GLOBALISATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

DR PHILIP LEECH-NGO
TODAY

- Introductions
  - Who am I?
  - Who are you?
  - What are your expectations/interests?
- Overview of the course
- Lecture: the making of the modern Middle East
A LITTLE BIT ABOUT ME

- New to Canada
- Senior Fellow at UOttawa Centre on Governance
- PhD from the University of Exeter in International Relations (Israel-Palestine conflict)
- Taught at UNB, Exeter, Plymouth and Liverpool
- Post-doc at UOttawa Human Rights Research and Education Centre
- GlobalisationCafé - website and podcasts
- I’m Dyslexic
MY RESEARCH

• Israel-Palestine conflict
• Palestinian politics - Statebuilding 2009-12
• Research focused in Nablus in North of the West Bank

Books:
• “The State of Palestine: A Critical Analysis” (Routledge 2016)
• “Political Identities and the Arab Spring” with Shabnam Holliday (Roman and Littlefield International 2016)

Peer-reviewed articles
• Critical Security Studies
• Foreign Policy Analysis
• Democracy and Authoritarianism
• Various editorials and opeds
TELL ME ABOUT YOU

- What's your name (and preferred pronoun)?
- What's your background?
- What's your interest in the Middle East?
- What are your expectations from these sessions?
- There will be a mini-survey sent round so you can answer confidentially and in more detail if you wish.
TOPICS

1. Introductions & The Middle East and Globalisation
2. The Israel-Palestine conflict
3. Oil, Wealth and Power in the Arab Gulf Monarchies
4. The 'Arab Spring' and after
5. Iran and the West
6. The Islamic State, terrorism and globalisation

Resources
Sent via email - please add your own

Teaching methods
2 x 30-45 min lecture
Discussion and break
(today is an exception)
OBSESSIVES, A WARNING...

• “The Middle East attracts, and for a very long time has attracted, an inordinate share of people who are obsessed. This is true whether they are obsessed with God, with themselves and their own narratives, or with something else. Those obsessed with one area or aspect of the Middle East often lose sight of larger patterns that may in fact determine or explain outcomes throughout this region and beyond” (Khalidi 2009).
WHAT IS THE MIDDLE EAST
QUESTIONS

• Where is the Middle East?
• Diversity: How do we characterise the region?
• What is the historical heritage?
• Key ideas 1: Orientalism and Occidentalism
QUIZ TIME

• Identify all the countries on the Map

• Note that one of the countries split into two in July 2011

• DON’T USE THE INTERNET/ CHEAT
ATTRIBUTES OF THE MIDDLE EAST
WHAT IS THE MIDDLE EAST

- The term ‘Middle East’ is in common usage...
  - ...but it lacks a fixed definition

- This presentation seeks to:
  - Address its definition
  - Explore the diversity obscured by the term
  - Question the origin of the term
  - Consider the relevance of the term to students of politics

- In pairs, answer the question:
  - What does the term ‘Middle East’ mean to you?
  - Think: politics, geography, culture etc.
Geographical Fixing

- Term ‘Middle East’ covers different geographical areas
- This map provides a common ‘public’ understanding of the term
- This includes the Arab peninsula, Iran, Israel, Egypt, Turkey, and the ‘Levant’ or Mashreq
- Includes the oil region, the Gulf, the Sinai Canal, Mecca, Jerusalem
- Think what is not covered here
A Wider Definition

- This is the area of operations for the US military’s ‘Central Command’
- This map goes further East to include Central Asia up to Russian border
- Includes the ‘Horn of Africa’ but excludes Israel, Turkey, the Maghreb
Different Terms

- ME is also known as the Near East or Southwest Asia
  - In India, it is considered as ‘Western Asia’
  - ‘Middle East’ is a British military term: ‘Middle East Command’ as opposed to the ‘Indian Command’

- Region contains sub-regions, including:
  - Maghreb (the ‘West’ i.e. North Africa)
  - Mashreq (the ‘East’ i.e. the rest of the Arab world)
  - Levant (Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan)
  - Arabian peninsula
  - Al-Khalij (the Gulf)
The Middle East and North Africa

- This is a wider image, stretching from Nouakchott, Mauritania to Kabul, Afghanistan
- This is the most useful geographical meaning used in this course
- Main focus will be on the Arab world, Iran, Israel, and Turkey
- But why these states?
Middle East = Nile to the Oxus
al-Maghreb

- Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Mauritania
- “the West”
- “where the sun sets”
- North Africa
al-Mashreq

- “the East”
- “where the sun rises”
- Top map: Egypt, Sudan, OPT, Isarel, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Yemen, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq
- **Bottom map**: Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, OPT
The Levant

- OPT, Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, parts of Iraq, Egypt
- Idea of Greater Syria
- Bilad al-Sham
Al-Khalij

- (Iraq)
- Kuwait
- Qatar
- UAE
- Bahrain
- Oman
- Saudi Arabia
Part Two:
Commonalities and Diversity
Common religion?

- Islam: Sunnism, Shi‘ism, Sufism
- Bahaism
- Druze
- Secularism
- Christianity: Coptic, Catholic, Protestant, Maronite, Greek Orthodox
- Judaism: Orthodox, Reform
Common geography?

- **Mainly semiarid**: History of agriculture, mainly dependent on irrigation; rainfall – varied
- **Rural**: Nomadism, Seminomadism, Irrigated farming
- **Urban**: Large metropolitan cities, Towns
The Fertile Crescent
Common political systems?

- **Kingdoms/Emirates**: Saudi Arabia, UAE, Jordan, Morocco, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar

- **Republics**: Iran, Syria, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Lebanon

- **Stateless/‘in transition’**: Kurds, Palestinians, Berbers, Azeris, Western Sahara

- **Authoritarian/dictatorship**: Syria, Iran, Algeria, Libya, Most of the Arab Gulf...

- **Democracy/pseudo-democracy**: Iran, Turkey, Israel, Iraq, Lebanon, OPT, Algeria, Egypt (?), Tunisia, Kuwait

Impact of ‘Arab Spring’ and after?
Impact of globalization and backlash?
Common economic systems?

- **Rentier states**: All Arab Gulf states, Iran, Algeria, Iraq
- **Indirect rentier**: Syria, OPT, Egypt, Jordan
- **Statist economies**: Syria, Egypt
- **Market economies**: Lebanon, Israel, Turkey

Impact of ‘Arab Spring’ and after?

Impact of globalization and backlash?
The Tides of History
The ‘Classical Period’

- Note the 6 major empires of the first century AD
- Depending on your definition, the ‘Middle East’ is within the boundaries of 5 empires
- This is an example of the diverse historical experiences of the region…
- …and of the region’s historic importance on the world’s major trade routes
The Caliphates AD622-750

- Map of the height of Arab expansion
- Note the inclusion of the majority of modern Spain within the empire
- This expansion is one of the greatest socio-cultural impacts on the region
- Only a small number of Arabs were involved in the initial expansion; much depended on the conversion of the conquered
Part 4

Ethnography
The ‘Islamic World’

- Islam expands with the Arabs
- Note Sunni/Shi divide
- Majority of world’s Muslims are no longer Arab and live outside the region
  - Islam is a feature of the region’s politics but is not unique
What are the implications of the term ‘Arab Spring’?
Ethnicity and Language

• Ethnicities include:
  – Arab, Persian, Turkic, Berber, Kurd, Armenian, Jewish ethnicities etc.

• Languages include:
  – Arabic (many forms), Farsi/Persian, Kurdish, Hebrew, Aramaic, Tamazight (Berber), French

• In sum, the ME is a melting pot of hundreds of cultures, histories, and peoples
  – This affects the region’s politics
Politics

- This course provides an introduction to the politics of the region
  - Case studies allow in-depth analysis
- Systems include authoritarian (different styles), democracies, theocracies, and monarchies (different types)
- Economies also differ from resource dependent, to market-liberal, to quasi-socialist
- ‘Arab Spring’ potentially biggest period of change in system
Part Four

Orientalism
Edward Said’s *Orientalism*

- “anyone who teaches, writes about or researches the Orient”

- “style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and ‘the Occident’”

- “corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it, making statements about it, authorising views about it [etc..] – … a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient”
What does this mean?

- Knowledge and power
- Discourse
- Power relations
- Binary relationships
- Essentialisation and generalisations
- Stresses cultural differences, particularly the significance of Islam
Three Major Claims of Orientalist approach

1. The ‘World of Islam’ is a homogeneous entity, its features do not change over time or space

2. Islam is flawed ⇒ decline of Islamic civilisation

3. ‘Islamic’ civilisation defined by lack of progress / modernisation and despotism

These claims ⇒ impact on policy: “The Truth Effect”
We were in the jungle. Huts made out of mud with pointy stick roofs all around us. And in a hut sitting on a dirt floor was a woman with skin as black as the ink that filled the inkwell in my school desk. A Shadow come to life. Sitting cross-legged, her hands weaving bright patterned cloth on a loom. ‘We’ve got machines that do all that now’, Graham said, as Emily nudged him to be quite. ‘She can’t understand what I’m saying,’ Graham explained. ‘They’re not civilised. They only understand drums.’”
Critique of Said

- Is it realistic to overcome the problem of assumptions?
- What are the alternatives?
- Does this open the door to ‘nativism’?
  - i.e. suggests that Oriental/native voices are more objective and thus more reliable
  - Can Westerners contribute at all?
  - Misreading of Said - is this reverse ‘Orientalism’?
Part Five

Occidentalism
What does Occidentalism mean?

- Essentialisation of the West
- not characterized by similar institutional, cultural and political structures as Orientalism
- Acceptance of Basic Orientalist Arguments
- Rejection of Orientalist discourse
- Binary relationships
Example of Occidentlalism

“Iran lags behind the West in industry and modern technological know-how. But it does not lag behind it in culture. We are not behind the West in cultural heritage. Our literature, poetry, prose, and overall our culture – national culture – do not have any shortcoming.”

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei
How to handle this:

- “This is not just a matter of Westerners who do not have enough *sympathy* for or comprehension of foreign cultures … What is perhaps more relevant is the political willingness to take seriously the alternatives… the existence of other cultures and societies.”

- Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*
Conclusion

• The term “Middle East” is useful for scholarly analysis…
• …but scholars must recognise the immense diversity within the term
• However, there are enough commonalities to enable region-wide analysis
• Further background:
  – Read works for this topic in module handbook