

TOWARDS A NEW MEDITERRANEAN AGENDA: DYNAMICS AND ACTORS AT STAKE

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This third Edition of the Interdisciplinary Research Seminar **Aula Mediterrània**, organized with ten Master's programs of different Catalan universities, focused on different issues under a common thread: the Mediterranean. The Seminar "**Towards a New Mediterranean Agenda: Dynamics and Actors at Stake**" gathered ten proposals from diverse disciplines and areas of study with the aim of fostering in-depth research from a scholar perspective and identifying the most relevant trends in the region.

On this occasion, the issues that were discussed were not only a concern for scholars and researchers, but they were also relevant for our societies as a whole. Nevertheless, this year's edition of the seminar focused particularly on the so-called



Welcome remarks by Manuel Manonelles (left), Director General of Multilateral and European Affairs (Generalitat de Catalunya), and Senén Florensa, Executive President of the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)



“actors” – women, transnational entrepreneurs, diasporas, media-, who are the main characters of our Mediterranean reality and are highly involved in all issues that were discussed. Other questions that are also at the core of current debates, such as the challenge of preventing violent extremism, the Turkish drift after the failed coup d'État, the situation of refugee settlement across the region or the portrayal of the “other” in the media, were also on the table.

The seminar intends to become an annual reference and a place for encounter, exchange and discussion in order to promote research and contribute to connect scholars, researchers and professionals from different universities and organizations from across the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Preventing Violent Extremism

In the last decades “radicalization” has become a fashionable word. It is present in various domains such as the media, politics and academia. Although radicalization has been commonly used to define the process by which a subject becomes radical, less has been said about how the use of such term conceals a critique on the management of diversity in European countries. Hence, this panel questions the “radicalization” paradigm through its emergence in the European political arena and its current political, security and social function.

Firstly, through deconstructing the term “radical”, it has been observed how “radicalization” emerged as a consequence of the islamophobic discourse. The idea of Islam being both inherently violent and the main driver of terrorist attacks was not enough to explain such actions. “Radicalization” has been thus coined to identify other drivers – such as individual or psychological factors - that lead individuals to commit these violent acts. However, this category presents its own limits to understand how someone, holder of “radical” beliefs, ends up acting violently. More importantly, this term - which pathologizes the terrorist actor – facilitates, on the one hand, security measures from the state (helping thus the profiling of the typical terrorist which in turn stigmatizes the Muslim community) while, on the other, avoids the confrontation of a critique concerning the social



order that excludes and marginalizes an important part of the population (migrant communities, Muslims, etc.)

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Secondly, the use of the term “radicalization” silences – as does ‘terrorism’ – other forms of violence which could also be seen as “radical” or terrorizing (state repression, wars, etc.) The Western response to terrorist attacks in the 2000s has proved to be a complete failure: no war will stop terrorism. Therefore, we need to look for other alternatives. Besides, the new legal framework to tackle the issue is also worrying. Each country has its own definition of terrorism. Such subjectivity allows for many human rights violations, abusive practices in detention, abusive surveillance techniques, stigmatization and discrimination.

In this context, preventing violent extremism should be encompassed with a critical perspective. For example, schools which are spaces of sociability and inclusion, are essential to prevent radicalization. However, in some cases teachers are obliged to report pupils who are suspected to be “radicalized”. Consequently, schools are no longer a place for inclusion but rather a space for control and surveillance. It is thus necessary to look at the multiple factors – the individual as much as the socio-economic and political context – if we aim at an effective prevention. Additionally, this critical perspective will allow us to promote more inclusive policies and spaces.



From left to right, Albert Caramés, Pedro Rojo, Núria Millán and Alberto López Bargados during the discussion on “Preventing Violent Extremism”



Challenges of Institutionalized Cooperation for Conflict Resolution in the Mediterranean

The dependence of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries and their low level of political and economic integration undermines regional cooperation and institutional development.

The Mediterranean is, in fact, a very complex region due to the many differences between its member countries. This complexity, together with a strong competition for natural resources, an interdependence among several states, and the numerous rifts between Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries has challenged regional cooperation institutions' potential for conflict resolution.

The institutional design and the governance of institutions such as the Arab League, the Arab Maghreb Union, and the Union for the Mediterranean have also many limitations in the field of conflict resolution. This is either due to the lack of formal competences or to discrepancies between member states, which are aggravated by a consensual decision-making model.

The strong dependence of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries on the Northern ones and the low level of political and economic integration further weaken regional cooperation institutions' capacities and institutional development.



From left to right, Leire Moure, Milagros Álvarez, Laura Huici and Sergio Carranza presenting the "Challenges of Institutionalized Cooperation for Conflict Resolution in the Mediterranean"



Furthermore, the threats to the post-Cold War existing global order, such as Trump's presidency, Brexit, or the rise of populisms draw a new international scenario, which is characterized by an increasing role of bilateralism at the expense of multilateralism. This is also a setback for institutionalized cooperation for conflict resolution in the Mediterranean.

To sum up, this session revealed the necessity to institutionalize cooperation between countries in order to establish clear rules of the game and thus avoiding asymmetries when dealing with conflict resolution among different bargaining capacities within regional cooperation institutions.

Being Journalist and a Woman in the Mediterranean

The study of gender and journalism reflects already two complex fields of study. However, it is interesting to look at their intersections since they mutually inform each other. For instance, regarding the representation of gender violence in the media, the project ORIGEN has showed that the press often reflects a Western society that is beyond sexism and gender inequality. It does condemn certain sexist practices that are visible while others that are more structural are often ignored. In many cases, the pressure to give a catchy title as 'crime of passion' or 'crime of jealousy' neglects the gendered dimension of such criminal act.

The representation of structural gender violence and discrimination is still absent in the media while women journalists are confronted to discrimination because of their gender.

Regarding gender violence in the Arab World, practices such as *taharrush*, i.e. sexual harassment to women in public spaces and events, are widespread in Egypt. This eventually affects female journalists as well, as it was the case for female journalists sexually aggressed during the Tahrir demonstrations in 2011. In the case of Palestine, while the role of women during the first Intifada was crucial, the situation has been deteriorating since the 80s. Moreover, in the Gaza strip isolation and tensions with Israel do not help placing women's rights in the agenda.

Another interesting intersection is the condition of journalist women in the Arab World. The core issue is not so much being a female journalist but being a journalist alone in the Arab region. Due to limitations on freedom of expression and the



Isabel Pérez and Joan Roura during the debate on "Being Journalist and a Woman in the Mediterranean"



Carla Fibla (between Xavier Giró and Antoni Castel) on the challenges of being a female journalist in the Maghreb

widespread use of censorship, it is very difficult for journalists to tackle certain issues that are considered beyond "red lines". Besides, the fact that media are often highly controlled by the state does not allow professionals to perform freely.

Concerning women's presence in media organizations, a notable effort has been made for an equal representation. However, it is still difficult for a woman in charge of a team to be respected by her male partners.

In short, the representation of gender violence and discrimination – at the structural level - is still absent in the media while women journalists – besides a better visibility in their professional domain – are still confronted to discrimination within their profession because of their gender.

From Soft Power to Hard Power. Turkey and the Domestic Drift

In the last decades, the possibility of becoming an EU member state was a main issue for the Turkish foreign policy. Lately, the possibility of Turkey becoming part of the EU seems rather unlikely. In fact, with the Syrian conflict, the Kurdish question and the so-called "refugee crisis", the future of the EU-Turkish relations is today uncertain and unpredictable.



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At the dawn of the Turkish Republic, its foreign policy was characterized by a political and economic westernization that - with exception of Cyprus, Armenia and the Kurdish question - was intended to minimize any kind of risk. Throughout the first half of the 20th century the Turkish foreign policy can be described as a *status quo* (i.e. its non-alignment during the II World War). Decades later, an important shift appeared with the so-called “new Turkish foreign policy” led by Ahmed Davutoğlu. By engaging in different multilateral organizations and becoming an important actor in the mediation of conflicts in the Middle East region, Turkey placed itself at the center of global politics. Under the presidency of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan – and after the resignation of Davutoğlu – the Turkish foreign policy is unpredictable and leaves many open questions concerning its relationship with the EU, United States and Russia.

What remains certain, however, is the fundamental role that Turkey plays in the EU foreign relations. While the negotiations – which started in 2004 – seem now stalled, Turkey stands out as a necessary ally for the EU in order to deal with the “refugee crisis”. Both the Syrian conflict and the refugee issue place Turkey at the center of EU foreign policy. However, the recent turn in domestic politics and the coming referendum, coupled with the conservative rhetoric of Erdogan, make Turkey-EU relations even tenser. Nonetheless, while not resulting in an entry of Turkey in the EU other ways to strengthen their relationship might be considered.

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Finally, the role of EU member states and their Turkish diasporas should be taken into account. The growing Turkish diasporas in Germany and the Netherlands have proved to be an additional source of tensions. In that regard, the Turkish diaspora is considered an asset for domestic Turkish politics since it can influence electoral results. As recent events showed (i.e. the riots in Rotterdam) domestic issues in Turkey - the confrontation between members of AKP and the Gülenists - have also been transferred into the diaspora communities, provoking distress in some European governments and externalizing some of the domestic tensions.



From left to right: Elisabeth Johansson-Nogués, Melike Janine Sökmen, Eduard Soler and Ilke Toygür

Humanitarian Research and Innovation on Living Conditions at Refugee Settlements in the Mediterranean

This session examined three different approaches in dealing with refugee settlements in the Mediterranean, in particular in Croatia, Lebanon and Morocco. These experiences revealed the difficulties of the refugee crisis' management, its global character, and the disproportionality of the number of refugees in each of these countries, being Lebanon the one with the highest migratory pressure (50% of its population are refugees). It was also highlighted the important contribution of NGOs and private institutions in terms of financial and human resources. In this regard, the public funding tend to be lower than the private.

NGOs and private institutions have made an important financial and human resources contribution

When analyzing the three countries, different patterns can be identified. On the one hand, in transit countries like Croatia, refugees spend few time as they plan to reach other EU countries, such as Germany or Sweden. On the other hand, in countries like Morocco or Lebanon, refugees remain a longer period because of the difficulties in crossing the border with Europe or due to the proximity to their home country.



Differences in the way the crisis is managed from one country to the other can also be pointed out. Both Lebanese and Croatian governments have allocated public funds to the refugee camps. However, the Moroccan government, driven by its deal with the EU, intensified its pressure against settlements, in particular against the informal camps settled at the Gurugu Forest, close to the border with Melilla (Spain). At the same time, the Moroccan government opened the possibility of normalizing their legal status. The living conditions at the Gurugu are extremely poor and their settlers often face violence and abuse.

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In Lebanon, conversely, not only their basic needs are covered but also some refugees benefit from education programs. One example is the Lebanese International University's project SEAD (Social-Emotional-Academic-Development), which aims at getting all Syrian youth into and through education. The project is divided into school education for those Syrians under 18 and university education for those above 18. The key point is the fact that Syrian university students are, at the same time, the teachers of Syrian schoolers, enabling Syrians to teach and learn from themselves.



Sonia Parella and Giorgos Milios during the panel “Humanitarian Research and Innovation on Living Conditions at Refugee Settlements in the Mediterranean”



Martina Benkovic and Anwar Kawtharani speaking on the Croatia and Lebanese case-studies

Popular Uprising at the Rif in 2016-2017. Conflict Cycles and the Local-Global Link

The conceptualization of the uprisings in the Rif as “cycles of conflicts” reflects less a continuity than an evolution in social mobilization and its impact on citizens, public opinion and values, as well as in the transformation of the Moroccan state itself. Thus, it is possible to discern a historical line from the first rebellions in the Rif through Bou Hmara’s revolution in the region and its reminiscence in the current revolts of today. In that regard, the Revolt of 1984 in Nador, or “the bread revolt”, can be considered an episode of this cycle as well as the revolts of 2004 to today’s uprisings.

In the early 20th century, Bou Hmara (Djlali ibn Idris al-Zarhuni al Yussufi) - after returning from exile in Algeria to North Morocco - revolutionized the area causing a situation of anarchy, especially in a context of collaborationism between the



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Spanish government and those called “amigos de España” (*friends of Spain*) for the exploitation of mines in the region.

In 1984, the revolt spread because of several factors. In a context of a hesitant opening of the political regime in the first municipal elections, there was no consensus due to high political fragmentation and high levels of corruption. Economically, the country was undergoing a heavy debt due to the implementation of neoliberal policies and there was an evident lack of opportunities for young people. Finally, the center-periphery tensions provoked a structure of opportunity for the outbreak of the uprising.

The earthquake in 2004 raised once again political and social claims from the Rif, as the region was isolated and abandoned without humanitarian aid arriving to satisfy the victims' basic needs. The political tension and disappointment was latent, especially among those who felt it would be more acceptable to tolerate the consequences of the earthquake than the consequences of marginalization, since there was no public policy from the authorities on the geographical dangerous location of the Rif.



From left to right: Rachid Yechouti, Laura Feliu, Ángela Suárez and Rachid Aarab



Following these events, a popular revolt erupted last year in the city of Al Hoceima sparked by the acts of police brutality against a salesman and, as a consequence, tensions and riots flourished in the recent months.

In short, the Rif region is characterized by a high level of social mobilization in relation to the rest of Morocco with specific demands based on a historical moment. However, they all revolve around issues linked to territorial recognition, normalization of the language and culture, as well as the development of public policies and infrastructure in the region.

Media in the Mediterranean: Actors and Social Constructions of Reality

There is no discussion in pointing out the central role of media in shaping reality. It is co-constitutive of our common representations of our social, economic, political and cultural environment. European newspapers and television channels depict the Euro-Mediterranean area from a dominant perspective linked to politics and security.

In the same way, the Inter-Mediterranean space is not defined in terms of coexistence but rather with a negative terminology, portraying the Mediterranean as a zone of “conflict” and “problems” (e.g. migration). Therefore, an alternative discourse centered in the shared socio-cultural background between the two shores is urgent. In fact, it should place Mediterranean identity at the core of the regional representation. Such narrative should take into account the historical views that highlight the cultural, social and economic ties in the region.

Yet, while doing this exercise it is also important to frame it within a post-colonial scheme. Still today, the relationship between the two shores – North and South – are marked by asymmetrical relationships. Thus, in order to create an alternative discourse, it is necessary to de-colonize as well as de-orientalize the Mediterranean imaginaries.

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Ricardo Carniel and El Houssein Majdoubi during the debate on "Media in the Mediterranean"



Teresa Velázquez and Ahmad Abdul-Kareem Shaban discussing on "Media views of the Syrian Conflict"

Concerning current affairs, it is also important to see how the Syrian conflict has been permeated by multiple media narratives. Such plurality of narratives reflects de politicization of information. In this regard, from a comparative angle, the study of different media (Al-Jazeera, BBC, Russia Today) showed how media take part in the conflict – some with a pro-Assad stance (as Russia Today) and others supporting the opposition (Al-Jazeera and BBC). Having the Syrian conflict as a case-study, the so-called "neutrality" of the media can be questioned as well as the dialectical relationship between politics and journalism.

Gender Studies in the Mediterranean Context: New perspectives

Studies on the Mediterranean have often overlooked the role of women in social and political mobilization. In fact, historically, women from the Arab World are often portrayed as passive actors who are confined to the private sphere. The development of gender studies in that regard is revisiting the agency of women in the Mediterranean.

From a historical perspective, it is important to note how there is a need to shed light on female personalities who have been influent politically, socially and culturally but remain mainly ignored or forgotten because of their gender. There



Arab and Muslim women are engaged through cultural practices which express their struggles as women

is thus a necessity to do “memory work”, in other words, revisiting historical archives with gender lens. Examples of such endeavor can be found in the works of Ana López and her *Las mujeres que nos faltan* or *La mujer morisca: sus actividades* by Ana Labarta which demonstrates how the majority of weavers in Al-Andalus were women. Similarly, many works have showed the participation of women in public life and politics during the Al-Andalus period, for example as *fqihs*.

Nowadays, there is also a drive to make visible how Arab and Muslim women are active in the social and cultural sphere. They are very engaged, especially in literature and other artistic practices through which they express their struggles as women in their own societies. Their work reflects the empowerment of women during the uprisings. During the Egyptian revolution, for instance, a project named “Noonesma” aimed at painting graffiti on the walls of the city with women’s faces. Other initiatives, such as “Harassmap” took place in social media (i.e. Twitter)



From left to right: Emilia Calvo, Dolores Serrano, Jolanda Guardiola and Èlia Romo



The mobilization of women is undermined due to an Orientalist imaginary operating against the idea of Arab and Muslim women as active players

where people collected all cases of sexual harassment in a city map as a way to denounce and avoid these acts.

The cultural and social mobilization of women in the Mediterranean is thus often undermined, also due to an Orientalist imaginary operating against the struggles to see Arab and Muslim women as players and central actors of their life and within their societies. Gender studies in that respect are essential to shed light on the ways in which women are mobilizing and organizing their own societies.

Transnational Moroccan Entrepreneurs: New Social Patterns, New Narrative Policies

Migration studies have often focused in the complex relationships between the diaspora and the 'home country'. Such studies observed how states elaborate strategies in order to include their citizens living abroad into domestic politics. Others have been focusing on how the diaspora influences the cultural and social sphere of the country of origin. Less attention has been given, however, to the economic ties between the diaspora and the state. In that regard, this panel offers an original take on this issue with the example of Moroccan entrepreneurs living abroad.

The Moroccan government has promoted new policies intended to mobilize Moroccans living abroad in the economic development of the country

Today, entrepreneurship is central in these new migratory dynamics. Within the 5 million Moroccans living abroad (MRE in French), an important number of them have built a cultural and social capital that lead them to invest in the home country of their parents. Far from ignoring this phenomena, the Moroccan government is well aware of its importance for the country GDP. Therefore, the government has promoted new policies intended to mobilize the MRE in the economic development of the country.

These new policies are materialized in specific programs designed to revitalize the ties between the Moroccan government and the Moroccan entrepreneurs living



abroad, aiming at following and assisting the entrepreneur in their investments (i.e. Project “Maghreb Belgium Impulse”).

On the other side, a “new generation of Moroccan entrepreneurs” is collectively being structured, creating a network of entrepreneurs that represent their interests both in the country of residence and in Morocco. In the case of Catalonia, a youth movement of entrepreneurs is growing. The diaspora of young Catalan-Moroccans is working to build a social capital through their own “hybrid” identity through which their cultural and linguistic capital – Catalan, Spanish and Arabic – becomes a key component of their entrepreneurial work.



Ricard Zapata (standing), presenting Karim Basrire, Fatima Tigratine and Zouhair el Hairan

The Other and our Fears: Violent Representations in the Media

The role of the media as a tool of public interest is essential for the development of an informed citizenry. So, the way through which the media construct the image of “the other” is, in short, the image formation of “the self”.

The technological revolution of the World Wide Web and the establishment of a cyberspace have caused a displacement of the symbolic power to a “society of visibility” and a “society of vanity” in which coercion of the image and the fight for attention involve the erosion of human dignity, and even humiliation. In this



sense, when constructing a representation of the “other” in the digital environment, such “other” is not seen as a human being and its image tends to be de-humanized. It is necessary, therefore, a development of an ethics of representation or an ecology of the image.

The present 2.0 landscape has brought a fight for attention that involves erosion of human dignity and humiliation of the “other”

The “other” is also present in the work of journalists covering migration. The precariousness of journalists, the restrictions to access information, the economic crisis of the traditional media and investigative journalism provoke a rather desolate overview. Moreover, the danger of far-right narratives is becoming more evident as they attempt to seize part of the cyberspace through hate speech against migrants.

Moreover, cultural and political elites implement and expand a system of domination through ideology. Therefore, the image of the “other” is also linked to government policies and the main consequence is the development of a perception that is heavily influenced not only by media discourses, but also by institutions (for example, rooted in the economic relationship and interest with



Jean-Paul Marthoz (center) and Lola Bañón (right) listening to Carlos Ruiz presentation



Montserrat Arbós, Carlos Ruiz and Jean-Paul Marthoz during the debate

Gulf countries everything that comes from that area is more positively considered).

In short, the media have great influence in the construction of representations and ideological hegemony in harmony with the interests of the dominant political class. The narrative that is created about the “other” comes from silence, without dialogue, since the opinions of immigrants are only asked when it comes to immigration issues, even though they are citizens, of course, with their own political views. “The other” becomes, definitely, a literary character.



The Seminar “**Towards a New Mediterranean Agenda: Dynamics and Actors at Stake**” was organized by the European Institute of the Mediterranean, in collaboration with 10 different university programs. Each master program suggested an area of interest and topics for their session, provided the lecturers and the discussants. The participant master's degree are listed below:

- Master's in Diplomacy and Public Service. Centre of International Studies – Universitat de Barcelona (CEI-UB)
- Master's in International Studies, Universitat de Barcelona (UB)
- Master's in Communication of Armed Conflicts, Peace and Social Movements, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)
- Master's in International Relations, Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI)
- Inter-University Master's in Contemporary Migrations, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) and Universitat de Barcelona (UB)
- Master's in International Relations, Security and Development, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)
- Master's Erasmus Mundus in Inter-Mediterranean Mediation: Towards Investment and Integration (MIM), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) / Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia/ Université Paul- Valéry Montpellier
- Master's in Arab and Islamic World, Universitat de Barcelona (UB)
- Master's in Immigration Management, Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF)
- Master's in Journalism and International Relations, Blanquerna–Universitat Ramon Llull (URL)



Closing session with Oriol Amorós, Secretary for Equality, Migration and Citizenship (Generalitat de Catalunya), Senén Florensa and Lurdes Vidal (IEMed)



Participants enjoying their coffee in the cloister of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, venue of the Seminar

This report was written by Alex Govers with the inputs of David Bertran, Chaimae Essousi, Ignasi Pérez and Miquel Iborra, coordinated by Lurdes Vidal.