



RIEAS SEMINAR “NEW WORLD ORDER IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN”

The Research Institute for European and American Studies (RIEAS) organized a seminar titled “New World Order in the Eastern Mediterranean” on 22 March 2023 in the Greek Armed Forces Club in Athens, Greece. **Guest Speaker was Admiral Ioannis Egkolfopoulos (ret HN). Public & Private Security Professionals, Foreign Military Defense Attaché in Athens and Diplomats were participated from the following countries: Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Poland, USA, UK, Morocco, Hungary, Taiwan, Greece, France, Egypt, Italy, and Israel.**

On 22nd of March 2023, the Research Institute for American and European Studies (RIEAS) organized a seminar with the title “New World Order and Eastern Mediterranean”, which took place at the Armed Forces Officers’ Club (LAED). The seminar started with the opening remarks of the founder and the director of the Institute Prof. John Nomikos. The keynote speaker was the Admiral Ioannis Egkolfopoulos who then followed with his lecture on the new world order in the region of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Admiral Ioannis Egkolfopoulos started by explaining his focus on this particular area characterizing it as a “desire region” due to geopolitical, financial and energy factors. More particularly, 32% of the vessels pass from the Eastern Mediterranean while eighteen thousand vessels pass through the Suez Canal representing 12% of the world trade. However, according to Admiral Ioannis Egkolfopoulos, after the Covid-19 and the war between Russia and Ukraine the interest in this area has increased rapidly, stating that the world is entering a new era. Admiral Ioannis Egkolfopoulos then went on to explain the complications and the challenges that arise from this prospect for the actors of this region.

As it has already been mentioned the presence of hydrocarbons in view of the energy crisis have increased the competition between the actors involved in the Eastern Mediterranean, the one bloc being Turkey and Libya and the other one being Greece, Cyprus, Egypt and Israel. Russia is also being involved by making energy agreements with Turkey and trying to restart the distribution of gas through Turkey.

Furthermore, concern is raised with Iran's support to extremists, the political instability in Lebanon, Syria and Libya, the economic uncertainty in Egypt and Tunisia and the economic penetration of China. Exploiting these circumstances, countries such as Turkey, Russia and China get involved as mediators, usually, trying to take on a more important role in the international system and to expand their influence in this area. On top of these, the complications that arose with the pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian war have signified, according to Admiral Ioannis Egkolfopoulos, the new world order.

Admiral Ioannis Egkolfopoulos explained extensively the current era, by stating its characteristics and the main differences to the past era. More importantly, the economy took a massive hit with the GDP being reduced by 2 trillion dollars, the mining industry and tourist industry facing difficulties and the world stock market being declined. These, in combination with the ongoing war that seems to have no end because as he stated "Russia is too weak to win and too strong to lose", have led to a multi polar system with conflict inflation, the states focusing on security and resilience while the 4th industrial revolution, involving the evolution of artificial intelligence and the 5G, has started. Admiral Ioannis Egkolfopoulos then also mentioned the importance of the phenomenon of globalization and how it worked with the US as leader of the system by using the dollar.

More importantly, Admiral Ioannis Egkolfopoulos seems to support that the latest changes and the exploitation of this phenomenon by China and the emerging powers have led to a currency war in which new means/weapons have been introduced: cryptocurrencies. In this world the leaders seem to be China and Russia which have accepted them in one way and have introduced laws concerning their regulation, while the US is still being critical of this type of currency.

Admiral Ioannis Egkolfopoulos continued with examining every country of interest in the Eastern Mediterranean. Admiral Ioannis Egkolfopoulos started by stressing the importance of preserving stability in Egypt which is a country with a big population, connected with Asia and Africa and the Suez Canal, with a powerful army. Russia's presence in Syria is really important and Syria's relations with Libya and Tunisia, while for Libya the ongoing instability is an arena for other states to express their interests. The presence of gas and oil resources of Libya on the other hand should not be ignored.

Furthermore, Admiral Ioannis Egkolfopoulos highlighted the importance of the upcoming elections in Turkey and the new role Turkey is trying to take on. Tunisia is characterized by political instability and is of utmost importance to be stable for the same reasons as Egypt (immigration). Iran following the example of Turkey is trying to increase its influence by the exploitation of its oil reserves. Last but not least, China is the actor that everyone needs to pay attention to, concerning the 4th industrial revolution.

Admiral Ioannis Egkolfopoulos concluded by stating that the world will stabilize by 2030 and stressed one more time the need for stability in the area of Eastern Mediterranean. Moreover, Admiral Ioannis Egkolfopoulos mentioned that the future is quite unstable and nothing can be predicted. Discussion and questions followed by the attendees. Admiral Ioannis Egkolfopoulos was asked to give his opinion concerning the situation in Libya, in his answer he supported that the situation is difficult to change due to Turkey's presence. Afterwards, he was asked if the Greek Central Bank will

introduce cryptocurrency regulations, in which he commented “not in the near future”. The conference was characterized successful, receiving positive feedback from the attendees and the presentation of Admiral Ioannis Egkolfopoulos efficiently provided insight to the participants concerning the ongoing changes, the challenges and the intervention of actors in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Note: Seminar proceedings was prepared by *RIEAS Research Associate,*
Ms Martha Delli.