

B-3 Globalization and Domestic Politics in the Middle East I

Chair: **Mary K. Meyer McAleese**, Eckerd College

Panel Abstract:

In a graph drawn by an economist, the important thing to note is where the lines cross. As a world region, the Middle East it is the place where many key geopolitical lines cross. The papers on this panel look at the intersection of domestic and global politics in two Middle Eastern states, Kuwait and Turkey. Both countries have strong Islamist movements whose impact on domestic governance continues to grow. Kuwait has been the target of external as well as internal pressures to open its economy and political system, while Turkey has made a strong bid for membership in the European Union that has mobilized key domestic constituencies on both sides. How these issues are resolved will be important elements in determining the future of how governments and populations in this pivotal world region engage with the west - and the rest.

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Allah's Boundaries': Surveying the Role of Islam in the Public Sphere of Kuwait."

Abstract:

Examining the role of Islam in crafting the public domain in Kuwait is a compelling issue. It allows for a more holistic understanding of Islam's construction of the public and private spheres on the one hand, and the social, cultural and political conditions that arise from such distinctions on the other. This jurisprudential analysis of the 'private' and 'public' spheres historicizes the role of political Islamic movements are the genesis of the modern Kuwaiti state, using examples from events in contemporary Kuwaiti history to outline the broad effect of these political forces. The result is a model of political thinking in Kuwait that is notably pro-religious in contrast to the milieu that predominated at the time that Kuwait became independent, that is, a substantially secular political and social culture.

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Pitfalls on the Road to Brussels: Article 301 and the Politics of EU Accession in Turkey

Abstract:

The political climate in Turkey has changed as Turkey has tried to gain full membership in the European Union. Two conflicting factions have taken shape. Establishment "Kemalist" laicists reflect Turkey's French-style radical secularism which comes clothed in a militarist authoritarianism whose influence permeates administrative, judicial, and educational institutions. Islamists advocate a US-style secularism based on religious freedom, and favor Turkish accession to the EU because necessary adjustments in Turkish law would lift restrictions on the practices of observant Muslims. This paper examines one prominent battleground in this war for Turkey's political soul: the strategic use of Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, which forbids citizens to "insult Turkishness" or any of the key institutions of the laicist establishment. The hypothesis of this study is that 301 cases are intended not simply as harassment of domestic political adversaries the power of Turkey's traditional elites.

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New Spaces for Old Politics: Bottom-up Democratization in Kuwait

Abstract:

Kuwait is a "traditional" Arab society governed by an autocratic regime that benefits from the economics characterizing dynastic monarchies and rentier states; at the same time, it hosts a notably lively

civil society with deep domestic roots and branches reaching well beyond its formal borders. Which of these influences politics more is difficult to say. Among the issues I address in this discussion of civil society in Kuwait is the May 2005 amendment of the election law to include women as citizens with full political rights. The apparent gift of an autocratic state, its achievement is the outcome of a strong grass-roots politics that can either encourage progressive change or prevent its realization. Indeed, I hope to show that the persistent work of civil society organizations is the primary engine of democratization in Kuwait.

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The Theoretical Dynamics of Competing Values: European Integration and Turkish Accession

Abstract:

As the European Union continues to expand, it becomes increasingly pertinent to investigate more closely the mechanisms that push sovereign states towards integration. Controlling the uniformity of government and economy gives way to a desire for regularity in the realm of social norms and homogeneity on the basis of long-held beliefs and practiced traditions. This standardization traditionally implies the need to make changes in legal, economic, and institutional systems through a process of "leveling-up", whereby incoming member-states strive to reach entrance criteria based on existing high-level norms. The question regarding the relationship between the two then is whether or not the legal process of "leveling-up" can and should apply to social values. Nowhere is this concern better illustrated than in the movement for Turkish accession to the European Union. Turkey possesses social standards vastly different and sometimes at odds with traditional European principles, leaving political leaders to grapple with the challenge of needing to "level-up" a separate value system.

Discussant: **Nikolaos Zahariadis**, University of Alabama-Birmingham