



MENA WORKSHOPS

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OUR MISSION

The APSA MENA Workshops program is an initiative, made possible through a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York, to enhance scholarly networks and support political science research among early-career scholars in the Middle East and North Africa.

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers,

Greetings! Welcome to the Spring 2017 issue of the APSA MENA Newsletter – a project emanating from the APSA MENA annual workshops.

While our first issue discussed the challenges of researching Middle East politics, this second issue includes a symposium on the opportunities for Middle East political science research. Though the recent regional developments have posed substantive and methodological challenges, there are many prospective growth areas in regional political science research. The Arab Uprisings and their aftermath have unraveled a wealth of data on several phenomena, such as social movements, regime change, and civil conflict. Scholars of the region not only have access to this data, but also adopt novel approaches in analyzing and interpreting it. Our research symposium includes six pieces that offer new perspectives on research in the MENA region.

Fred H. Lawson explores how the outbreak of civil wars in the region offers new grounds for rethinking the oft-used concept of “security dilemma”. Amirhossein Teimouri explores the promises and pitfalls of using big data in researching the MENA region. Aya Nassar explores how the Arab uprisings and social movements opened the door for research on space and cities in the region. Kristin A. Eggeling reflects on the opportunities that fieldwork can offer for in-depth intellectual and personal engagement with the region. Abdalhadi Alijla outlines the different challenges and opportunities facing scholars from the region. Ilham Sadouqi examines how the uprisings have offered new opportunities for researching the under-studied category of “post-Arab spring youth” in the context of Morocco.

This issue also includes a list of news, announcements, and calls. One of the APSA MENA Newsletter’s most important goals of is to engender a sense of community among MENA scholars around the world. If you have anything that you would like to share with others, please contact us and we will be happy to include it in the next issue. In addition, we currently have a webpage: <http://web.apsanet.org/mena/newsletter/>, where you can find links to previous issues of the Newsletter.

Sincerely,

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NOTE FROM APSA

Greetings from APSA!

I hope this message finds all of our alumni doing well. Many thanks to newsletter co-chairs May Darwich and Abdul-Wahab Kayyali for their efforts on this issue.

After four years of political science workshops in the Arab Middle East and North Africa, we're trying something a bit different this year: a three-day [Research and Publication Conference](#), organized in cooperation with [POMEPS](#) and [CEMAT](#). Taking place in Tunis from July 25-27, the conference brings together workshops alumni and non-alumni for networking and research feedback across five thematic working groups. In total, 35 early-career authors will be joined by 15 scholars who are leaders in the field of MENA political science. We expect the conference to result in several special journal special issues and other collaborative publications.

At the same time, we continue to offer networking and professional development opportunities to support workshop alumni, including Alumni Grants and APSA Annual Meeting activities. Within the next couple weeks we will issue an alumni-survey to collect information on post-workshop networking, professional development outcomes, and areas for future support. Please stay tuned for this e-mail, as your responses will greatly inform our plans to expand the APSA MENA network and develop new projects.

Furthermore, I'm happy to announce that Carnegie Corporation of New York has renewed funding for APSA's MENA Programming for an additional two years. Thus, we will resume the workshops program in 2018, alongside continued funding for alumni grants. In addition, we seek to partner more directly with departments of political science to support specific projects benefiting faculty and graduate students. See "Expanding Support for Political Science in the Arab Middle East and North Africa: MENA Workshops 2017-2019" in this issue for more information.

As always, I encourage you to contribute to future newsletters through announcements, research submissions, and your feedback on how we can continue to improve this publication. I look forward to catching up with some of you at the Tunis Conference this summer or perhaps at APSA's upcoming Annual Meeting in San Francisco. Best to all in the coming months and stay well!

Andrew Stinson

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RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM:

SILVER LININGS: PROSPECTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

FROM POPULAR UPRISING TO CIVIL WAR: THE SECURITY DILEMMA REASSESSED

By Fred H. Lawson

Four of the popular uprisings that erupted across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in the winter of 2010-11 have transformed into civil wars. Syria is the most frequently analyzed of these instances of internal warfare, but Libya, Yemen and Iraq display the characteristic features of civil war just as definitively (Sambanis 2004; Mason and Mitchell 2016). Why peaceful protests evolved into armed intra-state conflict in these four countries, but not in Egypt, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Algeria or elsewhere, remains elusive, despite the all of the studies that have appeared so far on the origins and trajectory of the Arab Spring.¹

One theory that students of comparative politics have used in order to explain why civil wars break out is borrowed from the literature in international relations, and is usually referred to as "the security dilemma". The argument is deceptively simple: Whenever established states break down, domestic politics starts to resemble the kind of anarchic arena in which international relations take place. Without the basic protection that is accorded to citizens by a well-articulated authority structure, different ethno-sectarian communities take steps to protect their constituents' interests, and in doing so they almost always jeopardize the security of other communities. The others respond by taking actions to defend themselves that leave the first community worse off than it had been at the outset, or that heighten the level of antagonism and mistrust among all actors. In this way, measures undertaken to secure each community generate a conflict spiral, which tends to escalate into inter-communal violence (Jervis 1976; Kydd 1997).

¹ One notable attempt to explain the transition from popular uprising to civil war in Syria rests on the assumption that the residents of the southern province of Dir'a consist largely of marginal tribespeople and smugglers, who are predisposed to take up arms against the authorities (Leenders and Heydemann 2012).

Scholars who employ the security dilemma to explain the outbreak of civil wars assert that this dynamic also provides a useful way to account for the success or failure of post-war arrangements. Ethno-sectarian warfare is unlikely to stop unless rival communities are assured that their survival is no longer in jeopardy, whether by the creation of new structures of authority (Chapman and Roeder 2007), the intervention of foreign peacekeepers (Walter 2002) or the redrawing of inter-communal boundaries (Kuperman 2004; Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2009; Johnson 2015). So long as one or more of these mitigating factors diminishes the gains from launching an attack, reduces the losses that result from being caught off guard or raises the cost of mutual belligerence (Jervis 1978), a peace settlement can be expected to persist (Kaufmann 1996).

Unfortunately, these relatively straightforward analytical points have been burdened with additional claims that make it hard to determine the adequacy of the original concept. The most influential version of the argument grafts offense-defense theory onto the dynamics of the security dilemma (Posen 1993; Rose 2002; Melander 2009). Other scholarship asserts that a security dilemma takes shape whenever one community sets out deliberately to inflict injury on the other(s), rather than when both parties are trying to protect themselves (Kaufmann 1996; Kaufman 1996; Roe 1999).

Recent events in Syria, Libya, Yemen and Iraq offer a rare opportunity for MENA specialists to test and refine fundamental components of the security dilemma as a theory of internal warfare. It has become commonplace to observe that the mere existence of anarchy is insufficient to explain the existence of pervasive rivalry and mistrust among actors (Wendt 1992). So are there particular ways in which state institutions break down that inculcate a higher propensity for inter-communal hostility? Or are there specific actions that state officials take as the existing authority structure crumbles that promote mutual fear and belligerence among communities? Even if anarchy is what actors make

of it, they probably do not construct new modes of interaction under circumstances of their own choosing.

Equally important, existing studies of the security dilemma and civil war assume that the communities involved are unitary actors, whose members enter the group by accident of birth. The extensive body of scholarship that explicates the mobilization of ethno-sectarian identity and activism stands starkly at odds with almost all of the literature on ethnic civil wars.² Consequently, it is crucial to investigate the circumstances under which latent or potential ethno-sectarian communities amalgamate and galvanize into collective action. Does this process occur differently depending on various types of state collapse? Does community solidarization tend to be more pronounced during the first phase of the security dilemma, when one community undertakes a security-producing initiative, or instead during the second phase, when the target community reacts by adopting measures to protect itself from the threat it faces? More important, does inter-communal warfare precede (and perhaps facilitate) community formation, or on the contrary does fighting result from growing solidarization?

Yet a third conceptual problem seems particularly germane to the admittedly complicated cases of Syria, Libya, Yemen and Iraq. Shiping Tang (2011, 533) suggests that the intensity or explosiveness of the security dilemma tends to vary according to whether adversaries face each other directly or instead deal simultaneously with allies. Building on Glenn Snyder's (1984) path-breaking analysis of adversary-alliance interactions, it would be worth exploring the dynamics of abandonment and entrapment in the context of internal warfare. For example, in the Syrian case an assortment of local militias based in the northwestern provinces has fought alongside larger formations like the Battalions of the Free of Syria (Kataib Ahrar al-Sham), which operate throughout the country, while at the same time confronting predominantly expatriate forces like the Assistance Front for the People of Syria (Jabhah al-Nusrah li Ahl al-Sham) and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (al-Dawlah al-Islamiyyah fi al-'Iraq wa al-Sham). Kaleidoscopic reconfigurations of alignments among these disparate actors have no doubt contributed to

the bursts of extreme and indiscriminate ethno-sectarian violence that Snyder would interpret as initiatives on the part of emboldened allies, which operate so as to entrap their partners in unwelcome attacks against noncombatants.

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THE "BIG DATA REVOLUTION": CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR MENA SOCIAL SCIENCES

By Amirhossein Teimouri

Big data-driven scholarship is rapidly growing in the social sciences. The 2015 American Sociological Association (ASA) annual meeting in Chicago, for instance, featured a panel entitled "Big Data and Social Movement Research." In the field of political science several papers have been published. In addition to Bond and Messing (2015), *Political Analysis* recently published an issue concerning "text analysis revolution" in social science.³ Margaret Roberts examines this issue for the Washington Post, with the provocative headline entitled, "Here's how text analysis is transforming social-science research."⁴ This new approach clearly has "the potential of surprise ... provoking construction of new descriptive and predictive

theory" (Evans and Aceves, 2016: 43).

What kind of revolution are social scientists concerned with? Is it a methodological paradigm shift? What are the challenges and opportunities of such a shift? One example of this "revolution" can be seen by examining public likes on Facebook pages; for example, Bond and Messing (2015) argue that Facebook activism can be a more reliable predictor of political behavior and/or ideology than traditional survey methods. Though certainly a provocative and ambitious argument, this has yet to be an established hypothesis.

As far as the Middle East is concerned, this growing field may face a few methodological challenges. Due largely to the political turbulences in the region, Middle East scholars have had a hard time gathering data in different parts of the region. Conducting traditional social surveys, having field access, and developing interviews with socio-political activists have become increasingly risky for researchers. These issues were discussed in the 2016 Middle East Studies Association (MESA) annual meeting in Boston. For example, Middle East experts drew attentions to the recent political developments and academic freedom in Egypt and Turkey and their consequences for researchers. Due to the current situation in the region, media-centered data—particularly social media-driven big data—has grown in popularity. However, as I argue below, in comparison to big data-driven research in the U.S., there are serious methodological concerns for such research when it comes to Middle East scholarship.

PERSPECTIVES ON POLITICS' PAPER ON ARABIC TWEETS

A recently co-authored paper by Amaney Jamal, Robert Keohane, David Romney and Dustin Tingley (2015) entitled "Anti-Americanism and Anti-Interventionism in Arabic Twitter Discourses" draws attention to several challenges in this rapidly developing field. Jamal and her collaborators demonstrate that social media data (here Twitter data) not only can provide us with strong insights about individual attitudes, but about social discourses or as they indicated, "social globalism" (55). The discourse here relates to anti-Americanism among Arab Twitter activists. Through analyzing more than 120 million Arabic Twitter posts between January 1, 2012 and December 31, 2013, the authors found that 25.88 percent of Arabic Twitter posts express anti-American attitudes, topping the list of Arabic tweets in the given period. In their analysis,

³ Virtual Issue: Recent Innovations in Text Analysis for Social Science.

⁴https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/05/27/heres-how-text-analysis-is-transforming-social-science-research/?utm_term=.98d055174c4c

anti-Iranian attitudes are second at 17.51 percent.

The data used in this paper was gathered and stored by Crimson Hexagon, a social media analytics company. Though the authors acknowledge Crimson Hexagon's weaknesses, I would argue that this new line of research may result in skewed and biased results. This is due in large part to replication, missing data, inter-coder reliability, and other methodological issues. Consider, for example, the search terms they used in their research; to gather Arabic posts on Iran, for instance, they only looked at "Iran" and "Iranian(s)" in Arabic Twitter posts (table 9, p 68). As far as the U.S. is concerned, their paper is centered on "America," "American(s)," and "the United States of America." However, for Israel, which at 17.28 percent is the third most hated country in Arabic tweets, "Israel," "Israeli(s)," "Zionism," "Zionist(s)," "Judaism," "Jewish," "Jew(s)" are the identifying search terms. While they have incorporated some religious search terms concerning Israel (i.e., Jewish, Jews, and Judaism), it is unclear why they did not follow the same pattern for Iran.

As other research shows, religious terms such as Shiite and *Majus*, which explicitly and implicitly relate to Iran in Arabic Twitter posts, abound (E.g Siegel 2015). It is unclear why in table 9 the authors just ran the monitors with two keywords (Iran and /or Iranians), which resulted in more than 27 million tweets, while as table 10 shows, they added "Shiite" keyword to their analysis, culminating in more than 42 million tweets. It is unclear why they did not disaggregate the term Shiite concerning different Shiite forces in the region. Do they believe that all Shiite-related tweets implicitly refer to Iran's involvement in the region? If so, why were keywords such as *Majus*, *Rafedhi*, and *Safawi* not incorporated into their analysis?

I ran different keywords such as "Iran," "Iranians," "*Safawi*," "Shiite," "*Majus*," and "*Rafedhi*," combined. The total posts based on these keywords in Crimson were 11,051,618, which is far less than the numbers the paper shows (tables 9 & 10). After exchanging numerous emails with an employee in Crimson Hexagon, I was told that Twitter might have purged lot of tweets because they did not fit Twitter's terms and conditions. Adding other keywords such as Farsi and Khomeini, which have been steadily posted on Arabic tweets, did not solve the problem; the number is still far behind 27 and 43 million tweets that Jamal et al.'s paper is

built on. I can speculate that if the authors had incorporated the mentioned search terms concerning Iran into their analysis, they would have ended up having different results. Part of the problem, as mentioned, relates to Twitter's terms and conditions and purging millions of Arabic accounts and tweets, especially after the rise of ISIS in the past two years. This renders Jamal et al.'s paper with a simple problem: the data is not replicable.

Even though the data is no longer replicable, the authors also failed to analyze ironies; sarcasms; humors; linguistic ambiguities; and so forth, and thus their analysis does not decode politically-relevant and between line semantics in Arabic tweets. Jamal and her collaborators point out, "ferreting out sarcasm is well beyond the Read-Me algorithm" (58), but that begs the question as to whether or not researchers will end up having wrong results if an analytics program fails to parse out sarcasm, humor, ironies, etc.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE AVENUES

As Jamal et al.'s paper and other big data-oriented research propose, "social media discourses" can pave the way for innovative social scientific analyses. There are, however, some noticeable challenges. The authors and other researchers can minimize the margin of error by more sophisticated inter-reliability coding process. Although the paper was coauthored by four political scientists, mechanisms for inter-coder reliability are not that clear in the paper. To Kreuter and Peng (2014), these kinds of issues in big data-relevant research relate to measurement and inference problems. In the paper under the examination, lots of sarcastic and oblique search terms concerning Iran's role in the region are excluded from the analysis. This significant missing data can drastically change the results, and thus invalidate inferences. Kreuter and Peng also call our attention to data-generating process as well as missing data as the most distinguishing characteristics of big data compared to traditional data (258-262). To minimize the measurement, inference and replicability problems of big data, they suggest data integration; that is, a combination of traditionally designed data and big data that arise organically (266).

The security environment of some Middle Eastern settings has made the gathering of traditional data very difficult. Big data can provide Middle East scholars with new avenues of research. But how can

we trust big data generally, and in these controversial cases in particular? Social scientists as well as big data analytics companies need to consider these methodological problems. Unless we reach some satisfactory answers, revolutionizing aspects of big data research, especially concerning Middle East scholarship, will lag behind. This line of research is exciting and promising. At this early stage, however, scholars should take research design seriously, and hesitate to make inferences without giving due diligence to these new tools.

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CITY POLITICS: WALKING, BODIES AND SPACE

By Aya Nassar

"Which is to say that the subject of walking is, in some sense, about how we invest universal acts with particular meanings."

Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*.

While an interest in cities' urban space in the Middle East has a long tradition; I argue in this piece that the revolutionary year of 2011 and its aftermaths (for better or for worse) have brought the politics of space into the spot light. Whether through physical reclaiming of space, symbolic practices of commemoration in space, or dominating assault through enacting violence and gating spaces, cities are key actors in the dramaturgy of Middle Eastern politics. In this piece, I focus on the renewed and changing sense of ownership of cities — and by moving through it — as a resourceful methodological tool.

In 2006 the editors of *Cairo Cosmopolitan* called for a *Cairo School of Urban Studies*, evolving from the political mobilization moment of 2005, the assault on neoliberalism, and the resistances of city dwellers (Singerman & Amar, 2006). The school was an attempt to critically challenge existing narratives of the Arab Street by bringing an interdisciplinary group of sociologists, political scientists, and anthropologists to publish interdisciplinary, qualitative and mostly ethnographic research. More than a decade later, I am not sure if the name of the school took hold, yet its commitment — I believe — has remained pertinent to the interdisciplinary scholarship on the Middle East.

On a more personal note, it has been exactly these ten years during which I have been thinking about the spatial turn to make sense of the city and how it relates to political subjectivity and personal selfhood. During these ten years, the spatial turn had already taken hold, and disciplines of critical geopolitics and political geography remain attractive sites for engagements on cities and beyond. For Middle East studies, 2011 is a watershed moment and an epitome of the now-uncontested spatiality of politics. 2011 saw several dramaturgies of protests

and resistances that centered on a political relationship with space. The 2011 global uprisings used space, to occupy it, reclaim it, or march in it.

There are a lot of ways in which 2011 might have opened and influenced an agenda of urban studies research in the region. With 2011, the spatiality of politics became central in urban research not only for scholars of the Middle East, but also for broader commentators on politics (Harb, 2017). Academically, it could be argued that the space for space has been made.

On the level of the everyday, I think that one of the detrimental ways in which the Arab Spring year have influenced the relationship of subjects to the city of Cairo, is a renewed sensibility of walking the city. Through marches, stalled plans, curfews, violent clashes happening in the city, zoning off sites of street clashes, imposing urban normality elsewhere; through all this, mobility in the city has gained a new sensibility with the inevitable everyday navigating revolutionary times. “Walking itself has not changed the world” writes Solnit “but walking together has been a rite, a tool and reinforcement of civil society that can stand up to violence, to fear, and to repression” (Solnit, 2014, p. xii).

Anthropologist Julia Elyachar reflects on returning to her field, that is Cairo, after finishing her dissertation. She says “In my own ongoing ethnography of walking and crossing the street in Cairo, ten years after I had concluded my dissertation fieldwork, it had become harder for me to cross the street” (Elyachar, 2011). The rediscovery of the city anew infuses the everyday space of the city with emotional cartography. This is naturally very personal and very particular. I argue, however, that this personal relationship with a city in flux has offered me ways to tap into my own city; ways without which, my attempt to conduct interdisciplinary research on it would have never taken the turns to arrive to where it is now. Since 2011, I have organized and participated in several projects that relied on walking as a research tool. I continued to rely partly on that, for my PhD fieldwork, particularly when interviewing, or conducting ethnography were increasingly becoming either unsafe, or inadequate for the purposes of my research questions. What walking does is render the familiar strange, generate questions, but also accommodate space, materiality of built environment and power into a series of provocations. This is not just an academic practice, but also a practice of

everyday politics.

Since 2011, I noticed the increase in initiatives for walking the city, as a means of exploring its history and reconnecting with its heritage. Through walking, projects of documenting the city visually or archiving its imagery also appear on social media.⁵ What this means for urban research is that movement in the city not only creates a wealth of data that can push questions of urban politics out of dichotomous narratives, but it also recapitulates an old interest in walking as a methodology for social science.

The aim of this short piece is, of course, not to romanticize a walkable city that might not exist. Instead, it sheds light on some questions that city politics pose as soon as we start thinking of practices that align bodies, mobilities, and materiality of space. It is not surprising that since 2011 multiple assaults on free movement and space ownership have plagued urban spaces of Middle Eastern cities. These events portray everyday practices that have accompanied what we abstractly call the counter-revolution or the closing off of public spheres. These practices are manifest in urbicides,⁶ the ruination (Stoler, 2013) of built environment and infrastructures, the jamming of urban mobilities, halting movement, proliferation of walls and check points, and securitizing practices that generate unease. These are practices that manifest themselves locally, as well as globally (Bigo, 2002). Some of these urban practices have long histories (Mitchell, 1991), and some are novel. But they all come alive in the politics of every day space. These practices might tap into what philosopher Henri Lefebvre calls quotidian rhythm of the urban (Lefebvre, Moore, & Elden, 2013). I would argue that this turbulent decade has shaken the ways we inhabit urban space and has kindled reflection on the choreographies of our bodies as they struggle to move in our cities. This, in turn, is an untapped source of methodological inquiry on the politics of the city and the everyday in the study of the Middle East.

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⁵ cf. <http://www.facebook.com/deadwallsegv>

⁶ Urbicide refers to the deliberate destruction of material as well as symbolic fabrics of cities, during periods of conflict or reconstruction in particular.

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ON ACADEMIC FIELDWORK

By Kristin A. Eggeling

Scholars of International Relations (IR) have increasingly called for a practical turn in the discipline, inviting scholars to get out of their comfortable armchair, go out into the “real world,” and enrich their analysis by means of collecting “different kinds of contextual data from the field...that may illuminate how...global politics are experienced as lived practices” (Neumann 2002, 628; see also Pouliot and Adler 2011; Pouliot 2015). In the praxis of academic life, this invitation most often translates into the inclusion of “fieldwork” into the research design. Like many other buzzwords in the IR discipline, what is meant by “doing fieldwork” often remains vague, and the final product of the research process (be it a journal article, a thesis, or a book) often only makes scant references to what the author actually *did* to arrive at the arguments. According to most methodology books floating around graduate school reading lists, fieldwork as a tool to gather information may be associated with several methods of data collection, such as surveys and statistical data on populations, territories, or

properties, etc., as well as more qualitative methods focusing on uncovering stories by means of observations, interviews, or focus groups. To — quite literally — extract this information from the chosen field site, some researchers “parachute” in, stay for a few days or weeks and follow a busy, predefined research schedule (Hannerz 2004). Others, especially those relying more on interpretive approaches, may try to “go native”, adapt to the environment of their chosen cases and try to “think and act like a local” (see Geertz 1973, or more recently Schatz 2009).

No matter what kind of researchers we may be, or how long our research stays last, however, thinking about “the field” as a clearly defined, far away, and essentially “other” place produces a number of problems. As Oliver Richmond, Stefanie Kappler and Annika Björkdahl argue in their recent paper “The ‘Field’ in the Age of Intervention” (2015), “the idea of a field holds both spatial and discursive meanings and triggers associations with peasantry; that is, a space in which farmers cultivate and grow certain crops” (25). According to the authors, these associations do not only imply the possibility for an outsider to mechanically control the field, but furthermore suggests backwardness and opposition to progress. Eventually, they argue, the field comes to be seen as a site for the extraction of labour and goods, an interpretation that “acts as a denial of culture and society and their complex meanings, which may be located in such fields” (ibid, 25). In the end, framing research trips as “fieldwork” may therefore (re)produce some of the power dynamics inherent in contemporary practices of knowledge production, which legitimise the role of (outside) experts that explore the laboratory of the field. Arguably, this problem is especially pronounced in relation to doing fieldwork in regions such as the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), whose portrayal as a (dangerous) “other” has been identified as an issue in academic and policy circles for many decades. To produce more critical work that does not fall into one of the most fundamental fallacies of academic research — to define people and places before we have gotten to know them and hence only find what we were looking for — do we, as academics, have to rethink how we use the concept of “fieldwork”?

Arguably, yes. During my time as a PhD student, I had the opportunity to travel to and carry out extensive “fieldwork” in the Middle East, mainly in the Gulf. When I first left my home institution in

rural Scotland, many people ironically asked “why do you need to travel to the desert to do fieldwork, there are plenty of fields around here”. Half-heartedly laughing away such comments at the time, I have since started to think more about *localising the field*, and about *where* research and academic work actually happens. In the first research design I wrote for my thesis, the second year of my degree was “reserved for fieldwork”, which in my mind was the time when I would travel to the states I study and collect information for when I would be back at my desk in St Andrews “writing-up” the thesis. In this design, the field was a place unaffected by me that would provide me with the material I needed to then, far away, think up a bigger argument. Throughout the research process, however, I increasingly came to realise that the field is not a definite, self-contained geographical space, but rather a fluid and practical sphere that emerges and persists with social interchange. Over the course of the research project, the “field” I was studying grew with every person I spoke to and every place I visited. And importantly, I did not somehow leave it behind as I got back on a plane to Europe. Rather, it stuck to me, as conversations continued and “fieldwork”, “deskwork” (analyzing) and “textwork” (writing) started to converge (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2014). Defining academic work in this way, however, is a dangerous endeavour, as being “seduced” by one’s field site is a phenomenon viewed with “considerable suspicion” at universities and among donor and funder circles, as it reduces the well-established distance between knowledge and researchers, and challenges the still deep commitment in the discipline to objectivity and objective fact (Richmond et al 2015, 28; on “fieldwork seduction” see Robben 1996).

Shortly after arriving in Doha — where I spent most of my time “on fieldwork” — I started to question the validity of this almost laboratory approach to the production of knowledge, as I quickly started to realise that the city, the people I spoke with, and the things I observed did not simply provide me with clear-cut answers, but that I needed to work hard to better understand the local context and get people interested in me and my project before I could start to set up interviews and “collet data”. With a bit of hindsight and a humbler view about the complexities involved in trying to study the social world, I have therefore become increasingly reluctant to use the term “fieldwork” to talk about my research trips. Rather than thinking about Doha as a field site, I have come to think

about my time in the city as an opportunity to experience the place that I study, and an opportunity to speak to the people whose everyday lives revolve around my research puzzles. In the process, I have very much come to realize that the field is not a blank space wanting to be scripted, but a space with its own dynamics, logics and characteristics that start to emerge once I started to do “research *with*” the places and people I encountered, rather than “research *on*” them. Breaking down perceived barriers between inside and outside, self and other, and international and local academic practices is one of the APSA MENA initiative’s main aims. In this context, I wonder, whether it is time to reconsider our use of the term “fieldwork” in relation to research related trips to the region.

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- Kristin Eggeling** (2015 Workshop) is a PhD candidate in the School of International Relations at the University of St Andrews, UK. Her research focuses on questions of legitimation, authoritarianism, state-branding and identity politics, with a regional focus on Central Asia and the Gulf (e-mail: kae3@st-andrews.ac.uk).

ON RESEARCHING THE MIDDLE EAST

By **Abdalahadi Aljla**

Researching the Middle East has seldom appeared more challenging. Extreme regional violence has influenced academic institutions, state agencies, security services and society at large. Researchers have not been immune to this, and their experience is shaped by their individual identity and the institution with which they affiliate.

Despite this, there is an increasing rate of enrollment in postgraduate studies at universities in the Arab World. According to the UNESCO Arab Regional Convention on Higher Education report, the number of postgraduate students in the region from 1998 to 2008 has increased by 6 percent.⁷ Moreover, recent research has identified a vast majority of university students in the Arab World as students in social science and humanity faculties (78 percent).⁸

By now the challenges facing regional social sciences are well-known: a lack of methodological rigour, shortage of financial resources and research support, and censorship/exclusion are the prime obstacles. In March 2017, the Arab Council for Social Science (ACSS) held its annual conference in Beirut, Lebanon. The proceedings of the conference itself highlighted some of the issues facing social science researchers in the region, when renowned researcher Khalil Anani was attacked by other academics from Egypt for using the term “coup” in his paper. This reflected a broader problem in regional social science: a systematic exclusion of academics based on their opinions and political orientations, and a creation of “otherness” in academic conversations

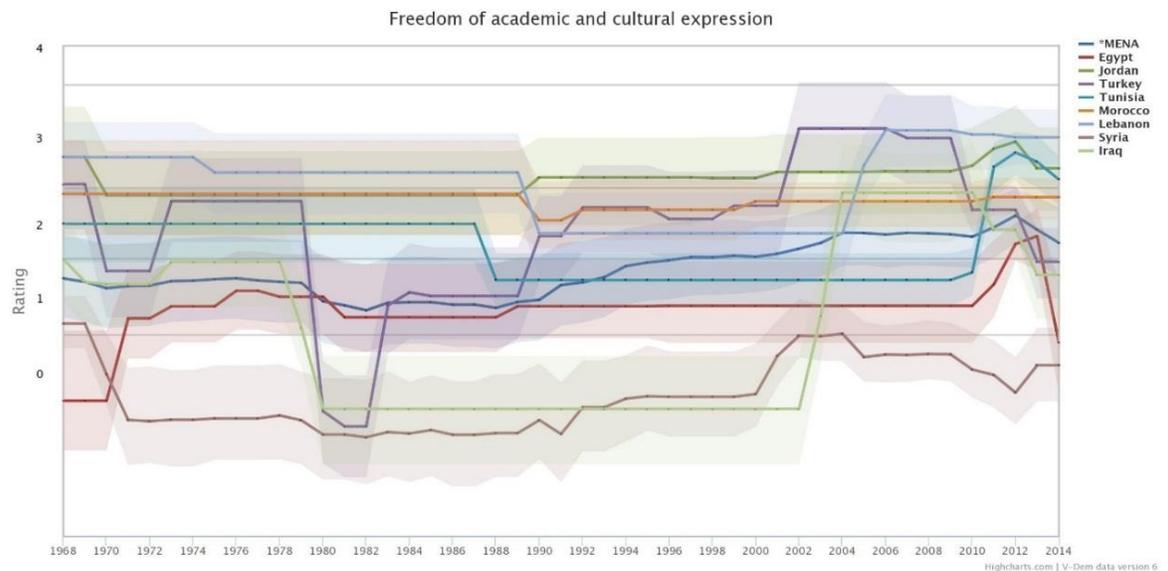
⁷http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Beirut/pdf/Regional_Report_on_Higher_Education_in_the_Arab_States_Arabic_-_Final_.pdf

⁸http://www.ub.edu/LinkingMedGulf/docs/kickoff_meeting/scientific_research.pdf

which hardly advances the goal of scientific inquiry.

Not only are certain opinions privileged at the expense of others in regional social science. The physical and professional security of researchers is also at risk, as the traumatic murder of Gulliano Regeni in Egypt and the widescale persecution of Turkish academics has shown. The very concept of academic freedom is thus persistently violated in a region suffering from various forms of authoritarianism and repression. The below graph from the V-Dem institute indicates the regional trends:

These challenges are well known and heavily deliberated. A challenge that is seldom highlighted,



however, is the generational divide in regional academia. Older generations of Middle East researchers heavily employ qualitative methods and prioritize teaching over research. This leads the older generation to approach their professorships as mundane teaching jobs, not as careers in research institutes where they are in charge of producing and reproducing knowledge. In contrast, the younger scholars, especially the western-educated ones, focus much more on research and knowledge production and employ quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods. This generational mistrust often creates an inhospitable environment for younger scholars, and a bias towards qualitative studies despite the availability of datasets appropriate for quantitative analysis (e.g Arab Barometer Survey, World Values Survey, Arab Opinion Index).

Another challenge is the gender bias against female

researchers. According to the ACSS's "Social science in the Arab world" report from 2015, 75 percent of academics in social science in the Arab World are males.⁹ Moreover, female academics face the double whammy of being underestimated by the old generation academics and by their counterparts from the same generation. Though their work has been recognized and published in prestigious journals, they receive a higher degree of scrutiny than their male counterparts – and their ability to lead a research team or a department is questioned.

Despite these challenges, opportunities for regional research persist and grow for regional and extra-regional researchers alike. Since the outbreak of the Arab Spring, the number of research grants for studying the Middle East or related questions has rapidly increased. This is despite the clear reduction of social science budgets in many Western countries.¹⁰ This creates opportunities for many regional scholars to be a part of ambitious research projects, thus empowering regional scholars by providing a high-quality mentoring mechanism, and expanding scholarly networks in Europe and North America. These initiatives also improve the quality of research pertaining to Middle East studies, as young regional researchers have access to better data and more accurate insights and information about regional phenomenon.

Other opportunities lay in the inauguration of research units for numerous International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGO). These units have mandates to produce high-quality research and policy recommendations based on scientific research. Examples of such organizations include Oxfam, Danish Refugees Council, ESCWA, UNV, and COSV. These platforms not only provide a secure environment to produce knowledge, but also the opportunity to gain valuable field experience that can advance the researcher's repertoire. They also provide valuable networking opportunities for researchers, and opportunities for career advancement through independent consultancy for other INGOS.

Additionally, there are now many international initiatives and research gatherings organized by Middle Eastern and Non-middle Eastern institutes to connect regional researchers with those from Europe

and North America. These provide spaces for regional researchers to network and collaborate with their extra-regional peers on an individual level, but also institutional capacity for regional researchers to learn and publish their work in internationally recognized platforms. Such initiatives include the APSA MENA workshops and the ACSS conferences and fellowships.

In conclusion, young researchers in the Middle East face significant challenges for their work, but also have at their disposal many opportunities and resources with which to face these challenges and remain resilient.

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PATTERNS OF YOUTH EXCLUSION AND VIOLENCE IN MOROCCO: A RESEARCH NOTE

By **Ilham Sadoqi**

A thriving research topic in Morocco is that of the youth – which has hitherto been a sociologically, culturally and politically under-studied category. Some studies have tackled the youth's value system (Bourquia et al. 1995, 2000), their economic condition (Chraibi 1994; Zaki 2007), and their social potential for change through collective action (Belghazi and Madani 2001). Others have highlighted the youth as a "confusingly" depoliticized mass (Maghraoui 2002), religious or political actors (Tozy 1984), or as radicalized social category (Pargeter, A, 2009; Alonso & Garcia Rey, 2007). Post-Arab Uprising conditions have unveiled both the youth's ostensible disavowal of conformist modes of expression and their creative apprehension of identity politics in the public sphere.

This piece sheds light on my current research on youth – summarizing a longer research paper I have written. Drawing on an interdisciplinary theoretical background and fieldwork research, the paper

⁹ <http://www.theacss.org/uploads/English-ASSR-2016.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.nature.com/news/social-scientists-tell-congress-don-t-cut-our-funding-1.21801> Also See : <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/content/european-union-research-cuts-scaled-back>

emphasizes the possibilities of interaction between the center and the margin to see how the youth negotiate convictions, identities and ideologies in situations of exclusion and violence. In post-Arab uprisings societies, the concept of youth represents a dynamic entity, one whose agency in revolutionary action has been significant, and whose project for change has been downplayed in the political, socio-economical and cultural spheres of action and production. In my paper, I study the potential links between the youth's political, cultural and socioeconomic exclusion and violence. I also examine the representation of youth, how they perceive their exclusion, and meanings they allot to violence in their everyday life and the registers of mobilization they deploy to influence public policies and enhance change. The fact that youth massively participated in Arab uprisings' protest movements to denounce authoritarianism and corruption of political regimes and ask for freedom, dignity and justice has put youth at the center of decision makers' interests. Yet, within the current reinvention of the stability paradigm, youth activism in the institutional political sphere of political parties and trade/professional unions seems to be limited. It is further compounded by the difficulty in accessing education, gaining a stable income, and having a social stature. This presumed socio-political exclusion might induce marginalization and lead to violence within society at large. Equally though, examining the problem of youth exclusion and violence in this study should not insinuate that this social category should be reduced to its vulnerabilities. Their everyday forms of resistance are as important as the manifestations of exclusion and violence.

THE GOALS OF THE STUDY

Informed by an interdisciplinary outlook, the paper addresses the question of youth by considering the multiple manifestations of their marginalization at the political, cultural and socioeconomic levels. On similar grounds, it explores the trajectories of violence in both its concrete and symbolic types. Establishing these connections between youth exclusion and violence has allowed us to perceive the marginality of youth as the product of a complex interaction of different individual, communal and societal factors. Dynamic and multifaceted, youth exclusion and violence is more perceptible through the heterogeneity of cases (different social and family status, educational background, political affiliation, gender, civil activism or history of

violence). Focusing on the diversity of their life trajectories unveils the factors leading to feelings of marginality and to violence, whether committed or subdued. From this constructivist approach, the paper takes into consideration the meanings youth give to violence and exclusion in accordance with their lived realities and their perceptions as a non-homogenous social category. My research strategy aims not only at mapping and analyzing youth multi-dimensional exclusion and violence, but also to suggest policy recommendations for decisions makers.

METHODOLOGY

I co-conducted a national survey with other colleagues from the Rabat Social Studies Institute, a recently established Moroccan think tank. We also adopted a qualitative methodology to study seven representative regions between May and June 2016 after an exploratory fieldwork in the region of Rabat in the winter of 2015. Participants in this study, whose age ranged between 18 and 32, were selected based on their demographic, economic, and cultural level, their level of political activism as well their history of protest. In each region, we conducted three different focus groups on socioeconomic, political and cultural exclusion and violence either in urban, semi-urban or rural communities. The appointment of a specific type of exclusion to any of these communities depended on their socio cultural, economic and political variables of each area and the degree to which they proximated a type of exclusion under study. Additionally, ten semi-structured interviews in each region with participants have enriched our data with in-depth accounts of the realities of their marginalization and violence and the prospects for inducing change. An apparent challenge in conducting this qualitative research is the difficulty to abide by preset ethics of fieldwork, such as gender parity of participants. Women's underrepresentation is more considerable when focus groups are held in associations, as marginalized young women access to the public sphere is limited. More importantly, unlike most qualitative-based research, this study adopts a coding platform to prepare a codebook, which implies a continuous involvement of the researchers themselves during all phases of the study to guarantee appropriate analysis and conceptualization.

CHALLENGES

A local researcher might enjoy easier and better access to data sources, manage fieldwork language obstacles and administrative bureaucracy, and understand ethical codes in each region. Nevertheless, challenges persist. Sometimes, coordinating with local associations can help host our fieldwork and take care of the administrative permissions and logistics. In other cases, there are security issues when focus groups and interviews are held in volunteering private homes. This is especially the case in remote and rural areas where fragile population may practice some banned but tolerated activities – such as cannabis farming – for subsistence reasons. Besides, another significant challenge is how to preserve our academic independence as researchers, especially if the research is conducted within the framework of an institution claiming independence from the state, political parties and international organizations. In general, research seems to face a triangular restriction: state censorship and monopoly control over the channels of international funding, public universities' lack of financial autonomy, and limited possibilities of national funding – most of which is dedicated to state institution projects. Thus, the validity of any research outcomes ought to be evaluated according to its position vis-à-vis the hegemonic discourse and its defenders inside and outside the country. The ultimate challenge is thus finding alternative ways to ensure the continuity of independent research and research institutions.

KEY RESULTS

Preliminary results demonstrate that Moroccan youth conceive themselves as a heterogeneous group in clash with the same but multifaceted authority. Despite their diverse origin, background and expectations, they tend to link the realities of their exclusion to state dominance over the sources of power and wealth. Consequently, they particularly show high interest in non-institutional forms of political participation including art. Yet they consider power abuse and deprivation of socio-economic rights and linguistic/cultural exclusion as forms of violence. Such violence proliferates in different institutions and spaces. Young women, for example, vehemently reject violence of patriarchy inside and outside the private sphere, and adhere clearly to the values of freedom of action. In this respect, Moroccan youth feel that their abused dignity and unequal access to national wealth, and

their non-integration in the process of socio-economic and political development foster a proclivity toward violence. Multifariously manifested, violence seems relatively tolerated in the private space of the family, but abhorred by youth, especially when state institutions and its policies produce systematic discrimination and enhance violence at schools, universities, the street or other public spaces. To overcome the failure of state inclusive strategies, Moroccan youth display active agency politics to influence policy makers locally and nationally through mobilizing to voice their demands and aspirations, and using innovative forms and means of participation in public life, with a hope to change the ethics and the logic of governance.

YOUTH AND RESEARCH PROSPECTS IN MOROCCO

The ongoing discursive polarization between conservative and liberal forces in the political, social and cultural spheres raises the question of power, youth and change at large. Despite the growing youth protest movement in post-Arab uprisings era, the state seems to have reinforced its supremacy in designing public policies and politics for the government, shaping socio-economic strategies and initiatives, and administering public debate. The fact that the Islamist Party of Justice and Development (PJD) succeeded in leading the government since 2011 has not transformed the political culture. Instead, the Islamists seem to pragmatically seek power while compromising their claims to combat corruption and democratize wealth. The estrangement between the Islamist authority and human rights and feminist actors reflects the former's inability to be inclusive of divergent discourses. Likewise, while the political space seems to reiterate the state's consolidation paradigm and the priority of stability in an unstable region, a vibrant society is shaping its own ways of mobilization and protest. The hyper activism of youth on social media, the proliferating violence in stadiums, religious radicalization of youth, protest by public suicide attempts, and resurgence of populism are signs of questioning the political system and its inability to deal with a rising social consciousness, especially among the youth. Further research on any of these issues would help explain how social mobilization checks and balances state power, or leads to democratization and /or destabilization.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

EXPANDING SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL SCIENCE IN THE ARAB MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: MENA WORKSHOPS 2017-2019

The American Political Science Association is pleased to announce the next phase of our engagement with political scientists in the Arab Middle East and North Africa. With continued support from Carnegie Corporation of New York, we extend our commitment to enhancing the scholarly networks of early-career political science faculty from the MENA region through 2019.

The APSA MENA Workshops are an annual series of capacity building workshops that bring together approximately twenty fellows, alongside four senior scholars, for training in research skills, professional development, peer review, and networking. The program is open to PhD candidates, post-docs, and early career faculty from across the Middle East and North Africa. Each program is dedicated to a substantive issue in political science with a unique schedule of lectures, discussions, research presentations, guest speakers, and professional development seminars. Throughout the workshops, fellows receive critical feedback on their own research and work to refine these manuscripts for publication. In the process, fellows form important professional networks of peer review, support, and collaboration.

Following their participation in the workshops, alumni are provided with complimentary membership to APSA and are eligible to apply for grants to facilitate further professional development and research collaboration. Alumni are regularly invited to present at the APSA annual meeting and other scholarly conferences.

The workshops have been hosted in cooperation with universities and research institutions across the MENA region since 2013. Previous workshops have been held at the Alsalam Center for Development and Strategic Studies in Kuwait, the American University in Cairo, the American University of Beirut's Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman, the Center for Maghreb Studies in Tunis, Lebanese American University, and Qatar University's Social and Economic Survey Research Institute.

In the next phase of the program, we seek to expand institutional-level impact by providing resources and support to political science departments at public universities across the region. These departmental collaborations will build institutional support for student and faculty research training and professional development and strengthen the field of internationally inclusive and open political science scholarship.

Alongside APSA's other international programs, the APSA MENA Workshops are a concerted effort to engage with the international political science community and strengthen research networks linking US scholars with their colleagues overseas, as part of the association's [2017-2019 strategic plan](#). For program news, updates, and additional information see the project website: <http://web.apsanet.org/mena/>.

ALUMNI PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

The next round of Alumni Grants will take place in 2018. Made possible by Carnegie Corporation of New York, the program supports alumni activities such as presenting at an academic conference, organizing a mini-workshop, conducting fieldwork, or advancing research towards publication. Since 2014, APSA has awarded over \$103,000 in small grants through the MENA Workshop Professional Development Grants program. Recent recipients include:

Olga Blázquez Sánchez (2016) – \$1,000 Individual Grant

Hamdi Echkaou (2016) – \$1,000 Individual Grant

Abdelhamid Rhaïem (2016) – \$680 Individual Grant

Dana El Kurd (2016) – \$1,000 Individual Grant

Shimaa Hatab (2016) – \$1,000 Individual Grant

Gerardus Hoetjes (2016) – \$1,000 Individual Grant

Yasmeen Mekawy (2016) – \$1,000 Individual Grant

Youssef Chouhoud (2016) – \$1,000 Individual Grant

Yasmina Abouzzohour (2016) – \$1,000 Individual Grant

Reham Rizk (2016) – \$1,000 Individual Grant

Johannes Gunesch (2016) – \$1,000 Individual Grant

Rania AbdelNaeem (2016) – \$1,000 Individual Grant

Laura Wickström (2016) – \$1,000 Individual Grant

Matt Gordner (2016) – \$1,000 Individual Grant

May Darwich (2013) and Nadine Sika (2013) – \$5,490 Collaborative Grant

Huda Alsahi (2016) and Nourah Shuaibi (2015) – \$5,900 Collaborative Grant

Shimaa Hatab (2016) and Nermin Allam (2013) – \$6,000 Collaborative Grant

Youssef Chouhoud (2016) and Matt Gordner (2016) – \$6,000 Collaborative Grant

Congratulations to these alumni! Additional information can be found online at <http://web.apsanet.org/mena/alumni-grants/>.

ALUMNI NEWS AND PUBLICATIONS

Over the past year, many of our alumni (both fellows and co-leaders) were invited to present their research and participate in conferences across the United States, including 16 alumni at APSA's Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, PA, and 18 alumni at the Middle East Studies Association's Annual Meeting in Boston, MA. For more information, see the [Alumni Network](#) section of our website.

If you would like to submit an announcement to be included in future Alumni News, send your updates directly to menanewsletter@apsanet.org. Please join us in congratulating the following alumni for their continued professional accomplishments!

2013 ALUMNI - CAIRO AND TUNIS

May Darwich (Durham University, UK) co-authored the article with Tamirace Fakhoury "Casting the Other as Existential Threat: The Securitization of Sectarianism in the International Relations of the Syria Crisis" in *Global Discourse* 6, no 4 (2016). She also published her article "Creating the Enemy, Constructing the Threat: The Diffusion of Repression against the Muslim Borderhood in the Middle East" in *Democratization* (Online first, March 2017).

Nermin Allam (Princeton University, USA) published her research "Despite New limitations, Egyptian women are still active" on the Washington Post's [Monkey Cage](#) blog on May 5.

2014 ALUMNI - AMMAN AND BEIRUT

Tareq Al Taie (Mosul University, Iraq) completed his PhD in Strategy And international Relations from Al-Nahrain University, Iraq

2015 ALUMNI - DOHA AND KUWAIT

Kristin Eggeling (University of St. Andrews, UK) published her article "Cultural diplomacy in Qatar: between 'virtual enlargement', national identity construction and elite legitimation" in the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, (online first, March 2017)

Fabiana Perera (George Washington University, USA) published her research "In Ecuador's extremely tight election, the left defied the odds" on the Washington Post's [Monkey Cage](#) blog on April 4.

MENA AROUND THE WORLD

LAUNCH: THE INSTITUTE OF MIDDLE EASTERN AND ISLAMIC STUDIES AT DURHAM UNIVERSITY

We celebrated the relaunch of Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (IMEIS) as a leading research institute in September 2016, marking the formal return of one of Europe's most respected centres of excellence in Middle Eastern and Islamic studies after a ten year absence following Durham's successful co-leadership of the multimillion dollar research councils-funded Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World consortium. We were honoured to have four distinguished scholars and close observers of the MENA region to lead our relaunch event, leading to the publication of the ['The Politics of Change in the Middle East'](#). Podcasts and publications of the event as well as other events are available online: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/imeis/>.

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS: IMEIS CONFERENCE 2017, DURHAM UNIVERSITY, 20 SEPTEMBER 2017

For its first Annual Conference since its re-launch by the School of Government and International Affairs in the Summer 2016, the Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies invites proposals on the theme **'Diversity'**. Throughout time, the Muslim world has been diverse ethnically, linguistically, culturally, regionally and religiously. Whether this diversity has been a weakening factor or the reason for its long-lasting history is still subject to debate. Moreover, grasping the entirety of this multifaceted nature far exceeds by far the boundaries of academic disciplines. Thus, diversity will not only be explored as a topic but also as an approach to Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies and as a methodology to lead research across and between a multiplicity of fields. We encourage proposals for papers, postgraduate research works, full panels and workshops. We particularly welcome submissions that highlight the collaborative work between academic and non-academic actors, as well as between researchers from different disciplines. For submission details, see: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/imeis/events/conference2017/>. **Deadline:** Wednesday 31 May 2017

TENURE-TRACK FACULTY POSITION, THE UNIVERSITY OF SÃO PAULO

The Department of Political Science at the University of São Paulo announces the opening of a full-time (RDIDP MS-3), tenure-track faculty position by public tender, on the topic of Democracy, Public Policy, and Inequality. The monthly salary is BRL R\$ 10.670,76 (May/2016). Applications will only be received online, through the link <https://uspdigital.usp.br/gr/admissao>. The **deadline is June 5, 2017**, until 5:00 PM Brasilia Time. For further information, please contact the Department of Political Science at the e-mail address alvarodevita@usp.br.

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS: THE 2018-2019 SUMMER PROGRAM IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, PRINCETON

The School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, announces open applications for the 2018-2019 Summer Program in Social Science. Conducted in collaboration with the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER) at the University of the Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg, and the Escuela de Estudios de Género (EEG) and Centro de Estudios (CES) at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, in Bogotá, this innovative program will take place over a two-year cycle, beginning with a two-week session in Princeton (June 18-29, 2018), followed by one week mid-2019 at one of the two collaborating institutions in South Africa and Colombia, with continuous communication facilitated among the scholars throughout the two year period. Designed to draw together twenty early-career scholars from countries in Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, the program aims to enrich and expand the realm of the social sciences through the confrontation of different intellectual traditions and perspectives. Fellows will pursue and present their own research projects during the program. Applications must be filed electronically through the Institute's online application system by the **deadline of September 15, 2017**. Application instructions can be found here: <https://www.sss.ias.edu/spss/instructions>.