

II. MIDDLE EASTERN CONGRESS ON POLITICS AND SOCIETY

14-17 October 2014
Sakarya - Turkey

SAKARYA ÜNİVERSİTESİ

The Centre for Middle Eastern Studies

Call for Papers

We are delighted to announce that the *II. Middle Eastern Congress on Politics and Society*, organised by the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at Sakarya University, will take place in Sakarya, Turkey, 14-17 October, 2014. Over the two years following the first annual congress in 2012, further significant developments have been experienced in politics of the Middle East. This year's congress, the details of which can be found below, aims to bring together a number of perspectives on political and social developments in the region.

At the outset, peoples' revolutions emerging in the Middle East have brought about an opportunity for a new regional restoration, starting from each country's democratic consolidation. However, rather than drawing on domestic political and social dynamics, the Arab Revolutions have moved away from their promised democratisation target under the effect of regional and global actors involved in each country where the transformation took place. Now, we need to discuss the "New Middle East" around emerging geo-political antagonisms, new ways of conflict and new stories of existence. Even so, in almost all countries of the region existing political and social orders were shaken and there existed a significant opportunity for change notwithstanding the efforts of all actors playing a role in the failure of the revolutions. In other words, the Arab Revolutions put a number of regional and global actors, primarily the Islamic world, in a position vis-a-vis a new historical challenge. This challenge makes it necessary more than ever to rethink about a wide array of concepts, phenomena and processes ranging from state-religion relationships to secularism in the "New Middle East", from new social subjectivities to new identity projections and new diplomacy.

As a result of this dynamism and emerging situations both policy makers and social scientists needed to reconsider the social and political



SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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- **Prof. Dr. Mehran Kamrava**
Georgetown University
- **Prof. Dr. Fawas A. Gerges**
London School of Economics
- **Prof. Dr. Hamid Dabashi**
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- **Doç. Dr. Burhanettin Duran**
İstanbul Şehir Üniversitesi
- **Dr. Thomas Pierret**
University of Edinburgh
- **Dr. Omar Ashour**
University of Exeter
- **Dr. Bobby S. Sayyid**
University of Leeds

dynamics in the Middle East. This congress aims to re-address and discuss different perspectives on political, economic and social structures as well as the recent events and transformation in the Middle East.

In the first year of its establishment, the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at Sakarya University invites academics, politicians and activists to participate in panels and meetings for strengthening our understanding of the dynamics in the region.

With simultaneous translations, the congress will be held in Turkish, Arabic and English. The opening speech and panels on the first day of the congress will be translated into Turkish, Arabic and English. On the second and third day of the congress, presentations that will be conducted in Arabic and Turkish will only be translated into these two languages. In tandem with these there will also be presentations in English only.

The closing speech that will take place on the fourth day of the conference in the SETA Foundation, Istanbul, will only be in English. For the congress participants, transportation to Istanbul will be provided by Sakarya University.

The opening speech of the congress will be delivered by **Prof. Dr. Michael Mann** from the University of Colombia.

Other confirmed speakers include such distinguished scholars known for their studies on the Middle East as **Thomas Pierret, Omar Ashour, Fawas Gerges, Richard Falk, Khalil Al-Anani, Bobby. S. Sayyid, Michael Lüders, Madawi Al-Rasheed and Hamid Dabashi.**

Abstracts of 500-750 words should be sent to middleeastcongress@gmail.com before 15 June 2014. Please include in the body of the email your contact details and a short bio. For further information and announcements please visit www.ortadogu.sakarya.edu.tr. Paper presentations are expected to be about the topics shown in the below panel contents.

1- Arab Revolutions: to Where?

Since 2011, Arab peoples, having long been ruled by oppressive regimes, have inflamed by far the most significant transformation experienced in this geography in the last century. At first, the revolutionary currents in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria were shaped according to respective domestic dynamics of each country. In the course of events, however, Arab peoples encountered the involvement of external actors who were wary of change, specifically in Libya, Syria, and Bahrain during the revolution and in Egypt in the post-revolution process. After all, in almost all countries the existing order trembled and there emerged a momentous opportunity for change. This panel plans to capture the Arab revolutions in all their aspects. Among the subjects to be discussed in this panel are particularly the future of revolutionary movements, the political transformation undertaken in countries where revolution took place, the situation in countries where revolution is on the way and the future of political regimes in countries where uprisings are yet to occur or have taken place to a limited degree. This panel will also focus on the following questions and issues:

- Will the Arab Revolutions be able to stay on Their Axis?
- Will the Arab Revolutions be able to lead to a Regional Restructuring?
- How do Theories of Revolution Explain Peoples' Movements in the Middle East?
- How do Regional and Global Actors Position Themselves with regard to the Arab Revolutions?
- What are the Principal Elements Determining Turkey's Policy in the Process of the Arab Revolutions?

2 – The Civil War in Syria

The on-going civil war in Syria, the international effects of which accumulate day by day, has become one of the most acute examples of the process called the Arab Revolutions. Leading to the death of hundreds of thousands of Syrians and forcing millions of Syrians to migrate inside and outside the country, the civil war has had both regional and international ramifications. The civil war is not limited to Syria; it has hastily turned into a development involving primarily Iran and Turkey as well as global powers, i.e., the U.S.A. and Russia. In order to capture this issue, it is of great importance to treat comparatively domestic, regional and international dimensions of the Syrian civil war. In this respect this panel will seek to address the parties involved in this war and their motives, and answer such questions as “to what extent sectarian divisions are decisive in the discourses of conflicting parties, what effects, in the short and long run, will the immense refugee waves have on the demographic structure of the region?” This panel will also deal with the Syrian civil war in its various dimensions, and provide a multi-dimensional environment around the following topics:

- The Parties Involved in the Syrian War
- The Syrian Civil War and Sectarian Solidarities
- International Actors' Syrian Policies
- The Problems of International Law and Refugee Issue
- War Propaganda and Social Media throughout the Syrian Civil War

3 – Egypt after the Military Coup D'état and the Opportunity for Democratic Transformation

The military coup d'état that took place in Egypt, one of the most eminent countries in the Middle East, in July 2013, is considered to be a big blow to the fledgling democratisation in the region. Viewed from today's conditions, it is crucial to make an assessment within the framework of following questions: can the domino effect, in terms of the revolution, created by people's

uprisings lead to an undemocratic period when coupled with a military coup? In the process from revolution to military coup, where can we position the political confrontations in Egypt and the quests for a new order within the context of the relationship between politics and the army? Can the blow given to Muslim Brotherhood's experience of democracy bring about a new political and intellectual questioning? How can we read being against- or pro-coup within the socio-political structure of Egypt? This panel will seek to answer where is Egypt, in which pre-revolutionary power structures are re-penetrative, tutelage is gaining weight and democratic weakness is experienced, politically heading to?

- The Military-Politics Relationship and the Problem of Democratic Consolidation in Egypt
- The Future of Islamist Movements in Egypt
- New Balances in the Middle East after the Revolution
- Regional and Global Actors' Policies on Egypt
- Social Movements and Youth Organisations

4 – Iraq in search of stability

After the US occupation in 2003, transformation to a peaceful democratic environment was not achieved in Iraq contrary to what had been envisaged. With the withdrawal of the US forces from Iraq in 2011, the occupation officially ceased to exist yet there remained a domestic security weakness in Iraq. 2013 was the year when the Al-Qaida activities culminated and death toll due to domestic violence was the highest in Iraq since 2008. The outbreak of Sunni protests, accusing the government for following a Shiite line, triggered the sectarian tension in Iraq. The brutal crackdown upon these protests by the Maliki government turned political matters into security problems, and became one of hindrances to stability. That the disagreements between the Kurdish Administration in the north and the Baghdad Government turned into a level of tension reveals that it will be potentially difficult to attain stability in Iraq for even a longer period. In this panel a discussion will be carried out around the following topics:

- The Arab Spring and its Effect on Iraq
- The Iraqi Al-Qaida's Effect on Iraq's Political, Social and Economic Structure.
- Hindrances to Stability in Iraq
- Problems between the Northern Iraq Regional Kurdish Administration and the Central Government

5 – Israel in the new Middle East

Since the outbreak of Arab revolutions, there has been a mention of a new Middle East. In the new Middle East the cards are being shuffled and a socio-political transformation is experienced in all countries of the region. Being one of the countries that will potentially be most affected by this transformation, Israel—as part of the old equation—continues to read the developments in the Middle East within a framework of egregious perception of threats. This perception exacerbates Israel's desire for conserving its security policies and the status quo, and isolates Israel by widening the gap between itself and the region experiencing change. Within this framework, Israel's position in the new Middle East will be discussed under the light of following developments:

- The Effects of Arab Spring on Palestine and Israel
- The Effects of the New Phase of Iranian-U.S. Relations
- The Potential Effects of the Military coup in Egypt and the Syrian Civil War
- Non-State Actors (Hamas and Hezbollah) and Israel
- The Evaluation of Domestic Politics within Israel in the Context of Arab Revolutions

6 – Restructuring of Iran’s Foreign Policy

With the ascendance of Hassan Rohani to presidency after the elections in June 2013, Iran has signalled a tendency towards restructuring its domestic and foreign policies. In this respect, on the one hand Iran has been following a policy of rapprochement with, primarily, the USA and the West, while it endeavours to re-establish trust with countries in the region, and to remove misunderstandings. Considering the fact that those circles in Iran’s domestic politics that are opposed to this foreign policy extension are in fact influential, it becomes crucial to ask how this extension will be formed, whether it will be permanent, if so how it will affect the region. This panel aims to discuss the following issues:

- Restructuring in Iran’s Foreign Policy
- Changing Iranian-U.S. Relations
- The Leadership of Rohani and Problems of the Middle East
- Iranian and Arab Revolutions
- Iran’s Relationship with Regional Actors

7- Relationship between Turkey and the Middle East

As one of the pivotal actors in the Middle East, Turkey’s policies as regards this region play an important role in shaping both the future of the Middle East and that of Turkey. Recently, Turkey, the largest economic power in the region, has shown a growing interest in the Middle Eastern region. Ankara’s tendency to directly have an effect on the developments in the region sparked an important discussion on the limits of Turkey’s economic, military and diplomatic capacity, both inside Turkey and within the Middle East. Espousing democratic movements in such countries as Egypt, Syria and Tunisia, Turkey has been at odds with other regional actors backing autocratic governments in these countries. This has debilitated Ankara’s role as a mediator/facilitator, which was followed until 2010, and made Turkey a part in the problems. This panel addresses:

- The Economical-Politics of Turkey’s Middle East policy.
- The Effects of Arab Revolutions on Turkey’s Middle East Policy.
- The Iranian Nuclear Issue and Turkey’s Relationship with Iran within the Context of Syrian Civil War
- Turkey-Saudi Arabia Relationships under the Shadow of Military Coup in Egypt
- Islamist Actors in the Middle East and Turkey

8 – Religion and Society

The followers of religions stemming from the Middle East constitute almost half of the world population. Over time these religions have also experienced fractions and were divided into various sects, ways, congregations, groups and finally there emerged different formations that espouse various balance structures. Among the questions that will be addressed in this panel are: How will shared religious values, upon which pious Middle Eastern people with different beliefs agree, serve as a barrier to fundamentalism within the context of security? To what extent are religious congregations influential in the region’s politics? How much prepared is the Middle East to be ruled by religious parties? What does religious-based politics mean in the Middle East? The issues to be discussed in this panel are:

- The Role of Religion in Establishing Order in the Middle East
- Political and Apolitical Congregations in the Middle East, Religious Organisations

- Religious Fundamentalism in the Middle East
- Tolerance and Discrimination in the Middle East
- Sectarianism in the Middle East and Its Socio-Political Ramifications

9 – Economic Polity in the Middle East

The Middle Eastern geography, which has been one of the most significant regions of the world, in terms of religion, economy and politics, in the past, maintains its significance due to oil reserves and its geopolitical position. For a better understanding of the developments in the region, as well as their repercussions in the world, it is necessary to examine both the economical features of and the economic background of developments in the region. People in several Arab countries where the Arab Revolutions have been experienced, took the streets by complaining about their discomfort of repressive practices of their rulers, as well as other problems such as, unequal distribution of county resources, lack of economic development and unemployment. After all, in Tunisia, where the revolution first started, the riots broke out due to economic reasons. Therefore, economical readings of the internal dynamics and the relationship between domestic and foreign policies will open a new window for us in the analysis of problems.

- The Economic-Political Competition in the Middle East
- The Economic Polity of the Middle East with regard to World Energy Resources
- The Socio-Economic Aspect of the Revolutions
- The Economic Policies of the Global Powers on the Region
- The Economic Situation in the Post-Arab Revolution Countries

10 – The Political System and its Problem in the Middle East

It is necessary to expose to a multidimensional analysis the existing political and governmental structures in the Middle East and the dynamics between these structures and the society in terms of political developments. The issues of states, political systems and democratisation constitute the main decisive field and projection of the crisis and transformation experienced in the Middle East in the last few years. Considering, particularly, the fact that the relationship between Islam and democracy is the object of a theoretical discussion, it appears as a necessity to re-question the theory-practice relationship through emerging democratic demands. Hence, this panel will bring to discussion such issues as the relationships between politics and society determining today's politics of the Middle East, the processes of modernisation and democratisation, governmental systems and state regimes, bureaucratic structure and institutions.

- Islam and Democracy from Theory to Practice
- Political Legacy and Political Culture
- Political Structures and Institutions
- Societal Politicisation, Participation in Politics and Limits
- The Civil-Military Relations

11 – The Problem of Democracy in the Middle East

Today it has become impossible to talk about a political movement that does not refer to the concept "democracy". The revolutions, coups, riots and conflicts in the Middle East make it necessary to reconsider the concept of democracy in the Middle Eastern geography. How can democracy, a Western concept, gain meaning in today's Middle East? Is it a prescription to be applied in "nondemocratisable" Middle Eastern countries, or is it possible to introduce a distinct interpretation of democracy in the context of economic resources, religions, and sects, chronically

conflicts, polarisation or armed organisation that shape the political dynamics in the Middle East? In the project of realising democracy via a political transformation that will build security, peace and tolerance, what do the attitudes of political actors correspond to? Without doubt, the consolidation of democracy will both mean reestablishment of peace and tranquillity for the Middle East and thwart any external attempt to interfere with the will of Middle Eastern actors.

- Reconstruction of Democracy in the Middle East
- Democratisation and Political Actors
- Limits to Democratisation
- The Effects of the Arab Spring on Democratisation
- The Social Structure of the Middle East and Democracy

