Regional Orders in the Middle East

BA/LA Politikwissenschaft
VAK: 08-26-5-M11-1

Tuesday, 13 October to 2 February (4 to 6 pm)
AIB, room 1010

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Sprechstunde: Mittwoch, 14-16.30 Uhr
General overview

The Arab Uprisings of 2010 and 2011 have, so far, led to rather depressing outcomes. Restorations and reinvigoration of authoritarian rule, the rise of Islamist parties and movements, the collapse of state authority and the outbreaks of civil wars, ethnic struggles and the formation of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria have overshadowed the democratizing potential associated with the Tunisian trajectory. To understand these most recent developments, this seminar will provide for a historically-based analysis of conflicts and regional order formations since the late nineteenth century.

Preparatory Readings


After a first round of debates on the role of regions in International Relations, in general, we will deal with the origins, continuities and ruptures of regional order formations. Going back to World War I as the birthdate of the modern Middle East, we will engage with several features that are quite unique in this region and which have by themselves had substantive impacts on later developments: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the role of petroleum, and the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 are some of these features, which continue to shape political struggles and questions of security.

Leistungsanforderungen

Students may acquire either 3 CPs for a mittlere Prüfungsleistung or 6 CPs for a große Prüfungsleistung. The participants are expected to read the obligatory texts and actively engage in class and group discussions.

For 3 CPs, students prepare and hold a presentation in one of the sessions below. Presenters should read the literature assigned to the session and provide the main topics and arguments related to the phenomena we deal with in the seminar. Of course, the literature provided here is not exclusive, and students should not hesitate to investigate an issue autonomously and include literature not mentioned in the list. The presentations should not exceed 30 minutes and are supposed to be framed in a way to stir group discussions.

For 6 CPs, students are expected to prepare and give a presentation and write a paper (up to 12 pages) on the same topic. The deadline for the paper is 31 March 2016!
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I, 13 October 2015: Introduction, assignments, organization

II, 20 October: What drives foreign policy?

III, 27 October: Regions as analytical units in IR


IV, 3 November: From the Arab Uprisings to the Islamic State


V, 12 November: Before the Uprisings, new powers and the New Arab Cold War


VI, 17 November: 9/11 and the Iraq War


VII, 24 November: Authoritarian Regimes versus Islamist movements


VIII, 1 December: The Second Gulf War, *Pax Americana* and the Oslo Process

The end of the Cold War granted the United States enormous capacities to structure Middle East politics. The Iraqi attack on Kuwait presented the remaining superpower an opportunity to form new alliances and to find a new way in dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which seemed solvable in these years.


IX, 8 December: The Islamic Revolution in Iran and the First Gulf War

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 represented more than just the end of the United States’ two-pillar regional framework and the break away of one essential ally. It led to a major reshuffle in regional politics as it not only led to the Iraqi attack and the First Gulf War but also to a formidable challenge of domestic affairs across the Arab world.


X, 15 December 2015: Oil revolutions and petrolism

Another prime Middle Eastern feature is the predominance of oil and gas for the regional political economies and its importance for the global economy. However, the international energy markets underwent serious transformations with the empowerment of national oil companies and the regional states behind them. What does this dependence on energy markets mean for the exercise of political power in the Middle East? Who are the winners, who the losers?


XI, 12 January: From the Jewish-Arab to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The highly conflictual nature of Middle East dynamics cannot be understood without taking the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into consideration. Where did this conflict come from, though? How would European Zionists succeed in creating their own state on formerly Ottoman territory? This session deals with the drivers of the Zionist state-making, the formation of the state of Israel and the implications this had for the Arab states.


XII, 19 January: Revolutions, Superpowers and the Arab Cold War

Even though neither any Arab state nor Turkey and Iran directly participated in World War II, the Middle East was, of course, not spared its consequences. Beyond the creation of Israel, what proved most consequential was the bipolarization of world politics and its structuring of Arab affairs which was triggered by the emergence of revolutionary military officers who worked toward the socio-economic transformations of their countries. However, it was not only ideological differences between republicans, on the one side, and monarchists, on the other side, that dominated the region.


XIII, 26 January: Liberalism, Nationalism, Islamism

The Middle East has not been excluded from ideological innovations and transformations that originated in Europe but became globally modular, i.e. open to appropriation by local actors and groups. While cosmopolitan liberalism and ethnic nationalism underwent similar dynamics as in other post-colonial settings, the birth of political Islam and the tricky relationship between national and religious identities has taken on a particular Middle Eastern shape.


XIV, 2 February: The First World War and the Creation of the Modern Middle East

World War I ended the reign of the Ottoman empire. In its aftermath, the imperialist powers redrew the borders of the new states of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Mandate of Palestine. It is fair to argue that most problems of state authority and regional security can be traced back to British and French decisions after 1915. While other peoples were left without their own state (Armenians, Kurds, Palestinians), it was obvious that the empires would not relinquish control over this increasingly tense region whose populations would not give up their struggle for emancipation and sovereignty.


