

LSE Middle East Centre PhD Students Conference

Thursday, 15 September 2011, 10 am – 5:30 pm

Thai Theatre (Room LG.03), New Academic Building, LSE

Abstracts

What a Revolution makes of its People; Reading a revolt through its own lyrics
Alia Mossallam

*Raise your voices, raise them high;
they who chant will never die¹*

The slogans that pulled us through the events of the revolution are not only what we chanted in all the attempts to keep alive; but also how we learnt to articulate ourselves as a people. At the start of the revolution, they are what gave us courage, and after the square was taken over, they are how we communicated. How the workers emphasized their plight; the Nubians their demands, and fellahin came to sing their sorrows. At a time when we realized consensus was an impossibility and that 'Tahrir would never be one party'; they were how we determined our priorities, our demands. The decision that gained most consensus was the slogan or song that was chanted hardest, that lasted longest. They were how we made immediate decisions; how when Mubarak hired Omar Suleiman as vice president; the chant that grew upon the declaration was 'Neither Mubarak nor Suleiman; that could have worked long ago'. They were how we reminded each other to hold fort; how we maintained our lines. Tahrir became the place of gathering, once the battles were won in Port-said, Suez, and Alexandria, it is where the fighters came for their reception, where they sang their victories; it became our centre, and it held.

These slogans, songs and chants, were spaces where we experimented with our peoplehood. They are how we explored a common history, and conjured the features of a future, we were all willing to fight for. They encapsulate not only the sense of what the moment was, but the possibilities it was pregnant with. These possibilities are no longer in the physical space of Tahrir, and they elude a people scattered throughout a gated community; but these songs, chants, slogans and anecdotes are what a greater whole remember. And at this moment of struggle over 'the narrative' of the revolution, in them lies the essence of who and what this movement was about.

¹ First heard, Cairo, 25th of January, 2011

Neo-liberalism for Development and Statehood in Palestine: Fayyadism, Aid Dependency and State Building
Alaa Tartir

In post-Arafat era, the Palestinian polity, governance systems, and the socio-economic conditions witnessed dramatic changes. 'Fayyadism' and 'state-building program' became the two 'magical' paradigms and the only game in town. They acquired unprecedented levels of international aid and western 'political' support as an investment in building a Palestinian state by September 2011, through implementing neo-liberal and good governance reforms to prepare the Palestinian Authority's institutions for statehood, despite the Israeli occupation. This paper aims to explore and analyze various aspects of Fayyadism and state-building program and their intertwine with the aid dependency status and its impacts on the Palestinian national aspirations. It will raise the questions: What kind of 'powers' and 'politics of

¹ First heard, Cairo, 25th of January, 2011

change' had emerged in Palestine, under Fayyadism, that alter the historical equation 'liberation before state' to become 'state before liberation'? How come the good governance and institutions building (Dawlat Al-Mo'sasat) has been elevated 'to the status of a national goal in and of itself'? Do Palestinians need a 'state' or 'homeland' (Dawlah or Watan)? And what is a papier-mâché Palestinian state worth? Additionally, how could a technocrat who lacks constitutional legitimacy, political constitute and the traditional national trappings of leader redefines national priorities and provide technical prescriptions for political problems? Why Fayyad is viewed both as a Palestinian Messiah and as a traitor to the Cause? In nutshell, this paper acknowledges that Fayyadism is not only a strategy but also an outcome; it is a 'home-grown' phenomenon but externally funded and sponsored; and surely it achieved various 'successes' at the Palestinian Authority's institutional level and some of the socio-economic indicators in the West Bank. However, since it is presented as the only and best approach to achieve the Palestinian aspirations, how much it is risky that this kind of forcing and convincing may be very problematic, and can shift it to be another authoritarian approach but galvanized with modernity packages?

The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement: An Overview **Suzanne Morrison**

The Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement is a broad-based social movement that calls on international civil society organizations and people around the world to boycott Israel (through its state-related institutions, events, products, etc.) until it complies with international law and respects universal principles of human rights. Specifically, the movement calls for an end to Israeli occupation, return of Palestinian refugees, and equal treatment of Palestinian citizens in Israel.

This paper is a general overview of the BDS movement and analysis of the movement's main components, campaign achievements, movement goals and limitations. The BDS movement has made impressive gains in its campaigns throughout the world and has grown since its official establishment in 2005. Despite remarkable campaign achievements in a relatively short amount of time, the movement has yet to connect the successes of various campaigns to the goals of the movement more generally. In addition, the BDS movement is not an all-encompassing political platform to solve the Palestinian problem and like any social movement has its own limitations. In part, success will depend on ensuring that the movement's campaigns can translate into goals outlined in the call. In this way, the effect of BDS campaign victories can create or enable an environment in which Israel is pressured and/or persuaded to comply with international law and human rights. If the BDS movement can create this climate, the movement has the potential to fundamentally change the direction and discourse of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Ethnification of Territories and the Map of Greater Kurdistan **Zeynep N. Kaya**

Civic conception of national identity is generally believed to build upon citizenship, democracy and the will to stay together, whereas ethnic conception on primordial ties such as blood, glorious history and sacred territory. Which conception of national identity is more prevalent in the Middle East? Most states in the Middle East formed as a result of processes such as war, transition from colonial administration to self-rule, or arbitrary divisions by the Western powers. Ethnic and cultural characteristics were not primary features of those state-building processes. But, these features are becoming increasingly prominent and politicised. For example, the claim that the Map of Greater Kurdistan (involving territories of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Armenia) illustrates the ethnically homogeneous Kurdish territory appears increasingly credible. This paper does not assume that all Kurds and Kurdish nationalists have a political agenda to form a Greater Kurdistan, but it argues that most of scholarship and writing on the Kurds attributes ethnic and primordial character to this map and consider it as the cartographic depiction of the national territory of Kurdish people. This perception is facilitated due to the trend in the world, especially since the 1990s, to justify new state-building processes or claims to statehood through ethnic and cultural conceptions of identity as the cases of Kosovo, South Sudan, Abkhazia, Khalistan, and others indicate. Claims on the ethnic distinctiveness of territories, which I believe have racist and regressive tendencies, increasingly appear as claims for democracy, a progressive goal. This is a curious but dangerous duality and the idea of Greater Kurdistan embodies this duality.

From Humanitarian Aid to Human Rights: Implications of the Iraqi Refugee Resettlement Policy for Refugee Protection in the Middle East
Perveen Ali

The 2003 war in Iraq and the security crisis that followed led to the flight of 2 million Iraqis and 40,000 refugees who had previously sought refuge in Iraq, primarily to Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. While initially sympathetic to their plight, these states came to view their presence as an economic and political burden and imposed obstacles to their entry, residence, and economic and social rights. These states tended to construct and respond to the Iraqi refugee crisis more in terms of the need for compassionate humanitarian aid than the obligation to protect fundamental rights. In the absence of possibilities for Iraqi refugees to legally integrate in these states or to return safely to Iraq, the agency of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) appealed to its donor states to increase their resettlement quotas in the spirit of “burden-sharing” and widening the “protection space” for Iraqi refugees in the Middle East. The donor states responded positively, funding the resettlement of more than 100,000 refugees from the Middle East to Europe, the Americas, and Australia by 2010. The UNHCR in turn attempted to use these expanded resettlement quotas as leverage to negotiate with states in the Middle East to secure greater *de facto* human rights protections for those Iraqi refugees who remained on their territories – a policy termed “the strategic use of resettlement”. This paper considers the implications of the Iraqi refugee resettlement policy for the development of refugee protection frameworks in the Middle East. First, it will argue that this policy revealed an emerging institutional shift in the UNHCR, as resettlement became increasingly highlighted as a means of protecting refugee rights, not only for the few who obtained resettlement, but also for the many remaining in the Middle East. Next, it will examine how this policy’s language promoting state responsibility for rights protection nonetheless continued to exist in a tenuous relationship with discourses of humanitarian compassion, reflecting tensions between the UNHCR’s ever-broadening mandate and states’ narrowing interests. Finally, it will consider how such shifts and tensions produced contested notions of citizenship, identity, and responsibility in the Middle East, creating possibilities for imagining refugee protection strategies that exceeded the boundaries of sovereign states.

Saudi State Identity under King Abdullah
Adel Al Toraifi

On 29 November 1995, King Fahd suffered a debilitating stroke, which left him incapacitated. Crown Prince Abdullah became *de facto* regent ruler of Saudi Arabia. From 1996 to 2005, Abdullah worked actively—and gradually—to re-shape Saudi foreign policy priorities and by the time he was King, Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy has been considerably transformed.

Abdullah was brought up in the desert according to Bedouin tradition. As a child he spoke with a stutter and grew up away from his father and half-brothers. He would later become the Commander of the Saudi National Guard due to his support of King Faisal in the 1962 power struggle with King Saud. Moreover, Abdullah is associated with piety, modernization and a great sense of Arab Unity. In fact, during the 1970s and 1980s Abdullah had strong ties with Arab leaders like Hafez al-Asad of Syria, Kamal Jumblatt of Lebanon and Saddam Hussein of Iraq. He reportedly argued against the use of US troops during the Second Gulf War (1990-91) and favoured decreasing Saudi Arabia’s dependency on US military presence in the Kingdom. Before assuming power, he played a minor role in the country’s foreign policy and was often considered less talented and educated than his predecessors.

Nevertheless, Abdullah proved to be far more active and more willing to take risks than anyone had observed. He started a rapprochement with Iran in 1998, expanded Saudi ties towards China and India and introduced an Arab Peace Initiative in 2002. Furthermore, he weathered the events of 9/11 and successfully maintained close—often tense—relations with the US. In 2003 he opposed—and publically denounced—the US-led invasion of Iraq. Furthermore, he was willing to cut ties with Syria after the Hariri assassination in 2005 and publically denounced Hezbollah for instigating the 2006 War with Israel. In 2009, he ordered Saudi troops to retaliate against the Houthi rebels in the North of Yemen and pushed hard for the GCC countries to send troops to stabilize Bahrain recently.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the emergence of Crown Prince Abdullah as Saudi Arabia's chief foreign policy maker. I will explore foreign policy decision-making under Abdullah, key players and highlight main factors affecting Saudi Arabia's state identity in the 2000s. Furthermore, I will be focusing on the 1997 rapprochement and assessing Abdullah's decision to normalize with Iran and what implications this had on Saudi regional policy in the years to follow.

Knowledge-based Economic Development as a Unifying Vision in a Post-awakening Arab World
Wesley Schwalje

This article traces the evolution of knowledge-based economic development in the Arab World. In pursuing this objective, many countries in the region have made large state-driven human capital investments with the goals of job creation, economic integration, economic diversification, environmental sustainability, and social development. An assessment of the effectiveness of Arab investments in human capital shows marginal progress towards knowledge-based development over the last decade. A disconnect between the skills developed in Arab skills formation systems and those required by private sector employers relegates Arab businesses to contesting lower-skilled, non-knowledge intensive industries which has stalled knowledge-based development in the region.

Expanding the Sustainability Map: Building Public-Private Partnerships in Masdar City Abu Dhabi
Prianjali Mascarenhas

Abu Dhabi, the dynamic capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has placed itself firmly on the global sustainable development map with an ambitious eco-city project – Masdar. Despite the UAE being listed as the country with the world's highest carbon footprint, the project is a testament to Abu Dhabi's commitment to diversify its industry away from oil to a knowledge-based economy with the ability to develop alternative energy solutions, test and implement innovative clean technologies and build state-of-the-art housing, retail and transportation infrastructure within a walled eco-friendly city. It is evident that Masdar is an anomaly particularly within the geography, customs and traditional Arab culture it is situated within, and represents a modern example of the hardened dualities facing this part of the region.

Masdar is an important part of Abu Dhabi's political, environmental and economic future. In 2010 it was discovered that Masdar's plans were too ambitious for the short time frame they allotted themselves. The definition of sustainable development has since been redefined, and involves a scaling down of the original tenets. Despite the negative criticism of the scale backs, I argue that these scale-backs can actually signify a positive turn for the Masdar project enabling the leadership and its partners to reflect on resource and value choices in particular considering the project amidst its local context, geography and societal values.

Within Masdar City the renewable energy sector is experiencing unique trends in private sector engagement. This paper will uncover the process of steady expansion of the private sector in Masdar City amidst a current scaled-down concept of sustainability, coupled with examples of increased interaction between the State and the private sector in the renewable energy industry through diverse partnerships and coalitions being built amongst renewable energy companies, the Masdar leadership and other autonomous groups. The paper will explore the process of private expansion, as well as common agenda setting and decision-making between coalition partners. Amidst an environment of project scale backs and budget cuts the evolution of partnerships offers a unique background to understand the successes and challenges facing the growth of the private sector in the renewable energy industry, evidence that a polarised approach to sustainable development can be replaced by consensus and common agendas through partnership.

The Manama Dialogue: Britain's Withdrawal and Bahrain's Transition to Independence in 1971
Andrew Bowen

The landmark announcement of 1968 that Britain would withdraw altogether from the Gulf by 1971 sent shockwaves throughout the Gulf and marked the dusk of Britain's fading empire. Shaikh Isa Al Khalifa, the

ruler of Bahrain, considered it a betrayal of Britain's fiduciary responsibilities to his country, and a potentially devastating blow to the future of his country and his rule. The Political Agency in Bahrain acknowledged that 1971 was a very immediate date to prepare Bahrain for its departure in light of the pressing concerns facing the state.

Two of the most important concerns were the unresolved Iranian sovereignty claim on Bahrain, which caused tension between Iran and Bahrain for many years, and the incorporation of Bahrain into a union with the other Gulf states, which was seen as the best possible future for Bahrain. As well, Britain devoted attention to improving the domestic condition of the state.

While Britain and Bahrain did not achieve all that they initially sought, this paper explores the critical role Britain played in preparing Bahrain for statehood, and argues that the 1968 decision acted as a catalyst for the resolving these concerns and that the period of 1969 through 1971 proved consequential for their resolution.