



SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND POPULAR MOBILISATION IN THE MENA

Digest of Current Publications and Events

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CONTENT

Call for Papers & Conferences	4
The Social Structure of Insurgencies. Reproduction and Change during and after Conflict	4
Conflicted Bodies: Feminist and Queer Responses to Militarism and Violence since 1900	5
BDS: Driving Global Justice for Palestine.....	6
Talks & Other Events	7
The Commander: Fawzi al-Qawuqji and the Fight for Arab Independence 1914-1948.....	7
Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse in Syria: A Social-Institutionalist Explanation	8
Democratic Practices in Social Movements	8
Palestine Today: The Six Day War at 50 and Balfour at 100	9
Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East	9
The Calculus of Dissidence: The Socialist Forces Front and the Failure of Opposition in Algeria.....	10
Political Remittances and Political Transnationalism: Narratives, Political Practices and the Role of the State	10
Personalised Media and Participatory Culture.....	11
Recent & Forthcoming Books	12
Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East	12
Remembering Akbar: Inside the Iranian Revolution	12
Knowledge Production in the Arab World: The Impossible Promise	13
Journal Articles & other Academic Publications	13
Adaptation Strategies of Islamist Movements.....	13
How far does neoliberalism go in Egypt? Gender, citizenship and the making of the 'rural' woman	14
The political economy of regime survival: Algeria in the context of the African and Arab uprisings	14
Bridging social divides: leadership and the making of an alliance for women's land-use rights in Morocco	14
Nâzim Hikmet's ecopoetics and the Gezi Park protests.....	15
The revolt of small towns: the meaning of Morocco's history and the geography of social protests	15
Cultural Battles on the Literary Field: From the Syrian Writers' Collective to the Last Days of Socialist Realism in Syria.....	15
The Zajal: Popular Poetry and the Struggle over Lebanon's History.....	16
News Pieces & Commentary	17
'Optimism of the Intellect'? How to Stay Hopeful in the Wake of Turkey's Referendum Results....	17
Fear and Loathing in Turkey - The Backstory to Erdoğan's Referendum	17

Armenian Feminism and Reconstructing the Post-Genocide National Identity	18
'The oppression is brutal': Morocco breaks up Western Sahara protest ahead of UN talks	18
To be or not to be: the future of opposition in post-referendum Turkey	19
Foucault, the Iranian Revolution, and the Politics of Collective Action	19
Civil Marriage in Lebanon: The Political Developments.....	19
The Paradoxical Role of Israeli Prisons in the Palestinian Resistance Movement	20
International Community Urged to Stand With Palestinian Political Prisoners Hunger Striking in Israeli Jails.....	20
Rescuing the Revolution from Its Outcome	21
Why We Are on Hunger Strike in Israel's Prisons.....	21
Jemna in Tunisia: an inspiring land struggle in North Africa	22
Creative Insurgency in the Arab World	22
A new chapter for feminism in Jordan	23
The Tribal Consensus Candidate: A Mini-Democracy or the Denial of Free Will?	23

CALL FOR PAPERS & CONFERENCES

The Social Structure of Insurgencies. Reproduction and Change during and after Conflict

Deadline: 15 May 2017

Current research on civil wars and conflict increasingly turns to the inner structure and functioning of non-state armed groups, and their impact on aspects such as violent practice, internal cohesion and the dissolution of these groups during the conversion to peace. We are looking for contributions which draw on sociology, political science, history, psychology or other disciplines to understand the social structure of insurgencies and discuss its patterns of change and its impact on practices within and outside the respective group.

The call is not limited to any region or type of conflict (e.g. terrorism, genocide or civil war) but aims at a comparison between different kinds of insurgent groups, their social structures and the respective patterns of inception and recruitment, internal cohesion, violent practice and strategies of conversion during reintegration. In order for an innovative and interdisciplinary book to be compiled, the volume may encompass contributions addressing the topic from theoretical and empirical perspectives within various disciplines. Contributions may focus on predominantly theoretical aspects, on single cases, on comparative studies of a few cases or on analyses using statistical methods.

The social structure of insurgent movements should be seen as a dynamic system, as a structure that is a constant process of reproduction and change, even during times of massive societal upheaval, such as violent conflict. Therefore, the impact of the social structure on a group's practices will be addressed within three time frames: 1) during the inception, 2) during different stages of the conflict and 3) during the transition to peace and after the war's end. By not limiting the scope of the volume to particular types of conflict, world regions or type of organization, an opportunity is provided to compare similarities and differences across a variety of empirical cases, thereby bridging artificial gaps between sub-disciplines. Moreover, through inviting contributions on different stages of conflict, patterns of change and reproduction in time can be addressed more fully.

Please, send your abstract of no longer than 500 words and a biographic note of 100 words to Daniel Bultmann (bultmand@hu-berlin.de) by no later than 15th May 2017. Contributors will be notified within two weeks after the deadline. Final paper submission will be 30th October 2017.

Contact Info: Dr. Daniel Bultmann

Institute of Asian and African Studies, Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany

Contact Email: bultmand@hu-berlin.de

More information [here](#)

[**Back to top**](#)

Conflicted Bodies: Feminist and Queer Responses to Militarism and Violence since 1900

Deadline: 30 April 2017

30 September 2017, Goldsmiths (University of London)

Keynote: Jasbir Puar (Rutgers University)

How might logics of militarism, patriarchy and heteronormativity be enmeshed and interdependent? By the same token, how might feminist, queer and pacifist politics draw on each other in the struggle for equality and against war? How do cultural representations in the media, art and literature shape and normalise such heteronormative practices? In thinking through the potential tensions and alliances between these ideologies, this conference seeks to reconsider the relations between gender, sexuality and violence.

Twentieth and twenty-first century Western norms have largely centred on the fantasy of hegemonic masculinity as the only subject able to manifest 'control', a subject that has given flesh to the nationalist ideals of sovereignty and self-determination. Women, queer identities, colonial subjects, and enemies in wartime have often been subordinated within this model of the body politic. These excluded subjects must be managed to maintain a social order grounded in the privileging of white, heterosexual, militarised masculinity.

Yet how might these norms be put under strain by the conflicts they are cultivated to support, or by political struggle? What of the claims made by these excluded subjects, and the new modes of representation they generate? What of the wounded male body – does this challenge or simply re-coup the status quo? If the exposure to violence is unevenly distributed through the categories of race and social class, do we need to interrogate the broad concept of hegemonic masculinity? What are the linkages between periods of national crisis and the pathologising of sexuality? What are the conditions of the masculinist revival perhaps most visible currently in the United States? Moreover, what of female or LGBTQ militancy? How might we re-think subjectivity, vulnerability and violence in order to contest structures of power?

Papers might touch on (but need not be limited to):

- Violence and representation
- Conflict transformation and the arts
- States of exceptionality and national crisis
- Gendering paramilitarism and terrorism
- Trauma and the legacies of conflict
- Democracy and protest
- Semantics of hygiene and purification
- Pacifism and peace movements
- Homonationalism
- Civil and international wars
- Industrial military complex
- Securitisation and surveillance technologies

- Incarceration, detention, internment
- Remembrance and commemorative practices
- Social change and collective norms
- Feminist and LGBTQI activism
- Donald Trump / “masculinist revival”
- Menstrual politics
- Abortion activism
- Transgender politics
- Anti-racist struggles

The conference will take place at Goldsmiths (University of London), on 30th September 2017. Please send abstracts of no more than 300 words along with an academic bio to Eleanor Careless, Alex Coupe and Edwin Coomasaru at chasegsv@gmail.com by the 30th April. The symposium is part of the Gender Sexuality & Violence Research Network’s programme, supported by the AHRC/CHASE.

More information [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

BDS: Driving Global Justice for Palestine

Deadline: 1 June 2017

28-29 July, University of Sydney

The Department of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney, Sydney University Staff for BDS, and a range of pro-Palestinian organisations including the Australia Palestine Advocacy network (APAN) are calling on supporters of Palestine justice, both activists and researchers, to participate in a two-day conference, 'BDS – Driving Global Justice for Palestine', which will be held at the University of Sydney on 28-29 July, 2017.

The recent UN Security Council resolution declaring Israeli settlements in 'flagrant violation' of international law and calling for a halt to all settlement activity, followed by Israel's retrospective legalisation of thousands of settlements on stolen Palestinian land, acutely raises the question of what steps can be taken to promote justice, along with genuine peace, in the region.

In line with the call from Palestinian civil society for boycott, divestment and sanctions, this conference, held to mark the centenary of the Balfour declaration and the 50th anniversary of Israel's 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, will analyse the current politics of BDS in Australia and abroad, reflect on previous BDS activity, and contribute to greater public understanding of the BDS campaign.

Contributions are invited from activists and researchers on any topic related to these themes, including but not limited to

- reflections on BDS campaigning in the Asia-Pacific and elsewhere so far: lessons learnt and analysis of current prospects;
- successes in BDS campaigning internationally;
- planning for BDS campaigning into the future: ideas and possibilities, proposals for action;
- sources of BDS solidarity: unions, churches, etc.;
- responding to issues around BDS : anti-Semitism, freedom of speech, peace, etc.;
- legal attacks on BDS.

Proposals for twenty-minute presentations (maximum 200 words) should be sent to jake.lynch@sydney.edu.au and nick.riemer@sydney.edu.au by June 1, 2017. Academic proposals will be peer-reviewed. See here for the conference announcement from the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies.

More information [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

TALKS & OTHER EVENTS

The Commander: Fawzi al-Qawuqji and the Fight for Arab Independence 1914-1948

2 May 2017, 5:45 PM - 7:00 PM

Venue: Paul Webley Wing (Senate House), Wolfson Lecture Theatre, London, UK

Speaker: Laila Parsons, Institute of Islamic Studies (McGill University)

Chair: Charles Tripp, SOAS

Lecture by Professor Parson's on her latest book *The Commander: Fawzi al-Qawuqji and the Fight for Arab Independence 1914-1948* (Hill and Wang, 2016). Revered by some as the Arab Garibaldi, maligned by others as an intriguer and opportunist, Fawzi al-Qawuqji manned the ramparts of Arab history for four decades. In his most famous role, he would command the Arab Liberation Army in the Arab-Israeli War of 1948. Laila Parsons tells Qawuqji's dramatic story and sets it in the full context of his turbulent times. Following Israel's decisive victory, Qawuqji was widely faulted as a poor leader with possibly dubious motives. *The Commander* shows us that the truth was more complex: although he doubtless made some strategic mistakes, he never gave up fighting for Arab independence and unity, even as those ideals were undermined by powers inside and outside the Arab world. In Qawuqji's life story we find the origins of today's turmoil in the Arab Middle East.

More information [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse in Syria: A Social-Institutionalist Explanation

2 May 2017, 17:15 – 19:15

Venue: Room 9.04, 9th Floor, Tower 2, LSE, London WC2A 2AZ, United Kingdom

Speaker: Thomas Pierret, University of Edinburgh

Over the last four years, the Syrian insurgency has witnessed the rise and consolidation of certain factions, particularly Islamist ones, but also the demise of once powerful groups of a more nationalist persuasion. Common explanations of these opposite trajectories have focused on factors such as popular support, ideology, and external funding. Drawing on Paul Staniland's social-institutionalist conceptual framework, Thomas Pierret proposes a different explanation that revolves around the social networks upon which insurgent groups were built. He argues that groups that have relied on long-standing networks stemming from armed militancy or religious proselytism had a determining organisational advantage over counterparts that lacked such a background. Organisational superiority explains why some factions maintained their cohesion despite military setbacks and temporary resource shortages, whereas some well-funded groups disintegrated as a result of internal feuds or military attacks on the part of other rebel factions. *More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

Democratic Practices in Social Movements

4 May 2017

Venue: University of Westminster, room UG04 309 Regent St, London W1B 2UW

Speaker: Prof. Donatella della Porta

In this public lecture, leading scholar Professor Donatella della Porta explores democratic practices in social movements. Her extensive empirical and theoretical work investigates how social movements' struggles for more democracy are paralleled by internal efforts to self-organise in democratic ways. By establishing deliberative and participatory practices inside social movement organizations, they challenge common conceptions of representative democracy. These processes of democratic internal decision-making and consensus-finding create new participatory spaces at the grass roots. Donatella della Porta's work examines movements ranging from the Eastern European processes of democratization in 1989, the Global Justice movement, to the Arab Spring, the Indignados, and Occupy. *More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

Palestine Today: The Six Day War at 50 and Balfour at 100

4 May 2017

Venue: University of Warwick, Social Sciences Building, Coventry CV4 7AL, United Kingdom

A conference assessing past legacies, present accountability, and future visions. 2017 marks the 50-year anniversary of the Six-day war which ushered in the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza (the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 had already claimed 80% of historic Palestine), as well as the centenary of the Balfour Declaration in which the UK declared its support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” laying the foundations for the present political geography in the region and enduring conflict. This one-day conference will assess the research gaps on the Israel-Palestine conflict at this time in history, explore the future of the West Bank caught between a military occupation and a ‘civilised’ annexation (supported by the new US administration), and identify interdisciplinary synergies to fill those gaps. The conference aims to revisit key themes of the Israeli-Palestinian context in light of various disciplines, uncovering overlooked issues that remain under-explored and under-theorised. *More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East

8 May 2017, 18:00 – 19:30

Venue: Room 9.04, 9th Floor, Tower 2, LSE, London WC2A 2AZ, United Kingdom

Speakers: Nader Hashemi, University of Denver; Danny Postel, University of Denver; Madawi Al-Rasheed, LSE Middle East Centre; Toby Matthiesen, University of Oxford; Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, University of Manchester

As the Middle East descends ever deeper into violence and chaos, ‘sectarianism’ has become a catch-all explanation for the region’s troubles. The turmoil is attributed to ‘ancient sectarian differences’, putatively primordial forces that make violent conflict intractable. In media and policy discussions, sectarianism has come to possess trans-historical causal power. In this book launch, editors Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel join Madawi Al-Rasheed, Toby Matthiesen and Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi to challenge the use of ‘sectarianism’ as a magic-bullet explanation for the region’s ills, focusing on how various conflicts in the Middle East have morphed from non-sectarian (or cross-sectarian) and nonviolent movements into sectarian wars. *More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

The Calculus of Dissidence: The Socialist Forces Front and the Failure of Opposition in Algeria

30 May 2017, 17:15-19:15

Venue: Room 9.04, 9th Floor, Tower 2, LSE, London WC2A 2AZ, United Kingdom

Speaker: Hugh Roberts, Tufts University

The Socialist Forces Front (FFS) is routinely referred to as Algeria's oldest opposition party. Finally legalised in 1989, the FFS from its foundation in 1963 provided the main template of 'opposition' in Algeria, but its achievements have been meagre at best. Hugh Roberts examines the FFS's origins in the rebellion of 1963-5, arguing that its achievements as an opposition movement have been limited because it has not been engaged in opposition properly so called, merely dissidence. *More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

Political Remittances and Political Transnationalism: Narratives, Political Practices and the Role of the State

19-20 June 2017

Venue: University of Oxford, Nuffield College, Clay Room

Conveners: Dr Félix Krawatzek and Dr Lea Müller-Funk

This workshop seeks to gather an interdisciplinary group of researchers undertaking innovative research on migrants' political remittances and political transnationalism. The question of how political ideas and practices circulate between migrants and their home country has clearly gained in relevance with the current increase in worldwide migration and requires historically sound investigations. The workshop continues discussions initiated during "Political, Social, and Economic Migrant Remittances: Content, Social Networks, and Impacts" held at Nuffield College (Oxford) in September 2016. Political remittances and political transnationalism have increasingly been addressed across social sciences and the humanities. Research has covered a wide array of topics, such as migrants' transnational political practices to understand the development of the home country, the interlinkages of political remittances and conflict resolution vs conflict exacerbation, the connection between political transnationalism, immigrant integration and identity constructions, and the role of diaspora engagement policies on political transnationalism. These phenomena have been studied using methods such as interviews, ethnography, text and corpus analysis, surveys, network analysis or policy analysis. However, important questions remain open: What factors can be identified from historical and cross-country comparisons to improve understandings of political transnationalism? What can different disciplines learn from each other in studying political narratives and practices circulating among migrants? What influence do states have on political transnationalism? What theoretical concepts have been developed to study these phenomena across disciplines? What type of sources and methodologies are appropriate to study the flow of political remittances? *More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

Personalised Media and Participatory Culture

Project Conference 29-30 June 2017

London School of Economics

For some years now the idea of digital media as an activator in politics and the civic sphere has taken hold. Digital networks have been said to redefine relationships between individuals, audiences and media organisations, and those between citizens and the state by acting as a virtual public sphere. The sorts of participatory connections – and dare we say it – *cultures* that are apparently enabled by digital media have been assumed, celebrated and also decried. In many cases it has been argued that young people are at the forefront of ‘digital revolutions’. But are such assumptions borne out equally in different parts of the global north and global south? Are the movements and networks that fall under discussions of ‘digital revolution’ actually primarily digital? Any what are the real-world effects of assumptions about the motivating, connective and civilising power of the digital in low income communities of the global south?

Young people’s uptake and uses of new and emerging digital technologies for cultural and civic participation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region remains under-studied and under-theorised, particularly in the context of their everyday lives. This conference aims at problematising the assumed connections between particular parts of the world, networks (both digital and real-world), participatory cultures, young people, and emerging media tools. Keynotes and panels will aim at assessing and theorising the nature and extent of digital media’s articulation with artistic, civic, cultural and political participation and pinning down what exactly is *new* about the participatory uses and potentials of new media in particular communities and geographic spaces. In doing so, we aim to present a fresh perspective on concepts such as the ‘digital age’, ‘empowerment’, ‘networks’ and ‘participation’ amidst the range of face-to-face and old-media participatory civic, political and cultural networks, practices and identities that abound in modernity.

During the conference we will present the findings of our project that concentrated on participatory networks and media in Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and UAE. Through mapping the field of youth participation textually and analytically, and through interviews with young people, experts and stakeholders, the research presents a wide and different range of forms of social and political participation of youth in the MENA region. We suggest factors that can explain how young people decide to participate in their communities. Our research evaluates and theorises young people’s civic engagement and public participation not only in the narrow domain of institutional politics, but in a broader sense that encompasses artistic and cultural consumption, cultural remixing and the production of popular culture as an emerging civic participatory culture.

The opening keynote will be delivered by Professor Mohamed Zayani (Georgetown University, Qatar) with plenary keynote panels and a few parallel panels. *More information* [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

RECENT & FORTHCOMING BOOKS

Sectarianization: Mapping the New Politics of the Middle East

Nader Hashemi, Danny Postel (Eds)

2017 – Hurst

As the Middle East descends ever deeper into violence and chaos, ‘sectarianism’ has become a catch-all explanation for the region’s troubles. The turmoil is attributed to ‘ancient sectarian differences’, putatively primordial forces that make violent conflict intractable. In media and policy discussions, sectarianism has come to possess trans-historical causal power. This book trenchantly challenges the lazy use of ‘sectarianism’ as a magic-bullet explanation for the region’s ills, focusing on how various conflicts in the Middle East have morphed from non-sectarian (or cross-sectarian) and nonviolent movements into sectarian wars. Through multiple case studies — including Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Yemen and Kuwait — this book maps the dynamics of sectarianisation, exploring not only how but also why it has taken hold. The contributors examine the constellation of forces — from those within societies to external factors such as the Saudi–Iranian rivalry — that drive the sectarianisation process and explore how the region’s politics can be de-sectarianised.

[Back to top](#)

Remembering Akbar: Inside the Iranian Revolution

Behrooz Ghamari

2016 - OR Books

Set in the tumultuous aftermath of the Iranian revolution in 1979, *Remembering Akbar* weaves together the stories of a group of characters who share a crowded death row cell in Tehran’s notorious Evin prison. A teeming world is evoked vividly through the relationships, memories, and inner lives of these political prisoners, many of whom were eventually executed. Told through a series of linked memories by the narrator, Akbar, whose striking candor is infused with a mordant sense of humor, the story takes the reader beyond mere political struggles and revelations, to a vibrant alternative history, written, as it were, by the losers. The characters whose stories Akbar recounts are brought to life within the mundane rhythms of a bleak institution, in its simple pleasures as well as its frequent horrors, and in the unexpected connections that emerge between the world inside and a past before imprisonment. Rather than exalting the heroic, or choosing to focus merely on despair or redemption, *Remembering Akbar* reveals eloquently how life unfolds when death is starkly imminent. It is a deeply moving story of great camaraderie, biting humor, and soulful remembrance.

[Back to top](#)

Knowledge Production in the Arab World: The Impossible Promise

Sari Hanafi, Rigas Arvanitis

2016 – Routledge

Knowledge Production in the Arab World assesses the role and dynamics of regional research, posing questions crucial to understand its relevance and beneficiaries. The book looks at the Arab drive to join the increasingly globalized world of research, and in doing so promote “knowledge” economies. Yet – provocatively subtitled *The Impossible Promise* – authors Hanafi and Arvanitis (respectively Arab and European) note that all hasn’t succeeded; elaborating on the state of research and knowledge production regionally, one of the book’s themes is how countries are struggling on this score. Using case studies from the region including Jordan, the book depicts Arab research as involving two potentially opposing strands: local relevance and internationalization. Underlying this dichotomy, one of the more obvious problems in regional research dynamics is underfunding, the financial investment in scientific research in the Arab world being scant compared to other regions. In fact, there seems to be little connection between the financial resources of a given Arab country and the amount it invests in knowledge production. Given such underfunding, many researchers look for foreign sources of finance but this is often problematic as it leads to output not necessarily related to local issues and thus having no societal impact. A major dilemma in the Arabic academic community then becomes this choice between local and international relevancy.

[Back to top](#)

JOURNAL ARTICLES & OTHER ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

Adaptation Strategies of Islamist Movements

POMEPS Studies 26

Long repressed, banned, and exiled, many Islamist movements and parties across the Middle East and North Africa witnessed a moment of electoral success after the 2011 uprisings. Since then, their fates have varied widely. Some have made significant compromises to stay in power, others have ostensibly separated their religious and political efforts, while others have been repressed more brutally than before or have fragmented beyond recognition. What accounts for these actors’ different adaptation strategies and divergent outcomes? Earlier this year, the Project on Middle East Political Science brought together a dozen top scholars for our 4th Annual workshop on Islamist politics to address these questions. *Download [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

How far does neoliberalism go in Egypt? Gender, citizenship and the making of the 'rural' woman

Karim Malak, Sara Salem

Review of African Political Economy, Published online: 22 Mar 2017

This paper focuses on civil society in Egypt as a site in which the 'Egyptian rural woman' is made by looking at processes of microfinance which often 'fail' to realise their stated goals of 'empowerment', 'poverty alleviation' or 'social mobility'. Using ethnographic material from a microfinance programme in the Egyptian governorate of al-Minya, such programmes are problematised beyond their stated goals. Instead, such initiatives put in place an infrastructure that links micro-borrowers to the market. Thus, what it means to be a 'liberated' woman in the Egyptian context is built on access, participation in and creation of 'the market'.

[Back to top](#)

The political economy of regime survival: Algeria in the context of the African and Arab uprisings

Hamza Hamouchene, Brahim Rouabah

Review of African Political Economy, Volume 43, 2016 - Issue 150, Pages 668-680

This briefing analyses the ways in which the Algerian regime has navigated the multi-dimensional crisis it has been faced with over the last two decades, and the political economy of its survival in a turbulent regional and international geopolitical context characterised by the African and Arab uprisings and the reaction of status quo forces to this phenomenon.

[Back to top](#)

Bridging social divides: leadership and the making of an alliance for women's land-use rights in Morocco

Yasmine Berriane

Review of African Political Economy, Volume 43, 2016 - Issue 149, Pages 350-364

This article analyses a women's movement that emerged in the context of increased land commodification in Morocco. It focuses on the dynamics that characterised the making of this coalition of actors across the social divide. It mainly analyses the division of tasks among the different partners, highlighting the role played by intermediate organisations and actors in connecting and merging together local, national and international norms, practices and actors. The empowerment of this intermediate layer of leaders indicates a gradual inversion of the power hierarchy and illustrates the fluidity of domination relationships within social movements.

[Back to top](#)

Nâzım Hikmet's ecopoetics and the Gezi Park protests

Kim Fortuny

Middle Eastern Literatures, Volume 19, 2016 - Issue 2, Pages 162-184

Nâzım Hikmet's representation of nature in his poems became a powerful incentive to political action in the 2013 Istanbul Gezi Park protests. Protecting trees meant challenging divisions between the human and the non-human through communal acts of civil disobedience. This action and the literary models that informed it are relevant to current issues in ecopoetics. This article identifies four interlocking categories of nature in Hikmet's poems: Anatolian nature poems, poems of land and resistance, nature in exile poems, and Istanbul nature poems. In these poems a sustainable land ethic is synonymous with political pluralism and nature is harnessed as a resource for social change. Nature, the literary arts and socio-political protest are fused in the poems and give rise to Nâzım Hikmet's relevance to contemporary environmental movements.

[Back to top](#)

The revolt of small towns: the meaning of Morocco's history and the geography of social protests

Koenraad Bogaert

Review of African Political Economy, Volume 42, 2015 - Issue 143, Pages 124-140

Attempts to understand the wider context of the Arab uprisings in Morocco mainly focus on the dynamic created by the 20 February Movement, while the long history of increasing socio-economic struggle tends to be underestimated. This article argues that the political and democratic protests of the last two years and the history of socio-economic protests cannot be viewed as unrelated phenomena but must be understood as part of the same process. The account focuses on different disturbances, such as the riots in the phosphate mining region of Khouribga, to show the particular dynamic between civil democratic and socio-economic struggles.

[Back to top](#)

Cultural Battles on the Literary Field: From the Syrian Writers' Collective to the Last Days of Socialist Realism in Syria

Alexa Firat

Middle Eastern Literatures, Volume 18, 2015 - Issue 2, Pages 153-176

This article discusses the literary debates that echo the struggles for cultural power in Syria from the 1950s–1970s. The article suggests that the founding of the Syrian Writers' Collective in 1951 was a juncture that attempted to realize a social function for literature within an emerging discourse of socialist realism. Availing the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's work on the mechanics of an autonomous literary field, this study suggests that the challenges presented by the self-criticism of

'post-67 discourse' would compel certain players to protect this agenda of hegemony; that is, the publication of the text *al-Adab wa-al-idīyūljīyah fī Sūriyyah 1967–1973* (1974, Literature and Ideology in Syria). One can read an ensuing rupture in the field within the pages of the collection *Ma'ārik thaqāfiyyah fī Sūriyyah* (1978, Cultural Battles in Syria) that was published soon after, suggesting the emergence of an autonomous literary field that embodies a complex of reactions to and rejections of a set of pre-existing conditions.

[Back to top](#)

The *Zajal*: Popular Poetry and the Struggle over Lebanon's History

Yusri Hazran

Middle Eastern Literatures, Volume 16, 2013 - Issue 2, Pages 169-188

Druze historiography in modern Lebanon has developed in leaps and bounds since the early 1980s and has burst the confines of the written text to resonate in poetic and popular literature. One of the best examples of the latter is *zajal*, specifically the work of Ḥamdān, considered the greatest of contemporary Lebanese Druze popular poets. This study is based on still un-consulted oral poetry, principally in the form of cassette recordings of Ḥamdān's poetry to be found in Druze villages in Israel and Lebanon. The diffusion of Druze narrative into *zajal* poetry may be interpreted in two different ways: as a unique phenomenon of intertextuality between written texts and oral tradition, or as a manifestation of oral tradition. The present paper focuses on the correspondence between the contents of the written historiography and the ideological and historical meanings contained in Ḥamdān's poetry. Furthermore, it demonstrates how Ḥamdān employs his poetic talents to present the Druze narrative while simultaneously conducting a polemic against the Maronite establishment, historiography, and politics. The similarity in content between the written texts and the oral poetry assumes the existence of a dialog between the historiographical texts and the ongoing cultural and social process on the one hand and between the oral poetry and the written text on the other.

[Back to top](#)

NEWS PIECES & COMMENTARY

‘Optimism of the Intellect’? How to Stay Hopeful in the Wake of Turkey’s Referendum Results

Gülay Türkmen-Derviřođlu

Jadaliyya, 27 April 2017

Following the constitutional referendum in Turkey, which resulted in a narrow victory for the “Yes” camp (with fifty-one percent of the voters approving the constitutional changes that grant President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan unprecedented powers), pundits rushed to portray a grim picture, mourning “the death of Turkish democracy.” In an op-ed for *Foreign Policy*, titled “RIP Turkey, 1921-2017,” Steven Cook claimed that with this victory, Erdoğan not only “permanently closed a chapter of his country’s modern history” but also closed off the prospect that Turkey could become a democracy. Similarly, Dexter Filkins of the *New Yorker* argued, “after fifteen years of riding the train of democracy, Erdoğan and Turkey are finally stepping off.” Writing for *CNN*, Frida Ghitis joined this chorus by declaring that, “Turkey’s democracy has died.” *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Fear and Loathing in Turkey - The Backstory to Erdoğan’s Referendum

Ümit Cizre

MERIP, 26 April 2017

Shortly after the failed coup attempt of July 16, 2016 in Turkey, I received a frantic text message from a lifelong friend, Lale Kemal. Lale is a prominent freelance journalist with an impeccable 37-year record of non-partisan reporting and analysis. She is an internationally known expert on Turkish civil-military relations, having written for *Jane’s Defense Weekly* since 1991. Now, Lale texted from Ankara, she was under arrest for her columns in *Zaman*, which, until its court-ordered seizure four months before the putsch and its closure soon thereafter, was one of the highest-circulation daily newspapers in Turkey. *Zaman* was owned by men close to the influential Muslim cleric Fethullah Gülen, who is head of a conservative-nationalist transnational movement with schools and businesses inside and outside Turkey, and is now in self-imposed exile in the United States. The government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan declared the Gülen group responsible for the coup attempt. According to the government, Lale’s writings for the paper made her guilty, too. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Armenian Feminism and Reconstructing the Post-Genocide National Identity

Yeghia Tashjian

New Eastern Politics, 25 April 2017

In post-genocide or post-catastrophe periods, women are often left out of the national collectivity. That is, in the gendered classification between public and private space that characterizes national structures, women are restrained within the private space and their contributions to. In post-genocide or post-catastrophe periods, women are often left out of the national collectivity. That is, in the gendered classification between public and private space that characterizes national structures, women are restrained within the private space and their contributions to public life of the nation are often ignored or erased from history. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

'The oppression is brutal': Morocco breaks up Western Sahara protest ahead of UN talks

Mohamed Samid Ould

Open Democracy, 24 April 2017

Moroccan police forcibly broke up a pro-independence demonstration in El-Aaiun on April 15, beating dozens of activists. Saharawi demonstrators from all walks of life took to the streets to protest occupation and demonstrate solidarity with political prisoners languishing in Moroccan jails. The protesters were responding to a call launched by local NGOs, with demonstrators chanting self-determination slogans and denouncing the plundering of Saharawi natural resources. Members from the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) were patrolling the city, but didn't intervene. Rumour has it there was a visiting American diplomatic delegation in town. The demonstration was not an anomaly. Protest is a permanent feature of Saharawi life, taking place despite constant police siege and an embargo imposed on all activity advocating independence and the respect of Saharawi rights. Saharawis cling to peaceful demonstrations as a tool to raise awareness about their plight and the endless quest to bring justice to the people of Western Sahara. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

To be or not to be: the future of opposition in post-referendum Turkey

Halil Gürhanli

Open Democracy, 22 April 2017

The most significant result of the April 16 referendum in Turkey seems to be that no one but the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his supporters accepts it. As predicted, the referendum has yielded controversial results after extremely unfair and suspicious processes of campaigning, voting and counting. The official results declare a narrow win for Erdoğan's 'yes' camp to legally cement his one-man regime: but external observers and opposition state that up to 2.5 million votes could have been manipulated as a result of a blatantly illegal decision by the High Electoral Board (YSK). All the opposition parties, including the Republican People's Party (CHP), Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), and the opposition wing of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), contest the results and, thereby, question the very legitimacy of Erdoğan rule as well as the regime he wants to impose. Spontaneous rallies of mass protest calling for the referendum to be annulled continue in several cities. So do the arrests of those protesting. This means that in post-referendum Turkey, it is not just Erdoğan and his supporters but the opposition as well who refuse to recognize their adversaries as legitimate.

Continue reading [here](#)

[Back to top](#)

Foucault, the Iranian Revolution, and the Politics of Collective Action

Navid Pourmokhtari

Jadaliyya, 21 April 2017

In *Foucault in Iran: Islamic Revolution after the Enlightenment* Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi presents a comprehensive overview of Michel Foucault's writings on the revolutionary wave that swept across Iran, culminating in February 1979 with the overthrow of the Pahlavi monarchy. According to Ghamari-Tabrizi, Foucault views the revolution "as a phenomenon of history and, at the same time, as a phenomenon that defies it" (2), meaning that it is to be understood as a moment of "historical singularity," owing to its religious impetus, and at the same time as an event "outside the purview of a Western teleological schema" (6). Thus, the revolution can only be "comprehended through an open defiance of a universal history" (7). *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Civil Marriage in Lebanon: The Political Developments

Stephanie Khouri

Al-Jumhuriya, 20 April 2017

In the midst of the Lebanese civil war, a Christian priest, the anecdote goes, reached out to the President urging him to pass a civil status code to remove the identity causing people to kill

each other. This tellingly locates the peculiar environment in which the idea of civil status laws evolves in Lebanon: an ancient discussion tinged with sectarianism that isolates Lebanon from a regional debate, more inclined to situate the issue pertaining to personal status laws within an egalitarian agenda, as tends to be the case in countries like Morocco where economic and social changes have encouraged the development of reforms prompted by feminist movements. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

The Paradoxical Role of Israeli Prisons in the Palestinian Resistance Movement

Oscar Jarzmik
Muftah, 20 April 2017

The Palestinian Committee for Prisoner's Affairs, the Palestinian Prisoner's Society, and the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics released a joint statement on Saturday, April 15, 2017, just two days ahead of Palestinian Prisoner's Day. According to the statement, Israeli authorities have detained approximately one million Palestinians since Israel's establishment in 1948. As reported by Addameer, a Jerusalem-based prisoner's support and human rights organization, roughly 6,300 Palestinian political prisoners are currently in Israeli prisons, including 500 being held in administrative detention (incarceration without charge or trial). Israel routinely uses this method of indefinite detention against Palestinians, particularly in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt), holding prisoners "for periods ranging from several months to several years." A January 2014 report from Addameer states that up to 40% of Palestinian males in the oPt have been arrested through Israeli military orders. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

International Community Urged to Stand With Palestinian Political Prisoners Hunger Striking in Israeli Jails

Hiba Zayadin
Muftah, 19 April 2017

In Israeli prisons today, over 6300 Palestinian political prisoners languish in horrible conditions. For the most part, they spend years, in near oblivion, enduring administrative detention, farce trials, solitary confinement, and torture. Often times, only their families – mothers, fathers, siblings, children – are aware of their glaring absence. According to Addameer, a Palestinian prisoners' rights group based in Ramallah, almost every Palestinian family has experienced losing a loved one to the Israeli prison system. Every year, on April 17, Palestinians in Israel, in the Palestinian territories, and in the diaspora attempt to remind the international community of the thousands of men, women, and children wasting away their lives in unjustified captivity. This year, on the 100th anniversary of

the Balfour declaration, a letter that made public British support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, and on the 50th anniversary of Israel's military occupation of the Palestinian territories, prisoners have taken matters into their own hands in a massive show of resistance and protest. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Rescuing the Revolution from Its Outcome

Anthony Alessandrini

Jadaliyya, 18 April 2017

Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi's *Foucault in Iran: Islamic Revolution after the Enlightenment* is an exemplary book in a number of ways, but perhaps first and foremost because of what the book does *not* do. While it represents the most extensive and sympathetic consideration in English of Michel Foucault's writings on the events leading up to and culminating in the Iranian Revolution, Ghamari-Tabrizi does not fall into the commonplace critical practice of arguing whether Foucault was "right" or "wrong" about the revolution and its aftermath. More admirably, *Foucault in Iran* is not satisfied with performing the subtler but still ultimately familiar work of simply asking what Foucault's writings on Iran can do for us in analyzing our contemporary context. Instead, the book performs Ghamari-Tabrizi's scrupulous allegiance to what he finds most valuable in Foucault's work: his insistence upon recognizing "the singularity of the revolution" and the concomitant need "to liberate it from the constraints of universalist narratives" (75). By doing so, he manages to contribute not only a new and significant understanding of Foucault's late work on ethics, but also an important re-historicizing of the Iranian Revolution for an audience that very likely needs this re-telling. It is on this notion of singularity as Ghamari-Tabrizi reads it out of Foucault's work, as well as out of the revolution itself, that I will thus focus on in my contribution to this roundtable.

Why We Are on Hunger Strike in Israel's Prisons

Marwan Barghouti

New York Times, 16 April 2017

Having spent the last 15 years in an Israeli prison, I have been both a witness to and a victim of Israel's illegal system of mass arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment of Palestinian prisoners. After exhausting all other options, I decided there was no choice but to resist these abuses by going on a hunger strike. Some 1,000 Palestinian prisoners have decided to take part in this hunger strike, which begins today, the day we observe here as Prisoners' Day. Hunger striking is the most peaceful form of resistance available. It inflicts pain solely on those who participate and on their loved ones, in the hopes that their empty stomachs and their sacrifice will help the message resonate beyond the confines of their dark cells. Decades of experience have proved that Israel's inhumane system of colonial and military occupation aims to break the spirit of prisoners and the nation to which they belong, by inflicting suffering on their bodies, separating them from their families and communities,

using humiliating measures to compel subjugation. In spite of such treatment, we will not surrender to it. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Jemna in Tunisia: an inspiring land struggle in North Africa

Hamza Hamouchene

Open Democracy, 13 April 2017

Over the past several years, the people of Jemna, a region in southern Tunisia famous for its excellent quality dates called Deglet Nour (the dates of light), have been engaged in an important and inspiring struggle around land rights. It took around a century for this oasis community to score a victory, albeit precarious for now, through occupying and working their long-confiscated land in an astonishing experience of self-management and voluntarism that emphasised the centrality of the peasant question and the right to land and other natural resources such as water in revolutionary times. Jemna is a challenge and a threat to the power of the neoliberal and counter-revolutionary elite and it represents resistance and an alternative to the kinds of neo-colonial, dispossessing and environmentally damaging forms of managing and exploiting the land. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

Creative Insurgency in the Arab World

Jadaliyya, 12 April 2017

In this interview for [الوضع](#), host Katty Alhayek speaks with Marwan Kraidy about his new book *The Naked Blogger of Cairo*, which tackles creative insurgency and the Arab uprisings. Marwan M. Kraidy is the Anthony Shadid Chair in Global Media, Politics and Culture, and Founding Director of the Project for Advanced Research in Global Communication (PARGC) at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, where he is also affiliated with the Middle East Center. An expert in global communication and a specialist in Arab media and politics, he also researches the relationship between culture and geopolitics, global media industries, theories of identity and modernity, and the political symbolism of the human body in the public sphere. Kraidy's work is distinctive for its deep reliance on primary materials, theoretical grounding in a multilingual literature, and a comparative approach across historical periods, geographical sites, cultural forms, and media platforms. Kraidy has published 10 books, penned 120 essays and chapters, won 50 awards for teaching and scholarship, delivered keynote addresses and named lectures worldwide, and advised universities, civil society organizations, foundations, and governments. *Listen [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

A new chapter for feminism in Jordan

Olivia Cuthbert

Open Democracy, 3 April 2017

Wajd Shamayleh's family won't discuss women's rights at the dinner table. Too often it ends in a quarrel. In the eyes of her family, women shouldn't talk about politics or religion. "They think a woman should study, have a degree and work but be limited in what she does or says," explains 27-year-old Shamayleh. Even as a child, growing up in a conservative community in Jordan, she found these restrictions difficult to digest. While her younger brothers spoke their minds freely, she was told to shush, "because as a girl you should be quiet." For Shamayleh, the expectation that she would slot into traditional roles felt unnatural. "I had something in me that kept asking why I should follow a certain path and not have my own dreams. Why, when I wanted to start work, did it have to be a job my father found for me? *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)

The Tribal Consensus Candidate: A Mini-Democracy or the Denial of Free Will?

Dana Gibreel

This article was published on 7iber.com in Arabic on August 23rd, 2016

All you need to be able to participate in the internal elections for selecting your tribe's consensus candidate is an ID card confirming that you're a male over 17 years old, and that your last name matches that of the tribe, which is gathered to elect its representative in the parliamentary elections. Not far from the Mafraq city center, in the town of Mansheyat Bani Hasan, about 2,000 male members of the Al-Shadaifat tribe gathered late last month to elect their candidate for the upcoming parliamentary elections. The process was guided by protocols and guidelines as determined by the tribe's Central Elections Committee. Some of its provisions were taken from the Independent Election Commission's (IEC) guidelines, others from one of the tribe's internal documents, and several from customs and norms not formally stipulated anywhere. *Continue reading [here](#)*

[Back to top](#)