Disputes on Alcohol in The Middle East

Tuesday, 12 February – 5pm
Investcorp Auditorium, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College

Speakers:
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Philippe Bourmaud (Jean Moulin University Lyon 3)
Nicolas Elias ((French School at Athens)

Chair: Philip Robins (St Antony's College)

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, alcohol has been the object of diverse and contested normative processes in the Middle East. Concomitant with the global circulation of alcohol as an industrial commodity and emergence of anti-alcohol policies in different parts of the globe, the Islamic sanctions on the consumption of alcohol also took on new meanings. Yet within the extensive literature on anti-alcohol movements and public alcohol policies in especially the European and American contexts, the Middle East has been typically overlooked. This is in part owing to the assumption that it is a non-issue given Islamic prohibition. The limited research on the Middle East context has tended to elaborate the multiple underlying concerns shaping the adoption and enforcement of public policies regarding alcohol including public morality, public health norms and religious prescriptions alongside ideological drivers. We contribute to the limited but slowly growing scholarly focus on the contestations over alcohol in the Middle East by exploring different settings and uses, and historicizing current moral/religious discourses. In this manner we also shed light on the controversies over alcohol by framing it in the context of new forms of governmentality.

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