

CES Center for European Studies

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CONVERSATIONS ON EUROPE

The Colonial Mediterranean and Its Place in European History

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Decades after the publication of Braudel's masterpiece that defined our understanding of history and the Mediterranean, the history of the Middle Sea enjoys a venerable popularity. Recent and current political turmoil in Mediterranean countries and the question of whether European states should intervene (or not) evokes the historical trajectory of European colonialism in the Mediterranean. This talk argues that with few recent exceptions the historiography of the modern Mediterranean suffers from a fragmentation into national and regional studies of colonial history of North Africa and the Middle East. The talk also argues for a more 'interventionist' approach that refashions Mediterranean history as part of the history of colonialism and includes different geohistories that go beyond the current methodological nationalism; by bringing Southern Europe into the debate on the Colonial Mediterranean, a new understanding of European history and its colonial dimension is possible and indeed necessary. Such an approach relates to current debates about the neo-colonialism of real economic dependence and the neo-orientalism of assumed political immaturity.



Sakis Gekas is assistant professor teaching Modern Greek and Mediterranean History at York University, Toronto. He has taught Economic History at the LSE and the University of Manchester and was a Max Weber Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence. He has published on the economic and social history of Mediterranean ports, and he is completing a history of the Ionian State and British colonialism in the Mediterranean.

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