

*The Arab Revolutions
in Context:
Socio-Political Implications for the
Middle East and Beyond*

**A joint Forum with Deakin University and The University of Melbourne
Elisabeth Murdoch Theatre, University of Melbourne
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NATIONAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR
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Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation



The Arab Revolutions in Context:

Socio-Political Implications for the Middle East and Beyond

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The Arab Revolutions in Context: Socio-Political Implications for the Middle East and Beyond

Program

8:30-9am: Registration and Morning Coffee

9-9:30am: Opening Session: *The Arab Revolutions in Context*

Introduction and Welcome: Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh

9:30-10:30am: Panel One: *The Causes of the Arab Revolutions*

Failed and Failing "Republican" Dynasties and the Revolutions in North Africa. Associate Professor Richard Pennell

Six Months in Cairo: The Road to the 'Egyptian Revolution'. Dr Gennaro Gervasio

Chair: Dr Matthew Gray

10:30-11am: Morning Tea

11-12:30pm: Panel Two: *The Events of the Arab Revolutions and their Consequences*

They Shoot Protesters, Don't They?: The Libyan Crisis. Dr Sally Totman

The Arab states of the Gulf and the Consequences of the 2011 protests. Dr Matthew Gray

Around the Mulberry Bush: The Counterterrorism Agenda in Yemen. Dr Sarah Phillips

Chair: Dr Benjamin MacQueen

12:30-1:30pm: Lunch

1:30-3pm: Panel Three: *The Key Civil Society Actors and the Politics of the Arab World*

Social Media and Social Movements in the Arab Revolutions. Dr Halim Rane

The Arab Uprisings and the Return of Politics. Mr Anthony Bubalo

Re-engaging with a Changing Middle East. Dr Benjamin MacQueen

Chair: Dr Gennaro Gervasio

3-3:30pm: Afternoon Tea

3:30-4:30pm: Panel Four: *The Implications for the Region and the World*

Middle East Conflict and Global Oil Prices. Dr Leanne Piggott

Russia, China and Revolutions in the Middle East. Dr Luca Anceschi

Chair: Dr Sally Totman

4:30-5:30pm: Concluding Session: *Beyond the Arab Revolutions*

Panel Discussion: Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh, Mr Anthony Bubalo, Dr Halim Rane

Chair: Dr Benjamin Isakhan



The Arab Revolutions in Context

Overview

Late 2010 and early 2011 have seen a series of dramatic and unprecedented events sweep across the Middle East. It began in the quiet Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid, where one young street vendor set himself alight in response to the corruption and oppression that surrounded him. This desperate act of self-immolation resonated with a deeply disgruntled population and led to weeks of popular protests across the country. By mid January, the 23 year autocratic rule of President Ben Ali had come to an end. These events led to several scattered protests in other Arab states, most notably in Egypt where tens of thousands of protestors eventually took control of Tahrir Square. A stand-off ensued between elements loyal to the government and the popular uprising. Although he remained obstinate that he would introduce reform and then see out his term, by the 11th February the Arab Revolutions had claimed their second dictator in President Mubarak. Today, in both Tunisia and Egypt while there is certainly cause for optimism, the patience and commitment needed to turn the ideals of the revolutions into a reality pose a great challenge in the face of the many intractable problems that plague the region.

It is also important to note that these Arab Revolutions have come at a very high price. Even in the successful examples of Tunisia and Egypt the toppling of tyrants was accompanied by a high body count. Elsewhere, the cost has been much higher. In Libya the movement has turned into a brutal civil war. While the “rebels” have controlled key Libyan towns, Colonel Gaddafi has used his entire arsenal in an attempt to quash the resistance. With key multinational institutions like the Arab League condemning such actions, the United Nations has now authorized the use of “all necessary measures” to protect civilians in Libya. The world waits to see what steps will be taken to defeat the 42-year incumbent and what the legacy will be of this latest intervention in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, citizens across the region continue to stage (mostly) peaceful protests in their struggle against oppression and towards equality, human rights and democracy. In Yemen, Algeria, Morocco, Oman, Jordan, Kuwait and Iraq, these movements have been met with a mixture of brutal suppression and modest political and economic reforms designed to placate the citizens rather than commit to genuine change. In Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories and Syria, much smaller protests have occurred but with far less impact or attention. Perhaps the most troubling recent events have occurred in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. In Bahrain, the Youth Movement and the various Shia opposition groups have been quashed with King Al-Khalifa not only using his own helicopters and tanks to fight the protestors, but calling on the military of Saudi Arabia and the UAE to intervene (under the Gulf Cooperation Council GCC defense agreement umbrella). For their part, the Saudi's have met their own protests with not just a series of multi-billion dollar reforms coupled with live fire on open crowds, but with an abhorrent ideological campaign which asserts that Islam and social protests are incompatible.

The Symposium

This complex set of events pose a number of critical questions that need urgent and in-depth scholarly attention. Indeed, the Arab Revolutions – and the varying debates and discussions that they have stimulated – serve as a unique opportunity to reflect on many of the core issues facing the region and to challenge conventional wisdom concerning democracy in the Middle East, the efficacy of military intervention, and the implications of both for the region and beyond. This Forum will discuss the unfolding events in the Arab world but will do so by situating them within a larger conceptual and socio-political framework.

Symposium Organizers

- Professor Fethi Mansouri, Deakin University
- Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh, University of Melbourne
- Dr Benjamin Isakhan, Deakin University

Biographies and Abstracts

Dr Luca Anceschi (La Trobe University)

Title

When it's not time for change: Russia, China and Revolutions in the Middle East

Abstract

The echoes of the 2011 Arab unrest reverberated far beyond the Mediterranean Sea. The wider public, the economic elites, and – perhaps most importantly – the political leaderships of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China have paid significant attention to the unfolding of events in the Middle East. In the last few years, Moscow and Beijing formulated and implemented their policies vis-à-vis the Middle East according to diverging trajectories. In a clear break with strategies consolidated in the Soviet and early post-Soviet era, Putin's Russia has progressively disengaged with the region, limiting its involvement to strategic interaction with the Gulf States. On the other hand, a combination of matters of domestic political consumption, geopolitical aspirations, and economic interests has been at the basis of Beijing's growing interaction with the region, in which China now plays a key strategic role. In spite of the different intensity of their interactive encounters with the Middle East, Moscow and Beijing adopted strikingly similar attitudes in relation to the events occurred during the turbulent early months of 2011. As it is often the case in foreign policy making, it was the primacy of domestic factors that shaped most decisively Russian and Chinese responses to the 2011 Arab revolutions. In other words, the crumbling of Middle Eastern authoritarianism unsettled the leaderships of Russia and China to influence profoundly their international postures vis-à-vis the 2011 Arab unrest. Assessing the perceived impact that Arab revolutions had on Russian and Chinese politics represents the core issue of this paper, which will contextualise Moscow's and Beijing's perceptions of and attitudes towards popular unrest in the Middle East within dynamics of power maintenance in Russia and China. A multilayered approach – that looks simultaneously at the domestic spheres and foreign policy making environments of the states in question – has been designed in support of the argument advanced in this paper. At domestic level, the paper will illustrate the dynamics through which the Russian and Chinese leaderships revealed their growing preoccupation with the destabilising impact that Arab popular unrest could have on their respective internal political landscapes. So far as foreign policy making, the paper will first review the bilateral policies that Moscow and Beijing devised in the context of international action towards the Middle East revolutions. The focus will then shift onto multilateral diplomacy, to analyse and discuss the underlying determinants of Russian and Chinese voting behaviour within the UN Security Council during the debate on international intervention in Libya.

Biography

Luca Anceschi is Lecturer in International Relations in the School of Social Sciences, La Trobe University. A graduate of the University of Naples 'L'Orientale' and of La Trobe University, his principal areas of research are the politics and international relations of post-Soviet Central Asia and the Greater Middle East. His publications include *Turkmenistan's foreign policy – Positive Neutrality and the consolidation of the Turkmen regime* (Routledge, 2008) and *Energy Security in the Era of Climate Change – The Asia-Pacific Experience* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, co-edited).

Mr Anthony Bubalo (Lowy Institute)

Title

The Arab uprisings and the return of politics

Abstract

For much of the last two decades most people in the Middle East saw participation in domestic politics as pointless, dangerous or both. To the extent that there was any domestic politics at all it came with strictly enforced rules and boundaries: only certain political actors were allowed to participate; opposition movements were either loyal or illegal; if there were parliamentary elections ruling parties always won, even if the margin would sometimes be altered to give the appearance of politics; and protests were restricted in time, place and size, sometimes by the agreement of the protestors themselves, sometimes by the swift actions of security forces. The Arab uprisings reflect, however, a massive re-politicisation of Arab societies. This paper will explore the sudden onset – but also gradual evolution – of this re-politicisation over the last two decades. It will discuss a range of factors that have contributed to it, from the regions New Media and Social media revolutions, to its socio-economic crises and the crisis of authority afflicting regimes throughout the Middle East. The paper will conclude with an assessment of whether re-politicisation is likely to prove short lived or whether, in fact, the region's political landscape has now been changed fundamentally.

Biography

Anthony Bubalo is Program Director, West Asia at the Lowy Institute for International Policy in Sydney, Australia. His key research interests are West Asia-East Asia linkages and Australian policy in West Asia (the Middle East, Central and Southwest Asia). Major publications include, with Dr Greg Fealy and Whit Mason, 'Zealous democrats: Islamism and democracy in Egypt, Indonesia and Turkey' and with Dr Greg Fealy, 'Joining the Caravan? The Middle East, Islamism and Indonesia'. He comments regularly on Middle Eastern issues for Australian and international media outlets and his work has appeared in The Australian, The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald, the Financial Times and Asahi Shimbun newspapers as well as in The National Interest and on ForeignPolicy.com.

Before joining the Lowy Institute Anthony was an officer in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for thirteen years. He has served in Australian diplomatic missions in Saudi Arabia and Israel and was Senior Middle East Analyst with the Office of National Assessments from 1996 to 1998. From 2002-2003 he was director of the Policy and Coordination Unit of the Australian government's Iraq Task Force, and immediately prior to joining the Lowy Institute Anthony was DFAT's Senior Speechwriter.

Dr Gennaro Gervasio (Macquarie University)

Title

Six Months in Cairo: The Road to the 'Egyptian Revolution'

Abstract

On January 25, hundreds of thousands of ordinary Egyptians did something unprecedented: faced with close ranks of helmeted, baton-wielding riot police blocking Cairo's Tahrir Square, they walked calmly and peacefully forwards. Then, after less than three weeks of intense protests, President Mubarak had to step down and relinquish his powers to the Supreme Army Council, ending his almost 30-year old regime. Many observers, including Western 'experts', commentators and policymakers were caught by surprise by the Egyptian uprising, and opted to focus their explanations of the events on their apparent unpredictability.

Without negating the 'exceptionality' of the events, especially so far as the degree of popular participation and intensity of the protests, this paper will argue that, when it comes to the Egyptian uprising, a reaction of 'surprise' can only be justified by a superficial analysis of the latest developments in Egyptian politics and society. In this sense, this paper will focus on the many 'signposts' on the road leading to the Uprising and the demise of the Mubarak regime.

This paper is based on extensive fieldwork in Egypt, and more specifically on the intensive research on local civic activism carried out in Cairo between June 2010 and January 2011. Ultimately, this paper will aim to investigate the wider causes that prompted the Egyptian population to take to the streets in January-February 2011. Rather than being 'quiet' or 'inert', as in many misleading representations, the Egyptian street had seen a renewed wave of activism in the 2000s. In the last decade, protest movements prompted by formerly 'isolated' issues came together for the first time to create a real 'culture of protests', or, to use Asef Bayat's words, embodying 'Street Politics'. A number of stages can be hence identified within the formative process of such movement. First, protests were started by pan-Arab issues, including the Second Palestinian Intifada in 2000/1 and the 2003 invasion of Iraq. At a later stage, they adopted requests for democratic reforms, as exemplified by the campaign against Mubarak re-election in 2004/5 led by the Egyptian Movement for Change under the slogan Kifaya! (Enough!). Finally, the Egypt protest movement moved onto focusing on socio-economic grievances as demonstrated by the large strikes in 2007/8 and the birth of an independent workers' movement.

In order to highlight the nuances of the evolutionary trajectory of Egyptian activism, this paper will demonstrate that it was the renewed wave of activism in Egypt in the 2000s – in which different issues and different components merged to have paved the way to the 'January 25 Revolution'.

The integration of an ethnographic approach and social movement theories will allow the paper to investigate the deeper causes of the political, economic and social crisis of the Egyptian society, key issues in the background of the revolution and the regime's incapability, or lack of will, to formulate viable responses to the demands coming from the protest movements.

Biography

Gennaro Gervasio is a lecturer in Middle East Politics as well as the Director of the Centre for Middle East and North African Studies at Macquarie University, Sydney. His main research interests are: social movements in the Arab World, the processes of democratization and de-liberalization in the Arab World (especially Egypt and Morocco), the role of the Arab (mainly but not only) secular intellectuals, and the politics of the Arab media. Before joining Macquarie University in 2008, he held teaching and research positions at the Universities of Mansura (Egypt), Bristol (UK), Milan and Naples 'L'Orientale' (Italy). He was a Visiting Professor in Political Science at the American University in Cairo in the fall of 2010. His latest monograph is *al-Haraka al-Markisiyya fi Misr, 1967-1981 (The Marxist Movement in Egypt 1967-81, Cairo: The National Center for Translation, 2010)*.

Dr Matthew Gray (Australian National University)

Title

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab states of the Gulf: The political, economic and regional consequences of the 2011 protests

Abstract

While the most striking protests in the Middle East in 2011 have been in Egypt and North Africa, few states have been untouched by popular uprisings or protests: in the Gulf, Bahrain saw an extensive set of protests in mid-February that were only weakened after a commitment by the monarchy to negotiate with Shi'i opposition leaders. Disagreement over preconditions to these talks saw further protests in mid-March which were violently repressed by Bahraini forces, backed by Saudi and Emirati forces. As at late March, repression seems to have cleared Pearl Roundabout and al-Manama's streets of protestors, but a renewed uprising remains possible. The greater fear is that radical Shi'i might even resort to sabotage, terrorism, or the like.

What all this means for Bahrain, and in turn Saudi Arabia, coming as it does on top of turmoil elsewhere, is therefore a crucial question that this paper will address, looking at the consequences of protests for Bahrain and Saudi Arabia specifically, plus some wider implications from the responses by these states, and especially by Riyadh.

The first issue that will be addressed, after a background on the sources of the Bahraini protests and the risks of similar in Saudi Arabia, is the impacts that have come, or may yet come, to Bahrain's domestic environment. There is now a greater prospect of genuine political and economic reform, to address the grievances of the Shi'i but to a lesser extent also the Sunni, including: some limited political liberalization, which has long been promised; other bureaucratic or administrative reform as well or instead; and economic changes to improve the living standards of ordinary Bahrainis, especially the Shi'i. In the absence of genuine reforms, the prospects for considerable instability will also be examined.

Second are the impacts on Saudi Arabia's domestic scene. The protests threaten to undermine the rentier bargain in the Kingdom, with implications for stability, the prospects of political reform, and the possibility for changes to the state capitalism and neo-patrimonialism of the Kingdom's politics and political economy. Yet these structures could just as easily sustain the status quo instead.

Finally is the regional nature of the events; protests in Bahrain are not just a matter of concern for the al-Khalifa and Bahrain's elite; they also feed into threat perceptions in Riyadh. They pose direct political and economic threats to Saudi border stability, and they worsen fears that Riyadh will be regionally weakened by these events or Iran strengthened, all the more so were the Bahraini ruling dynasty to be overthrown and replaced by a Shi'i-dominated political order. The Shi'i uprisings in the Eastern province in 1979 are still recalled by Saudi Arabia's elite, as is the importance of that province, and stability in next-door Bahrain, for oil exports from the Gharar and other fields and for port and economic activity in the upper Gulf more generally. Concerns about all of these dynamics will impact Saudi Arabia's relations with other GCC states, Iran, Yemen, other key Sunni Arab states, and even the United States.

Biography

Dr Matthew Gray joined the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies as Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid al-Maktoum as a Senior Lecturer in January 2005. Prior to this appointment he held several positions with the Australian Government in trade promotion, defence intelligence, and international cooperation roles.

His research interests cover the politics, political economy, and international relations of the Arab Middle East. He is the author of *Conspiracy Theories in the Middle East: Sources and Politics* (Routledge, 2010), and of several articles and edited chapters on related topics such as political language, propaganda, and constitutional debates in the region. He has also published widely on political economy, including on Gulf sovereign wealth funds, rentier theory, oil dynamics, and the political economy of tourism.

His teaching includes undergraduate courses on Middle Eastern political economy and Middle Eastern business, and postgraduate courses on development in the Middle East and the Gulf strategic environment.

He completed his doctorate at the ANU in 2000, on the political economy of the Middle East. He also holds a Master of Arts degree, specializing in Middle Eastern studies, and a Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in Politics, both from Macquarie University in Sydney.

Dr Benjamin MacQueen (Monash University)

Title

Re-engaging with a changing Middle East

Abstract

The downfall of the Ben Ali regime in Tunisia and the Mubarak regime in Egypt, alongside unrest in Algeria, Yemen, Jordan, Bahrain and elsewhere has shaken the foundations of autocratic regimes across the Arab world. What is less evident, perhaps, is how these events have affected the way in which governments, analysts, and others understand the region. Here, these uprisings have shaken key assumptions held about political dynamics in the Middle East. This paper will explore four key implications of the current unrest for previously-held views of regional politics: first, how this nebulous, organic and largely leaderless form of opposition challenges the predominant view of authoritarianism or Islamism as the only political options; second, how the collapse of the social contract through this unrest has revealed a profoundly different state-society dynamic in the region than was previously assumed; third, how the Western obsession with 'stability' in the Middle East frames reactions to the uprising; and fourth, that these uprisings are not exclusively about democratisation nor reactions to oppression, but a combination of these whose effects are likely to lead to strikingly new political arrangements. It is argued that questioning one's positionality in respect to events in the Middle East is critical to enhance analytical flexibility and insight for the new political landscape that is emerging in the region.

Biography

Dr Benjamin MacQueen is a Lecturer in the School of Political and Social Inquiry and Deputy Director of the Global Terrorism Research Centre at Monash University. He is the author of 'Political Culture and Conflict Resolution in the Arab World: Lebanon and Algeria' and a range of other works exploring Middle Eastern politics, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. He is a regular media commentator on issues relating to Middle Eastern politics and international relations.

Associate Professor Richard Pennell (Melbourne University)

Title

Failed and failing "republican" dynasties and the revolutions in North Africa: Did kinship power exacerbate the rebellions or hold them off for too long?

Abstract

This paper is a preliminary attempt at examining the role of ruling families in the 2010/11 revolutions in North Africa: the ben Alis in Tunisia, the Mubaraks in Egypt and the Qaddafis in Libya. All of these posed as non-royal regimes, but they functioned as proto-dynasties with power-consuming families at their centres. All, in theory, had public commitments to popular rule - republican elections in Tunisia and Egypt and "direct democracy" in Libya, but in each case those commitments were hollow. In each case the top dynastic figure was becoming elderly by the end of 2010. The paper outlines an approach to understanding the revolutions in terms of the tensions between fraudulent systems of popular participation and dynastic weakness in terms of the historical political development of the three countries concerned.

Biography

Richard Pennell has BA and PhD degrees from the University of Leeds in Britain. He taught extensively in North Africa, the Middle East and Singapore and joined the History Department at the University of Melbourne in 1997. He has published extensively on the history of North Africa; particularly Morocco and Libya including *Morocco since 1830: a History* (London and New York: New York University Press, 2001) and *Morocco: From Empire to Independence* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2003). He is currently working on two projects; the history of criminal trials abroad and resultant questions of national identity and the history of armed jihad.

Dr Sarah Phillips (University of Sydney)

Title

Around the Mulberry Bush: The Counterterrorism Agenda in Yemen

Abstract

President Ali Abdullah Saleh won't go without a fight, and is using every trick in the book to cling to power. From the West's perspective, the most problematic trick is his penchant for releasing militant jihadis from prison when his legitimacy with the West is strained.

While the story has not been widely released, local security sources have confirmed that this is just what he did on 8 March when he quietly granted around 70 al-Qa'ida suspects their freedom from a Political Security prison in Sana'a. In other words, the man whom the US Administration continues to look to for assistance against al-Qa'ida in Yemen has, again, released al-Qa'ida suspects from jail.

This all seems rather counter-intuitive: Why would president Saleh release members of a group that actively threatens him, particularly when he has also undermined his local legitimacy by consenting to US air strikes against them? The answer is that he has built his power on an informal system that runs on crisis, and al-Qa'ida are agents of crisis. The presence of al-Qa'ida in Yemen ensures that the West will continue to look at the country through a counterterrorism prism at the exclusion of the other seismic shifts that are occurring there. It ensures that the West will argue for "stability" and "orderliness" rather than for change through the emergence of a movement that is built on the rejection of the president's smoke and mirrors.

In so doing, President Saleh has read his audience very well and, essentially, gotten away with murder. Ten days after releasing the 70 men from prison, President Saleh placed snipers armed with Dragunov marksman rifles on the buildings that overlook "Taghair" (Change) Square in Sana'a. In the space of a few minutes they killed more than 50 unarmed protestors and injured hundreds more.

Conscious of the security threat the Yemen wields, President Obama responded to the massacre by saying: "those responsible for today's violence must be held accountable," as if to suggest that President Saleh might not really have been behind it. US Defense Secretary Robert Gates responded to events by articulating the vain hope that President Saleh is the man to prevent al-Qa'ida from gaining ground in Yemen: "We've had counterterrorism cooperation with President Saleh and the Yemeni security services... So if that government collapses, or is replaced by one who is dramatically more weak, then I think we'd face some additional challenges out of Yemen, there's no question about it." But this is a leap of faith for the United States.

By sanctioning the release of the 70 prisoners from the Political Security Prison in Sana'a, Saleh has attempted to insure himself against becoming obsolete. For a man who has always ruled by creating chaos and confusion among those who might challenge him, releasing people who can graphically illustrate just how dangerous Yemen is helps to reduce the possibility of genuine change. In that, the blinkered securitised view of Western policy makers is partly culpable.

Biography

Sarah Phillips lectures at the Centre for International Security Studies at Sydney University, where she specialises in Yemeni and Middle Eastern politics, and the politics of state-building. She lived and worked in Yemen for several years and has advised numerous Western governments and aid agencies on matters relating to Yemen. Sarah has published widely on Yemeni politics, including her book "Yemen's Democracy Experiment in Regional Perspective" (Palgrave Macmillan, December 2008). Her second book, "Yemen and the Politics of Permanent Crisis" will be published by the Adelphi Series later this year. An earlier version of that work, funded by the Developmental Leadership Program, is available through: <http://www.dlprog.org/>

Dr Leanne Piggott (University of Sydney)

Title

Middle East Conflict, Global Oil Prices, and the Search for Alternative Fuel

Abstract

There is an intrinsic relationship between the energy security of oil producers and consumers. For oil producing states, the security of oil demand is paramount while for consumer states it is the security of oil supply that is of primary concern. Further, while high oil prices are good for producers, they are detrimental for consumers - at least in the short term. However, in the medium term, high oil prices have a negative impact on both producers and consumers. In the United States - the world's largest oil consumer and importer of petroleum - all but one of the country's recessions since World War Two have been preceded by a dramatic increase in the price of crude oil. Recession leads to a reduction in spending across all sectors of the economy, including those dependent on oil consumption, notably transportation. Reduced global oil consumption in turn impacts negatively on oil producing states generally, but is of particular concern to those states for whom oil 'rents' constitute the majority of total GDP, and in the case of authoritarian regimes, pay for social and political order.

Historically, conflicts in the Middle East have triggered higher oil prices due to the region's geo-political significance: 56% of known global oil reserves are located in the Arabian/Persian Gulf, while 40% of seaborne traded oil, which represents 20% of oil, traded worldwide, transits the Strait of Hormuz. The current turmoil in the Middle East is no exception. Political unrest and conflict across the region have seen crude oil prices reach two and half year highs, stoking concern that the fragile global economic recovery could be derailed by higher fuel prices. This is of particular concern for the United States whose transportation sector depends on petroleum for 95% of its fuel. Already in 2008, when the oil price reached an all-time record of \$US147 a barrel, the need to reduce the US' dependence upon oil imports was elevated to national security status. Under the Obama Administration, initiatives to reduce the country's oil dependence have become a top priority with the electrification of land transportation its primary target. The issue has been propelled to centre stage in the wake of events in the Middle East triggered by the revolution in Tunisia.

There is yet to emerge a consensus as to the pace of the transition in the US and other major oil-importing states to a light vehicle fleet fuelled by batteries and other alternatives fuels, and if and at what point this will lead to global 'peak oil demand'. Regardless, the debate raises important questions beyond the current uprisings to the medium and longer-term implications for oil demand security and the economic and political stability of the oil-producing states of the Middle East and the region more broadly. In an effort to shed further light on these questions, the aim of this paper is to examine the impact of current political unrest and conflicts in the Middle East on global oil prices, and the knock-on effect this is having on consumers. The reason why these issues are of concern for the ruling elites of the region will also be assessed.

Biography

Dr Leanne Piggott is a graduate of the University of Oxford and the University of Sydney. Her PhD was on Australian foreign policy in relation to the Middle East, specifically on the Palestine Question of 1947-1948. Leanne is a Senior Lecturer in The University of Sydney Business School where she is the First Year Undergraduate Program Director. She also teaches political risk management in the Business School's Global Executive MBA. Her research focuses on energy security, in particular, supply and demand security of the global oil market.

Leanne is the author of the book, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Timeless Struggle*. Her other recent publications include *The Evolving Terrorist Threat to Southeast Asia: A Net Assessment*, a jointly authored book published by the RAND Corporation. She is a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Dr Halim Rane (Griffith University)

Title

Social Media and the Diffusion of Ideas among Social Movements in the Arab Revolutions
Halim Rane and Sumra Salem

Abstract

Since the beginning of 2011 the world has witnessed popular uprisings against long-standing regimes in the Middle East and North Africa. Indeed more political change occurred in the first three months of 2011 than the previous 30 years. To date this has resulted in the toppling of Tunisia's Ben Ali regime, a re-shuffling of the Jordanian government, and the toppling of Egypt's Hosni Mubarak. At the time of writing, the regime of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi is struggling to retain power in the face of a rebel insurgency backed by a UN enforced no-fly zone. The regimes in Bahrain, Syria and Yemen continue to face daily protests. It is argued that the Tunisian revolution of January 2011 was the catalyst for popular uprisings in Egypt, Yemen, Libya and elsewhere in the region. A process of diffusing ideas about political change evolved into social movements for freedom and democracy. Using diffusion theory and social movement theory, this chapter examines the impact of the Tunisian revolution on the corresponding movements for freedom and democracy in Egypt, and subsequently, Egypt's impact on Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria. Our research is based on analysis of social media including blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and comments on mass media sources posted by online activists in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya and Syria. In its examination of the lessons Egyptian online activists learnt from those in Tunisia and subsequently taught to others in the region, this chapter will focus on the transmission of ideas concerning freedom, democracy, Islamism, national unity, the use of non-violence, and the reactions of Western political leaders. It argues that while a high level of identification between the social movements in the various countries selected for analysis is present, the extent to which ideas are adopted and are successful depends on domestic as well as broader geopolitical contexts.

Biography

Dr Halim Rane is the Deputy Director of the Griffith Islamic Research Unit and a Senior Lecturer in the School of Humanities at Griffith University. Dr Rane is the author of numerous articles and books concerning the Middle East, Islamic and Muslim issues including *Islam and Contemporary Civilisation: Evolving Ideas, Transforming Relations* (Melbourne University Press, 2010); *Islam and the Australian News Media* (Melbourne University Press, 2010); and *Reconstructing Jihad amid Competing International Norms* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Ms Sumra Salem is a regular contributor to online media concerning Middle East issues. She has a Bachelor's degree in international relations with honours and wrote her honours thesis on the role of Egypt in U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

Dr Sally Totman (Deakin University)

Title

They Shoot Protesters, Don't They?

Abstract

The popular uprisings dubbed by the mainstream media as the 'Arab Spring', which began in Tunisia in December 2010, have now reached Libya. Having ruled Libya since September 1969, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi is currently the world's longest serving non-monarchical head of state. However, it appears (at the time of writing) that with the help of a UN-mandated no-fly zone, which has been broadly enforced across the country, the end of Colonel Qaddafi's increasing despotic and iron-fisted rule is nigh.

This paper examines the multitude of causes of the popular uprisings in Libya, and assesses the responses by the Libyan government to the protests compared to those of other Arab leaders facing similar uprisings. Finally, the paper will investigate and appraise the most likely scenarios for a post-Qaddafi Libya should the popular uprisings topple the Qaddafi regime.

Biography

Dr Sally Totman is a Senior Lecturer in the School of International and Political Studies, Deakin University, where she specialises in Middle East politics. Her research interests include US foreign policy towards the Middle East, in particular Libya, and the link between Hollywood film, popular culture and the role of public opinion in shaping perceptions of the region.

Organising Committee

Professor Fethi Mansouri (Deakin University)

Biography

Professor Fethi Mansouri is a leading researcher in the University and a prominent scholar nationally and internationally. He is the principal supervisor of many PhD A candidates in Middle Eastern studies, migration research and inter-cultural studies.

Professor Mansouri has published twelve books, nine major research monographs, more than fifty refereed research articles and book chapters, and many book reviews and media pieces. He has presented more than 100 invited conference and seminar papers and many other invited presentations at national and international symposia.

Over the last ten years, Professor Mansouri has been awarded more than 30 research grants from a number of funding bodies including the Australian Research Council in 2009-12 on 'Social Networks, Belonging and Active Citizenship among Migrant Youth in Australia'; 2007-10 on 'Local governance and multicultural policies'; 2004-07 on 'Cultural diversity in education'; and in 2002-04 for a project on 'Australia's Asylum Policies'. Professor Mansouri received funding from the state government and a number of philanthropic foundations to conduct research into cultural diversity in education and within local governance.

Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh (University of Melbourne)

Biography

Shahram Akbarzadeh is Professor of Asian Politics (Middle East and Central Asia). He has an active research interest in the politics of Central Asia, Islam, Muslims in Australia and the Middle East. He has been involved in organising a number of key conferences, including a Chatham House rule workshop on Australia's relations with Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan (2007), sponsored by the International Centre of Excellence for Asia Pacific Studies.

In 2000 Professor Akbarzadeh was the Middle East Studies conference co-convenor and served as the Central and West Asia Councillor for the Asian Studies Association of Australia (1999-2004). He has promoted Asian studies through contacts with industry and the academia by research and publication. He guest edited a special issue of *Asian Studies Review* on the Middle East (Vol.25, No.2, 2001) and a special issue of the *Journal of Arabic, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies* on Globalization (Vol. 5, No.2, 2000). He is a member of the Editorial Board of two leading refereed journals: *Global Change, Peace & Security*, and the *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*.

Dr Benjamin Isakhan (Deakin University)

Biography

Research Fellow - Centre for Citizenship and Globalization

Dr Benjamin Isakhan is Research Fellow at the Centre for Comparative Social Research, part of the Faculty of Arts and Education at Deakin University, Australia. Previously, Ben has been a Research Fellow with the Centre for Dialogue at La Trobe University and a Research Fellow and Lecturer for the Griffith Islamic Research Unit, part of the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies, Australia. Ben holds a Bachelor of Arts in Applied Psychology (1997), First Class Honours in Literature and Cultural Studies (1998), and a PhD in Middle East Studies (2009).

In 2009, Ben was awarded his PhD for a thesis entitled *Discourses of Democracy: 'Oriental Despotism' and the Democratisation of Iraq* which received high appraisal from the international and national assessors. This work is currently being re-worked into a book tentatively titled *Democracy in Iraq: History, Politics and Discourse* (Ashgate, 2011). Ben is also the co-editor of *The Secret History of Democracy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) and *The Edinburgh Companion to the History of Democracy* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012), both with Professor Stephen Stockwell. In addition, Ben has authored several publications including book chapters in *Islam and the Australian News Media* (Melbourne University Press, 2010).