

POLITICS and INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, Part II / Part IIB, 2025-2026

POL12: The Politics of the Middle East

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Contents

1. Introduction	2
1.2 POL12 lecture list in brief.....	4
2. The Politics of the State in the Middle East	5
3. The Politics of the Environment in the Middle East	19
4. The Unmaking of the Middle East - and its Remaking?	23
5. The mini-subjects	31
A. Language Politics in the Contemporary Maghreb	31
B. China and the Politics of Development in the Middle East	33
C. Woman, Life, Freedom in Iran	35
6. Examination	36
a. Mock exam paper	36
b. Past exam papers and reports	36
7. Other approaches to understanding Middle Eastern politics	51
a. Websites	51
b. Literary fiction (either in English translation or originally in English).....	52
c. Films	54
d. Music.....	54

This version was last updated on 30th July 2025. The reading lists are not complete, especially for the third lecture series. There will be updates before the start of term. Sections of text that are significantly incomplete or undecided are highlighted in yellow.

1. Introduction

This paper on the politics and international relations of the modern Middle East is built around three thematic sections. The first section explores states in the Middle East through debates on the form of states and governments in the region. The second section is on the politics of the environment in the Middle East, looking at human-environment interactions in order to explore the perspective and power relations of governments, corporations and citizens. The third section is on the Middle East in global politics, with a focus on regional conflict since October 2023. Students taking the paper should do 5 supervisions across these sections.

There will also be three separate 'mini-subjects' within the paper. The mini-subjects are on (i) language politics in contemporary North Africa; (ii) China's role in the Middle East; and (iii) the Woman, Life, Freedom movement in Iran since 2022. The mini-subjects are taught in Lent term, by a seminar. Students are encouraged (but not required) to choose *one* of these on which to have a supervision, which will be held as their last supervision in Lent term.

It is important to attend the introductory lecture on Wednesday 8th October, 11am, the day before the start of week 1, in the Alison Richard Building room SG2, as structures for potential supervision arrangements during the year will be presented at that lecture. Any specific preferences that you have will be taken into account when arranging supervisors and supervision topics. Typically, though, students will have five or six supervisions, comprising:

- 1 supervision on the historical emergence of modern politics in the region;
- 4 supervisions in total on the thematic sections, with at least one from each section;
- Optionally, 1 supervision on the 'mini-subject' (Language Politics in the Maghreb; China in the Middle East, Woman Life Freedom in Iran).

The exam paper is undivided, and a mock exam paper is contained in the section 6 of this paper guide. There will be one question on each of the mini-subjects.

To benefit from this paper, it is important to have a sense of the overall contours of the modern history of the region. It is worthwhile to work your way through one of the standard histories of the region at the start of the year to familiarise yourself with key events, historical processes and core terminology:

Roger Owen, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* (London: Routledge, 3rd edition, 2004)

Betty S. Anderson, *A History of the Modern Middle East: Rulers, Rebels, and Rogues* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016)

Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 4th edition, 2018)

William Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Westview Press, 6th edition, 2016)

Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991; updated edition, 2012)

Eugene Rogan, *The Arabs: A History* (London: Penguin, 3rd edition, 2018)

James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 5th edition, 2020)

These seven texts are quite different: Owen's historical account is only of the modern period and is fairly short, but has separate thematic accounts that develop the history. It is still useful, even though it is now dated. Cleveland takes in a longer sweep of history, and is detailed, but excludes North Africa west of Egypt from its account; it's perhaps better to use as a reference text than to read through. Anderson also excludes North Africa, but it is a lively and readable text, although it doesn't engage with academic literature. Hourani is a celebrated classic, with the longer historical sweep, but only of the Arab world (so excluding Turkey, Iran and Israel), and is brief on the post-1939 era; Rogan's is more up to date, and is focused more heavily on the 20th Century. The account from Milton-Edwards is that of an accessible textbook. Gelvin incorporates a social history within the political narrative to a considerably greater degree than the others. It's generally better to flick through each, and purchase the one you prefer: it will come in useful throughout the year.

The reading lists that follow in this paper guide are generally quite long, but this is to give you a choice about what to look at. We do not expect you to work through each item listed. Those that are particularly recommended are starred (*). Most of the items can be obtained online, especially journal articles, and links are included where relevant. If you find that specific pieces are not available electronically at the sites listed below, please contact the lecturer: URLs change and pieces are taken down, and it's helpful to inform us if that happens. Many of the reading lists below include works that are quite dated, and which provide judgements and prognoses that are no longer relevant. (Some of them, needless to say, you will rightly find to be flawed in their analysis). They are on the list sometimes because they were influential texts that shaped how particular regions or themes were studied – and sometimes to give you something to react against. You should also make sure you keep up to speed with the contemporary politics of the region, not least because of the widespread sense (which may of course be inaccurate) that the Middle East is currently in a period of flux. Some on-line sources are recommended in the last part of this course guide.

1.2 POL12 lecture list in brief

All the lectures and seminars for this paper will be in **the ARB, room SG2 unless otherwise stated.** The lectures are for one hour, the seminars for 90 minutes.

Introduction: Wednesday 8th October, 11am.

Michaelmas 2025	Michaelmas 2025 – Lent 2026	Lent 2026	Lent 2026
A: The Politics of the State <i>Tuesdays 11am</i>	B: The Politics of the Environment <i>Thursdays 2pm</i>	C: The Politics of Crisis, Oct 2023- <i>Tuesday 11am</i>	D: the mini-subjects <i>Friday 3pm-4.30pm</i>
14 th Oct: State formation. Case study: Syria.		27 th Jan: Eyeless in Gaza	
21 st Oct: The nation-state. Case study: Jordan.		3 rd Feb: Legacy of Uprisings	
28 th Oct: The authoritarian state. Case study: Algeria.	6 th Nov: Colonial environments - deserts and desertification	10 th Feb: Interventionism	13 th Feb: Language Politics in the contemporary Maghreb
4 th Nov: The rentier state. Case study: Saudi Arabia.	13 th Nov: Nation- & state-making - water & hydraulic infrastructures	17 th Feb: Unresolved conflicts	20 th Feb: China in the Middle East
11 th Nov: State religion. Case study: Iraq.	20 th Nov: Greening - trees & the built environment	24 th Feb: Nuclear reactions	27 th Feb: Woman, Life, Freedom in Iran
18 th Nov: The gendered state. Case study: Tunisia.	27 th Nov: Energy transition & the climate crisis – sun, wind, minerals	3 rd Mar: The Middle East in the Global Political Imaginary	
25 th Nov: The security state. Case study: Egypt.	22 nd Jan: Ecologies of war & occupation	10 th Mar: The politics of perpetual crisis	
2 nd Dec: Statelessness. Case study: the Palestinian diaspora.	29 th Jan: Environmental justice and resistance	17 th Mar: Remaking the Middle East	

Details of revision teaching in Easter term will be circulated at the start of that term.

2. The Politics of the State in the Middle East

Lectures (Glen Rangwala): MT Tuesdays @ 11.00am in **Room SG2**.

The first two substantive lectures of the term are intended to set up the course historically, from the late Ottoman era (1839-1922) through to the creation of modern independent states throughout the region and their attempts to establish national identity. From there, this lecture series explores the various dimensions of the politics of statehood in the region, from their mode of rule through their forms of political economy, to their embedding in religion and in gender relations, and on to the role of the security sector. The series ends by looking at the forms of statelessness in the region. Each of the lectures revolves around a specific case study.

1. State formation: the case of Syria

The first four texts set up the context for the formation of modern states in the Middle East, Hourani in terms of intellectual context and Fromkin, Provence and Rogan in military/political context. Perhaps the most useful is Provence, especially chapter 3, on the takeover by colonial powers and their attempts to suppress rebellion. The central theme in the remaining works is the character of the Middle Eastern state. Anderson provides an introduction to the field. Tripp in Hakimian/Moshaver presents three themes through which to understand that character, and Owen discusses change. Ayubi's broad text is worth reading in its entirety, but those pressed for time should concentrate on Chapters 1, 3, 8 and 12. Beblawi (listed with lecture 4) draws out an influential characterisation of many Middle Eastern states. Gongora, Heydemann, Cronin (see the introduction and chapter 1) and Gaub (particularly chapter 2) look to the centrality of the institutions of violence to the Middle Eastern state, though in different ways. Saouli usefully shifts the focus to the international position of Middle Eastern states: chapters 2 and 6 give you the core argument. Fortna's short article provides a useful way of thinking about the different trajectories of state-formation after the end of the Ottoman Empire.

The lecture will make particular use of the case of Syria. Reilly provides the general historical introduction; Gelvin, Neep and Daher all provide accounts through the lens of state formation focused on different periods in Syria's modern history. Thompson provides a gendered reading of the process.

Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, new edition, 1983 [1962]), particularly the epilogue.

David Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East 1914-1922* (London: André Deutsch Ltd, new edition, 2009 [1989]), especially Part XII.

* Michael Provence, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), especially chapter 3.

Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: the Great War in the Middle East, 1914-1920* (London: Allen Lane, 2015), particularly chapter 13.

* Hassan Hakimian and Ziba Moshaver (eds.), *The State and Global Change: The Political Economy of Transition in the Middle East and North Africa* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001) – see especially the chapters by Charles Tripp ('States, elites and the "management of change"') and Roger Owen ('The Middle Eastern state: repositioning not retreat?')

Steven Heydemann and Marc Lynch, eds., *Making Sense of the Arab State* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2024), especially chapter 1 by Steven Heydemann and chapter 5 by Bassel Salloukh

* Nazih N. Ayubi, *Over-stating the Arab State* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995/2006), chapter 3

* Lisa Anderson, 'The State in the Middle East and North Africa', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 20, No. 1 (October 1987), pp.1-18, at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/421917.pdf>

Adham Saouli, *The Arab State: Dilemmas of Late Formation* (London: Routledge, 2012), chs 2 & 6

Ben Fortna, 'Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire and After', in Sally Cummings and Ray Hinnebusch, eds., *Sovereignty after Empire: Comparing the Middle East and Central Asia* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp.91-103

Thierry Gongora, 'War making and state power in the contemporary Middle East', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 29/3 (1997), pp.323-340, at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800064795>

Steven Heydemann, ed., *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000) – especially chs 1 (by Heydemann) and 11 (by Owen), accessible via: <https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft6c6006x6;brand=ucpress>

Case study - Syria

James A. Reilly, *Fragile Nation, Shattered Land: The Modern History of Syria* (London: IB Tauris, 2018), chapters 4-10

James Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999)

* Daniel Neep, *Occupying Syria under the French Mandate: Insurgency, Space and State Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), chapter 2

Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), chapter 5

Raymond Hinnebusch, 'Syria: from "authoritarian upgrading" to revolution?', *International Affairs*, vol.88/1 (2012), pp.95-113, at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2012.01059.x>

* Joseph Daher, *Syria after the Uprisings: The Political Economy of State Resilience* (London: Pluto Press, 2019), chapters 3, 6 and especially 7

2. The Nation-State: the case of Jordan

The first major analyses of the modern politics of the Middle East were on the development of the idea of a pan-Arab nation, portrayed as emerging out of the Ottoman Empire and in tense relations with Western imperial powers. This is a literature that continues to shape studies of the Middle East. Tibi's volume to a large extent reflects this tradition of analysis, in Parts II-IV of the book; Choueiri (especially chapter 3 and 6) is an alternative. The critique is presented by the articles in Gershoni/Jankowski volume (essays 1,4,5,8 and 12 especially), and also Bromley (chapter 3). A

second literature then traces the decline of Arab nationalism after 1967; it is represented here by Ajami and Salem. The critique is from Gelvin. Bayat's book (esp chapter 10) provides an alternative frame of reference: by looking at 'everyday cosmopolitanism' in the Middle East, it challenges the literature which focuses on the political significance of particularistic identity claims.

Jordan provides the case study, due to the complex interlinkage of identity claims at work in this country. Robins provides the general history. It's useful to have a good sense of the colonial heritage: see especially Massad's chapters 2 and 5. Anderson takes you through the development of nationalist politics after independence. Nanes and Köprülü explore the complexity of national identity, and are worth comparing. Culcasi is most useful on how the concept of the Jordanian nation is presented to the population. Schwedler and Ryan take the account through the ways in which political identities are mobilised and instrumentalised amidst the post-2011 protests.

Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: Between Islam and the Nation-State* (London: Macmillan, 3rd edition, 1997 [1981]), Parts II-IV.

Youssef Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism: a History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), chapters 3 & 6

* James Gelvin, 'Modernity and its discontents: on the durability of nationalism in the Arab Middle East', *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 5/1 (1999), pp.71-89, at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1354-5078.1999.00071.x>

Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, ed., *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1997)

Rashid Khalidi, 'The 1967 war and the demise of Arab nationalism: chronicle of a death foretold', and Fawaz Gerges, 'The transformation of Arab politics: disentangling myth from reality', in W. Roger Louis and Avi Shlaim, eds, *The 1967 Arab-Israeli war: Origins and Consequences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Simon Bromley, *Rethinking Middle East Politics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), chapter 3

Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice since 1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, 1992), especially part III.

Paul Salem, *Bitter Legacy: Ideology and Politics in the Arab world* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994)

R. Stephen Humphreys, *Between Memory and Desire* (University of California Press, revd ed, 2005), chapter 3: 'The strange career of pan-Arabism'

* Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), chapter 10

Case study – Jordan

Philip Robins, *A History of Jordan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

Joseph Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), especially chapters 2 and 5

Betty S. Anderson, *Nationalist Voices in Jordan: The Street and the State* (Austin: Texas University Press, 2005), chapters 5 and 9

* Stefanie Nanes, 'Choice, loyalty and the melting pot: citizenship and national identity in Jordan', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol.14 (2008), pp.85-116, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537110701872683>

Karen Culcasi, 'Warm nationalism: mapping and imagining the Jordanian nation', *Political Geography*, vol.54 (2016), pp.7-20, at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2016.05.002>

Nur Köprülü, 'The interplay of Palestinian and Jordanian identities in re/making the state and nation formation in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan' in Kenneth Christie and Mohammad Masad, eds, *State Formation and Identity in the Middle East and North Africa* (New York: Palgrave, 2013).

* Jillian Schwedler, *Protesting Jordan: Geographies of Power and Dissent* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022), especially chapter 4. Also, an updated argument from 2024, at: <https://merip.org/2024/01/jordan-palestine-and-permissible-protest/>

* Curtis R. Ryan, *Jordan and the Arab Uprisings: Regime Survival and Politics Beyond the State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), especially chapters 5 and 8

3. The authoritarian state: the case of Algeria

Before the 'Arab Spring' of 2010-11, the literature on forms of rule in the Middle East were dominated by studies on the resilience of authoritarianism in the region, particularly in the Arab states, and this lecture starts with these arguments – exemplified by the first four texts on the list: especially the Posusney/Angrist collection (especially the articles by Bellin, Langohr and Lust-Okar) and Schlumberger (chapters 1, 2 and 10); the Albrecht/ Schlumberger article gives the core argument behind the latter collection. Bellin reflects on this argument from the standpoint of the seeming changes through the region in the early 2010s. Since the mid-2010s, the focus has shifted to how authoritarian regimes have reinvented themselves: Filiu and Allison set up, in different ways, a way of thinking as the response from states as a counter-revolutionary one.

The case study is from Algeria. Lowi is centrally on economic governance, but also provides a general history, and so is a good place to start (and see especially chapter 6). Werenfels is the most detailed account of how the state works. Entelis and Henry provide updates, questioning the durability of the model. The two listed essays in the Bonner collection look at specific features of the Algerian state that the other texts miss. On the mass post-2019 protest movement, the articles by Wolf, Serres and Joffé are here as initial responses; Haden/Harr-Siebenlist and Rachidi/Abdallah as very different sorts of later evaluation.

Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist, eds., *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance* (Lynne Rienner, 2005); originally published as a special edition of *Comparative Politics*, vol. 36/2 (2004), via: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i388670>

* Oliver Schlumberger, ed., *Debating Arab Authoritarianism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), especially chapters 1, 2 and 10

Holger Albrecht and Oliver Schlumberger, "'Waiting for Godot": regime change without democratization in the Middle East', *International Political Science Review*, vol. 25/4 (2004), pp.371–92, at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1601605.pdf>

Eva Bellin, 'Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring', *Comparative Politics*, vol.44/2 (2012), pp.127-149, at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23211807?seq=1>

Joshua Stacher, *Adaptable Autocrats: Regime Power in Egypt and Syria* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012)

* Joseph Sassoon, *Anatomy of Authoritarianism in the Arab Republics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), especially chapters 2, 3, 4 and 7

Jean-Paul Filiu, *From Deep State to Islamic State: The Arab Counter-Revolution and its Jihadi Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

* Jamie Allinson, *The Age of Counter-Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), especially chapters 1 and 4.

Case study - Algeria

Miriam Lowi, *Oil Wealth and the Politics of Poverty: Algeria Compared* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

* Isabelle Werenfels, *Managing Instability in Algeria: Elites and Political Change since 1995* (London: Routledge, 2007)

* John Entelis, 'Algeria: democracy denied, and revived?', *Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 16/4 (2011), pp.653-678, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2011.630878>

William Quandt, 'Algeria's transition to what?' and Mohammed Akacem, 'The role of external actors in Algeria's transition', in Michael Bonner, Megan Reif and Mark Tessler, eds., *Islam, Democracy and the State in Algeria* (London: Routledge, 2005). Originally published as articles of a special issue the *Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 9/2 (2004), via: <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/fnas20/9/2>

Clement M. Henry, 'The vanishing intermediary bodies of "authoritarian" regimes: legacies of Algerian student revolutionaries', in Noureddine Jebnoun, Mehrdad Kia and Mimi Kirk, eds., *Modern Middle East Authoritarianism: Roots, Ramifications, and Crisis* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp.81-100.

Anne Wolf, 'The myth of stability in Algeria', *Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 24/5 (2019), pp.707-12, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2019.1647899>

Thomas Serres, 'Understanding Algeria's 2019 revolutionary movement', *Middle East Brief* (Brandeis University, 2019), at: <https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/meb129.pdf>

George Joffé, 'Have Algerians seized back the initiative?', *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol.24/3 (2019), pp.349-355, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2019.1600229>

Madelyn Haden and Gabriel Harr-Siebenlist, 'Algeria's economic and political trends after the Hirak movement', *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol.28/6 (2023), pp.1303–1316, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2023.2254025>

Ilhem Rachidi & Abdallah Aballagh, 'Algeria's Hirak: fading prospects for democratisation?', *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol.28/6 (2023), pp.1515–1537, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2023.2207230>

4. The rentier state: the case of Saudi Arabia

The two major interlocking approaches to the state's economic form in the Middle East are on the 'rentier' character that is imputed to many Middle Eastern states; and on the process and problems of economic liberalisation. They are brought together helpfully in two volumes that provide general overviews: the Henry/Springborg and the Cammett et al. The second of those is more advanced, although there are different focuses to the two texts, and so both are worth dipping into as need be. The literature on rentierism begins with Beblawi's classic article. Okruhlik, Chaudhry and Mitchell all serve as different sorts of critical engagements with this account. The case study, Saudi Arabia, is well represented in that general literature, but some of the more recent literature on economic change in Saudi Arabia (often discussed alongside the Gulf states) is listed below.

Clement Henry and Robert Springborg, *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

Melani Cammett, Ishac Diwan, Alan Richards and John Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East*, 4th edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 2008/ revd 2015) – earlier editions, which are perhaps more widely available in Cambridge libraries, were by Richards & Waterbury.

* Hazem Beblawi, 'The rentier state in the Arab world', in Giacomo Luciani, ed., *The Arab State* (University of California Press, 1990). A slightly earlier version, published in *The Arab Studies Quarterly*, is at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41857943>

Gwenn Okruhlik, 'Rentier wealth, unruly law, and the rise of opposition: the political economy of oil states', *Comparative Politics*, 31(3), 1999, 295–315, at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/422341>

Kiren Aziz Chaudhry, 'Economic liberalization and the lineages of the rentier state', *Comparative Politics*, 27(1), 1994, pp.1–25, at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/422215>

* Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (London: Verso, 2011), chapters 6, 8 and the conclusion

Anoush Ehteshami and Emma Murphy, 'Transformation of the corporatist state in the Middle East', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 17/4 (1996), pp.753-772, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436599615362>

Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *Globalization and Geopolitics in the Middle East: Old Games, New Rules* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), Introduction and chapter 6

* Koenraad Bogaert, 'Contextualizing the Arab Revolts: the politics behind three decades of neoliberalism in the Arab World', *Middle East Critique*, vol.22/3 (2013), pp.213-234, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2013.814945>

Steven Heydemann, eds., *Networks of Privilege: the Politics of Economic Reform in the Middle East* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), the introduction by Heydemann.

Helen Thompson, *Disorder: Hard Times in the 21st Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), chapters 2 and 3.

Juergen Braunstein, 'Domestic Sources of Twenty-first-century Geopolitics: Domestic Politics and Sovereign Wealth Funds in GCC Economies', *New Political Economy*, vol. 24/2 (2019), pp.197-217, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2018.1431619>

Case study – Saudi Arabia

Adam Hanieh, *Money, Markets, and Monarchies: The Gulf Cooperation Council and the Political Economy of the Contemporary Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), especially chapter 2.

* Daniel Moshashai, Andrew Leber & James Savage, 'Saudi Arabia plans for its economic future: Vision 2030, the National Transformation Plan and Saudi fiscal reform', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.47/3 (2018), pp.381–401, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2018.1500269>

* Hannes Baumann, 'The transformation of Saudi Arabia's rentier state and "the international"', *Globalizations*, vol. 16/7 (2019), pp.1165-1183, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2019.1573870>

Karen E. Young, 'Sovereign risk: Gulf sovereign wealth funds as engines of growth and political resource', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.47/1 (2020), pp.96-116, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2020.1714866>

Alexis Montambault Trudelle, 'The Public Investment Fund and Salman's state: the political drivers of sovereign wealth management in Saudi Arabia', *Review of International Political Economy*, vol. 30/2 (2023), pp.747-771, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2022.2069143>

5. State religion: the case of Iraq

On Islam in politics, probably the best place to begin is the Eickelman/Piscatori volume, which covers the range of ways in which religion comes into politics, not specific to 'political Islam' or the Middle East. Ayubi, though dated, is still a good text that works through the beliefs and movements in a systematic way. It sets up many arguments that subsequent authors have followed; the final chapter (10) gives you a good sense of its approach. This can be complemented with Ismail, which explores the different types of Islamism principally in Egypt. Zubaida links Islam back to nationalism. Mandaville's book serves both as a useful introduction (particularly chapter 2 for a helpful starting point on history and concepts), and has useful framing and themes in chapter 6.

Studies of the religious character of the state have shifted in their analytical focus since 2003 to explanations of the role of religious sect, centering on the rivalry that is purported to exist between those of different affiliations. These explanations are presented at both the region-wide level, such as in accounts of a "Shi'a crescent", or at the sub-national level, such as in analysis of Sunni vs Shi'a in Iraq, or Alawite vs Sunni in Syria, or Sunni vs Zaydi Shi'a in Yemen. We explore this through the case of Iraq, in how the Iraqi state since the 1980s has come to navigate its religious character in the face of multiple wars and upheavals, but also the multiple forms of resistance to that positioning.

Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam* (London: Routledge, 2007), especially chapters 2, 6, 8 and 9

Nazih N. Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World* (London: Routledge, 1991), chapter 10

* Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), especially chapter 3.

Salwa Ismail, *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, the State and Islamism* (London: IB Tauris, 2003). , chapter 3.

* Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (London: Hurst, 2004 [2002])

Sami Zubaida, 'Islam and nationalism: continuities and contradictions', *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 10/4 (2004), pp.407–20, at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1354-5078.2004.00174.x>

* Fanar Haddad, *Understanding 'Sectarianism': Sunni-Shi'a Relations in the Modern Arab World* (London: Hurst, 2020), especially chapter 4.

Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel, 'The sectarianization thesis', in Hashemi/Postel, eds., *Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East* (London: Hurst, 2017), pp.1-22.

Case study – Iraq

Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005)

* Sami Zubaida, 'The fragments imagine the nation: the case of Iraq', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 34 (2002), pp.205-15, at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743802002039>

* Fanar Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq: Antagonistic Visions of Unity* (London: Hurst & Co., 2011), chapters 6-7

Eli Amarilyo 'History, memory and commemoration: the Iraqi Revolution of 1920 and the process of nation building in Iraq', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.51/1 (2015), pp.72-92, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2014.934816>

Samuel Helfont, 'Saddam and the Islamists: the Ba'thist regime's instrumentalization of religion in foreign affairs', *Middle East Journal*, vol. 68/3 (2014), pp.352-66, at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/43698590.pdf>

D. Gershon Lewental, "'Saddam's Qadisiyyah": Religion and History in the Service of State Ideology in Ba'thi Iraq', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 50/6 (2014), pp.891–910, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2013.870899>

Thomas Hegghammer, 'Global jihadism after the Iraq War', *Middle East Journal*, vol. 60/1 (2006), pp. 11-32, at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4330214>

George Joffé, 'The fateful phoenix: the revival of Al-Qa'ida in Iraq', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, vol.27/1 (2016), pp.1–21, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2016.1122899>

Taif Alkhudary, 'From *muhāsasa* to *mawatana*: consociationalism and identity transformation within the protest movement in federal Iraq, 2011–2019', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol.30/1 (2023), pp. 145–163, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2023.2230712>

6. The gendered state: the case of Tunisia

The focus in the lecture is on gender politics and the role of women in politics. Section 2 of Keddie provides a starting point, though the Joseph/Slyomovics collection will be more relevant (especially the articles by Graham-Brown, Joseph and Kandiyoti). The Chatty/Rabo volume (chapters 1, 6 and 9) and the Doumato/Posusney collection are also useful for the general overview. On the

2011 protest movements, a variety of the short articles in the special issue of the *Journal of International Women's Studies* will be useful: see especially Sika and Khodary (on Egypt) and Salime (on Morocco). The attention to women in political parties and state-sponsored programmes of empowerment provides particular interest: see Clark/Schwedler, Hatem, Browsers and Joseph for different takes. Al-Ali (perhaps especially chapter 6) and Mahmood (chapter 2 for the descriptive basis, chapter 5 for the most relevant arguments) look at the interplay of religion and gender: both are about Egypt, but they have wider resonance. Al-Rasheed (perhaps especially the introduction) speaks to how women figure within Saudi Arabia's religious nationalism. Massad is an innovative exploration of thinking about sexuality in the Arab world: chapter 3 tends to draw the most attention.

The case study is Tunisia. Reform of gender relations has been a central feature of government policy over recent decades, and has had a high profile in international discussion. In particular, the lecture looks at state empowerment and the consequences of the 2011 revolution for women. Murphy's article sets up the background. Charrad explores the changing role of women in state policy. Marks looks at the effect of the revolution. On this, see also the piece by Zlitni and Touati in the *Journal of International Women's Studies*, referenced earlier.

Nikkie Keddie, *Women in the Middle East: Past and Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007)

* Suad Joseph and Susan Slyomovics, eds., *Women and Power in the Middle East* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia, 2001)

Dawn Chatty and Annika Rabo, *Organizing Women: Formal and Informal Women's Groups in the Middle East* (Oxford: Berg, 1997)

* Janine Astrid Clark and Jillian Schwedler, 'Who opened the window? Women's activism in Islamist parties', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 35/3 (April 2003), pp.293-312, at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/4150178>

Journal of International Women's Studies, vol. 13/5 (2012), special issue: 'Arab Women – Arab Spring', via: <http://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol13/iss5/>

Mervat Hatem, 'Toward the development of post-Islamist and post-nationalist feminist discourses in the Middle East', in Judith E. Tucker, *Arab Women: Old Boundaries, New Frontiers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993)

Michaelle Browsers, 'The centrality and marginalization of women in the political discourse of Arab Nationalists and Islamists', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, vol. 2/2 (June 2006), pp.8-34, at:

http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_middle_east_womens_studies/v002/2.2browsers.pdf

Suad Joseph, 'Elite strategies for state building: women, family, religion and the state in Iraq and Lebanon', in Deniz Kandiyoti, *Women, Islam and the State* (London: Macmillan, 1991) [M]

Nadje Al-Ali, *Secularism, Gender, and the State in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005)

Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A Most Masculine State: Gender, Politics and Religion in Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

Eleanor Abdella Doumato and Marsha Pripstein Posusney, eds., *Women and Globalization in the Arab Middle East: Gender, Economy and Society* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003)

Joseph Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007)

Case study - Tunisia

* Mounira Charrad, 'Policy shifts: state, Islam and gender in Tunisia, 1930s-1990s', in *Social Politics*, vol 4/2 (1997), pp.284-319, at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/4.2.284>

Emma Murphy, 'Women in Tunisia: between state feminism and economic reform', in Eleanor Abdella Doumato and Marsha Pripstein Posusney, eds., *Women and Globalization in the Arab Middle East: Gender, Economy and Society* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003), pp.169-94.

* Monica Marks, 'Women's rights before and after the revolution', in Nouri Gana, ed., *The Making of the Tunisian Revolution: Contexts, Architects, Prospects* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp.224-251

Aitemad Muhanna, 'Islamic and secular women's activism and discourses in post-Uprising Tunisia', in Maha El Said, Lena Meari and Nicola Pratt, eds., *Rethinking Gender in Revolutions and Resistance: Lessons from the Arab World* (London: Zed Books, 2015).

7. The security state: the case of Egypt

The military and domestic security apparatus has a privileged position in many Middle Eastern states, and its role has often withstood changes of government or ruling party. Its position in patrimonial networks partly explains this continuity. This lecture explores variety of forms taken by security apparatuses. Grewal, Lutterbeck and Moussa focus on different dimensions of military adaptation since the Arab uprisings. It settles on the case of Egypt as an example for how domestic political change has had a discernible but limited effect on the military's involvement in the economy and domestic repression, while setting the limits for competitive politics. Much of the general literature on this topic discusses the case of Egypt in detail (such as Cook, Sayigh and Grewal), though usually in comparison with other cases, and can complement well the specific literature about Egypt, particularly the texts by Abul-Magd and Springborg.

* Steven Cook, *Ruling But Not Governing: The Military and Political Development in Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007)

Stephanie Cronin, *Armies and State-building in the Modern Middle East: Politics, Nationalism and Military Reform* (London: IB Tauris, 2014), introduction & chapter 1

Florence Gaub, *Guardians of the Arab State: When Militaries Intervene in Politics, from Iraq to Mauritania* (London: Hurst, 2017), chapter 2

Sharan Grewal, *Soldiers of Democracy? Military Legacies and the Arab Spring* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), especially chapters 5 and 7 (on Egypt), and 10 and 11 (on Tunisia)

Derek Lutterbeck, 'Arab Uprisings, armed forces, and civil-military relations', *Armed Forces & Society*, vol.39/1 (2013), pp.28-52, at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48609004>

Yezid Sayigh and Nathan Toronto, eds., 'Politics of Military Authoritarianism in North Africa', *Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center* (2021), at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2021/03/politics-of-military-authoritarianism-in-north-africa?lang=en>

* Engy Moussa, 'Privatizing security and authoritarian adaptation in the Arab region since the 2010-2011 uprisings', *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol.44/3 (2023), pp.462-490, at <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2023.2214757>

Case study - Egypt

* Zeinab Abul-Magd, *Militarizing the Nation: The Army, Business, and Revolution in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), especially chapters 3 and 5

Shana Marshall, 'The Egyptian armed forces and the remaking of an economic empire', *Carnegie Middle East Center* (2015), at: http://carnegieendowment.org/files/egyptian_armed_forces.pdf

Stephan Roll, 'Managing change: how Egypt's military leadership shaped the transformation', *Mediterranean Politics*, 21/1 (2016), pp.23-43, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2015.1081452>

* Robert Springborg, 'The rewards of failure: persisting military rule in Egypt', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 44/4 (2017), pp.478-496, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2017.1363956>

Angela Joya, 'Neoliberalism, the State and Economic Policy Outcomes in the Post-Arab Uprisings: The Case of Egypt', *Mediterranean Politics*, 22/3 (2017), pp.339-361, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2016.1219182>

Joshua Stacher, 'Egypt running on empty', *MERIP online*, 8th March 2016, at: <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero030816>

8. Statelessness: the case of the Palestinian diaspora

The final lecture in the series on the politics of the state redirects thinking about the state by looking at its seeming absence. It looks at different forms of 'statelessness': refugees, minorities and diasporas. On refugee populations, Chatty gives the overview, while Lutterbeck and Heisbourg explore cases. On minorities, Zabad and the articles in the two collections give overviews, but the piece by Akbarzadeh et al. illustrates some of the dynamics nicely through its case on Kurds of Iran. On diasporas, almost all Middle East countries have large diasporas which continue to identify actively with their country of origin. Tsourapas and Brand look to the varied conditions under which these diasporas have formed, and concomitantly their different contemporary characteristics. Moss, Pearlman and Baser look to how these geographically dispersed populations engage with – and are engaged by – their homelands, and the political significance of this interaction. It also looks to their roles and predicaments within the countries of residence.

The case is the Palestinian diaspora – bringing together themes of refugee and minority status, with those of a dispersed diaspora. While Khalidi provides historical background, Schulz / Hammer is the main text, with the other accounts either serving mostly to update its themes (Gabiam) or explore more overtly political dimensions (Chamberlin, Shabaneh). This also links into the starting point for the lectures next term.

Dawn Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), especially chapter 1

Derek Lutterbeck, 'Across the desert, across the sea: migrant smuggling into and from Libya', in Peter Seeberg and Zaid Eyadat, eds., *Migration, Security and Citizenship in the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave, 2013)

François Heisbourg, 'The strategic implications of the Syrian refugee crisis', *Survival*, vol. 57/6 (Nov 2015), pp.7-20, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2015.1116144>

* Gerasimos Tsourapas, 'Theorizing state-diaspora relations in the Middle East: Authoritarian emigration states in comparative perspective', *Mediterranean Politics*, vol.25/2 (2020), pp.135-59, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2018.1511299>

Ibrahim Zabad, *Middle Eastern Minorities: The Impact of the Arab Spring* (London: Routledge, 2017)

Ofra Bengio and Gabriel Ben-Dor, ed., *Minorities and the State in the Arab World* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1999)

Nils Butenschon, Uri Davis and Manuel Hassassian, eds., *Citizenship and the State in the Middle East: Approaches and Applications* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000)

Kirsten Schulze, Martin Stokes and Colm Campbell, *Nationalism, Minorities and Diasporas: Identities and Rights in the Middle East* (London: IB Tauris, 1996)

* Shahram Akbarzadeh et al., 'The Iranian Kurds' transnational links: impacts on mobilization and political ambitions', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 43/12 (2020), pp.2275-229, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2019.1689280>

Laurie Brand, *Citizens Abroad: Emigration and the State in the Middle East and North Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

Philippe Fargues and Alessandra Venturini, eds., *Migration from North Africa and the Middle East: skilled migrants, development and globalisation* (London: IB Tauris, 2015)

* Dana M. Moss, *The Arab Spring Abroad: Diaspora Activism against Authoritarian Regimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), especially chapter 7

* Wendy Pearlman, 'Competing for Lebanon's diaspora: transnationalism and domestic struggles in a weak state', *International Migration Review*, vol.48/1 (2014), pp.34-75, at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12070>

Marcus Michaelsen, 'Exit and voice in a digital age: Iran's exiled activists and the authoritarian state', *Globalizations*, vol.15/2 (2018), pp.248-64, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2016.1263078>

Alice Alunni, 'Long-distance nationalism and belonging in the Libyan diaspora', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.26/2 (2019), pp.242-258, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2019.1569303>

Bahar Baser, 'Homeland Calling: Kurdish Diaspora and State-building in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in the Post-Saddam Era', *Middle East Critique*, vol.27/1 (2018), pp.77-94, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2017.1415512>

Philippe Fargues, 'International migration and the nation state in Arab countries', *Middle East Law and Governance*, vol.5 (2013), pp.5-35, at: https://brill.com/view/journals/melg/5/1-2/article-p5_2.xml

Case study – the Palestinian diaspora

Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), especially chapter 8.

* Helena Lindholm Schulz and Juliane Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and the Politics of Homeland* (London: Routledge, 2003), especially chapters 3, 8 and 9.

Paul Chamberlin, 'The struggle against oppression everywhere: the global politics of Palestinian liberation', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.47/1 (2011), pp.25–41, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263201003590300>

Rami Siklawi, 'The dynamics of Palestinian political endurance in Lebanon', *Middle East Journal*, vol. 64/4 (2010), pp. 597-611, at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40926502>

Nell Gabiam and Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 'Palestinians and the Arab Uprisings: political activism and narratives of home, homeland, and home-camp', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol.43/5 (2016), pp.731–748, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1202750>

Ghassan Shabaneh, 'Refugees, international organizations, and national identity: the case of Palestine', *New Political Science*, vol. 32/2 (2010), a <https://read.dukeupress.edu/nps/article-standard/32/2/215/397501/Refugees-International-Organizations-and-National>

Suggested supervision questions:

- Are the origins of the Middle Eastern state to be found in the Ottoman Empire, Western imperialism or post-independence politics?
- What factors and/or forces were core to the establishment of authoritarianism in the Arab region before 2011?
- EITHER: How have economic liberalization in the Middle East empowered the state and its security institutions instead of enhancing a free-market economy and a strong private sector?
OR: Is successful democratization in the Arab region dependent on weakening the military institutions?

- How did the Arab uprisings affect the security market in the Arab region and with what effect on the ruling elites' security and interests?
 - Are Western interests at odds with the establishment of democracy in the Middle East?
 - Is the continuing turbulence across the Arab region since 2011 a sign of the failure of authoritarian adaptation?
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- Is national identity to be understood in the Middle East principally as a foreign imposition, a form of loyalty or a frame of political contestation?
 - Are nationalism and religion opposing or complementary forces in Arab politics?
 - Is 'sectarianism' a fake category in understanding Middle Eastern politics?
 - Is the Middle East a hostile place for ethnic and religious minorities?
 - What forms does political empowerment take for women in the Middle East?

3. The Politics of the Environment in the Middle East

Lectures (Ekin Kurtic): Michaelmas weeks 5-8 & Lent weeks 1-2, Thursdays @ 2pm. SG2

This section focuses on the politics of the environment in the Middle East, examining key issues and themes such as colonialism, nation-building, urbanization, political violence and conflict, and social mobilization through the lens of human-environment interactions. We will explore the historical and sociopolitical foundations of environmental discourses and practices, with particular attention to their role in perpetuating and/or challenging existing inequalities and injustices. Key environmental issues in the region, such as desertification and afforestation, tree-planting, sustainable cities, environmental destruction and war, waste and toxicity, climate change, energy transition, and water management, will be analysed through empirically grounded and theoretically informed studies. These studies will offer insights into the perspectives and power dynamics among a diverse set of actors, including governments, corporations, techno-scientific experts, farmers, urban dwellers, pastoralists, and activists. Throughout the module, students will engage with key concepts relevant to the study of environmental politics in the Middle East, including environmental orientalism, settler ecologies, national nature, green grabbing, environmental justice, climate colonialism, technological adjustments, and green authoritarianism, among others.

1. Colonial environments in and across the MENA: deserts and desertification

Davis, Diana K. (2019). From the divine to the desertified: the foundational case of deserts in the Middle East. *Global Environment*, 12(1), 56-83.

Davis, Diana K. (2004). Desert 'wastes' of the Maghreb: desertification narratives in French colonial environmental history of North Africa. *Cultural Geographies*, 11(4), 359-387.

Lehmann, Philipp. (2022). *Desert Edens: Colonial climate engineering in the age of anxiety*. Princeton University Press. (Introduction, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3)

Luneau, Tyson A. (2023). A Disdain for Deserts: The Sahara Sea Project and Climatic Modification in North Africa, 1864–1885. *Journal of World History*, 34(4), 527-556.

Dunn, Ross E. (2018 [1977]). *Resistance in the desert: Moroccan responses to French imperialism 1881-1912*. Routledge.

Koch, Natalie (2021). The desert as laboratory: Science, state-making, and empire in the drylands. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 46(2), 495-509.

Koch, N. (2021). Desert geopolitics: Arizona, Arabia, and an arid-lands response to the territorial trap. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 41(1), 88-105.

Dolbee, Samuel. (2020). The desert at the end of empire: An environmental history of the Armenian genocide. *Past & Present*, 247(1), 197-233.

2. Nation- and state-making: water and hydraulic infrastructures

Sowers, Jeannie (2011). Remapping the nation, critiquing the state: Environmental Narratives and Desert Land Reclamation in Egypt, In *Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa*, 158-191.

- Hanna, Ramy, and Jeremy Allouche. (2018) "Water nationalism in Egypt: State-building, nation-making and Nile hydropolitics." In *Water, technology and the nation-state*, pp. 81-95. Routledge
- Jones, T. C. (2013). State of nature: The politics of water in the making of Saudi Arabia. *Water on Sand: Environmental Histories of the Middle East and North Africa*, 231-50.
- Raabe, Pauline. (2021). The Technopolitics of Desalination in Saudi Arabia. *POLIS Reflects*. Available online at <https://polisreflects.polis180.org/pub/dd39suw6/release/1>
- Bilgen, Arda (2021). "Concrete" steps toward modernization: Dam-, state-, and nation-building in southeastern Turkey. In *The Routledge handbook on contemporary Turkey* (pp. 297-308). Routledge.
- Harris, Leila M. (2012). State as socionatural effect: Variable and emergent geographies of the state in southeastern Turkey. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 32(1), 25-39.
- Stahl, Dale J. (2019). A technopolitical frontier: The Keban Dam project and southeastern Anatolia. In *Transforming socio-natures in Turkey* (pp. 31-51). Routledge.

3. Politics of Greening and Sustainability: trees and the built environment

- Braverman, Irus. (2009). Planting the promised landscape: Zionism, nature, and resistance in Israel/Palestine. *Natural Resources Journal*, 49: 317-366.
- Gutiérrez Vázquez, L., Amann Alcocer, A., & Martella, F. (2025). Greening the occupation: colonial landscape regulation in Palestine-Israel. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 1–25.
- Hughes, S. S., Velednitsky, S., & Green, A. A. (2023). 'Greenwashing in Palestine/Israel: Settler colonialism and environmental injustice in the age of climate catastrophe'. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 6(1), 495-513.
- Ouis, P. (2002). 'Greening the Emirates': The modern construction of nature in the United Arab Emirates. *Cultural geographies*, 9(3), 334-347.
- Koch, Natalie. (2019). AgTech in Arabia: 'spectacular forgetting' and the technopolitics of greening the desert. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 26(1), 666-686.
- Günel, Gökçe. (2019) *Spaceship in the desert: Energy, climate change, and urban design in Abu Dhabi*. Duke University Press. (Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 3)
- Zumbraegel, Tobias. (2024). Eco-Tech Odyssey: The Political Craftsmanship of a Green Technostate in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). *Middle East Critique*, 1–20.

4. Energy transition and the climate crisis: sun, wind, and critical minerals

- Rignall Karen. (2019) Living Climate Change in the Middle East and North Africa. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 51(4):629-632
- Hamouchene, Hamza, and Katie Sandwell. (2023). Introduction: Just in Time – The Urgent Need for a Just Transition in the Arab Region. In *Dismantling Green Colonialism Energy and Climate Justice in the Arab Region*. London: Pluto, 1-20.

- Moore, Sharlissa. (2018) *Sustainable energy transformations, power and politics: Morocco and the Mediterranean*. Routledge.
- Rignall, Karen E. (2016). Solar power, state power, and the politics of energy transition in pre-Saharan Morocco. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 48(3), 540-557.
- Alkhalili, N., Dajani, M., & Mahmoud, Y. (2023). The enduring coloniality of ecological modernization: Wind energy development in occupied Western Sahara and the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. *Political Geography*, 103, 102871.
- Allan, J., Lakhal, H., & Lemaadel, M. (2023). An unjust transition: Energy, colonialism and extractivism in occupied Western Sahara. In *Dismantling Green Colonialism Energy and Climate Justice in the Arab Region*, eds Hamouchene, H., and K. Sandwell. London: Pluto, 49-61.
- Pouran, Hamid. (2023). The Middle East's critical mineral resources: a key to the clean energy transition. *Middle East Institute*, December 4. Available online at <https://www.mei.edu/publications/middle-east-critical-mineral-resources-key-clean-energy-transition>
- Hoffmann, Clemens, & Ergenc, Ceren (2022). A Greening Dragon in the Desert? China's Role in the Geopolitical Ecology of Decarbonisation in the Eastern Mediterranean. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 25(1), 82–101

5. Ecologies of war and occupation

- Sowers, Jeannie L, Erika Weinthal, and Neda Zawahri. (2017). "Targeting Environmental Infrastructures, International Law, and Civilians in the New Middle Eastern Wars." *Security Dialogue* 48, no. 5: 410–30.
- Khayyat, Munira (2022). *A Landscape of War: Ecologies of Resistance and Survival in South Lebanon*. Univ of California Press.
- Molavi, Shourideh. (2024). *Environmental Warfare in Gaza: Colonial violence and new landscapes of resistance*. Pluto Press.
- Jongerden, J., de Vos, H., & van Etten, J. (2007). Forest burning as counterinsurgency in Turkish-Kurdistan: An analysis from space. *The International Journal of Kurdish Studies*, 21(1/2), 1.
- Rubaii, Kali. (2020). "Birth Defects and the Toxic Legacy of War in Iraq," *Middle East Report* 296. Available online at <https://merip.org/2020/09/birth-defects-and-the-toxic-legacy-of-war-in-iraq/>
- The Cost of Imperial Wars on Iraq's Environment - Flow Podcast - Episode 6 with Kali Rubaii Available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcgWzZoop4Q>
- Guarasci, B. L. (2015). The National Park: Reviving Eden in Iraq's Marshes. *The Arab Studies Journal*, 23(1), 128-153.

6. Environmental Justice and Resistance

- Sowers, Jeannie, (2019) 'Environmental Activism in the Middle East and North Africa', in Harry Verhoeven (ed.), In *Environmental Politics in the Middle East*. Hurst.
- Makdisi, K. (2012). The rise and decline of environmentalism in Lebanon. *Water on sand: Environmental histories of the Middle East and North Africa*, 207-30.
- Nucho, Joanne R. (2019). Garbage infrastructure, sanitation, and new meanings of citizenship in Lebanon. *Postmodern Culture*, 30(1).
- Knudsen, Ståle. (2016). Protests against energy projects in Turkey: Environmental activism above politics?. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 43(3), 302-323.
- Erensü, Sinan, and Karaman, Ozan. (2017). The work of a few trees: Gezi, politics and space. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 41(1), 19-36.
- Kurtiç, Ekin (2022). Criminalizing environmental activism in Turkey. *Middle East Briefs*, 147, 1-9.
- Fadaee, Simin. (2016). 'Rethinking Southern environmentalism: Iranian environmental movement and its premises.' In *Understanding Southern social movements*, (ed). Simin Fadaee. Routledge, pp. 15-26.
- Wiktor-Mach, D., Hajiagha, A. R., & Hamelink, W. (2024). Decolonising environmental justice: grassroots perspectives from Iranian Kurdistan/Rojhelat on water rights and ecological activism. *Kurdish Studies Journal*, 2(2), 151-181.
- Hunt, Stephen. E. (2017). 'Prospects for Kurdish Ecology Initiatives in Syria and Turkey: Democratic Confederalism and Social Ecology.' *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 30(3), 7–26

Suggested supervision questions

- How do environmental imaginaries of the Middle East shape contemporary processes of dispossession and exploitation?
- Does environmental determinism help explain power relations in the Middle East and North Africa?
- Is a decolonial energy transition possible in the region?
- Is Middle Eastern environmentalism a “Western” export or an intrinsically local form of activism?
- What role do environmental infrastructures play in political conflicts in the Middle East?
- Why are technologies and technical experts attributed central roles in greening and sustainability projects in the MENA?

4. The Unmaking of the Middle East - and its Remaking?

Lectures (Glen Rangwala): Lent weeks 1-8, Tuesday @ 11am. **ARB SG2**

The paper takes a turn in Lent term. The Michaelmas lectures lead on major themes in the study of Middle Eastern politics, as it has developed over recent decades. The Lent teaching, by contrast, leads on events since 7th October 2023, with the series of conflicts that escalated across the region. The purpose of this section of the course is *not* to give a narrative account of developments over the past two years, but instead to set recent developments in historical and theoretical context – and that will be done through engaging with some of the themes that have come to the fore over this time. Inevitably, many of the arguments being looked at here are highly contentious. You are encouraged to engage critically with much of the literature listed here, and indeed with the approach of the lectures themselves.

The reading listed here is predominantly written before October 2023; and much of the reading listed that was written subsequently consists of journalism or other non-academic writing. **The lists will be updated extensively by January 2026.** The objective is to think through contemporary events in light of the wider historical and analytical themes brought out in the earlier literature. Essays written for this section of the paper can be expected to be more speculative in their approach than standard academic essays.

1. Eyeless in Gaza

The opening lecture sets up the section of the course, beginning with the Hamas-led raids on Israel on 7 October 2023, and the unfolding conflicts that have resulted in escalating violence between Israel and Lebanon, Syria, Iran and Yemen among others, as well as in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It then positions these conflicts historically, challenging the idea that the regional conflict began in October 2023. It also positions it within the discipline of the 'international relations of the Middle East': it looks to how this literature interacts with the histories of the international politics of the region, histories in which external actors and conflicts often take centre stage.

The lecture draws its title from Milton's tragic drama *Samson Agonistes* (1671): *Gaza yet stands, but all her Sons are fall'n, All in a moment overwhelm'd and fall'n*. The text of the play does not form part of the reading list.

Reading list to follow

Louise Fawcett, ed., *International Relations of the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd edn, 2013)

Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, eds, *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States* (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 2nd edn, 2014)

Fred Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

Michael Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab Politics: Negotiations in Regional Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998)

- Fred Lawson, *Constructing International Relations in the Arab World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006)
- Mehran Kamrava, ed., *International Politics of the Persian Gulf* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011)
- Rashid Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East* (London: IB Tauris, 2004)
- Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), chapter 4
- * Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010)
- * Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, various editions, [1978]), especially chapter 3, part IV, 'The latest phase', pp.284-328; and the 1995 afterword
- Waleed Hazbun, 'The Middle East through the lens of critical geopolitics: globalization, terrorism, and the Iraq War', *Is There a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept*, edited by Michael E. Bonine, Abbas Amanat and Michael Ezekiel Gasper (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012)
- Karen Culcasi, 'Constructing and naturalizing the Middle East', *Geographical Review*, Vol. 100, No. 4 (October 2010), pp. 583-597, at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1931-0846.2010.00059.x>

2. The legacy of the Arab Uprisings

The lecture sets up the rapidly shifting regional order in the Middle East immediately prior to October 2023, and the debates about political legitimacy that had a broadly polarising effect at the time. It does so through looking at how the Arab Uprisings of 2010-11 left sharp divisions both within countries and between governments, who entered into a new round of geopolitical struggle. This serves as a way into the context of the post-2023 crisis, as well as a starting point for understanding subsequent change.

- Bassel Salloukh, 'The Arab uprisings and the geopolitics of the Middle East', *The International Spectator*, vol. 48/2 (2013), pp.32-46, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2013.787830>
- * Joshua Stacher, 'Fragmenting states, new regimes: militarized state violence and transition in the Middle East', *Democratization*, vol.22/2), pp.259-275, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2015.1010810>
- Katerina Dalacoura, 'The 2011 uprisings in the Arab Middle East: political change and geopolitical implications', *International Affairs*, vol. 88/1 (2012), pp.63-79, at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2012.01057.x>
- * Ariel I. Ahram & Ellen Lust, 'The decline and fall of the Arab state', *Survival*, 58/2 (April/May 2016), pp.7-34, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2016.1161897>
- Marc Lynch, 'Proxy war and the new structure of Middle East regional politics', in James Gelvin, ed., *The Contemporary Middle East in an Age of Upheaval* (2021), pp.238-252, at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cam/detail.action?docID=6521326>

3. Interventionism: Brokers, Managers, Advocates

This lecture works towards understanding how external powers have a long history of attempting to 'manage' the Middle East after independence, and particularly how issues in the politics of the Middle East mobilise actors and debates outside the region. In looking at the politics of intervention, the focus is not so much on how and why outside powers intervene in the region but on how debates about intervening in the Middle East come to take on political significance in other regions of the world. In particular, it looks to three themes: how 'democracy promotion' comes to take on a framing role in engagements with the Middle East; why and how the politics of gender and sexuality in the Middle East comes to be a focus for external attention, and how the Israel-Palestine conflict comes to take a role in setting wider political alignments around the world, and the consequences of this.

* Sean L. Yom, *From Resilience to Revolution: How Foreign Interventions Destabilize the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), chapter 1

* Karim Makdisi, 'Intervention and the Arab Uprisings: from transformation to maintenance of regional order', in R.A. Boserup et al, *New Conflict Dynamics: Between Regional Autonomy and Intervention in the Middle East and North Africa* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2017), pp.93-106, at:
https://pure.diiis.dk/ws/files/830699/2017_DIIS_New_Conflict_Dynamics_in_the_Middle_East_and_North_Africa_web.pdf

* Sheila Carapico, *Political Aid and Arab Activism: Democracy Promotion, Justice and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), introduction and chapter 4

Paul Salem, 'The Middle East's troubled relationship with the liberal international order', *The International Spectator*, vol. 53/1 (2018), at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2018.1407165>

Jessica Leigh Doyle, 'Civil society as ideology in the Middle East: a critical perspective', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.43/3 (2015), pp.403-422, at:
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2015.1102713>

Daniel Neep, 'Dilemmas of democratization in the Middle East: the "forward strategy of freedom"', *Middle East Policy*, vol. 11/3 (2004), pp.73-84, at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1061-1924.2004.00167.x>

Thomas Carothers, 'The democracy crusade myth', *The National Interest*, vol.90 (2007), at:
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/42896042>

* Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2013), chapter 3, pp.81-112: 'Authorizing moral crusades'

Sunaina Maira, '"Good" and "Bad" Muslim Citizens: Feminists, Terrorists, and U. S. Orientalisms', *Feminist Studies*, vol.35/3, (2009), pp.631-656, at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40608397>

William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 3rd edn, 2005)

John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* (London: Allen Lane, 2007)

Jonathan Rynhold, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict in American Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), especially chapters 2 and 3

Michael R. Fischbach, *Black Power and Palestine: Transnational Countries of Color* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019)

Lori Allen, 'What's in a link? Transnational solidarities across Palestine and their intersectional possibilities', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol.117/1 (2018), via:
<https://read.dukeupress.edu/south-atlantic-quarterly/issue/117/1>

Ben Freeman, 'The Qatar Lobby in Washington' (2020) and 'The Emirati Lobby: How the UAE Wins in Washington' (2019), both via: <https://www.internationalpolicy.org/ben-freeman>

4. Unresolved conflicts

The lecture involves a comparison of Lebanon, Syria and Yemen, as highly disordered political spaces. It looks first to the ways in which conflicts in those places remained before 2023 in a state of a long-term stand-off, exploring the reasons for this. Its central focus in what follows though is how the intertwining of conflicts since 2023 has reordered each of these situations.

Yemen

Stephen W. Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen: a Troubled National Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), especially chapter 8

Ginny Hill, *Yemen Endures: Civil War, Saudi Adventurism and the Future of Arabia* (Hurst, 2017)

* Maria-Louise Clausen, 'Competing for control over the state: the case of Yemen', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, vol.29/3 (2018), pp.560-578

* Mareike Transfeld, 'Political bargaining and violent conflict: shifting elite alliances as the decisive factor in Yemen's transformation', *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 21/1 (2016), pp.150-169

Thomas Juneau, 'How war in Yemen transformed the Iran-Houthi partnership', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2021.1954353>

Sebastian Sons and Toby Matthiesen, 'The Yemen war in Saudi media' (2016), Muftah.org, via:
https://muftah.org/yemen-war-saudi-media/#.WTe_AGjyuU

Lara Aryani, 'Saudi Arabia and the War of Legitimacy in Yemen', *Jadaliyya*, 2 May 2015, at:
<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/21538/saudi-arabia-and-the-war-of-legitimacy-in-yemen>

Syria

Robin Yassin-Kassab and Leila al-Shami, *Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War* (London: Pluto, 2016)

* Joseph Daher, *Syria after the Uprisings: The Political Economy of State Resilience* (London: Pluto Press, 2019), chapters 3, 6 and especially 7

Kheder Khaddour and Kevin Mazur, 'The struggle for Syria's regions', *Middle East Report*, vol.269 (2013), at: <https://merip.org/2014/01/the-struggle-for-syrias-regions/>

Christopher Phillips, 'Sectarianism and conflict in Syria', *Third World Quarterly*, vol.36/2 (2015), pp.357-376, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1015788>

Rustum Mahmoud and Stephan Rosiny, 'Opposition visions for preserving Syria's ethnic-sectarian mosaic', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.45/2 (2016), pp.231-250, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2016.1246241>

Eyal Zisser, 'Rethinking Syrian nationalism: national identity and state in Syria, from the 'struggle for Syria' to the Syrian civil war', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 58/3 (2022), pp.421-434, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2022.2047657>

More recent updates to come

Lebanon

* Joseph Bahout, 'The unraveling of Taif: the limits of sect-based power-sharing in Lebanon', in Frederic Wehrey, ed., *Beyond Sunni and Shia: The Roots of Sectarianism in a Changing Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190876050.003.0007>

Hannes Baumann, 'Social protest and the political economy of sectarianism in Lebanon', *Global Discourse*, vol.6/4 (2016), pp.634-649, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23269995.2016.1253275>

Faten Ghosn and Amal Khoury, 'Lebanon after the Civil War: peace or the illusion of peace?', *Middle East Journal*, vol. 65/3 (2011), pp. 381-397, at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23012171>

Melani Cammett and Sukriti Issar, 'Bricks and mortar clientelism: sectarianism and the logics of welfare allocation in Lebanon', *World Politics*, vol. 62/3 (2010), pp.381-421, at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887110000080>

To update

5. Nuclear reactions

In the context of the post-2023 crisis, allegations about Iran's "nuclear programme" have often come to prominence in explaining both the extension of the conflict (most palpably in October 2024 and June 2025) and fears for its future. This lecture sets those claims in terms of the longer history of arguments about nuclear weapons – as well as chemical and biological weapons – in the region, and explores the multiple reasons why some of these issues become highly politicised on the international agenda. It explores arguments about whether nuclear proliferation would enhance or diminish regional security, while also looking to the limitations highlighted by counter-proliferation approaches in the region.

Reading list to come

6. The Middle East in the Global Political Imaginary

Using the post-2023 conflict as a starting point, this lecture's central themes are (i) the place of the Middle East within the politics of the rest of the world – that is, why and how an understanding of the Middle East comes to shape global politics; (ii) how people in the Middle East engage with global politics through which to reshape their own circumstances, beliefs and aspirations; and (iii)

how historical experiences, memories and practices of commemoration inform the engagement with global politics. It turns back to how the ongoing conflict reshapes these imaginaries.

(a) The Middle East in Global Imaginaries

Lisa Anderson, “‘They defeated us all’: international interests, local politics and contested sovereignty in Libya”, *Middle East Journal*, vol.71/2 (2017), pp.229-247, at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/90016317>

Ussama Makdisi, “‘Anti-Americanism’ in the Arab World: An Interpretation of a Brief History”, *The Journal of American History*, vol. 89/2 (2002), pp.538–57, at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3092172>

Ayla Göl, ‘Imagining the Middle East: the state, nationalism and regional international society’, *Global Discourse*, vol.5/3 (2015), pp.379-394

Kamran Matin, ‘International Relations in the Making of Political Islam: Interrogating Khomeini’s “Islamic Government”’, *Journal of International Relations and Development*, vol.16/4 (2013), pp. 455–82

Latife Reda, ‘Origins of the Islamic Republic’s Strategic Approaches to Power and Regional Politics: The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict in Khomeini’s Discourse’, *Middle East Critique*, vol. 25/2 (2016), pp.181–203, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2016.1141587>

Mark L. Haas, *The Clash of Ideologies: Middle Eastern Politics and American Security* (Oxford University Press, 2012), chapter 5

Sami Baroudi, ‘Arab intellectuals and the Bush administration’s campaign for democracy: the case of the Greater Middle East Initiative’, *The Middle East Journal*, vol.61/3 (2007), pp.390-418, at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4330417>

Elizabeth Monier, ‘The Arabness of Middle East regionalism: the Arab Spring and competition for discursive hegemony between Egypt, Iran and Turkey’, *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 20/4 (2014), pp.421-34, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2014.968474>

Marc Lynch, *Voices of the New Arab Public: Iraq, al-Jazeera and Middle East Politics Today* (Columbia UP, 2006)

(b) Global imaginaries in the politics of the Middle East

Şuhnaz Yılmaz and İpek K. Yosmaoglu, ‘Fighting the spectres of the past: dilemmas of Ottoman legacy in the Balkans and the Middle East’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.44/5 (2008), pp.677-693, at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40262610>

Nora Fisher Onar ‘Echoes of a universalism lost: rival representations of the Ottomans in today's Turkey’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.45/2 (2009), pp.229-241, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263200802697290>

Umut Uzer, ‘Conservative narrative: contemporary Neo-Ottomanist approaches in Turkish Politics’, *Middle East Critique*, vol.29/3 (2020), pp.275-290, at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2020.1770444>

Lucia Volk, 'When memory repeats itself: the politics of heritage in post-civil war Lebanon', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol.40/2 (2008), pp.291-314, at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743808080550>

Eli Amariyo, 'History, Memory and Commemoration: The Iraqi Revolution of 1920 and the Process of Nation Building in Iraq', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.51/1 (2015), pp.72-92, DOI: [10.1080/00263206.2014.934816](https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2014.934816)

Rochelle Davis, 'The politics of commemoration among Palestinians', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol.47/1 (2017), pp.69-85, DOI: [10.1525/jps.2017.47.1.69](https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2017.47.1.69)

7. The politics of perpetual crisis: the construction of the Middle East as a 'problem' region

The last two lectures are an attempt to pull some of the threads throughout the course together. This penultimate lecture is aimed at the intellectual construction of the Middle East as a region renowned for 'crises' – refugee crises, security crises, environmental crises and oil crises (among others) – and particularly on the multiple effects that this construction has on the policy of other states towards the region, and on the region itself.

* Waleed Hazbun, 'US policy and the geopolitics of insecurity in the Arab world', *Geopolitics*, vol.15/2 (2010), pp.239-262

Philip Marfleet and Adam Hanieh, 'Migration and "crisis" in the Middle East and North Africa region', in Anna Lindley, ed., *Crisis and Migration: Critical Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp.24-45

* Simon Mabon, 'Existential threats and regulating life: securitization in the contemporary Middle East', *Global Discourse*, vol.8/1 (2018), pp.42-58

* Pinar Bilgin, 'Whose "Middle East"? Geopolitical inventions and the practices of security', *International Relations*, vol.18/1 (2004), pp.25-41

Jacob Mundy, 'The Middle East is violence: on the limits of comparative approaches to the study of armed conflict', *Civil Wars*, vol.21/4 (2019)

Adam Hoffman, 'The securitization of the coronavirus crisis in the Middle East', in *The COVID-19 Pandemic in the Middle East and North Africa*, POMEPS Studies 39 (2020), pp.10-14.

Crystal Ennis and Bessma Momani, 'Shaping the Middle East in the midst of the Arab Uprisings: Turkish and Saudi foreign policy strategies', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 34/6 (2013), pp.1127-1144

Nabeel Khoury, 'The Arab Cold War revisited: the regional impact of the Arab uprising', *Middle East Policy*, vol. 20/2 (2013), pp.73-87

Ziya Öniş, 'Turkey and the Arab revolutions: boundaries of regional power influence in a turbulent Middle East', *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 19/2 (2014), pp.203-219

8. Remaking the Middle East?

A concluding lecture – content to fit whatever condition the world is in by mid-March 2026

Suggested supervision questions

- To add

5. The mini-subjects

A. Language Politics in the Contemporary Maghreb

Seminar (Kaoutar Ghilani): Friday 13th February, 3pm-4.30pm. **ARB SG2.**

Language has been an omnipresent subject of contention in the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia) since the countries' independence in the 1950s and 1960s. The combination of multilingualism and diglossia in a postcolonial context has rendered legislation on languages an arena for competing identities and interests and a domain of ideological confrontation on nationalism, decolonisation, neocolonialism, modernity, tradition, and globalisation. While debates on language in the public space articulated around the competition between Standard Arabic and French in the early post-independence period, these became more complex with the quest for recognition of Tamazight (Berber) as an official language, the increased visibility of Darija (vernacular Arabic), and the growing interest in English in the region.

This seminar takes the case of language politics as an entry point to understanding the complexities of postcolonial societies in the Maghreb. By examining the debates on language within the three countries' public spheres, the seminar analyses language in its political complexity, both as a vehicle of identity and an instrument of access to symbolic and material resources.

During the seminar, we will look at the stakes behind language politics in the region while attempting to answer the following question: "Why is language such a vibrant topic in the Maghreb?" For this, we will consider the cases of language at school (taught languages and teaching languages), the quest and experience of language recognition by the state, the foreign policy dimension of Maghrebi language politics, and the place of language in nation-building processes in times of political turmoil.

Reading list:

*Benrabah, Mohamed. *Language Conflict in Algeria: From Colonialism to Post-Independence*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2013.

Bentahar, Ziad. "'Ytnahaw ga'!': Algeria's Cultural Revolution and the Role of Language in the Early Stages of the Spring 2019 Hirak." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 33, no. 3 (2020): 1-18.

*Boutieri, Charis. *Learning in Morocco: Language Politics and the Abandoned Educational Dream*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016.

*Daoud, Mohamed. "The Sociolinguistic Situation in Tunisia: Language Rivalry or Accommodation?" *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 2011, no. 211 (2011): 9-33.

Ghilani, Kaoutar. "'The Legitimate' after the Uprisings: Justice, Equity, and Language Politics in Morocco." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2020), DOI: 10.1080/13530194.2020.1863772.

Iddins, Annemarie. "Debating Darija: Telquel and Language Politics in Modern Morocco." *Media, Culture & Society* 37, no. 2 (2015): 288-301.

Jacob, Camille. "English as a Decolonial Language: Academic Frames, Popular Discourses & Language Practices in Algeria." *The Journal of North African Studies* 25, no. 6 (2020): 1013-1032.

Kabel, Ahmed. "The Neoliberal Linguistic Consensus: Neoliberal Multilingualism and Linguistic Governmentality in Morocco." *The Journal of North African Studies* (2021): DOI: 10.1080/13629387.2021.1932481

*Maddy-Weitzman, Bruce. *Amazigh Politics in the Wake of the Arab Spring*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2022.

Salomone, Rosemary. "Adieu to French." In *The Rise of English: Global Politics and the Power of Language*. New York: Oxford Academic, 2022; online edition, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190625610.003.0007>.

Smail, Gareth. "Debating Arabic: Governmentality and Language Controversy in Algeria." *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics* 33, no. 1 (2018): 32-71.

Press and Think-Tank Articles:

El Atti, Basma. "Morocco to teach science subjects in English instead of French." *The New Arab*, October 25, 2022. <https://www.newarab.com/news/english-become-moroccos-first-foreign-language-ministry>

Eljehtimi, Ahmed. "Moroccan lawmakers vote to bolster French in education system." *Reuters*, July 23, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-education-law-idUSKCN1UI04D>

Lakhal, Malek. "Despite France's Efforts, Is French Language In Tunisia On Its Way Out?" *Nawaat*, March 26, 2019. <https://nawaat.org/2019/03/26/despite-frances-efforts-is-french-language-in-tunisia-on-its-way-out/>

Saad Allah, Abu Bakr Khaled. "The Politics of Language in Algerian Education." *Sada – Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. July 20, 2023. <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/90230>

Suggested Supervision Question:

- Is the local/global dichotomy sufficient to explain language tensions in the Maghreb?

B. China and the Politics of Development in the Middle East

Seminar (Maha Abdelrahman): Friday 20th February, 3pm-4.30pm. ARB SG2.

This seminar takes the case of China's growing cooperation with Middle East countries and its investments in the region as a lens to discuss the changing politics of development in the 21st century and to examine the rising narratives and projects of South-South cooperation. Academic research on the relationship between China and the Middle East has largely focused on the question of oil and its implications for economic growth in China. The large number of ME countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, however, will be used to light a torch on China's growing relationship to the region across a range of fields and sectors, including business and commercial activities, entertainment and construction. Similarly, the last decade has witnessed increasing investments by Chinese big tech companies such as Huawei, Alibaba and Tencent in digital development in the Middle East. Investments in smart cities, data centres and digital solutions will also be discussed against a fast-expanding global data regimes.

Despite the fast-evolving role of China in various sectors and the significance they hold for new patterns of social and economic development in the region, there is lack of research which interrogates such relations and patterns. The seminar will discuss these new patterns within a global landscape of the US-China growing rivalries and a changing world of new donors and rising powers.

Required Readings

Anderson, P. (2020). "Not a Silk Road: trading networks between China and the Middle East as a dynamic interaction of competing Eurasian geographies." *Global Networks* 20 (4): 708-724.

El Bernoussi, Z. "Developing the Halal Market: China's Opportunity to Strengthen MENA Ties and Address Uighur/Hui issues," in *Rethinking Halal: Genealogy, Current Trends, and New Interpretation*, Ayang Utriza Yakin and Louis-Léon Christians (eds,) Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2021.

Murphy, D.C. 2022 'Belt and Road and China's Relations with the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa' in Murphy, *China's Rise in the Global South: The Middle East, Africa, and Beijing's Alternative World Order*. Stanford University Press.

Suggested Readings:

Al-Sulayman, F. (2022). *Rethinking State Capitalism in the Gulf States: Insights from the China-focused Literature*.

Anderson, J. (ed) (2018) *The Red Star and the Crescent: China and the Middle East* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Behbahani, H. (2020). *China's foreign policy in the Arab World, 1955-75: Three case studies*. Routledge. 214.

Dorsey, J. (2017) China and the Middle East: Venturing into the Maelstrom, *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* 11(1): 1-14

Fulton, J. (2022) *Routledge Handbook on China–Middle East Relations*

Kamel, M (2018) China's Belt and Road Initiative: Implications for the Middle East, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 31:1, 76-95, DOI: [10.1080/09557571.2018.1480592](https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2018.1480592)

- Murphy, D.C., 2022. *China's Rise in the Global South: The Middle East, Africa, and Beijing's Alternative World Order*. Stanford University Press.
- Olimat, M (2012) *China and The Middle East: from Silk Road to Arab Spring*. London: Routledge
- Rasheed, A. (2022) The Narrative of the Rise of China and Authoritarianism in the Global South: The Case of Egypt, *The International Spectator*, 57:2, 68-84, DOI: [10.1080/03932729.2021.2009641](https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2021.2009641)
- Sun, Degang, and Yahia Zoubir. 'China's response to the revolts in the Arab World: A Case of pragmatic diplomacy'. *Mediterranean Politics* 19, no. 1 (2014): 2–20.
- Simpfendorfer, Ben. *The New Silk Road: How a rising Arab world is turning away from the West and Rediscovering China*. Springer, 2011.
- Waisbich, L. T., & Mawdsley, E. (2022). South-South Cooperation. In *The Routledge Handbook of Global Development* (pp. 82-92). Routledge.

Supervision question

- What does the 'South-South' cooperation narrative mean in terms of China-Middle East relations?

C. Woman, Life, Freedom in Iran

Seminar (Evaleila Pesaran): Friday 27th February, 3pm-4.30pm. ARB SG2.

Account to be added here, soon

6. Examination

a. Mock exam paper

The mock paper below is arranged as follows: (i) there are four questions from series 1 and three questions from each of series 2 and 3 of the paper; (ii) there is a 'wildcard' question, that can be answered usually from a number of standpoints; (iii) there is one question on each of the mini-subjects, of which you can answer a maximum of one. The paper is undivided. This arrangement of questions in the mock paper (4-3-3-1-1) will be kept for the 2026 exam paper.

POL12: The Politics of the Middle East

Candidates should answer three questions.

1. Were Middle Eastern states created by European imperial powers?
2. What factors and/or forces have been most relevant in the reestablishment of authoritarianism in the Arab region since 2011?
3. How are state security forces, particularly the military institution, an impediment to democratization in the Arab region?
4. What are the main threats to regime survival in the Middle East a decade on from the 2011 mass uprisings?
5. Is there a tension between national identity and religious identity in the Arab Middle East?
6. How is citizenship in Middle Eastern states gendered?
7. Why are religious and/or ethnic minorities in the Middle East so often a focus of persecution or hostility?
8. To what extent are key decisions about the politics of the Middle East taken by agents from outside that region?
9. Does the end of the oil era bring stability or instability to the Middle East?
10. When do diasporas become powerful actors in Middle Eastern politics?
11. What features of Middle Eastern politics have been most significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?
12. EITHER: What are debates on language in the Maghreb symptoms of?
OR: What are the political consequences of China's Belt and Road Initiative in the Middle East?
OR:

b. Past exam papers and reports

The past nine exam papers are below. The paper has been taught each year since 2014-15 except 2020-21 and 2024-25. These past papers had significantly differently content from this year's version, both across the topics of the questions and in the mini-subjects, which change most years. While the new mock paper, above, remains the most definitive guide to the structure of the 2026 exam paper, the questions in the past papers may also be helpful for revision practice.

2024.

1. Do the Arab countries of the Middle East share broadly similar political legacies of European colonial rule?
2. Have Western powers contributed to the poor outcome of the Arab uprisings?
3. Is an increasingly diversified security market across the Arab region indicative of a weakening of state power?
4. What does the aftermath of the Arab uprisings reveal about the relationship between authoritarian adaptation and mass violence?
5. Does sectarianism have different meanings across different contexts? Discuss in relation to at least two Middle Eastern countries.
6. What lies behind cases of resurgent nationalism in some Middle Eastern countries?
7. When do class identities come to have political salience in the Middle East?
8. How does the Middle East's status as the birthplace of three 'Abrahamic faiths' channel external political involvement in the region?
9. What explains the attention that is attributed to female dress codes in debates about the politics of gender in the Middle East?
10. To what extent are global narratives of crisis in the Middle East driven by anxieties about oil and gas supplies?
11. Are conflicts in the Middle East unusually intractable?
12. EITHER: Is English a decolonial language in the contemporary Maghreb?
OR: Could a 'Beijing Consensus' emerge as a major development paradigm in the Middle East?
OR: How is the war in the Gaza Strip from 7 October 2023 different from those of the past two decades, other than in scale?

2023.

1. To what extent do the ways in which Middle Eastern states became independent explain their political structures today?
2. How do governments in the Middle East use patrimonial networks to ensure their resilience?
3. To what extent have changes to the security market been significant to authoritarian survival in the Middle East since 2011?
4. Have international efforts to democratise the Middle East ever been serious?
5. Has the 'Arabness' of many Middle Eastern countries lost its political salience?
6. Do Middle Eastern countries with large religious or ethnic minorities face ongoing struggles with a sense of national identity?
7. Do political movements espousing gender equality in the Middle East always need to take sides in debates about the place in politics of religion?
8. How realistic are the plans of the oil-exporting states of the Middle East for adapting to the climate crisis?
9. Why is the Middle East treated as a 'problem region' in global affairs?
10. Are Middle Eastern diasporas important resources for the region's governments?
11. What, if anything, is exceptional about the politics of the Middle East?
12. EITHER: Is economic development with Chinese characteristics a viable prospect for Middle Eastern states?
OR: Why have Palestinian fatalities in the Israel-Palestine conflict been overwhelmingly concentrated in the Gaza Strip over recent decades?

2022.

1. How did the periods of rule in the Middle East by European imperial powers shape the forms of nationalism within the region?
2. Have authoritarian governments in the Middle East, under which no mass uprisings have taken place since 2010, managed effectively to legitimise their rule to their citizens?
3. How have military and security institutions in the Arab Middle East adapted since 2011 to face the domestic challenges to ruling regimes?
4. Does authoritarianism in the Middle East serve the interests of external powers?
5. What explains the 'sectarian turn' in the politics of the Middle East?
6. When do women's movements in the Middle East become politically significant actors?
7. Has 'post-nationalism' been a diminishing political force in the Middle East? Answer in respect of EITHER post-Zionism in Israel OR the Kurds in one or more of Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq.
8. How have oil-producing states in the Middle East shaped global responses to the climate crisis?
9. Do Middle Eastern diasporas contribute to liberalising their countries of origin? Compare the influences of two different diasporas.
10. How does the common conception of the Middle East as a zone of crisis shape political action in and towards the region?
11. Have Islamic political movements in the Middle East become discredited through the association of 'jihadism' with terrorism?
12. EITHER: Is a return to democracy possible in Turkey, given the trends of the last two decades?
OR: Why does the Gaza Strip keep serving as the flashpoint in the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israeli government?
OR: What is missed from characterisations of Lebanon as a 'failed state'?

2020.

1. Is the state in the Middle East a creation of European colonialism?
2. Why have elections rarely been an adequate basis for meaningful popular political participation in the Arab Middle East?
3. Do the ongoing programmes of economic liberalisation in many of the oil-rich states of the Middle East help ameliorate the negative effects of rentierism?
4. Do the main impediments to gender equality in Arab Middle East states come from their governments or from their societies?
5. What has prevented external powers compelling the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to find a mutually acceptable solution to their conflict?
6. Why have frameworks of regional cooperation been largely ineffective in addressing prolonged hostilities? Answer with respect to EITHER the conflict in Libya OR the approach of the Gulf Cooperation Council to Qatar.
7. Is there a new Cold War in the Middle East between the United States and Russia?
8. Is Islamism losing its relevance in the contemporary Middle East? Discuss with reference to at least one example.
9. Do the ideas of Islamism rely upon the presence of conflict to have political appeal?
10. What has been the political legacy in the Middle East of the rise and fall of the self-styled Islamic State movement?

11. To what extent is Turkish politics exceptional in the context of the Middle East? Answer with respect to national politics, foreign policy or both.
12. Whose interests does the conflict in Yemen serve?
13. Can 'quiet encroachments of the ordinary' change political outcomes in the Middle East?

2019.

1. Is the propensity towards unaccountable government in the Middle East a colonial legacy?
2. Is all politics in the Middle East closely connected with issues of identity?
3. How significant has activism by Middle Eastern women been in reforming gender relations within their societies?
4. How have minorities in Middle Eastern states responded to the prospect of persecution or discrimination?
5. Why have attempts to negotiate a solution to the Israeli - Palestinian conflict failed?
6. Do members of the Gulf Cooperation Council need a common enemy in order to work together?
7. To what extent and why have all recent US military interventions in the Middle East been unsuccessful?
8. Have projects of Islamic revivalism necessarily involved confrontation with prevailing power structures?
9. Does contemporary jihadism originate in the writings of Islamist political thinkers?
10. What are the political consequences of the high levels of economic inequality between Middle Eastern states?
11. Do Iraq's experiences since 2003 demonstrate that democracy without a functioning state has no value?
12. What does the study of the politics of everyday life reveal about authoritarianism in the Middle East?
13. What general lessons should we draw from the 2010-11 Arab Uprisings for the study of social movements?

2018.

1. Is the legacy of European rule in the Middle East more one of ideas than of institutions?
2. What, if anything, remains of Arab nationalism?
3. Why are there so few liberal market economies in the Middle East?
4. How has authoritarianism within the Middle East shaped the context for struggles for gender equality?
5. Does international political involvement in the conflict between Israel and its neighbours restrain local animosities or exacerbate them?
6. What explains the breakdown in relations between many of the states of the Arabian Peninsula from 2015?
7. Does it make any sense to characterise US relations with Middle Eastern states as a form of imperialism?
8. Do groups like al-Qa'ida and the self-styled Islamic State draw upon an older strain of militant Islam to mobilise their supporters?
9. Is modern Shi'a Islamism inextricably bound up with the ideas and policies of the Iranian government?
10. Do the North African states share a distinctive form of politics with the other parts of the Middle East?
11. **EITHER (a)**: Does Turkey's policy on the Syrian war represent a fundamental discontinuity with its earlier approach to foreign affairs?

OR (b): Is Recep Tayyip Erdoğan a new type of leader for Turkey?

12. What social or political processes have driven the 'sectarianisation' of conflict within the Middle East?
13. What effect has the refugee crisis since c.2015 had on the politics of the Middle East?
14. Have parties with their origins in political Islam had a distinctive effect when they have taken a role in governance within the Arab Middle East?

2017.

1. To what extent are the varying characteristics of Middle Eastern states today attributable to the different circumstances of their creation?
2. Does the plurality of identities within most Middle Eastern states serve as an impediment to democratisation?
3. What are the political consequences of the state's domination of the economy in most Middle Eastern countries?
4. What explains the vulnerability of many ethnic and religious minorities within the Middle East to persecution?
5. Are Middle Eastern states distinctively 'masculine'?
6. To what extent can state legislation deliver the shari'a?
7. Has the ambiguity of the Qur'an been more an asset or a liability for Muslim politics?
8. What factors explain the impetus for projects of reform of Islamic law in Muslim states, and what explains their success or failure?
9. Why does the Israeli-Palestinian conflict draw so much political attention from outside the Middle East?
10. What explains the stridency of expressions of mutual hostility across the Persian Gulf over recent years?
11. To what extent do Middle Eastern states look to the United States for regional leadership, and what are the prospects for change in this regard?
12. Does competition or cooperation prevail in relations between Arab states today?
13. Is today's sectarianism in the Middle East no more than an uninhibited expression of pre-existing divisions?
14. In what ways, if any, is the current Turkish regime fundamentally different from its predecessors since 1923?
15. Is the self-styled 'Islamic State' group the intellectual and political legacy of the Muslim Brotherhood?

2016.

1. What consequences did the unresolved legacies of colonialism have for the politics of the modern Middle East?
2. Is political Islam to be understood as a response to the failure of nationalist projects in the Arab Middle East?
3. Have the Arab uprisings from 2010 set back the course of democratisation in most of the region?
4. How useful is the concept of rentierism for explaining the political characteristics of oil-rich Middle Eastern states?

5. What explains the different approaches taken by Middle Eastern states in upholding or challenging discrimination? Answer with respect to EITHER the politics of gender OR the status of ethno-religious minorities.
6. Can the shari'ah be codified? What might be lost, or gained, in the process?
7. What explains the diversity of approaches to the implementation of the idea of an Islamic state, in the contemporary period or the past?
8. To what extent, and in what way, do Islamic institutions check the power of the state?
9. In what respects do the understandings of the past held differently by Palestinians and Israelis serve to perpetuate the conflict between them?
10. Does hostility across the Persian Gulf come primarily from domestic politics or geostrategic ambitions? Answer with respect to one or more countries.
11. In accounting for the reasons for the close involvement of major external powers in the Middle East, what if anything do explanations that focus solely on the role of oil interests miss?
12. How is the mass movement of refugees from, within and through the Middle East reshaping the politics of the region?
13. EITHER: Was Erdoğan's authoritarian turn inevitable?
OR: What accounts for the failure of the Kurdish peace process, and what is the effect of this failure on Turkish foreign policy?
14. Are the reasons for the prominence of sectarian divisions in the Syrian conflict from 2011 similar to those in the Iraq conflict after 2003?

2015.

1. To what extent did France and Britain create the modern Middle East?
2. Does the Middle East show any sign of taking a 'post-Islamist' turn?
3. Does democratisation imperil ethnic and religious minorities in Arab countries?
4. Do Arab countries share common themes in their gender politics?
5. How should calls for the application of shari'ah in the Muslim World today be understood?
6. How do Islamic institutions mediate between the Muslim and the state?
7. Do Islam and authoritarianism go hand in hand?
8. How does domestic US politics affect the Arab-Israeli conflict? Answer with respect to *either* the origins of the 1967 war in the Middle East, *or* the Oslo process from 1993.
9. Has the security system in the Persian Gulf region moved decisively under the control of local states?
10. Do the Arab Uprisings from 2010 demonstrate that the idea of an 'Arab states system' is still useful?
11. Why has the programme of economic liberalisation faltered in many Middle Eastern countries?
12. Was Iran's 'Green Movement' opposing a leader or a system?
13. Have the processes of state-building and nation-building taken very different paths in the Middle East? Answer with respect to *either* the Palestinians *or* the Kurds.
14. What lessons can be drawn for other contexts from Turkey's political trajectory about *either* (a) how to reconcile Islam and modern politics, *or* (b) the role of a strong state as an obstacle or a boon to democracy?
15. Have the experiences of Iraq since 2003 and Syria since 2011 demonstrated that there is a 'Shi'a crescent' after all?

Examiner's report 2024

There were 22 exam scripts submitted for this paper. The breakdown of results was 7 scripts with a mark of 70 or higher (including one outstanding script with a mark of 80); 11 scripts with a mark of 60-69; two scripts with a mark in the 55-59 range; one script with a mark in the range 40-49; and one radically incomplete script with a fail mark. The two scripts that did not reach the mark of 55 are exceptional within the recent history of this paper, and both have been the focus of subsequent applications in light of the specific circumstances of those cases.

The wide range of material and argument brought to the essays this year was particularly noticeable. Most clearly, there was a good spread across the different questions, with every question receiving at least two answers. Within the essays there was also the broad use of examples, deflecting the common concern that scholars and students neglect countries in the Middle East that they label peripheral to the region's headline-worthy events. In terms of arguments, again, it was good to see students drawing upon a range of types of literature – from the deeply theoretically to the richly descriptive – in providing their accounts. As always, the best essays had critical engagement with advanced arguments from the academic literature; displayed good, detailed knowledge of the region's politics, from an historical or comparative angle; and/or were able to draw out compelling and non-obvious arguments through the substance of their essays.

Some of the more common problems mentioned in past exam reports – of unfocused narrative accounts, of insufficient attention to the difference between 'how' questions and 'why' questions, of essays sacrificing depth by trying to pack too many examples in – were less evident this year. There wasn't really a common pattern across the weaker essays this year: a few were marred by factual mistakes, some by not moving beyond a literature review, and some by resorting to too high a level of generalisation in making their arguments. Still, a few essays felt 'pre-written', especially those which tried to reinterpret the essay question into a form that better suited their material. It would be fair to assume that in the open-book format this is a result of some students compiling material in advance to populate the final essay. This I think has not been a worthwhile approach to take in this paper, and by the time this paper returns in 2025-26 (after being rested for a year), it should not be possible with the anticipated and welcome return to closed-book exams.

Examiner's report 2023

The quality of scripts for this paper remains high, with the large majority of students writing accurate essays that drew upon a good range of literature and examples. This year it was especially encouraging to see that the essays were mostly well-focused; there were only a relatively small number of essays that were weighted towards providing general background information instead of providing an answer, or which seemed to be missing the point of the question.

This generally high standard is demonstrated by the marks awarded, in which 6 of the 26 scripts were given marks of 70+ by the examiners, and a further 12 scripts had marks in the 65-69 range. Out of the 8 remaining scripts, 6 were in the range of 60 to 64, with only 2 scripts below 60, both with marks of 58. There was no apparent variation between the different tracks and Triposes; out of the 6 students with marks of 70+, three were on the HSPS Politics single track, one was on the joint track with Sociology, one was in the History & Politics Tripos and one was in the Asian & Middle Eastern Studies Tripos.

Each question was taken by at least one student. By far the most popular question was the one on the mini-subject, in which 19 students answered either the question on the Gaza Strip in the Israel-Palestine conflict or the one on China's role in the Middle East. Out of the other questions, the ones on the legacy of the mode of independence (q.1) and on Middle Eastern diasporas (q.10) were the most popular, each drawing 10 answers.

There were few common problems across the scripts. A few scripts included a detailed account of a specific case, often with a good focus on relevant material, but didn't relate the case-based material to more general arguments. Others gave lots of short examples, again usually accurately, but resulting in a somewhat superficial argument. These essays generally ended up with marks in the mid-60s. A few essays to the questions that asked 'why' (qq.9 and 12b) gave answers that did not appreciate that this was requiring a causal explanation, but instead answered the question as if it had been asking 'how'. Two scripts contained unfinished last essays, which was somewhat surprising to see in a 5-hour open book exam; one of the scripts, that otherwise contained two fairly high-quality answers, fell below 60 in its final mark because of this.

Overall, the standard of writing and analysis remains encouragingly high on this paper, and its students are generally fluent and knowledgeable across a wide range of subjects concerning the modern Middle East.

Examiner's report 2022

The exam was taken by 24 students, of whom 5 received a mark in the 70-79 range, 14 received a mark in the 60-69 range, and 5 received a mark in the 50-59 range. Students taking it came from the Triposes in HSPS, History and Politics, and Asian & Middle Eastern Studies, and it was pleasing to see that there was at least one student in each of those Triposes who received a mark of 70+. Each script was each double-marked according to the same standards, irrespective of Tripos.

In terms of the spread of answers, most students (19) took one of the 'mini-subjects' in q.12, with the question on why the Gaza Strip serves a persistent flashpoint being the most popular of the three options. The next most popular question was q.10, on the conception of the Middle East as a zone of crisis, which drew 11 answers; as this was a new topic for the paper, it was pleasing to see the high level of engagement with the issues. In addition, q.5 on sectarianism was also popular, drawing 8 answers. Most of the other questions drew a fair number of answers too, so there was a quite good distribution across the paper; the only exception was q.7, on post-nationalism, which drew no answers.

The most successful answers this year adopted a clear focus at the start within the scope of the question, explained that focus, and sustained it through a detailed, critical evaluation throughout the scope of the essay. This year however there were a lot of long essays that gave long descriptive or narrative accounts, either not making an argument, or arguing about something that didn't really respond to the question. It can be presumed (not least due to their length) that at least some of these accounts were prepared beforehand and simply transplanted into the submitted essay, given that the exam was taken in an 'open book' format. Although using prepared material was not prohibited, and candidates were not penalised for this, it may have had the unintended effect of making some essays drift away from relevance to what the question was asking.

There were a small number of cases in which the essay did not seem to be responding to the question at all. This was particularly the case with q.1, which asked about how “periods of rule in the Middle East by European imperial powers” shaped nationalism, but which led to essays that discussed at length the development of nationalism under the Ottoman Empire; and with q.2, which asked about “authoritarian governments ... under which no mass uprisings have taken place since 2010”, but which produced two answers that heavily used the case of Egypt, which experienced a mass uprising in 2011. In both cases, it was difficult to see this as an honest mistake, since the question was clear, and the individual essays could not be judged to have “concentrate[d] on the subject matter of the question”, the requirement for a mark of 50 or higher. It cannot be emphasised enough that a single essay of this sort, which wholly disregards the question, can have a disproportionately large effect in bringing down the overall mark for a paper, and indeed the overall class of a student.

On the more positive side, it was encouraging to see that there was a lot of critical engagement with advanced academic literature in the essays this year, more so than before. A good number of the most successful essays brought out a theme or theory out from a text, and used it often fairly centrally in the development of the argument, but were also able to show its limitations or provide another critical twist. There were fewer essays this year than usual that were commentaries on current events, perhaps reflecting the lower extent to which the Middle East has been featuring in UK news headlines, and the result was more reflective, analytical essays which often tried to take in a broader scope of recent history or made a more sustained effort at comparison.

Examiner’s report 2020

The examination for the Politics of the Middle East paper was taken remotely this year on account of the Covid-19 pandemic, and in an open-book format. Most students chose to type their essays. It was taken by 25 students, from a range of Triposes: History & Politics, and Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, and three different tracks of HSPS. The same standards were applied across all students.

The quality this year was high. 6 students received average marks of 70 or above, including (as it happens) at least one student in each of the three Triposes. Only 2 students received marks lower than 60, in both cases receiving marks in the high 50s. The large majority of answers this year drew well upon the literature and were factually accurate, which in part follows from the open-book format. What was impressive this year was how many of the essays were able to make well-focused arguments through both developing critical accounts of the literature and staying engaged with empirical detail. There was on the whole a good balance between evidence and argument, and between broad themes and case-based specificity.

A few essays had extended descriptive sections at the expense of argument. Often this was done by asserting at the start a contentious judgement – that, for instance, in response to q.12 that Turkish politics used to be exceptionally secular but is no longer – and then using the rest of the essay to fill this in with detail. This approach often failed to engage with the issues with a sufficient sense of complexity and awareness of different judgements. A somewhat larger number of essays answered the essay question only somewhat indirectly, and this was probably the largest problem for responses to questions 4 (on obstacles to gender equality) and 5 (on the Israel-Palestine conflict) in particular. It was striking that a number of answers to question 4 did not address at all what the obstacles to gender equality are in the Middle East.

Finally, it should be noted that a number of third essays in a script were less well-developed than the other two – in that they were both significantly shorter and more abruptly argued than the preceding two essays – and this sometimes had a disproportionately negative effect on the overall mark. Presumably this was due to a shortage of time, prompted perhaps by the novel examination format. In a few cases, it brought the overall mark below 70. This was disappointing to see, as a more equal distribution of time between the essays could have resulted in a higher mark.

The most popular questions were on the origins of the Middle Eastern state (question 1, 11 answers), on the Israel-Palestine conflict (question 5, 10 answers) and on regional cooperation (question 6, 9 answers). The least popular questions were on economic liberalisation (question 3, 2 answers), on US-Russian rivalry in the Middle East (question 7, 1 answer), and on the legacy of the self-styled Islamic State movement (question 10, no answers).

This paper will not be running in 2020-21, but may be in back in future years.

Examiner's report 2019

There were 19 candidates who took this paper by examination, and 16 by long essay. Out of the candidates taking the paper by examination, five candidates received first class marks, one candidate received a 2.2, and the other candidates received marks of 2.1.

There were some very good scripts. Many candidates were good at developing their own arguments, and providing evidence for the claims they were making. We were impressed by the range of examples in many exam scripts. The stronger scripts took time to justify their choice of factors/cases. Some questions were more popular than others, with ten candidates answering a question on the Gulf Cooperation Council (Q6) and ten candidates answering a question on the state and democracy in Iraq (Q11). All other questions were attempted by at least two candidates, except Q4, which was not chosen by any candidate.

Weaker answers received low 2.1 or 2.2 scores. Often these did not develop a clear argument, or did not use examples to support the main points being made. Sometimes these answers were imprecise or contained material that was superfluous or incorrect. Weaker answers showed an over-reliance on sweeping claims about the international environment (US does or does not want to engage, Russia as a spoiler), taken as self-evident, while avoiding engagement with domestic or regional factors.

The best scripts were notable for their ability to use examples effectively, for their range of references and for their ability to provide critical reflection on aspects of the politics of the Middle East.

Examiner's report 2018

POL12 this year featured 23 students who took the paper by examination and 8 who took it by long essays. Six students overall received a mark of 70 or above, and only one (taking the paper by long essays) received a mark lower than 59. That leaves 24 who received a mark in the 60-69 range, 14 of whom were in the 65-69 range. Put differently, almost two-thirds of students (20/31) received an overall mark of 65 or above.

This mark distribution reflects how essays and exams were generally of a quite high standard this year, more so than in previous years. The large majority of students wrote accurate, well-focused essays that engaged suitably with the academic literature and constructed a coherent argument.

With the assessed essays, the best essays were those which brought out a range of themes and theories, and demonstrated good knowledge of broader debates about the politics of the Middle East – but which then found a way to focus their essays on a particular situation, era or contrast. The less successful essays either kept too narrowly to specific descriptive accounts without framing it within a broader conception of what the question was asking; or, for other essays, didn't find a clear focus for the discussion, for example by not conveying a clear enough idea of what the question was asking. In 2018-19, the questions will be phrased more broadly than they were this year, so the first issue is less likely to arise, but the second issue becomes even more pertinent to consider.

For the exams, it was striking that students wrote with greater authority, subtlety and sense of judgement when they were addressing events and processes in the twentieth century than when they were writing about contemporary issues. This no doubt reflects the academic literature, for which there is an accumulated sense of debate for issues that are now older. But it does entail that students who choose to write about contemporary affairs – as we hope they do – should be looking more to develop a more rounded, multi-faceted appreciation of current debates, rather than accepting any one interpretation as valid. It was striking how students who wrote about imperial legacies and the force of Arab nationalism drew upon multiple sources, ideas, interpretations and theories, and formulated their own distinctive judgements on the back of them; while those who wrote about post-2015 refugees in the Middle East simply regurgitated the substance of two or three articles.

In terms of subject matter of exam answers, the most popular questions were on the drivers of sectarianism (q.12, 10 responses), the legacy of European rule (q.1, 9 responses) and Gulf crises (q.6, 8 responses). It was disappointing that only one student took the question on gender struggles, although that student did it well: very few other exam essays brought in issues related explicitly to the politics of gender.

Those points aside, most students taking this paper by examination this year have a well-developed sense of how to write a good essay – and equally the pitfalls to avoid. Few students wrote descriptive narratives instead of structured arguments, for example. And the best scripts were able to develop critical insights into influential academic texts while not losing sight of the need to develop a coherent, sustained argument of their own. The large majority of scripts were able to relate general arguments well to specific national and regional contexts. Many of the more common problems in previous years weren't apparent in this set of scripts, and future students may want to look back at earlier examiners' reports to have a sense of the ways in which their less illustrious predecessors have sometimes struggled with the POL12 exam.

Examiners' report 2017

This year's paper had 36 students. Six of the exam candidates received an average mark of 70+ from both examiners, 23 received an average mark in the 60-69 range, and seven received an average mark in the 50-59 range. No-one received an overall mark lower than 52.

There was a fairly heavy bunching of answers in response to the questions on sectarianism (21 answers), the creation of states in the Middle East (17 answers) and international attention on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (16 answers). The questions about pluralism in democratisation, US regional leadership and the legacies of the Muslim Brotherhood each drew 7-10 responses, and all

remaining questions received 5 or fewer responses. For a course that is taught broadly about the region, and which is designed to stimulate a range of new interests among its students, this bunching was surprising and somewhat disappointing for the examiners.

The relatively low number of firsts – lower as a proportion than in previous years – was primarily a consequence of a large number of candidates not structuring their essays around answering the question. The better answers devised an essay framework that was centrally about the question, and deployed suitable empirical material as part of the process of reasoning towards a conclusion. By contrast, too many students wrote long narratives or explanations that were not directly relevant to the question.

An example is question 1, for which many students wrote a general history of the formation of states in the Middle East, without attention to differences in the circumstances of their creation (which is the starting point for the question) and often with only a few words in the conclusion about how this does or does not explain their varying characteristics today (which is the central issue at stake in it). It would have been much better to think first about what those relevant ‘varying characteristics’ today are, and then to structure an essay around how state-formation can or cannot explain them.

In general, there were too many students who resorted to long historical narratives which didn’t have an underlying argument. These generally began with something along the lines of ‘To understand Topic X, we must first appreciate the historical background...’, thus beginning a simple chronologically-plotted account which in many cases accounted for over half the essay. The Israeli-Palestinian question (q.9), for instance, drew a number of general histories of the conflict, going back to the 19th Century, even though the question was about the international attention paid to it. These essays were mostly taken as unfocused, and therefore not eligible to receive a mark higher than 59 according to the marking criteria.

It was also rather curious to see many students seem to have learned lots of data – such as percentages who affirmed something in an opinion poll, or where a particular country stands in some league tables (which, incidentally, are of dubious intellectual value). In a number of essays, the structure seemed to have been designed to take us to this factoid, even though its relevance to the question was marginal at best. This is a poor trade-off: the deployment of knowledge only contributes to the essay if it is relevant to the question.

The sectarianism question generally drew essays that were relevant to answering the question, but a number of students took it to demand a critique of ‘primordialism’ rather than explore whether any sectarian identity existed before the current conflicts in Syria and Iraq. A false contrast was created between those who see an unchanging division from the schism in the 7th Century to the present (a perspective that was readily dismissed) and those who look solely at elite manipulation during the current conflicts.

As always, the best essays didn’t stick to some narrow formula for essay writing, but tackled the topic in a focused and often innovative way – aware of the arguments in the literature, but able to think independently of them. Many also put to good use specific and detailed examples of places, periods or political movements. The examiners weren’t reluctant to give marks of 80+ to such essays. They would have happily given more if a greater number of students had been willing to be more adventurous in their essays.

Examiners' report 2016

34 students took this paper, and the quality was generally encouraging. Six students received average marks of 70 or more, and a further ten students received average marks of 65-69. Five students were in the 55-59 range, but no-one was below it. All the questions on the exam paper were taken by at least two students. The most popular questions were on sectarianism (q.14, 20 answers) and the politics of the Persian Gulf (q.10, 10 answers).

The best essays, as always, retained a close focus on the question while demonstrating awareness of a broad range of relevant arguments. The less successful answers, by contrast, were let down by the mismatch between the topic of the question and their actual discussion. An example of this is the question on how Israelis' and Palestinians' understandings of the past served to perpetuate the conflict (q.9). This was a difficult question, but those candidates who thought seriously about what sorts of arguments could be made for how the historical understandings of the participants informed their conflictual actions were rewarded with some of the highest marks awarded for single essays this year. By contrast, those who provided simple descriptive narratives of the modern history of the conflict without regard for what the question was asking received some of the lowest marks. A number of students answered the question as if it were asking 'to what extent do...', weighing its influence up against other factors, but the question was 'in what ways do..', which requires a different sort of answer. It has to be assumed that the two students who just wrote about how territorial ambitions perpetuate the conflict, the subject of the supervision question during the year, didn't know anything about the conflict aside from their own supervision essays, and were marked down accordingly.

This year most students demonstrated good knowledge of the range of arguments made by relevant authors. The question on the codification of the shari'ah (q.6) prompted most students who answered that question to reflect closely and carefully on the extent to which arguments from authors such as Vikor and Hallaq worked, identifying what they could be seen to have missed, and comparing their approaches. Some questions, such as this, can be usefully answered through engaging in careful critical analysis of key texts, as it leads to a nuanced answer to the exam question.

Other questions prompted essays which combined textual analysis with the deployment of detailed empirical examples. The question on the usefulness of the concept of rentierism (q.4) required an explanation of that concept, which most students taking the question were able to provide; the distinguishing factor from there was how closely the conceptual account could be made to fit with examples. In this, a pleasing number of students were able to convey substantive information accurately about a range of cases, from Algeria to Kuwait, in order to interrogate the concept.

There were two specific issues that problematised a number of essays this year. The first was that three questions specifically asked for a comparative understanding: qq.5 and 7, which asked candidates to explain the diversity of approaches to discrimination and the implementation of the idea of an Islamic state respectively; and q.14, which asked for a comparison between the reasons for sectarian polarisation in Syria and Iraq. Many students answering these questions were able to make comparisons, but a significant minority only discussed one case at length, typically Tunisia for

the sub-question on gender discrimination, and Iraq for the question on sectarianism. Clearly comparison between cases is not possible if candidates only know about and discuss one case.

The second issue comes from candidates avoiding key terms in the question. The question on the effect of the 'unresolved legacies of colonialism' (q.1) does require answers that impute meaning to that term: there isn't a single answer to what those 'unresolved legacies' might be, but essays which just wrote generally on the effects of colonialism in the region were missing a trick. Similarly, those who wrote on 'Islamic institutions' (q.8) without providing a clear understanding of what was meant by that term retained a level of ambiguity that hindered their clarity.

One pleasing aspect of this year's scripts was the extent to which students were able to relate established debates to contemporary events. An example of this was the ways in which the question on hostility across the Persian Gulf (q.10) was answered by using contending approaches to understanding Iranian foreign policy in order to discuss the Vienna deal of July 2015. The number of students who used recent examples, and did so usually well, provides encouragement to the course's aspiration that a historically and theoretically grounded approach can usefully inform our understanding of the contemporary Middle East.

Examiners' report 2015

This was the first year of the Middle East paper, and it drew a good number of students. 26 students took the exam, and a further 2 students took the paper by long essay.

In general, the quality of exam scripts and long essays was high: there were quite a few scripts demonstrating an outstanding level of understanding, and two thoroughly researched and innovative long essays. Three scripts were judged by the both examiners to fall below the 2.1 standard, but there were none below the 2.2 level.

The best scripts and long essays for this paper drew upon detailed knowledge to make their arguments, whilst recognising and evaluating critically contrasting arguments. The very best ranged across material from the different reading lists within the same essay, demonstrating independent thinking and well-structured writing intentions.

The most significant limitations were as follows. First, quite a few exam essays did not demonstrate a good understanding of key concepts in the questions (eg 'post-Islamist', 'Arab states system'): this indicates a limited extent of careful reading. Secondly, a few students adopted a strategy of giving a straightforward answer to the question in the opening section of the essay, and filling the rest of the essay with factual information to back up their starting assertion. Even if the information is entirely correct, this is an approach that cannot reach a 2.1 standard: it's not making an argument. It'd be much better to recognise different real or plausible potential answers, and evaluate between them. Thirdly, there was a surprisingly large number of basic factual inaccuracies, often quite trivial in form (such as in stating the years of particular events), but which cumulatively within the same script led to a sense of carelessness.

In general, most students showed they could combine broader thematic analysis with attention to the politics of particular places. It was good to see that the empirical material drawn upon by students ranged across the region, from detailed discussions of the place of Islam in Morocco through to engaging accounts of gender politics in Oman. There was useful attention to the particularities of politics in Iran, Turkey and Israel, alongside the more 'standard' reference points in Middle Eastern studies (Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq). It was particularly encouraging to read close, critical engagement with the two case studies of Turkey and the 'new sectarianism'. One pleasing aspect of the exam scripts was that all the questions were attempted by at least one student, and no question received more than ten responses: one hopes that this reflects the diversity of interests and approaches that the course was intending to stimulate.

7. Other approaches to understanding Middle Eastern politics

In order to develop a more rounded understanding of Middle Eastern politics, going beyond traditional academic sources is necessary. This section provides a few suggestions of websites, literary fiction and cinema that will help fill out your thinking. Tastes and inclinations vary, and there is no claim to exhaustiveness in the lists below; they do however provide some potential starting points for those beginning to engage with these topics. Suggestions of items to add to any of these lists would always be appreciated.

a. Websites

Aside from the standard Anglo-American news sources, you may want to dip in to some of the following on-line sources:

www.merip.org

- The Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP) regularly produces short online articles on its website from leading scholars on contemporary problems or issues, alongside its established academic journal, *Middle East Report*. Although it doesn't try to be a systematic source of information, these interventions are worth reading for the new insights and attention they give on particular themes, usually those which are underreported. It tends to have a critical approach to Western policy in the region.

www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/

- Qatar-based al-Jazeera news has a slick English-language news website that has a level of detail in promptly reporting on Middle Eastern politics that others lack. The video and documentary content is also generally of high quality. It has though increasingly come to follow a Western news agenda that limits its distinctiveness.

www.al-monitor.com

- Al-Monitor is a news website, drawing largely upon local journalists in the Middle East to provide more detailed coverage of and commentary on contemporary stories. Quality is variable, but the range of issues and perspectives and the promptness of the reporting makes this source often particularly useful.

www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa.aspx

- The International Crisis Group (ICG) produces well-researched and often quite original reports on contemporary problem-areas. It always makes policy prescriptions, and so the style of writing isn't really appropriate for follow for this paper. Try also not to approach the region simply as an arena for various 'crises'. Nevertheless, the reports on the Middle East are usually well worth reading. The ICG takes a liberal interventionist approach to most issues.

www.project-syndicate.org/world-affairs

- Hosts commentary pieces from journalists, politicians and analysts around the world. It is not specific to the Middle East, but it has articles taken (and translated) from a fairly significant number of Middle Eastern publications.

www.arabist.net

- The consistently engaging and sometimes quite offbeat blog run by Cairo-based Issandr El Amrani.

The entries are mostly on Egyptian politics, but the blog also contains lots of helpful links to other articles on the wider politics of the region.

www.Jadaliyya.com

- This is the e-zine of the Washington-based Arab Studies Institute. At its best, it hosts engaging reflections from scholars on contemporary developments in the Arab world. At its worst, it produces turgid and posturing social theory.

www.arab-reform.net

- The Arab Reform Initiative provides policy analysis that addresses contemporary issues across the Arab region. Its research largely aims to articulate a home-grown agenda for democratic change and social justice.

www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia

- openDemocracy is a non-profit global media organisation with coverage from a liberal / progressive perspective. Its different projects address issues such as trafficking and slavery, freedom of information and the global economy. Its project on 'North Africa and West Asia' (the Middle East plus Afghanistan, it seems) contains in-depth contributions alongside broad coverage.

www.middleeasteye.net

- A relatively new digital news organisation, founded in 2014, that covers stories from the Middle East, as well as related content from beyond the region. It is a good venue to visit when seeking analytical perspectives on contemporary news stories.

en.eipss-eg.org

- The Egyptian Institute for Political and Strategic Studies is an independent research centre founded in Turkey in 2014. It offers solid research and in-depth analysis on a wide range of critical topics, primarily concerning Egypt, its domestic politics as well as foreign policies and relations.

english.alaraby.co.uk

- The 'New Arab', a London-based news website, presents in-depth and informative coverage of events in the Middle East and beyond. Many of its articles features a progressive discourse and counter autocratic and sectarian narratives.

b. Literary fiction (either in English translation or originally in English)

For those interested in the modern classics of Middle Eastern literature, attention will readily be drawn to Naguib Mahfouz' monumental *Cairo Trilogy* (1956-57), Ghassan Kanafani's story of Palestinian refugee life, *Men in the Sun* (1962), Emile Habibi's darkly comic *Secret Life of Saeed, The Pessoptimist* (1974), Amos Oz' mysterious tales of memory and disillusion in Israel, *My Michael* (1968) and *A Perfect Peace* (1982), and Elias Khoury's fractured story of Beirut during the Lebanese civil war, *Little Mountain* (1977). The list below is not of such 'classics', but of more recent and perhaps idiosyncratic works that bring out themes, debates or struggles in contemporary political life in the region.

- Hassan Blasim, *The Iraqi Christ* (2013). As a series of short – some very short – stories, this is a great starting point for thinking about how literary responses to war can inform one’s understanding of politics. Some of the stories are shockingly macabre.
- Jokha al-Harhi, *Celestial Bodies* (2018). A beguiling account of an Omani family, bringing out well the disruptions, jealousies and miscomprehensions that surround the transformation of life amidst the country’s new wealth over the past 50 years.
- Basma Abdel Aziz, *The Queue* (2016). A jarring but engaging account of living under the uncomprehending and often incomprehensible demands of a malign authoritarian regime. Set in a barely disguised Egypt.
- Kanan Makiya, *The Rope* (2016). A rather lightly fictionalised account of the experience of a Shi’a militiaman in Najaf, through which to tell the account of the early years of the US occupation of Iraq. Makiya uses the narrator to ventriloquise his own political views, but still the novel has its value.
- Abdo Khal, *Throwing Sparks* (2009). A powerful sustained account of living in the shadow of ruthless personalised (but also, illuminatingly, anonymous) authority, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
- Orly Castel-Bloom, *Human Parts* (2002). Perhaps the most realistic of Castel-Bloom’s works, it engages with how Israelis understand and respond to ‘violence’. The early *Dolly City* (1992), set in a lightly fictionalised Tel Aviv, portrayed as gruesome and nihilistic, may also be of interest.
- Susan Abulhawa, *The Blue Between Sky and Water* (2015). Of the many Palestinians in exile who write stories about returning to Palestine, this is perhaps the best contemporary example: an American-born girl returning to live in the Gaza Strip with her family, and so opening up the character of the place.
- Khairy Shalaby, *The Lodging House* (2003). Set within the Egyptian urban underclass, seen through the eyes of a student drop-out, the book engages with the multiple stories and struggles that rarely capture wider attention. The later novel, *The Time-Travels of the Man who Sold Pickles and Sweets*, is uproarious funny, albeit less obviously politically relevant.
- Hanan al-Shaykh, *I Sweep the Sun off Rooftops* (1998). Perhaps the most widely read female Arab author in English, this is a diverse collection of 17 stories set around the region and in diasporas. The novels are more popular and may also be of interest.
- Elif Shafak, *The Architect’s Apprentice* (2014). Although it’s set in 16th Century Istanbul, and so doesn’t quite match the objective of engaging you with contemporary politics, the novel brings out a resilient sense of the diversity, social divisions and self-conceptions of the Ottoman Empire, for those drawn to sweeping historical epics.
- Alaa al-Aswany, *The Yacoubian Building* (2002). One of the most highly regarded novels of recent years, it is the story of the residents of one apartment bloc in central Cairo, drawing in the many sides of the modern city.
- Halim Barakat, *The Crane* (2008). Fictionalised nostalgia for village life in mid-century Syria, coupled with reflections on later dislocation and marginalisation. Short and graceful, if rather sentimental.

c. Films

These are listed with a few suggestions per country. The films listed are not necessarily the best representatives of national cinematic traditions, but are on here because of the ways in which they link up with political themes in the course (and because subtitled versions are readily available). ***This list is rather old, and suggestions for updates would be appreciated!***

Egypt: *Terrorism and Kebab* (1992) engages comically with themes of corruption, bureaucracy and inadvertent violence. *The Yacoubian Building* (2006) is a film of the book mentioned above.

Iran: *Offside* (2006) is a comic take on Iran's gender restrictions. *Secret Ballot* (2001) is an engaging and surreal if slowly-paced story of an election day that explores the ways in which different understandings of Iran's politics are brought out. *Persepolis* (2007), based on the graphic novel of Marjane Satrapi, was widely acclaimed; quite a bit of it is about life in exile, rather than Iran itself.

Palestine: *Divine Intervention* (2002) is a dark comedy set mostly in Nazareth; as a series of sketches, it works like a short story collection. *The Time that Remains* (2009), also directed by Elia Suleiman, charts an eventful life across four episodes.

Syria: *The Night* (1993), a complex epic spanning three generations of a family from the Golan Heights.

Israel: *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) revolves around an Israeli soldier's memories of the Lebanon war. *Lemon Tree* (2008) uses the struggle between two neighbours – the family of an Israeli defence minister and a Palestinian widow – to illustrate how interpersonal and political connections interact.

Turkey: *Breath* (2009) is an anti-war film about a unit of Turkish soldiers based in the southeast. *On the Way to School* (2008) is a documentary about a young Turkish teacher who struggles to communicate with his Kurdish pupils.

d. Music

Thanks to Liv Robinson (2021-22) for compiling this list

Cheikha Rimitti and Cheb Khaled – 'The Mystic Revelation of Rai' – the coming together of two stars of Rai, a popular form of Algerian folk music commonly surrounding subjects of colonial occupation and societal inequalities or issues. Rimitti, one of the first female Rai singers to perform publicly and Khaled, the best-selling Rai musician of all time.

Rachid Taha – 'Tekitoui', 'Rachid Taha Live' or 'Diwan 2' – a fantastic blend of The Clash-esq Rock and Rai by French-Algerian musician and activist Rachid Taha.

Rachid Taha, Cheb Khaled, Faudel – '123 Soleils' – Surely one of the best albums ever made, a collaboration between three Algerian and French-Algerian Rai singers, alongside a wide range of talented players. It showcases some of the best of their work, including a performance of the Algerian folk song 'Abdel Kader'. There is also a brilliant concert film of the entire event also titled '123 Soleils'.

Umm Kulthum – ‘Amal Hayate - Aroh Le Men’ - described as the ‘fourth pyramid’ of Egypt, one of the most influential singers throughout the entire Arabic world, an utterly spectacular voice accompanied by an amazing orchestra.

Youssra El Hawary – ‘No’oum Nasyeen’ – album rich with political satire, jazz and folk from Egyptian accordion player Youssra El Hawary.

Hasna El Becharia – ‘Smaa Smaa’ – a brilliant example of Gnawa, a musical style associated with groups in many north African nations, said to have originated from mystical cults amongst the descendants of slaves brought to North Africa from the South-Saharan region. Apart from singing, El Becharia is also plays guitar, oud and the Guembri on this album.

Various Artists – ‘Festival au Desert’ – a festival with an unbeatable line up of musicians, showcasing especially Tuareg forms of music as well as music from the wider North and West African region.

Omar Souleyman – ‘Wenu Wenu’ – This album takes the Dabke, a style of line-dance music popular in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries at celebrations and reworks it into an electronic style resulting in songs which almost aggressively push you to dance.

Derya Yıldırım & Grup Şimşek – ‘The Trip’ – a psychedelic mixture of Anatolian folk music, rock and pop music.

Nass el Ghiwane – ‘Essadma’ - referred to as Morocco’s answer to the Rolling Stones, and one of the most famous bands in the region, the music of Nass el Ghiwane represents a wide range of blend of influences and instruments, encompassing both Sufi poetry and banjos.

Rana Farhan – ‘I Return (Baz Amadam)’ – a brilliant engaging album, blending jazz and blues with the classical Persian Poetry of Rumi.

Fairuz – ‘Emany Satea’ – known as the ‘soul of Lebanon’ and potentially the highest selling Middle Eastern artist of all time, the appeal of her music in spans across social divisions in Lebanon and throughout the world.

Googoosh – ‘40 Golden Hits of Googoosh’ - one of the most popular pop singers and icons in pre-revolutionary Iran. Even after the revolution, despite a ban on performing, her influence was still felt through the wide circulation of bootlegged performances, and she continues to perform globally to this day.

Natacha Atlas – ‘Best Of’ – A Belgian-Egyptian singer with an otherworldly voice who brings to each album a fantastic blend of Arabic influences, hip-hop, jazz and reggae.