



A Symposium on



Sports, Media and Wars

Organized by: The Athens Institute

Place: 5th Floor, 9 Chalkokondili Street, Athens.

Date: Monday, 11 May 2026

Time: 13:00-14:30

P R O G R A M

Moderator: John V. Pavlik, Professor, Department of Journalism and Media Studies, School of Communication & Information, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, USA.

Speakers:

1. **Naila Hamdy**, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, The American University in Cairo, Egypt. **Title:** *From Stadiums to Battlefields: Sports, Media, and the Making of War Narratives in the Middle East.* ([summary](#))
2. **Corina Barbaros**, Associate Professor, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania. **Title:** *Sport as a Strategic Communication Arena in Times of War.* ([summary](#))
3. **Gregory T. Papanikos**, Professor (Adjunct), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA. **Title:** *Goals and Geopolitics: How Media Frames Iran, the U.S., and the 2026 World Cup.*
4. **TBA**

Discussion

Note: The working language of the symposium will be English. If you are interested in participating, please contact Celia Sakka at info@atiner.gr or by phone at +30 210 3634210.

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Summaries

Naila Hamdy: This presentation explores how sports and media intersect to construct war-like narratives in the Middle East. Through key case studies, it shows how football matches—such as the Egypt–Algeria 2009 African Cup qualifier—became mediated battlegrounds, amplifying nationalism and diplomatic tensions. Qatar’s 2022 World Cup demonstrates how sport can be leveraged as a form of soft power to reshape regional and global perceptions. Palestinian representation in sports illustrates how media platforms enable symbolic resistance and visibility, while past matches between Iran and the United States reveal how media narratives reproduce geopolitical tensions. Additionally, Gulf investments highlight how sports spectacles are strategically used to project power, illustrating how stadiums function as arenas where war narratives are both produced and contested.
