

The Middle East in Global Politics

MPhil in Politics and International Studies, Lent 2023

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Description

The Middle East is usually studied in international relations with an emphasis placed on power politics and inter-state competition, with attention given principally to crisis events that happen within the region. This course starts with this traditional literature, but moves quickly on to two approaches that are often overlooked when understanding the place of the Middle East in global politics. First, it develops an understanding of the Middle East's politics that looks to the importance of transnational factors. The issues explored include regional and global economic change, diasporas and refugee movements, and the politics of transnational religious movements. Secondly, it looks to how the Middle East itself shapes global politics. It interrogates the 'crisis perspective' on the Middle East through exploring how political agents and advocacy groups around the world present the Middle East as a problem region. Through this prism, it looks at how conceptions of the Middle East shape political sensibilities in other parts of the world.

The MPhil course is assessed by a single long essay of up to 3,000 words, in which students will explore a specified theme through one or two cases. You will be asked to give one or two seminar presentations in Lent term. Often you will be able to line up a seminar presentation with your intended long essay topic if you would like to do so, although this depends on the range of topics chosen by students on this course for their long essays.

The course presumes pre-existing knowledge of the modern history and politics of the region. There will be no lectures directly accompanying the seminar series, but students may be interested to attend the lectures for the third year undergraduate course on the politics of the Middle East, POL12 < <https://www.polis.cam.ac.uk/files/pol12.pdf> >. In Michaelmas term, there are eight lectures on the politics of the state, and eight lectures on the politics of identity. In Lent term, there are eight lectures on the Middle East in global politics (largely mirroring the seminars for the MPhil) and a variety of shorter lecture series and seminars on specific issues – such as China's role in the Middle East, and the role of the Gaza Strip as a flashpoint in the Israel-Palestine conflict. The lectures are open to all students and seminars can be attended on the basis of an invitation. You are invited to look through the lecture list and decide which fit in well into your intended programme of study.

The reading lists here only provide some initial ways in to the literature on each topic, and are not meant as a substitute for the discussion in the seminars which will go well beyond the content of the reading here. This is particularly so as much of the literature here is being presented to talk through what is missing from existing scholarly approaches to the Middle East. Items that are particularly recommended are starred (*), and it is generally helpful to start with these for each seminar. After that, further reading is optional, and can follow your interests.

The course draws heavily also upon a range of broader literatures about contemporary global politics, literatures which are not specific to the Middle East; this is not listed here, but you are very much encouraged to bring in broader theory, comparative analysis and general critical sensibilities into the course that are drawn from your wider reading and understanding.

Section I: Setting it up

1. Agency and actors in the International Relations of the Middle East

The introductory session will explain some of the themes around which this course is based. It sets up the discipline of the 'international relations of the Middle East', but also interrogates its contours. Reading for this seminar is organised around two main poles: the sorts of introductory textbooks that have structured the subject – these are list (a), along with some standard applications in list (b) – and some critical interventions in list (c). List (a) is for those who haven't studied this aspect of the subject before; those who have done so before can move to list (c).

- *How is the concept of 'the Middle East' constructed and contested in global politics, and with what consequences?*
- *Within general accounts of Middle Eastern politics, who are conceived as the primary actors within the region's politics?*
- *What methods and methodologies are commonly used for studying the international relations of the Middle East: what focuses do they have, and who is the intended audience of this literature?*

(a) Some standard answers

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)

Ewan Stein, *International Relations in the Middle East: Hegemonic Strategies and Regional Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021)

(b) Some contemporary examples

Paul Salem, 'The Middle East's troubled relationship with the liberal international order', *The International Spectator*, vol. 53/1 (2018)

Christopher Phillips, *The Battle for Syria: International Rivalry in the New Middle East* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016)

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>

(c) Critical interventions

* 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

Fred Halliday, "'Orientalism" and its critics', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 20/2 (1993), pp.145-163

2. Telling the international history of the Middle East: Empires, Cold Wars, Pax Americana and Regional Disorder

The principal purpose of this session is to ensure that all participants have the historical knowledge to contribute well to later discussions in the course. The international history of the region is often told in an episodic way, one in which the strategies of the hegemonic actor or the struggles for hegemony are foregrounded. It is also often told – by academics and popular commentators alike – through explicit references to historical injustices, which are linked frequently to contemporary predicaments; that is, there is a 'presentist' slant to historical discussions. The two broad questions to address in this seminar are these:

- *Is there a shared international history of the modern Middle East, or are there just lots of separate histories with their own dynamics and trajectories? If there are unifying themes, where do those themes come from?*
- *How does the past, particularly the history of international politics, become so frequently an arena of contestation within contemporary Middle Eastern politics?*

For this session, I would like two presenters, each to address the two questions above for one of two historical eras: the end of European empires in the Middle East; and the end of the Cold War. For everyone else, I would encourage you to dip into the various texts below, with

a focus on what you have studied least before. It would be helpful if everyone has read the last part of Antonius (whose presence on this reading list is an anachronism, but a justifiable one I think); chapter 1 of Khalidi's *Sowing Crisis*; and the epilogue of Oren.

* George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1938), chapters 9 and 16, pp.164-183, 350-412. A scanned copy is available at:

<https://tinyurl.com/ydcrbg2e>

Rashid Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East* (London: IB Tauris, 2004)

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.

Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), chapter 4

Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Superpowers and the Middle East: Regional and International Politics* (Boulder CO: Westview, 1994)

* Michael Oren, *Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present* (New York: WW Norton, 2007); the epilogue gives you the flavour of the text

* Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010)

Malcolm Kerr, *The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir and his Rivals, 1958-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971)

Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987)

Efraim Karsh, 'Cold War, post-Cold-War: does it make a difference for the Middle East?,' *Review of International Studies*, vol. 23/3 (1997), pp. 271-91

Bassel Salloukh, 'The Arab uprisings and the geopolitics of the Middle East', *The International Spectator*, vol. 48/2 (2013), pp.32-46

Ariel I. Ahram & Ellen Lust, 'The decline and fall of the Arab state', *Survival*, 58/2 (April/May 2016), pp.7-34

Section II: Alternative agendas

3. Economic globalisation and political agency

The course shifts gear here, and begins a more in-depth analysis of how global economic change affects the Middle East, and the Middle East's role in the drivers of global change. The central themes in this seminar will be:

- *Hierarchy and agency: has economic globalization brought a dispersal or a concentration of power in the Middle East?*
- *Oil and the role of the Middle East in global politics: does the abundance of natural resources within the Middle East create a role for Middle Eastern agents within a globalized economic order?*
- *The contested politics of economic reform in the region: does it make sense to consider the Middle East as having undergone a sweeping process of neoliberalization, bringing social and political turmoil, and if so what drives this; or is reform more limited, with uneven and reversible reforms, and if so, what restrains reform?*

We are looking here for one presenter of the economic power of Middle Eastern states outside the region, and one presenter on the politics of economic reform within Middle Eastern states, through which to engage with the questions above. The presenters should perhaps choose a specific country or small set of countries on which to focus their presentations. Everyone should look at the starred items below.

(a) Framing debates

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

* Clement Henry and Robert Springborg, *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), especially chapter 1

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.

Raymond Hinnebusch, 'The Middle East in the world hierarchy: imperialism and resistance', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 14 (2011)

(b) The global and the local in the politics of oil

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

Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (London: Verso, updated edition, 2009), especially chapter 8

Toby Craig Jones, 'America, oil, and war in the Middle East', *Journal of American History*, Vol. 99/1 (June 2012), pp.208-218

* Rüdiger Graf, 'Making use of the 'oil weapon': Western industrialized countries and Arab petropolitics in 1973–1974', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 36/1 (January 2012), pp.185–208

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

(c) Global economic change and political struggles

* 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.

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

Jamie Allinson, *The Struggle for the State in Jordan: The Social Origins of Alliances in the Middle East* (2015), chapters 1 and 6

4. Transnational religio-political movements

Transnational religious movements are not new to the Middle East, or indeed any part of the world. The seminar explores their development and their contemporary political significance, looking at and comparing the roles of transnational Islamic, Jewish and Christian movements in shaping the region and as contestants in its politics. The central question that the seminar will explore is how the Middle East figures within larger global debates about religion and the place of religiosity and religious identity within politics. To have one presenter on each of Shi'a Islam, Judaism and 'Sunni Islamism' would be a good basis around which to order this seminar.

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

* Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (London: Routledge, 2001), especially chapters 4 and 5

Laurence Louër, *Transnational Shia Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf* (IB Tauris, 2011/2008), chapters 7 and 8

Toby Matthiesen, *Sectarian Gulf: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab Spring that Wasn't* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), chapter 2.

Augustus Richard Norton, 'The geopolitics of the Sunni-Shi'i rift' in Elizabeth Monier, ed., *Regional Insecurity After the Arab Uprisings: Narratives of Security and Threat* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad, Militancy, Morality, Modernity* (London: Hurst, 2005)

Peter Layton, 'Bringing the transnational into 'new wars'': the case of the Islamic State', *International Review of Social Research*, vol.5/3 (2015), pp.191-201

* Yaacov Yadgar, *Israel's Jewish Identity Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), especially chapter 3

Dov Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe: The American Jewish Conflict over Israel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), chapters 1 and 7

Theodore Sasson, 'Mass mobilization to direct engagement: American Jews' changing relationship to Israel', *Israel Studies*, vol.15/2 (2010), pp.173-196

Tareq Baqoni, *Hamas Contained: The Rise and Pacification of Palestinian Resistance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), chapter 6

Bosmat Yefet, 'The Coptic diaspora and the status of the Coptic minority in Egypt', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol.43/7 (2017), pp.1205-21

5. Interventionism: Brokers, Managers, Advocates

This seminar picks up some of the themes from the previous one, but turns it back towards understanding how external powers engage with the Middle East, 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. I would like particularly to pick up on two issues through the presentations, though seminar participants are welcome to suggest others:

- *Why and how the politics of gender and sexuality in the Middle East comes to be a focus for external attention?*
- *How does the Israel-Palestine conflict comes to take a role in setting wider political alignments around the world, and with what consequences?*

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

* 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

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

* Paul Chamberlin, 'The struggle against oppression everywhere: the global politics of Palestinian Liberation', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.47/1 (2011), pp.25-41

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

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>

6. Mobile populations

Populations in the Middle East have a very high level of geographical mobility, compared to those in most other parts of the world; almost all Middle East countries have large diasporas which continue to identify actively with their country of origin. The central theme in this seminar, in turning back to the Middle East, is how these geographically dispersed populations engage with their homelands, and the political significance of this engagement. One or two presenters will speak to embedded diasporas who have come to be a vocal and organised presence in their country of residence; and one presenter will speak to more recent refugee populations, taking a particular focus of their choosing. In both cases, the central discussion here is of how the extent and character of the diaspora affects the 'homeland', though we can also speak about their roles and predicaments within the countries of residence.

* 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

* 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.

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

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)

* 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

Alice Alunni, 'Long-distance nationalism and belonging in the Libyan diaspora', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.26/2 (2019), pp.242-258

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

* 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

Philippe Fargues, 'International migration and the nation state in Arab countries', *Middle East Law and Governance*, vol.5 (2013), pp.5-35.

Section III: Bringing it all together

7. The flow of ideas: the Middle East in the Global Political Imaginary, the Global in the Middle East's political imaginary

This final seminar could go in a number of directions, and I would like it to pick up on themes from previous seminars rather than the reading list below (which is somewhat scattered – these are texts that speak to relevant issues in the overall approach of the course but which didn't really fit elsewhere). Its central themes though 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. In both themes, I'd particularly like to pick up on the place of Iran and Saudi Arabia – here not as actors engaged in realpolitik in Middle Eastern struggles, but how they both have an vivid image (and image problem) in wider global politics, and have populations that are closely attentive to issues in global politics. So one presenter on each would be useful for this seminar.

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

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

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

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

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.

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