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SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

**TITOLO/TITLE:**

**Disaggregating the conflict responses of authoritarian and democratic states in the wider MENA region**

**PROPONENTE/I – PROPONENT/S:**

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**ABSTRACT (1500 parole/words):**

Conflict zones across the Middle East and North Africa and all along its periphery (Afghanistan, Ethiopia, the Sahel) have engendered a wide range of responses from regional and external actors. Different normative paradigms have been used to explain the actions of these state and non-state actors. Authoritarian states, for example, favor military and paramilitary figures and support their leadership roles in conflict scenarios (Volpi 2013; Hill 2019). Democratic states, on the other hand, act in ways that support technocrats and democrats (Saidin 2018; Valbjørn 2019). This understanding of how states operate (and utilize non-state actors in the process) presents a partial picture, one that often has little correspondence to reality. This panel, therefore, offers an in-depth study of Middle East and extra-regional state actors and their responses to conflict scenarios in the wider MENA region. We then define and analyze patterns of attempts by external states to affect political and military outcomes in Libya. While the panel is not limited to the Libyan case study, we consider the conflict in Libya as an important laboratory of these dynamics and the starting point for a wider discussion. Additional cases may be Tunisia, and Morocco (in the MENA region), Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia (in the Horn of Africa), and Niger and Mali (Sahel). In doing so, the panel will be able to disaggregate and analyze the actions of more democratic (or less authoritarian) and more authoritarian (or less democratic) states using relevant theoretical perspectives, while noting that an ideal type is not present in either case.

What implications do the extra-regional actors' actions have on local, regional, and global dynamics in the coming years? How do Middle Eastern countries interact with local non-state actors? And how with other extra-regional actors? These are just some of the questions the panelists will try to answer.

Contributions may address one or more key issues that are relevant to this topic, such as:

- the theoretical issues underlying the debate on the increasing interactions between Middle East states and African states from various IR (disciplinary?) angles.
- the practices and the main actors that have been involved in conflict scenarios in the wider MENA region, including the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, over the last few years;
- the political strategies and the output of the politics of the Middle East states in relation to local actors and other extra-regional ones.

The papers and the working language of the panel is English.

References

- Hill, Jonathan NC. "Authoritarian resilience and regime cohesion in Morocco after the Arab Spring." *Middle Eastern Studies* 55, no. 2 (2019): 276-288.
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- Valbjørn, Morten. "What's so sectarian about sectarian politics? Identity politics and authoritarianism in a New Middle East." *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 19, no. 1 (2019): 127-149.
- Volpi, Frédéric. "Explaining (and re-explaining) political change in the Middle East during the Arab Spring: trajectories of democratization and of authoritarianism in the Maghreb." *Democratization* 20, no. 6 (2013): 969-990.

#### PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL/DELLA/DEI/DELLE PROPONENTE/I – SHORT BIO OF PROPONENTS

**Brendon J. Cannon** is Assistant Professor of International Security at the Institute of International & Civil Security (IICS), Khalifa University, Abu Dhabi, UAE. He earned a Ph.D. in Political Science with an emphasis on International Relations at the University of Utah, USA (2009), and held previous academic positions in Nairobi, Kenya and Hargeisa, Somaliland. His research focuses on the nexus of international relations, security studies, geopolitics and the strategic interplay between external states and the Horn of Africa. He is the author of multiple articles appearing in *African Security*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *Defence Studies*, and *Third World Quarterly*.

**Federico Donelli** is a postdoc research fellow in International Relations at the University of Genoa, Department of Political Sciences. His research fields have covered international politics and security studies of the MENA region, focusing on the foreign policy of the different players. Currently he is working on the process of militarization in the Horn of Africa and the growing engagement of the Middle Eastern states in the region. He is the author of multiple articles appearing in *International Affairs*, *Third World Quarterly*, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, and *The International Spectator*. His latest book *Turkey in Africa. Turkey's strategic involvement in sub-Saharan Africa* has been published by I.B. Tauris in 2021.

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