

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: Trajectories of 'resistance': Iran, Syria and Hezbollah in the Syrian battlefield**

**CONVENOR(S):** - Aurora Sottimano  
- Roschanack Shaery-Yazdi

**ABSTRACT:**

This panel seeks to explain the resilience of the so-called 'resistance front' alliance (grouping Iran, Syria and Hezbollah) and its paradoxical trajectory from a revisionist force to a counterinsurgency alliance projecting power in the broader Middle East. We will discuss the changing notions of revolution (*thawra*) and resistance (*muqawama* and *mumana'a*) as constitutive elements of both nation states and non-state actors and pillars of popular mobilisation, as well as the ongoing transformation of the 'resistance front' and the anti-imperialist camp after the launch of the war on terrorism in the Levant. To understand such transformation, we will assess the present power configuration within the 'resistance' partners against the backdrop of an ongoing re-articulation of the ideological makeup of the region.

The importance of such study is manifold: first, it allows us to map autochthonous (but hardly autonomous) form of resistance, which are neither fully independent expressions of 'civil society' nor mere imposition of a hegemonic power. This in turn leads to a problematisation of the opposition between subaltern and authoritarian actors, and calls for a deeper analysis of both the 'public sphere' and the resilience of alignments in the Levant. Moreover, the panel aims at contributing to a nuanced understanding of how the intertwined dynamics of ideological and power reconfiguration shape an emerging order in the Middle East.

The general aim is to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the formation, strength and duration of regional alignments and how these dynamics shape an emerging order in the Middle East.

**CONVENORS ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

**Aurora Sottimano** is a Visiting Researcher at the Centre of International Studies (CEI-IUL), Lisbon and a Senior Fellow of the Centre for Syrian Studies, St Andrews University (UK). She taught at Leiden University (Netherlands) and at the British University in Egypt. Her research focuses on Syrian politics and regional relations in the Levant.

**Roshanack Shaery-Yazdi** is a social and political ethno-historian with a focus on transnationalism, Islamism (mainly Shiite movements), political violence and memory politics. Her research focus is the Arab East (Lebanon and Syria) and Iran. Before joining the University of Antwerp she taught at Washington University in St. Louis.