

BRI0002 - Final Essay Questions

Due midnight, Monday 22 June

Please choose and answer **ONE** of the questions below. Your essay should be approximately 3,000 words and demonstrate original research beyond the lecture slides and assigned readings.

The essays will be checked for plagiarism so please make sure to provide appropriate reference for any idea, quote or information that is not originally yours.

1. “In Iran, homosexuality is a crime punishable with death for men and lashing for women. But Iran is also the only Muslim country that legally recognizes the identity of transgender people and even subsidizes sex reassignment operations.”

How to make sense of this apparent contradiction? Discuss the LGBTQ+ rights/struggles in the Islamic Republic of Iran from a historical, regional and/or theoretical perspective.

2. The Kurds and the Palestinians both struggle against powerful state actors for rights recognition and national self-determination. Despite this, they have not always been natural allies, with the Palestinian cause being championed by countries that oppress their own Kurdish minorities and the Kurdish cause finding vocal support in Israel.

Discuss this observation with historical examples and what it teaches us about geopolitics in the Middle East and selective solidarity for rights struggles.

3. In the early stages of the “Arab Spring”, Turkey was widely held up as a successful model of Muslim democracy for the wider region. But as the “spring” turned into “winter”, Turkey increasingly looked like yet another country plagued by conflict, instability and authoritarianism.

Discuss the rise and fall of the so-called “Turkish model” in the context of the country’s domestic transformation and regional engagements during the Arab Spring uprisings.

4. Can we explain the democratic deficit in the Middle East by using existing democratic theories, or should we treat the region as a special case, anomaly or an exception? Discuss with reference to at least two distinct theoretical approaches, as well as historical and contemporary cases.