

Workshop Agenda

Russia's Power and Strategies of Influence in the Wider Mediterranean

Location: Luiss Guido Carli University
Viale Pola, 11, Rome - Mediation Room

Date & Time: 07 February 2025 | 09:30 - 17:45

This workshop seeks to examine the evolution of Russia's strategies of influence in the wider Mediterranean region, focusing on how shifting regional and international dynamics are reshaping its foreign and security policies. Key transformations under discussion include the war dynamics in Ukraine, the country's partial disengagement from Syria following Bashar al-Assad's ousting, the escalating Israeli wars in Palestine and Lebanon, and the political realignments unfolding in Western Africa.

Drawing on the findings of previous and ongoing research conducted by the Luiss Mediterranean Platform (including the eBook *Russia's Soft Power Strategies in the MENA Region and Africa*) and the "Russian Repertoires of Power in the MENA Region" (RUSMENA) project team, the workshop will provide a comprehensive exploration of Russia's influence. Topics will range from the strategic use of soft power and military tools to its partnerships with regional actors, as well as its growing presence in Africa.

The discussions will also analyze the reception of Russia's strategies by local societies and ruling elites, using case studies and broader geopolitical transformations to shed light on how Moscow navigates a rapidly changing international order. By fostering a deeper understanding of these issues, the workshop aims to assess the implications of Russia's actions for regional stability in the wider Mediterranean and beyond.

09:30 – 09:45

Welcome and Introductions

- Luigi Narbone, Luiss Mediterranean Platform
- Jakub M. Godzimirski, Norwegian Institute for International Affairs

10:00 – 11:30

Session 1 – General Patterns of Russia's Power Repertoire in the MENA

- Jakub M. Godzimirski and Iver B. Neumann, *Russian Power Repertoire in the MENA Region in the Context of the War in Ukraine*
 - Luigi Narbone, *Evolving Russian Soft Power Tactics and Strategies in the MENA Region and the Sahel*
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11:30 – 13:00

Session 2 – Syria’s Impact on Russia’s Regional Strategies in MENA and Africa

- Julie Wilhelmsen and Karen Philippa Larsen, *Russia’s Syria (Dis)Engagement – What Does it Mean for the Russian PMC in the Region?*
- Elise Daniaud Oudeh, *War Reporters in Russia’s Strategy: Lessons from the Syrian Case*
- Virginie Collombier, *Russia’s Strategic Realignment: From Syria to Libya?*

13:00 – 14:00

Lunch break

14:00 – 15:30

Session 3 – The Role of Regional Partnerships in Russia’s Strategy of Influence

- Jeff Mankoff, *The Impact of the War in Ukraine on the Middle East, and Russia-Turkish Relations*
- Tine Gade, *Russia and the Gulf: Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Membership in BRICS*
- Luca Raineri, *Russia’s Footprint in Mali: Can Syria Provide a Template of Regime Change?*
- Abdolrasool Divsallar, *Russia and Iran: Continuity of the Past or a Critical Juncture? (online)*

15:30 – 16:30

Session 4 – Changes in Moscow?

- Carolina de Stefano, *Redefining Russian Soft-Power? Russian Research Institutions on the Middle East and Africa after the Ukraine War*
- Igor Delanoe, *Russia’s Narrative on the ‘World Majority’: A New Vector of Influence?*

16:30 – 17:00

Coffee break

17:00 – 17:45

Concluding Discussion and Next Steps

List of Participants:

Meryem Akabouch	Luiss Mediterranean Platform / School of Government
David Coccoluto	Luiss Mediterranean Platform / School of Government
Virginie Collombier	Luiss Mediterranean Platform / School of Government
Elise Daniaud-Oudeh	Luiss University / Mediterranean Platform
Igor Delanoe	French-Russian Observatory
Abdolrasool Divsallar	United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)
Tine Gade	Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI)
Jakub M. Godzimirski	Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI)
Karen Philippa Larsen	Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS)
Jeff Mankoff	Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS)
Luigi Narbone	Luiss Mediterranean Platform / School of Government
Iver B. Neumann	The Fridtjof Nansen Institute (FNI)
Luca Raineri	Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna
Mario Savina	Sapienza University
Omar Sheira	Luiss Mediterranean Platform / School of Government
Carolina de Stefano	Luiss School of Government
Abdelkarim Skouri	Luiss Mediterranean Platform / School of Government
Julie Wihelmsen	Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI)