About AMEC

The Afro-Middle East Centre (AMEC) is a research institute and think tank that focuses its work on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and the region’s relationship with Africa. Through its work, AMEC’s primary focus is to foster enhanced and strengthened relations between the MENA region and South Africa and to be a credible source of information and analysis that can enhance public opinion and policy-making.

Established in 2008, AMEC has sought to produce and disseminate the highest quality of research on the Middle East and North Africa, to maintain public discussion and to help shape the public discourse on issues related to the MENA region. Primarily, AMEC engages in funded research on the contemporary Arab world, and accepts research commissions from government, business, academia, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations. AMEC has been based in Johannesburg, South Africa, since its establishment.

AMEC’s staff and research associates are sought after by the media to provide commentary and analysis on issues relating to the Middle East, the Islamic world and Africa. They have been interviewed by or have provided expert analysis to BBC, Al Jazeera, CGTN, the South African Broadcasting Corporation’s television and radio channels, Channel Africa, eNCA, CNBC Africa, Voice of America and a number of other electronic and print media.
For many centuries, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has been a theatre that foreign powers have sought to control and gain influence in. In the twentieth century, with British and French attempts to destroy the Ottoman empire, the 1918 Sykes-Picot agreement saw these powers seek to divide the region into their respective spheres of influence. The region’s importance to foreign powers increased as oil became the primary energy source over coal, since the MENA region possessed some of the world’s largest oil reserves.

By the mid-twentieth century, the Cold War, in which the USA and the Soviet Union fought for ideological and global superiority and employed proxy states and forces in various parts of the world, saw these powers and their allies battle for the support of MENA states and non-state actors in attempts to extend their influence over a critical geostrategic region and to exert control over energy resources. Western powers such as the USA and Britain supported Arab monarchies such as Saudi Arabia and Jordan, while Arab republican states such as Egypt and Syria were, in the main, supported by the Soviet Union. Two powerful non-Arab states in the region, Iran and Turkey, were both in the western camp for much of the Cold War era.

The creation of the state of Israel in 1948 added a new dimension to foreign intervention as a number of western powers sought to bolster and protect the new entity and ensure the easy flow of Jewish immigrants to it. Israel effectively became the bulwark of western interests in the MENA region.

Despite the end of the Cold War in 1989-1990, the region’s geostrategic significance and oil resources ensured that it would remain the target of various forms of intrigue and intervention. The discovery of large gas reserves gave even more reason to foreign powers to jostle to win influence. More recently, emerging powers, such as India and China, have also sought to access the resources in the MENA region and exert influence over state and non-state actors there. For China, the region is also critical in its belt and road initiative, which aims to tether China’s growth to an opening up of trade routes and markets with Middle East countries.
In the past decade, the involvement of a number of foreign powers in the region has been massively militarised in some countries. The shock of the MENA uprisings in 2010-2011 persuaded many foreign actors to increase their role in the region. Indeed, Syria and Libya serve as good examples of the large number of foreign actors intervening, and of the scope and scale of their interventions. The USA, Russia, a number of European states, as well as non-state military outfits from these countries have been active in military training, strategic planning and advice, on-the-ground military activity, and air attacks that have left thousands of citizens of MENA countries dead or injured. Many of these countries are also key suppliers of weapons to state and non-state actors. The rise of the Islamic State group provided a further excuse to foreign powers who wanted to maintain a presence in the region, and it became the cited reason for the increased military activity of Russia and the USA, as well as other foreign powers.

In many instances in the region, the influence and interventions of these foreign states have often led to the suppression of the popular will, facilitated the violent clampdown on dissent, and generally empowered elites against the citizenry – often with serious implications for the violations of human rights.

In the past decade, the foreign role in the MENA region has taken new and different forms, from seeking to influence youth activists through funding to largescale military intervention. These interventions have also played a role in reconfiguring political alliances and axes in the region. While current politics in the region are extremely fluid, this reconfiguration could produce developments that upset the manner in which state-to-state relations have been conducted within the region in the past half a century, and could also see radical changes in which external states exercise what influence on which state and non-state actors in the region. Will the US role continue along the same trajectory as it had been in the past? Is Russia poised to play a much larger role and develop its own set of MENA proxies and allies? How will fluctuating Turkey-USA relations affect the role of NATO in the region? Will Turkey’s and Iran’s mostly warm relations with Russia result in a new regional-foreign bloc? How will the Saudi-Israeli-American alliance play out in future and how will it affect the future of the Palestinian struggle?

These and numerous other such questions are relevant in any discussion on the role of foreign actors in the MENA region.

The above themes and questions will be interrogated at a two-day conference organised by the Afro-Middle East Centre. Academics and experts from the region and globally will discuss these issues and assess the region’s future trajectory.
Tuesday, 8 October 2019
08:30 – 09:00 Registration

Opening Session: 09:00 – 10:30
Welcome, Introduction – Na’eeem Jeenah
Keynote speech – Sami A Al-Arian
10:30 – 11:00 Tea Break

Session One: 11:00 – 12:00
Conceptualising intervention in international political theory
Chair – Cheryl Hendricks
- Understanding international political theories on intervention – Garth Le Pere
- International powers and regional alliances: Implications for regional security – Galip Dalay

12:00 – 13:00 Lunch

Session Two: 13:00 – 15:00
From Colonialism to contemporary interventions in the MENA region
Chair – Moshibudi Motimele
- French and British colonialism in the Middle East and North Africa – Dorothée Schmid
- A special case of colonialism: The Zionist movement and the occupation of Palestine – Irene Calis
- Russia in the Middle East – Yury Barmin

15:00 – 15:15 Tea Break

Session Three: 15:15 – 17:00
Finance and economy as a form of control of the Middle East
Chair – Matshidiso Motsoeneng
- The politics of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank lending in the Middle East – Taher Al-Labadi
- Using foreign trade, sanctions and economic isolation – Yacoob Abba Omar
- The evolution of the oil curse in MENA economies – Mahmoud Araissi

Wednesday, 9 October 2019
Session Four: 09:00 – 11:00
Regime change as an instrument of control
Chair – Lindelwe Dube
- Of coups and assassinations – Omer Aslan
- Regime change breeding chaos: The case of Libya – Shafiq Morton
- The Foreign hand in the MENA uprisings – Imad Daimi

11:00 – 11:30 Tea Break
Sami A Al-Arian is the director of the Center for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA) and Public Affairs professor at Istanbul Zaim University. He authored The United States and Israel: From Enabler to Strategic Partner (2019) and The Arab Awakening Unveiled: Understanding Transformations and Revolutions in the Middle East (2013), as well as several studies and articles focusing on US foreign policy, Palestine, and the MENA uprisings. He also published a book of poetry on spirituality, Palestine, and human rights called Conspiring Against Joseph (2004). Al-Arian received a PhD in Computer Engineering in 1986. During his four decades in the USA (1975-2015), mostly as an academic, Al-Arian founded numerous institutions and publications in the fields of education, research, religion, and civil and human rights. In 2001, Newsweek named him the “premiere civil rights activist” in the USA. In 2012, he was profiled in the Encyclopedia of American Dissidents. Al-Arian was indicted in February 2003 in the USA on seventeen counts under the Patriot Act. A jury acquitted him on eight counts and deadlocked on nine. He later struck a plea bargain that would see him released and deported by April 2007. He spent three and a half years in prison, in solitary confinement for most of that time. He was also held under house arrest for seven years from 2008 until 2014 when federal prosecutors filed a motion to dismiss charges against him.

Garth Le Pere is a visiting professor at the University of Pretoria, and a senior associate at Gabriel & Associates. He is the founding executive director of the Institute for Global Dialogue, where he served for twelve years. Le Pere attained his MA, MPhil and PhD degrees from Yale University. His areas of research include international relations theory, multilateral trade and emerging markets, the politics of Africa and the Middle East, and China’s increasing role in Africa, a subject on which he co-authored China, Africa and South Africa: South-South Cooperation in a Global Era (2007). His forthcoming book is China’s Global Rise: Reconfiguring Power after the Cold War.
Galip Dalay is a visiting academic at the Department of Politics and International Relations and a visiting research fellow at the Centre for International Studies (CIS) at the University of Oxford. He is also a senior associate fellow at Al Shaq Forum and Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, associate researcher at the French Institute for International Relations (IFRI) in Paris, and non-resident fellow at Brookings Institution, Doha Centre. He was book review editor of the quarterly magazine Insight Turkey from 2013 to 2016. Dalay is a regular contributor to the German Marshall Fund’s ‘On Turkey’ policy brief series since 2013.

Dorothée Schmid is an expert on Mediterranean and Middle East issues. She joined the French Institute for International Relations (IFRI) in 2002 in Paris. She holds a PhD in Political Science from Panthéon-Sorbonne University and a diploma in public management from Science-Po Paris. She has produced extensive analysis on EU and French policies in the region, induced democratisation, and political economy and regional balance of powers. She established the Contemporary Turkey Program in 2008 in order to follow the rise of Turkish foreign policy and the transformations of the Turkish regime. Her research interests include the dynamics of political transitions in the post-MENA uprisings period, the future of rentier state culture, rising conflicts, territorial reorganisations, and the new competition for influence among powers.

Irene Calis is a Palestinian scholar, activist, and organiser who teaches in Critical Race, Gender, and Culture Studies at American University, DC. Her longterm research and activism focuses on emancipatory politics from the perspective of everyday life, which has involved living and working with farming and youth communities throughout the West Bank. Her current work on political futures situates the Palestinian struggle in a wider conversation with indigenous-settler experience and intellectual thought.

Yury Barmin is a risk consultant whose work focuses on issues related to the Middle East and Russia’s positioning in the region. Barmin holds an MPhil in International Relations from the University of Cambridge. He is an expert at the Russian International Affairs Council where he deals with the Middle East and North Africa, Moscow’s policy towards the region, with a special focus on the conflict in Syria.

Taher Al-Labadi holds a PhD in economics from Paris-Dauphine University. He is currently working on international aid-funded policies for refugees in Lebanon from a local perspective, with a specific emphasis on projects targeting Palestinian and Syrian refugee youth. His research interests include political economy, liberalisation policies, international aid and conflict management in the MENA region. He authored several articles on the involvement of Middle East countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Irene Calis

Yacoob Abba Omar is Head of Strategy and Communications at the Banking Association of South Africa (BASA). His PhD was on ‘Sovereignty and National Identity in South Africa’ from Wits University. He is a former director of operations of the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflections (MISTRA). Abba Omar served as South Africa’s ambassador to Oman and to the United Arab Emirates, and as deputy director-general of South Africa’s Government Communication and Information Services. Before South Africa’s first democratic elections in 1994, he served in the African National Congress in several capacities.

Mahmoud Araissi is an assistant professor of finance at Adrian Kassar School of Business. He holds a PhD in Economics from Indiana University. He has a BA from the American University of Beirut and an MA from University of Chicago. Araissi has a mixed background in economics and social sciences, with an emphasis in finance.
Ömer Aslan is an associate fellow at Al Sharq Forum, and a researcher at the Institute for Security Sciences at the Turkish National Police Academy (TNPA). He previously worked in the political research department of the SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research. Aslan is a PhD candidate in Political Science at Bilkent University, working on a dissertation in civil-military relations. Among his publications are ‘A Turkish Muslim Between Islamism and Turkish Nationalism: Seyyid Ahmet Arvasi (1932–88)’, and ‘“Unarmed” we Intervene, Unnoticed we Remain: The Deviant Case of “February 28th Coup” in Turkey’. His research interests include military and politics in the Muslim World, external actors and military coups d’ètats and police and politics.

Shafiq Morton is a photojournalist, editor, and radio and TV presenter. In a four-decade-long career, he has been on assignment in Palestine, Libya, Somalia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan, Namibia, Niger, among other countries. In 2008 he won the National Vodacom Award in the community media section and the regional award in 2010. In 2014 his radio show was nominated for the MTN awards and in 2016 for the Liberty Life Awards. From 2009-12, he was named among the ‘500 most influential Muslims in the world’ by Jordan’s Royal Islamic Institute. In 2012 he received the AWQAF SA award for his contribution to community media. Morton authored four books: Notebooks from Makkah and Madinah; Surfing behind the Wall: My Palestinian Journey; Imtiaz Sooliman and the Gift of the Givers: A Mercy to All and From the Spice Islands to Cape Town: the Life and Times of Tuan Guru.

Imad Daimi has been a member of Tunisia’s Assembly of Representatives of the People in Tunisia since 2014. He is the rapporteur of the Parliamentary Committee on Rights, Freedoms and Foreign Relations. He was also a member of the National Constituent Assembly that was elected in October 2011 to draft Tunisia’s new constitution. Daimi is the secretary general of the Istanbul-based Arab Council of Democratic Revolutions. From 2011 to 2013, he was the minister director of the Presidential Cabinet and chief of staff to President Moncef Marzouki. Daimi was secretary general of the Congress for the Republic Party (CPR) from 2013 to 2016 and secretary general of the Harak Party from 2016 to 2017. From 1991 to 2001, Daimi lived in exile in France as a political refugee. He has authored dozens of articles in several Arab newspapers, and a book on political exile and the Tunisian exile community (2011).

Phyllis Bennis is a fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) in Washington and of the Transnational Institute in Amsterdam. Her work focuses on ending wars and occupations by changing US policy to strengthen international law, human rights and equality in the Middle East. Bennis is a co-founder of the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, and for years co-chaired the UN-based International Coordinating Network on Palestine with Na’eem Jeenah. She has written widely, publishing twelve books and dozens of book chapters. Her most recent books include the sixth edition of the best-selling Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Primer (2018), and Understanding ISIS and the New Global War on Terror: A Primer (2015).
Sinan Hatahet is a consultant working with a number of think tanks; he focuses on Syria. He is currently the strategy communication director of Omran Centre for Strategic Studies. He holds a PhD in IT security from the University of Technology in Compiègne. His research concentrates on governance and local councils, anti-radicalisation, Islamism, the Kurdish national movement, and the new regional order in the Middle East. He previously worked as the executive director of the Syrian National Coalition (SNC) Media Office. Hatahet has published a number of studies.

Martin Revayi Rupiya is the Innovation and Training Manager for the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), and co-editor of the African Journal on Conflict Resolution. He has a PhD in History and Military Studies from the University of Zimbabwe, an MA in War and Strategic Studies from Kings College London, and a BA Honours in Economics and History. He is also a member of the editorial board of Journal of African Military History, advisory board member of the International Journal of African Studies, and editorial board member of the African Journal of Political Science & International Relations.

Zeenat Adam is an independent international relations strategist, entrepreneur, political opinion writer and former diplomat. She has an MA in International Relations from the University of the Witwatersrand. She served as deputy head of mission of the South African Embassy in Qatar. Her knowledge and understanding of politics in the Middle East contributed to South African foreign policy development and enhanced South Africa’s role in the MENA region. Adam was named one of the ‘Top 200 Youth’ in South Africa by Mail and Guardian in 2011, featured in Public Service magazine, and was named a role model for South African women in Destiny Magazine. She has contributed to various academic and popular media publications. In 2019, she founded Conscience Collective, an organisation aimed at creating awareness and solidarity on international issues and advocating for human rights through collective, shared social realities, art, literature and critical analyses.

Omar Ashour is the founding director of the Critical Security Studies Program at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. He is the author of The De-Radicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements (2009) and How ISIS Fights: Military Tactics in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Egypt (forthcoming). Ashour previously taught the University of Exeter and at McGill University. He served as a senior consultant for the United Nations on counter-terrorism, security sector reform, and deradicalisation. He co-authored the document on security sector reform for the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (UN-ESCWA). Ashour served as a research fellow at the Brookings Institution, and as associate fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House). He is a regular contributor to Arabic and western media outlets.

Cengiz Gunes is an academic and researcher interested in the politics and international relations of the Middle East, conflict studies and critical terrorism studies, with a focus on ethnic nationalism and the resolution of violent intrastate and interstate ethnopolitical conflicts in the region, particularly in Turkey, Iraq, and Syria. He is the author of The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey: From Protest to Resistance (2012), which offers an original examination of the re-emergence and evolution of the Kurdish national movement since the 1960s, its subsequent mass mobilisation of the Kurds, and subsequent and ongoing conflict in Turkey.
Keynote Address:
The dialectics between colonisers and colonised, revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries in the context of the MENA uprisings – Sami A Al-Arian

The colonisation process over much of the MENA region that started at the turn of the nineteenth century and unfolded over more than one and half centuries had opened deep wounds and fractures in the societies of this region; its long-term effects are still reverberating across the Muslim world. This paper will discuss the impact of colonialism and its painful legacy across the MENA region, as well as explore the key challenges facing Arab societies in the context of the Arab uprisings and sociopolitical transformations that swept the MENA region in the past decade. It will also examine the current forces shaping the region, the impact of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and likely future scenarios for the Arab and Muslim worlds.

Session 1: Conceptualising intervention in international political theory
Understanding international political theories on intervention – Garth Le Pere

‘Intervention’ is a controversial topic in international relations, and theoretical perspectives on it are varied. These often clash with notions of ‘sovereignty’ and ‘territorial integrity’. This paper will consider different theoretical perspectives of intervention in international relations and international law theory, and will examine the conflict between intervention and sovereignty. It will explore concepts such as ‘military intervention’, ‘humanitarian interference’, ‘legitimate intervention’ and ‘responsibility to protect’, among other themes.

International powers and regional alliances: Implications for regional security – Galip Dalay

Recent years have seen an increase in the number and intensity of global power interference in the region. Added to this has been an increased assertiveness of domestic actors, who have often partnered with these states for their own agendas. This paper will assess the means and methods used by these actors and their resultant impacts. It will use the case studies of Syria and Yemen, and focus on their implications for both interstate security and local populations. Last, it will look at how the seeming regional Cold War between Saudi Arabia and Iran are contributing and benefitting from this, and methods to ensure that this does not escalate.

Session Two: From Colonialism to contemporary interventions in the MENA region

British and French Colonialism in the Middle East and North Africa – Dorothée Schmid

Britain and France extended their colonial empire into the Middle East after their successful colonial projects in Africa and the Indian sub continent. The colonial enterprise in the Middle East received a boost when the Ottoman empire, which ostensibly controlled much of the Middle East, joined World War I in October 1914 on the side of Germany. Following the end of World War I, as a result of the Sykes-Picot agreement – between France and Britain – and the League of Nations’ mandate system, France took control of greater Syria and greater Lebanon in 1923, while Britain exercised control over Palestine, Iraq, Egypt, and much of the Gulf region. This paper will provide a historical analysis of the role of British and French colonial enterprise in the MENA region and the implications of these projects for the contemporary MENA political landscape.
A special case of colonialism: The Zionist movement and the occupation of Palestine – Irene Calis

The Balfour Declaration of November 1917 marked the insertion of the Zionist movement in the international political arena. The Declaration promised that Palestine would become a ‘national home’ for Jewish people, setting the stage for a special case of colonialism in the Middle East. This paper will interrogate the subject of colonialism within the context of the Zionist movement which spearheaded Jewish migration to Palestine and eventually the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. It will expand on how Zionist occupation of Palestine, supported by Britain and the USA, produced a special case of colonialism.

Russia in the Middle East – Yury Barmin

This paper assesses Russia’s role in the MENA region, briefly considering a history of Russian involvement from the Tsarist era through Soviet times to its current manifestations. The paper will explore Russian interests in the region, and consider the response of local actors to Moscow’s role. As case studies, it will discuss Russia’s interventions and involvement in Syria, Libya, Sudan, Egypt and its foreign policy towards Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Palestine and Israel.

Session Three: Finance and economy as a form of control of the Middle East

The politics of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank lending in the Middle East – Taher Al-Labadi

International financial institutions have a reputation of aggressive liberalisation through structural reform policies as well as imposing harsh austerity measures on developing economies. The 2010-2011 Arab Uprisings highlighted the adverse impact of IMF and World Bank measures that led to increasing unemployment, rising food prices and income inequality. In 2008, the IMF announced it was revising some of its approaches and was prioritising socioeconomic inclusion for MENA countries. This paper will explore the role that international financial lenders such as the IMF and World Bank have played in MENA economies and the impact thereof. It will also consider the regional implications of the control of MENA states by international financial institutions.

Using foreign trade, sanctions and economic isolation – Yacoob Abba Omar

This paper will examine how foreign trade, aid and economic sanctions have been used to influence MENA states and their economic, social and foreign policies. It will consider the roles of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and other institutions and frameworks dealing with trade, and will examine different historical stages of trade liberalisation and private foreign investments in the MENA region and their impact on the region. It will also consider how economic sanctions have been deployed for centuries as instruments of political and economic pressure, interrogating the historical and contemporary use of sanctions and economic isolation as instruments of coercion by foreign actors on the MENA region. It will assess the impact of sanctions on these economies and their effectiveness as instruments of control and intervention.

The evolution of the oil curse in MENA economies – Mahmoud Araissi

The MENA region, where around half of the world’s oil reserves are located, has long been viewed by foreign powers through the prism of access to oil and gas. This factor has been – and continues to be – a prime reason for various forms of intervention in the region by foreign powers. This paper will examine the centrality of oil and natural resources as key attractions to and reasons for external intervention in the region. It will examine the forms of interventions that this has spawned, and its resultant consequences for states and nations. Further, it will expand on how this may evolve in light of the fact that some global powers, especially the USA, have become oil independent.
Session four: Regime change as an instrument of control

Of coups and assassinations – Omer Aslan

The arsenal that global powers have historically used to protect their interests in the Global South has included assassinations of leaders and coups d’état. This has especially been the case when client regimes have threatened to defect into the orbit of another global power, or attempted to assert their independence from foreign powers. This paper will discuss how coups and assassinations have been used in the MENA region by foreign powers to protect their interests.

Regime change breeding chaos: The case of Libya – Shafiq Morton

While global powers have often engineered the change of governments in states they did not approve of, regime change processes have not always been smooth or immediately useful to the conspiring powers. In 2011, Libya became engulfed in the uprisings that had begun in Tunisia and spread across the MENA region. Western powers, particularly through NATO, played a central role in ensuring that Libya’s leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, was removed from power. This, however, pushed Libya into anarchy. This paper will examine how regime change processes sometimes result in destruction and chaos in the target country, and will use contemporary Libya as a case study. It will focus on UN resolutions that facilitated the NATO intervention; the role of NATO members; and the outcomes of these interventions, leading to the Libyan crisis as it is today.

The foreign hand in the MENA uprisings – Imad Daimi

What started as a one-person self-immolation in Tunisia in December 2010 quickly turned into a wave of revolutionary protests that swept through many countries in the MENA region, significantly changing the political landscape. This paper will assess the interests of foreign powers in these protests, and the means used by these powers to actualise their interests after the uprisings had begun. It will discuss the results of these interventions and assess whether they empowered or disrupted the then largely-indigenous movements. In addition, it will elaborate on how entrenched political forces responded to the agendas of foreign powers, and their consequent impacts.

Session Five: External military intervention

Invasions, occupation and conquest: Foreign military role in the MENA region – Phyllis Bennis

Military intervention has been a strategy not shied away from by foreign actors wishing to secure their interests in the MENA region. This paper will provide a broad overview of particularly western military strategy and intervention in the region since the mid-twentieth century, and examine the different methods of different actors, and the use of invasions, occupations and military conquest to achieve their aims. It will also assess the results of these interventions, especially in relation to their impact on local populations and governments.

Foreign powers using local proxies: The case of Syria – Sinan Hatahet

The use of local state or non-state armed proxies by foreign powers is not a new phenomenon in the MENA region. Particularly during the Cold War, states in the region were bitterly fought over by the superpowers. While such actions always intend to serve the foreign power, they have profound impacts on the politics, economics and social relations of the countries that are so instrumentalised. This paper will use the case of Syria in the past decade to expand on the use of non-state armed proxies by foreign powers. It will assess the means and methods of empowering these actors, and the interests behind their use. Further, it will expound on the impacts of this for both Syria and the local actors that are used as proxies. It will also consider the future of Syria in light of this phenomenon.
Empowering domestic militaries – Martin Rupiya
Supporting state military formations has been used across the region by foreign powers to influence and control a country’s politics and its resources. This paper will expand on how and why military structures in the MENA region have been and continue to be supported by foreign powers. It will consider the interests of the foreign powers, as well as those of the local military elites. Moreover, it will expand on the impacts that this has had on domestic politics and economics, especially in relation to democratic consolidation, freedoms, social relations and socioeconomic development. It will focus, particularly, on Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.

Session Six: MENA states’ responses to foreign intervention

MENA states leveraging foreign interference – Zeenat Adam
The interference of foreign powers in postcolonial states often benefits not only the foreign powers but also (sections of) local elites. These local elites often leverage the patronage and largess of foreign powers in order to internationalise their conflicts, such as in Syria and Yemen, the Saudi-Iranian rivalry or the Qatari blockade, or to use the discourse and agendas of foreign patrons to suppress local dissent. This paper will expand on this phenomenon and its impacts. It will discuss how certain MENA states use their relationships to foreign powers to garner international support, and oppose their domestic and regional rivals or enemies, and the consequences of this for the security of and democratic struggles in the region.

The emergence of militant transnational groups in response – Omar Ashour
Among the responses from populations and roleplayers to foreign interference in the MENA region has been the emergence and growth of militant transnational groups, particularly Al-Qa’ida and the Islamic State group (and their various affiliates and allies). This paper will look at this phenomenon, and will examine how opposition to this interference is instrumentalised by these groups. It will also discuss the methods they use to amplify this opposition, how they use foreign interference to recruit and resource themselves, and the consequences of this for MENA populations, governments, and the foreign powers. It will also consider the potential of these transnational groups to, themselves, ‘interfere’ in the countries of these foreign powers.

Foreign interventions in the Middle East and the Kurds – Cengiz Gunes
The ‘Kurdish question’ might be traced to the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the story of unfulfilled promises. In the Kurdish quest for rights, autonomy, and/or statehood, some groups among Kurds have effectively sought and used foreign support to support their agendas. This paper will expand on this by looking at the motives and outcomes of foreign support for the Kurdish struggle. It will also assess how governments of the region have related to this, and consider the repercussions both for Kurds themselves as well as for other populations in the region.
The Islamists: A Contextual History of Political Islam (2017) by Basheer M. Nafi

Today’s Islamists are not a reproduction of an ancient legacy, but are modern political actors defined by modern discourses, argues Basheer Nafi in The Islamists. He examines the emergence and development of political Islam in the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, discussing the historical context within which political Islam arose, and relating it to the social movement and political parties that lead the phenomenon today. On questions concerning the state, economics and law, the difference among Islamists are no less than their agreements. Nafi teases out some of these agreements and differences relating to governance, citizenship, pluralism, unity, revivalism and truth.

Next Time They’ll Come To Count The Dead: War and Survival in South Sudan (2016) by Nick Turse

For six weeks in the spring of 2015, award-winning journalist Nick Turse traveled on foot as well as by car, SUV and helicopter around wartorn South Sudan talking to military officers and child soldiers, UN officials and humanitarian workers, civil servants, civil society activists, and internally displaced persons — people whose lives had been blown apart by a ceaseless conflict there. In fast-paced and dramatic fashion, Turse reveals the harsh reality of modern warfare in the global South, and the ways people manage to survive the unimaginable. Reporting from the front lines of an unfolding tragedy, he recounts the dramatic, true, stories of men and women trapped in the grip of South Sudan’s ongoing civil war.

Islam and Modernity (2018) by Rafik Abdessalem

Rafik Abdessalem seeks to walk in the footsteps of the great Muslim philosopher Abu Hamid al-Ghazali who relied on myriad schools of thought and diversity of methods, including those of the philosophers he sought to refute, so as to make plain the internal contradictions and shortcoming of a discourse. However, Abdessalem attempts to go beyond the ‘game of deconstruction’ and seek to open new possibilities and advance new answers, to fill the spaces and bridge the gaps.

AMEC PUBLICATIONS

Outsourcing Repression (2019) by Alaa Tartir

Outsourcing Repression is a collection of analyses and essays on the roots, manifestations and consequences of the paradigm of security coordination between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA). The book discusses four key themes: the evolution and reform of Palestinian security forces and security coordination since the inception of the Oslo Accords; the militarisation of Palestinian aid and the foundation of a police state; the outsourcing of repression and sponsorship of authoritarianism; and the criminalisation of Palestinian resistance as a consequence of donor-driven security sector reform of the Palestinian Authority security establishment.
A Playground for foreign powers: MENA region as target for foreign intervention

*Afro-Middle East Centre*

**Lineages of Revolt: Issues of Contemporary Capitalism in the Middle East (2015)**
by Adam Hanieh

While the outcomes of the tumultuous uprisings that continue to transfix the Arab world remain uncertain, the root causes of rebellion persist. Drawing upon extensive empirical research, Lineages of Revolt tracks the major shifts in the region’s political economy over recent decades.

by Nick Turse

You won’t see segments about it on the nightly news or read about it on the front page of America’s newspapers, but the Pentagon is fighting a new shadow war in Africa, helping to destabilize whole countries and preparing the ground for future blowback. Behind closed doors, U.S. officers now claim that “Africa is the battlefield of tomorrow, today.”

**The Battle for Justice in Palestine (2015)**
by Ali Abunimah

Efforts to achieve a “two-state solution” have finally collapsed; the struggle for justice in Palestine is at a crossroads. As Israel and its advocates lurch toward greater extremism, many ask where the struggle is headed. This book offers a clear analysis of this crossroads moment and looks forward with urgency down the path to a more hopeful future.

**MENA Uprisings and Transformations and their impact on Africa (2014)**
by Na’eem Jeenah (editor)

Written while the euphoria of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) uprisings was still palpable, this is a collection by an international mix of respected academics and active political roleplayers who reflect on the changing face of the MENA region since the end of 2010.

by Azzam S. Tamimi

Azzam Tamimi introduces the thought of Sheikh Rachid Ghannouchi, the renowned Islamist political activist who heads Tunisia’s most important Islamist political party, Ennahda, previously banned by the authoritarian regime of Zine Abidine Ben Ali, and now the main party in the tripartite government in Tunisia.

**Apartheid Israel: The Politics of an Analogy (2016)**
by Jon Soske and Sean Jacobs (co-editors)

Does the term Apartheid define the current Israeli regime? What lessons from South African liberation can help strengthen international solidarity movements? In their divergent responses, the contributors of Apartheid Israel generate a collaborative dialogue across their individual experiences and studies of oppression and struggle.

**The Battle for Justice in Palestine (2015)**
by Ali Abunimah

Efforts to achieve a “two-state solution” have finally collapsed; the struggle for justice in Palestine is at a crossroads. As Israel and its advocates lurch toward greater extremism, many ask where the struggle is headed. This book offers a clear analysis of this crossroads moment and looks forward with urgency down the path to a more hopeful future.
Kurdistan: Achievable reality, or political mirage? (2013)
by Mariam Jooma Carikci
Spread across a number of countries around the world, and concentrated in four Middle East countries, the Kurdish people have yearned for their own country for almost a century, but were forgotten when the region was carved up by the Sykes-Picot Agreement early in the twentieth century. Since then, the creation of a Kurdish state was high on the agenda of all Kurds. This was especially true when we consider the lot of Kurds in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran.

The PLO: Critical Appraisals from the Inside (2013)
by Mohsen Moh’d Saleh and Na’eem Jeenah (co-editors)
At the turn of the millennium, after decades of struggle, the Palestinian Liberation Organization was in a shambles. In 2005, a reconciliation conference held in Cairo seemed to offer some hope for the revitalisation of the organisation, but Hamas’s victory in the 2006 Palestinian Authority elections caught the PLO off-guard. Conflicts and tensions exploded as the PLO tried to claw back the power it had lost.

by Na’eem Jeenah (editor)
Can a state be both democratic and ethnically self-defined? The publication Pretending democracy: Israel, an ethnocratic state unpacks this issue by using Israel as a case study. Based on papers presented at AMEC’s 2010 conference themed ‘Locating ethnic states in a cosmopolitan world: The case of Israel’, the book interrogates concepts such as ‘cosmopolitanism’, ‘nationalism’, ‘ethnocracy’ and ‘citizenship’.