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EUROPA BOTTOM-UP

ARBEITSPAPIERE ZUR EUROPÄISCHEN ZIVILGESELLSCHAFT / EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY WORKING PAPERS

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NORA LAFI
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EUROPE AND THE MEDITERRANEAN

TALKING, LEARNING, WORKING, AND LIVING TOGETHER

5

EUROPA BOTTOM-UP NR.19

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A Conference in Heraklion/Crete, Greece
24th to 27th April, 2017

Papers (Part 3)

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Foreword

by Rupert Graf Strachwitz¹

This is the 3rd and last volume of publications emanating from a conference held in Heraklion / Crete in April, 2017.² It is also the 5th volume of a series of publications representing the findings of three conferences, held in 2013, 2015, and 2017 under the heading

Europe and the Mediterranean Talking, Learning, Working, and Living Together

The Maecenata Foundation as the organizer of these conferences wishes to thank everybody who helped:

- the Goelet Foundation, New York,
- the Lazord Foundation, USA/France/Egypt,
- the Mercator Foundation, Essen,
- the Allianz Cultural Foundation, Berlin,
- the Regional Government of Crete,
- Villa Vigoni, the German-Italian Centre for European Excellence, Lovenjo di Menaggio,
- the coorganizers, namely Professor Udo Steinbach of the Governance Center Middle East | North Africa of the Humboldt-Viadrina Governance Platform,

¹ Dr. Rupert Graf Strachwitz is the Executive Director of the Maecenata Foundation.

² The conference report and two additional papers are published in: Costa Carras, Sarah Kassem, Udo Steinbach: Europe and the Mediterranean – Talking, Learning, Working, and Living Together 3, EBU No. 17, Berlin: Maecenata Stiftung 2017, http://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/52221/ssoar-2017-Europe_and_the_Mediterranean_Talking.pdf?sequence=3

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A list of the conference delegates can be found on page 35 of this volume.

Dr. Eleftherios Ikononou of Arts Etc. Intercultural Dialogues, and Pierantonio Rumignani,

- all presenters, session chairs, and contributors to the publications, and
- all delegates who made the conferences so inspiring and memorable.

Over the years, it has become more and more evident that transcultural dialogues of this kind are essential to keep bridges open and lines of communication functioning in very troubled times. What we need to achieve is to prepare now for the moment when we can reconstruct the Mediterranean as a common memory and living space. We very much hope we can all stay involved in this venture together.

Berlin, in November 2017

The Geography of the Mediterranean

by Eleftherios Ikonomou

A few days ago, I went to visit the new museum of Eleftherna. The archaeological site of this Minoan city was excavated during the last 30 years. An archaeologist who had been working at the excavation from the very beginning started his presentation by saying:

“All Minoan cities had an opening towards the sea, the Mediterranean”. He continued: “This was the location where goods, ideas, myths, and cultures but also mercenaries, enemy armies, destruction and death came from.”

He then went on to unravel the history of the city of Eleftherna. As I listened I thought about his presentation in relation to what we had discussed in our conference a few kilometers away, with the growing certainty, that the choice of Crete and the city of Heraklion, was a most appropriate choice for our conference. There, in the modern city-port and Crete’s capital center one could feel connected to this long history of the Mediterranean and follow the thread that leads from the mythical origins of the dawn of civilisation, as it was named, to the contemporary reality.

We are all in a way familiar with the role of the Mediterranean in our European identity and how our cultural heritage begins with the Minoan civilisation, having heard of the myths of Daidalos, the Minotaur, Zeus at Mt. Ida and the myth of the rape of Europa, as of king Minos’ rule, his powerful thalassocracy, and the island’s strong links with the Egyptian, Ancient Near Eastern and Cycladic cultures. And then, the end of the Minoan and Cycladic civilizations, with the arrival of the Myceneans who came from the north and who, from their strongholds, invaded the coastal cities all around the Mediterranean, which marked the beginning of the Trojan War, the mythical conquest of the city of Troy, described by Homer in his Iliad and his Odyssey, where the very first traveller we know, Odysseus the king of Ithaca on his return to his home, travelled not only across the Mediterranean, but even to the underworld.

The Classical and Hellenistic times brought about further change in the Mediterranean. One only needs to think of the city-states of mainland Greece with their colonies on the eastern and western shores of the “Big Sea”. Then Alexander the Great of Macedonia emerged. From Pella in Northern Greece Alexander’s empire then extended across the Mediterranean with the founding of new cities in northern Africa and the ancient Near East and far beyond, down to India.

With the conquest of Greece by the Romans, the centre of the Mediterranean moved to Rome. The eternal city, became the centre of the ancient world. The Roman world expanded from the Mediterranean, their *Mare Nostrum*, to Northern England. The Roman army opened new borders, and connected the ancient world with roads over land or naval ways. All roads led to Rome, where people and goods from the entire empire, gathered.

The beginnings of Christianity changed the “geography” of the Mediterranean yet again. The relocation of the center of the Roman Empire to Constantinople, the new Rome, moved the centre of the Mediterranean to the east. Constantinople became the political and religious centre of the Byzantine Empire that expanded all over the Mediterranean world. Here again we find Crete with its early Christian Basilicas, a very important Byzantine stronghold. But the real transformation of Crete came with the Venetian conquest. Venice, a naval commercial power, on its quest for more land, occupied Crete and “Candia”, as the city was named, became the seat of the Duke. Strong walls surrounded the city and its harbour. Through this fortified harbour the products of the island were loaded in ships and were transported to Venice, the centre of all commercial routes.

Two centuries after, when the Ottomans dominated the eastern Mediterranean, Northern Africa, the Balkan Peninsula and the Black Sea coasts, Candia the easternmost Christian Venetian-ruled stronghold of the western world, falls after a long siege of 24 years. The city of Candia is now called “Kandiye”. Occupied now by peoples that came from the East, the Ottoman occupation that was to last until the end of the 19th century, is still most evident in the cityscape and aspects of its life and language today.

The 19th century brought great new changes to the Mediterranean yet again. The slow break-up of the Ottoman empire, the industrialization of Northern Europe and the continuous colonizations, created new artificial borders that spread the power of European states to the Middle East and North Africa. In 1885 Jules Francois Camille Ferry declared in a speech on the Colonial Empire, in front of the French Chambers of Deputies: “the superior races, have a duty...to civilize inferior races”. At the same time the Sykes-Pikot agreement for the Near East had divided the areas into regions that looked good in the colonial offices in London and Paris, but made no sense on site.

The effects of colonization were disastrous. The local cultures were dissolved, old traditions and ways of life endangered or even destroyed. Countries were deprived of their resources, the local populations were diminished as large numbers swarmed to the metropolitan centres of Northern Europe, leaving behind few who were no longer able to lead their homeland to growth and development.

The first and second world war which led to disillusionment and disaster, brought about new changes. The bankruptcy of European imperialist powers, de-colonization after the mid 50s, and the ex-colonies now left back with authoritarian regimes, the rise of socialism, but also of extremism and violence compose a new reality.

In recent years the Democratic Revolution of the Arab World, which is called The Arab Spring by the west, fought for the condemnation of corruption, equal opportunities, freedom of speech and democratic accountability. Some of these slogans are the same ones used by the youth in the crisis regions of Southern Europe. These communalities created a different climate in the region.

The sources of tension and instability in the Mediterranean countries were intensified by the unrepresented wave of refugees from the war regions of the Near East-Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria- and North Africa. Millions of people are on the move for various reasons like war, famine, political persecution, ecological and climatic problems. Northern Europe is their ultimate goal. But their travel is

extremely difficult and organised help is rather seldom. The Mediterranean becomes their way towards freedom, but it is also for thousands of them, their grave.

The sources of tension and instability in the region are not based on the belief that we are different with diverse cultural identities and religions. Being Christians or Muslims does not play any role. They both fight for the legitimacy of the political systems they live in.

It is well known that the Mediterranean people have a lot in common: a mutual cultural heritage and history, and similar spiritualities.

Political, social and cultural integration of the Mediterranean peoples will be the only way for the democratization. The way to achieve this goal is to work together with multiple organizations who believe in the similarities which connect the people around the basin.

A new narrative based on these issues will create again a democratic and peaceful Mediterranean.

Lessons Learnt

by Sahar Hamouda

We began our meeting with a significant remark from Rupert Graf Strachwitz: “We the people”, signifying we are humans first. Udo Steinbach’s opening speech about the Decameron continued the theme. Storytelling makes us humans, and I think that after two days of presentations and discussions, one thing we agree about is that the common ground we are looking for is, in the end, our humanity, along with the universal values that people around the world share.

But I want to go back to storytelling. History began as storytelling. The first voice to blaze out of the darkness of Europe was that of Homer, singing to us of the tragedies and suffering brought on by war. How true it still rings today, when we witness the horrors and ravages that war is causing around the Mediterranean, and so close to the ancient site of Troy. Storytelling, because it captures the essence of “the people” and humanity, is eternal and universal.

If mobility started with homo sapiens moving out of Africa, it would be epitomized in another character out of another story: Odysseus, the traveler par excellence. Mobility continued when people migrated in search of new territory for purposes of livelihood and survival, and freedom of trade and worship. It created colonies which, despite their evils, became open spaces. In particular the Ottoman empire was a space that encouraged mobility and exchange and allowed for the cultural diversity that we laud now. Yes, we heard that Berlin is equally diverse today – as are other cities around the globe – but mobility is restricted by borders (and sometimes physical walls) and endless paperwork and obstructions, and lucky indeed is the person who manages to find refuge or asylum or a job after perhaps surviving the journey across the sea, as Odysseus had done. And mobility is not only associated with better opportunities but also with displacement and the undesired position of being the “foreigner”. The foreigner is accepted depending on his / her utility. In ancient Athens foreigners would be welcomed and given the citizenship if they had something to contribute, not on account of their naked humanity. Oedipus was welcomed in Thebes because he

was the savior who saved it from the Sphinx, but Medea (also referred to by Udo Steinbach) was a threat because she was a strong woman.

“Common ground” was a subject of much discussion. Is there a common ground? We explored trade and economy, religion and politics. We discussed other things, such as marriage and gastronomy. The Mediterranean is a space of exchange, but also of separation.

The other debate was over crossing bridges and retaining identity, and the significance of the nation state. If I can return to “storytelling” and literature again, Oedipus was the first man to ask, “Who am I?” Since then we have been trying to answer that question. Am I a monolithic being, or multiple, shifting, constructed identities? Do I need to be rooted in past and origins, or should I celebrate all possibilities of becoming? And I personally, should I limit myself to be the “Arab” I am now designated as, or should I rejoice in the memory of my genes, care of being Egyptian, African, Greco-Roman, Christian, Arab, Moslem, Mediterranean, with a Turkish grandmother and a Palestinian mother and a British education?

The memory of the modern colonial past has not been dealt with or purged, especially as its effects can still be seen. Perhaps it is not our topic, but it is something most of us here have in common. It lurks in our subconscious and continues to plague our identities and politics.

Ude also believes, as I passionately do, that culture – film, theater, the novel, the performing arts – facilitates the encounter. Of course, it does. It is a universal language and it emphasizes our humanity and the common factors we share. *But* it is the privilege of the elite. I know that many organizations are represented here who do marvelous work in this area, but how many of the population do they reach? How many per cent? In a country of 90 million, like Egypt, with the terrible poverty and the eternal struggle of trying to survive another day, how many have the luxury to read or go to the theatre or dance performances, or even the means to know of them? Yes, some poor people do that, but they are the exception. Umut Koldaş pointed out the importance of satisfying every day needs. This is something we cannot deny.

I would like to quote Udo Steinbach again: “The future of the Mediterranean can only be thought of as common – on fair and equal footing”. We are still a long way off. A number of you have expressed disappointment with the Barcelona Process. Also, in the area of culture, the EU publishes calls for grants as a means of exchange between the north and the south. However, it is the Northern partners who are generally the lead partners, and we follow. They are the ones who have the know-how of writing proposals, the contacts and the lobbying.

Udo Steinbach also said, “Israel failed to integrate” and perhaps out of political correctness we have skirted around the issue. The Israeli / Palestinian conflict remains the cause of, or excuse for, the discord and violence in the area. And on an emotional and human level, it is the gaping wound in the Arab heart that will not heal.

Another idea that has been repeated is the question of myths, and the distortion of history. Some have even said, in private conversations, that myths are lies. What about today? Aren’t myths still being fabricated, by politicians and leaders and, more importantly, the media? Are we still not being lied to, all the time? Knowledge is power, said Foucault, but those in power hide knowledge from us. And by the time we know the truth, it is too late.

To conclude. We, the Mediterranean, are part of a global economy. Our challenge is: can we once more re-invent ourselves, or are we only fiddling?

I turn once more to literature, and to Tennyson’s words on Odysseus:

“To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.”

Although I find the Mediterranean present bleak, I am not without hope, because we are natural organisms. A seed will keep groping in the dark, until it finds a crack, and pushes its way out. So, as we have seen, “the people” are motivated, as Nelly Corbel said, and the youth is finding their way around, and they will not yield.

Culture of Memories: Remember, Explain, Transmit Our Common Heritage and Take Actions – Some Introductory Aspects for Our Debate

by Yamina Bettahar

I will present these questions in 3 main points:

1. Introduction: Why is this question important for our conference?
2. Some significant examples: The Mediterranean between myth and reality
3. To conclude: A few recommendations for the future

1. Introduction – Why is this question important for our conference?

Let us remember that The Mediterranean Sea separates Europe from North Africa and the Near East but at the same time it establishes a particular space for exchanges. The specificity of this shared space, bound by a mixed history, constitutes a constant challenge for circulations, even circulatory migrations right through the Mediterranean Sea.

Today, it is clearly established that the circulation of the people, the ideas, the knowledge, the scientific corpuses, the artistic and esthetic forms around the Mediterranean Sea has been – and still is – in the heart of a dynamic real and ancient exchanges, which have passed and continue to pass by the various crossing points of the Mediterranean space.

They lastingly mark the reality and the complexity of the relations between Europe and their neighbors in the South. For example, it is the case for engineering, architecture, painting, literature and quite particularly philosophy (including political philosophy), fields where the knowledge of the Arab-Islamic world essentially contributed to the development of Europe.

Naturally, this exchange is not a one-way road. Indeed, on the one hand the Arab-Islamic world has a debt to the antique Greco-Roman world and on the other hand, the impact of the ideas, the knowledge and the ideologies of Europe

on the Arab-Muslim world since the 19th century has been significant and remains so even today.

The economic, social, political, cultural and scientific interactions between both banks of the Mediterranean Sea have formed a dynamic common space. This space is not determined by physical conditions: it depends first of all on people's thoughts and actions.

The 'Euro-Mediterranean' space is mainly formed by the density of the relations and the mutual interdependences in the past and the present. We shall call it "functional" space in the sense that Fernand Braudel understood the "Big Mediterranean Sea". For him, the Big Mediterranean Sea is not only the Mediterranean Sea and its local inhabitants but also Europe until the North of the Alps and Africa until the South of the Sahara.

2. Two significant examples – The Mediterranean between myth and reality

My first example is about the migration phenomenon:

The massive arrival of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers on South European coasts is becoming a current phenomenon, notably during last years showing a sharp increase in their number. Simultaneously violence of certain groups, claiming allegiance to Islam, propagating terror by awful attacks on the European soil, increased fears and do not allow a reasoned approach of neither the presence of Muslims in Europe nor the relations with the Muslim countries. The so-called "Cologne affair" in which young German women were believed to be harassed by Arab refugees in December 2016 reactivated prejudices based on racist theories or on the so-called "civilizations clash". As usual, prejudices are based on oversight or occultation. To reverse them one must get back to facts, notably related to reciprocal cultural contributions and real migrations. Close inspection of some of these prejudices may show their meaninglessness and moreover, may bring the two sides of Mediterranean Sea culturally together.

As other regions in the world, Europe was subject of the massive inflow of migrants. The presence of populations coming from the Middle-East area on European soil during the Neolithic period is now well established.³ These populations moved there because they were following the Mediterranean Sea coasts or feeding rivers like Danube or Rhône rivers. This was due to the agricultural and demographic revolution in the Middle-East at that time.

Without going back to these more distant eras, today's Europeans forgot even the migrations of the nineteenth century. Indeed, consider the sole French case, it is interesting to note that in the late nineteenth century, while the Great Recession was striking the country very hard, the French left wing, again faithful to the traditions of the pre-war, had a unified and consistent discourse on the migration phenomenon.

In the past the workers from the Mediterranean area (Italians, Spanish, Algerians, Moroccans, Tunisians...) were chased out of their countries of origin by poverty and arrived in France, a country where they knew neither the language nor the cultural habits.

They were sentenced to work under unbelievable conditions and for a pittance!

Then, after periods of growth in the years 1900-1920, fractures appeared in times of crisis.

Firstly, in the beginning of the 1930s, at a time when unemployment grew, some people asked for foreigners to be expelled.

Afterwards, the recession in France in the 1970s, generated new rejections of foreigners which has continued until today.

In a context where populism is reactivated in certain European countries, the effectiveness and even relevance of the French policy are regularly brought into question. Surely, the reactivation of populism in France and in Europe has many causes.

³ Jean-Paul Demoule, *On a retrouvé l'histoire de France. Comment l'archéologie raconte notre passé*, Paris, Éds. Robert Laffont, 2012.

In reality, for years or even decades if not centuries, migration has kept dividing and embarrassing European countries and presidential candidates. They also failed to find solutions and reach a final settlement, despite the many efforts of the international community. These recent years, it has to be said that the treatment of this issue has been abysmal! Added to this are the tensions created by ongoing security threats, including acts of terrorism against civilian populations.

Germany has experienced the same problems with the Turkish migration.

Today, the crisis of displaced people (men, women, minor children) has become our crisis! A crisis political and moral, as well as demographic. We can recognize here a variant of the Weberian dualism between ethic of responsibility and ethic of conviction.⁴

And together, Europe and the Mediterranean space, as we are all concerned, we should work on finding suitable solutions.

My second example is about the questions of Islam, democracy and the historical relations between Arabic and European Philosophers:

In my opinion, a prejudice profoundly rooted in the minds of Europe is that Islam would be incompatible with the Republic, the Democracy and the related individual's freedoms which accompanies them. It would be in essence paradoxical to the Enlightenment.

It is known that the Islam was very early interpreted in an open manner and not very distant way by the spirit of the Lights, even one thousand years before the Lights!⁵

Recall that the spirit of the Enlightenment was a conquest, long and painful by the European peoples.

⁴ Max Weber, *Le Savant et le politique*, trad. Par J. Freund, Paris, Plon, 1959.

⁵ Jean-Luc Pouthier, *Les Religions d'aujourd'hui. Une histoire pour quel avenir?*, Paris, Éd. Larousse, 2008; Ali Benmakhlof, *Pourquoi lire les philosophes arabes aujourd'hui. L'héritage oublié*, Paris, Éd. Albin Michel, 2015; Ali Abderraziq, *L'Islam et les fondements des pouvoirs*, Paris, Éditions la Découverte, 2009.

Indeed, Churches, after many conflicts, finally adapted themselves to this spirit, which freed them from superstitions and from obscurantism.

As soon as the 8-10 centuries relying on the Koranic text, Arabic philosophers developed a central theory according to which the support to Islam without Reason has no relevance. For most of them there is no contradiction between Religion and Reason, believing in Allah and in Reason at the same time is something obvious.

They have used the “Ancients” thought, as we then called the Greeks of Antiquity, before developing their own concepts.⁶

Naturally, as in Christianity, some thinkers and orthodox religious pressure groups opposed them a philosophy exclusively centered on crowned texts, here the Koran and Tradition, supposed to answer questions asked by the Muslim society, in any place, at any time.

This movement, having become a majority, remained dominant until the beginning of the 20th century. The debate on religion / society in the Muslim countries did not however stop and it is confirmed today by new thinkers whose writings take up again the Reason philosophers from the 8-10 centuries, in interaction with the modernity from Europe.

It is also remarkable that the Arabic philosophers’ belief that Reason is contained in the religious Law, found a profound echo in the European philosophers of the Middle Ages. In the 13th century, the base of the religious faith begins to be shaken by heterodox trends in Europe, influenced or even aroused, by the Arabic philosophy.

Thus, the Arabic philosophers would have embodied, along with Aristotle or Platon, the philosophic rationality in the Christian West. This Arabic philosophic inheritance became blurred under the influence of time but also because of its concealment during the colonial period by thinkers like Ernest Renan!

⁶ See Ali Benmakhlouf and Jean-Luc Pouthier, *Ibidem*; Mohammed Arkoun, *Ouvertures sur l’Islam*, Paris, Jacques Grancher, 1992.

It is funny to observe that the thesis which Ernest Renan dedicated to Averroës⁷, the most influential Arabic philosopher among his European contemporaries, is a remarkable analysis of the echo of the Arabic philosophy in Europe.

Convinced that Christianity is unsurpassable and that the Arabic philosophy is only a pale description of the Greek philosophy, the author describes, over a period of four centuries (12-16 century), and in an accurate way the adoption, the development then the decline of Averroës' thoughts in all the European universities.

Indeed, as early as the 8-10 centuries and based on the Koran text, Arab philosophers developed a remarkable statement according to which Islam without the Reason is not pertinent. For most of them there is no contradiction between the religion and the Reason, they believe in both, in Allah and in the Reason. They used the thought of the "Ancients", that the ancient Greeks, then developed their own concepts.

Obviously, as for the Christianity, thinkers as well as orthodox religious pressure groups, opposed a philosophy strictly centered on the holy texts (Koran or Hadiths) and believed to respond to the issues posed by the Muslim society, every time and everywhere. This religious orientation, which became predominant, remained controlling up to the 20th century. The debates between Religion and Society in Muslim countries never ceased this and nowadays manifested by the existence of numerous thinkers the writings of whom reconnect with the philosophers from the Reason of the 8-10 centuries, interacting with the modernity stemming from Europe.⁸

The conviction of the Arab philosophers that the Reason intimately belongs to the religious Law met a deep echo of the European philosophers of the Middle-

⁷ Ernest Renan, *Averroès et l'averroïsme*, Paris, Durand, (1852), Maisonneuve & Larose, 2002; Ali Benmakhlouf, *Faire de la philosophie arabe aujourd'hui*, *Le Philosophoïre*, 2013/2, (n°40), pp. 79-96.

⁸ Mohammed Arkoun, *Ouvertures sur l'Islam*, Paris, Jacques Grancher, 1992; Alain de Libera et Maurice-Ruben Hayoun, *Averroès et averroïsme*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1991.

Age. In the 13th century, the basics of the religious belief began to be undermined by heterodox trends in Europe, influence or even generated by the Arab philosophy.

The Arab philosophers would have embodied the rational philosophy of the Christian west, besides Aristotle and Platon. This Arab philosophical legacy vanished with time and also due to its occultation during the colonial period by thinkers like Ernest Renan in France and others in Europe.

i) It was the European philosophy during four centuries (12-16) in all European universities, without exception.

ii) Among the emblematic figures or institutions of European averroïsm, we can find for example:

The Sorbonne (averroist bastion if there was one), the philosopher Roger Bacon, the Franciscan Alexandre de Halès, the Carmelite Jean Bacon Thorp, Frédéric II de Sicile, Dante Alighieri (who in his “Divina Commedia” places Averroës in Paradise, next to Saint-Thomas).

In Raphael’s painting ‘The school of Athens’, the figure of Averroës is represented alongside the ancient Greek philosophers and their subsequent European disciples.⁹

The relentless struggle that the catholic church led against Averroës will end with a draw: the disappearance of the reference to Arab philosophy in European thought forever but also the separation of religion and philosophy.

Naturally, this reminder has to hide on no account the debt of the Arab Islamic world to the antique Greco-Roman world on one hand, and, on the other hand, the impact of the ideas, the knowledge and the ideologies of Europe on the Arab Muslim world for the 19th century.

It was significant, and it is even more today. It is the case in particular political systems, like the democracy, the personal freedoms, the human rights in Europe,

⁹ We can see this painting in the “Stanza della Segnatura”, in Musei Vaticani, Città del Vaticano, Roma (Italy).

joined nation states governed essentially by republics, but also by constitutional monarchies. A similar process seems to work in a number of Muslim countries.

Indeed, after the decolonization, nation states were born on the European model there. Set apart the countries of the Gulf, the majority of the Muslim countries adopted the republican system.

Malaysia, Jordan and Morocco became formally constitutional monarchies.

The concerned peoples did not need to theorize about the compatibility of the Islam with the Republic or the Democracy!

They asked no Imam if the Republic or the Democracy were allowed or not by the Koran.

They regulated their living together by the adoption of Constitutions by imitating the European political systems, these systems appearing to them more modern, more effective than the Caliphate.

So, the Iranians not only exchanged their monarchy for a republic but, besides, considered it as Islamic!

Thus, the Islam is not concretely incompatible with the Republic and the Democracy. Just think about the Catholicism rejecting the French republic from its birth in the 18th century and only accepting it at the end of the Second World War!¹⁰

These historical considerations are interesting, but they should not hide the question of the current Islamist religious violence, on Islam ground and elsewhere!

As everyone knows, this violence has not always existed and especially is not specific to the Islam.

It is regrettably general in all religions all over the world, including the tropical regions where wisdom would have taken refuge, as it is said. For monotheist

¹⁰ Jean-Luc Pouthier, *op. cit.*

religions we can quote dozens, even hundreds of verses of the sacred books calling for violence of believers against other believers, including against those who are sharing the same religion.

Besides, Islamic violence seems experienced with more intensity by the opinions in Europe compared to those of other regions on the planet. The reason could be that the Europeans have been living in peace for more than seventy years, contrary to many other peoples, still marked by decolonization wars and their dramatic post-independence consequences.

All of this resulted in the oblivion or sometimes the concealment of wars and other violent episodes which marked the history of Europe. Saying this does not at all lessen the atrocity of the crimes committed by the Islamist groups.

The countries of Islam and their societies, yesterday and today, are still badly known in Europe, apart from the specialists, who are anyways generally not listened to very much. For example, what is the proportion of those who know that the fertility rate of Muslim women, Africa set apart, is equal or inferior compared to the one of European women and that 70 % of the Muslim population is constituted with students!

Moreover, the economic, scientific and cultural needs of countries bordering the South-Mediterranean Sea are huge and numerous international studies underline it (UNDP, UNESCO, FAO).

The human exchanges are also very important, although presently directed at from south to north.

Favoring the populations' needs as far as possible to the detriment of the purely military needs, by associating the lobby groups of the two banks, could establish exciting convergent lines. The societies from the South are eager to have exchanges, because they are very much aware of how late they are compared to Europe.

This would be a new episode in the long history of exchanges of all kinds around the Mediterranean Sea.

3. I will finish my presentation, bringing up some elements to feed our debate:

The countries of Islam and their societies from yesterday and today are poorly known in the EU. Apart from the specialists which are generally relatively weak and have insufficient political backing as their public opinion is only listened to by few.

Like it had been said before in reality, we know all that the economic, scientific and cultural needs of the countries at the South-Mediterranean Sea are immense and numerous international studies underline it (UNDP, UNESCO, FAO...).

While respecting the State authority in the field of education, we must staunchly support and facilitate human exchanges, particularly at university, research and civil society levels.

To favor the needs of the populations, as far as possible to the detriment of the purely military needs, by associating the civil society of both banks could constitute an exalting axis of convergences.

The societies of the South apply to the exchanges, because they are very much aware of their delay in comparison to Europe. It would be a new episode in the long history of the exchanges of all kinds around Mediterranean.

Finally, in my opinion, its urgent to lift the brakes and cultural boundaries and innovate; to create bridges for the sharing of knowledge, to pool and share our common heritage and incorporate the contribution of different Mediterranean cultures to life in Europe.

This space is not determined by physical conditions: it depends first of all on the thought and actions of men and women.

Confronting the Unsaid: Historical Research and the Critical Interpretation of the Present Wars and Crisis in the Middle East and North-Africa

By Nora Lafi

“Io so tutti questi nomi e so tutti i fatti (attentati alle istituzioni e stragi) di cui si sono resi colpevoli. Io so. Ma non ho le prove. Non ho nemmeno indizi. Io so perché sono un intellettuale, uno scrittore, che cerca di seguire tutto ciò che succede, di conoscere tutto ciò che se ne scrive, di immaginare tutto ciò che non si sa o che si tace; che coordina fatti anche lontani, che mette insieme i pezzi disorganizzati e frammentari di un intero coerente quadro politico, che ristabilisce la logica là dove sembrano regnare l'arbitrarietà, la follia e il mistero. Tutto ciò fa parte del mio mestiere e dell'istinto del mio mestiere.”¹¹

Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975), was a poet, film-maker, journalist, philosopher and intellectual but he was not a historian. He lived, however, in times in which his country was at the centre of complex entanglements of scale between national politics and cold war geopolitics. This resulted in a destructive season of terrorism and political manipulations in Italy. Pasolini denounced the collusion between neo-fascist militias, parts of the state apparatus, NATO and the CIA in the organisation of deadly terrorist acts in the country.¹² His position, as an intellectual, can be a source of inspiration when trying to reflect on how historians can tackle the present. Contrary to the periods they study in the archives, and for which they reflect on the heuristic status of the historical proof, they don't have such proofs for the present. What they have however, is, in addition to a considerable sum of information, the knowledge of some mechanisms, that might help interpret the present. This paper is an attempt to interpret current events in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and the Mediterranean in the light of this inspiration, around the explicitation of a few facts that are often neglected or unsaid. In my case, part of this inspiration also comes directly from my work as a historian.

¹¹ Pasolini (Pier Paolo), Io so [I know], Il Corriere della Sera, 14 November 1974.

¹² See: Ganser (Daniele), NATO's Secret Armies. Operation Gladio and terrorism in Western Europe, Abingdon, Routledge, 2005, 336p and Silj (Alessandro), Malpaese. Criminalità, corruzione e politica nell'Italia della Prima Repubblica, Rome, Donzelli, 1994, 483p.

While preparing this article indeed, I recalled a scene that happened to me while I was in Cairo in 2011 for a research in the national archives of Egypt. I was studying the anthropology of urban violence during the French occupation of the city between 1797 and the early 1800s¹³: violence of the repression of popular revolts, agents provocateurs, sexual violence against women on the squares of the city... And suddenly, I saw what I was studying happen again, under a new form but with similar logics, under my eyes. I thought my approach as a historian was also relevant for understanding the present. Of course, I don't have the same proofs for the present as for the past. In the archives, for this case and for others I studied for the 19th and early 20th centuries, I found reports by *agents provocateurs* explaining the success of the intrigues, I found spies (who were officially diplomats, geographers, journalists or archaeologists) applying for their pension, I saw police officers explaining their strategies. I don't have access to such documents as for the present (but be sure they do exist somewhere). This is why historians have to be prudent. They have however a unique understanding of some mechanisms. On this basis, here are a few unsaid facts or constantly minimized configurations (geopolitical, ideological) that I think are important in order to be able to interpret the present with critical eyes and challenge the ideology that is sometimes hidden beyond false discourses of rationality. Historians of the future will do their work, starting where today's critical interpretations stop due to a lack of access to sources and to the overwhelming power of imposed narratives.

The first of these unsaid aspects, which seem to me of crucial importance due to its inertia, relates to the cold war origins of global Jihad. Starting in the mid-1970s, a form of interpretation of Islam was promoted by the CIA and some of its proxies (Saudi and Pakistani intelligence services) in order to challenge the geopolitical influence of Soviet Russia in Afghanistan.¹⁴ The aim was to pro-

¹³ Lafi (Nora), Mapping and Scaling Urban Violence: The 1800 Insurrection in Cairo, in: Urban Violence in the Middle East. Changing Cityscapes in the Transition from Empire to Nation State (eds U. Freitag, N. Fuccaro, C. Ghrawi) and N. Lafi, Oxford/New-York, Berghahn, 2015, 334p., p.29-51.

¹⁴ See: Cole (Steve), Ghost Wars. The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001, London, Penguin, 2004, 738p. and Hartman (Andrew), The Red Template: US Policy in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan, Third World Quarterly, 2002, 23-3, p.467-489.

voke a Russian invasion of the country in defence of the local communist government, and eventually a weakening of Russia's capacity of external domination. The Soviet invasion happened in 1979 and the alliance between the US, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and extremist militias lasted at least until the fall of the Soviet regime. This not only created a precedent and reinforced extremist ideologies: it also shaped entire networks of power between the US, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and those extremist militias. Members of such militias were later instrumental in the creation of Al-Qaeda and part of the networks of power involved in earlier phases remained. In the name of the fight against communism, the so-called West played with fire. One cannot forget this aspect when talking about Islam, radicalism and civilizational values.

Another tragic dimension is that the so-called West did not learn from this historical mistake, that counts among the causes of the 2001 tragic attacks in the US. The alliance with Jihadist groups and their financing, either directly or through proxies, remained an often-used tactic until 2016. In Libya, during the late-1970s and the whole 1980s, extremist groups of fighters were used, in addition to plots aiming at killing M. Qaddafi¹⁵, by British and US intelligence services in order to destabilize and fight the regime.¹⁶ Such tactics are better known and documented as for Cuba, but what happened in Libya was comparable.¹⁷ This kind of tactic was again applied during the so-called Arab Spring of 2010-2011.¹⁸ While as a historian I do know how to identify some of the *agents provocateurs* of the past (members of European intelligence services in Ottoman cities for example), of course I don't know how to establish the identity and exact extent of actions of such figures as for recent events. But their actions remind me of those of the past I have seen in the archives. The so-called Arab

¹⁵ Lewis (Neil), Memo Mentioned Killing of Qaddafi, The New-York Times, 5 October 1986.

¹⁶ See: Jenkins (Philip), *Whose terrorists? Libya and State Criminality*, Crime, Law and Social Change, 1988, 12-1, p.5-24. Also: Lafi (Nora), Kâdhâfi Mu'ammâr al (1942-2011), Encyclopaedia Universalis, <http://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/mu-ammâr-al-kadhafi/>

¹⁷ See: Hamm (Mark), *State-organized homicide: A study of seven CIA plans to assassinate Fidel Castro*, *Making law: The state, the law, and structural contradictions* (1993): 315-46.

¹⁸ See : Lafi (Nora), *The "Arab Spring" in Global Perspective: Social Movements, Changing Contexts and Political Transitions in the Arab World (2010–2014)*, in S. Berger and H. Nehring (eds.), *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective*, New-York, Palgrave, 677-702.

Spring included, indeed, a strong cold-war-style geopolitical dimension¹⁹, with the idea, fuelled by NATO experts (possibly under the influence of Polish members of this alliance on the model of tactics used in Ukraine) to use these revolts against pro-US dictators in Tunisia and Egypt (Ben Ali had been trained at a US military intelligence school and was a former CIA correspondent in the country²⁰) and against pro-Russian dictators in Libya, Syria and Yemen.²¹ This effort at inverting the nature of the revolts is one of the most ambitious (and ambiguous) CIA and NATO operations since 1989. I don't know all the mechanisms and all the people involved, but I recognize some of these mechanisms. What my studies in the archives about Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Greece, Lebanon and Syria in late-Ottoman times have illustrated, is how European powers allied with local factions and militias in order to push their own agendas. I suspect it was the case again in 2010 and 2011. This configuration, of course, induced a strong path dependency, of which today's chaos is a consequence. Instrumentalization is risky, as once stimulated, a situation can evolve by itself. Also, this had already been told by history. In Syria, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar, partly acting as proxies and partly following their own agendas, have been supporting various Jihadist groups since 2011.²² The birth of the Syrian branch of ISIS was partly a result of covert operations by Turkish intelligence services.²³ Moreover, many factions of revolts that have been labelled as simply "Islamist" are in truth Jihadist. The consequence is that, on the pretext of fighting the dictatorship, the country has been destroyed. The Russian intervention in support of the regime had to add itself its share of tragic damages, destructions and deaths. It is only in 2016 that Turkey stopped to support Jihadi groups in Syria. Saudi Arabia and Qatar, I don't know. As for the US, France and Great-Britain, their commandos on the ground long faced an ambiguous

¹⁹ See: Katerina Dalacoura (2012), *The 2011 Uprisings in the Middle-East: Political Change and Geopolitical Implications*, *International Affairs*, 88-1, p.63-79.

²⁰ Ware (L.B.), *Ben Ali's Constitutional Coup in Tunisia*, *Middle East Journal*, 1988, 42-4, p.587-601.

²¹ See: Curtis Ryan, *The New Arab Cold War and the Struggle for Syria*, *MERIP*, n.262, 2013.

²² Sanger (David), *Rebel Arm Flow is said to benefit Jihadists in Syria*, *The New-York Times*, 14 October 2012.

²³ See: Philipps (David), *Research Paper: ISIS-Turkey Links*, *HuffPost/Columbia University Institute of Human Rights*, 11/09/2014.

situation due to their support to groups whose relationship to the global Jihadist ideology was not clear.

I have more direct and indirect information about Libya. I have been doing my PhD about this country, in which I have been living during the period of the embargo. I know a lot of people there, both popular and elite, and in all sectors of the administration, on all sides and I have direct information on a daily basis. What I would like to say is first that after a series of more or less spontaneous popular protests against the dictatorship in Bengasi, the real starting point of the revolt of 2011 was when factions of armed Jihadist fighters attacked prisons in order to free jailed Jihadists and caserns in order to seize more arms.²⁴ From this moment on, there was no more peaceful revolt. A media campaign in the “West” labelled threats by the regime against these fighters (who had been present in the country for decades, often sponsored by foreign powers) as threats against the general population. This helped “sell” the idea of a no-fly zone in the “western” public opinion. This campaign resulted in the ‘vote of resolution 1973’ by the security council of the United Nations on 17 March 2011. On 19 March 2011, in total violation of this resolution²⁵, and betraying Russia and China, who had accepted the idea of a no-fly zone but not of an attack against the country, the US, Great-Britain and France launched a massive attack that eventually led to the fall of the regime after intensive bombings and months on fighting on the ground, where US, French and British commandos acted together with Jihadist militias. Some of these commandos, probably French, might have participated in the killing of M. Qaddafi. The war also made thousands of civilian victims. Also, the whole civilian infrastructure of the country was destroyed. Furthermore, it resulted in a double chaos: Jihadists everywhere, eventually turning against their former allies.

Having chosen to openly betray Russia was part of the major mistakes made by the NATO in Libya. If there is one thing I am sure of as a historian, it is that you do not betray Russia. The consequence of this fact is that Russia decided not to ever abandon Syria and to do everything necessary in order to protect the

²⁴ Lafi (Nora), Libye, Encyclopaedia Universalis, <http://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/libye/>

²⁵ See: Ulfstein (Geir) and Christiansen (Hege), The Legality of the NATO Bombing in Libya, *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 2013, 62-1, p.159-171.

regime. Now both Libya and Syria have been destroyed. Millions of refugees had to leave Syria. In Libya, Europe is now willing to establish a regime that controls migrations from Africa and already opened camps for refugees and migrants on a highly questionable basis. The Mediterranean became a sea of death.

There are also unsaid aspects in the understanding of the question of the refugees from Syria in Europe. One aspect is that many of these refugees are in fact Turkish citizens of Kurdish culture who fled the war which their government is waging in their region of origin. Labelling them as “Syrians” in Europe was an easy compromise in order not to politically confront a difficult ally.

Another unsaid truth is that a significant number of the victims of the war in Syria are Palestinians. They were expelled from their land in 1948 and 1967. They have been living in Syria since then, in refugee camps that became urban neighbourhoods in Damascus, Aleppo and many other Syrian cities. These neighbourhoods have been particularly struck by the war. The war in Syria is thus also another episode of the forced displacement of the Palestinian population. I know that both as a scholar who has been doing decades of field work in Aleppo and Damascus and as a volunteer in a refugee camp in Berlin: I have been talking with hundreds of these people. In official discussions about Syria however, this dimension is almost never evoked.

In Yemen, Saudi Arabia is destroying a country, in the name of a geopolitical and sectarian opposition to Iran, with the support of Europe and the US.

The last unsaid aspect I would like to evoke relates to the identity of Europe. The question is not only what happens in the Mediterranean and Middle East, as “Europe” or “the West” are often used as implicit referents as for civilizational values. I was in Andalusia this spring. What struck me is how discourses inherited from the “Reconquista”, one of the most violent operations of ethnic and religious cleaning in history, are still strong today. This is the case for the whole identity of Europe, I think. When Nation-States were created, they were since the beginning generally unable to handle diversity: one state per each ideologically constructed people, religious uniformity, as the early modern *cujus*

regio ejus religio principle stated, no living together.²⁶ In the Mediterranean and Middle East, there was a tradition of living together in diversity, inherited from medieval and Ottoman times. Since the 16th century, the very idea of Europe has been against it (in the name of principles that we think are universalist): “Reconquista”, colonization, creation of post-Ottoman nation states. We have to question our own principles and identity in order to discuss the present situation. It is not “the West” and its principles against a region which would need to be taught as for civilizational values. Another cliché indeed in that violence is part of the DNA of the region. My 25 years of research in the archives of all the countries of the region invites me to challenge this vision. Violence was often produced by European powers under the form of colonial occupation and of massacres aiming at reinforcing it. The Napoleonic conquest of Egypt was a first deadly example. Algeria followed with 130 years of recurrent massacres and war crimes.²⁷ The French conquest of Syria between 1918 and 1925 was also a history of massacres against the civilian population, with for example the massive bombing of civilian neighbourhoods in Damascus.²⁸ Same for the Italians in Libya.²⁹ This has to be part of our conscience when talking about violence in the region. Another aspect about violence is that when intercommunal violence appeared in the Ottoman Empire, it was often after Europeans had introduced distortions in local balances. This does not mean that I have an irenist vision of the Ottoman Empire: it was also a society with violent aspects. But this induces me to defy from visions today which are still leaning toward Europe giving lessons. The terrible civilizing mission Europe thought it had in the world, from the moment of the colonization of Algeria (1830) to the moment of the establishment of the mandates of the League of Nations in Syria, Palestine and Irak after World War One was a feature so deeply anchored into the very nature of Europe that it still shapes foreign policies and political attitudes. There

²⁶ See: Harrington (Joel) and Walser Smith (Helmut), Confessionalization, Community and State-Building in Germany (1555-1870), *The Journal of Modern History*, 1997, 69-1, p.77-101.

²⁷ Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, *Coloniser. Exterminer: sur la guerre et l'état colonial*, Paris 2005.

²⁸ See: Wright (Quincy), *The Bombardment of Damascus*, *The American Journal of International Law*, 1926, 20-2, p.263-280. Also: Laverty Miller (Joyce), *The Syrian Revolt of 1925*, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 1977, 8-4, p.545-563.

²⁹ Eric Salerno, *Genocidio in Libia*, Rome, *Il Manifesto*, 2005, 150p.

are too many political, ideological and historical ambiguities in such postures: they have to be critically discussed and abandoned.

Culture of Memories

By Dimitris Stefanakis

It is often said that the Mediterranean world is nothing but a figment of Homer's imagination in the sense that the great poet defined its narrative dimension through the *Odyssey*. Indeed, Ulysses is considered to be the first cosmopolitan. The king of Ithaca sets out on his quest when he gets desperately homesick. At the end of his epic adventure he thinks of the Mediterranean as his homeland — the same homeland that all of us share up to this day.

We generally state that past is silence and what makes that silence speak for itself is the magical voice of literature. With the help of fiction, we bring back to life a considerable part of a long-lost universe. It is amazing how people of old times led such fascinating lives, as if the human being constantly invented various episodes of a magnificent novel.

There are two ways of telling stories: either as a historian or as a novelist.

Both ways implicate the quality of memory that enables a person to recall any element of the past. Storytelling is a kind of war that humanity has declared against time and therefore degeneration. In that perspective memory ensures a bare minimum of immortality.

We think of History as a stage where kings, fools, murderers and tyrants parade in a Shakespearean way. In this grand domain everyday life is of little importance. Historians have the tendency to traverse past time in strides. Historical events are the official side of truth. There is nothing to be doubted in these monumental moments of time that we call History.

In my opinion, though, it is not a question of truth as historians usually claim, but rather an attempt of reinvention. In reality we reinvent what took place years or even centuries ago. Although it is not quite clear whether memory is a tool of storytelling or vice versa, the first has everything to do with time. We narrate what we are able to remember not only from personal experience but also from

collective memory. In the *Alexandrian Quartet* by Laurence Durrell, for example, the author sheds light on the recent history of Alexandria with the use of multiple fictional characters. In doing so he manages to recap a point in time known as Mediterranean cosmopolitanism.

We often treasure memory considering it to be equivalent to accuracy, forgetting that memory often becomes as partial as History can be. Literature lies somewhere in between them; seeking after its own truth succeeds in bringing out a direct experience of everyday life.

The present is the capital of time and it certainly is a dazzling one with technology and all. Although only temporary it is inevitably intertwined with reality. On the other hand, the past has a captivating influence on the modern era. Expelled from the kingdom of time people of the past keep on fascinating us with their magnificent creations. It is past time that feeds our aesthetic.

We are mortal: this is time's deepest meaning in storytelling. Fiction shows us the past as well as the present moment in a mortal light; it is an art served by the indelibility of memory. If culture is to survive it will survive through that very memory used by storytellers. That is why we are used to saying literature is the art of remembering. In a way, memory is the only thing that beats time and death. Perhaps civilization just signals this triumph.

German painter and sculptor Anselm Kiefer once said: "I believe above all that I wanted to build the palace of my memory, because my memory is my only homeland". It seems that people develop a special bond with time as well as place. Artists in particular draw inspiration from past times. In that sense art is the genealogy of time, the same way that civilization is of human race.

After all, what else could memory be than a side effect of time? Both History and literature shape this memory, while keeping track of notable moments. In the sea of time these moments seem to be small islands inhabited by nostalgia. Nonetheless it is not because of nostalgia we are attracted to the past. We are right to consider past times as a tank containing vital information for our future. We are also right to call this tank human civilization.

Language has its own memory. Indeed, we use the word ache after having experienced pain. In the same way love, which is most poets' favorite subject, traces in memory the most precious feelings. It is generally acknowledged that this word game is based on recalling a specific experience. If you try to think of a word detached from memory you will probably not succeed. This reminds us of Plato who claimed that knowledge is not but reminiscence. Either way we are in desperate need of memory so that we may be able to reconstruct the lost universe of the past. During this process literature and poetry in particular, seems to be a monument of words.

Perhaps we live in an age when great poetry cannot be written. It is possible to argue that today Homer and Virgil would have written in prose, that Shakespeare would have composed novels. This has to do with the indisputable fact that modern prose has become too poetic. One of the pillars of literature, the man who has put a full stop to this form of art, author Marcel Proust, gave us the perfect example of a prose flavored with poetry. In his autobiographical novel in *Search of lost time* the French novelist follows the narrator's recollections of childhood and experiences into adulthood during late 19th century to early 20th century aristocratic France. Most specifically he reflects on the loss of time while trying to regain the lost moments through memory. Proust absolutely realizes the magic link between memory and time, he laments the passing of time, but he takes comfort in the existence of memory. Following his example, we should try to regain the lost faces of culture through this magical quality thanks to which the human being reinvents so often and so easily his own past.

Octavio Paz, the great Mexican poet writes:

*“Between what I see and what I say,
between what I say and what I keep silent,
between what I keep silent and what I dream,
between what I dream and what I forget is poetry.”*

Let me paraphrase his verses in order to say: Between what I forget and what I remember is literature.

Remember for the Future – The Mediterranean as a Memory Space: Delegates' List

Dr. Polyxeni Adam-Veleni (Director of Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, Greece)

Dana Alakhras (Lazord Foundation Fellowship Program, Jordan)

Stavros Arnaoutakis (Governor of Crete, Greece)

Dr. Hind Arroub (Fulbright senior lecturer and scholar based at Fordham University-New York, USA)

Prof. Dr. Yamina Bettahar (Prof. Dr. in Sociology & History of Sciences / Université de Lorraine & MSH Lorraine, France)

Costa Carras (Vice President, Europa Nostra, Greece)

Giusy Checola (PhD candidate at University Paris 8 Vincennes Saint-Denis, France)

Prof. Dr. Murat Çizakça (Professor of Islamic Economics and Finance at KTO Karatay University Konya, Turkey / Adj. Prof. at Luxembourg School of Finance, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg)

Nelly Corbel (Vice President of the Board, Lazord Foundation, France/Egypt)

Dr. Vera Costantini (Assistant Professor of Turkish Studies and Economic History at the "Ca' Foscari" University of Venice, Italy)

Angie Cotte (Roberto Cimetta Fund, France)

Dimitrios P. Droutsas (Former Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, Greece)

Ellada Evangelou (Researcher / Community Worker in Culture – University of Cyprus, Cyprus)

Nada Farah (Project Manager at Ettijahat – Independent Culture, Lebanon)

Henrietta Goelet (John Goelet Foundation, USA)

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Prof. Dr. Sahar Hamouda (Director, Alexandria and Mediterranean Research Center, Bibliotheca Alexandrina / Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Alexandria University, Egypt)

Dr. Eleftherios Ikonomou (Former Director of the Foundation for Hellenic Culture for the German Speaking Countries of Europe, Germany)

Sarrah Kassem (Ph.D. Student, University of Tübingen, Germany)

John Kelly (Mira Kelly; International Fundraising Consultancy, United Kingdom)

Georges Khalil (Forum Transregionale Studien, Germany)

Dr. Krystel Khoury (Anthropologist & Cultural Manager, Arab Theatre Training Centre, Lebanon / Roberto Cimetta Fund, France)

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Paul Lassus (Lawyer, Paris Bar, France)

Anna Manice (Co-Founder and President, Lazord Foundation, USA)

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