the Minutes of the sessions of the three Iraqi parliaments and notables (1925-1928, 1928-1930, 1930-1932) from Baghdad, the Minutes of the Iraqi Council of Ministers' sessions (1920-1932) and the Correspondence of the British Colonial Administration as well as Iraqi newspapers and periodicals.

Koranrezitationen, ein ausschließlich männliches Unternehmen? Wie maskulinistische Deutungen Frauenstimmen zum Schweigen brachten.

Yasmin Amin (Independent Researcher, Egypt)

Koranrezitationen von Frauen haben eine lange Geschichte, die bis in den Frühislam zurückreicht. In einigen historischer Epochen, vor allem während der Mamlukenherrschaft waren weibliche Koranrezitatoren üblich und verbreitet. Sie wurden bspw. angeheuert, um den Koran in den Harems vorzutragen. Zwischen 1905 und 1911 gab es mehrere berühmte weibliche Koranrezitatoren, deren Stimmen auf Schallplatten aufgenommen und ab 1934 im ägyptischen Rundfunk ausgestrahlt wurden. Auch Radiosender in London und Paris verbreiteten ihre äußerst beliebten Rezitationen. 1949 wurde jedoch eine Fatwa erteilt, mit der Behauptung, dass Frauenstimmen - *'awra* (wörtlich: Nacktheit) sind und - *fitna* (Versuchung) verursachen. Daraufhin wurde die Ausstrahlung weiblicher Koranrezitatoren im ägyptischen Radio eingestellt. Frauen hörten jedoch nicht auf zu rezitieren, wie bspw. die berühmte ägyptische Sängerin Umm Kulthūm, auch bekannt als Kawkab al-Sharq (Stern des Ostens), die ihre Karriere im Alter von 12 Jahren als Koranrezitatorin begann. Erste Versuche, ägyptische Radiosender anhand offizieller Anfragen dazu zu bewegen, weibliche Rezitatorinnen wieder einzusetzen, wie 2009 von Shaykh Shu'aysha', Führer der Koran-Rezitatoren-Gewerkschaft, und danach Shaykh al-Ṭablāwī, scheiterten, wobei interessanterweise einer der entschiedensten Gegner Hajar Sa'd al-Dīn, Direktorin des 1964 gegründeten Koran-Radiosenders war. Im Juli 2021 schien sich, mit der vom ägyptischen Präsidenten Sisi veranstalteten Eröffnung der offiziell im nationalen Fernsehen ausgestrahlten Eid-Feier, eine Wende anzudeuten, als die 17-jährige Zahrā' Ḥilmī den Koran öffentlich rezitierte. In diesem Beitrag steht die Untersuchung maskulinistischer Deutungen von Frauenstimmen im Fokus und es wird die These vertreten, dass Koranrezitationen durch Frauen letztlich nie ganz in Ägypten zum Schweigen gebracht werden konnten.

Wenn am Anfang des Lebens das Ende steht

Beate Anam (Orientalisches Institut, Universität Leipzig)

In Deutschland lässt sich in der öffentlichen Wahrnehmung im Hinblick auf Schwangerschaftsabbrüche (seien sie spontan oder induziert) eine weitgehende Tabuisierung feststellen, die aufseiten der Betroffenen mit unterschiedlichen Graden der Verunsicherung und Vulnerabilität einhergehen können. Dies gilt umso mehr für muslimische Betroffene, für die neben den staatlich-rechtlichen auch religiös-rechtliche sowie moralisch-ethische Normen und Werte gelten. Diese werden teilweise mit der individuellen Glaubenspraxis und den subjektiven Wertevorstellungen in Einklang gebracht und somit gegebenenfalls modifiziert umgesetzt.

Der empiriebasierte Vortrag macht die individuelle Glaubenspraxis zum Ausgangspunkt der Betrachtung. An Einzelfällen exemplifiziert, werden die von Betroffenen in Interviews dargelegten Legitimationen für das individuelle Handeln dargestellt. Dabei wird der Frage nachzugehen sein, welche Determinanten und Einflüsse für den faktischen Umgang mit ungeborenem Leben handlungsleitend sind. Dafür werden Aspekte wie die religiöse Orientierung ebenso einbezogen wie die individuelle Biografie sowie der individuelle mental-psychologische Umgang der Betroffenen mit diesem Lebensereignis. Auch werden innerhalb der muslimischen Gemeinschaft laufende Diskussionen und drängende Fragen muslimischer Betroffener aufgegriffen.

Die bis dato dargestellten Ergebnisse werden anschließend vor dem Hintergrund einschlägiger religiös-rechtlicher und ethisch-moralischer Normen und Werte verortet. Diesbezüglich wird zu beantworten sein, ob sich aus der individuellen Glaubenspraxis in einer mehrheitlich nichtmuslimischen Gesellschaft eine Fortentwicklung sui generis im Hinblick auf religiös-rechtliche und ethisch-moralische Werte und Normen mit Bezug zu pränatalem Kindsverlust ableiten lässt. Der abschließende Blick auf die Begleitung muslimischer Betroffener im Rahmen einer Seelsorge oder Trauerbegleitung bindet diese Erkenntnisse mit ein, wenn er - nach einer Skizzierung des gegenwärtigen Standes einschließlich bestehender Desiderata - für die Lebenswirklichkeit anschlussfähige Handlungsmöglichkeiten vorstellt.

Economic diversification – A history of failures, reasons, and the impacts of hydrogen

Dawud Ansari (German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP); Energy Access and Development Program)

Boosting economic diversification has been a policy objective on the agendas of most oil-rich MENA countries—in some cases, it was set more than five decades ago. Nevertheless, and aside from some infamous, large-scale projects, actual progress towards this goal has been vastly limited.

This talk will present a new overview of the progress various countries in the MENA region have made towards diversifying away from oil. A novel index, constructed from four different dimensions of diversification (value-added, exports, political participation, public revenues) provides insights into the (in-)homogeneity of respective efforts. While some progress towards the diversification of exports is visible, public revenues and political participation have even decreased in some countries (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Iraq). Based on these insights, the talk assesses the role authoritarian governments have in creating additional inertia that hinders a transition away from oil, but also financial and energy-system-related aspects are considered. Eventually, the talk discusses the role hydrogen may play in providing alternative value chains and its potential consequences for regime survival, regional stability, and geopolitics.

The failure of Oslo and the Palestinian Authority (PA). Interlinkages between the deadlock in the Middle East Peace Process, authoritarian governance in the PA, and the quest for equal rights

Muriel Asseburg (SWP, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Deutschland)

Over the last few years, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has become ever more autocratic. Checks and balances, such as an independent judiciary and the Palestinian Legislative Council have been dismantled. In 2021, long overdue elections were indefinitely postponed by President Mahmud Abbas and a prominent critic of the PA, Nizar Banat, was killed in PA custody. At the same time, the PA has upheld its security cooperation with Israel. As a consequence, the popularity and legitimacy of the PA and its institutions have waned, with a large majority of Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip today demanding the resignation of the President and increasing numbers seeing the PA as a liability rather than as an asset.

This contribution investigates the correlations and feedback loops between a) deteriorating governance in the Palestinian territories and the waning of legitimacy of the PA, b) the deadlock in the Middle East Peace Process, an ever more entrenching one-state reality in Israel/Palestine, and continued Israeli/Palestinian security cooperation, c) the adversarial competition between the two Palestinian governments, d) the focus of Western donors on upholding the Oslo framework, e) limited capabilities of the PA leadership to engage in peace-making and f) the search for alternatives to a negotiated two-state settlement by Palestinian activists. It also addresses the implications that the focus of the latter on equal rights, denunciation of Israel as an apartheid regime and a settler colonial endeavor has for conflict transformation.

De facto annexation? Local governance in and modes of integration of Turkish-controlled enclaves of Syria into Turkey

Muriel Asseburg (SWP, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Deutschland)

Since 2016, Turkey has intervened directly with three military operations in the north of Syria (Operation Euphrates Shield, 2016; Operation Olive Branch, 2018; Operation Peace Spring, 2019) in an effort to undo the political and territorial achievements of Syria's Kurds (in particular the PKK-linked PYD) and prevent further influx of Syrian refugees to Turkey. It has since controlled three enclaves in northern Syria through a mix of approaches, such as integration into the Turkish administration, Turkification of local citizens, reconstruction as well as repression, mainly depending on the majority population of the respective enclave (Kurdish vs. Arab). While Turkey's interventions were supported by local Syrian allies of former rebel formations of the so-called Free Syrian Army (now Syrian National Army), they have hardly led to autonomous Syrian institutions, even in the Arab-dominated enclaves.

Against this backdrop, the contribution investigates dynamics of local governance, civil society action and economic relations in the enclaves under Turkish control in Syria's north between the local, the trans-local, the trans-regional and the trans-national.

Relations between the AKP and Islamic groups after the failure of the July 15th coup d'état: The Furkan Vakfi case

Efrat Esther Aviv (Bar Ilan University)

My paper examines the relationship between AKP and religious movements in Turkey after the 2016 coup attempt through a case study of Furkan Vakfı (FV) and its leader, Alparslan Kuytul, who primarily oppose the government. FV's social and educational activities have attracted a large following both online and offline, and it has come to be regarded as a threat by Erdoğan and the AKP. The article first explores the history of religious movements in Turkey and their affinity to various governments since 1925. It then discusses how these relationships changed during the rise of the AKP. Finally, with the case of FV, it examines further changes since the 2016 coup, asking to what extent the state–religion relationship has changed, and how religious movements have reacted.

This paper attempts to show in detail how the relationship between AKP and religious movements has changed since the coup, using FV as a case study. The paper first gives historical background on the political situation of religious movements in Turkey, then describes AKP's relationship with them, before providing a full case study on FV. This examination will help understand the relationship between politics and religion in Turkey; it will provide an insight into how political powers seek to instrumentalize religion, curbing the freedom of religious movements and communities.

Iran-China Strategic Partnership: Implications for Iran's Middle East Policy

Hamidreza Azizi (German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Germany)

Having been under severe international and American sanctions for years, Iran views China as an alternative source of modern technology and investment, needed to boost its failing economy. In the meantime, the increasingly confrontational American approach toward China makes Beijing a natural partner for Iran. A Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement between Iran and China was signed in March 2021, promoted by the two sides as a first serious step towards more extensive cooperation. However, some political factions and parts of public opinion in Iran have expressed concerns that growing Chinese influence may lead to Tehran's overdependence on Beijing. Growing cooperation between China on the one hand and Saudi Arabia and Israel on the other hand can be another source of irritation in bilateral relations.

This article will assess the prospects for continuation or change in Iranian foreign and regional policy with a focus on China's role in Iran's long-term regional plans and the real potential for a strategic partnership to be formed between the sides despite domestic and regional pressure. The article will come up with conclusions on the future of the Iran–China political relations. The main argument is that although in the short term, China's support may embolden Iran to embark on an even more adventurous regional policy, domestic constraints and Beijing's pursuit of a balanced foreign policy in the Middle East will tie Iran's hand and lead it toward a more calculated regional strategy.

Tuning in to ‘things’ of the Past: Radio Berlin International and its Memory Regimes in Cold War India

Anandita Bajpai (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Germany)

This paper traces the trajectory of the German Democratic Republic's (GDR), foreign broadcasting radio station, Radio Berlin International (RBI) and its presence in India during the Cold War. Focusing on the station's Hindi Programme (1967-90), which acquired a broad listening public (hundreds of listeners' clubs), the paper will delve into how the station rendered the GDR present in Indian households. Transnational affinities and affective ties of solidarity developed over 23 years of the station's existence between those behind the microphone in East Berlin and those behind the radio set in India. After presenting the overarching political context in which the Hindi Division was set up and the larger Cold War ambitions of RBI, the paper will delve into how the station became a means for preparing fertile ground for individual bonds of affinity. It will shed light on the role of things, objects that were sent to the listeners from the GDR and their affective relationships with the same. Building up on Francois Hartog's notion of regimes of historicity, the paper will show how objects become repositories of regimes of memory-making. They offer the dual possibility of analyzing registers of love, solidarity, and warmth, which became the trope of explaining listeners' relationship to the radio station at the time they were sent, as well as material markers of an unspoken past in the present. They thus present different ways in which individuals deal with their past, but also how they embed it in narratives of the present and the future.

A COVID-19 Effect? Diverging Dynamics of Violence in Damascus, Dar'a and Idlib before and after 2020

André Bank, Selman Almohamad (GIGA German Institute for Global and Area Studies, Deutschland)

After more than a decade of war fighting, local territorial control in Syria has become much more stable in recent years, especially after Assad regime forces and its international allies re-conquered earlier rebel areas in Rif Damascus, in southern Dar'a and in central parts of the country. While the capital of Damascus has been under regime control throughout the war, since its reconquest southern Dar'a has been characterized by a repressive, yet less comprehensive regime, Russian and Iranian military control. In contrast, northwestern Idlib has remained under control of the radical-Islamist Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and thus outside the purview of the regime and its allies.

Against the background of these diverse actor constellations, the contribution analyzes the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has yielded on local dynamics of violence in Damascus, Dar'a and Idlib. The contribution finds that in (late) war contexts like Syria, COVID-19 has not contributed to directly changing military dynamics on the ground. However, pandemic effects in different Syrian locales are more indirect and contextualized, with various armed actors attempting to instrumentalize COVID-related governance (e.g. lockdowns, curfews) and socio-economic measures (aid, medical supply) for their own power position, especially in the early phases of the pandemic.

Das Vermögensteuergesetz von 1942-44: Wie das Vermögen der nicht-moslemischen Minderheiten „türkisiert“ wurde

Abdulmesih BarAbraham (Mor Afrem Stiftung, Germany)

Der Vorsitzende der Republikanischen Volkspartei (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi - CHP) Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu kündigte kürzlich eine politische Initiative unter dem Oberbegriff „helalleşme“ an, was so viel bedeutet wie „sich gegenseitig vergeben.“ Kılıçdaroğlu listet ein Dutzend Themen aus der dunklen, seiner Ansicht nach, bisher kaum aufgearbeiteten Geschichte der Türkei auf, die bis heute verschiedene ethnische und religiöse Gruppierungen belasten.

Eines dieser Themen ist die Vermögensteuer (Varlık Vergisi), deren Einführung 1942 unter der damaligen CHP Regierung sich zum 80. Mal jährt. Sie wird in der Türkei kontrovers diskutiert. Während die nationalistische Geschichtsschreibung von einer legitimen staatlichen Maßnahme im Zuge der außergewöhnlichen Situation des 2. Weltkrieges spricht, entwickelt sich zunehmend die Ansicht, der Hauptzweck dieser Maßnahme bestand darin, Vermögenswerte und die Wirtschaftskraft im Land zu „türkisieren.“

Dieser Beitrag wird die gegenwärtige Diskussion basierend auf der aktuellen Literatur und Faktenlage zusammenfassen und bewerten, welche belegen, dass die Steuer (zu mehr als 80%) hauptsächlich die nicht-muslimischen Minderheiten wie Juden, Griechen, Armenier und Assyrier belastete. Das Gesetz legte fest, wer wie viel Steuern zu zahlen hatte, wobei die endgültige Höhe von Kommissionen entschieden wurde. Auch in Tur Abdin wurden Kommissionen berufen, welche diese Steuer festlegten und eintraben, wie Berichte und Erzählungen von Zeitzeugen belegen. Einspruch und Rechtsbehelf wurden unterbunden, die Zahlungsfrist auf 15 Tagen verkürzt. Das Vermögen derjenigen, welche die festgesetzte Steuer nicht entrichteten, wurde durch Zwangsvollstreckung zum Verkauf angeboten. Nicht-Muslime, die trotz Zwangsvollstreckungen ihre Steuern nicht bezahlen konnten, wurden ins Arbeitslager verbannt, um durch körperliche Arbeit ihre Steuerschulden zu begleichen. Die Steuer wurde 1944 schließlich abgeschafft.

Between Death Worlds and Necropower: Harraga through Maghrebian Youth's Perceptions

Rachid Benharrouse (Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco)

Despite the Maghreb's institutional independence from Europe, northward migration from the Mediterranean south has continued. While in an earlier era, Maghrebian states encouraged youth to migrate to France and Western Europe, they restructured their migration policies in the late 1990s to discourage migration and encourage return. Nevertheless, much Maghrebian youth remain determined to leave their homelands through regular or irregular itineraries. The phenomenon of Hrig, then, or clandestinity, has become a permanent feature of popular and youth culture. This paper assays a critical, grounded engagement with the phenomenon of migration through the perceptions of Maghrebian youth, and engages the notion of Hrig through a critical interpretation of Achille Mbembe's "Necropolitics." That is, sovereignty, either European or Maghrebian, is not subjugating life to death in the Mediterranean, rather the idea of Europe as a place of "salvation," which captivates youth and paradoxically subjects them to necropower. It is through this perception of youth that Maghrebian sovereignties emerge as Death Worlds. Seeking "salvation" through clandestine mobilities, young people subjugate their life to necropower. Hrig becomes the praxis of the idea of Europe as "salvation" and the materialization of Maghrebian sovereignties as death worlds. In attending to the youth's pre-migratory expectations, the paper examines the inferiority complex that Maghrebian youth feel concerning the European other, which structures the clandestine crisis in the Mediterranean. Based on secondary research, detailed surveys, and interviews with Maghrebian youth, this research enriches current scholarship on migration studies.

"Identities & Beliefs: The 'M' in UGEMA"

Elizabeth Anona Bishop (Texas State University, United States of America)

The Interdisciplinary Fellow Group (IFG) "Identities & Beliefs" queries, which identity-based disparities and diverse beliefs are available and dominant in specific contexts? What are their similarities and differences across different social and political settings? How have the disparities around identities and beliefs evolved in recent history and up until the present, and which visions for the future emanate from them? On the basis of 33 oral history interviews of former UGEMA (l'Union Generale des Etudiants Musulmans Algeriens) members published by Moore (2010) and Kadri (2014), as well as two volumes of archival documents republished by Les Cahiers du Groupe d'études et de Recherche sur les Mouvements Etudiantes (GERME, 2012-2013) documenting interaction with French students' secular organizations, this analysis follows North African students' deliberate choice to include the "M" representing Muslim identity in their organization's name. Engaging both Belaïd Abdesselam, l'Union générale des étudiants musulmans algériens: 1955-2005 (2012), as well as Ahmed Mahi, De l'UGEMA à l'UNEA : témoignage sur le mouvement étudiant: 1959-1965 (2014), this contribution tests a primary hypothesis that any such decision be assessed within the specific context of 1955-1956: while French students dominated Communist-internationalist student organizations, the Algerians' Muslim identity defined their civil status in France north and south of the Mediterranean. In addition to the specific context of 1955-1956, this contribution tests a secondary hypothesis that the "M" represented forms of solidarity between Algerian and other students who had experienced second-class citizenship under the circumstances of colonialism: i.e. Egyptian, Tunisian, Moroccan, and Senegalese.

European Aid and Changing Social Contracts in the MENA Region Since the Arab Uprisings

Thilo Bodenstein, Mark Furness (Central European University, Austria; Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik, Germany)

European aid to MENA countries has increased sharply since 2011, ostensibly to support changing social contracts in the region following the Arab uprisings. However, the increases in aid have mostly not been accompanied by policy statements from European governments setting out their strategic objectives in the region, and the role of aid in conjunction with other policy tools in achieving them. This has fuelled a debate in academic and policy circles about whether gaps between rhetorical support for democratic transformation, and the ways in which aid programmes are financed and run, are due to technical failings and fragmentation, or whether aid has been purposefully used as a tool for pursuing security and anti-migration agendas in the region. This debate reflects broader questions about conflicting norms that drive aid policymaking and practice, particularly that between 'solidarity' with vulnerable people in other countries, and the 'instrumentality' of aid as a foreign policy tool. What strategic objectives do European donors have for their MENA aid? Do the practices of European aid spending actually address development and humanitarian challenges, as these are defined by MENA countries themselves? At the conceptual level, this paper unpacks the conflict between the 'solidarity' and 'instrumentality' norms and posits that this conflict is central to understanding how large development actors decide to spend aid. The paper then illustrates this dilemma with a structured review of the policy and practice dimensions of four European MENA aid programmes since 2011: Germany, France, the EU and the UK.

The Autocrat's Guide to the Periphery. Analyzing center-periphery relations in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Miriam Bohn (Friedrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany)

Encouraged by western donors including the IMF and World Bank, highly centralized Arab regimes have introduced decentralization reforms as a means to enhance local autonomy and to increase political participation and economic development ever since the 1990s. In the aftermath of the widespread protests in the Arab world around 2010/2011, which mostly originated from the socio-politically neglected periphery, these reform projects were pushed even further. However, the de facto outcome of decentralization efforts in the Arab world is subject to elite dynamics between all levels of government - central, regional, and local. While an autocrat can use decentralization reforms to strengthen his ties to the periphery, they are also breaking up patterns of authoritarian rule by providing new opportunities for local elites and other political stakeholders to evolve. This study seeks to broaden the scholarly debate on elite management and authoritarian resilience by systematically including the subnational levels of government into the analysis. An empirical analysis of three governorates in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan provides insights into center-periphery relations under authoritarian rule in the MENA region.

Rethinking Rentierism: Nation Branding, Economic Diversification and Authoritarian Rule in the UAE

Omar Bortolazzi (American University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates)

Over the past decade, the United Arab Emirates has become increasingly prominent, playing a major role in regional developments and at the international level. For many years the UAE steadily built its military and security capacity, and positioned itself to play a dynamic role in defining its national and regional interests. Much academic attention has been focussing on UAE's development of powerful surveillance and security capabilities in recent years. In authoritarian contexts, the surveillance and military dimensions can be used to securitise the nation from external or regional threats, but also for domestic purposes to maintain internal stability. However, this paper argues that security and surveillance are one application of coercive measures; the UAE is simultaneously pursuing longer-term strategies aimed at generating discourses that align with regime necessities. Reprising from the theoretical analyses produced by Buzan (1991) which identifies five dimensions of security: political, military, economic, social and environmental - this research aims to investigate the economic and diplomatic initiatives undertaken in recent years to support the UAE's economic diversification plans. In the last decade, the United Arab Emirates has implemented a broad range of strategies to shift itself from an oil-reliant nation to elevate itself into an international brand. Economic diversification, tourism and cosmetic 'liberal' policies made the UAE leap from natural resource extraction nation to post-industrial service economy. In turn, these post-rentier programs helped the leadership to maintain the stability of the governing system and the state over the need to implement participatory mechanisms.

Palestinian Global Diplomacy as a Strategy of Conflict Resolution: Overcoming the Negotiated Deadlock

Jan Busse (Universität der Bundeswehr München, Deutschland)

Almost 30 years after the inception of the Oslo Peace Process, there is widespread recognition that the underlying framework for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has failed. Faced with the intransigent Israeli counterpart, embodied by longtime Prime Minister Netanyahu, the Palestinian Authority/Palestine Liberation Organization resorted to a strategy of international recognition as an alternative to bi-lateral negotiations. As a result, Palestine was not only recognized as a non-member observer state by the UN General Assembly in 2012, Palestine joined numerous international treaties and conventions, including the Rome Statute of the ICC. Most recently, however, Palestinians increasingly faced international and regional marginalization, especially exemplified US-president Trump's outright disregard of Palestinian interests on the one hand and by the Arab League's disregard of Palestinian interests in the context of the Abraham Accords on the other.

On this basis, this contribution will assess both the historic emergence and current developments of Palestinian international and regional diplomacy. Conceptually, this paper relies on a practice-theoretical understanding of diplomacy in International Relations, as advanced, most prominently, by Iver B. Neumann and Vincent Pouliot, in order to make sense of diplomatic dynamics beyond formal statist actors and inter-state relations. Hence, the focus also lies on non-state diplomatic agency and practices related to public diplomacy and nation branding. By considering Palestinian global diplomacy as a case of "everyday making of statehood" (Vikosa 2018) this contribution will assess to what extent the underlying strategy of international recognition serves as a suitable alternative to a negotiated settlement of the conflict.

The making of religion in secular educational spaces – a view from Jordan

Daniele Cantini (MLU Halle-Wittenberg, Germany)

In this contribution, I argue for a thorough engagement with the theme of education when discussing the secular and the religious from an anthropological perspective, following the work of scholars such as Dale Eickelman and Gregory Starrett. Universities in Jordan are formally secular, yet religion is present at different levels; this of course reflects the very foundation of the state in Jordan, in which much of the legitimacy of the ruling dynasty rests on their religious credentials. Jordan is thus an especially apt location to investigate the mutual making of religion and the secular through higher education. In this presentation, I will analyze this co-production in three aspects of universities in contemporary Jordan. First, they are spaces in which forms of sociality are largely regulated by at times contrasting understanding of a proper religiosity. Second, they are organizations in which religion sensibilities are inserted in their governance, for example during Ramadan or even during praying times. Third, at an institutional perspective, religious sensibilities are as relevant as political considerations in guiding textbooks, teaching and research, to name but a few aspects, but never without contestations and different understandings of how to translate these sensibilities in norms. Religion and secularism are thus to be seen as entangled concepts, at least co-produced through the educational system, whose consistence and boundaries are constantly made and remade, and yet routinely presented as being stable or even immutable.

The Dynamics of the Rwandan Foreign Policy after genocide

Samia Chabouni (Jijel University, Algeria)

The objective of this proposition is to offer a multi-dimensional understanding of the dynamics of the Rwandan foreign policy, that's operating in the context of a complex region. It presents a case of African foreign policy in connexion with the development of the country since the end of the genocide. So, the aim of this project is to propose a reflection about the external action of the Rwandan state and the diplomatic strategies that the Rwandan authorities have been conducting since 1994. We will study the main strategic orientations of Rwanda with regard to a complex regional context, marked by chronic conflicts in the African Great Lakes region.

Since the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) came to power in 1994, the country has had an active foreign policy, especially in the Great Lakes region, and Kagame seems to be infusing this policy. After a first phase marked by military intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kigali undertook to diversify its alliances, in particular to forge new ties with emerging countries, while affirming its regional leadership. Emphasis has also been placed on economic development by encouraging foreign investment, trying to set itself as a model in this area. Kagame wants to be a central actor and plays a hegemonic role in the sub-region and even on the continental level.

Religion after Religion? Abu al-Ila Afifi and the Academic Study of Mysticism in Interwar Egypt

Simon Conrad (Princeton University, Deutschland)

My paper discusses changing understandings of religion (*din*) amidst the rise of its academic study in semi-colonial, interwar Egypt. I focus on the life and thought of the Egyptian university philosopher Abu al-Ila Afifi and some of his colleagues and associates who pioneered the academic study of mysticism (*tasawwuf*) in the institutional context of recently established public universities in Egypt. Following a discussion of the underlying understanding of religion that guided Afifi's work and others', my paper relates these understandings to questions over society and modern subjectivity in interwar Egypt and beyond. In so doing, my aim is to contribute to a recent body of histories of the study of religion that have pointed to the field's implication in imperial power-structures. I suggest that the study of scholars of religion in colonised societies like Afifi can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of what the study of religions was and could be.

Mysticism and Revolution: The Journal al-Islam wa al-Tasawwuf

Simon Conrad (Princeton University, Deutschland)

In June 1958, Muhammad Mahmud 'Alwan, head of the Sufi orders, set up the journal Islam and Mysticism (al-Islam wa al-tasawwuf). A member of parliament before the 1952 Revolution, opening articles to his new journal now stressed the link between Nasser's revolution and mysticism's spiritual guidance, celebrated the revolution as spiritual liberation, and, in an article by later President Anwar al-Sadat, lauded the mystics' history of resisting atheism and materialism. Over the course of the journal's existence until 1962, the journal attracted contributions by a number of prominent mystics, philosophers, and political leaders, including Uthman Amin, Abu al-Wafa al-Taftazani, and Taha Abd al-Baqi Surur.

This paper discusses the link between mysticism and revolution through an examination of the journal Islam and Mysticism. Previous research has pointed to the prehistory of Nasserist theory and practice, such as interwar discourses on national liberation and social justice, as well as anti-materialist articulations of 'socialism' (ishtirakiya). Nevertheless, understandings of 'spiritualism' in general and particularly the role of 'mysticism' (tasawwuf) therein remain underexplored. By providing an overview of the journal's contributors' concerns as well as a close, contextual reading of some of its key exponents, I show how mysticism and its academic study was closely linked to discourses of anti-imperialism, national liberation, and the cultivation of revolutionary citizenship. In so doing, my paper contributes a new perspectives on 'Nasserism': the role of political theology, the academic study of religion, and their continuity vis-à-vis currents before and after Nasser.

Social Protection in Islamic Countries: an Islamic Welfare Model?

Fabio Coriolano (Gdansk University of Technology, Poland)

Social security evolved in Islamic countries since the 1950s as a part of the attempt to establish a modern state. My research analysed the development of welfare protection in Islamic countries and verified the possibility to recognise one or more "models" -or "regimes"- distinctive of the Muslim societies.

My research took into consideration the class composition of each country and examined how the evolving relationship between the ruling elites and the social groups influenced the definition of social protection and -more broadly- the distribution of public resources.

The results led to the identification of four different "welfare bargains", which regulates access to public resources and social protection between the state and the various social classes.

During my presentation, I intend to resume the main aspects of my research and expose the conclusions, underlining when and how welfare protection in Islamic societies revealed original attributes, diverging from the global trends.

Combining *deen* and *duniya*: Taj Begum's Narrative about the Indian Partition

Deepra Dandekar (Leibniz-zentrum Moderner Orient, Germany)

Taj Begum (1937-) from a well-renowned and highly esteemed Muslim family from Delhi became displaced as a refugee in 1947, and journeyed to Pakistan under the duress of Hindu-Muslim riots. After surviving the harrowing and life-threatening journey that included a few months in a refugee camp in Delhi, and later in Lahore, Taj Begum's family underwent many hardships before finding their feet in Pakistan. Taj Begum completed her abruptly truncated education in Delhi, in Pakistan, after which she went on to attain a leadership position in running schools for girls in rural regions outside Karachi. Her narrative in Urdu, recorded by the NGO "1947 Partition Archives", is presently housed at the Stanford University Library as an exhibit, in which she recounts a story of ultimate pride and success. Her message in her interview endorses combining *deen* indicated in her Muslim religious life that was learned as a child in India, with *duniya*, a new life of a woman, nation-making patriot in Pakistan, that championed Benazir Bhutto as another woman leader in whom Taj Begum saw herself reflected. The learning from Partition narratives such as Taj Begum's, presented in this paper, is an investigation of how *deen* and *duniya* are social concepts about religious life and Muslim identity within the nascent nationalisms of South Asia, that are based on memories of Partition and Hindu-Muslim conflict, in which *deen* is projected into past memories, just as *duniya* becomes the context within which *deen* finds fruition.

Zur Rolle und Bedeutung ethisch-moralischer Verpflichtungen bei der Auslegung von qiwāma am Beispiel Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāhs

Doris Decker (Universität Marburg, Deutschland)

Im Beitrag wird die Deutung des Koranverses 'Die Männer haben Vollmacht und Verantwortung gegenüber den Frauen, weil Gott die einen vor den anderen bevorzugt hat und weil sie von ihrem Vermögen (für die Frauen) ausgeben' (Khoury) behandelt - ein Vers, der hochumstritten ist und im Zentrum der Debatten um Geschlechtergerechtigkeit im Islam steht. Ziba Mir-Hosseini stuft ihn als 'the lynchpin of the whole edifice of the patriarchal model of family in classical fiqh' (2013) ein. Auch Faḍlallāh, bedeutendster schiitischer Gelehrter im Libanon des 20. Jhs., versuchte sich in der Auslegung des Verses und leitete daraus die gesetzlichen Verpflichtungen (iltizāmāt qānūnīya) des Ehemanns ab, für die Verwaltung des Ehehauses und alle Ausgaben verantwortlich zu sein, wodurch ihm im Gegenzug spezifische Rechte zugesprochen wurden (z.B. Scheidung). Faḍlallāh ging in seiner Deutung aber ein Stück weiter, da er die Verwaltung nicht als etwas von Gesetzesparagraphen bestimmtes Fixes verstand, und bezog die ethisch-moralische Ebene der Verpflichtungen (iltizāmāt ahlāqīya) in einer Weise ein, sodass sich für die Ehepartner bei der Handhabung der Ehehausverwaltung große Freiräume und Flexibilität bis hin zur Möglichkeit für die Frau, die Verwaltung zu übernehmen, ergaben. Dieser besonderen Einbindung einer ethisch-moralischen Dimension von Verpflichtungen, ihrer Auswirkung auf die Auslegung von qiwāma und damit Faḍlallāhs scheinbarem Versuch einer Angleichung der Rechte der Geschlechter wird hier nachgegangen.

Analysis of Perceptions of Male Academics towards Gender in Turkey

Birgül Demirtaş (Turkish-German University, Turkey)

There are increasing number of academic works on gender in Turkish academia in the literature, but most of them focus on the perceptions of female academics. This study aims to fill in the gap by analysing perceptions of male academics. It is important to analyse the impact of populist politics and deeuropeanised national context on gender relations in academia in a Muslim majority country. The presentation is based on semi-structured interviews with 70 male academics in the departments of International Relations at different Turkish universities. The aim is to examine how male academics perceive gender relations at their universities and compare it with the results of the perceptions of female academics. It is found out that there are three different perceptions by males in Turkish universities. First group thinks that there is gender equality, second group argues that females are discriminated against. Third group states that not only females, but also non-Sunnis, non-Turks are discriminated against as well. The study will also compare the results from this survey with the results of academic works based on perceptions of female academics.

Autocracies and the temptation of sentimentality: Nonmaterial means of “post-oil regime survival” in the MENA region

Thomas Demmelhuber (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg, Deutschland)

The scholarly debate on the durability of autocracies is vivid and has led to a broad spectrum of different sources and mechanisms of regime survival. Yet, there is a bias toward the strong effect of material means of regime survival, be it cooptation, repression, and/or notions of output legitimation. In resource-rich MENA countries this was deeply rooted in the logic of rent economies. Only recently, immaterial factors of authoritarian power have gained more prominence in the literature. In order to deconstruct this rather new phenomenon in 21st century autocracies, this paper aims at introducing sentimentality as a key concept that sheds light on a new trend of “meaning making on a collective level” (Bens/Zenker 2019: 97). Sentimentality is understood as a relational code of communication relying on a broad set of emotional repertoires and oscillating between the presence and the past. The concept of sentimentality is inspired but goes beyond debates around nostalgia, foundational myths, and retrotopian thought (see e.g. Bauman 2017). It is used to deconstruct a new top-down initiated storytelling about the nation, the collective we-identity, and a new sense of national identity that relies on relicts, patterns, or newly interpreted parts of the past. In this paper both the Saudi Vision 2030 and the Qatar National Vision 2030 – key examples of narratives that shall embed post-oil energy transitions – are taken as case studies to investigate the temptations of sentimentality for the sake of regime survival.

The foreign perception of German foreign policy by the Tunisian Nahda Party in the context of the Tunisian transformation processes after 2010

Julius Dihstelhoff (Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb (MECAM)/ Philipps-Universität Marburg, Tunesien)

The Arab revolts of 2010/2011 represent an 'implicit turning point' in German foreign policy towards Tunisia, contributing to changes in international policy in several domains: state behaviour, the national level (e.g. regime change and democratization in Tunisia), and the transregional level (e.g. spread of pro-democracy movements to other Arab countries). Before 2010, Tunisia played a minor role in Germany's foreign policy, expressed primarily through rudimentary relations. Germany's foreign policy reception and dealings with actors from the Islamist party spectrum became a core component of the foreign policy realignment after 2010, as they were among the first election winners in many transitional Arab nations, holding the reins of government for the first time. In Tunisia, the Nahda Party is the largest and most important Islamist actor.

This study identifies specific features of Germany's foreign policy role concept in the context of the Tunisian transformation processes of 2010, as they are assessed in the external perception by Tunisia's Nahda Party. According to research literature, Germany has traditionally adopted a foreign policy role concept that conforms to civilian power. That's why the focus here is on the external perception of Germany as a civilian power by the Nahda members of the Constituent Assembly between 2010 and 2014. Findings are based on operationalized criteria, identified through a questionnaire. The latter was analyzed primarily with the help of a multivariate principal component analysis (PCA) which is used to identify exploratively meaningful hypothetical thought constructs, on Germany's foreign policy role concept in Tunisia after 2010.

‘Rethinking the postcolonial state in the Middle East; elite competition and negotiation within the disaggregated Iraqi state’.

Toby Dodge (London School of Economics, United Kingdom)

This paper takes as its case study the Iraqi state, from the seizure of power by the Ba’ath Party in 1968 to the contemporary political system put in place after invasion and regime change in 2003. The choice of Iraq allows the paper to examine a state which has been profoundly transformed three times since 1968: first when the Ba’ath Party seized power, secondly in 1990, when the invasion of Kuwait saw Iraq placed under some of the harshest international sanctions ever applied and finally after 2003, when a US-led invasion set out to impose a new ruling elite upon the reconstructed institutions of the state. Each of these transformations directly impacted the way the power of competing elites within the state crystallized in the higher levels of its institutions. These transformations directly influenced the capacity, reach and coherence of actors within that state and their ability to shape society. Comparatively, this paper seeks to develop an understanding of the state that treats it as a dependent variable, subject to social, economic and military transformation. In doing this, the paper disaggregates the state, problematizing the neo-Weberian barriers between its institutions and personnel and wider society.

Research for the paper is based upon a number of extended field trips to Baghdad, carried out both before and after regime change. This data, largely gained from elite interviews, has been combined with secondary economic, political and historical sources.

No Limits for the Mukhabarat? The study of Iraq's Mukhabarat and understanding its exceptional remit during the Baath Party era (1969-1990).

Ali Dogan (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient; Otto-Suhr-Institut für Politikwissenschaft)

This paper analyses Iraq's Foreign Intelligence Agency, the Jihaz Al Mukhabarat al Amma and illustrates its exceptional remit within the Iraqi state from 1969 until 1990.

During the Baath Party era, the Mukhabarat had unlimited powers and used its secrecy to occasionally operate outside the rule of law. The Mukhabarat was an important national and transnational actor for the Iraqi state.

First, I argue that the study of the Mukhabarat allows us to identify the characteristics of the Iraqi intelligence system and understand the Mukhabarat's position within the Iraqi state. I show that the Jihaz Al Mukhabarat Al Amma was an essential actor in Saddam Hussein's security policies. Second, I demonstrate that the Mukhabarat's exceptional remit became transnational. I show that the Mukhabarat operated in different parts of the world to observe, repress, and neutralize dissidents and adversaries.

Research for this paper was conducted in the following archives: Hizb al-Ba'th al-'Arabī al-Ishtirākī Records (Ba'ath Party Records), Politisches Archiv, Bundesarchiv, BND-Archiv.

Leben mit verlassenen Lehmziegelsiedlungen in Zentraloman - eine archäologische Betrachtung

Stephanie Döpfer, Irini Biezeveld (Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Germany)

Zentraloman ist ein Schmelztiegel traditioneller und moderner Architektur. Im Zuge der Modernisierung des Landes seit 1970 (Nadha) wurden viele der traditionellen Lehmziegelsiedlungen aufgegeben und stattdessen neue, moderne Häuser aus Beton errichtet. Daher gibt es viele traditionelle Lehmziegelsiedlungsquartiere, die als historisches Stadtzentrum in modernen Städten stehen. Andere Lehmziegelsiedlungen sind komplett aufgelassen, werden aber teilweise durch die lokale Bevölkerung als preiswerte Unterkünfte für südasiatische Gastarbeiter, Tierställe und Müllkippen genutzt. Aktuell zeichnet sich vereinzelt ein Umdenken der lokalen Bevölkerung ab. Die Häuser der Lehmziegelsiedlungen werden immer häufiger auch als Vermögenswerte und potenzielle Beschäftigungs- und Einnahmequellen erkannt, beispielsweise durch die touristische Umnutzung des verlassenen Ortskerns.

Mit fünf Fallstudien aus der Region um die Stadt Al-Mudhaybi im Zentraloman, zeigen wir anhand archäologischer Untersuchungen, wie sich die Bedeutung, Funktion und Nutzung der aufgelassenen Lehmziegelsiedlungen geändert hat. Wir möchten verstehen, wieso diese Lehmziegelsiedlungen verlassen wurden, wann genau dies passierte, wie sie vorher genutzt wurden und wie sich die heutige Nachnutzung darstellt. Vorläufige Ergebnisse von unserer Forschung zeigen, dass die Siedlungen ab ca. dem 17. Jahrhundert erbaut wurden und meistens einen landwirtschaftlichen Fokus hatten. Manche scheinen bereits vor der Nadha verlassen zu sein, in anderen ist der Wandel von Lehmziegelhäusern zu Häusern aus Beton nachzuvollziehen. Die Restaurierung von bestimmten Gebäuden, wie Moscheen oder Türme, zeigt, dass zumindest Teile der Siedlungen noch heute für die lokale Bevölkerung von Bedeutung ist, aber dass der Funktion der Siedlungen, sich stark geändert hat. Somit liefern diese Untersuchungen ein wichtiges Beispiel für den Wechselbeziehungen zwischen sozialen Strukturen und gebauter Umwelt.

The Battle for the Soul of Islam

James M. Dorsey (Middle East Institute = NUS, Singapore)

Jordanian ruler Abdullah I bin Al-Hussein gloated in 1924 when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the visionary who carved modern Turkey out of the ruins of the Ottoman empire, abolished the Caliphate. "The Turks have committed suicide... Now the Khaliphate has come back to Arabia," Abdullah told The Manchester Guardian at the time.

It did not. A century later it is not the caliphate that Muslim powerhouses are fighting about. It is religious soft power to garner geopolitical influence, power, and dominance.

The significance of the battle for the soul of Islam lies in what is at stake for both the Muslim and non-Muslim world. At stake is which Muslim-majority country or countries will be recognized as leaders of the Islamic world and the degree to which moderate Islam incorporates principles of tolerance, pluralism, gender equality, secularism, and human rights as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The major competitors – Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Qatar, and Indonesia – fall into two broad categories:

-- proponents of a state-controlled form of Islam, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Iran, and Qatar, whose principles are defined by the political needs of an often authoritarian or autocratic state and

-- advocates of an interpretation of the faith, like Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama, that is defined by civil society, embraces principles of humanitarianism, pluralism, human rights and secularism and involves legal recontextualization and/or reform of Islam to address problematic and discriminatory notions.

Nationalist Narratives, Justifications of Repression, and Repressive Agents in the WANA Region: One-Directional or Interacting Relationships?

Mirjam Edel (Universität Tübingen, Germany)

Since 2011, state repression in Western Asia and North Africa (WANA) has increased and changed in its nature, and rhetorical justifications are brought forward in attempts to control how this repression is perceived in the broader population. Simultaneously, on a more general discursive level, nationalist narratives and argumentations reminding of developmental dictatorships have become en vogue and supersede liberalization narratives that had dominated the 1990s and 2000s. Taking these developments into account can help understand how state-society relations are partially reconfiguring in the WANA region today.

This paper sets out to analyze whether these developments are connected, i.e., whether and how the new nationalist discourses are directly or indirectly related to the justifications, and/or the agents and forms of repression currently dominant in many countries of the region. We know that justifications of repression tend to be in line with broader legitimation strategies (Dukalskis 2015), and it has been hypothesized that the professional background of justifying actors has an impact on which justification frames are used (Josua 2021). Against this background, the paper tackles the question how two discursive themes (general nationalist discourse and justifications of repression) and two sets of agency (agents justifying repression and agents implementing repression) are intertwined and impacting one another, and into which directions causalities can be assumed to run. Drawing on empirical material from Egypt and the UAE, alternative hypotheses on the relationships between discourses and agents will be evaluated.

Kritische Überlegungen zur androzentrischen Perspektive religiöser Normen am Beispiel der Fremdbestimmung des weiblichen Körpers

Dina El Omari (WWU Münster, Germany)

Die Sprache und Perspektive in den islamischen Rechtswissenschaften sowie in der religiösen Praxis der Muslim*innen zeugen von einem deutlichen androzentrischen Charakter. Oft wird über Frauen als Objekte in den unterschiedlichen Bereichen des islamischen Rechts gesprochen, was besonders im Zusammenhang mit der Wahrnehmung des weiblichen Körpers zu signifikanten Einschnitten des Selbstbestimmungsrechts der Frauen führt. Zwar gibt es im Rahmen von Modernisierungsprozessen des islamischen Rechts als kodifiziertes Recht in verschiedenen islamischen Ländern Versuche, Regelungen an den Lebenskontext der Menschen anzupassen, doch die Grenzen dieser Prozesse werden immer wieder deutlich. Einerseits sind Aushandlungsprozesse und damit einhergehend Gesetzgebungen in vielen islamischen Ländern nur dort fruchtbar, wo keine festen unveränderlichen Regeln der Scharia vorliegen und somit auf eine eigenständige Interpretation zurückgegriffen werden kann. Diese Interpretation kann aber wiederum nur in Einklang mit den Hauptquellen für die Ableitung religiöser Normen des islamischen Rechts, also dem Koran und den prophetischen Überlieferungen, erfolgen. Das Hauptproblem an dieser Stelle ist das Festhalten an diesen Quellen als eine Art von göttlichen bzw. prophetischen Gesetzestexten, die nur wörtlich zu verstehen seien. Andererseits ist das Grundverständnis weiblicher Sexualität in der islamischen Theologie im doppelten Maß negativ und paradox konnotiert. Es braucht eine methodische Verlagerung bezüglich des Umgangs mit den beiden Hauptquellen des islamischen Rechts, weg von einem ahistorischen und hin zu einem historischen Verständnis, um religiöse Normen abzuleiten, die dem Anspruch der Geschlechtergerechtigkeit, aber auch der Mündigmachung der Frau gerecht werden. Der Vortrag widmet sich daher dem Problem der Fremdbestimmung des weiblichen Körpers am Beispiel des *Fitna*-Begriffs sowie der genannten methodischen Verlagerung.

Promising Dubai in Sohar: Radical Transformations and job creation in Oman

Crystal A. Ennis (Universiteit Leiden, Netherlands, The)

Through examining the radical spatial, demographic, and economic transformations in Oman, this paper contests dominant narratives of labour's irrelevance and exceptionalism in Gulf states. Using multi-year ethnographic and semi-structured interview research, this study focuses on two case studies: the radical transformations of Sohar (2000s-2010s) and Duqm (2010s). It interrogates the nexus of development planning, youth socio-economic expectations, and the politics of labour and job seeking. Sohar is a critical case of rapid economic transformation and disjuncture. Promising the benefits of dramatic economic growth, Sohar transformed from a small coastal town to a city in the 2000s hosting a major port, freezone, and functions as a centre of industrial activities. Today, such promises unfold in the transformation of Duqm into a massive Special Economic Zone. Such industrial development in Sohar and Duqm are supposed to generate growth and jobs, facilitated by policies of labour nationalisation and entrepreneurship promotion. Yet the outcomes are mixed. Sohar was at the heart of the 2011 Omani Spring, and had protests by jobseekers again in 2021. This study interprets the promises-expectations gap, arguing that radical transformations in the region are just as much about global capitalism as they are about rentierism. The cases demonstrate that first, there is an endemic tension between economic openness and social protection; and second, rentier states respond to both social and global neoliberal pressures. A focus on the human side through the lens of globalised labour markets offers fresh insights for the international political economy of labour and rentier state theory.

Building a “Community of Common Future for Mankind”? Iranian and Chinese Perspectives on the Silk Road Initiative

Tim Epkenhans, René Trappel (Universität Freiburg, Deutschland)

In a 2017 speech at the United Nations Office in Geneva, President Xi Jinping of the People’s Republic of China presented the concept of a “Community of Common Future for Mankind” (CSFM) as the Chinese vision for a new world order. CSFM’s five main pillars are “peace through dialogue and consultation”, “common security for all through joint efforts”, “common prosperity through mutually-beneficial cooperation”, “an open and inclusive world through exchanges and mutual learning”, and “make[ing] our world clean and beautiful by pursuing green and low-carbon development (see http://en.qsttheory.cn/2021-01/05/c_579937.htm). This Chinese vision for a new world order would be built on respect for different “civilizations”, appreciating differences in history, culture, and customs. This concept of a new world order furthermore postulates the conditionality of human rights and a reversal of the international order that had emerged after 1945. CSFM thereby opens a door for international pariah states such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has signed a 25-year Cooperation Program with the People’s Republic of China in March 2021. Our paper explores and compares the Iranian and Chinese expectations of the future global order and, particularly the prospects of their mutual cooperation. Importantly, both the Chinese CSFM and Iranian foreign policy agenda have an intrinsic domestic dimension with regards to regime legitimization and ideological discourses of national sovereignty.

Salafi politics in the Maghreb

Guy Eyre (MECAM & ABI)

This paper looks at something unexpected – how ‘quietist’ Salafi actors in Morocco and Algeria, who claim they “don’t do politics”, actually do do politics. Politically ‘quietist’ expressions of Salafism were long thought to be a defining feature of Salafi trends. These Salafi groups are typically known for their focus on studying and teaching Islam, and cleansing it of ‘impurities’, and their lack of interest in formal politics, if not their traditional full-blown rejection of all formal political participation and activism. Much contemporary scholarship on global Salafism typically describes the politics of Salafi actors in terms of involvement in formal institutional politics, and how they contest state authority and legitimacy – practices that ‘quietist’ Salafi groups explicitly disavow. This paper, however, attempts to advance understanding of Salafi political practices and, in doing so, broaden and nuance notions of ‘political’ Salafis within the scholarship on Islamic politics.

When is the Future? Temporality and Iranian Anti-Regime Online Spaces

Elena Fellner (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, Deutschland)

Authoritarian regimes like the Islamic Republic of Iran subsist on projecting a sense of inevitability and rightfulness with regard to the future that awaits their citizens, as evidenced for example by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei's announcement of the "Second Phase of the Revolution" in 2019, which he promised "will never expire." If enough of those citizens oppose the regime, however, existential uncertainty permeates the body politic and the onus falls on the would-be revolutionaries to not only criticize the present and lament the past, but to conceive a future that connects a utopian vision with an inadequate present through a series of tangible steps. Drawing on primary data collected via Twitter and Instagram from the nation-wide protests of November 2019 into the first year of Ebrahim Raisi's presidency, I will sketch ideas about a brighter future without the Islamic Republic, as well as its roots in a collective past marked by equal amounts of suffering and greatness, which circulate in anti-regime circles on Persian-language social media. I will also provide an answer to the question who these deliberations on the future address – who will require removal, who will enjoy its benefits, and who is called upon to make it all happen.

Middle class generations: looking for the breaking point of Nasser's social Revolution

Antoinette Ferrand (Sorbonne-University, France)

Most experts who witnessed the 1952 Revolution and the years that followed agreed on creating a new government for the Egyptian middle class: having graduated from the country's institutions of higher learning and having been politicized in an atmosphere dominated by nationalist mythology surrounding Sa'd Zaghlūl, the Free Officers took it upon themselves to realize the transition of Egyptian society from independence to national development. For Marxist historiography, the "new society" born from that union would merely constitute the hegemony of a "new class": a bureaucratic and technocratic elite that betrayed national aspirations in the name of so-called 'socialism'.

But Nasserist practitioners went beyond new alliances. Over the course of almost twenty years, their planning in the realms of public policy worked towards moulding society in accordance with their vision. As a result, the middle class finally resembled a melting pot of social strata: it ranged from the descendants of the interwar effendiyya to legions of recently graduated civil servants who had joined the administration and the public sector, to the urban petite bourgeoisie who had gained access to education after leaving its rural background behind. From 1952 to 1970, a sufficient time for a generational shift passed, changing aspirations of the growing intermediate strata.

This paper provides a study of the generational conflict which simmered between the older and younger members of these intermediate strata. From this new angle on Nasser's "new socialist society", it seeks to challenge the commonplace understanding of 1952 as a rupture through social classification.

Pro-government Media and Elite Discourse in Turkey: Affective Dimensions of Reporting during the 2013 Gezi Protests in Turkey

Bahar First (Freie Universität Berlin, Deutschland)

The Gezi protests of 2013 were a direct challenge against the rule of the AKP and Prime Minister Erdogan. Not only did they challenge the regime, they also played a crucial role in its further authoritarian transformation. Much has been said about this authoritarian restructuring in post-Gezi Turkey, however the significance of affect and emotion in this transformation has not been uttered much. In fact, the regime made substantial use of emotional rhetoric and affective practices in order to discursively accompany its policies of violence and repression. Pro-government media has played a noteworthy role in the dissemination of the ruling elite's discourse during the protests, specifically by contributing to the active creation of argumentative frames about the protests and protestors. These frames have been invigorated affectively by the ruling elite during upcoming critical moments of the country, especially in the aftermath of the coup attempt in 2016, and been utilized in the construction of Erdogan's New Turkey.

Addressing the abovementioned gap in authoritarianism studies on Turkey, this paper will examine the pro-government daily Sabah at the time of the protests during Mai-June 2013. Building on original data, which was collected in the framework of the CRC Affective Societies research project, the paper will apply critical discourse analysis to selected newspaper articles for this time period. The paper will illustrate how discursive frames about protests and protestors in Gezi were constructed affectively. It will also discuss why and how these constructions are relevant for comprehending the ongoing affective authoritarianism project in contemporary Turkish politics.

The Road to the “Spider Web” – Hizballah's perception of the Israeli society during the 1990's

Netanel Flamer (Bar-Ilan University, Israel)

After Israel partially withdrew from Lebanon in 1985, Israeli forces continued to control a wide area in South Lebanon known as “the security zone.” By 1992, under the scepter of Nasrallah, a charismatic leader with operational command experience and a strong position in the organization, Hizballah's activities against the IDF became more intense, sophisticated, and destructive. Hizballah attacked Israeli military outposts, headquarters, and convoys of military vehicles. It also carried out assassinations of senior commanders as well as operations against special Israeli units.

This research aims to explore how Hizballah interpreted and analyzed the Israeli leadership and Israeli society's opinions, beliefs, and resilience regarding the prolonged fighting in southern Lebanon in the 1990s. It will analyze how over that period, Hizballah has collected information from various sources, mostly open-source materials, dealing with both military and civilian characteristics of Israel. These include the Israeli political system and trends in Israeli society and public opinion. Hizballah observed how Israeli society's belief in the justice of the IDF presence in southern Lebanon gradually eroded. Furthermore, it will explore how Hizballah's enemy image of the Israeli society affected its strategy and operational activity, as well as its psychological warfare efforts.

The research is based on various sources, mainly in Arabic and Hebrew.

The most important sources come from literature published by Hizballah: interviews, official publications, and media articles.

Islamic Ideals, the Concept of Love and Processes of Individualisation: Muṣṭafā Ḥusnī's Writings and his Spiritual Brand

Liza Maria Franke (Georg-August Universität Göttingen, Germany)

Academic research on Islam in Egypt often focuses on the entanglement of religion and politics, mostly analysed with regard to public spaces. This paper seeks to nuance the focus on pious activism and the idea that Islam is dominating everyday life in Egypt by taking the role of the Islamic television preacher Muṣṭafā Ḥusnī and the impact of his personal spiritual brand into consideration. My research on individual pieties, on being religious and doing being religious, especially opened up the worlds of individuals who are different. Drawing on fieldwork with young Alexandrians this paper considers how their spirituality is influenced by public religious figures, such as Muṣṭafā Ḥusnī, who include everyday life experiences of ordinary Muslims in their interpretation of Islamic sources. This development hints at tendencies away from mainstream Islam and asks for alternative options and different versions of belief. The religious television guide's self-marketing, his brand, his way of conveying information (religious, social and sometimes even political content) and his influence is being analysed in this paper. By focusing on these narratives, this paper tries to understand the relationship between public versions of Islam and processes of individualisation in the context of personal spiritual brands. In addition, it seeks to analyse these narratives in order to explore the dynamic character of the self in the realm of religiosities under the influence of the spiritual brand of Muṣṭafā Ḥusnī.

Utopian Horizons: Iran and the many possibilities of the early 1980s

Simon Wolfgang Fuchs (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Germany)

The Iranian Revolution has become a victim of teleology. The downfall of the Shah, it seems to many observers, unleashed a “sectarian tsunami” and thus greatly exacerbated contemporary Sunni-Shi’i tensions in the Middle East and beyond. Additionally, the Islamic Republic’s long-simmering economic and social woes have tainted the country’s image beyond recovery. Yet, focusing on this supposed path-dependency of an unsustainable theocratic model precludes us from appreciating the utopian horizons of the revolutionary moment. Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi has recently emphasized that “[f]orty years ago, Iranians embodied the [...] philosopher Walter Benjamin’s definition of revolution and took a leap into the open sky of possibilities, a costly leap into a world of uncertainty.”

My paper will aim at recovering several of these possibilities of the early 1980s. For a brief moment in time, Iran was at the forefront of developing alternative futures that comprised not merely Muslim majority states but also appealed to the so-called Third World in general. Sunni Islamist actors, for instance, considered Khomeini’s rise to power not only as a golden opportunity to finally do away with internal conflicts in Islam. The sweeping change in Iran also reminded them of the necessity to foreground their own struggle for social justice as a means for reaching out to workers and the urban poor instead of only debating within their own echo chambers. On the Left, Iran-propelled excitement about a reinvigoration of anti-imperialism and an end to capitalism as we know it prevailed for much longer than we commonly assume.

Coercion and Repression In Times of Crisis: Reflections from Lebanon After the October Revolutionary Uprising in 2019

Jeffrey G. Karam (1: Freie Universität Berlin, Germany; IRGAC RLS; EUME)

This paper explains how the political regime in Lebanon has been able to maintain the status quo after the eruption of the massive revolutionary uprising on 17 October 2019. By focusing on the regime's ability to manufacture and exploit sociopolitical and economic crises, it argues that the devaluation of the Lebanese currency, the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic, and the catastrophic August 4th, 2020 Beirut explosion were integral for the ruling elite to contain the revolutionary situation that is still unfolding since 2019. It explores the connections between local, regional, and global forces in Lebanon to present a novel conceptualization of counter-revolution.

Infrastrukturen der Besetzung - Japanische Entwicklungspolitik in Palästina

Sonja Alexandra Ganseforth (Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien, Tokyo, Japan)

Die palästinensischen Gebiete sind seit den 1990er Jahren zu einem Hotspot der internationalen Entwicklungspolitik geworden. Aus einer Post-Development-Perspektive heraus argumentiere ich, dass die Ungleichheiten und teilweise absurden Auswirkungen von Entwicklungsinterventionen besonders deutlich werden, wenn man die ungleichen Machtverhältnisse und Infrastrukturen im besetzten Palästina betrachtet. Auch die offizielle japanische Entwicklungshilfe hatte um die Jahrtausendwende die palästinensischen Räume in den Fokus genommen und eine japanische Friedens- und Entwicklungsinitiative für den Nahostkonflikt ins Leben gerufen. Das japanische Vorzeigeprojekt, der „Corridor for Peace and Prosperity“ im Jordantal, zielte darauf ab, durch die Errichtung eines grenznahen Agroindustrieparks eine exportorientierte industrielle Entwicklung zu fördern und ausländische Investitionen anzuwerben. Als Kooperationsprojekt mit japanischen, palästinensischen, israelischen und jordanischen Partnern konzipiert, sollte der Corridor den regionalen Frieden und die Verständigung durch wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit fördern.

Auch wenn eine Lösung der Konflikte ferner denn je erscheint und das Projekt über den lokalen Kontext hinaus eher unbekannt geblieben ist, weist das Projekt große Kohärenz mit vorherrschenden Diskursen über Entwicklung, Frieden und Sicherheit auf und steht beispielhaft für die entpolitisierenden Effekte entwicklungspolitischer Interventionen. Auf der Grundlage wiederholter Feldforschung in Palästina und Japan analysiert dieser Beitrag den Kampf um multiskalare Infrastrukturen, bei dem Akteure von Tokyo bis Ramallah und Tel Aviv versuchen, ein Entwicklungsprojekt zur Durchsetzung ihrer Partikularinteressen zu nutzen. Ich argumentiere, dass dies kein geradliniger Prozess ist, da weitreichende Grundsatzentscheidungen mit äußerst lokalen, kleinräumigen Auseinandersetzungen verflochten sind, die auf Infrastrukturen in verschiedenen Größenordnungen und in verschiedenartigen Räumen abzielen.

The Political Economy of AKP's Foreign Aid: A Regional Assessment of Middle East and North Africa

Ardahan Özkan Gedikli (GIGA Hamburg, Germany)

Although south-to-south cooperation (SSC) became an important field of inquiry within the International Political Economy (IPE) literature, the *raison d'être* behind the delivery of foreign aid by emerging donors remains open for theoretical explanation. Illustrating a sharp increase especially after 2011 and ranking as the top global donor in both 2018 and 2019 despite growing economic problems domestically, Turkey's foreign aid trajectory has been widely examined within this literature. Having delivered an essential amount of aid to Central Asia until 2000s, the focus of Turkey's aid seems to have shifted to the Middle East in the AKP era. Existing accounts on Turkey's foreign policy and aid policies often neglect the relevance of Turkey's historical transformation and the political economic roots of AKP's foreign-policy making. This project purports to propose a critical political economy approach to foreign aid and aims to link Turkey's foreign policy to a wider set of global, regional, and national socio-economic processes. Building on the interplay between Turkey's historical transformation and the international political economy, this study benefits from the Gramscian school to international politics widely used by Marxist scholars within IPE and International Relations (IR). These conceptualizations have the potential of mapping out the articulation of hegemonic projects both domestically and regionally, that reflect interests of different social forces and manifest themselves in foreign-policy discourses and practices. In this sense, this study aims to understand and contextualize Turkey's aid policies in the Middle East and North Africa within its social and historical context.

Architecture, Immaculate Form, and the Aesthetics of Branding in Dubai

Philip Geisler (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut)

This paper examines some of Dubai's residential and multifunctional architectural spaces in order to rethink the aesthetic meaning of neoliberal spatial production between 2001 and 2017. The paper argues that the forms and urban settings of residential skyscrapers in Dubai Marina and villas of Palm Jumeirah Island, the Mall of the Emirates, and the Burj Khalifa, as well as their narrative framing and iconic cartographic or photographic representation demonstrate a systematic capitalist appropriation of cultural topoi of immaculate form. These aesthetics evolve through mega-dimensions and narratives of construction technology, rigid separation of interior and exterior space, and thus the constitution of thematic and spatial totalities in architecture and constructed landscapes. Infrastructure then enables the establishment of coherent spatial experience, drawing on modern concepts of urban planning and enhancing a futuristic perception of urban space that resonates with science fiction imagery. Such aesthetics of spatial production not only serve to consolidate hegemonic and local autocratic power, but also result in constructed realities and sensory experiences that substantially define the self-conception of diverse global communities and their lifestyles in an era of globalized mass consumption. The paper concludes by highlighting that Dubai's architectural culture displays how the cultural history and immaculate aesthetics that are mobilized through architectural and urban branding achieve mental domination through epitomizing modern myths of happiness and perfection grounded in post-war cultural debates and connecting these with sculptural and fotogenic architectural structures that build on postmodern formal repertoires.

A Tale of Two Revolutions: The Sociopolitical Dynamics of the Syrian Revolution

Obayda Amer Ghadban (Marmara University, Turkey; The Observatory of Political and Economic Networks- Syrian Program)

Rather than toppling the authoritarian Syrian regime, the Syrian regime devolved into one of the world's most brutal, complex, multi-layered conflicts. Why and How? From this question, many related sub-puzzles might originate: How were the political and military actors being found and mobilized, and how were they connected? Why were there hundreds of rebel factions? Why did they not manage to unify? Why did the political and military opposition not manage to coordinate? And finally, why did the military action succeed locally but failed nationally?

Answering this is essential for any possible future resolution and it'd also deepen our knowledge of the Syrian society and state. Most essentially, the research provides a novel understanding of contemporary Syria, in a way that understands local network responses to political violence as essential to analysis.

I argue that the answer lies in the sociopolitical dynamics of the Revolution. By studying variant social structures of given communities and how they were reflected and represented in political and military bodies, I argue that both the existence and type (political or military) of any non-state actor is a reflection of the social networks and identities of its community. This applies for both local actors (on the town level) as well as nationwide actors.

Should I go or should I stay? Why people in Lebanon choose adaptation, resistance or emigration

Tim Glawion (German Institute for Global and Area Studies, Germany), Aya Chamseddine (Independent Researcher), Lilian Mauthofer (German Institute for Global and Area Studies, Germany), Amira Tamim (German Institute for Global and Area Studies, Germany)

The hijacking of the political, economic and social spheres by people closely connected to leaders of the sectarian civil war in Lebanon in the 1980s has narrowed opportunities in Lebanon and distinctly shaped how the limited remaining jobs and services can be accessed. We study three ways individuals living in Lebanon can cope with this situation. The first, adaptation, seemed to be standard practice over the past decades and created the outside facade of Lebanon as a harbor of stability and wealth in a tumultuous neighborhood. The recent rise of widespread resistance, second, has shaken this image and granted people hopes of reforming the system they believe deeply flawed. However, the intransigence of the ruling elite has boosted the ever present third option – emigration – to never seen heights. We explain why people choose one of the three pathways and how they relate to internal military-sectarian hijacking of the state as well as to external intervention as exemplified by changing EU policies towards Lebanon. We find that the three ways flow in successive waves, with adaptation as the unwilling default mode – often leading to internal resignation – shaken up by recurrent hopes of change through resistance, which after disillusionment raises the wish to emigrate and the need to readapt if this is not possible.

Future, Power, and Orientalism

Olmo Götz (Albrecht-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Deutschland)

Ideas and visions about the future are closely linked to questions of power. Those who seem to be able to envision conceptions of futures or to design their own future claim agency in history. On the other hand, the assertion of a lack of sustainability by competing societies can have political consequences or even legitimize interventions. The mechanisms of orientalism show how closely the claims to be able to design futures are linked to power. Orientalism locates the region in a mythicized past, incapable of progress. The West appears ex negativo progressive, rational, and of capable of designing a future – not only for itself. This has a major impact on the MENA-region, because the underlying discourses legitimize Western intervention in the region through the diagnosis of a lack of ‘future capability’. Against this background, projects such as Ibn Salman’s model city of the future Neom in Saudi Arabia are to be understood not only as visions for a new or better society, but also as a strategy of self-representation as an acting and planning subject of history. The same is true for ideological conceptions of the future of the region as well as for fictional visions of a distant future. In each case, the focus is on the claim to be able to think and project the future beyond foreign domination. The paper explores the conceptual constellation of future, power and orientalism and thereby sheds light on how the appropriation of a self-determined future can shape politics and culture.

Dying for a Cause: Mobilizing Martyrdom in Egypt, Lebanon and Sudan

Jannis Julien Grimm (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

Martyrs play a crucial role in most social movements, as do their visual depictions. They embody a link between grievances, indignation, and political action: as victims, they testify to unjust treatment and social problems; as heroes, they testify to the moral worth of a cause and the importance of acting, even at the price of self-sacrifice. Accordingly, the theme of martyrdom constitutes one of the threads that connects contemporary mobilization processes in West Asia and North Africa to the 2011 uprisings. Like Khaled Said and Mohamed Bouazizi in 2010, today, those killed in massacres and state-engineered catastrophes, such as the Beirut explosion, are recast as martyrs to support emancipatory struggles. Whether in Khartoum, Cairo, or Beirut, social movements attempt to transform the horror of deadly catastrophes into a moral commitment to continued resistance by portraying victims as martyrs, and survivors as heroes of endurance. Killings and death thereby become sources of indignation that encourage resilience and resistance, rather than demobilization. This paper explores the process by which the victims of physical and structural state violence are cast as martyrs for the purpose of social mobilization. Based on a comparative study of three recent events of deadly mass violence – the 2013 Rabaa massacre, the 2019 Khartoum killings and the 2020 Beirut port explosion – it posits that the mobilization of martyrdom by social movements can not only counteract the repression of existing protest campaigns but also trigger new collective action driven by demands for accountability and retribution.

Eternal Struggle of "Jiares" in Dersim (Turkey): Contemporary Destruction of Kurdish Alevi Sacred Land, and Environmental Struggles as a Form of Local Ethno-Politics.

Ahmet Kerim Gültekin (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

Kurdish Alevis have been exposed to continuous oppression by the Ottomans and afterwards the Turkish republic. The traumatic forced modernization politics in the 20th century devastated their rural life and oral culture-based social structure. Due to repeated military persecutions and related economic distress, most Kurdish Alevis live in Western Europe. Nevertheless, they keep believing in Dersim as an ancestral sacred land and sustain modern religious-political discourses by referring to mostly non-human entities, such as mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, wild animals etc. Large-scale destruction in the 20th century greatly affected Kurdish Alevis, tearing apart religious caste-like relationships. However, even though the socioreligious networks have long collapsed, sacred places have sustained the continuity of religion. These sites' power is how they reconnect between humans and non-human. In addition, the sites produce unique connections with mystical beings through various forms of private piety.

In the contemporary Dersim is not only threatened by devastating military operations of the state but also "hunting", "mining companies", "nature-tourism", "hydroelectric dams", etc. and Kurdish Alevis are afraid that these external threats will cause the death of their way of life and religion. Therefore, to resist these threats, most Kurdish Alevis combine environmental discourses with religious discourses that call for the protection of Dersim as a living soul.

This presentation will analyze the growing importance of sacred places in the Raa Haqi belief system and focus on the instrumentalization processes of sacred places concerning the reproduction of modern ethno-politics of Kurdish Alevi identity.

Competing for China's favor: COVID-19 implications on intra-regional Gulf dynamics

Julia Gurol (University of Freiburg, Deutschland)

While a resurgence of autocracies has been identified by scholars since the 2000s, empirical evidence grows that the fight against COVID-19 further facilitates the trend towards fostering the autocratic order at home and the bonds among autocracies worldwide. We argue that this development of fostering autocratic order is not intrinsically national but reinforced externally (i.e. there is a prevalent interplay of the external and the domestic level). We further argue that this new global surge of authorities is especially apparent in Sino-Gulf relations. However, while we notice that the COVID-19 pandemic has helped China's influence in acting as an appealing example of successfully combatting a global pandemic, thereby projecting a more positive image of the People's Republic (see: Demmelhuber et al., forthcoming), we also challenge the common assumption of autocratic patronage from strongest to weakest. In turn, we tend to show that the Gulf countries reveal specific dynamics of regionalism that include a double axis of conflict (Saudi Arabia vs. Iran) and competition (Qatar vs. UAE) that do not only oscillate but are also manifested in their relations with one of the international patrons (here: China).

Redefining Peace: Discourses of Normalization and Apartheid

Steffen Hagemann (Heinrich Boell Stiftung Tel Aviv, Israel)

With the advancing one-state reality, declining support for the two-state resolution, and the passage of the Abraham Accords, discourses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have shifted in Israeli society. Whereas in the past it was the Israeli left that used the concept of peace, today the Israeli center and right is using a peace framing.

With the Abraham Accords, Israel has gained international reputation, but at the same time the agreements redefine peace in a way that is no longer oriented toward international law. Instead, the peace frame is used in the hegemonic discourse to defame Israeli human rights organizations as obstacles to peace and to dismiss Palestinian claims. At the same time, this discourse enables (and legitimizes) the ongoing occupation. The progressive camp, on the other hand, increasingly turns away from the concept of peace and instead uses a rights frame, as seen in the apartheid discourse. This is integrated into a discursive change that departs from the principle of separation and pursues a new democratic grounding of the progressive camp, which challenges the ethnonational structures of the Israeli state.

This article examines this discursive shift and the different resonance of these two narratives. The peace framing resonates widely emotionally and discursively in Israeli society and is compatible with the ethnonational discourse of the Israeli right. The use of the apartheid discourse, on the other hand, is regionally and internationally resonant, but fundamentally challenges Israeli identity and Israel's ontological security.

Deutsche und italienische Orientalismen im Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus

Philipp Henning (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany)

Wie stark war der italienische Faschismus und der deutsche Nationalsozialismus (NS) von ihren jeweiligen Islam- und Orient-Bildern beeinflusst? Italien und Deutschland suchten und definierten ihre Ideologien im Spiegel des Orients. Die orientalisierte Betrachtung der Peripherie Europas war für die Achsenmächte ein bestimmender Rahmen. Blickt man auf den „Orient“ als konstruiertes „Andere“ von (Süd)Osteuropa über den Balkan bis in den Nahen Osten und Nordafrika, werden auch neue Zusammenhänge im Vorgehen der Achse ersichtlich.

Als Mittel der Einflussnahme im Orient setzten beide Regime auf den Rundfunk. Sendestationen wurden von italienischen und deutschen Firmen errichtet, um propagandistisch genutzt zu werden. Dies war auch als Ausdruck des "reactionary modernism" (Herf) der Achsenmächte zu sehen. Sahen Berlin und Rom die Auslandsrundfunkpropaganda eher als geopolitisches, kolonialistisches oder ideologisches Mittel an? Die deutschen und italienischen Varianten divergierten dabei von der Said'schen Orientalismus-Definition. Im NS fand die Verschmelzung aus wissenschaftlicher Orientalistik und verklärter Orientromantik statt. In Italien wurde orientalistisches Denken zu imperialistischen Zwecken verwendet.

Hierzu ist deshalb eine Definition des Begriffs zu entwickeln. Was war mit „Orient“ im italienischen, was im deutschen Fall überhaupt gemeint? Der Orient war dabei kein einheitlicher, sondern ein „überlappender“ (Koselleck) Raum. Hier zeigte sich die von Sebastian Conrad beschriebene „koloniale Globalität“. Die Konstruktion des osteuropäischen Menschen und dessen Abwertung ähnelte dabei sehr stark dem Bild des „Orientalen“ im NS. Wie sich dies - am Beispiel der auf Muslime und den Orient gerichteten Propaganda - ausdrückte, soll analysiert werden.

Die Stadtmauer von Bahla: Kommunale Selbstverwaltung in einer Oasensiedlung am Ende des omanischen ancien régime

Michaela Hoffmann-Ruf, Johann Büssow (Ruhr-Universität-Bochum, Germany)

Die die gesamte Oase umschließende 12 Kilometer lange aus Lehmziegeln, Steinen und Holz erbaute „Umfassungsmauer“ (*as-sūr al-muḥīt*) hebt die Oasensiedlung Bahla bis heute unter den anderen Siedlungen Omans hervor. Zusammen mit der im Zentrum der Oase gelegenen Zitadelle bildet das seit dem 16. Jahrhundert belegte Bauwerk eines der bekanntesten architektonischen Ensembles im Sultanat Oman. Aus Sicht der Geschichtswissenschaft ist die Tatsache von besonderem Interesse, dass ihr Unterhalt über Jahrhunderte hinweg weitgehend, wenn nicht gar ausschließlich von der lokalen Einwohnerschaft bestritten wurde. Anders als die meisten bekannten Festungsbauten ist die Stadtmauer von Bahla somit kein Monument eines Herrscherhauses, sondern in erster Linie ein Zeugnis lokaler Selbstorganisation.

Dieser Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit der Frage, wie diese kommunale Aufgabe organisiert wurde und wie sich die Zentralisierungs- und Modernisierungspolitik ab 1970 auf die lokalen Organisationsstrukturen auswirkte. Die Grundlage der Untersuchung bildet ein handschriftliches Rechnungsbuch aus dem Besitz des the Ministry of Heritage and Culture in Maskat. Dieses liefert Informationen über die Personen und Institutionen, die zwischen 1967 und 1976 mit dem Unterhalt der Mauer befasst waren sowie über die Organisation und Finanzierung der Arbeiten. Ein Vergleich mit älteren Rechtsgutachten legt nahe, dass viele der hier erkennbaren administrativen Routinen im mindestens seit dem 15. Jahrhundert Bestand hatten.

Die Studie erlaubt somit wichtige Einblicke in die Funktionsweise kommunaler Selbstorganisation vor dem Zeitalter des Nationalstaats. Zugleich beleuchtet sie die Art und Weise wie sich die epochale politische Wende von 1970 im Alltag einer Oasensiedlung auswirkte.

What does 'conspiracy' mean? The emergence and function of the modern term mu'amara in Arabic.

Jacob Høigilt (University of Oslo, Norway)

The term mu'amara (conspiracy) is ubiquitous in contemporary Arabic public discourse. However, it is a relatively recent conceptual addition to political language in the Arab Middle East. In this paper, I argue that the term emerged in the Arabic press during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and that it evolved to reflect a European conspiracist discourse that was common at the time. I show that while palace intrigues and secret plots are well-known parts of Arab history writing, the word mu'amara denotes a different kind of political phenomenon. Its meaning as secret cabals with long-term, sinister goals is rooted in European political discourse. However, Arab political elites employed this modern idea of conspiracies as a powerful rhetorical tool during the independence struggles and in the postcolonial state. In conclusion, I present some common conspiracy tropes as found in the discourse of these elites, showing that they bear little resemblance to what is commonly understood by the term conspiracy theory in Europe and the USA. The paper is based on an array of textual sources in Arabic: classical works of history and polemic, dictionaries from the Arab nahda, and digitized archives of Egyptian and Lebanese newspapers and political speeches from 1882-1970. The data from these sources are interpreted in light of the relatively rich literature on the history and functions of conspiracy theories in Europe.

International Development Cooperation and the Moroccan Social Contract

Annabelle Houdret, Mark Furness (Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik, Deutschland)

In 2021, a commission appointed by King Mohamed V released a new vision for Moroccan state-society relations: the New Development Model (NDM). The NDM responded to widespread discontent about the failure to implement reforms promised in 2011, when the Arab Uprisings swept across the MENA region. The NDM was presented as a 'national collective and federative project', entailing a social protection system called a 'social pact' or 'social contract'. The references to the social contract raise interesting conceptual and empirical questions, which have important implications for state-society relations and sustainable development in Morocco. From a conceptual perspective, what does 'new social contract' mean for state-society relations in Morocco? How does the NDM aim to build a new social contract, and what reforms are needed? What does this imply for international cooperation with Morocco in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs?

In order to address these questions, we develop a framework based on scholarship on social contracts in the MENA region since the Arab Uprisings. According to this analytical understanding, the state must deliver '3Ps' – protection, provision and participation – to the population. In return, the people grant their loyalty, taxes and contributions to public life. We use this framework to analyse the NMD, focussing on objectives suggested by the Commission and the potential for reforms in the Moroccan political context. We then turn to the NMD's international implications, focussing on areas where Morocco will need support in line with international commitments to the 2030 Agenda.

UAE's political economy of logistics and port networks in at the Horn of Africa

Martin Hvidt (University of Southern Denmark, Denmark)

This presentation focuses on the local power dynamics in the Red Sea Region. More specifically it aims to analyze the economic and political policies related to regional port and logistics networks taken by the Gulf states, primarily United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the Horn of Africa.

UAE has been become an active player in the Horn of Africa. First through investments into African agriculture in order to secure a steady and affordable supply of foodstuff for their populations. Second, through massive investments in banking, extractive industries, real estate, retail, education and above all, transport in Africa, investments only surpassed by China.

And thirdly through maritime trade, and more recently of port management and logistics. With the prospect of increases of maritime traffic through Africa's ports, there are solid economic reasons for DP World to invest in ports in HoA, not least because Africa is significantly undersupplied with port capacity today.

So far, UAE operates the Berbera container port in Somaliland, and has won the contract to upgrade the air and naval base facilities around Berbera airport. UAE furthermore manages the Doraleh Container Terminal in Djibouti, the Bosaso port in Puntland, Mogadishu and Barawe ports in Somaila and has established military bases on Socotra and Perim Island in Yemen.

This presentation aims to analyze this development in the light of UAE's shifting role, from a softer to a harder foreign policy player' in the political landscape in the region.

The paranormal as a new framework for interpreting African resistance in the context of violent decolonization: the case of Cameroonian nationalists from Sanaga-Maritime (1955 - 1958)

Patrick Romuald JIE JIE (The University of Ngaoundéré-Cameroun-ENS, Cameroon)

Of all the territories of black Africa under French domination, Cameroon was the only one where, in addition to resistance to the colonial conquest proper, recourse to the violence of arms was necessary to settle the conflict born of the claim of independence. The usual theoretical frameworks have long presented the fierce resistance of Cameroonian nationalists, as resulting from an effective use of visible weapons, consisting mainly of firearms of Western origin or of local manufacture (machetes, knives, arrows, spears ...) However, the field surveys that we carried out today allow us to glimpse another perspective in the explanation of the heroic resistance of the Cameroonian nationalists. We will call it "invisible weapons" or esoteric. In this context, the invisible arsenal that we have discovered is based on: the rite of Njég, the use of Ngambi or divination, the kòn bassa or absolute ancestral defense, the dim ba ko or ancestral hypnotic kaleidoscope, the nlend basôgôl or cry ancestral savior, the Likang or the occult anti-personal mine, the Nson basaa or the invisible missile. From this perspective, it can be concluded that visible weapons alone did not determine the fierce resistance of these nationalists. In order to achieve the main objective of this work, exhaustive documentary research and field interviews were carried out in the Boumnyébel area (central Cameroon). Ultimately, in this communication proposal, it is about going beyond the usual theoretical frameworks to question African resistance in general and Cameroonian resistance in particular from the perspective of the paranormal.

Protesters or terrorists? Justifying legal and extra-legal repression in the Maghreb

Maria Josua (German Institute for Global and Area Studies, Germany)

Previous research has shown that authoritarian officials use justification narratives to avoid the backlash effect of repression in highly visible and critical situations of contentious politics. This paper builds on and expands this finding, focusing on justifications of repression under “normal authoritarianism” of the 2000 years in Tunisia and Morocco. In addition to investigating the rhetorical strategies that accompany the policing of protests or other repressive actions of the security forces, this contribution sheds light on how the mentioned actors and aspects of repression interplay with legislative and judicial processes. While regime violence in Tunisia was much more widespread under Ben Ali, repression was also a frequent phenomenon in Morocco during the first years of Muhammad VI’s rule. This contribution analyses the communication of repression of pre-Arab uprisings protests in the context of the Global War on Terror, reflecting the increasing use of terrorism as a narrative to delegitimize political activism.

To study the communication of repression, this paper draws on public discourse by officials, but also the proceedings of court trials and the text of legislation which criminalizes certain activities that could also be stretched to include oppositional activity. The methods used in this contribution include a mixed-methods analysis drawing on a novel original database, the “Justifications of Repressive Incidents in Morocco and Tunisia Dataset”, legal analysis based on court proceedings, as well as document analysis.

Häuser bewohnen, mit Häusern leben. Praxistheoretische Überlegungen zu Transformationsprozessen der omanischen Lehmziegelarchitektur

Josephine Kanditt, Thomas Schmidt-Lux (Universität Leipzig, Deutschland)

Die im Oman vielerorts vorhandenen Lehmziegelsiedlungen (arab. harat) ragen deutlich wahrnehmbar und zugleich umstritten in Gegenwart und Zukunft. Als Folge der umfassenden Modernisierungsprozesse im 20. Jahrhundert im Oman und den damit einhergehenden tiefgreifenden Veränderungen, die sich auch im Wohnen und Bauen zeigten, wurden die Siedlungen seit den 1970er Jahren schrittweise verlassen.

In unserem Vortrag möchten wir den Lehmziegelsiedlungen aus einer praxistheoretisch inspirierten Perspektive begegnen. Dies geschieht anhand konkreter Fallbeispiele, an denen wir Praktiken identifizieren, die sowohl etwas über die konkreten Orte, aber auch über generelle Entwicklungen im Oman Auskunft geben. Praktiken werden hier nicht einfach als Handlungen verstanden, sondern als Sets von Handlungsabläufen, die eine gewisse Regelmäßigkeit haben und institutionalisiert sind. So wird z. B. über das Erproben neuer Wohnpraktiken und das Musealisieren traditioneller Praktiken die Transformation der Lehmziegelsiedlungen greifbar.

Dabei dient uns die Theorie sozialer Praktiken (Schatzki 2016) als ein Ausgangspunkt, mithilfe derer wir das Zusammenspiel von Akteuren und Gebautem am Beispiel der Lehmziegelsiedlungen entfalten werden. Mit der Betonung der körperlichen, leiblichen und performativen Aspekte des Sozialen kommt hier verstärkt die soziale Wirksamkeit von Gebäuden in den Blick und damit das, „was Architektur tut und wie sich Architekturen als Gebäude in Praktiken entfalten und dadurch in ihrer sozial prekären Gestalt über unterschiedliche Existenzweisen sichtbar werden“ (Göbel 2016, S. 200).

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Rural Development Ideas and Practices in Contemporary North Africa

Roy Karadag (University of Bremen, Germany; Institute of Intercultural and International Studies (InIIS))

There is a long history of international organizations like the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank (WB) producing ideas, realizing projects and promoting policies of rural development. Originally framed as measures to mobilize the productive forces of peripheral spaces, the field of rural development has expanded a lot in past decades and now covers anything from supporting agricultural capacities to health and schooling projects to social protection schemes for the rural poor. In this paper, I investigate how newer rural development ideas are intended to address contemporary land questions, the deepening of commercial agriculture and the persistence of rural poverty in North African settings. As these factors contributed to the outbreak of mass protests and the Arab uprisings in 2010/11, the main question of this paper is whether and how new rural development ideas have touched on these specific vulnerabilities. Also, how are governments' efforts aim towards restoring calm and order in peripheral regions credited by IOs? More often than not, such national development programs actively appropriate ideas produced in transnational epistemic communities and IO spheres in order to legitimize autocratic ruling strategies. What this transnational constellation of interests means for dissent and opposition capacities from below will also be addressed in this paper.

No roadmap, no global vision: shortcomings and pitfalls of the first stage of decentralization reforms in Tunisia

Bassem Karray (University of Sfax, Tunisia, Tunisia)

Tunisia has started a decentralisation process by enacting new local electoral rules and a local collectivities code pursuant to the constitution of 2014. The reform process of 27 years was divided into three stages of nine years each. The article takes the opportunity to analyse shortcomings and pitfalls of the first stage that came to an end in 2021.

After embedding Tunisia's controversies in theoretical debates on decentralisation and the country's history of centre-periphery relations, the article analyses the process of drafting the new legal framework of the local collectivities code (LCC). It finds deep controversies around the content of the reform, most importantly about the question of the financial autonomy of local units – a typical issue of contention in processes of decentralization. However, the article also reveals a number of procedural weaknesses that had negative consequences for the overall reform process, such as the decision to reform only laws governing local power and to leave the legal framework applied to deconcentrated units unchanged. Moreover, the lack of a roadmap for the reform process proved disastrous, leading to local elections prior to the promulgation of the respective local collectivities law. Finally, the government's lack of a clear vision about the reform process led to struggles between national and local bureaucrats as well as civil society actors about transparency and participation in the process. The outcomes, so far, have been blockages and disfunctions within the elected councils, leaving numerous challenges to the following two stages of decentralization reforms in Tunisia.

Uncertainties and Concerns on the Implementation of Local Democracy in Post-Revolutionary Tunisia (2014-2021)

Habib Kazdaghli (The Historicity of Democracy, Tunisia)

Following the 2011 Revolution, and the fall of Ben Ali's dictatorship, Tunisia entered a period of both great political effervescence and fragile process of democratization. This paper focuses on the question of the definition, negotiation, and implementation of democratic principles at the scale of local institutions, mostly municipalities after 2014, *i.e.*, the year of the general and presidential elections. This period led to the municipal elections of 2018. The aim of the paper is both to propose a chronicle of local debates on democracy, its form, and its nature in this context, and to analyse the ambiguities, limits and instrumentalizations the concept of democracy has been the object of at all levels. The aim is also to study how the various actors of such debates, from politicians to civil society, from media to social media and from the sphere of local activism, trade unions, conservative religious networks to mobilisation of the scale of neighbourhoods, villages or factories one the one side used and interpreted the concept of democracy and on the other side reflected in their own practices and representations various historical and anthropological layers of forms of deliberation and expression of opinions. This perspective is part of a broader reflection on the concept of historicity, with questionings on the constant interaction between various temporalities in the definition of democracy.

The dichotomy of tribalism and security in Iraq – Case study: West Anbar 2003-2020

Karim I Khashaba (none, Egypt)

The research question: How are the tribes of West Anbar (WA) and the security dynamics mutually affecting each other?

This paper is to understand the inter-relationships among the tribes of WA but also how these tribes are affecting the security scene in the region. The challenge of this paper, however, was in the extremely limited secondary sources bringing the two together, in relevance to WA and the contemporary influence of WA tribes on the ongoing security situation.

The concept of tribes and the understanding of the tribal dynamics were extensively tackled by authors and researchers. Moreover, the influence of the tribe on the civilian population and their relations amidst the security and political transitions were heavily researched abstractly and within contexts. This paper had resorted to such sources to set the base for the situation in WA. The security aspect, the core of this paper, was brought in through several dimensions: the tribal role, the geography and the security players.

The most appropriate methodology would be the case study research, especially that the paper would be tracing in-depth WA's operational processes of security and tribalism, rather than only the significance of the results of the interdependence of both variables, throughout the study period. The concluding arguments of the paper is that the conflict now in WA has changed from the Coalition vs. the Islamic State group to become more of a US-Iran battleground. The US-Iranian potential deal over the nuclear program is another critical determinant for the stability of WA.

Is climate change relevant? Mainstreaming the debates on Climate Change Adaptation in Amman, Jordan: A survey of a societal segment

Luna Khirfan (University of Waterloo, Canada)

This paper presents perceptions of urbanites in Amman, Jordan, with regards to climate change. It specifically interrogates their perceptions of the role of nature-based solutions within urban areas in adapting to its' impacts such as the daylighting (deculverting) of urban streams.

The paper presents results from two data collection methods. The first is an on-line survey instrument (in both Arabic and English) disseminated via social media Amman's current residents who are Jordanian citizens and are 18+ years of age. The instrument garnered 200+ responses that offer valuable insights into the perceptions of a societal segment of Amman's residents toward climate change, and specifically, the role of nature-based solutions, such as tree canopies and stream daylighting, in adapting Amman to a changing climate. In the second approach, we used focus group activities with local experts in Amman that underscored primarily nature-based solutions in adapting to climate change. We corroborate the data collected from these two methods to develop a better understanding on the extent to which the climate change discourse in Amman is mainstreamed. Our results reveal multiple contradictions in perceptions about climate change, its impacts, and the preferred responses to it among the study participants. The paper explores these contradictions to present an insight into the attitudes of a particular segment of Amman's society toward climate change. Finally, we explore in this paper the adaptability of our combined method for other urban contexts in Jordan and the wider MENA region.

The Political Economy of Corruption and the US war in Iraq (1991-2011)

Dina Rizk Khoury (George Washington University, United States of America)

My paper traces the continuities and transformations of the politics and economics of corruption that have pervaded the politics of Iraq. I argue that the distinctive features of corruption that usually accompany the neoliberal economics of privatization of state resources are compounded in Iraq by the fact that such privatization is embedded in an economy of war that saw its inception during the 1980s but took distinctive features after the 1990s. Most analyses of the politics of corruption in Iraq have focused on the particular arrangement of apportionment of power along confessional lines and neoliberal economic order that the United States crafted in the aftermath of the 2003. Corruption, however, has been a feature of an economy of war forged by an international sanctions regime, the dismantling of the state's territorial and economic sovereignty, and the privatization of state monopoly on coercion and the primacy of its role as guarantor of social goods that began in the 1990s. The post-2003 political and economic order created a class of political and economic entrepreneurs and legitimated the informal economy of corruption that had existed in the 1990s. The confessional order created by the post-2003 settlement depended for its survival on normalization of corruption as a mode of economic and political practice and was perpetuated by deployment violence and militarization of all aspects of social and political life in Iraq.

Branding and Spatial planning in Oman: a neoliberal turning point in politics?

Thibaut Klinger (Université Tours, France)

Like in other Gulf countries, branding belongs to the national political strategy of Oman. Since the 1970 coup, Sultan Qaboos has tried to create an “imagined community” and a unified territory resistant to threats of secession and civil war: spatial planning has been at the core of his strategy. During the 1990s, globalization ran with faster tempo: countries, regions and cities were competing more intensely for international funds, inward investment, technology and skills transfer, and so they needed to promote export (marketing) and define their “brand”. It is the case of Oman, especially when Qaboos emphasized the priority for tourism in the development program because of its great potential for growth and capacity for contributing to economic diversification. Nation branding means then featuring competitive identity and storytelling.

This shift has been accompanied by an evolution of governance according to the neoliberal model. Corporate branding influences nation branding, while “Visions” give a key role to the sovereign, as in other neighboring states, and refers to personal branding. These developments replace politically oriented planning with entrepreneurial management. At the institutional level, this is reflected in the development of agencies like OMRAN for tourism. In terms of action, the multiplication of “projects” should boost the territory while serving the interests of the economic elite which surrounds the sovereign. This evolution privileges the iconic places with the risk of a fracture between the components of the territory, contrary to what Qaboos sought at the beginning of his reign.

Milk Nationalism: Branding Dairy and the State in the Arabian Peninsula

Natalie Koch (Geographisches Institut, Universität Heidelberg)

Dairy products seemed to gain a new political significance in the Arabian Peninsula in June 2017, when Qatar was suddenly placed under an air, land, and sea embargo by its Gulf neighbours. While the country's entire food supply chain were affected, residents in Qatar were especially concerned with their access to dairy products because they were keenly aware that the embargo's two leaders, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, were their primary source of dairy goods. In the wake of the 2017 embargo, dairy acquired a new importance for how people understood Qatar's sovereignty. These events spurred the Qatari government to invest heavily in kick-starting domestic milk production by flying in thousands of milk cows to Baladna Farms, a dairy farm that came to be described as a nationalist champion for the country's food independence. The "cowlift" was a dramatic spectacle, but it is part of a broader trend of "milk nationalism" seen across the Arabian Peninsula. This paper traces this longer history and asks why the branding of national dairy companies has been so important in four Gulf Arab states: Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Oman. As a study in political geography, it employs the lens of critical geopolitics to analyse the history and narrative construction of milk nationalism these countries. As a branding discourse in the Gulf countries, milk nationalism both draws upon and builds contemporary understandings of the state and sovereignty.

Colonizing the future: Sovereign wealth funds and authoritarian developmentalism

Natalie Koch (Geographisches Institut, Universität Heidelberg)

Sovereign wealth funds (SWFs) are government-owned funds that pool a country's wealth, typically from selling natural resources like oil, and are charged with investing it for future generations. The Norway Government Pension Fund is the largest and best-known SWF, but most are controlled by nondemocratic states in the Middle East and Asia, where they have exploded in size and popularity in the last 20 years. SWFs appeal to authoritarian regimes because they are not subject to the same transparency and reporting rules as other major global investors, but the unique future-orientation built into SWFs' story of resource nationalism explains why they are found almost exclusively in developmental states. Authoritarian developmentalism is well-known to justify nondemocratic political relations through particular future imaginaries. In colonizing "time's indeterminacy and openness" (Buck-Morss 2000), the future becomes a technology of government. Despite the flurry of attention to authoritarian developmentalism in the late 1990s and early 2000s, scholars have not kept up with how such regimes are technologizing the future in new ways through mobilizing SWFs. Accordingly, this paper extends the research on developmental futurity by defining the unique logic of authoritarian space-time in how three oil and gas-rich states of the Arabian Peninsula (Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE) use SWFs. Drawing from my research in the region for the past 10 years, I show how local leaders use SWFs both to colonize the revenue extracted from the state's sovereign space and to colonize the future with their authoritarian visions of progress and modernity.

Greening the Gulf: Energy transition and geopolitics in the Arabian Peninsula

Natalie Koch (Geographisches Institut, Universität Heidelberg)

“Post-oil” futures are being promoted with great fanfare across the Arabian Peninsula today – spectacular sustainability mega-projects and financial structures are all working to “green” the region’s oil money. Given that these projects are largely controlled by the governments and their allies in the hydrocarbon sector and, increasingly, the financial sector, it is essential to understand how the energy transition is being imagined and implemented by actors that are strongly invested in continuing to profit from oil money. Taking the example of the United Arab Emirates, I show that Gulf post-oil energy projects cannot be reduced to cynical acts of “greenwashing,” but are active strategies to adapt Western sustainability discourses in their efforts to take control of defining a new “post-oil” political economy and geopolitics for the region. These jointly geopolitical and geoeconomics visions are less about promoting democratic values and energy justice, and more about preserving the capitalist and authoritarian power structures that the Gulf’s fossil fuel system was first built upon – and still prevails today.

Freie Universität Berlin's Strategy on Internationalization and Academic Freedom

Florian Kohstall (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

As International Network University Freie Universität Berlin has a longstanding record of international research collaboration and a strong focus on partnerships with North Africa and the Middle East. Since the establishment of the Cairo Liaison Office the number of joint projects and the numbers of student and faculty exchange have steadily grown. There have however been major concerns how this partnership can continue, considering shrinking spaces. The paper presents the background, the main principles and the implementation of Freie Universität's Strategy on Internationalization and Academic Freedom and how the strategy tries to find a responsible approach between more active protection of academic freedom and the need for continuous dialogue. It also discusses several examples of implementation and the quest for a stronger faculty involvement.

False Fakes, Fictitious Fashion and the Liberation of Logos: On the Islamisation of International Brands, or Removing the Idea of Bad Copies

Alina Kokoschka (Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies, Germany)

The Middle East is one of the hotspots for counterfeit items, especially in the field of fashion. In her essay, Alina Kokoschka explores the fake side of Middle Eastern brand culture with a special focus on Syria and Lebanon. However, her main interest is not in the omnipresence of imitated items but in reinterpretations of Western brands in the framework of Islamisation. This concerns commodities that carry a famous logo but differ significantly from items the brand is known for: Logos appear in combination with symbols from a context that is alien to the brand, Islamic symbols. Logos embellish articles of clothing that have never been shown on the brand's catwalk, Islamic clothing. These made up commodities use the „fiction value“ — inseparable from contemporary branding strategies — to tell a new story. They are fictitious fakes. And they have begun to refashion Western fashion.

Forced Displacement and Women's Economic Empowerment: A critical analysis of women's economic citizenship among Syrian Refugee Women in Jordan

Tamara A. Kool, Alissar Al-Hassan, Estefania Solano de la Sala Maldonado (Maastricht University & UNU-MERIT, Netherlands, The)

Currently Jordan is host to the second highest number of Syrian refugees in the region. Looking at the increased importance of self-reliance, the question arises to what extent female refugees could potentially be included in the labour market while recognising that impact of displacement and the subsequent coping strategies are gendered in nature. While increasing economic participation of women brings opportunities, it usually leads to added vulnerabilities for women (see also Brück & Vothknecht, 2011; Sørensen, 1998) and places additional burdens as they are expected to combine their economic role with their role as caregivers (Kabir and Klugman, 2019). Thus, one of the unceasing challenges lies in addressing the restrictions and inequalities women face in society, on the market, and within institutions (see also Buvinic et al., 2013; Kabeer, 2012).

As such, a careful examination is required on how Syrian refugee women can be included within the Jordan labour market through the lens of women's economic citizenship (Moghadam, 2005). This study seeks to contribute to the debate by answering the research question: to what extent can organisations provide a catalyst for changing norms surrounding women's economic empowerment among forced displaced populations? This study will comprise a qualitative analysis and builds on semi-structured interviews with refugees conducted in 2017/2018 and subsequent key informant interviews. This allows us to understand to what extent programmatic responses are reflective of the gendered lived experiences of individuals, and how they can foster or women's economic empowerment.

FAITH IN GOD AND IMPLICATIONS FOR BELIEVERS: A COMPARATIVE SURVEY OF ISLAM AND AFRICAN INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS

Mustapha Abdullah Kuyateh, Dr. Hussein I.I. Ibrahim (Islamic University College, Ghana, Ghana)

Most Muslims, including even Africans who accepted the faith, seem to have cultivated the same attitude of mind that African Indigenous Religions are not monotheistic in any form. Non-Muslim Africans, who have kept to their indigenous heritage, are seen as bereft of any abiding values; they have no culture because any culture other than Islam is no culture. Therefore, all Africans who wanted to become Muslims were often prevailed upon to shed their traditional culture and take on the Islamic culture. In some communities in Northern Ghana, Muslims are looked upon and described as “white” contrasted with non-Muslim indigenes who are labeled “black”. The colours here refer to knowledge and lack of knowledge. It is for this reason that this paper takes up the issue to see whether the indigenous religions of Africa, like Islam, are not God friendly and whether, like Muslims also, the knowledge of God, as held by Africans, do have implications for believers. The essay intends to look at the concept of God in both Islam and African Traditional Religions and go on to examine some implications of this belief on individual believers of these two faiths.

Complex Regimes of Historicity: The colonial Reinterpretation of Djema'a assemblies in Algeria

Nora Lafi (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (Berlin), Germany)

This paper is dedicated to the study of forms of collective deliberation, election, negotiation, and decision that are relevant in a discussion on possible early democratic impulses inherent to societies of the Muslim and Arab Worlds and on the difficult link between such impulses and modern concepts of democracy. Such instances include councils and assemblies at various levels. The case-study chosen here is that of local *Djema'a* (assemblies) in villages and cities of Algeria. Based upon local chronicles and archives (BOA Istanbul) as for the Ottoman period and archival resources pertaining to the colonial period (Archives nationales d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence), the paper examines at a micro-level the nature of decision-making processes as well as the details of voting procedures (materiality of the voting system, decisions on nominations, decisions on resolutions) and consensus-building processes in the context of societies marked by confessional, tribal and social diversity. The perspective is that of historical anthropology, linking this micro-analyse to broader questionings. Among such questionings are reflexions on the possible early democratic nature of such practices, its limits, and ambiguities and how the impact with colonisation and modernity created a profound gap between practices historically anchored in local societies and newly introduced decision-making processes, themselves marked by deep ambiguities and contradictions as far as democracy is concerned. Using the concept of historicity, the aim is to decipher the nature of the various layers of interaction and interpretation that have accumulated on, and transformed the meaning of, these instances: colonial reinterpretations by French authorities, contemporary instrumentalizations.

History Writing as Memory Silencing? Algeria, France and the entangled layers of historicity of the Post-Colonial Context

Nora Lafi (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (Berlin), Germany)

Recent trends in the historiography of Algeria insist, often with good reasons, on the late emergence of new voices and formulation of forms of memory that had long been silenced. This process however is also the expression of selective choices and other memories are kept outside or are deliberately silenced. In this process, the public uses of the past often correspond to complex mechanisms of memory building. The object of this paper is both to analyse current discourses on memory and what they tell on the nature of memory itself. The paper investigates layers of historicity that constitute the matrix of memory. Through an attention to the ottoman period (often despised under the term of pre-colonial in historiography), the aim is to challenge the inertia of ideologically connoted clichés. The paper is intended to be a reflection on the writing of the ottoman history of Algeria and the uses of this period in the construction of interpretations about later periods, including colonisation and decolonisation. This dimension indeed is often instrumentalized for political and geopolitical reasons. The paper intends to examine memories in their complex historicity. It will navigate between various pasts and presents in order to decipher mechanisms of memory construction, with a focus, too, on present-day phenomena and their blind spots. In doing so, the aim is to deconstruct the inertia of colonial readings and to put words, through an attention to archival resources and alternative voices, on other expressions of memory and other possible forms of history writing.

Surviving the present, building the future? Reconfigurations of the rural in the Syrian Jazira

Katharina Lange (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Deutschland)

The Syrian Jazira has historically been known for its vast spaces (used for grain and cotton cultivation and grazing, practiced by nomadic tribespeople) and the multi-ethnic composition of its population. In the 20th century, its subterranean resources led to an influx of professional cadres and the growth of a nascent oil industry, while political and strategic considerations engendered a large-scale (re)settlement scheme: the so-called Arab belt was aimed at “Arabising” the region by expropriating Kurdish landowners and establishing villages for Arab settlers (“maghmurin”) whose homes had been submerged by Lake Asad. Since the autonomous administration was inaugurated in 2014, the geostrategic relevance of the region, situated between Syria, Turkey, and Iraq, has led to the simultaneous presence of Turkish, American, Russian, and Syrian regime forces.

This paper traces how natural resource wealth, interethnic and descent-based (tribal) social relations and alliances have been reconfigured and have changed rural life in the past decade. Environmental conditions, political-economic measures of neighbouring countries, and internal social dynamics have all impacted local livelihoods. Drawing from open-source data and interviews, the paper discusses how different local actors (tribespeople and *maghmurin*; farmers, oil workers, etc.) navigate the shifting opportunities and limitations presented by the volatile security situation (which has nevertheless been more stable than in other parts of Syria) and the geostrategic position of the region, and concludes by asking what their futures might look like.

Old habits die hard: Reforming the media in Egypt

Nadia Leihs (freelance researcher, Germany)

During a period of transition between 2011 and 2013 Egyptian journalists witnessed changes and power struggles in their work places that mirrored those outside the media. This paper looks into the ingrained power structures inside Egyptian newsrooms and argues that –while attempts to reform could be witnessed– existing routines and practices proved to be persistent obstacles to change. One difficulty for transforming media systems lies in its ingrained organisational structures and professional practices and values. Those shape its inner workings, and power relations that connect it to other parts of a society such as the economic or the political system, and frame the outcome of all transformative efforts. If problematic aspects of its heritage as well as external influences such as ownership structures or legal restrictions are not tackled, the media can become an obstacle to social and political change itself.

In most state-governed Egyptian newsrooms for long a climate of fear and a system of carrot and sticks had determined professional and personal relationships among its members. In interviews, journalists described the predominance of authoritarian leadership styles and a struggle for resources among colleagues that led to mistrust and faction formation. Although in early 2011, those high-level editors most involved with the former regime reportedly withdrew from their offices, in 2012 most of them returned to the newsrooms. Additionally, the mind-set limiting free reporting –including self-censorship in the name of responsible reporting, obedience and opaque loyalties, and a preference of seniority over professionalism– never really had left the building.

Training for decent work? Cash for Work as an artificial labour market for Syrian women in Jordan

Katharina Lenner (University of Bath, United Kingdom)

This paper analyses the relevance and effects of Cash for Work programming, which provides temporary employment in public works projects, from the perspective of various policy makers as well as those of Syrian and Jordanian women participating in them. In the context of dwindling international funding for the regional response to protracted Syrian displacement, Cash for Work projects continue to be among the most well-funded types of intervention. Part of their appeal to international organisations and donors alike is the idea that Cash for work provides opportunities particularly for women to collect valuable labour market experiences in safe spaces characterised by decent work conditions, which will raise their appetite for work and thus increase low female labour market participation.

On the basis of 40 narrative interviews with Syrian and Jordanian women in Northern Jordan and 15 key informants in Spring/ summer 2021, the paper contrasts this perspective with the experiences of women who seek this type of employment. It shows that indeed, many women perceive Cash for Work opportunities as relatively safe, suitable and well-paid forms of economic participation. However, rather than building bridges into the broader labour market, Cash for work has become a self-referential sector, which perpetuates (esp. Syrian) women's socio-economic marginality through various dynamics. Among these are the importance of *wasta* in the selection process, the limited prospects to move beyond intermittent temporary employment, as well as the predictable decrease of such opportunities in the coming years.

Israel's Territorial Impasse: The Occupied Territories, the Bennett Government and the legacy of the Netanyahu years

Peter Lintl (SWP, Deutschland)

The Israeli government under Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has set a different tone towards the Palestinians: Both Foreign Minister Lapid and Prime Minister Bennett have offered plans for an upgrading of the Palestinian economy, strengthening the PA and shrinking the conflict. At the same time, the government rejects the idea that peace negotiations are currently possible, continues to build settlements also in sensitive areas and tightens the security control of the Palestinians. Bennett even rejected the idea of a two state settlement right out of hand.

This ambivalent approach towards the Palestinian territories has on the one hand to do with the heterogeneity of the government, which includes parties from left to right. On the other hand, we see currently still the repercussions of a longer standing policy that evolved especially during the Netanyahu years and that still affects current actions and discourse.

The presentation will examine: 1) The possibilities and limits of Bennett's government engaging the Palestinians 2) How practices that were established throughout the 2010s continue to entrench Israeli control and integration of the West Bank into the Israeli polity 3) How these policies are linked to the shifting Israeli discourses on the conflict with the Palestinians

Typology of drivers of change in MENA social contracts

Markus Loewe, Mark Furness, Amirah El-Haddad, Annabelle Houdret, Tina Zintl (Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) (German Development Institute), Germany)

The social contracts of MENA countries used to be comparatively stable for decades: Governments offered generous provision (economic and social benefits) in exchange for lack of participation. Some change happened in the social contracts but was slow and steady. But some countries saw quite sudden and radical changes after the uprisings around the year 2011: some governments increased participation, others decreased it further and some even decreased provision. The question is thus what drives changes in social contracts. Which factors make governments renegotiate the terms of the social contract with society or modify the terms unilaterally? Why should the government (or major societal actors) favour a change in a social contract that all actors have accepted for quite some time? If we know, we can say at what points in time different actors have the greatest opportunity to change the social contract in their interests. Our conceptual paper argues that drivers of change include changes in the structural framework conditions (e.g. oil price shock, bad harvest), interventions by foreign actors or so-called triggers, which are unexpected, seemingly unimportant events (e.g. disclosure information such as on unethical behaviour of a key person, sale of a small island to a foreign country, explosion in a storehouse) that are due to changes in the framework conditions or not.

The Search for a New Beginning: Obama and the United States' Legacy in the Middle East

Nils Lukacs (Universität Hamburg, Deutschland)

In Cairo 2009, President Barack Obama proclaimed a 'new beginning' in the relationship between the United States and the Middle East. After the inevitably flawed execution of that proclamation, political analysts were eager to point out the alleged mismatch between Obama's words and deeds. Yet, these assessments came at the expense of a thorough understanding of *the* main variable: the president's idea of a 'new beginning'.

Drawing upon the methodological background of the History of Ideas the study aimed at understanding Obama's 'new beginning' as a historical idea and thus as part of the historical narrative of the US-Middle Eastern relationship. Hypothesising that Obama's 'new beginning' constituted a paradigm shift in this narrative, the study addresses three lead questions: What was 'new', what was 'old', and how did Obama's 'new beginning' fit into the contemporary discursive environment? Based on the president's over 400 public speeches as primary sources, the thematic framework of two case studies (Obama's approach towards the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and his take on the Iranian nuclear program), and a three-prone methodological approach (a *close reading*, a *historical contextualisation*, and a *linguistic contextualisation*) the study was not only able to locate the hypothesised paradigm shift in the historical narrative of the US relationship with the Middle East. By revisiting the nature, the context, efficiency and, ultimately, the desirability of Obama's idea, the study also showcases the potential of a (global) Intellectual History approach when analysing a contemporary political discourse like the US president's historic 'new beginning'.

Armed Non-State Actors' Confessional Alliances and Aborted Democratization in Syria

Shaimaa Magued (Austrian Institute for International Affairs, Austria)

This study examines how armed non-state actors have contributed to the failure of the Syrian uprising's calls for democratization since March 2011. While scholarly writings have associated armed non-state actors to restrictive contexts and irregular warring strategies, they overlooked the impact of their identity-based networks of allegiance and regional alliances on democratization. Relying on the psychological approach in Foreign Policy Analysis, this study argues that the sectarian identity of armed non-state actors, notably Hezbollah and al-Nusra, in light of their regional alliances and support, has consolidated al-Assad rule by turning demands for political change into an incessant cycle of violence. In doing so, the study relies on the Critical Discourse Analysis method in examining speeches, statements, and video releases of al-Assad regime and armed non-state actors' warlords in order to unpack the impact of the latter's confessional alliances on authoritarian consolidation in Syria.

Unpacking Foreign Policy Decision-Making Process in the Middle East

Shaimaa Magued, Cengiz Gunay (Austrian Institute for International Affairs, Austria)

This paper discusses the particularity/specificity of foreign policy making in non-Western and non-democratic countries, in particular the Middle East. While FP scholars have addressed state institutions and leaders' personality traits, the decision-making process, its determinants, actors' motivations, FPA scholars have hardly explored non-state actors' involvement in the decision-making process. Authoritarianism, failing states, civil wars, institutional decay, inefficiency, corruption, rogue states, (neo)patrimonialism, parochial actors, and economic cronies underlined the need to address variations in the FP decision-making process across non-Western countries. In this vein, copious writings have contributed to the structure vs. agency debate and underscored the salience of middle range theories in depicting numerous idiosyncratic variables that shape the decision-making process, however, they overlooked significant and unique factors in Middle East politics, especially following the eruption of the 2010-2011 Arab uprisings. Regional alliances and inter-states' alignments along confessional and geo-strategic lines, and the striking role of non-state actors in shaping regional dynamics have introduced more puzzling questions in light of the striking authoritarian reassertion and state leaders' adoption of unpopular and bold decisions on the national level. These questions revolved around the possible appropriation of FPA approaches and methodological practices to the particularities of Middle East politics across countries in terms of understanding autocratic state leaders' FP decision-making process, actors who participate in this process, and their stakes in formulating and implementing decisions that are not publicly held accountable.

Living Din wa Duniya on the northern Swahili coast

Jasmin Anna-Karima Mahazi (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Germany)

This paper examines how the concept of "din wa duniya" is understood and lived by a Muslim people, whose medium for social interaction are, among others, dance and music performances. Oral art, dance and music performances are a means to negotiate and discuss classical Islamic controversial matters communally in a polite way. They are regarded as mila, a custom (customary socio-cultural practice), and not necessarily a part of dini, religion (universal and orthodox demands of Islam); therefore, itself a controversial issue worthy of negotiation. I argue that only a matrifocal perspective on these performances as communicative spiritual rituals (Amadiume 1998), is able to capture the understanding of "din wa duniya" as a single concept that is compatible with the understanding of such performances as a spiritual practice (of laws and directions, i.e. din) to govern human affairs in this world. Based on ethnographic research conducted along the Swahili coast, particularly in Lamu/Kenya, the paper discusses the many possible interpretations of the concept "din wa duniya" and sketches out how such tensions, which arise from a controversial conceptual understanding, are relieved through negotiation within music and dance performances.

The Failed Promise of Democratization: Transitions in Egypt and Hungary

Marwa Mamdouh-Salem (American University in Cairo, Egypt)

This paper addresses the phenomenon of failed democratization in post-revolutionary state in Egypt and Hungary, as it studies main phases of political transitions. The aim is to examine the spatial, temporal and structural elements that led to the failure of democracy. On the spatial level, the analysis includes the impact of geopolitics and theory of 'in-betweenness', and influence of regionality. On the temporal level, it concentrates on the historical continuity of illiberal values and the normalization of authoritarianism in the society, also the political actors' behavior to consolidate their power during transitions phase, e.g., the securitization of crisis, the exclusion of potential opposition, forming alliances with the military, oligarchs et cetera. On the structural level, the analysis includes the socio-economic factors such as the fading role of the middle class as a source of changes and the effect of economic transformation from state economy to capitalism. The main hypothesis of the study is that the nodal points of post-revolutionary situation and failure of democratic development provides an important basis for comparative approach that brings new knowledge of the general features of such processes. Hypotheses are to be examined through addressing the questions on what kind of role do the temporal, spatial or structural factors play in shipwrecking the democratization process? And what are the similarities and differences in the processes of these case countries? Beside contributing to the debate on democracy, the paper aims to present new modalities to avoid being lost in transitions.

Knocking on Africa's Doors: A Critical Appraisal to Germany's Africa Policies

Marwa Mamdouh-Salem (American University in Cairo, Egypt)

Germany is not a new-comer to Africa, as the German African relations have been passing through different historical interactions. However, analysts view a sort of transformation in Germany's Africa policies; this transformation is led by Chancellor Angela Merkel and spearheaded by the German private sector. It also coincides with the explosion of the illegal immigration crisis of 2015 in Europe, and which triggered different reactions by the EU states. Accordingly, the German government seeks to deal with the root-causes of the problem through improving the living standards in the underdeveloped African countries, thus encourages the African youth to stay in their homelands. Several development initiatives are made: the development ministry released its "Marshall Plan with Africa", the ministry of finance the "Compact with Africa" initiative and the ministry of economy the "ProAfrika" concept. Almost six years have passed after the launch of the German development plans, and it is necessary to evaluate what has been achieved and what is in the pipeline. Germany has a good opportunity to contribute to the development plans in Africa, however, the question raised is: To what extent the Africans own the German project as a prerequisite for its efficiency?

Perpetually Teetering On the Brink of Non-Existence: Sisi's Politics of Death.

Vivienne Matthies-Boon (Radboud University, Netherlands, The)

I will argue that the existential ground of Sisi's counter-revolutionary project entails nothing less than a fear for life and a celebration of death. The fear of life is above all grounded in Sisi's perpetual fear of the return of the 18 days. This is a fear of life in that these 18 days were above all marked by a prefigurative manifestation of creative collective becoming, wherein the recognition of others as existential equals was precariously and temporarily established. Thus, utilizing on the Philosophy of Erich Fromm, I argue that this existential intersubjective parity was centred around biophilia: the love of life. Yet fearful that this love of life would challenge the military's – and particularly Sisi's – new political and economic gains, Sisi set out on a particularly vengeful path of destruction, entailing nothing less than Fromm's dystopic vision of necrophilia. Drawing on activists' lifestories, I argue that the point of Sisi's accelerated politics of death was not only to kill – to reduce the number of critical agents on Egypt's streets – but rather above all, to shift the existential structure of being away from potentiality towards impossibility. The point was to situate activists perpetually on the brink of non-existence, where if not dead, they would be unable to move forwards or backwards: they would be reduced to a deadly life.

“Destroying Potentiality: On the Politics of Counter-Revolutionary Trauma in Egypt”

Vivienne Matthies-Boon (Radboud University, Netherlands, The)

In this paper I argue that Egypt’s counter-revolution – primarily consisting of the Egyptian military and its earlier temporary subsidiary the Muslim Brotherhood – has not only sought to destroy the object of revolutionary politics as such, but rather its very potentiality. Using a Habermasian philosophical viewpoint on trauma, I propose that the military has sought to destroy such potentiality through the infliction of multileveled traumatic status subordination. Traumatic status subordination comprised of the infliction of deadly physical violence, the colonization of the public sphere and economic marginalization through neoliberal economic rationalism. Under Sisi, this tripartite infliction of multileveled traumatic status subordination has accelerated significantly and culminated in a politics of death and the prisonification of Egyptian society wherein a shift in the underlying existential structures of experience has occurred towards a demoralized, nihilistic sense of impossibility.

Al-bilād und al-ḥāra, Heimatort und -Wohnquartier, in zeitgenössischer Wahrnehmung von in Maskat beschäftigten Arbeitnehmern aus Zentraloman

Birgit Mershen (Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Oman)

Mit der Machtübernahme von Sultan Qaboos bin Said im Jahr 1970 begann für Oman eine Phase der raschen und umfassenden Modernisierung. Nach Jahrzehnten der Abschottung unter seinem Vorgänger und Vater Sultan Said bin Taimur öffnete sich das Sultanat nun nach außen. Im Inland wurden technische und soziale Infrastruktureinrichtungen sowie moderne Technologien sogar in abgelegenen Teilen des Zentralomans eingeführt. Das Erscheinungsbild der Oasenstädte mit ihren dicht bebauten Wohnquartieren begann sich infolgedessen stark zu verändern. Die Lehmziegelquartiere, ḥārāt, wurden im Folgenden fast komplett aufgegeben – ihre Bewohner zogen in moderne Häuser in neu erschlossenen Wohnquartieren mit Fahrzeug- und Infrastrukturzugang.

Gleichzeitig hat die sich entwickelnde „Capital Area“, d.h. die Region um die Hauptstadt Maskat, omanische Arbeitskräfte aus den Städten und Dörfern im Zentrum Omans abgezogen, von denen viele – insbesondere in unteren Besoldungsgruppen – jedoch keine Familienhäuser in der teuren Hauptstadt errichten. Vielmehr wohnen sie unter der Woche in angemieteten Zimmern, Apartments oder Gemeinschaftsunterkünften und pendeln am Donnerstagnachmittag zurück in ihre Dörfer, um das Wochenende mit ihren Familien zu verbringen. Auch wenn sich wohlhabendere Familien in Maskat niederlassen, bleibt die Verbindung zum Heimatort „al-Bilad“ meist stark, und lange Wochenenden und Feiertage werden oft im dortigen Familienkreis verbracht. Basierend auf literarischen Quellen und Gesprächen mit Pendlern und anderen regelmäßig in ihr bilād heimkehrenden Bürgern untersucht das Papier ein rezentes Phänomen, bei dem gerade die verlassenen Lehmziegelviertel der Oasenstädte mit Zugehörigkeitsgefühl und Nostalgie assoziiert werden, was sich sowohl in der Gründung lokaler kommunaler Initiativen als auch in der zeitgenössischen omanischen Literatur und sozialen Medien widerspiegelt.

Was ist aus der Kritik am Schwert des „Experten“ geworden? Die Islamwissenschaft und ihre Rolle in den deutschen Medien

Albrecht Metzger (Freier Journalist, Germany)

Im Zuge des Golfkriegs 1991 meldeten sich erstmals Islamwissenschaftlerinnen deutlich und kritisch zur Islam-Berichterstattung in deutschen Medien zu Wort. Oft werde ein verzerrtes bzw. einseitiges Bild von dieser Religion und ihrer Anhänger gezeichnet, so die Kritik, der Fokus läge auf Geweltaspekten.

Ein Problem sei, dass es zu wenig Islamwissenschaftlerinnen in den Medien gebe. Alte Haudegen wie Peter Scholl-Latour und Gerhard Konzelmann seien nicht mit dem nötigen Fachwissen ausgestattet und pflegten einen kolonialistischen Blick auf die Region. (Vgl. Klemm, Verena,/Hörner, Karin (Hrsg.), Das Schwert des "Experten": Peter Scholl-Latours verzerrtes Araber- und Islambild, Heidelberg 1993.) Dreißig Jahre später hat sich die Lage vollständig verändert: Mittlerweile sind viele Islamwissenschaftlerinnen, Turkologen und Iranisten in den Medien tätig, teilweise an exponierter Stelle und in gehobenen Positionen. Die Art, wie sie über die islamisch geprägte Welt berichten, hat sich mit Sicherheit verändert.

Aber sind mit solchem Fachwissen ausgestattete Journalisten tatsächlich immer in der Lage (oder auch nur willens), sich gegen stereotype Narrative zu stellen, wenn sie sich erstmal etabliert haben? Am Beispiel der Berichterstattung zum Krieg in Syrien (2011-) möchte ich dieser Frage nachgehen. Meine These lautet (und ich formuliere sie bewusst provokant): Selbst und - gerade - Journalisten mit islamwissenschaftlichem Hintergrund haben in diesem Konflikt versagt. Das Bild, das sie zeichneten (und immer noch zeichnen) ist ähnlich stereotyp und undifferenziert wie dasjenige, das einst Peter Scholl-Latour zeichnete - nur in anderer Weise.

Nation Branding in the United Arab Emirates: Nuancing National Unity

Moritz A. Mihatsch, Richard Gauvain (British University in Egypt, Egypt)

The paper discusses the 2019 project to create a nation brand logo for the United Arab Emirates in terms of its potential range of meanings. It takes an interdisciplinary approach between anthropology and contemporary history. The paper is situated within the wider literature regarding nation branding and the construction of Emirati identity. The paper advances three main arguments. Firstly, the nation brand project is clearly to be understood within the frame of nation-building. Secondly, the design and promotion of this project reinforce established political hierarchies and structures. Thirdly, the same project may be understood as one of multiple strategies by which the UAE government also embraces the seemingly contradictory dimensions of its local/traditional and global/modern cultural and political realities. The paper is based on the analysis of official documents, promotion material from social media, media discourses and interviews with participating artists, as well as a sample of regular Emiratis to gauge the reception of the project.

What Only a Mother Can Feel: The Promise and Limitations of Motherhood-based Solidarity in Tunisia

Alyssa Miller (GIGA (German Institute for Global and Area Studies, Germany))

The Arab revolts of 2010-11 destabilized national borders across the Middle East and North Africa, amplifying the dangers of migratory trajectories practiced by under-class Tunisian youth. Structurally locked out of national labor markets, young people took advantage of the security breach to cross the Mediterranean for Europe; others migrated by the thousands to join the jihad in Syria, Libya, and Iraq. Back in Tunisia, the figure of these missing youth became central to the politics of families left behind. Taking advantage of new possibilities for activism in public space, families foregrounded the inviolability of kinship in an appeal to the state to locate their missing kin, confirm their safety, and return them home. In activist scenes, mothers' gendered performances on behalf of missing sons are viewed as particularly efficacious.

This paper examines motherhood as the basis for solidarity across the families of different classes of "missing" Tunisian youth. According to traditional gender ideologies, a mother's bond with her children is uniquely intense--an intimacy forged in the womb that endures for life. From Black Lives Matter to the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, motherhood has been used to denounce state violence and restore humanity to kin maligned as criminals or terrorists. In Tunisia, the pain of ambiguous loss unites mothers of missing migrants to both Europe and the Islamic State, yet hierarchies of value often reassert themselves in shared activist spaces. Based on interviews and participant observation with activist families, I assess the promise and limitations of motherhood-based solidarity in Tunisia.

A Representation of Ecofeminism in the Islamic Social Ritual of Hajj

Zarrin Monajati (Independent, Germany)

When we talk about different dimensions of societies, one of the first things that comes into mind is images of them that are formed by media products. Cinematographic productions are undoubtedly among the most highlighted and powerful ones. Films image the societies in different levels: the reality, visions, and dreams. This paper intends to analyze a special representation of a religious vision in an Iranian movie, which could be seen as a forerunner of future environmentalism in Islamic societies.

This paper is dedicated to a fiction film, *When All Were Asleep* (2005), by Fereydūn Ḥasanpūr, from an ecofeminist perspective. The story of this film is about an unusual performance of Hajj, one of the essential social rites of Islam, that is accomplished in a naturalistic form. In this film, the filmmaker has tried to establish a strong link between the Islamic naturalist view and the strict religious beliefs of Muslims in religious social rituals of Hajj pilgrimage in connection with a feminist perspective. By means of a comparative study of the main concepts of ecofeminism, the aesthetical elements of naturalism in the story and scenes of the film, and the details of the Islamic belief in the performance of Hajj pilgrimage, this paper argues that the depicted perspective of the film can be considered a successful example of Islamic ecofeminist imagery.

History & Memory in Artas: a Palestinian village between providence and heritage, 19th and 20th century

Ida Falestin Naili (University of Basel, Switzerland)

The analysis of this case takes up two key words in the conflictual historiography of Palestine - providence and heritage - while inscribing them in a critical perspective that is partly inspired by François Hartog's work on the regimes of historicity as a "heuristic tool" whose objective is to shed light on the tension between the field of experience and the horizon of expectation. To understand the history of Artas, providence and heritage represent relevant regimes of historicity. Providence is the way in which the history of Palestine has been interpreted by a part of the so-called Judeo-Christian world which is looking for signs heralding the End of Times. Indeed, millenarist or messianic visions of history attribute a special importance to Palestine, which becomes the place of the Last Judgment and the end of this world. Providence thus links the history of Palestine to the metahistory of humanity, as interpreted by millenarist believers. Heritage, for its part, is a term that encompasses the competing claims to the territory of Palestine. These claims have been formulated in religious or national terms depending on the period, but always harking back to ancient history.

Exploring New Leadership of Civil Society Organisations

Ibrahim Natil (DCU, Ireland)

This panel explores and discusses the theoretical framework, exploring technical constraints, shifts, Covid-19, and policies and their impact on CSOs' leaders' efficiency and effectiveness in grassroots engagement, change and community development, and how this can be understood from political, economic and social perspectives. This panel investigates clearly about these definitions and concepts in reference to the existing literature. How do local cultures and their social context and background affect CSOs' leadership and their engagement in local politics? To what extent have CSOs' leaders contributed to change and development processes despite shifts and the pandemic? The papers also discuss the existing literature to explore and compare the definitions of CSOs' local leadership structures in different case studies and countries. It also provides up-to-date case studies analysis on CSOs' leadership and barriers to engagement, challenges to development opportunities and lessons learnt on changes in, Yemen, Turkey, Syria, Iran and Palestine. It is innovative and different as it mainly stems from the experiences and fieldwork of young contributors from these regions, enriching the debate on various developments with new insights and a fresh perspective, particularly from the Global South.

Waffen für oder gegen den Staatszerfall? Militärische Interaktionen zwischen Deutschland und der Region Kurdistan Irak

Silvia - Lucretia Nicola (Freie Universität Berlin, Deutschland)

Während der Ausbreitung des sogenannten Islamischen Staats in Irak und Syrien im Sommer 2014 entschied die deutsche Regierung die internationalen Bemühungen zur Stabilisierung des irakischen Staates zu unterstützen. Eine der ersten Maßnahmen hierfür war die Peschmerga – die Sicherheitskräfte der Region Kurdistan im Irak (RKI) – zu bewaffnen. Diese Entscheidung stand in einem Spannungsverhältnis sowohl mit der historisch gewachsenen, tief verwurzelten militärischen Zurückhaltung Deutschlands als auch mit den selbst aufgestellten sicherheitspolitischen Leitlinien der Bundesrepublik, offiziell keine Waffen an eine Partei eines laufenden bewaffneten Konfliktes zu schicken.

Umso umstrittener war die geplante Bewaffnung der irakisch-kurdischen Kräfte, da es sich bei den Peschmerga um einen undurchsichtigen Sicherheitsapparat, der nicht unter der Kontrolle der irakischen Zentralregierung steht, sondern von zwei konkurrierenden kurdischen Parteien innerhalb eines regionalen Regierungssystems kontrolliert wird. Dass die RKI seit längerer Zeit nach jeder Möglichkeit sucht, sich von dem maroden irakischen Staatsgebilde abzuspalten, dürfte spätestens im Herbst 2017 auch jedem deutschen Politiker klar geworden sein. Medienberichten zufolge kam es nach dem von der KRI unilateral abgehaltenen Unabhängigkeitsreferendum von 2017 zu Zusammenstößen zwischen kurdischen und zentralirakischen Sicherheitskräften, bei denen auch von Deutschland gelieferte Waffen zum Einsatz gekommen waren.

Wie ist diese paradoxe Handlung Deutschlands – den irakischen Staat durch die Bewaffnung von Kräften mit offen proklamierten Sezessionsambitionen zu stabilisieren – zu verstehen? Welche Bedeutung haben die Interaktionen zwischen Deutschland und der RKI im Sicherheitsbereich für das Unabhängigkeitsbestreben der irakischen Kurden? Zur Beantwortung dieser Fragen werden im Rahmen dieses Papers die militärischen und politischen Interaktionen zwischen Deutschland und der RKI zwischen 2014 und 2020 untersucht.

Branding the Middle East in the Diaspora: Names of Mosques in Denmark

Helle Lykke Nielsen (Center for Middle East Studies, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark)

According to Öcal (2021) mosques in Europe can be seen as sites of everyday geopolitics where "interstate matters, religion, identity, and territoriality coexist, align, and intertwine". In this paper, I argue that the names of mosques, often seen as an expression of how mosques position themselves in the urban landscape of the diaspora, can possibly reflect geopolitical tensions. By regarding toponyms as a discursive construction of narratives that are compressed and materialised into a short form, names of mosques have the potential for expressing sense of belonging, and thus for branding mosque affiliations with various states, ideologies, and actors in and through the Middle East. Based on Giraut and Houssay-Holzschuch's theoretical framework for naming and the concept of scaling, two mosque names in Denmark are analysed, each illustrating how the choice of names situates them in the geopolitical landscape. The paper concludes that not only do the two mosques position themselves differently towards the ingroup (the Muslims) and the outgroup (the Danish majority); they also use their names in ways that suggest that they want to avoid the risk of triggering discussions of geopolitical issues with the Danish majority. For the Muslim minority two different branding strategies are identified: one which indexes Islamic tradition to obtain religious fame, which eventually can be exchanged to political fame; and another which indexes cultural prestige and political greatness that are used as a branding device for recognition and heritage.

How They Carry the Things They Carry: Trauma and Activism After Defeated Revolution

Elizabeth Nugent (Yale University, United States of America)

Most revolutions are defeated. While defeated revolution is first a political foreclosure, it is also a monumental experience for the activists who planned and executed revolutionary protests. For activists, defeated revolution means coming down from the euphoria of liminality to either the mundane life of the before or a more restricted existence. It means witnessing trusted politicians and institutions betray the people. It means exposure to high levels of state violence and repression as the regime defends itself, and witnessing one's friends and compatriots sacrifice, suffer, and die in vain. For activists in exile, defeated revolution also signifies their coerced migration from their home. This paper conceptualizes the experience of defeated revolution as a form of political emotional, physical, and psychological trauma, and introduces a theory centering how participants hold that trauma in conditioning their subsequent political behavior. In doing so, the paper builds on central findings from existing literature on social movement theory by incorporating research into the psycho-behavioral effects of activism, coerced migration, and trauma and emotion. Empirically, I draw on narratives collected through semi-structured interviews with Egyptian activists currently in exile due to the repressive aftermath of the 2011 revolution and its 2013 defeat.

From Popular Uprisings to Electoral Campaigns: Affective Dynamics of Anti-Government Alliances and Protests under Turkey's Authoritarian Transformation

Derya Özkaya (University of Graz, Austria)

In this paper, I will discuss both the transformative potentials of, and the challenges posed by the affective atmospheres of different moments of contention against Turkey's authoritarian transformation and analyze the role of collective emotions as aspirational political horizons for political change. Building on multi-sited ethnography in two cities of Turkey, Istanbul and Eskisehir, and in-depth interviews with dissident political actors, I will scrutinize the affective components of political (im)mobilization and emotional repertoire of anti-government alliances from the Gezi uprisings of 2013 to electoral campaigns in their aftermath. I will discuss how anti-government alliances formed during the uprisings and re-mobilized in the post-Gezi political landscape contributed to envisage a new political opposition centered on the urge for coalescence against the government cultivating hope and investing desire for the possibility of change. These temporary alliances have motivated diverse political actors to create alternative forms of resistance and coexistence, which, in turn, generated a collective sense of togetherness and unleashed political opportunities for organized resistance under the rising authoritarianism in Turkey. At the same time, they have also led to the reaffirmation of the status quo by suspending the contentious issues of the past and suppressing the dissonant affects which are indispensable to collective action. Critically engaging with and empirically analyzing the possibilities and challenges of collectivization, politicization, and mobilization of emotions and affect by the political opposition, I will offer an alternative perspective to the discussions on collective action, political transformation, and alternative future imaginations in Turkey.

Hindaoui/a: The Racialized Imaginations of South Asian Bodies in the Middle East and North Africa

Shreya Mayur Parikh (CERI-Sciences Po Paris (France) and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (USA))

The goal of this paper is to outline the popular imaginations about South Asian bodies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. More specifically, I deconstruct the contemporary racialized tropes of “Hindi/ya” or “Hindaoui/a” (both meaning “Indian” in Arabic dialects) and outline the varied meanings given to the trope based on perceived gender and socio-economic class of the body. I draw primarily on autoethnographic data collected in Lebanon (2012-13) and Tunisia (2020-22) to outline the content of the tropes. I argue that while there are convergences across the region in the content of these tropes, resulting from the wide reach and popularity of Indian cinema (and, more recently, Indian television soaps), the meanings given to the tropes diverge in different spaces and contexts based on historical and contemporary movements of populations from South Asia in the MENA region. While the popularity of Indian cinema has produced fantasies of beauty and enchantment about India as well as bodies perceived to be Indian (especially female bodies) across the region, the presence of guest worker population from South Asia in the Gulf countries as well as in Lebanon has produced, at local levels, racialized, classed, and gendered ideas about South Asian bodies.

Mapping urban racial segregation: The case of Bhar Lazreg arrondissement in Greater Tunis

Shreya Mayur Parikh (CERI-Sciences Po Paris (France) and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (USA))

The goal of this paper is to map racial segregation (a form of socio-spatial inequality) through the study of Bhar Lazreg arrondissement in La Marsa commune (part of Greater Tunis) in Tunisia. First, I make a case for the choice of Bhar Lazreg to study racial segregation and describe it. Second, I trace the history of Bhar Lazreg from independence of Tunisia (1956) to present. I am especially interested in the history of demographic shifts that the site has witnessed – from being agricultural land, to hosting internal migrants coming from rural areas in Tunisia (starting 1900s), to hosting a significant Sub-Saharan African migrant population (starting 2011). Third, I examine policies at the state and the municipal level that have produced La Marsa commune, especially policies that have led to resources being distributed unevenly in the commune and hence adding to the cycle of segregation. I ask: How is it that the migrants - most of whom are male, undocumented, work in local construction jobs without contracts, and lead a precarious life – came to live in the area? I conclude with a note about how the case of Bhar Lazreg helps us understand the (re)production of racial segregation. This paper is based on interview and observation data collected over Spring 2021 and Spring 2022. This paper is exploratory given that little work exists on the study of urbanization and segregation in Tunisia. Hence, it remains descriptive, outlining various observations that can become testable-hypothesis for future research.

The Political Uses of the Past in the Poetry of the Negev Bedouin

Kobi Peled (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel)

Bedouin poetry has not yet been explored from the perspective of social memory, let alone the poetry of the Negev Bedouin. Based on a corpus of hundreds of poems meticulously documented by Sasson Bar-Zvi (1924-2012) between the mid-1940s and the late 1980s, which has only recently been opened for research purposes, this paper will examine significant fragments from the political poetry of the Negev Bedouin in the 20th century. These fragments will enable us to take a close look at the power of poetry to hint at broad fields of meaning, historical memories, and cultural patterns.

Temporal dynamics of trust in conflict in the MENA

Hanna Pfeifer (Goethe University Frankfurt), Irene Weipert-Fenner (Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, Germany)

Social and political trust in the MENA are, with a few exceptions, still understudied in the broader literature on trust (Alijla 2020, 4). This paper is interested in advancing the debate on trust in the MENA by proposing two innovative perspectives on the matter, one theoretical and one methodological. In order to make our arguments plausible, we draw on recent and historical examples of protest and armed conflict in various countries in the region.

First, we hold that certain forms of trust can be built or even increase in and through conflict. Trust and conflict are commonly conceptualised as opposites, or at least as being negatively correlated. In contrast, we assume that their actual empirical relation depends on what kind of trust is studied under the conditions of which conflict: not all conflicts are conducive to all sorts of trust, but neither are all forms of trust undermined through conflicts. In order to make this more nuanced picture of trust and conflict visible, it is necessary to open up the black box of (social and political) trust conceptually and methodologically.

This is why, second, we want to scrutinise the temporal dynamics of trust both in the long-term perspective and with regard to micro-dynamics in phases of extreme uncertainty, such as mass protest and armed conflict. We argue that this requires alternative methodological options that can complement the wide-spread analysis of survey data, such as historical, ethnographic, narrative, or process-oriented methodological approaches to trust.

Envisioning (In)dependent Filastin: Agrochemicals and Nahda in British-Ruled Palestine

Omri Polatsek (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

By exploring the work of Arab-Palestinian agronomists in British-ruled Palestine, this paper points to the entanglements between British Imperialism, agrochemicals, and the Arab nahda (نهضة) during the interwar period. It argues that while Arab-Palestinian national aspirations sought independence from British rule, they were simultaneously dependent on a new global flow of chemical substances and ideas initiated by the British empire. Concurrently, these ideas were rooted in a regional nahda discourse that sought to 'develop' the economy of the emerging Middle East and to (re)create a regional unity after the formation of new nation-state borders.

The paper first introduces the interconnections between the British Empire, Colonialism, and agrochemicals during the interwar period. It also explores one specific global chemical company that operated in the Middle East and depicts its regional endeavors. The second part zooms in on British-ruled Palestine to describe a network of agricultural experts and their local and regional connections. Their absence from histories of British-ruled Palestine will be addressed as well. Finally, the third section studies one particular Arab-Palestinian agricultural expert working for the above-mentioned chemical company. Contextualizing Husni al-Miqdadi's writings within a regional nahda discourse on national economic independence demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between imperial chemicals and national aspirations. As Arab-Palestinians sought to create a national economy based on agriculture, al-Miqdadi's work as a selling agent and expert, and his texts, which linked agricultural expertise and economic development with regional 'Arabness,' testify to the interrelation between global imperial agrochemical flow and Arab-Palestinian state-building.

Religious (Dini) Education in South Asian Islamic Modernism

Maria-Magdalena Pruss (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Germany)

Educational reform was a central concern for Muslim modernists in 19th and 20th-century South Asia. Modernists were at the forefront of founding schools and colleges that combined a government-prescribed curriculum, which they termed part of a worldly (dunyawi) education, with religious (dini) learning. This approach was first pioneered by the eminent educationist Syed Ahmad Khan at his Aligarh college, but went far beyond his circles.

My talk focuses on religious education in the context of the Anjuman-i Himayat-i Islam Lahore (AHI, Society for the Defense of Islam, est. 1884), which was one of the most important modernist organizations of colonial north India, although it has received little attention in the historiography so far. I analyze how religion (din) was interpreted, taught and practiced at the AHI's institutions, including religious texts, ritual practice, and ethics. Who was regarded a religious authority at its schools and colleges? What kind of Islam was taught? What image of a "good Muslim" existed? How did religious (dini) education relate to worldly (dunyawi) learning? By tracing these themes over a time period of more than 60 years, between the founding of the AHI in 1884 and the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, my paper contributes to ongoing debates about the evolving nature of religious identity, the emergence of communalism, the role of education in religious nationalism, and the transformation of Muslim educational systems in the wake of colonialism, imperialism and anti-colonial activism.

Anna-Ehster Younes: Declarations of anti-Antisemitism: “The UNRWA Became a Kraken”

Detlev Quintern (Turkish German University, Türkei)

Islamischer Feminismus und das Problem der Hadith-Auslegung: Drei Fallstudien

Nevin Reda (Emmanuel College of Victoria University in the University of Toronto, Canada)

In Bezug auf Hadith-Studien dreht sich der islamisch-feministische Diskurs – und sogar der islamisch-reformistische Diskurs – hauptsächlich um das Problem der Hadith-Authentizität, also ob bestimmte Berichte zuverlässig auf den Propheten Muhammad (Friede sei mit ihm) zurückgeführt werden können oder nicht. Selten geht es jedoch um die Interpretation der Berichte selbst und um die dafür erforderlichen Methoden. Der Beitrag befasst sich mit genau diesem Problem und untersucht drei Hadith-Gruppen, in denen Frauen erniedrigt werden: Hadithe über Frauen als *fitna* (Verlockung), die Positionierung von Frauen hinter Männern in (Gebets)Reihen (*saff*) und Frauen als *'iwan* (Gefangene). Es wird angenommen, dass – im Vergleich zu Hadithen und anderen Texten – der Koran dem Propheten Muhammad zeitlich am nächsten steht und dass er deshalb die beste Deutung von Wörtern seiner Zeit ermöglicht. Problematische Wörter in diesen Hadithen werden mit ihrem Vorkommen im Koran verglichen, um ihre früheren Deutungen zu erläutern. Es wird gezeigt, dass es sich bei diesen Berichten um kurze, kryptische Aussagen handelt, die unterschiedlich interpretiert werden können und – angenommen, der Prophet hat sie ausgesprochen – deren frühere Deutungen Frauen vielmehr ermächtigen anstatt sie zu benachteiligen. Gefragt wird auch, ob Hadithe den Koran erklären können oder andersherum, ob der Koran Hadithe nicht besser erklären kann. Darüber hinaus werden die Berichte in einen Dialog mit anderen Hadithen gebracht, um Diskussionen in den ersten muslimischen Generationen und den ‚Sitz-im Leben‘ dieser Hadithe zu eruieren. Abschließend wird die Anwendung von Hadithen als unabhängiges Prinzip in der islamischen ethisch-rechtlichen Argumentation hinterfragt.

Din wa Duniya - دین و دنیا - The binary of Religion and World in Muslim discourse in South Asia in its complex diversity

Dietrich Reetz (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

The paper will explore different levels of reference and interpretation by Islamic scholars and Muslim activists in the context of South Asian Islam.

The distinctions that can be noticed for applying the terms Din and Duniya are very much dependent on the contextual meaning implying different theological, political and social motives and purposes. They use Dunya as a reference not only to the world at large, but also more specifically to the secular life-world of non-believers – or non-practitioners. In the history of South Asian Islam it was also used with an anti-colonial connotation where Dunya and Nai Dunya referred to the future of independence and imaginations of Muslim activists on it.

At the same time, Muslim life worlds today refer to Duniya as their current worldly engagements while Din represents their religious practice. This goes back to the history of Islam and the Prophet of having not only received the revelation of the Quran but also created the state of Medina and a system of governance based on Islamic principles, on religious and worldly realities. Another distinction is noticeable in the civil society context where Duniya refers to rebellious attitudes of young Muslim activists against authoritarian modes of governance in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

In addition, diverse sectarian and political orientations of Muslims in South Asia created their own contexts of meaning. The terms are thus used for negotiating private and public engagements of Muslims through their beliefs and with reference to their social, cultural and political environments.

The role of security discourses in reinforcing international reputation – the example of the United Arab Emirates

Anna Reuß (University of the Bundeswehr Munich, Germany)

This paper draws on the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as a case study to conceptualize security in international society. For that purpose, it will provide an overview of the UAE's state formation as well as the decision-making processes. By approaching security through the prism of the English School of International Relations, the paper identifies key concepts as intersections with the Copenhagen School of Security Studies and argues why international society is both the forum for states to shape the security discourse and the referent object of security. This paper aims to contribute to debates in International Relations regarding the interplay between security dynamics and primary institutions of international society. It will moreover present theoretical perspectives on the Middle East in English School theory. Integrating securitization theory into English School theory yields a duality of rationales, which means that the security concerns of states are rooted in two primary institutions: sovereignty and nationalism. The paper commences by highlighting the particularities of this duality in the UAE's security strategy. The UAE has become a key player in shaping the geopolitical balance of power in the Middle East. It has pursued an assertive foreign policy aiming at securing the survival of the state and reinforcing its global reputation and visibility.

Two Politicians and a Shrine: Competing Personal Brands around Eyüpsultan in Istanbul

Annegret Roelcke (Freie Universität Berlin, Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient Berlin)

This paper examines how rival Turkish politicians brand themselves by visiting Istanbul's Eyüpsultan Shrine and the ways in which this can transform the site's predominantly Islamist image. In doing so, it investigates the interplay between personal branding and place branding. The shrine is attributed to a Prophet's Companion, whose grave, legend has it, was rediscovered during the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul. The surrounding Eyüpsultan neighbourhood features prominently in contemporary Sunni Islamist and Ottoman revivalist narratives, such as those promoted by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). Likewise, president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of the AKP often performs public prayers in Eyüpsultan. Within the widely perceived secular-religious dichotomy of Turkish society, many who consider themselves secular see this as an aggressive demonstration of the Islamisation of politics. This paper shows how Ekrem İmamoğlu of the secularist Republican People's Party (CHP), Istanbul's mayor since 2019, has also branded himself by praying in Eyüpsultan. Foregrounding his rural upbringing in a religious Sunni family, he presents himself as sharing the social background of many AKP supporters. He combines his Eyüpsultan tours with visits to other shrines in the neighbourhood that are connected to groups such as Alevis, which are distant from the AKP's Sunni Islamist discourse. I argue that İmamoğlu's Eyüpsultan tours are crucial to his rhetoric of reconciling society, with which he positions himself in opposition to the dominant polarising discourse. By incorporating Eyüpsultan into his own powerful, personal brand image, İmamoğlu also opens up the place's predominantly Islamist image to alternative claims.

Doing Research in Times of Crisis: Displaced Scholars, Dangerous Fieldwork, and the Role of the University. A view from Berlin

Christina Rogers (Academics in Solidarity, FU Berlin, Germany)

This paper discusses the work of Academics in Solidarity (AiS) - a peer-mentoring program that connects researchers at risk with scholars in Germany, Lebanon and Jordan. It investigates how to create a network of solidarity, strengthen the value of cross-cultural research cooperation and open up new perspectives for researchers at risk. The AiS program offers support to displaced and endangered scholars through mentoring, academic counselling, systematic network building, and funding of small research endeavours. The paper wishes to investigate how perspectives of exiled scholars are key for researching social relationships and matters of precarity and politics in the middle east and Germany. It discusses how voices of exiled scholars find their way into policy papers that negotiate the state of academic freedom in different countries, thereby also challenging conceptions of academic freedom in the German context. Before this background, the paper presents structural key challenges in establishing research cooperation in and with partners in the Arab region. In particular, it discusses how universities can deal with dominant asymmetric structures in knowledge production to better address global challenges.

Greening the Desert: Emirati Youth Perceptions of Green Branding

Tilde Rosmer, Gergana Alzeer (Zayed University, United Arab Emirates)

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is becoming a successful example of governmental strategy of place branding in the Gulf, and in the Middle East in general, and especially Dubai has since the early noughties added green branding to attract business and tourism. This paper investigates to what degree Emirate youth are aware of this branding and how they understand the concept of green branding expressed in the strategies and policies by their leadership. As such, by investigating Emirati youth's awareness and perception of green branding of Dubai this paper fills three gaps in the current literature by addressing the general lack of research on consumers' (citizens or tourists) perceptions of green branding; and by addressing the specific case of green branding of Dubai thus adding a case from the under-studied Gulf region. Moreover, this research adds a non-western case to the analysis of the understanding of green branding that introduces a different perspective on greening which focuses on "making" green rather than preserving green.

Gateway cities for transnational higher education: Doha, Dubai and Ras al-Khaimah as regional amplifiers in the networks of the global knowledge-based economy

Tim Rottlieb (Leibniz-Institut für Raumbezogene Sozialforschung, Germany)

This paper focuses on a particular role certain cities in the Arab Gulf play for regional development and the ongoing processes of globalisation: as gateways for transnational higher education. Contributing to debates on the city/globalisation nexus in the Arab Gulf region, on the one hand, and to urban and economic geography debates on gateway functions of cities connecting their hinterlands to global networks, on the other, this paper analyses the relational political economy of so-called 'international education hub' projects in Doha, Dubai and Ras al-Khaimah. It empirically investigates the rationales of universities establishing offshore campuses in these cities, and how local governments link these institutions to existing gateway functions to change the positionality of their cities as destinations for transnationally mobile students and spaces of knowledge (re)production. The paper conceptualises the three cities as gateways for transnational higher education providing internationalising universities from the Global North access to student markets in the Gulf region and beyond, while at the same time connecting regional economies and their populations to the networks of neoliberal globalisation and the always unfinished project of the global knowledge-based economy. This paper not only broadens our understanding of the particular dimension of transnational higher education within gateway cities, but it also contributes to a more provincialized theorisation of the role cities in the Global South play for globalising capitalism and its hegemonic knowledge regimes.

Gender and Political Participation: The case of Algeria

Hayette Rouibah (University, Algeria)

This paper examines women's political participation in elected institutions, focusing on the Algerian case. In the past decade, the political reforms of the former president Bouteflika, who brought the quota system, increased the number of women in parliament, but it did not bring about any noticeable change in terms of votes and legislative proposals. Indeed, the number of women in parliament jumped from 13 women in 1997 to 147 in 2012 (31.6% of deputies), then to 112 in 2017 (24% of deputies). This rate decreased remarkably with the arrival of the new president Abdelmadjid Teboune, who introduced new rules and changed the quota system. A thing that affects later the women participation in the elected institutions. Indeed, only 34 women (8%) were elected during the parliamentary elections of 2021.

Same changes have been noticed on the local level. In 2007, only three women out of 1451 were elected mayors in 2007, and only one woman out of 48 was appointed to the post of Wali (head of the prefecture). In 2020, there was one wali woman. The author scrutinizes through this paper the main factors behind this evolution and decline in the term of gender participation, how it is concretised, and its impact on the targeted units of analysis. The analysis findings are a part of fieldwork that we started recently in Algeria to discuss the role of women in political life.

Diaspora and political change in Algeria

Hayette Rouibah (University, Algeria)

This paper focus on the diaspora in the modern times and its role in the change in the countries which have known colonisation and which have an heavy historical and cultural heritage, it is interested especially on Algerian diaspora, and it's want to be an actor on the change taking place in Algeria those last years. The study is a political reading of this phenomenon.

This study is a part of our post-doctoral research, it is an ethnographic research wich i carried out within the Algerian diaspora in Germany and in France during the Algerian popular movement began on February 22, 2019.

It deals with the role of the Algerian diaspora via its multiple channels in the change taking place in Algeria; it is also a question of analysing the obstacles that hinder this relationship – that has sometimes a conflict nature-

The objective of study is to analyse the role of the diaspora in the political change in Algeria, and trying to understand the mechanisms of this role through a field study. It has also as objective to shed light on the different aspects of the Algerian diaspora in Europe in the change that began with the popular movement (elhirak) since 2019.

How do Bureaucracies Operate under Authoritarian Pressure?: Insights from Contemporary Turkey

Erol Saglam (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany; IRGAC RLS)

Drawing on ethnographic research in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2018-2019, this project explores seemingly mundane practises and discourses across institutions to understand how bureaucrats cope with authoritarian interventions, legal disruptions, and the increasing interactions with the citizenry. It focuses on how bureaucrats weave networks of solidarity against authoritarian pressure and use their expertise to forge spaces of autonomy vis-à-vis nepotistic superiors as well as how the growing number of inputs from the citizenry (e.g., complaints) are instrumentalized to protect institutional autonomy. The research demonstrates how the law is "made real" (Latour 2002), how bureaucrats forge their subjectivities, and how the state operates in the everyday.

Confined knowledge flows: ambivalence of knowledge production on violence and repression in transitional justice

Mariam Salehi (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

This paper traces production, transmission, and ‘confinement’ of knowledge about violence and repression in the Tunisian transitional justice process. The paper aims at conceptualising confined knowledge flows and their ambivalent nature, as they are enabling and limiting at the same. It aims at identifying “dominant epistemological flows of power” (Rai 2003: 60) and therefore differentiates between two kinds of security knowledge: knowledge that should be produced about violence and repression in and through transitional justice processes, and knowledge that is produced and transmitted as governing technologies. The paper shows that knowledge flows are confined by networked actors from the Global North and South, who define the socio-technological offering for dealing with violence and repression, influence access to tangible and intangible resources, and concurrently shape the production and transmission of security knowledge. These actors determine what knowledge is deemed relevant in transitional justice, what is taught in training courses and to whom; and who then can shape how and what kind of knowledge flows further through transitional justice institutions, such as the Truth and Dignity Commission, what narratives become relevant, and, in consequence, political agendas.

Empirically, the paper is based on field research in Tunisia (2014-2018) and the United States (2015 and 2019) as well as remote data collection by phone and video (2020), interviewing both Tunisian actors involved in the transitional justice process and international transitional justice professionals, as well as observing situations of knowledge transmission and confinement, such as workshops, conferences, and confining built environment.

Politics of Transitional Justice

Mariam Salehi (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

This paper looks at three different modes of politics of transitional justice in periods of political change, during or in the aftermath of war and violence. It therefore focuses on Tunisia for the politics surrounding a carefully planned transitional justice project, on Syria for the politics of transitional justice from afar, and on Lebanon for the politics of transitional justice in the context of systemic perseverance and negligence. It becomes clear that struggles for change, justice, and accountability are embedded in ongoing political and economic conflicts, which they both shape and are the product of. The paper furthermore posits that in all three cases 'reconciliation' functions as, respectively is used as, a disciplinary discourse that tries to prevent change and preserve positions of power. In order to work out the modes of politics of transitional justice, the paper synthesizes existing literature and draws on original empirical research (extensively for the Tunisian case, more illustratively for the other two cases).

The nationalistic discourse: The Islamic Republic of Iran's next chance to survive?

Arash Sarkohi (Deutscher Bundestag, Deutschland)

The Islamic Republic of Iran has developed various discourses throughout its four-decade history to secure its survival and to answer to challenges it has faced. After the first turbulent post-revolutionary years, the phase of regime consolidation took place during the Hashemi-Rafsanjani presidency (1989–1997) and with it the first major discourse emerged, combining a focus on development and neoliberal economy with some liberal freedoms for the middle class. Later, the religious reformist movement and the Khatami presidency (1997–2005) were characterized by the idea of a religious democracy, which could allegedly reconcile religious rules with some aspects of democracy and human rights. Then, the Ahmadinejad presidency's (2005–2013) discourse was centered around social justice. His successor Rouhani, however, did not develop any major discourse on his own during his presidency (2013–2021). Each of these discourses were introduced to answer to specific societal challenges, each one had some degree of success and helped prolong the longevity of the system of the Islamic Republic – although all of them arguably failed in the long run.

One possible major discourse hasn't yet been brought to full life by the Islamic Republic: A nationalistic discourse. Some aspects of this discourse are the idea of the importance of Iran's historical 'greatness,' Iran as a regional hegemon, and the significance of territorial integrity and national security. Therefore, I will briefly discuss past discourses and then concentrate on the potential embrace and political implementation of a nationalist discourse, its possibilities and risks for the regime.

Deliberation on behalf of the people? Assessing the role of the Cairo Diwan, 1798-1801

Robin Francis Christopher Schmahl (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Germany)

The talk will offer an assessment of the role of the Cairo Diwan, or deliberative council, during the last phase of the French Expedition in Egypt, 1798-1801. For this purpose, it will adopt a three-dimensional approach based on polity, policy and politics descriptions. Drawing from deliberative theory the councils are explored in their function within the colonial administration of the Expedition in Cairo. Here, they are conceptualized as venues for publicized deliberation which purports information transfer from the administration to the local population and to bestow legitimacy to French rule in Egypt. The talk will focus on the Diwan under the Generalship of Menou, 1800-1801, based on two manuscripts held in the BnF. The Diwan of 1800-1801 will be conceptualized as the product of a continuing process of institutionalization of French colonial rule by connecting it to its precursory institutions in place under Bonaparte and Kléber described in Arabic and French sources. Finally, the chapter will elaborate on how an analysis of institutionalized deliberation within the Diwan conduces to a novel application of deliberative theory in an effort to understand the role of deliberation within undemocratic, repressive regime types.

Iconoclasm and Memory: the discussion on Germany's belated intellectual decolonization.

Robin Francis Christopher Schmahl (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Germany)

With the rise of the Black Lives Matter Movement and ongoing discussions on the restitution of artworks held in European colonial collections, German society entered a new phase of intense public debate on decolonization in 2020. Not only touching matters of material culture, racist colonial heritage within the German intellectual tradition was also strongly debated in mass media outlets. With a focus on the debate surrounding Immanuel Kant, this talk proposes a Foucaultian qualitative discourse analysis of Germany's discussion on intellectual decolonization during 2020-2021. Focusing on source material from German newspapers, podcasts and TV productions, it offers an examination of what happens when a question such as "Was Kant a Racist?" moves beyond the academic discussion and turns into a hot topic of public discourse. Once such questions of colonial heritage turn from mere subjects of historical research into matters of public discourse, they assume the form of meta-historical problematizations rooted in practices of memory. The talk will show how the public discourse posed a reaction to a perceived threat of iconoclasm for the German intellectual tradition and carried the purpose of reconfirming German cultural identities while denying the need for radical intellectual decolonization.

Syrian Displacement in Lebanon and Ways to Travel to Europe. Anthropological Perspectives on the Scope of Humanitarian Government

Susanne Schmelter (independent researcher, Germany)

This paper shows how humanitarian government has become a form of governance that penetrates society and individual trajectories also outside classical humanitarian structures such as camps and highlights the role that labour and self-reliance play in negotiating, appropriating and resisting it. The anthropological field research, conducted between 2013 and 2018, follows migration struggles along Europe's humanitarian border and looks in particular at Syrian activism in Lebanon's humanitarian sector, strategies to get a place in a humanitarian admission programme, projects to leave the country towards Europe and decisions to stay in Lebanon. The analysis shows that despite (informal) labour and efforts to be self-reliant, the arbitrariness of humanitarian government expands as a ruling logic in everyday social life, creates dependencies and contributes to zones where access to human rights is not a given but a daily struggle. The paper concludes with an outlook on the expansion of humanitarian government in view of current crises, notably Covid-19 and economic meltdown.

The sound of Egyptian counterculture: rewriting notions of class, identity and culture through Mahraganat

Elisa Maria Schouten (University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam)

During the early 2000's, Egypt witnessed the emergence and rapid success of a raw and explosive music genre called Mahraganat. Coming from the capital's poorest working-class neighbourhoods and aiming to give voice to its disenfranchised residents, the music and its makers broke with the country's cultural legacy of elitist and highbrow art that dominated the region in the 50's. Many other countries have seen similar instances of countercultural movements. In academic literature, the concept of counterculture has been linked to different musical expressions in the MENA-region, but not to Egyptian independent music. Despite the major impact it has made on the Egyptian society, the Mahraganat scene remains a severely underexplored part of the country's cultural landscape. This research will therefore analyse these genres through the framework of counterculture, looking at the music's relation with and influence on notions of identity, class and culture in Egypt.

Renewable Energies, Renewed Authoritarianisms? Solar Energy and Transregional Authoritarian Entanglements in the Middle East and North Africa

Benjamin Schuetze (University of Freiburg, Deutschland)

Much literature on the energy-politics nexus in the MENA-region features a double fallacy of energy determinism and methodological nationalism. Just as rentier theory inspired approaches link hydrocarbon rents to authoritarian power, the romanticisation of renewables as immaterial and more inclusive features a similar degree of determinism. Both approaches ignore that 'energized practices' engineer a diverse set of political relations in different contexts. Besides the plurality and contingency of possible renewable energy transitions, it is crucial to realize that 'energized practices' in specific, and modes of governance in general criss-cross established nation-state contexts. State-centric notions of authoritarian power must be replaced by an understanding of authoritarianism as transregionally entangled practices that prevent dissent, technocratize politics, and repress oppositional activism, with the overall purpose of enabling capital accumulation.

In this presentation, I discuss how transnational energy, engineering and planning corporations and investors attempt to aggregate distributed solar energy flows into centralized power structures. I zone in on the production networks of Saudi ACWA Power and Emirati Masdar and the exploitation of attempts at a renewable energy transition as newest frame for spectacular accumulation. Applying a transregional lens and a connective scholarship approach, I discuss how certain types of knowledge about renewability become hegemonic, how 'success stories' in one context inform the production of renewability elsewhere, and how, in the case of Jordan and Morocco, the production of renewability by a transregionally entangled set of state and non-state actors has led to a renewal of authoritarian power in the name of sustainability.

Boosting the game: post-pandemic era, regional dynamics & the pressure for climate action in the Gulf monarchies

Laura Schuhn (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Deutschland)

With the blockade of Qatar by the Saudi-led “quartet” in 2017, a tendency toward a prioritization of national interests and regional competition is evident in intra-GCC relations. In fact, decisive factors in regional cooperation seem to be convergence in content rather than cultural, historical, economic, or structural ties. Common interests – even ideational ones – and threat perceptions may adapt to regional contexts and may be more fluid than assumed. Thus, we face an intra-regional dynamic characterised by short-term, bilateral and content-driven alliances rather than GCC-level cooperation. This is also relevant in the field of climate and environmental policy: the pandemic accelerated the awareness of the Gulf monarchies’ vulnerability to the impacts of climate change on multiple levels such as food and energy insecurity. The predicted impacts of the climate crisis are likely to reinforce various dynamics, such as growing social contestation and socioeconomic pressure. So far, however, the “green” transformations taking place in the Gulf monarchies to counter the transboundary challenges due to the impacts of the climate crisis are characterised by national interests and competition. Therefore, uncovering specific content that produces authoritarian alliances or divisions may contribute to a deeper understanding of intra- and extra-regional dynamics and shifting patterns within the region.

A place in the sun: Internal and regional implications of Moroccan climate and energy policy

Juliane Schumacher (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), Deutschland)

Morocco has one of the most ambitious climate policies worldwide, and has become a regional leader in green technologies and renewable energy. This has implications both within the country and beyond, creating complex networks of power relations and discourses on different scales. In contrast to many countries where social movements have fought for environmental action against the state, in Morocco the transformation towards renewable energies and a climate-friendlier economy was a state project from the beginning. This has involved changing infrastructural and power relations, as well as the opening new political spaces and closing others. Morocco's form of 'environmentalism from above' calls into question the simple equation of the turn towards renewable energy systems and more democratic decision making. At the same time, the shift to green energy is closely related to Morocco's role both in international climate policy and its regional ambitions. The country has become an exporter and advisor on green energy for North and West Africa partners. Meanwhile, shifting economic and power relations in the region have changed Morocco's relationship with the European Union and the country's role as a potential exporter of green energy and hydrogen to the North. In this contribution I discuss the power economies of Morocco's climate and energy policy on different scales, the imaginations and socio-material infrastructures they relate to, and the effects on different groups of actors involved. In doing so, I offer a spatially and politically nuanced reading of the complex relation between authoritarian political power and energy systems.

Beyond disaster: Negotiating Climate Futures in North Africa

Juliane Schumacher (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), Germany)

North Africa is often referred to as one of the regions most affected by global warming, and primarily discussed as a potential source of aggravated conflicts and potential intensified migration towards Europe, or as a recipient of aid and support to adapt to climate change. A closer look at climate policy and discourse in the region, however, shows a much more diverse and complex picture. On one side, actors in the region are far from homogeneous: On the level of the nation state, the region contains both global 'leaders' in climate politics like Morocco and countries depending on the export of fossil fuels like Algeria that would be heavily affected by an ambitious climate policy on global level. On the other side, actors on different levels, from social movements to researchers from the region or the delegations of the countries in international climate negotiations, are actively negotiating and shaping the (climate) future of their respective environments, referring to different scales and notions of justice and responsibilities, invoking and going beyond the approaches developed in the Global North. In this contribution, I map and analyze climate policies in the region, before drawing on the example of Morocco and Egypt in a more detailed way how climate change and its consequences are negotiated and acted upon on different levels and in different forms, sketching a more nuanced and diverse picture of climate policy and activism in the region.

Competitive governance in Northwestern Syria: Violence, cooperation, and ideological differentiation

Regine Schwab (Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, Germany)

The proposed contribution looks at competitive rebel governance in Northwestern Syria by analyzing the interactions between two of the most important militant Sunni Islamist groups in the Syrian war next to ISIS –Jabhat al-Nusra (JN)/Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and Ahrar al-Sham. Being two of the oldest insurgent groups, JN and Ahrar were not only the most important military actors within the armed opposition to the Assad regime, they also played a prominent role in rebel governance attempts including the provision of basic goods and services, the regulation of economic activities, and the (re-)establishment of law and order. Next to substantial competition and even open violence between these actors, there were also different forms of cooperation encompassing informal alignments but also more institutionalized bodies. Furthermore, next to violence, particularly Ahrar al-Sham has also relied on ideological differentiation in order to compete with its main rival in the provision of governance. This is a largely non-violent (communicative) strategy with which groups try to stand out from others by re-evaluating or changing their positions with regard to issues crucial to the conflict. With this, Ahrar tried to not only create popular support among the local population, but also reach out to regional and international actors. In recent years, HTS has copied this approach with great success, which ultimately contributed to the marginalization of Ahrar al-Sham.

Tunisian Women's Mobilizations for Equality: Identity, Beliefs and Unfinished Revolution?

Arbia Selmi (Centre Marc Bloch in Berlin)

Following the 2011 Arab revolts, Tunisia experienced a decade of profound political, economic and social change, with the main challenges being the establishment of democracy, social justice, and the expansion of gender equality. However, despite significant advances in women's rights in Tunisia, women still cannot inherit on equal terms with men. A feminist movement for equality in inheritance was therefore created in 2018, sponsored by more than 60 secular feminist associations and united against the Islamic movement, which sought to pressure the government into adopting a law on equal inheritance. However, the Tunisian Parliament ultimately rejected the draft law establishing inheritance equality between the sexes. This was due to the patriarchal societal culture, religion and "national identity" which is defined in Article 1 of the Tunisian Constitution of 1958 and later reaffirmed by the Constitution of 2014 : declaring Islam as the religion of Tunisia. This rejection provoked the anger of women who mobilized to adopt this law. My research project addresses the following question: *How do national identity and beliefs influence the rights of Tunisian women?* Based on qualitative research and analysis of the archives of feminist associations, this paper seeks to understand the influence of national identity, beliefs, societal culture and law in the creation of inequalities for women. Going beyond the issue of inheritance law, I ask what conditions would allow for the establishment of substantive equality in all areas in post-revolutionary Tunisia.

Reconfiguring Religious and Worldly Spaces: Moderation in Saudi Arabia, or Secularization by Any Other Name.

Besnik Sinani (Tubingen University, Germany)

This paper analyzes the way the notion of moderation is being constructed in contemporary Saudi Arabia, the context that gave rise to the idea of moderation, and how it is shaping the re-drawing of the boundaries between religious and worldly spaces in Saudi society. How are the notions of entertainment, tolerance, and moderation marking those spaces, and who are the actors formulating these views? Drawing on research conducted in the kingdom this paper argues that far from constituting a formalized concept, moderation represents an ever-developing political idea of social engineering that was produced in response to the political mobilization of the Islamic Awakening Movement in the 1980s and 1990s, and the kingdom's search for a new political identity.

The Gulf states' humanitarian engagement at the Horn of Africa: Shifting patterns and strategies in times of COVID-19

Sebastian Sons (CARPO, Deutschland)

Since the 1960s and 1970s, the Gulf states Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait and Qatar have emerged as relevant providers of humanitarian and development assistance. The article argues that the Gulf states' respective developmental policies are undergoing significant changes as they need to adapt their traditional foreign aid approaches due to rising domestic socioeconomic and structural challenges that have been accelerated by the so-called "double shock" caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the decline in oil prices. As a consequence, the Gulf states' foreign assistance is shifting away from traditional Islamic forms of aid provision towards a new hybrid form of development assistance which considerably refers to "Northern humanitarianism". Against this backdrop, new developmental actors, methods, and instruments are emerging in order to promote domestic power consolidation and external power projection by addressing sectors such as health diplomacy and education. Furthermore, foreign aid constitutes significant elements of nation building and identity construction as traditional social contracts are vanishing due to growing challenges in times of COVID-19. In light of these developments, the article analyzes the contemporary Gulf efforts to provide humanitarian aid and development assistance to the Horn of Africa which has become of utmost geostrategic interest for the Gulf states in terms of economic, security, and logistical aspirations.

Fear and Violence, Loyalty and Treason: Settlement of Status in Syria

Marika Sosnowski (GIGA Hamburg)

This paper examines the arbitrary and oftentimes violent nature of loyalty and belonging in the wake of civil war through the case of Syria. It shows how the new “settlement of status” process is an extension of the governmentality of violence used by the Syrian regime to delineate loyal citizens from traitors. However, the paper argues that this process actually serves to undermine the regime in the long-run, potentially sowing the seeds for greater dissent and the possibility of the regime’s downfall. The Syrian case offers broader insights into the various social and political permutations of a citizen’s relationship to the state in the period after large scale violence has ended and how the state attempts to use fear and violence as mechanisms for social control.

The After-Life of War

Marika Sosnowski (GIGA Hamburg)

Conventionally, the end of large-scale armed violence has legally and politically denoted the end of war. However, recent scholarship on the complex and contested nature of war-to-peace transitions has shown that regardless of levels of violence, pre-war and wartime dynamics continue to manifest in the aftermath of armed conflict. This panel looks at these contested dynamics from three angles: citizenship rights, transitional justice and questions of legality and belonging. All three presentations show that the after-life of war is neither simple nor straight-forward and that many of the drivers of conflict live on, not as ghosts but as concrete manifestations of dispossession and disenfranchisement.

The Invisible Hard Work of Retrieving Syrian Papers

Marika Sosnowski (GIGA Hamburg), Mariam Salehi (Freie Universität Berlin), Veronica Ferreri (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Germany)

In the context of the Syrian asylum in Germany, seemingly mundane bureaucratic papers –such as birth and marriage certificates, passports and IDs, education certificates, to name but few– are fundamental since they are needed for numerous procedures, even after asylum has been obtained. As official proof of legal identities, education and relations to kin, Syrian legal papers become crucial tools for continuing a new life abroad, forcing Syrians to work hard to retrieve them either prior to their flight from Syria or after, when they are already residing in Germany. The journey of these papers from Syria to Germany lays bare how the work of accessing documents in wartime involves legal ambiguities as it intersects with state bureaucracy and security apparatuses, forms of sociability and bribing. Although, these practices predate ‘wartime’, they became forms of political and ethical solidarity that can restore a sense of individual agency both within Syria and from Germany. Reflecting on these practices and the meanings tied to these documents across times and geographical borders highlights how wartime and the political significance of citizenship rights in Syria infiltrates into the life of Syrians in Germany. Through these reverberations, the paper questions the limits of a teleological understandings of ‘postwar’ from the perspective of the Syrians’ struggle to navigate Syrian bureaucracy in their attempt to build a new life in Germany.

Branding Backlash: the erring of Urban Advertising in Gulf Cities

Roman Stadnicki (University of Tours, France)

Planned to respond to the demands of post-oil economic diversification, the Gulf cities are also the result of an image policy aimed at creating an urban spectacle of modernity. Renowned architects and planners participated in the international promotion of the conurbations that was orchestrated by the governments themselves. Thus, current images are of urban projects setting their sights on being avant-garde and out of proportion, heirs to a relatively old policy of creating showcase cities. The urban communication handed down to single-niche private sector stakeholders, such as developers and advertisers, blurring the edges of governmental approaches and strategy. Worse still, the systematic recourse to visual communication and the proliferation of urban advertisements city walls has produced a series of counter-effects. This paper first reveals the tensions generated by the advertisers' domination of the urban scene. Then it shows how urban images tend to become independent of the projects they support, thereby accentuating the process of virtualisation. Lastly, the paper addresses the excesses of urban neoliberalism, including the symptomatic obsolete and misused billboards, particularly in Kuwait City where the author has carried out systematic surveys. This paper is based on fieldwork and qualitative research conducted in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait from 2011 to 2019, during which time urban imagery was understood as both a method and an object of research. It is a highly appropriate point from which to address the political, economic and social dynamics at work in the urban field.

Radicalization as Resistance? Jihadist Meaning-Making of Marginalization and Repression in Tunisia

Clara-Auguste Süß (Leibniz-Institut Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung (HSFK/PRIF), Deutschland)

Among those countries that experienced the so-called Arab uprisings of 2010/11, Tunisia is the only one that has been called a 'shining example' of a successfully initiated transition to democracy. Yet at the same time, (violent) Islamist radicalization has been on the rise. While the influence and attractiveness of radical Islam have been receding in the last years, the underlying grievances remain: High unemployment, extensive informal economies and regional inequalities have already been the main reasons for Tunisians to take to the streets ten years ago – and despite the overthrow of the old regime, multidimensional marginalization persists. More generally, (perceived) ongoing mismanagement, political exclusion and persisting socioeconomic hardships can be tied back to structural notions of violence that might result in radicalization and, in turn, reinforced marginalization. As research suggests that radicalization might be fueled when subjective experiences with injustice, related grievances and repression are interpreted by particular actors as part of a political or religious struggle, such references entail certain mobilizing powers. Comparing important temporal phases from 2011 to 2021, the paper explores these dynamics from the perspective of radical Islamist actors and focuses on their 'reading' and meaning-making of both socioeconomic and political marginalization as well as state behavior and repression vis-à-vis Tunisian (radical) Islamism. It is based on findings from a frame analysis of a variety of radical online output published between 2011 and 2021, as well as interviews conducted during a field visit to Tunis.

Same Path, Different Routes: Legitimation of Repression in Turkey and Egypt

Hakkı Taş (German Institute for Global and Area Studies, Germany)

In the last years, two transnational Islamic movements, Turkey's Gülen Movement (GM) and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood (MB), have faced massive crackdown at home, with its repercussions abroad. This paper first focuses on how both Turkey and Egypt navigate a versatile strategy for the legitimation of repression depending on the target audience. While the international legitimation of repression rests on terrorization in both cases, the political leaders rather employ a religious framing at home. Second, it delves into how the overall campaigns of both countries simultaneously sustain each other. While Turkey demonizes its own Islamic movement, the GM, and backs Egypt's MB, Egypt denounces the MB and embraces the GM. Supporting each other's domestic enemies, all these interplays revolve around a common struggle for the soul of (good) Islam. Under the circumstances of the deteriorated bilateral relations, each campaign also concomitantly reinforces the other state's narrative about the alliance of evil forces. Investigating a vast textual corpus ranging from the leader speeches at the United Nations General Assembly meetings to the official statements and media coverages at home, this paper draws attention on how different narratives for the legitimation of their repression interact with each other.

The conflict between religious and secular parties in the MENA region

Valerian Thielicke (University of Rostock, Deutschland)

To this day many observers and scholars still claim that the MENA region is a special case often justified by the existence of religious parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood, dominant authoritarian systems and the prevalence of religion in politics. Thus in many countries a conflict between religious and secular parties is identified seemingly revolving around the role of religion in the state and society. Even the politics of some states are always described between Islamisation and secularisation. Without doubt religion has a central position in public debates, hence it seems to be a matter of a so-called cleavage. But is this really about religious rules or its role in society? On the basis of new findings on Tunisia and its political elite and by taking up the inner-Arab theoretical debate, this contribution will argue that in this conflict the questions of the organisation of religious affairs or religious laws are subordinate. Rather, the focus is on questions of collective "authentic" identity and consequently the fundamental social order. In this context, the two camps are not guided by highly specialized conceptions of society, but in particular by their image of the other, each of which is associated with fears and anxieties, which is shown by several examples. Finally, a cross-area comparison reveals that the MENA region does not take on a special role, but rather helps to sharpen the conceptual tools and to detach previous concepts such as cleavage from a Western particularism to grasp more areas and phenomena.

Autocratic hedging in times of Covid-19: A race for China's favor?

Antonia Thies (Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany)

With the pandemic serving as a geopolitical booster that accelerates the trends already under way by bringing the simmering US-China conflict into the open, the Gulf monarchies' regional ambitions and foreign policy behavior are heavily influenced by the greater international game going on at the time. Seeing in China a successful rising power and like-minded regime, suitable as a blueprint of a new governance-model, the Gulf states find themselves trapped in a dilemma of keeping the US on board while drawing closer to China. This risky hedge vis-à-vis China may be regionally conflictual with further implications for the configuration of power in the Gulf. In the course of approaching this topic, a comparative view of Saudi Arabia's, Qatar's and the UAE's hedging behavior allows not only to identify those possible competitive factors, but also illustrates and fills a gap within methodological conceptions. This contribution aims at focusing on the impact hedging has on an entire region when several actors pursue it as a strategy towards one emerging power.

From Guests and Labor Migrants, to Refugees and “Stateless Citizens”: The Case of Syrians in Sudan

Sarah Tobin (Chr. Michelsen Institute, Norway)

Since the Syrian crisis began 10 years ago, over 11 million Syrians have been displaced. By 2015, Sudan hosted a large number of Syrians because it became the only country that did not require visas. Until late-2019, the more than 250,000 Syrians in Sudan were treated largely as unbothered “guests”: they were able to live, work, obtain an education and health care on par with Sudanese without any necessary permits or documentation. Most of the Syrians were young, educated men who came as labor migrants and to avoid military conscription in Syria. The Sudanese government issued an estimated tens of thousands of Sudanese passports to Syrians who were otherwise unable to return to Syria. After the ousting of Al Bashir, the transitional government shifted policy for Syrians and began requiring various permits for residency, work, education, and access to healthcare. The policy also included the systematic revoking and confiscation of Sudanese passports held by Syrians, rendering them “stateless citizens.” This paper examines the case of Syrians who initially arrived in Sudan as “guests” and labor migrants, turned refugees, and then Sudanese citizens – both pragmatically and socio-culturally. Through in-depth interviews, Syrians discuss the challenges they encounter during this transition from guest and labor migrant to refugee and citizen, and then to “stateless citizen.” The paper concludes with a discussion about the deep uncertainty about the place for Syrians in the contemporary Sudanese political, social, and economic landscape, or their futures.

Doing Research in Times of Crisis: Displaced Scholars, Dangerous Fieldwork, and the Role of the University. A view from Berlin

Ertug Tombus (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Germany)

The increase of violent conflicts, persisting authoritarianism and the rise of populist governments and movements, as well as encroachments on academic freedom constitute major challenges for academic inquiry, especially for area specialists. While the Middle East and North Africa is not the only region affected by these phenomena, the past decade has moved the region again into the center of attention. On the one hand it has become increasingly difficult to conduct fieldwork in the region. On the other hand, many scholars from the region had to leave their home universities and look for shelter in European and especially German universities as refugee or at-risk researchers. Both developments harm research on, from and with the region, especially in the humanities and social sciences, and may widen the existing gap in knowledge production. How do universities react to these developments? How can they support scholars at risk? How can they protect their students and faculty members? And what are the effects in university partnerships, joint research projects and faculty mobility? The panel discusses different Berlin-based university strategies that have been established in response to the above-mentioned phenomena. It highlights the politics of hosting at-risk researchers by taking Academics in Solidarity, a transnational peer-to-peer mentoring project, as an example. It presents Freie Universität's Strategy on Internationalization and Academic Freedom as a tool to renegotiate partnership relations in time of crisis, and it presents the Berlin Center for Global Engagement and its strategy to strengthen research collaboration with the Global South.

Interactive Learning and Adaptation: the interplay of regional and domestic politics in Morocco after 2011

Beatriz Tomé-Alonso (The National Distance Education University (UNED), Spain)

Since the 2011 Anti-authoritarian protests, regional shocks and shifting regional power balances have affected domestic politics in MENA countries. This presentation explores the interaction between international and domestic arenas by studying the mechanisms through which domestic actors incorporate international factors into their strategic decisions. More specifically, it investigates whether and how the international context, regional examples, and third-party actors' foreign policies impact the interaction in Morocco between the Islamist Party of Justice and Development (PJD) and the Palace -as main political actor within the country-. The main contention is that the PJD and the Palace selectively incorporates international experiences and insights in their relation. This presentation examines this dynamic by investigating the interplay of two main mechanisms, learning and adaptation, that connect internationally generated experiences and circumstances and the PJD's and the Palace strategic decisions and discourses. We focus on two three phases: (a) the PJD's electoral victories after the 2011 regional anti-authoritarian protests (2011–2013); (b) the situation after the 2013 coup d'État in Egypt; (c) the current context after the 2021 legislative elections.

Decolonial Media Studies: Arab-Soviet Scholarship on the Regulation of Global Media Sphere in 1970s-1980s

Ekaterina Vasileva (Universität Erfurt, Germany)

I will explore and describe the history of the socialist approach to international media and communications relations, in particular the theoretical contribution of Arab students and Soviet scholars in the sphere of Arab-Soviet educational, cultural and intellectual exchange. In the period of late socialism Arab scholars were coming to the USSR to look for concepts, different from the Western media theory of free flow of information. Scholars from the so-called developing countries strived to conceptualize an antiimperialist, decolonial theoretical framework for the international and national media spheres and sought after relevant ideas in the Soviet media scholarship, facilitating an alternative to the Western epistemologies. Arab students from different countries of the region wrote theses on the national media of their countries and the impact of the international communication sphere on Global South. I would focus on a Moroccan student Jdidi Taoufik's doctoral thesis "State information policy in Morocco during a struggle of the developing countries for New Information Order" and a Syrian student Farid Al-Shakaf's "Problems of cooperation and coordination of information flow in the League of Arab States", as well as other thematically related theses written by students from Global South in Soviet universities.

Local Governance Reforms as Discursive Legitimation Projects: Evidence from Morocco and Tunisia

Erik Vollmann (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany)

The Arab uprisings in 2011 brought back to life a vivid public and international discourse on decentralization and pushed local governance reform projects in Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries. As strong protest movements originated from the local periphery, they also challenged the dominant scientific focus on the national level or regime type in the MENA region. Meanwhile, expectations of international donors and local activists are high: Decentralization reforms are presented as less invasive forms of democratization, as way to bolster the efficiency of local service provision, to increase regime accountability and create new opportunities for the participation of citizens and the civil society.

Evidence towards those merits of decentralization, however, is scarce or mixed in most MENA countries. Driving factors for the reforms are disparities between central and peripheral regions, between urban and rural spaces as well as intra-regional differences. While the reform processes are still dominated by central governments and authorities have shown hesitation to release their grip on financial or policy making power on a subnational level, the reform projects are used to increase political regimes' legitimation in the eyes of elites, the populace, and the international environment. My contribution analyzes how decentralization reforms in Morocco and Tunisia are employed as strategies to stabilize the political regimes. Drawing on theories of soft power, legitimation and cooptation this study employs a Grounded Theory-inspired mixed methods approach based on a media discourse analysis and semi-structured interview data.

Legal entanglements: the influence of colonialism on gender-coded law in Muslim societies

Maaïke Voorhoeve (Universiteit van Amsterdam, Netherlands, The)

The study of 'gender-coded' law in Muslim societies tends to establish links between present-day legislation and early Islamic doctrine. This approach is informed by the conviction that imperialism did not affect gender norms, because when codifying civil and criminal law, imperial powers left family relations to the orbit of sharia (Peters, Anderson, Coulson). This approach is, however, a-historical: colonial powers did issue laws in the field of gender, varying from short decrees with respect to the family to western style civil and criminal codes that included norms pertaining to gender. A striking example is Article 230 of the 1913 Franco-Tunisian Penal Code, that punishes 'sodomy' with 3 years in prison.

This paper examines gender-coded law through the lens of entangled legal history, using the Tunisian Penal Code of 1913 as a case study. It investigates the various influences that the colonial situation had on the articles pertaining to prostitution, rape, sodomy, adultery, and the crime passionnel. What was the role of colonial bureaucrats on this code? What role did Enlightenment thinking and the anti-revolutionary movement in France have on its contents? What role did local jurists and intellectuals play in the acceptance and rejection of particular norms? By answering these questions, we can formulate a theory on gender-coded law in Muslim countries that brings the colonial in.

Die jugendlichen Formationen nach der ägyptischen Revolution. Wer kann das Vakuum der islamischen Bewegungen besetzen?!

Mohamed Fatouh Wally (Bamberg Universität, Germany)

Die Fragestellung dieser Studie basiert auf der Tatsache, dass seit der ägyptischen Revolution der Einfluss der islamischen Bewegungen in Ägypten abgenommen hat und seit dem 30.06.2013 die meisten islamischen Bewegungen, insbesondere die Muslimbruderschaft, von der ägyptischen Regierung verboten wurden, daher konnten diese islamische Bewegungen keine soziale Rolle gespielt werden.

Die Studie beschäftigt sich mit der Frage „Wer sind die jugendlichen Alternativen der islamischen Bewegungen, die ihr gesellschaftliches Spektrum anstelle der islamischen Bewegungen erweitern können?“

In dieser Arbeit werde ich besonders hervorheben, welche neuen Jugendformationen seit dem ägyptischen Aufstand entstanden sind und die Beziehung zwischen diesen neuen jugendlichen Formationen, der Regierung und den islamischen Bewegungen. Die Studie beschreibt auch Wissen, Kultur und Ideologien dieser neuen Formationen in der jugenden ägyptischen Gesellschaft. Abschließend möchte ich noch diese Frage beantworten, ob diese Formationen ein Kulturelle oder eine religiöse Rolle in der ägyptischen Jugendgesellschaft spielen können?!

Budget politics and democratisation in Tunisia: escalating conflicts and the erosion of trust

Irene Weipert-Fenner (Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, Germany)

International attention for the severe political crisis in Tunisia peaked in July 2021, when President Saied, among other measures, froze the activities of parliament and sacked the prime minister. In so doing, he built on the broad discontent of the general populace with political parties, the legislature and numerous governments formed since 2011, who had all proven incapable of improving the socioeconomic situation of the majority of Tunisians. Seeking to better understand the crisis of the post-2011 political economy, this article studies conflicts around the annual budget - the so-called finance law - before Saied's election. The focus is on the finance laws of 2018 and 2019, when contentious collective actions brought about the first coordinated campaign against a finance law (2018) and the first socioeconomically motivated national general strike of the most powerful trade union federation since 1984 (2019).

Based on a systematic press and document analysis, including parliamentary minutes, the comparison of the preparation, ratification and implementation phase of these two finance laws reveals intense conflicts within and between parties and political institutions, casting doubt on the idea that too much consensus was Tunisia's problem at the time. Instead, the article argues that, first, political and societal conflicts remained relatively disconnected and, second, the procedures of budget politics in terms of participation and transparency were changing from year to year, leading to discontent on many sides. Finally, the government's responses to public contention eroded trust between political and social actors even further, oscillating between repression and backtracking after breaking promises.

Collective management and self-governance in Tunisia as a challenge to the post-revolutionary nation state?

André Weißenfels (FU-Berlin, Germany)

In the inner parts of Tunisia, many communities have long been at odds with different central authorities. They have been dispossessed and marginalized by French colonizers and later by the postcolonial Tunisian nation state. In the context of disappointed hopes after the 2010 revolution, those long-nurtured resentments towards central authorities have paved the way for new forms of autonomous self-government and self-management in the historically neglected parts of Tunisia. Examples of this can be found in the towns of Jemna, Menzel Bouziane, and Awlad Jaballa. These autonomous projects are characterized by a strong sentiment to manage different (agricultural) resources collectively and integrate the profit won from them into local societal structures. A first analysis of a small sample of such projects shows that they seem to be based on a dual structure: On the one hand, they started to collectively manage certain economic resources and thus took over the production process from former private (big or small scale) farming. On the other hand, those projects give birth to participatory political representation to negotiate consensually the broader direction of the project, the distribution of resources and the conflict with central authorities.

In this contribution, I want to

- a) Describe the cases of the two towns Jemna and Awlad Jaballa
- b) Flesh out their social dynamics and their historical context
- c) Reflect on their meaning for an ongoing postcolonial struggle and postrevolutionary learning processes

Beyond Arab Exceptionalism – Rethinking Political Representation in Egypt

Sarah Wessel (CARPO Bonn and BCGE-BUA, Deutschland)

The Arab uprisings since 2010/2011 have not only shaken world politics, but also academic debates in the field of democratization and authoritarianism studies. For decades, the dominant “Western” academic discourse emphasized the exceptionalism of the region in its democratization efforts in comparison to other regions in the world. With the mass uprisings, various Middle Eastern scholars have challenged this assumption, realigning the theoretical debates on how to explain political change. Henceforth, questions have focused on whether or to which extent “Western” theoretical epistemologies have contributed to an imaginary of a region resistant to political change, and its potential effects on political practices, as well as, on how to place more emphasis upon socio-political changes and discontinuities outside formal government to better understand political change.

Based on five years of fieldwork in Egypt 2010-15, this presentation contributes to the debate by providing rare insights into local and national ideas on politics, justice, and identity. With the selected empirical examples, I aim to illuminate on the question of how processes and practices outside formal government and procedures are constitutive in the making of political representation. Arguably, the predominant equation of political representation with formal democracy has deeply influenced authoritarian and democratization studies and contributed to an overemphasis on regime-level and formal politics and procedures. The presentation provides analytical innovation to the study of political representation outside formal government to better understand current global political developments and their interrelations, such as disenchantment with formal politics, the re-emergence of nationalist ideas, and populism.

Climate Change, Climate Justice, and the Reproduction of Order in West Asia and North Africa

Jan Wilkens (Universität Hamburg, Germany)

Climate change and global climate governance is fundamentally challenging the material, discursive and normative dynamics of ordering practices in global politics. From transnational social movements to international organizations, the discourse on climate justice has increased the pressure to decarbonize in order to reach climate targets. However, the understanding of climate change substantially depends on the definitions of what environmental problem are, while the perception of justice is also shaped by the normative background of actors. The paper draws on the observation that despite access to negotiations of civil society actors, predominant conceptions are defined by a limited number of actors. As activists from West Asia and North Africa (WANA) have highlighted, the language around climate change and climate justice itself is already problematic in different ways. This is not merely about correct terms, but a call to investigate the normative structures and meaning-in-use of concepts in local contexts in order to critically revise existing conceptualizations and ontological assumptions on a global scale. This paper will trace the concepts environmental and climate justice in academic debates as well as in official negotiations in order to highlight its main features (a). Subsequently, the contribution will discuss the case of environmental movements in Lebanon indicating the overlaps and gaps between local and global approaches to climate justice (b). Drawing on the empirical findings, the paper will discuss how a de-colonial approach to climate justice research can contribute to a more inclusive understanding within the global dynamics of climate change (c).

Die kritische Diskussion der arabischen Übersetzungen des Marxschen Werkes durch die Nahostwissenschaften der DDR

Philipp Winkler (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Deutschland)

Die westdeutschen Nahostwissenschaften haben sich, abgesehen von einem vielzitierten kursorischen Artikel von Stefan Wild in der Festschrift für Hans Wehr, kaum mit der Rezeption des Marxschen Werkes in der arabischen Welt befasst. In der DDR hingegen, wo eine bestimmte Interpretation der Schriften von Karl Marx als theoretisch-ideologische Grundlage des politischen Systems galt, war dies anders: Da es für die arabische Welt – im Unterschied etwa zur DDR selbst oder der Sowjetunion – keine zentralen Institutionen zur Verwaltung und Herausgabe des Werkes von Marx gab, kursierten schon bald eine Vielzahl von Übersetzungen einzelner zentraler Schriften, meist aus dem Französischen oder Englischen.

Einige ForscherInnen, vor allem Klaus-Eberhard Pabst (*1941, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg), sammelten und analysierten daher die verschiedenen in Umlauf befindlichen Übersetzungen der Werke von Karl Marx. Die alte Frage, inwiefern marxistische Theorien und Analysen sich auf nicht-westliche Gesellschaften, die eine teils völlig andere gesellschaftlich-ökonomische Struktur aufweisen, übertragen und anwenden ließen, welche etwa die sowjetische Orientalistik seit den 1920ern beschäftigte, stellte sich hier auf sprachlich-textlicher Ebene neu: inwiefern können in den Marxschen Schriften Terminologie, Metaphern und historische Beispiele, die meist einem christlich-europäischen Kontext entnommen sind, angemessen und verständlich ins Arabische übertragen werden, so dass auch LeserInnen mit einem nicht-westlichen religiösen, politischen und ökonomischem Hintergrund sie verstehen können? An dieser Stelle verbanden sich daher der sprachwissenschaftlich-philologische Zweig der Nahostforschung mit dem Politischen bzw. Soziologischen. Der Vortrag wird Motive und Methoden dieser kritischen Untersuchungen nachzeichnen sowie ihre Ergebnisse darlegen.

“Branding the Middle East” – A Missing Perspective and a Book Project: From Drinking Studies to Urban Studies

Steffen Wippel (MECAM, Tunis/Philipps Universität Marburg, Deutschland)

The paper introduces the panel on branding of, in and through the Middle East and North Africa. It will mainly consist of two sections:

First, it will point to the fact that comprehensive investigations are still missing for the MENA region in general, even if some Gulf countries and cities have attracted much attention in this respect. It then will present the outline and major sections of the present panel as well as of the edited volume that is currently in the making and on which the papers for the panel are based.

Second, it will demonstrate how different disciplines and perspectives – ranging from economics to anthropology and from drinking studies to urban studies – are involved in the study of Middle Eastern brands and branding. This will include short hints to the editor’s own contributions: a snapshot on the contemporary branding of wine in Morocco, which helps qualify a contested commodity, and a chapter on branding the North Moroccan city of Tangier on several scales and at temporal and spatial interfaces.

“Turkish Female Academics in International Relations: Resisting against Sexism and Patriarchy”

Zuhal Yeşilyurt Gündüz, Birgül Demirtaş (TED University, Turkey)

Despite the societal respect shown in Turkey for women academics, many endure difficulties that their male colleagues do not, also in the discipline of International Relations, still considered to be a "men's world".

While the number of women and men is nearly equal at the first steps in career, the number of men with higher promotion and titles increases while that of women decreases. We conducted 58 semi-structured interviews with female academics from Political Science and International Relations 02.04.2018 - 10.05.2019. By using the stratified sampling method, we reached 11% of all female academics in these departments, women from PhD candidature to professors in 22 cities, making this the most comprehensive study on gender ever conducted in those departments in Turkey. We aimed at learning women's experiences in recruiting, working conditions and promotion/advancement. Although the profession of an academic may be considered to be more privileged, women academics endure predicaments that remain unknown for men and we uncovered concepts leaky pipeline, glass ceiling syndrome, maternal walls and ivory basements. As if pre-COVID-19 pandemic times had not been difficult enough, the pandemic made academic, personal, and family life even harder for women. Therefore, 05-16.01.2021 we re-visited the female academics online and asked them first, whether the pandemic had caused ruptures in their academic research and work and second, how the pandemic affected responsibilities at home and whether care work was fairly/equally shared with partners. We received impressive answers from 32 academics, destroying the image of "modern women", "successful academic", "superwoman/super mum".

Orientalism from the Perspective of British Arthur John Arberry and New Trends

Gizem Yıldırım (Doctorate Student of Political Science and Public Administration Doctorate Program at Erciyes University, Turkey)

Orientalism has been an influential concept that has affected many different research areas from the 19th century to the present. In the first phase of modernity, the concept was discussed on different approaches and some studies have been carried on “othering”. These studies are also diversified with practices. As a result of the colonization of the East by some Western countries, orientalism studies have increased. Orientalism that published by Edward Said in 1978 greatly developed the other research areas and pioneered the creation of alternative areas. When orientalism was not so clear between 1900 and the 1970s, Arthur John Arberry, a student of the famous Professor R. A. Nicholson, came up with a different idea than the other English scientists. Despite his being of English descent, he followed in the footsteps of his teacher and he defended that the East was misunderstood in the West. He noticed the existence of information that was made up of complete nonsense and misunderstandings that had been placed in the minds of the Westerners until that day. He also defended that the information about the East has emerged from lies. He argued that this should be prevented and should be understood correctly. This theory which was put forward about East needs to be recognized today. The question of how this theory was shaped and reflected by globalization aroused curiosity. This article aims to find an answer for this question thanks to the hermeneutic method and aims to contribute to science.

GENDER-SENSITIVE APPROACH TO SECULARIZATION THEORY IN TURKISH CONTEXT

IFFET PIRAYE YUCE (Université Paris 8 | Vincennes - Saint-Denis, Turkey)

In Turkey, the remaining tension between religion/Islamic tradition and modernization/secularization has mostly become visible through the religiosity of women, which constitutes a useful tool for sociological analysis to explain the evolution of religion and the secularization process. This study argues that the adventure of modernization is experienced differently in each society. According to the theory of secularization, which developed in Western Christian societies, the various layers of a society are not equally affected in the same way by the processes of modernization.

Relying on Linda Woodhead's gender-sensitive approach to secularization theory, this study attempts to understand how female religiosity has been transformed in the process of modernization in Turkey through the prism of 42 semi-structured interviews carried out on the professional and family life of Muslim businesswomen as well as on their religious affiliation. The preliminary findings indicate that while the economic freedom contributes to the strong stance of women, we found that over-idealization of the idea that women are multitasking leads to an excessive workload for them by acquiring new responsibilities in the secular field without neglecting the responsibilities based on gender roles arising from tradition and religion. This study aims to contribute to the literature to understand the theory of secularization in terms of women in non-Western modernity processes.

INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO MULTIPLE IDENTITIES: MUSLIM WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN TURKEY

IFFET PIRAYE YUCE (Université Paris 8 | Vincennes - Saint-Denis, Turkey)

This study investigates the complexity of multiple social identities and the social and symbolic boundaries between Islam, gender, and professional activity through the lens of self-employed pious Muslim women's entrepreneurial activities, by problematizing how the female identity imbued with religious values fits into professional life in Turkey.

First, the study thematically analyses and interprets the outcomes of semi-structured interviews conducted in various provinces of Turkey with 42 women entrepreneurs. Then, the study focuses on the creation of margins within the Muslim religion by applying an intersectional approach to identity theory. Exploring Muslim women entrepreneurs' multi-layered experiences stemming from the intersection of their three social identities, the study sheds light on the practices of alternative "femininities" in the current context of Turkey.

The preliminary findings of this ongoing research indicate that conservative Muslim women go beyond their traditional gender roles through their entrepreneurial activities and create an alternative working-life model, a "Gray Area" that blends the mundane with the Islamic morality. At the same time, they tend to embrace gender-based responsibilities and perpetuate the patriarchal order for the sake of the family institution. This research aims to contribute to social identity theory and the existing literature on the relationship between female religiosity, gender, and economic activity.

Dysfunctionalities, Rigidities and their Causes in Arab-Mediterranean Countries' Labour Markets

Dina Zabaneh (Phillips Universität Marburg, Germany)

Arab Mediterranean countries face a multitude of Labour Market Dysfunctionalities, stemming from lack of Suitable approaches and evidence-based decision making. This has caused a continuous increase in unemployment, specifically among youth and women; coupled with low market participation rates, high market informalization, mainly caused by a lack of structured and applicable labour laws, lack of labour union participation, mismatches between labour supply and demand, among many others. Accordingly, reassessing the underlying casualties and determining the root cause of the dysfunctionalities, becomes ever more essential.

The market participation rate is lowest among women, due to cultural constraints and sexism. While, the increase in labour market supply is met with low absorptions rates, especially among youth, facing very lengthy transition periods. Moreover, the social protection systems remain weak and fragmented, and labour market institutions are highly ineffective. The deteriorating conditions are met with high rigidities of fiscal policies and structural reforms that have weakened the sovereignty of decision making.

Thus, the paper sets out to investigate the core dysfunctionalities of labour markets and their root causes, encompassing a local bottom-up perspective, from working on various labour market projects in the region. Whilst shedding a light on the commonalities within these countries' labour markets, and the urgency of understanding the dysfunctionalities and rigidities in a different analytical manner; concluding that the proposed casualties stem from imitative labour market policies that fail to incorporate the realities on the ground, and that further research is required to assess these policies and their precedent implemented programs.

Civil Society, Reconciliation, and Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies: Reconciliation and Grassroots Organizations in Algeria

Faouzia Zeraoulia (Mohamed Seddik University, Jijel, Algeria)

This paper addresses the role of civil society organizations in post-conflict contexts, focusing on the Algerian case. Algeria witnessed a contested reconciliation process that provoked enormous criticism among national as well as international human rights organizations. Despite the challenges and state censorship, grassroots associations have worked hard since the beginning of the war advocating victims' rights. Indeed, they showed remarkable efforts in shaping Algeria's history narratives and enhancing human rights culture. After the war, the bottom-up activism to defend peace culture and promote reconciliation was relatively fragmented and polarised. Nevertheless, in the last five years, we noticed the emergence of a remarkable horizontal network challenging the official accounts confirms the duty to remember and acknowledges the silenced gaps.

The author illustrates and examines the main approaches, mechanisms, and activities that civil society organizations have established to strengthen peace culture: how they define peace and reconciliation, how they perceive the victim-perpetrator cycle, mechanisms of resilience and adaptation, and main challenges. This analysis is a part of a research project that we started in 2019, which was financed in the early stages by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Fritz Thyssen Foundation. The findings are concluded based on intensive fieldwork that continues until today: interviews, archives, field observation, and official documents.

Moving towards smarter social contracts? Digital transformation as a driver of change

Tina Zintl, Annabelle Houdret (German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), Germany)

Digitalization is a global megatrend with not only technological and economic but also political and societal implications. E-government opens up new avenues of public service provision; governments foster digital jobs to counter job losses to automatization.

Digitalization thus is a driver of change in social contracts, with an impact on all three state deliverables provision, participation and protection, which is particularly strong in the MENA region.

- Digital service provision benefits from a more efficient and cost-saving manner. This is especially attractive for MENA states, which built their social contracts on financially unsustainable authoritarian bargains.

- Protection is also spurred by more efficient digital tools. Yet, MENA autocrats have been quick to protect their own grip on power, not their citizens, by adding digital surveillance to their extensive security apparatuses.

Participation is strongly impacted by social media and online platforms. The so-called Arab Spring epitomizes such media activism. Most MENA states proved however unwilling to grant more participative space, rather countering by launching neo-corporatist official websites and dialog forums. We explore these changes in state-society interactions and exchanged deliverables to demonstrate how digitalization triggers, shapes or prevents changes in social contracts. Further, we consider two limits to digitally enabled social contracts, (i) shrinking state sovereignty as virtual space defies its control and (ii) a lack of digital literacy and access to broadband services marginalizing certain population groups. Our paper is based on extensive desk research of academic literature and practitioners' reports, drawing on empirical examples in the sectors of e-governance and employment.

The New Start of Arab-Israeli Normalization: Palestine on the Sidelines?

Anja Zorob (Birzeit University, Palestinian Territories)

Since the Abraham Accords were signed in 2020, there is much talk again about 'normalization' between Israel and its Arab neighbours. In addition to the establishment of diplomatic relations, the focus is on cooperation in diverse fields including economy, energy and security. Business contacts and security cooperation started to develop a long time before, especially as far as the Israeli-Emirati arena is concerned, but remained 'under the table'. At the same time, the debate about political and economic plans, opportunities and expected effects of regional cooperation picked up speed. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict, however, seems to be largely ignored in this debate. The prospects for fulfilling the Palestinians' right to establish their own and independent state never looked good, even during the first wave of the normalization debate in the 1990s. One may remember Peres' concept of a New Middle East. Although the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 made the solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict a prerequisite for Arab-Israeli rapprochement, it failed to prevent the continuous extension of Israeli occupation and violation of Palestinian rights. How we can compare the debate 30 years ago with the debate prevailing today? What have been the positions of the advocates, opponents and 'observers' of normalization in the past and what are they today? Who among them has 'jumped ship'? How do the Palestinians receive and respond to the current discourse? The study is based on a content and discourse analysis of selected media contributions, political statements and discussions in academic literature.

Can Art and Cultural Activism play a role in Decolonization and social Emancipation? Some insights from Palestine.

Himmat Zoubi (EUME; IRGAC RLS)

What do the new Palestinian feminists teach us about double gaze, double counter-strategies, and on rebellious on multiple fronts? And how art and culture activism, in a hyper- neoliberal context, play any role in emancipatory struggles?

This talk will focus on the recent cultural and art scene in Palestine. It will argue that culture has always been a tool for resistance in Palestine, but in recent years, art and culture have become a key tool for claims of political decolonization, at the same time, of struggle for social emancipation. This paper will uncover the socio-political transformations that were behind this shift, but it will also illuminate how the new feminist wave stimulated this trend by standing up for ending all kind of oppression; patriarchy, colonization and capitalist.

Making power sustainable: How greening the energy sector serves the state-led political economy in Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates

Tobias Zumbärgel (CARPO - Center for Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient, Bonn)

When approaching the political economy of the hydrocarbon-wealthy Gulf monarchies, pundits are often puzzled how to classify the unique economic patterns: A high degree of personalization and deep involvement of the state merge with economic reforms around core precepts of neoliberalism and entrepreneurial thinking. The need of diversifying their hydrocarbon-intensive economies away from oil has further enhanced the assumption that the Gulf monarchies are at a crucial stage of reconfiguring their rentier-based social contract and pushing towards more privatization. This paper, however, challenges such a perspective. Using the example of clean technology and energy diversification (e.g. developing low-carbon or carbon-free energy sources), it shows how incumbents seek to maintain their control over the sustainable transformation. Instead, it is argued that the praised economic transformation towards market economy principles with a stronger role of the private sector looks good on the paper but falls short of expectations in practice. Instead, what I call an adaptive state capitalism remains in force that ultimately serves the power base of the ruling families. Using the examples of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the paper shows how leaderships make use of environmental sustainability to maintain their neopatrimonial system of interlocking privileges and interests through strategically binding various actors including other family members, technocrats and powerful business elites. Furthermore, green business and the promotion of like-minded and meritocratic technocrats with international outreach help to boost economic hedging towards new global partners. It ultimately strengthens the international influence and recognition of these states.

Competing for China's favor: COVID-19 implications on intra-regional Gulf dynamics

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While a resurgence of autocracies has been identified by scholars since the 2000s, empirical evidence grows that the fight against COVID-19 further facilitates the trend towards fostering the autocratic order at home and the bonds among autocracies worldwide. We argue that this development of fostering autocratic order is not intrinsically national but reinforced externally (i.e. there is a prevalent interplay of the external and the domestic level). We further argue that this new global surge of authorities is especially apparent in Sino-Gulf relations. However, while we notice that the COVID-19 pandemic has helped China's influence in acting as an appealing example of successfully combatting a global pandemic, thereby projecting a more positive image of the People's Republic (see: Demmelhuber et al., forthcoming), we also challenge the common assumption of autocratic patronage from strongest to weakest. In turn, we tend to show that the Gulf countries reveal specific dynamics of regionalism that include a double axis of conflict (Saudi Arabia vs. Iran) and competition (Qatar vs. UAE) that do not only oscillate but are also manifested in their relations with one of the international patrons (here: China).

Beyond the “right to work”: rethinking refugee labour in the Middle East

Ann-Christin Zuntz (University of Edinburgh, Vereinigtes Königreich)

This presentation provides an ethnographically-informed critique of the humanitarian focus on refugees’ “right to work”, contrasting the promises of self-reliance policies with the complex realities of displaced Syrians’ employment conditions outside NGO-led work projects. It draws on remote ethnographic and interview data from the 2020/21 Refugee Labour under Lockdown project, a study involving Edinburgh-based, Jordanian, Syrian and Turkish researchers, as well as 80 Syrian agricultural workers, 20 agricultural intermediaries and 20 agricultural employers in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and northern Syria—four countries with huge numbers of displaced Syrians in the agricultural workforce. In this project, we found that greater job insecurity, reduced working hours, and the absence of protective measures worsened precarious working conditions for Syrian households, who had entered the pandemic with no financial safety net, and decreased their bargaining power with intermediaries and employers.

By taking a political economy perspective, I contend that the International Labour Organization’s definition of “forced labour”, which emphasises acts of coercion by individual employers or states, does not capture Syrians’ experience of “unfreedom”. Insights from Modern Slavery Studies on the role of economic necessity in shaping workers’ willingness to accept non-decent jobs help us make sense of the mutually reinforcing effects of structural marginalisation in refugee-receiving countries, globalised food systems requiring cheap, mobile labour, and debt relationships, on refugee workers. Hence, formalising refugee labour will not put an end to exploitation, without the political will and resources to enforce labour standards.