



DEAKIN
UNIVERSITY

THE FUTURE OF THE MIDDLE EAST

**DEAKIN
UNIVERSITY
BURWOOD**
2-4 NOVEMBER 2016

**MIDDLE EAST
STUDIES FORUM**



ADI
ALFRED DEAKIN INSTITUTE FOR
CITIZENSHIP AND GLOBALISATION



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HOUSEKEEPING

The conference will be held on Level Two of Building BC on Deakin University's Burwood campus. The building is on the Burwood Highway side of the campus. See the map on page 33 for a map of Building BC, Level Two.

For those attending the conference dinner (registration essential), the event is also in Building BC, at The Point restaurant on Level One. The dinner begins at 6:30pm on Thursday November 3. The bar at The Point will be open from 5pm for those wishing to relax on campus before the dinner.

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Future of the Middle East conference, hosted by the Middle East Studies Forum at the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship & Globalisation, Deakin University, and sponsored by the US Consulate General Melbourne.

This December marks six years since the fatal self-immolation of the Tunisian fruitseller Mohammad Bouazizi, which set off a wave of events that fundamentally altered the Middle East. Since 2011, longstanding regimes have fallen in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen, conflict has broken out in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Egypt and Yemen, and long dormant communal divides have flared up across the Middle East. These events have highlighted the extent of the divide between states and societies, putting on display a profound deficit of legitimacy for ruling regimes, whatever their ideological colour. They have also highlighted the pervasive desire of populations to be heard and represented. Many observers have dubbed this a push for democracy; but the term has been problematic in the Middle East, conjuring images of US military intervention and concerns about cultural imperialism. Nonetheless, the desire for political accountability, fairness and transparency has been the defining feature of the popular uprising for change in the Arab world, echoing a similar push to that seen in the 2009 Green Movement in Iran. How best may this push for political reform be conceptualised? This question is urgent given its real world implications. Subsequent research and publications have the capacity to inform public debate and policy-makers. As scholars of the Middle East, we are not mere observers of events. We have the capacity and responsibility to contribute to knowledge outside the walls

of academia. How do we make sense of the contradiction, for example, between the desire for political accountability and openness, and the catastrophic descent of the region into sectarian conflict? What are the trajectories of political developments in the region? What does this mean for the future of the nation-state? Will the sectarian conflict continue to build? What future do democratic values have in the Middle East? To what extent is extremism setting the agenda, and where are the voices of resistance located?

This conference provides an important opportunity to benefit from the collective expertise to examine some of these key questions in relation to the future of the Middle East. The Middle East Studies Forum has sought to bring together the finest scholars from around Australia to discuss these very questions. We especially welcome our international and interstate guests, including Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen from the Baker Institute, Rice University. On behalf of the organising committee, I would like to thank all delegates for attending the conference. We hope that you will find the discussions over the coming days to be thought provoking.



*Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh
Chair, Organising Committee*

SCHEDULE

NOV 2: HDR WORKSHOPS

8:30 **REGISTRATION**

9:00 **OPENING REMARKS** | North 1

Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh, Deakin University

9:15 **HDR SESSION 1: FIELDWORK IN THE MIDDLE EAST** | North 1

Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, Baker Institute, Rice University

10:00 **MORNING TEA**

10:30 **HDR SESSION 2: TURNING YOUR THESIS INTO A BOOK** | North 1

Vishal Daryanomel, Associate Editor, Political Sciences and Business/Economics, Palgrave Macmillan (Springer Nature)

11:15 **HDR SESSION 3: MIDDLE EAST CAREERS IN DFAT** | North 1

Daniel Fisher, Middle East Branch, DFAT

Patrick Lawson, Staffing Branch, DFAT

12:15 **HDR SESSION 4: CONCEPTUALISING RESEARCH IN THE MIDDLE EAST** | North 1

Professor Larbi Sadiki, Qatar University

1:00 **LUNCH**

2:00 **HDR SESSION 5: GRANTS WRITING** | North 1

Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh, Deakin University

2:30 **HDR PRESENTATIONS** | North 1

Chair: **Dr James Barry** (Deakin University)

James Morris, University of Queensland

Child soldiers in the Israel/Palestine conflict and under the Islamic State group

Firas Naji, University of Sydney

Iraq from the Sykes-Picot Agreement to ISIS: A critical perspective on Iraqi national identity

Abdulrazig Osman, Deakin University

What future do democratic values have in the Middle East?

4:00 **AFTERNOON TEA**

NOV 3: CONFERENCE DAY 1

8:30 **REGISTRATION**

9:00 **OPENING REMARKS** | North 1

Professor Fethi Mansouri, Director of the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation

9:15 **OFFICIAL CONFERENCE OPENING** | North 1

Sue Ismiel, Chair, Council for Australian-Arab Relations

9:30 **OPENING PLENARY - THE POLITICS OF ECONOMIC REFORM IN SAUDI ARABIA AND THE ARAB GULF - CAN THE 'VISIONS' BECOME REALITY?** | North 1

Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, Baker Institute, Rice University

10:30 **MORNING TEA**

Sponsored by the Australian Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies (AAIMS)

11:00 **PLENARY 1: THE FUTURE OF THE MIDDLE EAST** | North 1

Chair: **Professor Greg Barton** (Deakin University)

Anthony Bubalo, Lowy Institute

Looking for green shoots in the Middle East

Professor Ihsan Yilmaz, Deakin University

Middle-Easternisation of Turkish political culture in 2010s and the future of Islam, secularism and democracy in the Middle East

12:30 **LUNCH**

1:15 **PARALLEL SESSIONS 1 & 2**

PANEL 1: CONFLICT AND CHANGE IN SYRIA | North 4

Chair: **Dr Ali Mozaffari**, Deakin University

Harout Akdedian, University of New England

The New Social Order in Syria: Perceptions of radicalisation and local narratives of ethno-religious relations

Marisa Della Gatta, Macquarie University

From Civic Religion to Islamic State: Assessing secularism in Syria

Marika Sosnowski, University of Melbourne

Rebel governance and ceasefires in the context of the Syrian civil war

Nikola Pijovic, Australian National University

Collapsing States Enduring Statehood: Islamic insurgencies and the rejection of the nation-state

PANEL 2: DEMOCRATIC LEARNING, AUTHORITARIAN RESILIENCE AND REIMAGINING THE MUSLIM WORLD | North 1

Chair: Dr Naser Ghobadzadeh, ACU

Dr Naser Ghobadzadeh, Australian Catholic University

Revisiting the Inclusion-Moderation hypothesis: Iran's electoral theocracy

Professor Larbi Sadiki, Qatar University

Islamist democratic learning curves: Tunisia's Nahda

Paul Esber, University of Sydney

Where to now for Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood: A new reality?

Mahmoud Pargoo, Australian Catholic University

Moral equality of humans: Contemporary democratisation of Shi'ite jurisprudence

3:15

AFTERNOON TEA

3:30

PARALLEL SESSIONS 3 & 4

PANEL 3: INSIDE IRAN | North 1

Chair: Dr Rebecca Barlow, Deakin University

Dr James Barry, Deakin University

Sectarianism or sectarianisation? Iranian views on the Sunni-Shi'a divide

Dr Tristan Dunning, University of Queensland

The 'other' Iran: cosmopolitan lifestyles in the Islamic Republic

Sedigheh Karimi, University of Melbourne

Rouhani's equity government: A new period of reform in Iran?

PANEL 4: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST | North 4

Chair: Dr Zahid Ahmed, Deakin University

Hanlie Booysen, Victoria University of Wellington

Moderation in Exclusion: The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood

Damian Doyle, Australian National University

Social Movement Theory and the Sadrist movement in Iraq

Martin Kear, University of Sydney

Fighting to stay in politics - Hamas and its Dual Resistance Strategy

5:00

CONFERENCE CLOSES FOR THE DAY

For those who have registered to attend the conference dinner and remaining on campus, the bar in Mrs Robinson/The Point on Level 1 of Building BC will be open

6:30

CONFERENCE DINNER (REGISTRATION ESSENTIAL)

The Point Restaurant, Level One Building BC

NOV 4: CONFERENCE DAY 2

9:00

PLENARY 2: THE BROADER IMPACTS OF THE SYRIAN CRISIS | North 1

Chair: Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh, Deakin University

Dr. Benjamin Macqueen, Monash University

The impacts of the Syrian refugee crisis

Associate Professor Benjamin Isakhan, Deakin University

The politics of heritage destruction under the Islamic State

10:30

MORNING TEA

10:45

PARALLEL SESSIONS 5 & 6

PANEL 5: THE ARAB SPRING AND RECONCEIVING THE ARAB STATE | North 4

Chair: William Gourlay, Monash University

Dr Nesrine Basheer, University of Sydney

"My people and Tribe": An analysis of Mohamed Morsi's political discourse

Gijs Verbossen, La Trobe University

The systemic disintegration of Mubarak's neo-liberal authoritarianism

Alasdair Hynd, University of South Australia

Reassessing territory, sovereignty, and borders: Democratic confederalism challenging the Turkish and Syrian nation-states

PANEL 6: WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE EAST | North 1

Chair: Janice Webster, Deakin University

Dr Seham Shwayli, Monash University

Reconstructing gender ideologies: The uncertain future of Iraqi women from dictatorship to ISIL

Shima Shahbazi, University of Sydney

Decolonising the feminist narratives of victimhood in transnational autobiographical micronarratives of history

Dr Rebecca Barlow, Deakin University

Where is the Iranian women's movement heading?

Dr Lucia Sorbera, University of Sydney

Gender: a useful category to analyse the counter-revolution in Egypt?

12:45

LUNCH

1:30

PLENARY 3: STATE AND REGIONAL SECURITY | North 1

Chair: Associate Professor Ben Isakhan, Deakin University

Dr Sarah Phillips, University of Sydney

Violent extremism and the state from a Yemeni perspective

Professor Joseph Camilleri, La Trobe University

The Saudi Arabia-Iran Divide: An unholy trinity of politics, religion and security

3:00

AFTERNOON TEA

3:15

PARALLEL SESSIONS 7 & 8

PANEL 7: THE KURDISH QUESTION | North 1

Chair: Dr James Barry, Deakin University

William Gourlay, Monash University

Whither the Kurds? Independence, autonomy or oppression in the Middle East

Dr Costas Laoutides, Deakin University

Feet of Clay: The Kurdish Factor as a security response to the Islamic State

Associate Professor Hussein Tahiri, Victoria University

Formation of a Greater Kurdistan: Internal Impediments and External Challenges

PANEL 8: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE ON THE ARABIAN PENINSULA | North 4

Chair: Dr David Tittensor, Deakin University

Maria Syed, Australian National University

Impending decline? A reassessment of Saudi power

Warick Smith, University of Western Australia

Voices of young Yemeni women after the mirage of the Arab Spring

Kylie Moore-Gilbert, University of Melbourne

Where to for Bahrain's divided opposition?

4:45

CLOSING PANEL: THE FUTURE OF THE MIDDLE EAST | North 1

Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh, Deakin University

Associate Professor Ben Isakhan, Deakin University

Dr Sarah Phillips, University of Sydney

5:30

CLOSE OF CONFERENCE

PANEL

DEMOCRATIC LEARNING, AUTHORITARIAN RESILIENCE AND REIMAGINING THE MUSLIM WORLD

CONVENERS: ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR LILY RAHIM (UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY) AND DR NASER GHOBADZADEH (ACU)

Public discussion and academic debate on the efficacy of Islamic discourses in shedding light on the complex political crises in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have gathered considerable momentum. Adopting a somewhat unfashionable approach, this panel explores recent developments within Islamic reformation discourses and assesses their analytical insights on the prospects for democratisation in the Muslim world. The papers in this panel focus on conceptual and theoretical articulations pertaining to the re-imagining of an inclusive Muslim democratic polity. The papers will also examine the methods employed by Islamic movements and parties geared towards navigating and negotiating secular democratic principles and processes towards these ends. The panel contributors will a) analyse the key factors and forces that have contributed to the resilience of authoritarian regimes and b) explore the chequered shifts towards democratic governance in the Muslim world, characterised by continuity within change, incremental reform, backsliding and protracted resistance.

Dr Naser Ghobadzadeh

Revisiting the Inclusion-Moderation hypothesis: Iran's electoral theocracy

The ruling clergy of the Islamic Republic of Iran have confined Iran's electoral politics to limited competition, some policy change, and partial shifts in power among internal political factions. In this way, the ruling clergy have reaped the benefits of electoral politics while avoiding its potential democratic ramifications. This strategy has enhanced the clergy's legitimacy in both the domestic and international arenas, offered incentives to elites, developed mechanisms to manage intra-elite competition, and quelled waves of political dissatisfaction. These gains have helped the ruling clergy not only to retain their political power, but also to resist any pressure from reformist Islamists to moderate the dominant politico-religious discourse. As a test case for the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, the engagement of Iran's ruling clergy in electoral politics has proven counter-productive. Rather than facilitating a process of moderation, electoral politics have strengthened the ruling clergy's determination to reify their anti-democratic polity. Instead, the inclusion-moderation hypothesis may prove helpful for explaining the evolutionary trajectory of another group of reformist Islamists. While reformist Islamists currently wield little influence over the country's political system, their ideological and behavioural moderation may have a formidable impact on the future course of Islamism in Iran.

Biography

Researching at the intersection of religion and politics, Naser's interests lie in the study of Islamic political theology, secularism, state-religion-society relations, and Middle East and Iranian politics. By mapping competing discourses and practices in the Muslim world, his current research project involves conceptualising the possibility not only of the co-existence of religion and secularity but also the need to recognise the religious roots of an emerging model of secularity in the Muslim world. Conceptualising the notion of electoral theocracy, Naser is also working on authoritarian resilience in Iran.

Professor Larbi Sadiki

Islamist democratic learning curves: Tunisia's Nahda

Addressing a subject as yet unexamined in North Africa, and drawing on personal conversations with Islamists from Tunisia's Nahda Party (NP), this paper provides insights into the factors that both encourage and impede democratic learning. The presentation draws on focus group and interview data gathered since the 2011 revolution, and my analysis combines this set of data with a reading of NP written/formal discourse, in particular speeches and policy papers. Central to unlocking the 'story' of democratic learning curves is firstly an attempt to map out the route followed by Islamists as they re-engage politics through civic and legal means whilst surrounded

by violent atmospherics both within Tunisia and in neighbouring countries. Second, in providing an account of Tunisia's Islamists' unfurling story about democratic learning curves, the presentation also probes the vital role played by Islamists in democratisation processes. Finally, this paper concludes with some of the broader lessons about how Islamists continuously adjust in order to carve out a margin of existence in polity, more or less seeking solutions in secular mechanisms and a civic modus operandi rather than through 'Islam is the solution' per se.

Biography

Professor Larbi Sadiki received his academic training at Sydney University and at the Australian National University where his PhD research focused on Islamist movements' notions of democracy. The resulting doctoral thesis and longitudinal research are to be published in a 2017 book on Islamist conceptions of democracy with special reference to Islamists in Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan. Professor Sadiki has had current and past scholarly association with various think-tanks including Carnegie and the Middle East Institute amongst others. He is Professor of Arab Democratisation at Qatar University.

Paul Esber

Where to now for Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood: A new reality?

In the wake of the 2011/2012 uprisings, Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood has witnessed a series of internal divisions that have resulted in the physical splintering of the once unified movement into a number of separate organisations. Each of these new organisations participated in the 20 September 2013 general elections, seeming to confirm a growing institutionalisation of difference. Is this and further fragmentation a new reality for the Muslim Brotherhood?

In this paper this question is examined in light of the movement's division and subsequent weakening as a leading force in the Jordanian opposition in the wake of the so-called Arab Spring. First we outline the history of the Brotherhood since its 2012 decision to boycott the 2013 elections, outlining how this decision proved a catalyst to the acceleration of internal debates that evolved into separatist organisations. Second, we examine the results of the September 20 poll, considering the success or failure of these now competing collectives to acquire votes, parliamentary seats and political capital. On the basis of this we then return to the question of whether the Muslim Brotherhood specifically and the Islamist movement more generally has entered a new reality.

Biography

Paul Esber is a researcher and PhD candidate in the Department of Arabic Language and Cultures at the University of Sydney. His research, focused on the

Eastern half of the Arab World (al-Mashreq), examines in a constructivist manner the interplay between state institutions and social movements in the social construction of identities, the evolution of political systems, and the intersection between local, national, regional and international/transnational scales in political behaviour. Currently based in Amman, Paul is a Visiting Researcher at the Identity Centre for Human Development, where his analysis is focused on parliamentary blocs, the 2016 Electoral Law and political party engagement in Jordanian civil society.

Mahmoud Pargoo

Moral equality of humans: Contemporary democratisation of Shi'ite jurisprudence

Equality has been considered one of the main principles of the democratic principles since the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. This moral conviction is asserted in almost all democratic legal systems in the form of the principle of equality of all individuals before the law. The notions of the universal moral equality of all individuals, however, contradicts pre-modern conceptions of the natural hierarchy of humans which persist in the form of certain religious dogmas. For example, in many classical formulations of Sharia, believers and non-believers have different legal and moral statuses. The question then arises as to how democracy, which presupposes moral equality of all individuals, can thrive in societies in which Sharia significantly influences the moral convictions of people?

This paper emphasises the political import of individual moral aspects of Sharia by focusing on the issue of ritual impurity in the Shi'ite jurisprudence, one of the Shi'ite legal precepts which categorically contradicts the idea of moral equality of humankind. While the interpretation that non-believers are substantively impure, an increasing number of contemporary jurists trying to pave the way for a more egalitarian understanding of Sharia have started to revise this ruling. This paper will investigate how traditional frameworks of Shi'ite jurisprudence are being utilised to facilitate a more democratic understanding of Sharia.

Biography

Mahmoud Pargoo has studied imāmi law and Islamic philosophy and kalām at Imam Sadiq University, Tehran. He holds an MA from Tarbiat Modares University in philosophical logic focusing on Quine's philosophy and is currently a PhD researcher at the Institute for Social Justice, Australian Catholic University. Mahmoud has published several books, papers, and articles in Farsi and English, and his current research focusses on mechanisms of change in the imāmi jurisprudence with special emphasis on the impurity strictures. Mahmoud's articles about current affairs in the Middle East are published in the Washington-based Al-Monitor website.

ABSTRACTS AND BIOS

Harout Akdedian

The new social order in Syria: Perceptions of radicalisation and local narratives of ethno-religious relations

By the end of 2013, the Syrian uprising had devolved into a widespread civil war between different armed groups including radicalised Islamic organisations that have emerged as the most potent and effective armed factions challenging the regime. In this process of conflict escalation, contradictory reports emerged in academia and media alike about the sectarian nature of the war.

This paper explores how Syrians perceive, experience and reconstruct religious-based differences in the face of radicalised Islamic groups. Based on three field trips to Syria and Lebanon in 2011, 2013 and 2014, the paper presents interviews from a cross-section of Syrian ethno-religious groups that illustrate perceptions of radicalisation and sectarianism. These interviews provide an evidential base for understanding the social impact of radicalised Islamic groups, local perceptions of ethno-religious relations, and the emerging social order.

Biography

Harout Akdedian is currently undertaking his doctoral research on radicalisation in Syria at the University of New England and conducting fieldwork with displaced Syrians in Lebanon. He has a BA in Political Science and a Masters in International Law and Settlement of Disputes. He was a research fellow at the Human Rights Center in Costa Rica, and worked as a freelance journalist in Syria and Lebanon. He has published and taught in Islamic Studies, Middle East Politics, Peace and Conflict studies and International Law.

Dr Rebecca Barlow

Where is the Iranian women's movement heading?

Ten years ago, in August 2006, the Iranian women's movement launched the One Million Signatures Campaign calling on the government to align national laws with its international treaty obligations on women's human rights. The Campaign caught the attention of international headlines due to its ambitious goal and forthright use of human rights discourse. At the same time, *ijtihad* – dynamic innovation of Islam's holy sources – was central to the methodology of the Campaign. This paper provides a retrospective analysis of the Campaign's goals and strategies, the constraints it faced, where it succeeded, where it failed, and why. Although the Campaign experienced some success at grassroots awareness-raising, it failed to mount an effective effort at upwards advocacy to impact legislative change for women's rights. This failure was, in part, the result of extreme external pressure from state forces that inhibited Campaign activities. The experience of the Campaign brings under scrutiny the efficacy of lobbying upwards for change in the existing power structure of the Islamic Republic, even if those efforts are framed within the confines of political Islam. With this in mind, this paper will consider the question of where the women's movement might be heading in terms of strategy and approach as it progresses past the One Million Signatures Campaign towards the overarching goal of achieving gender equality in Iran.

Biography

Dr Rebecca Barlow is a Senior Research Fellow at the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation. She works on the politics of women's human rights, specialising in Iran and the Iranian women's movement. Rebecca has worked as a Consultant on culturally sensitive approaches to population and development for the Gender, Human Rights, and Culture Branch of the United Nations Population Fund. In 2007 she was one of only four early career researchers selected to attend the inaugural conference of the Nobel Women's Initiative Women Redefining Peace in the Middle East and Beyond. Her work has been published in a range of academic journals.

Dr James Barry

Sectarianism or sectarianisation? Iranian views on the Sunni-Shi'a divide

In recent years, the escalation of conflicts in the Middle East has been increasingly blamed on a Sunni-Shi'a divide manifested through Saudi-Iranian proxy wars. However, a quick glance at the literature, both academic and general, demonstrates that the sectarianism issue is only about a decade old. This finding indicates that media and political discourses, at times appropriated and framed by academics, have contributed to the idea that sectarian tensions, long dormant, have re-emerged to launch a war. I argue that this discourse has fuelled what is essentially a 21st century phenomenon, the sectarianisation of conflict as opposed to sectarian conflicts.

This paper is based upon interviews with Iranian academics and officials performed in Iran during 2014 and 2015. In this paper, I argue that the consistent rejection of the term 'sectarianism' by Middle East based scholars in describing current conflicts should not be ignored, and that a conceptualisation of sectarianism is sorely lacking. Understanding Middle Eastern perspectives on sectarianism will prove more useful to academics and policy makers than binaries of Sunni versus Shi'a and conflict genealogies that analyse 21st century conflicts through 7th century historiographies.

Biography

Dr James Barry is an Associate Research Fellow at the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation at Deakin University. He was awarded a PhD (anthropology) from Monash University in 2013 for his dissertation on cross-generation identity among the religious minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran. He is currently involved in research on the role of Islam in Iranian foreign policy making, alongside a project on decision-making among Iranian and Afghan migrants in Indonesia.

Dr Nesrine Basheer

'My people and tribe': An analysis of Mohamed Morsi's political discourse

In Egyptian republican tradition, the key turning points have been marked by presidents' speeches to the people. In this presentation, I report the results of a sociolinguistic analysis of a 112-minute key speech by former Egyptian president Mohammed Morsi. I use principles of Critical Discourse Analysis and Bauman's theory of verbal art as performance to investigate Morsi's code-switching between Modern Standard Arabic and ECA. Supported by examples from the data, I argue that dominant linguistic features of the speech are tied to the political context of post-revolution Egypt. The speech coincides with the end of Morsi's first hundred days in office, when he and the Freedom and Justice Party had been harshly criticised for mismanaging the transitional stage. When addressing points of criticism, Morsi performs three major roles: 1) the Head of the Household 2) the Ruler-Citizen and 3) the Imam. I suggest that within these roles, Morsi's lexicon combined with instances of code-switching appeal to the traditional, religious members of the Egyptian population, a significant suggestion in light of his vow to be 'a president to all Egyptians'. The analysis showed that the sole reliance on English translations when examining diglossic Arabic political speeches potentially causes significant cultural, sociolinguistic and political dimensions to be overlooked.

Biography

Nesrine Basheer is a Scholarly Teaching Fellow at the Department of Arabic Language and Cultures at the University of Sydney. She earned her MA in Applied Linguistics from Teachers College, Columbia University, and her PhD in Arabic Linguistics from the University of Texas at Austin. Nesrine is a trained linguist and pedagogy specialist. Her main research areas are discourse analysis, especially of political speeches and the language of radicalisation, and Arabic as a foreign language pedagogy and curriculum design.

Hanlie Booysen

Moderation in Exclusion: The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood

My paper asks why the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (SMB) has remained committed to a civil, democratic state, notwithstanding the radicalisation of the Syrian conflict. I will show that the SMB's exclusion from institutional politics was the primary driver of the movement's policy and actions after 1982. The SMB first pursued reconciliation with the Syrian government, but then later repositioned itself politically to cooperate with the secularist opposition. This change in strategy was accompanied by ideological modifications, as reflected in the SMB's 2004 Political Project for the Future Syria, and confirmed in its 2012 Pledge and Charter. However, the character of the Syrian uprising changed after the publication of the Pledge and Charter in March 2012. I show that the SMB has remained committed to a civil, democratic state, because its target audience has remained the same, notwithstanding the radicalisation of the conflict. This commitment is further reinforced by the notion that moderation is the only option for the Brotherhood to return to the Syrian political arena. The empirical data for this paper was collected through interviews with executive members of the SMB in January and June 2015.

Biography

Hanlie Booysen has an MA in International Relations and Middle Eastern Studies from the Universities of Johannesburg and Durham respectively. She lived and worked in the Levant for twelve years as a South African diplomat including in Jordan (1993-1997), Palestine (2000-2004), and Syria (2009-2012). Hanlie is currently a PhD candidate at Victoria University, Wellington. Her research is on the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, with a specific focus on the Brotherhood's commitment to a civil, democratic state in the wake of the Syrian uprising.

Anthony Bubalo

Looking for green shoots in the Middle East

There has been a tendency amongst policymakers and casual observers of the Middle East to misdiagnose the causes of the region's current disorder. Typically the focus has been on the rise of movements, whether democratic, Islamist or jihadist, that have challenged the status quo. But the current turmoil is less about the strength of these movements and more about the weakness of the modern Arab state. This presentation will argue that more turmoil can be expected because the fracturing and in some cases total collapse of Arab states is likely to continue. Against this background the right policy for Western countries is neither to withdraw from the region nor to pursue grandiose schemes for regional transformation. The West needs to identify indigenous, 'green shoots' of positive change in the region, and work with local actors to create more stable and durable political and economic orders over the long term.

Biography

Anthony Bubalo is the Deputy Director and Research Director at the Lowy Institute for International Policy. He manages the Institute's research output, including the commissioning and editorial processes. In his time at the Institute he has produced research on Middle East - Asia linkages, Islamism, democratisation and terrorism. Before joining the Lowy Institute Anthony was an officer of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He served in Australian diplomatic missions in Saudi Arabia and Israel and was Middle East Analyst with the Office of National Assessments from 1996 to 1998.

Professor Joseph A. Camilleri

The Saudi Arabia-Iran divide: An unholy trinity of politics, religion and security

Much has been written about the so-called rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Some have explained it by placing the spotlight on geopolitical power play between two actual or aspiring regional centres of power. Others have focused on the dynamics of regime survival or the Sunni-Shia conflict. No doubt all three factors play a part but they do not, either singly or collectively, offer an adequate explanation of the nature of the rivalry, let alone of its causes or consequences.

This paper seeks to remedy this gap first by directing attention to the two entities themselves. Who or what are the key protagonists in this contest? Is it the current political class in each country? Or is it two societies situated in their respective political histories, with their distinct cultures, and opposing religious and political traditions? Are we right to confine our attention to the forces at work within the boundaries of these two states? Or, as the paper will argue, should we also consider the unstable regional environment, including the presence and policies of the United States, and more recently Russia's re-emergence in the region? In reality there is no option but to place the Saudi-Iranian relationship within a conceptual framework that takes account of three salient factors: domestic and external influences; the erroneous characterisation of the Saudi-Iranian relationship as symmetrical; and the state of flux that currently pervades the entire Middle East, and the elusive yet critically important relationship between Orient and Occident.

Biography

Professor Joseph Anthony Camilleri OAM is Emeritus Professor at La Trobe University, where he held the Chair in International Relations. He was founding Director of the Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University (2006-2012). Joseph Camilleri is also Managing Director of Alexandria Agenda, a new venture in ethical consulting offering services in the areas of sustainability, diversity and education. He has written some 20 major books. Professor Camilleri is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Social Sciences.

Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen

The politics of economic reform in Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf: Can the 'Visions' become reality?

This keynote puts the attempts by Arab Gulf States and Iran to launch large-scale development programs into historical and comparative context. Strategic 'visions' have been a hallmark of regional policymaking for more than two decades but persistent difficulties in implementation have meant that the plans have fallen far short of intended outcomes. By focusing on the practical and political challenges of technocratic and economic reforms, using specific examples to illustrate broader thematic points, this address analyses what the current generation of officials need to do differently in order to secure more favourable and sustainable results. Although the prolonged fall in oil prices has opened a 'window of opportunity' to introduce politically and economically sensitive reforms, the urgency of the fiscal pressures on budgets on both sides of the Gulf means there is little margin for error, and it is vital that decision-makers absorb the lessons from the flawed earlier attempts at reform that did not adequately link their economic and political dimensions. The urgency of the fiscal pressures that face Middle Eastern oil producing states means that policymakers no longer have the luxury of the slow pace of incremental change that has characterized previous episodes of reform in GCC states.

Biography

Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen is the Fellow for the Middle East at the Baker Institute for Public Policy at Rice University in Houston and an Associate Fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs – Chatham House in London. His research spans the history, politics, international relations, and international political economy of Arab Gulf States and their changing position within the global order. Coates Ulrichsen is the author of five books, including *Insecure Gulf: The End of Certainty and the Transition to the Post-Oil Era* (2011), *Qatar and the Arab Spring* (2014), two books on the First World War in the Middle East, and, most recently, *The Gulf States in International Political Economy* (2015). His forthcoming book, *The United Arab Emirates: Power, Politics and Policymaking*, will be published by Routledge in January 2017.

Marisa Della Gatta

From civic religion to Islamic State: Assessing secularism in Syria

In one of his recent declarations, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad asserted himself to be ‘the last fortress of secularism.’ The secular card has become central in the contraposition of the regime and some rebel groups wishing to implement an Islamic state in Syria. This paper assesses al-Assad’s secular formula: is secularism actually on the regime’s agenda or is it a mere political tag used by the regime to broaden its support and legitimation?

I argue that secularism is not a superficial label, but rather constitutes a substantial part of al-Assad’s political agenda. I show that his secular formula, ascribable as ‘civic religion,’ is nonetheless highly problematic. In fact, it leads to a forced separation between state and civil society. Because of this, instead of providing the regime with a source of political legitimacy, secularism becomes a reason for discontent. In order to evaluate these claims, I take into account al-Assad’s secular formula, closely related to the minority-majority issue. The analysis of groups currently divided in their support for the regime confirms the non-uniformity of the secular program. Ultimately, al-Assad’s secular program strengthens proposals for an Islamic state in Syria.

Biography

Marisa Della Gatta has a BA (Honours) Cultural and Media Studies and MA Research in International Cooperation from the University of Bari, Italy and is currently a PhD candidate at Macquarie University in the Department of Modern History, Politics and International Relations. Her research focuses on identity and ethnic politics in Syria and the Syrian diaspora.

Damian Doyle

Social Movement Theory and the Sadrist line in Iraq

Since 2003, international observers have been fascinated by the figure of Muqtada al-Sadr, his apparent volatility and militancy, and his ability to mobilise Iraqis in the hundreds of thousands. As a result of his strident opposition to US occupation, analysts in the US and elsewhere in the global north fixated on the personality and politics of al-Sadr and the activities of the Sadrist line’s armed wing. Only a handful of studies have examined al-Sadr’s close associates, and very few have considered the views of Iraqis who identify with the Sadrist line or its figurehead. This approach has proven inadequate for understanding a complex and increasingly influential social and political movement.

My research aims to address these shortcomings by providing a view of the Sadrist Movement from within and below. Its first phase draws on social movement theory to analyse the Sadrist line’s framing and discourse. Informed by findings from fieldwork planned for next year, its next phase will aim to reveal and examine the motivations and worldview of Iraqis who identify with the Sadrist line. This paper outlines preliminary findings to demonstrate how the Sadrist line can be better understood using the tools of social movement theory.

Biography

Damian Doyle is a PhD scholar at the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies at the Australian National University. His research is focused on the Sadrist Movement in Iraq.

Dr Tristan Dunning

The 'other' Iran: Cosmopolitan lifestyles in the Islamic Republic

The Islamic Republic of Iran has been a principal *bête noire* of the West, and especially the United States, since its establishment following the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Widely disseminated Orientalist tropes depict the Iranian government as an absolutist regime ruled by Islamic fiat and, in particular, by the dictates and fatwas of the Supreme Leader: first the leader of the revolution Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and since his death, Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Not only is this depiction misleading, however, insofar as it belies the tumultuous, fragmented and democratic aspects of the Islamic Republic, but it also strips many everyday Iranians, who vehemently disagree with the state's official ideological strictures, of their identity, agency and self-determination.

However, behind the scenes there is a vibrant counter-culture, comprising a cosmopolitan, educated, and indeed atheist, strand of Iranian society. These Iranians live their lives as they see fit and continue to defy the ostensible societal strictures laid down by the Islamic Republic's particular interpretation of Islamic law (albeit according to the government's unstated proviso that such activities be kept behind closed doors). This paper investigates this 'other' Iran, documenting their dreams, frustrations and aspirations for the future. The bulk of the data discussed in this paper's revelations stem from two excursions to Iran in 2014 and 2016.

Biography

Dr Tristan Dunning is an adjunct research fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry at the University of Queensland in Australia. He is the author of *Hamas, Jihad and Popular Legitimacy: Reinterpreting Resistance in Palestine*, published as part of Routledge's Critical Terrorism Studies Series in 2016.

Paul Esber

Where to now for Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood: A new reality?

See pages 10-11 for panel details

Dr Naser Ghobadzadeh

**Revisiting the Inclusion-Moderation
hypothesis: Iran's electoral theocracy**

See pages 10-11 for panel details

William Gourlay

**Whither the Kurds? Independence, autonomy
or oppression in the Middle East**

In a Middle East currently in turmoil, Kurdish communities have seen their fortunes rise and fall in different theatres. Amid the trauma of the Syrian civil war and the fight against ISIS, the Kurds have attracted international attention as never before and have won plaudits from many as reliable allies to the West. This paper will examine the political and strategic situations of the Kurds, as ethnic communities and as political actors, in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. Long looked upon as marginalised minorities in each of these four countries, Kurdish groups have in recent years come to be seen as important participants in the region's politics, yet their circumstances as sub-state actors leaves them vulnerable. In Turkey, long regarded as the most democratic of the countries in which Kurds live, the Kurdish political movement has recently endured several critical setbacks. In northern Iraq, the Barzani Kurdish regime appears to be moving tentatively towards independence amid significant political challenges. The Kurds of Iran are increasingly restive, while the Kurdish-dominated PYD in Syria has made significant strategic and territorial gains. This paper will examine the opportunities that are available to the Kurds in each state while also highlighting the perils that loom in a strategic theatre where regional powers are suspicious of Kurdish intentions and reluctant to permit them further gains.

Biography

William Gourlay is a PhD candidate in the School of Social Sciences at Monash University and a researcher in the Middle East Studies Forum at Deakin University. His doctoral research focuses on conceptualisations of ethnic identity and citizenship amongst the Kurds of modern Turkey. In 2014 and 2015 he was a visiting scholar at the Centre for Modern Turkish Studies, İstanbul Şehir University, Turkey. He has published chapters on Turkish, Iranian and Kurdish politics in several academic volumes as well as a writing for a range of publications including *The Age*, *openDemocracy*, *The Conversation* and *Eureka Street*.

Alasdair Hynd

Reassessing territory, sovereignty and borders: Democratic confederalism challenging the Turkish and Syrian nation-states

The ideology of Democratic Confederalism advocated by the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) in Turkey and the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Rojava, which prioritises municipal autonomy and local decision-making within a wider libertarian socialist political programme, poses an existential threat to the concept of the nation-state. The ability of the Turkish and Syrian nation-states to control their Kurdish-majority regions has been drastically undermined by local and regional developments, and has seen the reassertion of Kurdish sovereignty over impressive areas of nominally Syrian and Turkish territory. During the latter-half of 2015, as peace negotiations between the Turkish government and the PKK broke down, dozens of Kurdish-majority cities and towns in the south-east declared 'autonomy', whilst in Syria, the PYD has fought for four years against Islamic State, Syrian government forces, and other opposition forces in defending their control over the territory of Rojava. This paper argues that the nation-state ideal of sovereignty, namely the monopolisation of violence within established national borders, is increasingly redundant in understanding the situation of the Kurds in Turkey and Syria. Instead, Democratic Confederalism will be examined as an alternative, liberatory project for the Middle East that entirely abandons the idea of the nation-state.

Biography

Alasdair Hynd is a PhD student at the University of South Australia in the School of Communication, International Studies and Languages. His PhD thesis examines the sociological concepts of revolution and a rethinking of revolution in the wake of the 'Arab Spring' uprisings, with a specific focus on Egypt. His wider research interests include anti-capitalist and anarchistic social movements, anarchist and Marxist theory, prefigurative politics, the political and social theory of Murray Bookchin and Abdullah Öcalan, the use of technology in revolutionary activity, critical discourse analysis, and state and non-state terrorism.

Associate Professor Benjamin Isakhan

The politics of heritage destruction under the Islamic State

In February 2015, the world was shocked by a slick propaganda film in which members of ISIS destroyed Iraqi artefacts in the Mosul Museum. Such events are indicative of a broader phenomenon in which groups like ISIS target important heritage sites. In Syria and Iraq, ISIS has been responsible for the mass looting of ancient archaeological sites, and the destruction of ancient buildings, statues and religious sites that do not conform to their strict vision. These acts have been framed as barbaric acts of wanton destruction. The global community has struggled to craft suitable policy responses.

This paper argues that ISIS's heritage destruction are not random moments of barbarity, but are motivated by a carefully crafted political ideology. It documents some of the most extreme instances of heritage destruction and seeks to articulate a framework for interpreting the phenomenon. The paper argues that ISIS's attacks on heritage sites are underpinned by a three-pronged ideology: A broader campaign of cultural genocide in which non-Muslim minorities such as Yazidis and Christians and their heritage sites are to be removed; Ethno-religious sectarian lines, in which Shia heritage sites are deliberately attacked as proxies for the fight against the Syrian Shia-Alawite government, the Shia dominated Iraqi government and Iran its non-state allies; the iconoclasm of religious fundamentalism in which any pre-Islamic polytheism or post-Islamic religious 'innovation' is deemed heretical according to the strictest interpretations of Islam.

Biography

Benjamin Isakhan is Associate Professor of Politics and Policy Studies and member of the Alfred Deakin Research Institute for Citizenship and Globalization at Deakin University, Australia. He is also Adjunct Senior Research Associate, Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. He is the author of *Democracy in Iraq: History, Politics, Discourse* (Routledge, 2016 [2012]) and the editor of 6 books. Ben's current research includes a 3-year funded project entitled 'Measuring Heritage Destruction in Iraq and Syria'.

Sedigheh Karimi

Rouhani's equity government: A new period of reform in Iran?

This paper addresses the question of whether Iran entered a new period of progressive reform with the instatement of the Rouhani Government, particularly in the context of the women's movement.

It first considers auxiliary matter of the meaning of reformation, how Iran's leaders interpret 'reformation' as a theoretical concept and what their goals are in doing so, as well as the approaches of reformists to socio-political issues.

My paper then analyses the views of decision-makers and policy-makers during three periods: (the reform period (1997 – 2004), the post-reform period (2005 – 2013) and the equity government (2013 – present)) and examines their similarities and differences moving beyond a broadly relevant and general discussion of reform in Iran. I turn to the question of when the women's movement was initiated and when during its subsequent ongoing activity it reached the awareness that use of the internet could pave the way for future action. I demonstrate that the women's movement has gravitated towards using the internet not only in continuing its activities but also in broadening its support base.

Biography:

Brought up in a family with a history of political and law related activity, Sedigheh Karimi has always been interested in political science and law, generally human and women's rights in particular. Believing that research in these areas requires an open political atmosphere, she decided to complete her education abroad in an internationally recognized academic centre. Sedigheh is currently a PhD student at the University of Melbourne, researching the role of the internet in the context of the women's movement in Iran. She also teaches at the Azad University of Tehran.

Martin Kear

Fighting to stay in politics: Hamas and its Dual Resistance Strategy

The Inclusion Moderation (IM) analytical framework views the use of violence by non-state actors seeking entry into the political system as the antithesis of politically moderate behaviour. The corpus generally assumes that these actors are using violence in an anti-systemic and/or anti-democratic manner.

However, available evidence would suggest that this was not the case with the Palestinian Islamist movement, Hamas. It was permitted to retain its military wing and participate in the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections. Hamas's subsequent election victory made it a politically legitimate actor in Palestinian politics, although the Israeli government continues to classify Hamas's use of violence as a threat to the safety and security of the Israeli state.

Adopting an instrumentalist approach to understanding Hamas's use of violence, this paper argues that Hamas has employed a Dual Resistance Strategy (DRS) consisting of Political and Armed Resistance to achieve, maintain and defend its status as a legitimate political actor. Analysing the 2008, 2012 and 2014 Israeli invasions of Gaza, the paper seeks to demonstrate how Hamas is able to transmute the increase in its resistance legitimacy gained after each war into increased political authority in Gaza, in order to remain a viable political actor in Palestinian politics.

Biography

Martin is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney. He recently submitted his thesis titled 'Is This the Way to Palestine? Hamas and the Contested Road to Statehood' for examination. The thesis argued that Hamas employed a dual resistance strategy (DRS) consisting of political and armed resistance to achieve, maintain and defend its status as a legitimate political actor in Palestinian politics in the period 2005-2015. Martin's research interests include the political participation of Islamist movements, particularly Hamas, and the function of violence in the narrative of Islamist movements.

Dr Costas Laoutides

Feet of Clay: The Kurdish factor as a security response to Islamic State

The most important implication of the rise of ISIS is that ISIS as a de facto state exercises control over parts of Syria and Iraq thus questioning the territorial borders of these two countries. The 'Kurdish factor' is now considered the most, and perhaps the only, credible power to engage and contain the expansion and consolidation of IS. However, the internal factions among the Kurds in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran, each movement impacted by varying local political, economic and social conditions as well as ideological underpinnings, raise doubts about their credibility as a security alternative.

The aim of this paper is to unpack these differences and highlight that although nationalism may seem to underpin certain Kurdish visions for self-rule, the way that this grand vision has evolved and is operationalised differs from region to region as it is informed by different, and often opposing, ideas of political organisation creating a series of paradoxes. Thus, we witness political-ideological clashes over the nature of a future Kurdish democracy/democracies, the modes of economic production, the form of self-rule, and issues of gender equality and participation in the political process. These clashes strongly influence the future of the Kurdish position in view of the evolving post-conflict scenarios for a new status quo in the region.

Biography

Dr Costas Laoutides is a Lecturer in International Relations, Deakin University. He holds a PhD in International Politics, Department of International Politics, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, and a Masters in International Conflict Analysis, University of Kent at Canterbury. He was granted the EH Carr Scholarship for doctoral studies, Aberystwyth and an Economic and Social Research Council Scholarship for advanced postgraduate studies, Kent. He is the author of *Self-Determination and Collective Responsibility in the Secessionist Struggle* (Ashgate) and editor of *Territorial Separatism in Global Politics* (Routledge).

Dr Benjamin Macqueen

The impacts of the Syrian refugee crisis

By July 2016, the UNHCR had registered over 4.8 million Syrians as refugees from the current conflict, in addition to an estimated 7 million internally displaced persons. This represents, arguably, the most significant humanitarian crisis since WWII. Whilst attention has largely been fixated on Syrian refugees entering Europe, the vast majority of Syrian refugees remain in the proximate to conflict (PTC) states of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. There has been little investigation into the international support mechanisms for these states, the regulatory frameworks these states have employed to manage this mass refugee influx and, critically, the impacts of this influx on these states. This paper will provide an overview of an on-going research project into these issues. In particular, it seeks to highlight how each state has developed ad hoc regulatory mechanisms for the management of mass refugee influx as a means to mitigate its potentially destabilising effects. Whilst this has provided a degree of short-term stability, the intractable nature of the Syrian conflict means that longer-term solutions are required, but likely unattainable. Combined with growing 'donor fatigue', these states and the millions of highly vulnerable Syrian refugees in their borders face a highly uncertain future.

Biography:

Dr Benjamin MacQueen is Head of the Department of Politics and International Relations, Monash University. His research is focussed on factors affecting political change and continuity in the Middle East. His most recent publications include 'Questioning Consociationalism: Electoral Law Reform Inertia in Lebanon' (Middle East Policy 23[3] 2016), 'Peacebuilding and the "Responsibility to Rebuild?"' (AJPS 51[2] 2016), 'Democratization, Elections and the De Facto State Dilemma: Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government' (Cooperation and Conflict 50[4] 2015), 'Refugees and Political Stability in Lebanon' (Ortadoğu Etütleri 4[1] 2014) and *An Introduction to Middle East Politics* (London: Sage, 2013).

Kylie Moore-Gilbert

Where to for Bahrain's divided opposition?

Five years after mass popular protests came precariously close to toppling Bahrain's al-Khalifa monarchy, the government's crackdown on the predominantly Shi'i opposition continues to intensify. Initial attempts at fostering dialogue have been abandoned and there appears to be little appetite on the part of the Saudi-backed government to revive them. Radical underground activist groups continue to mobilise in the Shi'i villages and have succeeded in sustaining a degree of momentum, resorting to innovative protest tactics and at times, violence against security forces. This presentation will discuss the results of an in-depth study of Bahraini Shi'i opposition activism in the wake of the crackdown, drawing on over sixty field interviews and the findings of a research project tracking the online activism of the country's main Shi'i opposition groups across 2015. Revealing deepening divides within the Shi'i opposition, this research suggests that the moderate approach of Bahrain's largest Shi'i political party al-Wefaq is increasingly out of touch with the Shi'i street, and that the government's targeting of moderate Shi'i Islamists will only further the shift toward more radical methods of activism. Efforts to silence dissent will likely prove counterproductive, emboldening radicals at the expense of more moderate voices and further entrenching Bahrain's political crisis in the years to come.

Biography

Kylie Moore-Gilbert is a PhD candidate in Gulf politics at the University of Melbourne. She graduated with first class honours in Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Cambridge and has teaching and research experience at a number of Australian universities, including the University of Melbourne, Monash University and Victoria University. Kylie has spent several years living in the Middle East and conducts research in Hebrew and Arabic.

James Morris

Child Soldiers in the Israel/Palestine conflict and under the Islamic State group

Although child soldiers have been present in conflict throughout history, their experiences have only been of distinct academic interest since the late 20th century. With international humanitarian law increasingly targeted towards protecting children in conflict zones, various bodies are developing anti-child recruitment programs, notably the Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative. However, as the majority of the child soldier literature has focused on cases from Africa and the Americas, the viability of these programs for Middle Eastern cases is an emerging research puzzle, especially as large numbers of child soldiers are present in current conflicts within the region.

Using the Israel/Palestine conflict and the usage of children by the Islamic State as two contemporary case studies, this paper traces the recruitment patterns of child soldiers within these conflicts, using an agent-based approach to explore the relations between the incentives for children to fight, and the incentives for armed groups to recruit children. This paper suggests that child recruitment in the Middle East depends heavily upon armed groups' utilisation of children's sense of agency, either through exploiting pre-existing cultural and/or political pressures children feel to engage in violence, or through creating their own pressures via indoctrination and ideological saturation.

Biography

James Morris is an Honours student in the School of Political Science and International Studies, University of Queensland. His research interests include international security, international relations of the Middle East, African history, and genocide studies. In particular, his work examines the role and depiction of children and youth in armed conflict and their position in international humanitarian law. James is a conference coordinator for Young Minds of the Future, a youth education organisation that engages students with matters of international concern.

Firas Naji

Iraq from the Sykes-Picot Agreement to ISIS: A critical perspective to Iraqi national identity

Colonialism has not only shaped the Middle East through invasions, but also is shaping dominant opinion through imposing Eurocentric narratives. When ISIS declared 'the end of Sykes-Picot' in 2014, numerous of opinion pieces were written suggesting that the current borders in the Middle East are on the verge of substantial change. This paper builds on research works that critically contest the Eurocentric notions of artificial state, heterogenous populations and lack of shared history in relation to Iraq. It asserts examples of a counter-narrative that shifts the emphasis from Iraqi intercommunal divisions and identity conflicts, to identifying periods of connections, ties and exchanges that cut across communal divides and identities. It suggests that in such periods, Iraqi communal diversity, fluid boundaries and longstanding culture of coexistence created a plural public sphere where national discourses were produced, developed and hybridised. It concludes by suggesting that the first republic following the July 1958 revolution represents the high moment of an inclusive Iraqi nationalism that achieved the country's true independence. This was preceded by a historical journey that included the seeds of an Iraqi nation during the late Ottoman era, and a peak of Iraqi nationalist awareness during the 1920 Iraqi revolution.

Biography

Firas Naji is a Master of Art (Research) student in the Department of Arabic Language & Cultures at the University of Sydney. His research focuses on Iraqi identity between the diaspora and homeland using critical post-colonial approach.

Abdulrazig Osman

What is the future of democratic values in the Middle East?

The Arab region's tolerance of authoritarian regimes is a puzzling phenomenon for many scholars, to which the unprecedented uprising in late 2010 added further complexity. Five years after these spectacular events, Egypt is under military rule, Tunisia's relative success is tempered by the inauguration of an 88-year-old president connected with his predecessor, and other countries have descended into violence. The US declared a significant budget decrease in its democracy promotion program, and the EU is preoccupied thwarting Mediterranean migration waves, suggesting the West's priority has moved from democracy to security. These factors have prompted many analysts to suggest that the Arab Spring was a stumbling block in the path of democratisation.

In contrast, I will argue that despite the modest outcomes of the Arab Spring, it was a turning point in the region's history and a significant step forward on the long path toward democracy. My argument is backed by historical precedent—every revolution has faced setbacks, and the Arab Spring is not unusual in this way. Further, democracy has become the common melody among the new generation in the Arab region, making the march toward democracy irreversible. The lesson of the past has led to more maturity in democratic forces as manifested in mass resistance to the recently attempted military coup in Turkey.

Biography

Abdulrazig Osman is a PhD student at Deakin University. He holds a Master of Globalisation from the Australian National University. Abdulrazig has also acted as an Academic Advisor to the Saudi Cultural Attaché in Canberra.

Mahmoud Pargoo

Moral equality of humans: Contemporary democratisation of Shi'ite jurisprudence

See pages 10-11 for panel details

Dr Sarah Phillips

Violent extremism and the state from a Yemeni perspective

To most Western observers, al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is a non-state terrorist network that targets Western interests and the ability of the Yemeni state to contain it. Its resilience derives, in part, from the outlet that it provides for disaffected Yemenis, therefore benefiting from a 'natural base' of Yemeni popular support. AQAP is framed as an outcrop of the violence, insecurity, and poverty that is endemic to Yemeni society, which can be countered only by strengthening the writ of the state.

Yemeni discourses, on the other hand, reject the notion that AQAP is always a non-state actor. In Yemen, al-Qa'ida is widely seen as a pliable entity, at times, exercising little independent agency. Yemeni discourses implicitly reject the notion that private Yemeni citizens bear the weight of responsibility for the emergence and resilience of AQAP. Instead they emphasise the power of the Yemeni state to manipulate violent extremists – and the naivety of Western actors for assuming that the state is (or at least was, under former President Ali Abdullah Saleh) too weak to defeat AQAP. They suggest that the regime's failure to defeat the group was at least partly intentional, and was made possible by Western norms of statehood that are enacted through counterterrorism practices.

Biography

Sarah Phillips is a Senior Lecturer in the Centre for International Security Studies at The University of Sydney and holds two grants from the Australian Research Council. Her main research interests include the securitisation of development, post-colonial perspectives on international relations, and the politics of contemporary state-building and donor aid. Sarah has conducted extensive fieldwork in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa – particularly in Yemen, Somaliland, Kenya, Jordan, Pakistan, and Oman.

Nikola Pijovic

Collapsing states, enduring statehood: Islamic insurgencies and the rejection of the nation-state

This paper argues that Islamic insurgencies are only a symptom of a deeper malaise affecting large parts of the Middle East and Africa. This deeper malaise is the ultimate rejection of modern Western and Weberian statehood (and its territoriality) as it was grafted onto socio-political entities in these regions after World War II. While the establishment of the United Nations system and the Cold War both helped mask the problematic nature of statehood in the Middle East and Africa, those problems have become increasingly exposed since the early 1990s. This paper highlights the broader process of statehood contestation, and the place Islamic insurgencies currently play in it, by outlining the limitations of conventional statehood and state building models. It then discusses the examples of Islamic insurgencies such as Daesh and Al-Shabaab, arguing that competing state building processes in the Middle East and Horn of Africa highlight the nature of collapsing states but enduring statehood.

Biography

Nikola Pijovic is a PhD scholar at the ANU working on Australia's foreign policy engagement with African states in the post-Cold War era. He has published on Australian foreign and aid policy, and received the 2014 Peter Lyon Prize for the best policy-oriented article on a theme of significance for the contemporary Commonwealth published by The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs. Nikola also researches terrorism and insurgency in the Horn of Africa, and has published on statehood and insurgency issues in Somalia.

Professor Larbi Sadiki

Islamist democratic learning curves: Tunisia's Nahda

See pages 10-11 for panel details

Shima Shahbazi

Decolonizing the feminist narratives of victimhood in transnational autobiographical micro-narratives of history

The Middle East has most often been represented as a monolithic, despotic and turbulent area suffering from wars, sectarian conflicts, coups and uprisings. This kind of representation has produced historiographical narratives of victimhood along with critical ones especially when the voice of the Middle Eastern woman has been considered. Drawing on transnational and women of colour feminisms, this paper compares two autobiographical micro-history narratives about post-reformist Iran and post-invasion Iraq with an intersectional perspective to locate and highlight the women's voice of resistance and resilience in the two regions. The works that are studied are Nadine Nabir's *The Orange Trees of Baghdad* (2014) and Azadeh Moaveni's *Lipstick Jihad* (2005), both transnational writings, and the aim is to show that the decolonial resistant voice of the Middle Eastern women has been under-represented in the grand narratives of history. This paper also highlights the intricacies and distinctiveness of the Arab and Iranian feminine identity in the transnational context and introduces the indigenous knowledges that have been struggling and standing against gender, racial, religious, ethnic and political 'hypervisibility' and 'epistemicide.' It also discusses the ways in which transnational feminist scholars and writers from the Middle East have strived and are still working towards 'plurilogue' feminisms to critique the white imperialist feminism of the West which has represented Middle Eastern women as repressed victims.

Biography

Shima Shahbazi is a PhD candidate of International and Comparative Literary Studies at University of Sydney. She holds an MA in English Literature and she has taught various courses on English literature, critical theory, modern drama, literary research and comparative literature at Azad university of Tehran and Sobh-e-Sadegh institute of Higher Education in Iran. Her areas of interest include historiography, micro-history narratives, critical race theory, transnational and decolonial feminism, critical discourse analysis and women's writings. She has published a book and a number of articles in national and international indexed journals.

Dr Seham Shwayli

Reconstructing gender ideologies: The uncertain future of Iraqi women from dictatorship to ISIL

This presentation provides information about the decline of Iraqi women's status over the past 30 years. First I provide a historical background to women's roles and gender ideologies in the Iraqi context and look particularly at the impacts of the Iraq-Iran War and Gulf War, as well as the comprehensive sanction on women's status in Iraqi society, before discussing the impact of the current civil war and sectarian divisions on women's being, becoming and family life. My presentation poses the question, what kind of future awaits the voices of women seldom heard?

The historical background aims to shed light on the construction of gender ideologies under the tyranny of Saddam Hussain and beyond and how that this impacts on the construction of the Iraqi woman's identity in Iraq and the diaspora. I then discuss some of my PhD findings on Iraqi women's experiences of living in conflict and war zones that show how the political and social climate affect Iraqi women's rights and gender relations. I suggest that it is important to consider women's positions in any society and how wars and civil conflicts affect their rights, including in the current situation in Iraq, in order to analyse their roles and to appreciate their achievements.

Biography

Dr Seham Shwayli completed her PhD at Monash University in October 2015, researching Iraqi women's social inclusion in Australia. She received a Master of Education from Monash in 2010 and a Bachelor of Arts from Basra University, Iraq in 1996. Seham worked in language education for twelve years in Iraq, and works as ESL teacher, women's advocate and multicultural youth worker in Australia. Her current research focuses on contemporary issues affecting Muslim women, including social acceptance, multiculturalism and critical cultural studies.

Warick Smith

Voices of young Yemeni women after the mirage of the Arab Spring

The wave of optimism that swept across Yemen amongst progressive and globally minded youth in 2011 had turned into a drowning despair by 2014. Young women who were at the forefront of nationwide protests demanding the 'fall of the regime' are now amongst the most disillusioned of Yemenis. Hopes for democracy, justice, economic development and increasing freedoms were crushed as the country slid slowly into a grinding civil war that is endlessly fuelled by a wider regional political-sectarian conflict. This paper examines the future of Yemen through the eyes of young women struggling to find their way in the ruins of a shattered nation. A series of qualitative interviews conducted over several months explores their day-to-day experiences of sectarian conflict, examines their hopes and desires for their nation, and narrates strategic implementation of agency performed as acts of resistance against prevailing geopolitical and religious agendas.

Biography

Warick Smith lived in Yemen for seven years from 2007-2014, teaching English, training teachers and working in administration. During that time, he lived in Sana'a, Taiz and the Mahara, while also travelling extensively across the country. He is a PhD scholar at the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of Western Australia, and his research focuses on the identity formation processes of Yemeni youth in a globalising world.

Dr Lucia Sorbera

Gender: A useful lens to analyse the counter-revolution in Egypt?

Since the early 1980s, the term of 'gender' has been used by feminist scholars to refer to the social construction of masculinity and femininity and as the primary field where, or through which, power relationships are articulated (Scott, 1986). Gender concerns symbols, myths, representations, constructions of norms, constructions of subjective material identities, and the dimension of political conflict. Like every political process, the counter-revolution, which began in Egypt as soon as the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) announced the fall of Mubarak, is inherently gendered, and an analysis of the counter-revolution that does not take into account 'gender paradoxes' would fail to produce a nuanced understanding of the ongoing political processes.

In this paper, I focus on the relationship between the construction of sexuality and political authoritarianism in contemporary Egypt. My analysis of both the state's gender politics and women's political activism aims at shedding light on the link between political transitions and the re-emergence of contentious visions of gender and sexuality. Grounded in feminist epistemology, and building on my fieldwork in Cairo, this paper focuses on the renewed challenges that women political activists face in counter-revolutionary Egypt, arguing that the discussion on gender reveals high political stakes for the notion of identity, authority and power.

Biography

Dr Lucia Sorbera is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Arabic Language and Cultures at the University of Sydney. She is a historian who specialises in women and gender in international history, focusing on Egyptian women's political activism. She serves on a number of editorial and academic boards, curated the Arab Women Film Festival at the University of Sydney in 2015, and co-curated the program 'Arab Soul' at the International Torino Book Fair in 2016. Her most recent publication is 'Body Politics and Legitimacy: Towards a feminist epistemology of the Egyptian revolution,' published in the June 2016 issue of Global Discourse.

Marika Sosnowski

Rebel governance and ceasefires in the context of the Syrian civil war

This paper brings together ideas about rebel governance and ceasefires in the context of the Syrian civil war to examine conflict resolution concepts anew. It argues that the space ceasefires create may offer a useful insight into the dynamics of order and violence in civil war.

While civil war may appear chaotic and anarchic, emerging research in the field of rebel governance shows that order does emerge in the midst of conflict. Additionally, rebels are not generally guided by irrational passions or genocidal ideologies but rather make choices that are both strategic and rational. Likewise, rather than being a mutually beneficial political-military tool for parties to a conflict, ceasefires, when viewed through the lens of the rebel governance literature, may actually have very strong biases towards the state.

The ideas presented in this paper raise questions about whether ceasefires may have more strategic efficacy for state parties than was once thought. The paper also has potential ramifications for how policy-makers think about conflict resolution and peace building more broadly and for conceptualising the future of the Syrian conflict specifically.

Biography

Marika Sosnowski is currently completing a PhD at the University of Melbourne that focuses on governance development under ceasefires in Syria. She has taught Middle East politics at university, written about the region for numerous publications and is an international development consultant focusing on Israel/Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. She is also a regular guest on Melbourne radio station Triple R.

Maria Syed

Impending decline? A reassessment of Saudi power

Notwithstanding the lack of consensus as to what constitutes national power, indicators traditionally employed to measure it include national income, resource endowment, military preparedness and population size. Some scholars measure power as an ability to influence outcomes, and others consider political stability, constituent of state-society relations, and economic and social institutions. When judged against these indicators, Saudi Arabia seems to be at a tipping point. The steep fall in oil prices and simultaneously in national revenue have ignited fears about the sustainability of the economy, domestic terrorist incidents question the state's ability to maintain internal order, Yemen has proved a quagmire, the Kingdom is losing on many fronts to its archrival Iran and its traditional allies are slipping away.

Is the Kingdom cognizant of these maladies? What measures it has taken to contain or reverse this trend? Will it be able to secure a new lease on life? How will this bode internally? How will this play out for regional geostrategic landscape, geopolitical rivalries and alignments? Is Saudi power waning in comparison to Iran? Will Saudi Arabia embark on a path of cooperation or confrontation? The paper aims at answering all these questions towards the broader question of whether Saudi Arabia is witnessing a major decline in its power.

Biography

Maria Syed is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies at the Australian National University. Her research is entitled 'Interdependence between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in the Formative Phase.' Maria worked as a Research Fellow at the Islamabad Policy Research Institute, Pakistan for several years and has been published in research journals and newspapers. She is an alumna of three academic centres/institutes in the United States, as well as the King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies in Riyadh.

Associate Professor Hussein Tahiri

Formation of a Greater Kurdistan: Internal impediments and external challenges

The Kurds for long time lived by the mantra 'the Kurds have no friends but the mountains'. However, the attack by the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) on Kurdish territories in Iraq and Syria has changed this belief. At the very crucial time when the Kurds of Iraq and Syria were under threat from the ISIL, Western powers rushed to their assistance and helped them to resist ISIL's encroachment. Western assistance proceeded despite explicit and implicit outcries from neighbouring countries. Could the Kurds expect the same level of support if they declare an independent state?

A semi-independent Kurdish state has emerged in Iraqi Kurdistan, which is evolving into a fully independent state. There does not appear to be any international support for such a state but there is also no strong reaction against such a possibility. There is a likelihood that events in the Middle East could spiral out of control and provide an opportunity for the emergence of a greater Kurdistan. Are the Kurds ready for such a state and will they be able to gain international recognition?

This paper, focusing on the dynamics of Kurdish society and international developments, will explore the internal impediments and external challenges to the formation of a greater Kurdish state.

Biography

Dr Hussein Tahiri completed his PhD in political science at the University of Melbourne. He is the author of *The Structure of Kurdish Society and the Struggle for a Kurdish State*, co-editor of *Counter Terrorism and Social Cohesion*, and has contributed chapters to other books as well as written numerous academic and commentary articles. He is a commentator on Kurdish and Middle East Affairs in the Australian and international media. He is currently an adjunct associate professor with the Centre for Cultural Diversity and Well-Being at Victoria University.

Gijs Verbossen

The systemic disintegration of Mubarak's neo-liberal authoritarianism

The fall of Mubarak's regime in the Arab Spring of 2011 was the combined effect of neo-liberal economic reform and the politics of authoritarian survival. In contrast to the Washington Consensus expectation, however, his ousting was not the result of marketisation provoking popular political demands, but, as I argue in this paper, of causing contention between state institutions, in three systemic stages. First, marketisation favoured a foreign-capital intensive service sector over a labour intensive manufacturing industry. As a result, unemployment frustrated middle class aspirations, sending many into an informal economy inhabited by a burgeoning class of urban poor. Second, Mubarak awarded the new comprador business elite political power as exclusive regime clients, while policing the urban poor to suppress collective economic and political claims. Consequently, the interior ministry's state security grew to unprecedented size. Third, the troika of business, security, and politics deprived the armed forces of the domestic political power it had previously enjoyed. Relying again on the market, Mubarak placated the military by conferring commercial opportunities to it. This set the military against the state security-business coalition, while making it a self-sufficient autonomous state institution, to which the president ultimately became dispensable. When the urban poor class was big enough, it naturally had a partner in the armed forces to unseat Mubarak's troika.

Biography

Gijs Verbossen is a PhD candidate and Lecturer in the Department of Politics and International Relations at La Trobe University, Melbourne. His research focusses on the relationship between political economy, institutionalisation of power, and social contracts in Middle Eastern authoritarian states.

Professor Ihsan Yilmaz

Middle-Easternisation of Turkish Political culture in 2010s and the future of Islam, secularism and democracy in the Middle East

After briefly analysing the main domestic factors that paved the way for the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) departure from democracy since its third general election victory in 2011, this paper tries to shed some light on the impact of the "Arab Spring" on the Turkish ruling party AKP, Turkish foreign and domestic politics and Turkey's Islamist groups' understanding of the Middle East, secularism, democracy and extremism. The paper argues that "Arab Spring" process is one of the factors that radicalized Turkish political culture that, since 2010, has been moving away fast from democratic values to Islamist and "Salafist" extremism. In concluding, the paper asks in what ways the so-called Turkish model's (compatibility of Islam and democracy) collapse will have ramifications in the Middle Eastern state-society-Islam relations.

Biography

Ihsan Yilmaz is Research Professor and Chair of Islamic Studies and Intercultural Dialogue at Deakin University, Australia. He was Professor of Political Science at Istanbul Fatih University between 2008-2016, Lecturer in Law at SOAS, University of London between 2001-2008 and research scholar at Center for Islamic Studies, University of Oxford between 1999-2001. His most recent book is (2015) *From Kemalism to Erdoganism: Religion, State and Good Citizen in Turkey* (in Turkish). He is also the author of (2005) *Muslim Laws, Politics and Society in Modern Nation States: Dynamic Legal Pluralisms in England, Turkey and Pakistan*.

ABOUT THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE

The Future of the Middle East conference is organised by the Middle East Studies Forum at the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship & Globalisation at Deakin University. It was made possible by generous support from the US Consulate General Melbourne and the Alfred Deakin Institute, and help from a small army of ADI research assistants.

Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh (Conference convenor)

Professor Akbarzadeh is a Research Professor at Deakin University and the Deputy Director (International) of the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation. He currently holds an ARC Future Fellowship (2012-2016) on the Role of Islam in Iran's Foreign Policy-making and a grant on Sectarianism in the Middle East from the Qatar Foundation.

Professor Fethi Mansouri

Professor Mansouri is Alfred Deakin Professor Fethi Mansouri holds a Deakin University research chair in migration and intercultural studies and is the Director of the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation. In 2013 he was awarded a UNESCO Chair in comparative research on 'Cultural Diversity and Social Justice'. He is Editor of the Journal of Intercultural Studies (Routledge) and a global expert advisor to the United Nations (Alliance of Civilisations) on cultural diversity and intercultural relations.

Dr James Barry

Dr. Barry is an Associate Research Fellow at the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation at Deakin University. He was awarded a PhD (anthropology) from Monash University in 2013 for his dissertation on cross generation identity among the religious minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran. He is currently involved in research on the role of Islam in Iranian foreign policy making, alongside a project on decision-making among Iranian and Afghan migrants in Indonesia.

Ms Dara Conduit (Conference Secretary)

Dara Conduit is a Ph.D candidate at Monash University and a researcher at Deakin University. Her work has been published in the British Journal of Middle East Studies, Studies in Conflict & Terrorism and the Middle East Journal. Ms. Conduit also holds a M. Litt from the University of St. Andrews, was a Visiting Scholar at the University of Cambridge in 2015 and has provided advice to the UN OHCHR's Working Group on Mercenaries.



ABOUT THE ALFRED DEAKIN INSTITUTE

The Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation (ADI) is an internationally recognised and highly regarded social sciences and humanities research institute.

Researchers in the Institute create cutting-edge knowledge about citizenship, diversity, inclusion and globalisation which informs scholarship, debate and policy.

It has a vibrant research environment supporting excellence, innovation and collaboration among theorists and problem-

oriented researchers who look at critical and contentious social issues. Members are supported through mentoring and training schemes, particularly early career researchers and doctoral students.

The Institute hosts a number of research networks, including The Middle East Studies Forum which provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and international collaboration helping to strengthen our local and global partnerships.

ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST STUDIES FORUM

The Middle East Studies Forum (MESF) is a network of world-class researchers and lecturers in the field of Middle East and Central Asia studies and languages. MESF manages a number of high-profile international projects and teaching initiatives, and regularly hosts international and national events and seminars.

We are a collaborative research network open to researchers, research students, policy-makers, media professionals and anyone interested in the region. We are well-placed to conduct and collaborate on high-profile initiatives relating to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

MESF focuses on the following topics in relation to contemporary Middle East and Central Asia:

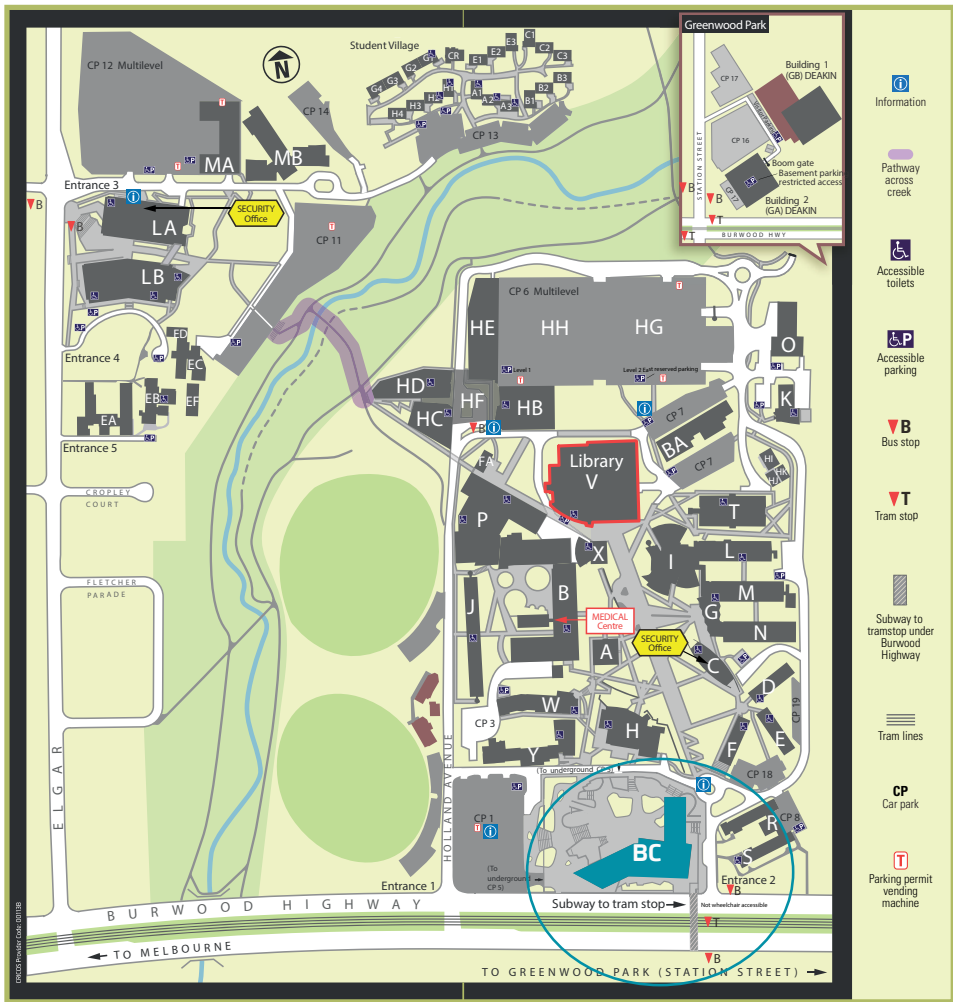
- International Relations, security and foreign policy dynamics
- The rapidly changing nature of civil society and democracy

- The emergence of sub-state groups
- Defining the 'Middle East' and examining how it has been constructed and understood in the 'West'
- The role of minorities and women across the regions
- The impact of contemporary politics on heritage sites
- The complex and overlapping histories of the region and its myriad languages, cultures and political movements
- Utilising interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies as the basis for understanding the complexities of the region.
- The need for innovative teaching and the supervision of higher degree work in the field



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