

IMS NEWSLETTER

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The IMS Newsletter is a biannual digest of the most important news in the Mediterranean area. It provides links, short summaries and occasionally comments about all aspects of the Mediterranean that appeared in the news of the last six months.

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Editorial

Multiculturalism in the Mediterranean Region

By: Mona Farouk M. Ahmed



Would it be suitable to use the concept of “multiculturalism” to describe the variety of cultures living together in the Mediterranean region? Examining the cultural diversity in the Mediterranean region, we can feel it in each Mediterranean country with a large variety of different cultures coexisting and mixing to develop more variety of cultures. Despite the common features of the societies of the Mediterranean region that we can describe it as a Mediterranean culture, those societies also carry a wide variety of distinctive cultures to which we may refer by the word “Multiculturalism”. Actually, the concept of “multiculturalism” involves recognition of cultural identities and minorities rights. Thus, applying this concept in the Mediterranean region would include other issues concerning the status of minorities and somehow can be related with the refugees’ status in the Mediterranean as they carry with them their cultures to their refuges.

For more information on Multiculturalism in the Mediterranean:

Read the full essay: <http://ims.or.kr/ims/essay/9>

See also IMS lecture via You tube on Multiculturalism in Egypt: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iyXDdUMmX-4&t=37s>

Current issues in the Mediterranean

1. Omicron overwhelming health systems in Eastern Mediterranean

The head of the World Health Organization (WHO) predicted that 22 countries and territories, including the occupied Palestinian territories, in the Mediterranean region with a population of about 679 million people would probably see more than 17 million cases and over 314,000 deaths by the end of 2021. Expectedly, Covid-19 cases of the Omicron variant continued to increase in the Eastern Mediterranean region increasing the burden on healthcare systems with its workers.

The Omicron variant was detected in more than 140 countries worldwide reflecting an increase of 89% in cases in the Eastern Mediterranean region in the first week of January 2022 compared to the last week of December 2021.

Ahmed Al Mandhari, the World Health Organization's regional director for the Eastern Mediterranean, declared some recommendations for facing this serious situation of the pandemic, such as; expanding vaccination efforts, adhering to public health and social measures, and containing the increasing number of cases.

The World Health Organization kept warning of an increasing number of Covid-19 cases in the Eastern Mediterranean region while describing the vaccine and health inequities as the biggest failures of 2021.

Links:

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1108632>

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/2022/01/13/we-need-to-prepare-who-warns-of-increasing-covid-19-cases-in-eastern-mediterranean/>

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/2022/01/26/who-says-omicron-overwhelming-health-systems-in-eastern-mediterranean/>

Current issues in the Mediterranean

2. Egypt's Suez Canal reaches its highest annual revenues during 2021

The Egyptian Suez Canal is globally well known with its importance for the world's trade. It connects between the Mediterranean and Red seas where about 10% of global trade, including 7% of the world's oil, flows through its waterway. The Suez Canal was first opened in 1869, and since then it became one of the main sources of the foreign currency to Egypt.



Source: <https://apnews.com/article/business-middle-east-africa-egypt-suez-canal-a54511067cdac353d6ac49e914a49e0d>

According to the declarations of Admiral Ossama Rabei, head of the Suez Canal Authority, the revenues of 2021 showed an increase by 12.8%, compared to 2020 as the canal achieved \$5.6 billion, which is considered as the highest in the crucial waterway's history.

He officially declared that 20,649 vessels flowed through the Suez Canal through 2021 with an increase of 10% compared to 18,830 vessels in 2020.

This unprecedented 2021 revenues of Suez Canal came while the shipping industry is still under pressure due to the internationally wide spread situation of the coronavirus pandemic. The canal also was blocked for six days in March 2021 by a massive Panama-flagged container ship, which ran aground in the single-lane stretch of the Suez Canal's waterway.

Links:

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/suez-canal-revenues-hit-time-record-63-billion-82039873>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/suez-canal-cairo-egypt-red-mediterranean-b1985595.html>

<https://apnews.com/article/business-middle-east-africa-egypt-suez-canal-a54511067cdac353d6ac49e914a49e0d>

1. Normalization between Israel and Arab countries:

The year 2021 was full of News and debates on the so called normalization deals between Israel and Arab countries. Among those news we can refer to the Trump administration agreement to sell F-35 fighter planes and other advanced military hardware to the UAE. Commenting on this news, Samuel Ramani, a nonresident fellow at the Gulf International Forum, argued that the UAE's growing relationship with Russia would make the arms deal counterproductive for the United States while particularly there are some warnings about the UAE's alleged support for Russian-backed troops in Libya.

For other Arab countries normalization with Israel, the relations with Israel was the main subject on the agenda for the first top-level U.S. visit to Sudan in 15 years, which was conducted by the US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo in October 2021. Reports about that visit showed that the US was willing to lift Sudan's terrorist sponsor designation only if Sudan agreed to normalize relations with Israel.

By the end of 2021, the Normalization was clearly seen in the attitude of four Arab countries, the UAE, Sudan, Morocco, and Bahrain. The four Arab countries were all motivated by the promises of either diplomatic favors from the US or deals of advanced weapons.

The 2021's normalization deals stand as the most significant breakthrough in the Arab-Israeli conflict since the 1990s, as Israel's new interactions with the UAE appeared to be warmer than its ties with Egypt and Jordan, Arab countries that formerly forged peace with Israel decades ago.

Links:

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/12/21/arab-ties-israel-diplomacy-normalization-middle-east/>

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/30/why-usa-shouldnt-sell-f35-jets-to-uae/>

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/11/trump-extends-arab-push-normalize-ties-with-israel-sudan/>

2. Lebanon economic crisis deepening the Mediterranean refugees crisis

Lebanon faced a serious economic crisis resulted in the suffering of its population of nearly six million people. Earlier on 4th of August, 2020, Beirut, the Lebanese capital, suffered destruction in large areas due to the explosions in the harbor which resulted in the death of more than 200 people. The economic crisis in Lebanon showed the decline of the Lebanese lira that lost more than 90% of its value since late 2019, while 78% of Lebanese people are living below the poverty threshold. The impacts of this crisis was obvious seeing that the Lebanese currency has crashed, the purchasing power of the Lebanese people has declined while the monthly minimum wage appeared to worth \$22.



Lebanese citizens sharing clothes and shoes donation with poor families in Beirut
Source: Nabil Mounzer / EPA: <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/34255/lebanon-120000-migrants-need-humanitarian-assistance-iom>

For the status of refugees in the Mediterranean region, this Lebanese economic crisis had also its impacts as according to the UN's refugee agency (UNHCR), between January and November 2021, among at least 1,570 individuals there were 186 Lebanese people who embarked or tried to depart Lebanon through illicit sea journeys. Most of those Lebanese people were trying to enter Europe through the island of Cyprus, the European Union member, which is 109 miles away from Lebanon. The number of those Lebanese people who involved in those attempts increased from the number recorded in 2019 that showed only 40 Lebanese among 270 passengers, who were mainly from Syria in the past few years, as reported by Lisa Abou Khaled, the UNHCR's spokesperson.

Links:

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220111-no-path-ahead-but-the-sea-lebanese-join-migrant-flow-to-eu>

<https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/37823/lebanese-migrants-look-across-the-sea-to-europe>

3. Turkish–Egyptian Rapprochement

Turkish–Egyptian relations have went through a rough period since 2013 witnessing the ousting of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi which resulted in the change of the attitude of both countries towards each another showing hostility. However, the year of 2021 showed new developments in the relations between Turkey and Egypt towards a possible partnership between them. The efforts for normalization showed bilateral interests by the two countries as both of them would benefit from normalizing relations in many fields including economic and foreign policies.

There are many factors for this normalization attitude adopted by Turkey and Egypt. Among those factors, the diminishing importance of the Muslim Brotherhood in the bilateral relations as the group is no longer recognized as a political organization in the region. Another factor would be the developments in the Eastern Mediterranean including the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF). Other factors can be seen in the growing tensions between Egypt and Ethiopia related to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) dispute, which is considered as an important matter of national security for Egypt, and the developments in the situation of Libya as the stability of Libya is also an important matter of national security for Egypt. The involvement of Turkey in those issues had its impacts on the effort for the normalization of relations between the two countries.

Links:

<https://politicstoday.org/turkish-egyptian-rapprochement-dynamics-prospects-and-expectations/>

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1925976/middle-east>

Culture

1. Egypt re-opens the 3,000-year-old Avenue of the Sphinxes

25 November 2021, Egypt re-opened the 3,000-year-old Avenue of Sphinxes to the public in a glittering extravagant ceremony in the city of Luxor.



Source: <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/110303/Live-Update-Egypt-reopens-ancient-%E2%80%98Avenue-of-Sphinxes%E2%80%99-in-Luxor>

The ancient walkway connecting between the Temple of Luxor and the Temple of Karnak with nearly two miles long and about 250 feet wide.

The re-opening ceremony witnessed a spectacular night parade along the length of the avenue. The walkway is lined on its two sides by over 600 ram-headed statues and traditional sphinxes. The participants and professional dancers of the parade wore pharaonic dresses and were accompanied by a symphony orchestra with lighting effects.

The event was attended by the Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi and other prominent figures of Egypt.

This ancient walkway was buried for centuries until 1949 when Egyptian archaeologist Zakaria Ghineim discovered a part of it with 8 sphinxes in front of the Luxor Temple. The restoration for the site took over the next seven decades and was interrupted many times by political upheaval including the revolution which led to several years of civil unrest.

Links:

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/egypt-reopen-ancient-avenue-sphinxes-luxor-karnak-parade-rcna6723>

<https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/110303/Live-Update-Egypt-reopens-ancient-%E2%80%98Avenue-of-Sphinxes%E2%80%99-in-Luxor>

2. Environment: Climate change in the Mediterranean

2021 news reported expectations for the Mediterranean will be hit by ever fiercer heatwaves, drought and fires supercharged due to the rising temperatures. A draft United Nations assessment from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that the Mediterranean region would be a "climate change hotspot" providing details about the future impacts that carbon pollution will have on the Mediterranean.

It was reported that the Mediterranean's inhabitants (more than half-a-billion) are facing "highly interconnected climate risks" according to a chapter dedicated to the Mediterranean region in a draft of the IPCC's Working Group II report on climate impacts, which is prepared for official release in February 2022. Warnings included sea-level rise related risks, land and marine biodiversity losses, health risks from heat, besides risks related to drought, wildfire, alterations of water cycle, and decreasing of food production,.

The draft expected that temperatures across the Mediterranean would rise faster than the global average in the coming decades, threatening the region's vital economic sectors including tourism, agriculture, and fisheries. Moreover, the Mediterranean's inhabitants are expected to face heightened risk of water shortages, exposure to extreme heat, and dangers of coastal flooding..

The probability of the increase of individual fires such as those happening in some Mediterranean countries like Greece and Turkey due to the heatwaves and drought caused by this global climate change. It was also reported that already southern Europe located on the Mediterranean is currently facing a severe heat wave with near-record temperatures.

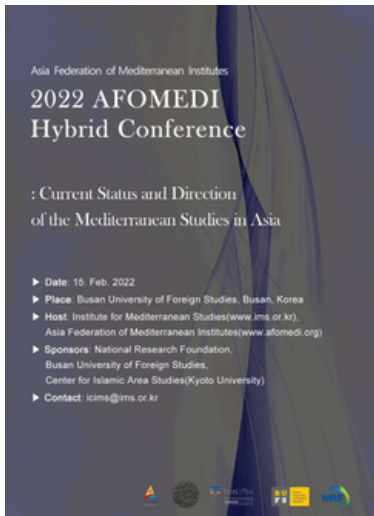
Links:

[https://www.un.org/climatechange?](https://www.un.org/climatechange?gclid=CjwKCAiAvOeQBhBkEiwAxutUVJX9JfDY4OAYviW4BWpP4D4H8e8GZlwcRGvZWoxwhE9ISFj6fQT5rRoCaHsQAvD_BwE)

[gclid=CjwKCAiAvOeQBhBkEiwAxutUVJX9JfDY4OAYviW4BWpP4D4H8e8GZlwcRGvZWoxwhE9ISFj6fQT5rRoCaHsQAvD_BwE](https://www.un.org/climatechange?gclid=CjwKCAiAvOeQBhBkEiwAxutUVJX9JfDY4OAYviW4BWpP4D4H8e8GZlwcRGvZWoxwhE9ISFj6fQT5rRoCaHsQAvD_BwE)

<https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20210806-un-report-says-mediterranean-climate-change-hotspot-will-see-temps-20-higher-than-global-average>

1. International conferences



2022 AFOMEDI Hybrid Conference

“Current Status and Direction of the Mediterranean Studies in Asia”

more information : ims.or.kr/icims.html



Renaissance of Civilizational Exchange in the Central Mediterranean

This conference includes the academic field of History, Literature, Philosophy, Art, and Politics in the perspective of exchange with in depth presentation and discussion of domestic and international expertises in Mediterranean Studies. It also aims to seek opportunities to approach Mediterranean Civilizational-Exchange Studies in multiple.....

more information : ims.or.kr/icims.html



10th AHLiST International and Interdisciplinary Conference

HYBRID (Virtual and Face-to-Face)
Conference and Workshops

Dates: November 18 to 20, 2021

Birds of a Feather: November 22 to 23, 2021

The AHLiST Conference is hosted by
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid



and

Co-Hosted by Busan University of Foreign Studies, South Korea



General Conference Topic: Identity and Wellbeing

Through the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of (bio)technology has become essential to sustain society, community and livelihood of human beings. On the individual level, while trying to survive the coronavirus and maintain the status quo, s/he has to juggle multiple types of realities: pandemic reality, social(-distance) reality.....

more information : <http://ahlist.org>

2. Upcoming Events



1st Colloquium: “All What You Need in Digital Communication Era is Data”

This colloquium seeks to bring together researchers of various digital and data studies across the globe to assess the current state of our research fields and possibly set forth directions for the future of digital humanities and data science. As the time changes...

more information : <https://ahlist.org/>



2022 International Mediterranean Conference "Jerusalem and Civilization Exchange in the Eastern Mediterranean"

more information : <http://ims.or.kr/ims/notice/75>

3. Publications



Sicilian Civilization Exchanges described

두터운 역사-문화지층을 지니며 다양한 모습을 보여 주는 시칠리아는 지중해의 역사와 문화 그 자체로서, 지중해 문명 교류학을 연구하기에 더없이 좋은 텃밭이다. 이 책은 그러한 시칠리아의 역사와 교훈, 메아리를 담고자 했다. 물론 3천 년이 넘는 오랜 풍파를 겪은 시칠리아를 한 권의 책에 담는다는 것은 난센스일 수 있다. 하지만 다양한 분야의 전문가들이 교류와 소통이라는 공동의 키워드를 통해 오랜 시간 시칠리아를 보아 왔고, 이 책은 그 성과를 한데 모은 것이다. 겉으로 보이는 시칠리아가 아닌, 시칠리아의 속살을 통해서 그 나라가 지닌 가치와 의미를 나누고 싶었다.