



The Arab
Political Science
Network

Roundtable Title: National Identity(ies), Conflicts, and Minorities in Arab countries.

Date: Friday September 16th, 2022

Time: 2:00 – 3:30 pm

Location: Palais de Congres, Montreal, Canada

Speakers:

Bessma Momani

Assistant Vice-President, Research and International, Office of Research
Full Professor, Department of Political Science
University of Waterloo

Abstract

In the wake of the Arab Revolutions, much has been said about the pivotal role that Arab youth played in mobilizing citizens against autocratic regimes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Less attention has been paid to the role played by engaged transnational Arab youth during this period. Diaspora Arab youth offer an excellent case study to investigate the kinds of activities that youth social movements invest in to transnationally mobilize citizenship across borders, and in the process, how they expand forms of autonomy, solidarity, and mutual concern, and thus transform civil society and citizenship capacity-building among diverse networks in society. Based on their work advocating, networking, educating, boycotting, and physically protesting, diaspora Arab youth represent a highly diffused and engaged newly emerging social movement whose transnational activism with or for social movements and government, or multi-lateral institutions represent forms of cross-national citizenship mobilization. Diaspora Arab youth, as a social movement, are emergent political subjectivities mobilizing citizenship capacities locally and in the MENA. Their impact is not large, right now, as upon supranational institutions, however, the breadth of their activities underscore their hope in their capacity to initiate meaningful change.

Bio

Dr. Bessma Momani is Professor of Political Science at the University of Waterloo. She is also a Senior fellow at the Centre for International Governance and Innovation (CIGI), and a

Non-Resident Fellow at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, D.C. She was a Non-Resident Senior Fellow at both the Brookings Institution and Stimson Center in Washington, D.C., a consultant to the International Monetary Fund, and formerly a visiting scholar at Georgetown University's Mortara Center. She was a 2015 Fellow of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation and now sits on its board of directors. She is also a Fulbright Scholar. Dr. Momani currently sits on the National Security Transparency Advisory Group ([NS-TAG](#)) to advise the Deputy Minister of Public Safety Canada and other Government officials on improving transparency to Canada's national security and intelligence departments and agencies. She has authored and co-edited ten books and over 80 scholarly, peer reviewed journal articles and book chapters that have examined international affairs, diversity and inclusion, Middle East affairs, and the global economy.

Romain Ferrali

Assistant Professor

Aix-Marseille School of Economics

Abstract

Young citizens in many democracies, and more so in electoral autocracies, turn out to vote at relatively low rates. Low youth participation arguably contributes to political parties' tendency to de-prioritize the youth's policy preferences. We analyze the effect of three low-cost, scalable, theoretically-grounded, online interventions designed to encourage young Moroccans to turn out and cast an informed vote ahead of the 2021 parliamentary elections. Those interventions aimed at (1) lowering the cost of participation by providing information about the voting registration process, (2) increasing the expected benefit of voting by providing information about the stakes of the election, and about (3) the distance between respondents' policy preferences and political parties' policy platforms. We find that some of these interventions managed to increase turnout intentions for a subset of participants, and that providing information about parties' policy platforms durably increased their support for the party that best represented their preferences, ultimately leading to better-informed voting, but leaving open important questions as to the potential for manipulation. We conclude by reflecting upon the difficulty of conducting online, quantitative research in the region in the context of new regulations surrounding individuals' rights online.

Bio

Romain Ferrali is an Assistant Professor at the Aix-Marseille School of Economics. He studies how social networks influence political outcomes. He is particularly interested in issues related to the political economy of development, especially in North and Sub-Saharan Africa. Ferrali's research uses game theory and a variety of quantitative methods including network analysis,

causal inference, and structural estimation. Aside from his academic work, he is also the scientific advisor of Tafra, an NGO based in Rabat, Morocco that advocates for the rule of law through access to data. With Tafra, he has curated a number of datasets on the Moroccan Parliament and elections and has disseminated research insights to the broader public.

Shamiran Mako

Assistant Professor of International Relations
Boston University

Conflicts in context: Reframing ethnic politics in the study of majority and minority communities in the MENA.

How do we explain the comparative study of ethnic identity politics in divided societies of the Middle East and North Africa? Why do Lebanon and Iraq draw more comparisons in the study of identity politics than Iraq and Turkey, or Lebanon and Egypt? The vast scholarship on identity, sectarianism, de-sectarianization, and ethnic conflict in the Middle East has examined the myriad ways identity has served as a driver of conflict and mobilization in ethnically divided societies in the region. In attempting to shift the analytical and empirical lens, this presentation posits that studying conflicts in context illuminates local-level peculiarities that necessitate a more nuanced approach to explaining and understanding ethnic and communal conflict and identity politics in divided states in the MENA. Using Iraq as a case study, I argue analytical monoliths fall short of capturing the complex and intricate ways majority and minority populations engage in, and challenge ethnic boundary making at the national and subnational levels following exposure to instability, insecurity, and violence. Zooming in on Iraq's disputed territories-as the country's most ethnically and religiously diverse regions and a nexus point of regional and international interventions-I illustrate how and why exposure to layered, pervasive, and cyclical forms of violence contribute not only to communal mobilization but also the minoritization and thus trivialization of group grievances in weak and fragile states.

Bio

Shamiran Mako is an assistant professor of international relations at the Pardee School of Global Studies at Boston University. She is a Fulbright Scholar Canada Research Chair in Global Governance for 2022-2023 where she will spend time finalizing her book on institutions and ethnic conflict in Iraq at the Balsillie School for International Affairs in Waterloo, Canada. Her research and teaching interests lie at the intersection of international relations and comparative politics of the Middle East with a substantive emphasis on foreign intervention, ethnic conflict, political violence in divided societies, and institutions and state building. Her research explores the historical and contemporary drivers of inter and intra-state conflicts that produce weak and

fragile states across the MENA region. She is the author of *After the Uprisings: Progress and Stagnation in the Middle East and North Africa*, with Valentine Moghadam.