



Ethno-religious ‘Minorities’ and Mobilisation in the Middle East Workshop

Thursday, 9 March 2017 – 9.30am to 5.45pm

Venue: The Fellows’ Dining Room, Hilda Besse Building, St Antony’s College, University of Oxford

The Middle East and North Africa region has been undergoing a series of major upheavals and transformation particularly in the wake of the regional uprisings which began in 2011. The confluence of external intervention and internal struggles are increasingly undermining national borders, resulting in large-scale demographic shifts owing to ethnic-cleansing, mass displacement and migration. The rise of radical actors such as the Islamic State (IS) have further exacerbated these trends. These dynamics in turn are both precipitating, and at the same time re-enforcing, the intensification of identity struggles and the (re)drawing of majority-minority communal and ethno-religious boundaries. In order to examine these shifts in identity and their consequences for the changing map of the Middle East, we will examine the following questions in a one-day workshop on ethno-religious mobilisation in the region:

- What are the patterns of ethno-religious mobilisation and changes in group boundaries particularly since 2011?
- To what extent are the current challenges faced by ethno-religious ‘minorities’ comparable with previous bouts of instability and crisis in the Middle East?
- How do current patterns of ethno-religious mobilisation differ (or not) from previous experiences, including the minoritisation of non-Muslims during the period of nation-building?

This workshop will therefore seek to situate and contextualise current developments both historically and identify emerging patterns of mobilisation since 2011. The particular areas of focus include research on identity struggles and shifts facing diverse communities such as Alevis, Alawites, Yezidis, Copts, Syriac-speaking Christians as well as Sunni-Shi’a relations and the broader intensification of sectarian politics in the region. The workshop will include panels on:

- Minoritisation and nation-building in the Middle East
- ‘New’ sectarian politics and mobilisation post-2011
- Challenges of research on ethno-religious minorities in the Middle East, methodology and avenues for interdisciplinary and comparative research

This workshop is co-organised by the School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies and the Middle East Centre, St Antony’s College, University of Oxford and supported by a grant from the Sasakawa Peace Foundation. The long term aim of the workshop is to establish a research network that brings together academics from the UK, Japan, the Middle East and beyond, whose research interests include ethno-religious ‘minority’ communities and mobilisation in the Middle East, to facilitate the interchange of ideas and experiences as well as to lay the basis for future collaboration.

Space for this event is limited. Please register for a place on eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/workshop-ethno-religious-minorities-and-mobilisation-in-the-middle-east-tickets-32185437510>

