**Panel 4**

**Oil Shocks and Regional Transformations in the Middle East and North Africa: The Late 1970s and Early 2010s Compared**

*Directors:*

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Current trends in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) mirror developments that took place during the late 1970s in at least two important respects: both periods exhibit a marked increase in world energy prices, bringing massive financial resources to the oil-producing states of the Gulf; and both periods saw major political upheavals, most notably in Iran during the late 1970s and in Tunisia, Egypt and Syria during 2010-13.

From 1973 to 1980, the economies of the MENA experienced a massive influx of capital that altered the structure of regional politics. The oil-producing states of the Gulf gained substantial leverage over the poorer countries of the "Arab Mediterranean," giving Gulf governments a strong incentive to intervene in the domestic affairs of countries like Egypt, Lebanon and Syria. Gulf activism accompanied, and in many cases promoted, the emergence of Islamist movements that posed a severe challenge to the existing political-economic order all across the Arab world.

Gulf influence waxed once more in the aftermath of the 2008-09 global financial crisis. Oil revenues again soared, heightening the influence that Gulf governments enjoy in regional politics. Qatar assumed a key role in mobilizing international backing for the armed opposition in Libya, while Saudi Arabia provided material and moral support for radical Islamist movements in Egypt following the ouster of Husni Mubarak. Both Doha and Riyad involved themselves in the Syrian civil war, eventually lining up behind rival blocs in the opposition coalition. Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic of Iran took steps to prop up the Ba'th regime in Damascus and the Lebanese Party of God (Hizbullah). Gulf power in the region looks to be on the rise, as it was in the late 1970s.

To what extent, and in what precise ways, the oil-producing states of the Gulf have exercised their economic power to shape political transformation in the MENA during these two pivotal moments is a pressing question for scholars and policy-makers alike. On the surface, it appears that the Arab Gulf states firmly oppose fundamental change, with Saudi Arabia often singled out as a counter revolutionary force. Nevertheless, Riyad has sponsored a broad range of Islamist movements, not all of which buttress the status quo. Other Gulf oil-producing states have engaged in even more radical initiatives, not only during the late 1970s but also at the present time.

This panel will explore trends in political, economic and cultural relations between the oil-producing states of the Gulf and other parts of the Middle East and North Africa, and make explicit comparisons between trends in the late 1970s and those of the present day. Contributions that focus on the impact of the two Energy Booms on national security and political-economic transformation across the region are particularly encouraged.

Specific topics over which papers will be collected include:

-Patterns of Productive Development within the Gulf Countries and Integration within the World Markets

-Patterns of Investments from the Gulf to the MENA Countries and Influence over Economic Reforms

-Patterns of Migrations from the MENA to the Gulf Countries

-Patterns of Alliances and Intervention in Regional Conflicts

The Panel will be held with the support of the FIRB programme 2010 – ‘The engines of growth: for a global history of the conflict between renewable, fossil, and fissile energies (1972-1992)’, Ca' Foscari University Research Unit.

*Participants:*

Beside their own contributions, the directors will make both an open call for papers on the web, which will close on October 1, 2014, as well as will they will invite specific scholars of highly distinguished international profile. It is envisaged the participation of six papers givers.

A discussant will be appointed once the contributions are collected and selected.

Funding for travel and accommodation for the Panel participants will be partially covered by the organizers with the support of the FIRB programme 2010 - The engines of growth: for a global history of the conflict between renewable, fossil, and fissile energies (1972-1992)

Working Language: English and French

*Paper and research dissemination*

Once assessed the quality of the papers and related discussion during the Panel, the directors and the discussant will decide whether to collect the contributions and submit the topic to an academic or international journal (i.e. Comparative Studies in Society and History, Cambridge University Press), both in Italy or abroad. Otherwise, the directors will submit their proposal to the Routledge Middle East Studies series.