

## Annual Conference

# Rethinking the “State” in Syria: Violence, Institutional Fragility and Economic Collapse

 @medirections

**24 - 25 September 2020**

Zoom - Webinar

Scientific Organisers:

Luigi Narbone | European University Institute

Agnès Favier | European University Institute

## Draft Programme

### 24 September

14.00 - 14.15 **Institutional Welcome**

**Brigid Laffan** | Director, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute

**Luigi Narbone** | Director, MEDirections Programme, Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute

**Agnès Favier** | Project Director, The Wartime and Post-Conflict in Syria (WPCS), MEDirections Programme, Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute

14.15 - 16.15 **Panel 1 | Syria 2020: Who governs in fragmented Syria?**

Decentralization (as opposed to fragmentation) has often been presented as a post-conflict solution but the implementation of such a framework naturally faces many challenges. In this respect, questions pertaining to decentralization and fragmentation necessitate analysis of dynamics around governance and power-sharing at the local level. To what extent does the Government of Syria exercise and maintain control in various areas? How are regime networks reordering at the local and central levels?

**Moderator:** Kevin Mazur | Princeton University

**Political Orders and Local Intermediaries in Southern Syria**

**Speaker:** Abdullah Al-Jabassini | WPCS - European University Institute



## **'Arrested Development': Rethinking Local Development In Syria**

**Speaker:** Ian Larson | WPCS - Center for Operational Analysis and Research - COAR

## **Authoritarian Governance Structures and Social Intermediaries in Reconciliation Areas (Rural Damascus)**

**Speaker:** Mazen Ezzi | WPCS - European University Institute

### **25 September**

#### **14.00 - 16.00 Panel 2 | The collapsing economy and its impact on donors' strategy**

The destruction of the economy and more recently the Lebanese financial crisis, new international sanctions and the impact of Covid-19 have accentuated further the dire socio-economic situation for a majority of Syrians. What will be the consequences of the Syrian government's inability to meet the socio-economic needs of large sectors of the population and to provide adequate social services? Will Damascus's allies invest more in humanitarian aid and early recovery? In this deteriorating situation, what are the main risks and opportunities of a 'more for more' EU approach to Syria?

**Moderator:** Steven Heydemann | Smith College

#### **Governmental Policies and the Socio-Economic Collapse**

**Speaker:** Joseph Daher | WPCS - European University Institute

#### **Regime-Sponsored NGOs and charities as service providers**

**Speakers:** Sinan Hatahet and Ayman Aldassouki | WPCS - European University Institute

#### **Narcotics, military recruitment, and labor unrest: The unseen impact of Syria's economic collapse**

**Speaker:** Natalie Jabri | WPCS - Center for Operational Analysis and Research

#### **16.00 - 16.30 Break**

#### **16.30 - 18.30 Roundtable | Regional and international involvement in post-war countries: in which way could external interventions contribute to the stabilization of MENA conflicts? Comparative perspectives**

Conflict stabilisation appears to have become a guiding principle for the international community, but its meaning is poorly defined and highly contentious. In Syria and Libya, stabilisation policies are implemented in situations where external state and non-state actors still intervene militarily and where no comprehensive settlement has been achieved. In this context, what are the effectiveness of stabilisation policies in building sustainable peace? Are these policies tools to ensure a lasting influence for foreign actors? Do they contribute to restore authoritarian rule, to strengthen some specific local actors or to build an inclusive political system?

The roundtable will provide short presentations from experts coming from the EU and the main countries involved in both Syria and Libya: Russia, Turkey, UAE, and US.

**Moderator:** Luigi Narbone | MEDirections Programme, Robert Schuman Centre, European

University Institute

**Participants:**

Gilles Bertrand | Chargés d'affaires *ad interim*, Delegation of the European Union to Syria

Agnès Favier | MEDirections Programme, Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute

Alan Bugeja | Former EU Ambassador to Libya

Virginie Collombier | MEDirections Programme, Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute

Andrey Kortunov | Director General of The Russian International Affairs Council (Russia)

Galip Dalay | Richard von Weizsäcker Fellow at Robert Bosch Academy (Turkey)

Steven Heydemann | Smith College (USA)