

14<sup>th</sup> SeSaMO Conference

**PATHS OF RESISTANCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA**

University of Turin (Italy)

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SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

**TITLE: Anti-Westernism and Intellectual Resistance to Imperialism in the Middle East and North Africa**

**CONVENOR(S):** - Oguzhan Goksel  
- Michelangelo Guida

**ABSTRACT:** Western colonialism has non-violent dimensions (i.e. cultural imperialism), therefore anti-Western sentiment in our age does not remain limited to societies with a history of Western occupation such as India and Egypt. Though never directly colonised, traumatic encounters with Western colonialism have also shaped the political and socio-economic trajectories of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries such as Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Perhaps due to its geographical proximity to Europe, the MENA region has long been at the centre of debates over anti-Westernism – attracting the attention of scholars such as Bernard Lewis, Ian Buruma and Pankaj Mishra. While some observers have associated anti-Westernism with religious fundamentalism, others have evaluated it as a reaction to the political and economic subjugation of the region by Western powers such as the US.

One relatively under-studied discussion is the way in which intellectuals of the MENA region innovatively formulate anti-Westernism as a form of *resistance* to – and *mental emancipation* from – the pervasive and omnipresent discursive influence of the Western world. This panel is inspired by the perspective of Cemil Aydin who argues that anti-Westernism has been developed by educated elites in the non-Western world as a response to a self-contradictory aspect of Western civilisation, namely its “double standards”. Aydin believes that Western powers often violate their own proclaimed standards of civilization (e.g. human rights) as a result of their imperialist ambitions. As such, the double standards of Western global hegemony lead to disillusionment among the intelligentsia and push them towards putting forward anti-Western visions for the salvation of their societies. Within the conceptual context summarised so far, we invite contributions that examine the political thought and anti-Western visions of MENA intellectuals subscribing to various different ideologies (e.g. Islamism, conservatism, Turkish/Iranian/Arab nationalism, Marxism etc.). Papers could focus on the thought of a single intellectual, cultural circle, and school of thought from one MENA country or comparatively study several of these from various countries.

**CONVENOR'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

**Prof. Michelangelo Guida** is Head of the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Istanbul 29 Mayıs University, Turkey. He obtained his Ph.D. from Istituto Universitario Orientale in 2005 and since then he has worked in several Turkish universities.

**Dr. Oguzhan Goksel** is Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Istanbul 29 Mayıs University, Turkey. He is also the Editor-in-Chief of *New Middle Eastern Studies* journal, based in the UK. He obtained his Ph.D. degree from Durham University, UK in 2015.