

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the APSA MENA POLITICS SECTION NEWSLETTER, the official publication of the MENA POLITICS Organized Section. The first volume of the Newsletter was edited and produced by a dedicated team of early career scholars from the region, with support from the APSA MENA Network team (see their note in this issue). With this issue, we relaunch the Newsletter with a new editorial team and a new mandate.

The newly relaunched Newsletter is intended to become a central forum for the community of political scientists working on and in the Middle East and North Africa, available to Section members and to the broader academic public. The Newsletter will publish a wide range of provocative and compelling essays of interest across the field. Essays and special sections will feature original research, provocative reflections on fieldwork and methodology, discussions of emergent research programs, reviews of multiple new publications, and provocations designed to stimulate debate. We invite suggestions, proposals and submissions from all Section members. To guide this exciting new forum, we have recruited a diverse and talented Editorial Board to steer the Newsletter's strategic direction: Holger Albrecht, Nermin Allam, Alexandra Blackman, May Darwich, Kevan Harris, Shimaa Hatab, Lisel Hintz, Lama Mourad, Jillian Schwedler, Nadav Shelef, Stacey Philbrick Yadav, and Sean Yom.

The MENA POLITICS SECTION was approved as an Organized Section by the APSA Council at the 2018 Annual Conference with a mandate to support, develop and publish research on the politics of the MENA region utilizing interdisciplinary methodological, theoretical and empirical tools. It seeks to fully integrate the rigorous study of the politics of the Middle East with the broader discipline of Political Science, to serve as an institutional home for the community of political scientists dedicated to the Middle East, and to fully integrate scholars from the MENA region and diverse scholars from the United States into the global study of Middle East politics. It builds on earlier efforts by the Conference Group on the Middle East inside APSA, and the decade of field building supported by the Project on Middle East Political Science outside of APSA.

The Section is led by Marc Lynch (Chair), Lindsay Benstead (Vice-Chair), Steven Brooke (Treasurer), Bassel Salloukh (At-Large), and Jillian Schwedler (At-Large). The Section quickly acquired nearly 200 members even before most of its official activities have begun. Its active Twitter feed @APSAMENA has more than 500 followers, and its recently created Facebook page has over 100 followers. While some Section activities (such as eligibility for awards) is limited to members, it aspires to reach a broader academic public. Section dues are waived for graduate students and scholars from the region. It has an independent website (<https://www.apsamena.org>) outside the APSA membership paywall, where those interested in the political science of the region can follow Section news, learn about professional opportunities, and freely download the Section Newsletter.

2019 will be the first Annual Conference of the APSA for the MENA Politics Section, and it will be a busy one. On Wednesday, August 28, the Section will co-sponsor (with the Project on Middle East Political Science and the APSA MENA Network) the MENA Politics Research Development Group short course for the second year. The RDG workshop is designed to bring together early career scholars from the region for intensive discussion of article length papers and professional development programming. The 2018 RDG featured paper presentations by Sultan Alamer, Aymen Boughanmi, Shimaa Hatab, Dana el-Kurd and Lama Mourad, with discussants including Melani Cammett, F. Gregory Gause, Michael Herb, Ellen Lust, Curtis Ryan, Jillian Schwedler, and Sean Yom. The 2019 RDG will discuss the work of six more early career scholars: Luai Allarakia, Abdeslam Badre, Mona Farag, Rania Abdel Naeem Mahmoud, Safa al-Saeedi, and Basileus Zeno. The Section will also be co-sponsoring a Short Course on teaching about the Middle East, organized and run by Gamze Cavdar and Sultan Tepe.

The APSA allocated the Section three panels at the 2019 Annual Conference. In a highly competitive process, the selection committee formed by Section Vice-Chair Lindsay Benstead chose the following to represent our inaugural set of MENA Politics panels: *Gender and Institutional Change in the Middle East and North Africa* (Marwa Shalaby and Melissa Marschall; Alex Blackman, Julia Clark, and Aytug Sazmaz; Gail Buttorff and Bozena Wellborne; Carolyn Barnett; chair, Mark Tessler; and discussant Lindsay Benstead); *Old and New Actors in the Middle East and North Africa* (Ashley Anderson; Mohamad-Dhia Hammami; Lindsay Benstead and Ellen Lust; Kim Guiler; chair Sharan Grewal; and discussant Aytan Sazmaz); and *Survey Research in the Middle East and North Africa* (Matt Buehler, Kristin Fabbe and Kyung Joon Han; Steven Brooke, Michael Hoffman, and Youssef Chahoud; Holger Albrecht, Sharan Grewal, and Kevin Koehler; Dina Bishara, Michelle Jurkovich, and Robert Griffin; chair Amaney Jamal; and discussant Ellen Lust). In addition, the Section selected one poster presentation from Saadet Konak Unal, University of Houston, on "The Role of Gender in the Turkish Parliament."

At the Business Meeting of the 2019 Annual Conference, the Section will present its inaugural awards, chosen by selection committees assembled by Section Vice-Chair Lindsay Benstead. The awards will be given for "Best Dissertation" (defended in AY 2017-18) and "Best APSA Paper" (presented at the 2018 Annual Conference). Finally, on Friday evening the Section will partner with POMEPS to sponsor a reception open to all scholars working on or in the Middle East and North Africa.

I am delighted to share the rich set of essays in our inaugural Newsletter: *Nermin Allam* reflects on the frustrations of fieldwork on Egyptian women during and after the revolution; *Steven Brooke* and *Neil Ketchley* use their recent work on Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood to explore the value of novel historical archival sources for political science research; *Kevan Harris* and *Daniel Tavana* discuss rigorous new public opinion survey research in Iran; *Waleed Hazbun*, *Karim Makdisi* and *Coralie Hindawi* discuss the politics of insecurity from the vantage point of Beirut; *Lisel Hintz* argues for the value of studying popular culture for understanding Turkish politics; *Marc Lynch* investigates Islamist movements in wartime conditions; *Lama Mourad* and *Daniel Masterson* engage with ethical issues surrounding the wave of research on Syrian refugees; *David Patel* points to the surprising neglect of Iraq in the study of Islamist movements; *Kristian Ulrichsen* lays out the growing problems facing academic research in the Gulf; *Morten Valbjørn* proposes multiple ways of theorizing identity politics; and *Stacey Philbrick Yadav* offers a profound reflection on the ethics and pragmatics of research on a Yemen at war.

Sincerely,
Marc Lynch, The George