

## Panel 15: **In—Between borders: buffer zones, safe zones, no man’s land**

Thursday 17, 16.30-18.45, Aula 252

Convenors: **Daniel Meier** (CNRS-Grenoble), **Rosita Di Peri** (Torino University)

Discussant: **Rosita Di Peri** (Torino University)

The Middle East knows many oddities in terms of borderlands. From the no man’s land between Egypt and Sudan to the “safe zones” that regional powers may set up on segments of Syrian borderlands. Since WWII, the UN interventions contributed to the shaping of “intermediate borderlands” following a rationale of interposition between foes. More recently, the breakdown of the Iraqi, Syrian, Libyan and Yemenite States opened the door to a State’s re/definition, following the rise of the organization of the Islamic State. In this context of political changes and sovereignty challenges in the Middle East, it may sounds timely to explore the current types of in-between borders and boundaries that appeared, persisted or changed. In terms of borders, three types will be explored here: The demilitarized areas that usually are located along a border between two States at war and patrolled by UN troops; Restricted areas/safe areas, usually near a sensitive border, defined either by the State itself or by external powers set up to secure areas for different military/humanitarian/political purposes; No man’s land between the two border posts previously described as ‘frontiers’ and today’s waiting areas or humanitarian cordon. In terms of boundaries, the meaning of inbetweenness is palpable through the changing political patterns and shifting meanings of reality. While the first category of space primarily raise the concern about sovereignty, the general concern for both in-between borders/boundaries relates to the type of identities those spaces (re)defined in terms of representation as well as for living conditions (status, rights). In proposing an exploration of those types of in-between spaces from several points of view, this panel intends to read beyond the political strategies and decipher meaningful dynamics at stake in the current reshaping of the Middle East. In so doing, it intends to discuss conceptual tools to describe the double dimensions of empirical and symbolic reality at stake thanks to notions like heterotopia (“non-lieu”), networked borders (Popescu, 2012) or borderities (Amilhat-Szary & Giraud, 2015).

Paper givers:

- 1) **Philippe Bourmaud** (University of Lyon 2), *The sanitary cordon in the Middle East, between strategic design and international experience (1838-2015)*

Sanitary *cordons* are not designed to establish geopolitical division, such as no-man's lands and armistice lines between conflicted armies, but to submit territorial administration to an anti-epidemic design, either within a single territory or along border lines. Yet since the work of Daniel Panzac in the 1980s, the historiography of public health in the Middle East has insisted their role as both margins and instruments of sovereign control. Infected areas would be identified as dangerous Others. Supervision would boost state authority or be a tool of foreign intervention. Based on Ottoman and French diplomatic archives and inspired by the work of Sylvia Chiffolleau, this paper aims at questioning whether *cordons* were indeed established to consolidate borders, following concerns for territory control, or they were based on an incremental international body of experience of time-and-space requirements before being instrumentalized by the states.

- 2) **Daniel Meier** (CNRS, Grenoble), *UN buffer zones in South Lebanon and Cyprus: naturalizing the status quo of no man's land?*

The Middle East is one of the key areas where UN investment in interposition between foes resulted in several important and oldest UN missions in the world. The Eastern Mediterranean shores are prone in the spreading of buffer zones. Two cases study will be under scrutiny: Lebanon with UNIFIL mission since 1978 and Cyprus with UNFICYP since 1974. One can notice that for both of them, peace processes has not occurred as a consequence of UN presence. While the UN presence resulted in a cessation of hostilities, it also resulted in freezing position on the ground. Second, each case produced a no man's land or buffer zone where UN personnel is patrolling in order to separate enemy forces. Third, such territorial mediations resulted in a new political geography on the ground: hectares of land have been withdraw from states' sovereignty and are managed by the UN. As a consequence, those UN missions have not been able to solve disputes, although the Blue line between Lebanon and Israel is succeeding to secure segments of the international border. More problematic, these missions tend to provoke a *status quo* in the territorial dispute and tend to naturalize partition (in Cyprus) or occupation (in South of Lebanon) while the UN resolutions backing those missions cannot be enforce and seem to be the hostages of international alliances.

- 3) **Evrin Gormus** (Istanbul Bilgi University), *Bedouins of Sinai: Living in No Man's Land.*

My paper aims to examine the proliferation of the Salafi-Jihadist groups in the Sinai Peninsula by engaging the question of how the decades-long marginalization and exclusion of local Bedouin populations by the central state turned Bedouins into natural allies of the transnational Jihadist groups who seek to exploit the continuously deepening power void in Sinai. Part one examines the uneasy relations between the state and Bedouins from the 1979 Camp David Accords to the overthrow of the Mubarak regime in Egypt. The socio-economic and political exclusion of the Bedouin population and the Palestine question would be analyzed as the main dynamics that shaped state-society relations in Sinai during that period. Part two analyses the increasing alignment of local population with jihadist groups in the security vacuum created by the disintegration of the former regime in Sinai. This section is followed by a discussion on Islamic State's franchising strategy and its expansion to Sinai. The last section concludes with policy implications.

- 4) **Véronique Bontemps** (CNRS, EHESS), « *This is not an ordinary border* » *The waiting zone (istirâha) of Jericho during the crossing of the Allenby Bridge*

The Allenby/King Hussein Bridge holds a particular place within the border system imposed by Israel on the Palestinian Occupied Territories: for Palestinian West Bankers, it is indeed their only exit to Jordan, thus to the « outside world ». In this article, I seek to analyze the place of the waiting zone (*istirâha*) of Jericho within the Israeli system of control on Palestinian circulations at this particular crossing point. I describe how, through maintaining the ambiguous status of this zone, Palestinian authorities find themselves indeed involved in the management of the crossing. I first take a historical perspective in order to describe the context in which the *istirâha* was created. I then expose how the different actors at play during the crossing try to justify their action in this particular place. I contend that while struggling to improve – as much as possible – the conditions of crossing for Palestinian passengers, these actors yet find themselves forced to play a role in maintaining the regime of control of Palestinian mobility imposed by Israel (along with the Jordanian State).

5) **Matthieu Cimino** (CERI/Sciences Po), *Heterotopia of the Syrian Conflict: A Comparative Study of 'Waiting Areas' at the Turkish- and Jordanian-Syrian Borders (2011-2016)*

Since the beginning of the revolution (2011), the Syrian borderlands have been deeply restructured: Initially simple “crossing points” or transit zones for various actors involved in the conflict (smugglers, rebels, aid workers), they have gradually turned into permanent “waiting zone/area” for refugees. From both sides of the Syrian border, millions of displaced people and refugees have gathered in camps, hoping for a favourable outcome of the conflict.

In only four years, these settlement practices have defined new territorial, economic, and symbolic realities, as well as new circulatory dynamics. This communication, through a comparative study of Turkish-Syrian and Jordanian-Syrian borders, examines two of these “waiting areas” that constitute models of multi-scale observation of the current dynamics at work in the Syrian conflict and analyses their empirical and symbolic implications. Who are the actors involved in the management of these “waiting areas”? How can they inform about institutional mechanisms of control and local, national and regional policies of the countries involved (Turkey, Jordan)? How are these control policies perceived by the populations, and how do they contribute to the redefinition of their identities? As a result of several field studies in Sanliurfa and Zaatari, this paper will provide a theoretical framework for understanding these “non-lieu/heterotopia” (Bourdieu, 1966) of the Syrian conflict.

6) **Paul M. Esber** (University of Sydney), *Representational Politics and Networked Borders in the MENA – A No Man's Land? A Case Study of Jordan*

Whereas as Popescu focuses on the networked effect on the movement of people and services, this paper tentatively explores how the analogy of the networked border is applicable to the movement of ideas and the impact of this on state (regime)-society relations. The state here is conceived of as the intersection between the local and global in such a way that the state is a door, window or semi-permeable membrane between them. People, goods, capital and ideas flow across the membrane, the state. Axiomatically the state is not passive in this transfer, but is an active participant in selecting who or what passes back and forth. This is not to say however that flow is an inherently controllable phenomenon. The reality that flows through borders is not entirely controllable is reflected in the development of representational politics in Jordan since 1989 when political liberalisation was initiated. This paper therein examines the evolution of representational politics in Jordan and its uneasy relationship with the prevailing centralisation of political decision-making. It is posited that representational politics is at present a type of ‘no man's land’ between authoritarian and democratic practice. It is therefore a contentious space and the proponents of either side are involved in a struggle that is global in scope through the phenomenon of networked borders.