

Bawader/Commentary Writing Guidelines

Bawader/commentary are short papers that comment on and look to engage with timely issues in the Middle East and North Africa. They present seasoned and informed analysis, explore challenging issues, and argue innovative solutions to pressing problems. The goal is to contribute to open and far-reaching debates on critical areas that affect MENA societies.

Key Writing Guidelines

1. Timeliness and Relevance

- Focus on current, pressing issues in the MENA region
- Address topics that are actively evolving or have recent developments
- Connect your analysis to broader regional dynamics and debates.

Recent Bawader examples tackle Syria's transition, Yemen's conflict, Lebanon's energy sector, and Tunisia's political movements.

2. Structure and Format

Strong Bawader pieces typically follow this structure:

1. **Opening:** A strong, contextual introduction that frames the current situation and its significance
2. **Background/Context:** Brief historical or political context to situate the reader (avoid excessive detail)
3. **Core Analysis:** Multiple substantive sections with clear subheadings that:
 - Present the main argument or observations
 - Draw on specific evidence and examples
 - Connect local dynamics to regional implications
 - Identify patterns, tensions, or turning points.
4. **Forward-Looking Conclusion:** Analysis of implications and potential trajectories, often including policy considerations, when relevant.

3. Length, Style, and Voice

- Aim for approximately 1,500-2,500 words
- Use clear, accessible language that balances scholarly rigor with readability
- Write with authority based on expertise and evidence
- Write in paragraphs rather than excessive bullet points
- Employ descriptive subheadings to guide readers through your argument
- Maintain an analytical tone, limit purely descriptive tones

- Maintain analytical distance while being willing to take clear positions.

4. Argumentative, Analytical, and Policy Relevant

Strong Bawader pieces:

- Make a clear, original argument (not just summarizing events)
- Provide a nuanced analysis that goes beyond surface-level observations
- Acknowledge complexity and competing interpretations
- Challenge conventional wisdom and highlight overlooked dynamics
- Analyze and interpret the data rather than just present it
- Consider multiple stakeholder perspectives and identify practical implications for different stakeholders
- Connects regional to international dimensions: How local dynamics connect to regional power competition; cross-border implications and spillover effects; the role of external actors such as regional powers and international organizations; comparative insights from other MENA contexts .

While maintaining analytical independence:

- Highlight obstacles to resolution or reform
- Consider what outcomes are realistically achievable
- Suggest areas where intervention or policy attention is needed
- Keep in mind that it is necessary to address prevalent limitations and the counterarguments, and open new perspectives as a way forward
- When presenting recommendations, consider available options, alternatives, and trade-offs.

5. Evidence and Sources

- Ground arguments in concrete evidence: specific events, policy decisions, statements by key actors
- Reference relevant reports, data, or expert analysis where appropriate
- Use hyperlinks to embed references naturally
- Avoid over-citation; integrate sources smoothly into narrative.

Submission Guidelines

- Bawader/commentary papers are between 1500 and 2500 words
- Submissions should be in MS Word, sent as an attachment in your email
- No need to include a table of contents for the short paper

- Internal headings and subheadings must be clearly numbered, and their hierarchy must be clear
- Figures and tables inserted in the text should also be submitted in the original format (of the Data tables) in which they were created (MS Excel, Google Sheets)
- Submit all photos inserted in your paper as independent electronic files, with clear rights of usage
- Ensure consistent spacing throughout the paper (between lines, between paragraphs, and between footnotes)
- Avoid inserting loose hyperlinks as references in footnotes
- Keep footnotes to a minimum
- Ensure your references include all information. References should be given as follows: name of author, “title of article/chapter” OR title of book/publication: subtitle, publisher, year of publication, page, paragraph
- Include a page with a short bio and your current position/title, your name as you would like it to appear (including its Arabic spelling, when applicable), a photo, and your social media accounts (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram).