Letter from the MEEA President

This is a busy summer for the MEEA research community. We have two conferences: Lebanese American University is hosting a conference on "Inequality, Poverty and Unemployment in MENA" on May 17-18, 2001 in Byblos, Lebanon. The program can be accessed from our present web site at www.gsb.luc.edu/depts/economics/meea.htm and the contact person for the conference is Professor Wassim Shahin, Dean of the Business School. MEEA is also organizing a MEEA-SOAS Joint conference on "Global Change and Regional Integration: The Redrawing of the Economic Boundaries in the Middle East and North Africa". This conference is organized by Professor Hassan Hakimian and is being held at University of London on July 20-22, 2001. Its program is also posted on the above web site as well as the linked SOAS web site.

In the meantime, our Executive Secretary Jeff Nugent is preparing seven sessions for the MEEA Annual Conference (to be held at ASSA meetings, January 4-6, 2002 in Atlanta, Georgia) and is transferring the web page to our address at meeaweb.org. Bulent Uyar, our Treasurer, is diligently working on our finances, on record keeping and on our future financial projections. Needless to say, we are a volunteer service organizations and most costs of MEEA are subsidized through our own institutions. Fortunately, we have been a major beneficiary of the internet age—it has substantially decreased our mailing costs and communications time in the last four years.

During this spring, we have completed work on the Editorial Board Protocol (thanks to Parvin Alizadeh). This will be used as a guide in determining the relations of the Editorial board with the Research Editor and the MEEA Board. Work on the third volume of our web journal, Topics in Middle East and North African Economies (which has selected proceedings from the MEEA sessions in ASSA meetings in New Orleans this January) is almost complete. The volume will be ready on the web in the next month. We have also finished revising the MEEA by-laws. Fatemeh Moghadam, MEEA’s ex-President, has helped reformulate the changes and will send it out for members’ approval during this summer. The changes in the by-laws have been necessary to encompass the multi MEEA activities we have started in the last few years which, in turn, necessitated changes in internal rules and protocols.

I want to thank Ward Sayre for putting together this newsletter. I hope all of you a very productive summer and I hope to see you in our meetings in the future.

E. Mine Cinar
Loyola University Chicago
ANNOUNCEMENTS

MEEA CONFERENCE IN EUROPE– JULY 2001

The Middle East Economic Association (MEEA) is organising its first European conference in London University in the summer of 2001. This international conference marks the twentieth anniversary of MEEA’s foundation and is a joint venture with the Centre of Near & Middle East Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

The theme of the conference is Global Change and Regional Integration: The Redrawing of the Economic Boundaries in the Middle East and North Africa. The aim is to provide an opportunity for addressing MENA’s economic challenges in a global setting looking at ways in which the changing patterns of trade, investment and finance, and labour flows are likely to influence the future direction of the region’s economies.

For further information, please contact Hassan Hakimian at H.Hakimian@soas.ac.uk Fax +44-20-7898 4559 Tel +44-20-7898 4537 or go to the MEEA website for a program.

TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL MEETING OF MEEA
JANUARY 4-6, 2002

MEEA will hold its Twenty-First Annual meeting January 4-6, 2002 as part of the Allied Social Science Associations (ASSA) meetings in Atlanta, GA. The program committee is currently finalizing the program for these meetings which will include seven MEEA-sponsored sessions. A finalized program will be available on the MEEA website (www.gsb.luc.edu/depts/economics/MEEA). Presented papers will be eligible for the MEEA online journal, Topics in Middle East Economics.

MEEA-CHRAF

MEEA’s Committee on Human Rights and Academic Freedom (CHRAF) monitors infringements of human rights and academic freedom of economists in the Middle East. For information, please contact Co-Chairs of MEEA-CHRAF, Abbas Alnasrawi, or Sohrab Behdad. Professor Alnasrawi may be reached at the Department of Economics, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont 05405 USA (telephone 802-656-3064, fax 802-656-8405, email alnasra@moose.uvm.edu). Professor Behdad is at Department of Economics, Denison University, Granville, Ohio, 43023 USA (phone 740-587-6404, fax 740-587-6348, email behdad@denison.edu).

IBN KHALDUN PRIZE

Reminder that submissions for the Ibn Khaldun Prize for the best paper on one or more Middle Eastern countries by a junior economist (no more than three years after receiving Ph.D.) must be received no later than December 10, 2001 at the following address: Prof. Jeffrey B. Nugent, Dept. of Economics, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089-0253, USA. The entries will be evaluated by a three person committee.

SPECIAL ISSUE OF THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS

The International Journal of Business will have a special forthcoming issue entitled “Emerging Financial Markets of the Middle East.” The guest editor of this special issue, Dr. Yochanan Shachmurove is soliciting high-quality manuscripts. The International Journal of Business is indexed by, among others, EconLit. All authors will not be levied a submission fee. Possible topics of interest include, but are not limited to: asset pricing in emerging markets; corporate finance issues that distinguish emerging markets from developed markets; the role of capital in emerging markets; capital market integration; the role of political risk in both corporate finance and portfolio management; currency and fized income pricing in emerging markets; the implications of emerging market crises.

All articles are subject to the usual peer review process. The deadline for submission of manuscripts for possible inclusion in this special issue is July 1, 2001. Please send all correspondence to Dr. Yochanan Shachmurove Department of Economics University of Pennsylvania 3718 Locust Walk Philadelphia, PA 19104-6297 or email to yochanan@macneil.sas.upenn.edu.

EIGHTH ANNUAL ERF CONFERENCE IN BAHRAIN

The Economic Research Forum for the Arab Countries, Iran and Turkey will hold its Eighth Annual Conference held in Manama, Bahrain October 25-27, 2001. Research will be presented in the areas of labor and human resources; financial markets, public finance and governance; globalization, trade and FDI; and science and technology and industry and environment.

Further information about the conference, can be obtained on the ERF website www.erf.org.eg or by writing ERF at 7 Boulos Hanna St., Dokki, Cairo, Egypt. Fax 202-361-6042; Email erf@ids.gov.eg

RESEARCH IN MIDDLE EAST ECONOMICS

The series editor of MEEA’s Research in Middle East Economics is currently accepting proposals for volume 7 of the series. Volume 6 is currently still accepting paper submissions (see the announcement on page 3 of this newsletter) and volumes 4 and 5 will be out shortly. Volume 4 entitled “Women and Work in the Middle East” is currently in press, and Volume 5 “Food, Agriculture and Economic Development” has been completed and should be out by the end of the year. You can email Jennifer Olmsted, the series editor, with proposals for volume 7 at jolmsted@oxy.edu.

NEWSLETTER CHANGES

As of August 1, 2001 the newsletter editor will move from Kenyon College. My new address will be Edward Sayre, Dept. of Economics, Agnes Scott College, 141 East College Ave, Decatur, GA, 30030.
Recent Journal Articles

As part of the information services to MEEA Members, the Newsletter will list and abstract recent articles on the economics of the Middle East. Authors who would like their articles abstracted are encouraged to send them directly to the editor. The articles listed below were published between January 2000 and April 2001 and abstracted in the Social Science Citation Index.


Islamic Law prohibits charging interest. We study financial instruments used by Islamic Banks and find that most are not based on profit-and-loss sharing (equity), but are very debtlike in nature. We see some bias against providing financing for agriculture and industry. Long-term financing is rarely offered to entrepreneurs. Our model shows that debtlike instruments are a rational response by Islamic banks to their contracting environments. As agency problems become more severe, debt becomes the dominant instrument of finance. We give conditions under which banning debt increases social welfare as well as conditions under which banning debt decreases social welfare.


Rational-choice theories of the state have been used in attempts to explain how variations in policy result from differences in constraints. But these theories give little attention to how the state comes to know what the constraints are. This article provides a dramatic example of the process of discovering economic and political constraints by examining Iran’s policies toward the opium trade during the reign of Reza Shah Pahlevi (1921-1941).


The paradigm of a rational individual acting on the earnings-enhancing benefits of migration is subjected to statistical scrutiny, using data from Turkey. Results with robust selectivity correction support the rationality hypothesis: Both migrants and nonmigrants chose the option in which they had comparative advantage. However, the estimated gain from moving is negative for a substantial portion of migrants, whereas a minority realize very high returns. This suggests that migration is a lottery: Individuals are willing to invest in a proposition that has a high probability of yielding negative returns because of the potential for a very large payoff.

Call for Papers: RMEE Volume 6

The editors invite you to submit a paper for publication in Volume 6 of the Research in Middle East Economics Series. The publication is part of the Middle East Economic Association Series published by Elsevier. This volume will focus on the evolution of banking and finance in the MENA region since the 1970s. Manuscripts will be refereed and we hope to publish this volume in the coming year. If you have a paper you are working on, given recently at a conference, or would like to write in the coming months, please contact us as soon as possible. We are also looking for MEEA members to serve as referees for this volume.

The volume will assess the future of banking and finance in terms of globalization and the emergence of more mature capital markets in the region. We are hoping to include papers that offer a regional perspective on issues such as globalization, the impact of the euro, the banking system, financial markets, foreign direct investment, monetary policy, micro rural and informal finance, and South-South financial integration. We will also be including a section that proffers country specific case studies on various banking and financial issues within the MENA region.

Manuscripts can be sent to either:

Dr. Nora Ann Colton (ncolton@drew.edu)
Associate Professor of Economics
Drew University
Madison, NJ 07940

or

Dr. Simon Neamine (sn01@aub.edu.lb)
Institute of Money and Banking
American University of Beirut
850 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Membership

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Middle East Economic Association, please fill out this form and return it to the Treasurer. The membership fee is $45 U.S. for faculty and other professionals and $35 U.S. for students.

Name:

Rank & Affiliation:

Professional Address:

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Fax:

Email:

Send to:

Bulent Uyar
Treasurer, Middle East Economic Association
College of Business Administration
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, IA 50614

The Middle East Economic Association, a non-profit international organization, was formed in 1978 and is affiliated with the American Economic Association and the Middle East Studies Association. The main objective of MEEA is to foster scholarship and to establish lines of communication among specialists interested in the Political Economy of the Middle East. Web: gsb.luc.edu/depts/economics/MEEA

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