

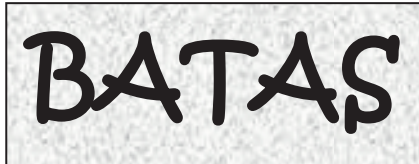
# Turkish Area Studies Review

Bulletin of the British Association for

Turkish Area Studies



[www.batas.org.uk](http://www.batas.org.uk)



## **The 2020 John Martin Lecture**

has been postponed to February 2021  
(precise date, time and 'venue' to be confirmed)

### **Professor Ziya Öniş**

Professor of International Political Economy,  
Department of International Relations  
Koç University, Istanbul

will address the issue of

**Turkey's current international role and prospects**

(precise title to be confirmed)

For updates see [www.batas.org.uk](http://www.batas.org.uk)



## **Spring Symposium 2021**

We are hoping to hold in May 2021 at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, the symposium which was originally planned for May 2020. It is not possible to make a definite announcement at this stage.

BATAS members will be kept updated by email. Details will also be provided at [www.batas.org.uk](http://www.batas.org.uk)



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**Please note: Opinions expressed and stances taken are exclusively those of the contributors themselves.**

## Editorial

The reader will find this a compelling, varied and lengthy *Review*. The co-editors were understandingly worried about contributions coming forward in these corona-stricken times. However, with the help in part of some well-connected BATAS members, we were pleasantly surprised to receive a number of high quality pieces. Not surprisingly, Corona-related articles predominate. The authors (David Barchard, Mina Toksöz and Bülent Gökay) view the effects of the pandemic from many different angles, although one common theme remains the need for the Turkish authorities to balance a calibrated response to the pandemic while at the same time ensuring that measures taken would not seriously damage the Turkish economy. David Barchard also addresses other recent issues in Turkey's domestic and foreign policies, including Turkey's increased activity in its neighbourhood.

Another welcome surprise was that we received two articles on Cyprus, after having received none in the *Review* No 35. The two articles are different but at the same time complementary. Birol Yeşilada adopts a comprehensive approach much along the lines which Clement Dodd used to provide. Peter Millett's article has a special focus on one particular avenue of work towards a settlement – the activities of the Stelios Foundation. In addition to the second part of a work on the role and impact of Russian migration to Turkey, there are interesting articles in the 'History Section'. These cover an overview and analysis of the US role in the Middle East, and a fascinating piece on football in the late Ottoman period focusing on the life of James La Fontaine. Another article offers a personal account of a retired Turkish diplomat whose family are closely connected with the family of the current British Prime Minister.

The 'Culture Section' includes the first part of a detailed account of the Sunni-Shia divide and the impact of this on Turkish policy. A less well-known poem by Bülent Ecevit, with a unique translation, was a particularly fine addition to this section. There are also two book reviews and a list of recent publications to whet the appetite.

The co-editors wish to thank all contributors, and also, of course, to recognise the careful work of our proof-readers. As the Covid-19 pandemic has made it impossible to hold any physical meetings since March – and it is not certain when such events will be allowed again – the BATAS Council has decided to offer some alternative high-quality events in webinar format. A few members of the Council have worked tirelessly on this and there are two events now due on 31 October (p 25) and in November (p 75). The Eventbrite link, as well as information about the panellists, will be given at [www.batas.org.uk](http://www.batas.org.uk) and in the notices of the events that will be distributed by email and posted on Facebook.

Sigrid-B Martin  
Co-Editor

Gareth Winrow  
Co-Editor

## Summer 2020 – a Tough Time for Turkey

David Barchard



This has been a tough summer for Turkey. It will be remembered for its baleful combination of pestilence, war – not just one – and a deepening economic crisis. Yet during the spring the internal situation seemed relatively quiet, preoccupied with the struggle against the Coronavirus. With the arrival of summer and autumn a series of harsh developments unfolded.

### The Political Scene

#### **AKP leans harder on nationalist right for support**

Much of the turmoil can be explained by one factor. Turkey's political life at the moment is apparently driven by government anxiety; according to the opinion polls, the AKP (Justice and Development Party) enjoys less support than formerly. There is a widespread belief among opposition politicians and the public that the AKP's rule could collapse in the next elections, but this is surely an overstatement. The AKP is indeed apparently 10% or 15% below peak levels, but it is still far ahead of other parties. There also seems to be a clear majority opposed to the executive presidency introduced between 2014 and 2017 and a wish to return to a parliamentary system.<sup>1</sup> A bird's eye summary of recent Turkish poll results, each of which has to be set against each pollster's political slant, can be seen on the Internet on Wikipedia.<sup>2</sup> Most polls show the CHP (Republican People's Party) still in the doldrums at around 25%: a pathetic showing reflecting years of faltering leadership and lack of energy in building up a mass membership base. In most countries, this midterm showing would not greatly alarm a well-established ruling party, but the AKP has always aimed to have more than half the votes and based its legitimacy on this. Its current poor showing is believed to be causing tensions inside the party organization.

Opposition parties are relatively puny, but the AKP now faces serious rival presidential contenders at the next elections. In particular, the CHP mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem İmamoğlu trails President Erdoğan by only a few percentage points in opinion polls. The AKP, or rather its leader, is responding by relying on its parliamentary ally, the MHP (Nationalist Action Party), assessing its chances of victory in the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections in terms of their combined vote, unlike the days when the AKP had a secure overall lead.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2020/gundem/halkin-72-3u-1-yil-icinde-secim-bekliyor-5967946/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion\\_polling\\_for\\_the\\_2023\\_Turkish\\_general\\_election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion_polling_for_the_2023_Turkish_general_election), viewed 20 September 2020.

The MHP's leader has no formal position in the government but his very tough rightwing nationalist agendas – quite distinct from the Islamist mission of the AKP – have an increasing hold over the government. It may be that, by proposing harsh measures, he is being used to float trial balloons for the President.<sup>3</sup> These include ideas such as the restoration of the death penalty and calls for the Turkish Doctors' Union to be shut down and its leaders tried for treason.<sup>4</sup> In September, Bahçeli called for Nakchivan, the Azerbaijani exclave, to be integrated with Azerbaijan from which it is at present separated by Armenia.<sup>5</sup>



A second response by the president to the news from the polls has been to step up support for populist Islamist policies, most notably the removal of the museum status of Ayasofya, the sixth century Byzantine basilica, returning it to mosque status after 86 years.

### A circle of fire in foreign policy

The most alarming initiatives however came in foreign policy, with Turkey simultaneously actively intervening in the Libyan civil war, managing a precarious situation in Idlib in northern Syria, engaging in a fierce confrontation with Greece and the EU by prospecting in the seabed close to a Greek island and, finally, appearing poised for some kind of indirect intervention in hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the Caucasus. Those are enticing carrots for nationalist voters. But the stick is also being employed in the form of continuing daily police raids and the arrests of opponents accused of terrorism.

### Tiny support for new parties DEVA and Gelecek

Meanwhile the AKP has to contend with two new political parties formed by senior defectors from its ranks – DEVA, (Democracy and Progress Party) established by the former economics minister, Ali Babacan, 53, widely regarded as one of the most capable and moderate ministers in the AKP governments. Meanwhile the 'Future Party' (Gelecek) has been set up by Ahmet Davutoğlu, successively foreign minister and prime minister until 2016. Both parties have an Islamist tinge, but neither is much of a threat to the AKP. The polls suggest that, between them, they will pick up less than 5% of the popular vote.<sup>6</sup>



<sup>3</sup> <https://yetkinreport.com/en/2020/06/29/turkey-erdogan-carries-the-drum-bahceli-plays-it/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/tabipler-birligi-koronavirus-kadar-tehlikeli-41615400;>  
<http://bianet.org/english/politics/231035-turkish-medical-association-we-stand-by-our-words-we-are-on-our-duty>

<sup>5</sup> <https://t24.com.tr/haber/bahceli-ermenistan-devleti-bir-kez-daha-zulum-sacan-yuzunu-gostermistir,907171>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.haberler.com/2020-anketleri-anket-sirketlerinin-tum-secim-13484055-haberi/>



## Turkey and the Covid-19 Pandemic

*As of the last day of September, Turkey had officially had 317,272 cases of Covid-19 of which 8,130 had resulted in deaths. Though the number of deaths is far below the numbers in the UK, France, and Italy, despite the country's much larger population, the total is still rising steadily and it has emerged that the number of cases is being systematically underreported by the Ministry of Health.*

The worsening pandemic figures from late July contrast with the earlier part of that month when much tighter restrictions were enforced and things seemed to be going better than expected. Because of Turkey's precarious economic state, as well as its size and diversity, Ankara did not follow the UK and other western countries with a full national lockdown but deployed a cocktail of measures – e.g. long weekend curfews, limits on the movements of the under-20s and the over 65s, and a focus on the big metropolitan provinces plus Zonguldak (where infections seemed most widespread). These restrictions were duly imposed on 21 March and continued until 1 June when normality returned, with THY resuming domestic and international flights. As has happened elsewhere, this was followed by an upward turn in infection rates. Further measures continued to be required during the summer with masks in public, bans on large wedding parties and similar occasions.<sup>7</sup> There were widespread reports of legally required precautions not being observed. Steadily tougher inspections by teams of police and other officials across the country's 81 provinces to crackdown on persons ignoring the restrictions were announced in July, August, and September.<sup>8</sup>

### Health Minister's fatherly face cheers the public with positive presentations



Nightly reports from Fahrettin Koca, the doctor and medical entrepreneur who is minister of health, offered a detailed but reassuring message to the nation saying that Turkey was faring much better than many western countries but warning citizens not to end their vigilance. At the end of May, the death toll from Covid-19 was still around 4,500, i.e. less than a tenth of what it had been in the UK. One reason for this may be that the over-65's in Turkey make up only about 9% of the population, a much smaller segment than the 19% in the UK.<sup>9</sup>

### Testing numbers expand

By the end of the summer, Turkey was testing 1.31 people per thousand daily, though this was less than half the rate in Britain (3.38 ppt).<sup>10</sup> However, in August, as cases rose and hospital wards filled to overflowing, claims circulated of systematic under-recording.<sup>11</sup> At the end of that month, the mayors of Ankara and Istanbul (both of course from the opposition CHP) and

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/wide-ranging-inspection-in-turkey-to-curb-rise-of-covid-19-38688>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-announces-strict-measures-to-curb-spread-of-virus-158061>

<sup>9</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.65UP.TO.ZS>

<sup>10</sup> <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus-testing>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/09/turkey-coronavirus-covid-erdogan-akp-istanbul>

then the Doctors' Union publicly warned that the official statistics did not reflect realities.<sup>12</sup> Ankara had been identified as the city hardest hit by the pandemic, with at least twice the number of infections as Istanbul. The mayor of Ankara mentioned that his city generated 1000 new cases each day i.e. about two thirds of the figure reported for the country as a whole.<sup>13</sup> Eventually, it emerged that the figures for positive tests cover only persons who have symptoms and are hospitalized. Asymptomatic positive cases are treated as not being ill and so go unrecorded.

### **Mayors barred from Covid-19 relief**

The opposition mayors have reason to be critical of the government which intervened early in the pandemic to bar them from collecting donations to support Covid-19 on the grounds that only national government could do this, seizing funds already collected for this purpose. President Erdoğan even claimed in April that municipal fund-raising for relief work was somehow similar to PKK terrorism or the Gülenist attempted coup of 2016.<sup>14</sup>

### **Testing starts for Chinese and Turkish vaccines**

Meanwhile Turkey has joined the hunt for a vaccine. On 26 September the Minister of Industry and Technology, Mustafa Varank, announced that human trials had begun at Hacettepe Hospital, Turkey's premier medical centre, on three Chinese vaccines.<sup>15</sup> Four days later a second dose was being administered after the volunteers showed no side effects.<sup>16</sup> On 3 October it was announced that three Turkish-made Covid-19 vaccines would soon be tested and a test has also been developed.<sup>17</sup> As September ended, there were signs that the number of new cases might be easing slightly to just below 1,500 a day, still a high figure.

### **Religious Affairs Presidency flexes its muscles**

The public role of religion – and the part in national life played by the Presidency of Religious Affairs (PRA) which regulates the Sunni clergy, places of worship and educational institutions – is growing. Could deep institutional and legal Islamisation, including perhaps changes to civil law, be

12 <https://t24.com.tr/haber/imamoglu-ve-yavas-saglik-bakanligi-nin-rakamlari-gercekleri-yansitmiyor,899868>; <https://ahvalnews.com/coronavirus/opposition-mayors-accuse-govt-withholding-true-covid-19-figures>

13 <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-08-04/turkish-doctors-dispute-official-count-of-coronavirus-infections> ; <https://www.vice.com/en/article/qj49k5/turkish-government-hiding-the-true-scale-of-covid-warn-experts>

14 [https://sg.news.yahoo.com/erdogan-attacks-opposition-mayors-over-virus-aid-052622057.html?guccounter=1&guce\\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9kdWVja2dvLmNvbS8&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAAKGImDKY9wkppP-4CMbWR-fYdo\\_pGCfCxR4xNYVz84at5IUwaQxsymVEZec4iaYJ\\_9RfZS7dfA0fEJoNcR4I9\\_u5XHT1nVE9Z5qcuAVq\\_JFZio\\_6Rt-V00Jr60qeAm-uB2nlLrgFT2dCpY8ZDB6MuDTqDR6gssZzb2s1IW7kQIQ](https://sg.news.yahoo.com/erdogan-attacks-opposition-mayors-over-virus-aid-052622057.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9kdWVja2dvLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAKGImDKY9wkppP-4CMbWR-fYdo_pGCfCxR4xNYVz84at5IUwaQxsymVEZec4iaYJ_9RfZS7dfA0fEJoNcR4I9_u5XHT1nVE9Z5qcuAVq_JFZio_6Rt-V00Jr60qeAm-uB2nlLrgFT2dCpY8ZDB6MuDTqDR6gssZzb2s1IW7kQIQ)

15 <https://t24.com.tr/haber/sanayi-ve-teknoloji-bakani-varank-turkiye-nin-3-asi-projesi-insan-denemeleri-asamasinda,905707>

16 <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/hacettepede-cin-asisinin-ikinci-dozu-yapildi-ciddi-bir-yan-etki-gorulmedi,reSp8sktXEKTANcle3TWYg>

17 <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/turkey-to-start-human-trials-for-locally-produced-vaccine-within-10-days/news>; <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/turkish-university-develops-virus-test-kit-that-shows-result-in-8-minutes/news>



on the way? Meanwhile the PRA is impacting national life, professional groups, and the media. At the start of Ramazan, the month of fasting, Ali Erbaş, the president of the PRA and the nearest thing Turkish Sunni Islam has to a prelate, preached a sermon claiming, with obvious relevance to the Covid-19 pandemic, that plagues were spread by homosexuals and adulterers.<sup>18</sup> This drew Turkey's secular-minded professional bodies, lawyers and doctors to denounce his remarks and threaten legal action for hate speech. However, President Erdoğan himself quickly responded with strong support for Erbaş<sup>19</sup> and set in motion a scheme to deprive the bar associations, whose officials are elected by their members, of their exclusive right to represent the profession. A new law to allow multiple bar associations rather than a compulsory single one in each province, thus weakening the influence of the existing majority ones, was passed in mid-July.<sup>20</sup>

### **TV station's five-day shut down for insulting Ottoman Sultan**

The influence of the PRA was felt on another matter involving freedom of expression. Merdan Yanardağ, a veteran leftwing journalist and chief executive of Tele1, an opposition TV channel, described Sultan Abdülhamit II (who was deposed in 1909 and died in 1918) as 'a base man' and an 'oppressor of intellectuals and the people'. Once again the PRA entered the political arena with a complaint against Yanardağ to RTÜK, the Radio and TV watchdog, apparently based on the idea that long dead Ottoman Sultans are objects of religious veneration and so cannot be insulted. There is no law to this effect, but RTÜK enforces what it considers to be 'national morality'. Astonishingly, RTÜK closed down the entire broadcasting operations of the channel for five days and warned Tele1 that, if it repeats the offence, it will be shut down permanently. After a hitch with an independent-minded court which argued that the ban was contrary to freedom of speech, the blackout order was eventually carried out on 2-7 September. A five-day transmission ban on another station, Halk TV, the broadcasting arm of the opposition CHP, was also imposed for five days, ending on 2 October.

### **Ayasofya becomes a mosque again**

Mr Erbaş returned to public attention on 24 July, when he mounted the *minber* (Islamic Pulpit) of the sixth century basilica of St. Sophia (Ayasofya). Girt with an ancient sword signifying victory, he led the first midday prayers there in 86 years. Thousands of mostly bearded, and in many cases gowned, worshippers attended in the open spaces outside the church, performing *namaz*, giving a Middle Eastern look to what till now has been the epicentre of international tourism in Turkey.<sup>21</sup> The privileged protocol elite inside the

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diyanetten-cuma-hutbesi-escinsellik-ve-nikahsiz-yasama-hastalıkları-beraberinde-getiriyor-1734976>

<sup>19</sup> <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/04/28/turkish-president-supports-top-clerics-homophobic-comments/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/07/reform-bar-associations-turkey-questions-and-answers>

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/legislation/turkeys-new-bar-association-bill-becomes-law>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.politico.eu/article/hagia-sophia-opens-for-first-prayers-after-reconversion-to-mosque/>

building had all been tested for Covid-19 late the previous night, but at least two MPs came down with the illness soon afterwards.<sup>22</sup>

There was a storm of controversy in the rest of the world, but the Foreign Ministry declined to respond, with the President declaring that the status of Ayasofya is a matter of national sovereignty.<sup>23</sup>



However, the fate of Ayasofya's mosaics and Christian art work continues to arouse concern, as do those in Kariye Museum, another world-famous former Byzantine church in Istanbul, now designated a mosque. Conservation and preservation work will now be the responsibility of

the clergy and their contractors and not of museum curators and conservationists. And they have what some consider a dubious record with their own heritage.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Turkey's Byzantinist academics have been excluded from the entire conversion operation.

Privately, many Turks are skeptical that pious traditionalist worshippers are likely to agree to coexist with visible Christian art for very long. On the eve of the mosque opening ceremony, Fuat Oktay, President Erdoğan's vice-president promised that 'very advanced technology' would be used to screen the icons,<sup>25</sup> but so far it seems that the mosaics are only concealed by crude sheets of hardboard which are not removed for tourists.

## Courts and Laws

### Curbs on social media

On 1 September a new law came into effect in Turkey obliging social media firms with more than a million Turkish users to set up local offices and comply with government or court requests to remove content when asked or face heavy fines and other penalties. The law was passed by the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) on 29 July<sup>26</sup> and reflects official desire to bring the internet social media under much closer control. Twitter, Facebook, and Google currently hold out as the one large and easily accessible remaining area of free expression when most of the larger print and broadcasting media reflect only the viewpoint of the ruling AKP. So far, none of the top international social media corporations has agreed to abide by the special rules now legally required in Turkey.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.internethaber.com/ak-partide-koronavirus-soku-covid-19-a-yakalanan-vekil-sayisi-4-oldu-2117721h.htm>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/hagia-sophia-a-matter-of-turkeys-sovereignty-erdogan/1913812>

<sup>24</sup> <https://thearabweekly.com/deficient-restoration-problem-turkeys-heritage>

<sup>25</sup> <https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/202007181042478896-cumhurbaskani-yardimcisi-oktay-ayasofyadaki-fresklerin-koronacagi-sistem-cok-orijinal/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-53579089>

<https://www.euronews.com/2020/07/29/concerns-of-censorship-grow-in-turkey-after-parliament-approves-new-social-media-regulatio>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.ibtimes.com/turkey-begins-life-under-strict-social-media-rules-3054778;>

<http://bianet.org/english/media/229330-google-denies-reports-that-it-will-open-new-office-in-turkey-to-comply-with-social-media-law>

Other recent human rights news in Turkey includes:

- On 11 September, at least 47 lawyers were arrested in dawn raids by police on their Ankara homes on the grounds that they were giving professional support to the Gülen movement.<sup>28</sup>
- On 25 September, 82 politicians linked to the HDP (the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party) were arrested and charged with involvement in the Kobani protests of 5 and 6 October 2014 in which 37 people died.<sup>29</sup> They join a sizeable contingent of politicians already in jail including the party's two leaders who have been held for four years. Four more of the HDP's MPs are now there too, as well as the party's last elected provincial mayor, Ayhan Bilgen of Ağrı. Bilgen was stripped of his office on 2 October and replaced by the province's governor.<sup>30</sup> The HDP won 65 mayoralities in March last year. All but five have now been replaced by Ministry of the Interior officials.<sup>31</sup>

## Foreign Affairs

### No disengagement from Syria

Though Turkey's Syrian operations have been overshadowed by events in the Mediterranean and in the Caucasus, Turkey is not planning any compromises or scaling down of its operations there and may conduct further offensives, according to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, speaking on 3 October in Hatay. The President declared "We will continue to actively be on the ground...The existing terror hotbeds in Syria will either be cleaned as it has been promised to us or we will go and do so ourselves," he went on: "We will by no means agree to any step that will cause a new humanitarian tragedy in Idlib. We will not hesitate to duly respond to the harassments and provocative attacks that try our patience. We definitely prefer peace and political methods... Until the entire world comes to this point, we are determined to continue on our path..."<sup>32</sup>

### Tension and violence in Idlib continue

For now, Turkey is ignoring the areas along its frontier that it does not control and is focused on the north-western Syrian province of Idlib. Officially, the peace deal negotiated with Russia last spring in Idlib has continued to operate throughout the summer with joint Russian-Turkish patrols moving once a week along the east-west M4 highway which cuts the province in half. However, conditions in Idlib are dire; about three million Syrian opponents of President Assad are unable to go back to their homes or to proceed, as they

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/09/turkey-human-rights-lawyers-mass-detention.html>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN26G0VY>;  
<https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN2661H9>.

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.barrons.com/news/turkey-removes-pro-kurdish-mayor-over-unrest-01601632813>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-54386357>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/122246/-we-will-elevate-turkey-to-the-level-of-the-most-powerful-countries-of-the-world-in-every-field-> (Official translation). The speech also contained a veiled warning to internal dissidents which was not included in the English version on the Internet.

seem to wish, into Turkey where they would join about five million of their compatriots. Life in the province remains violent and unstable and further major military operations by Russia and its Syria clients seem inevitable sooner or later.

HTS (Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, a former offshoot of al-Qaeda) remains a major local power. HTS is hostile to the Russians and also unfriendly towards Turkey – it strongly opposed the deal between Russia and Turkey in February. Apart from demonstrations, there have been cases of HTS fighters shooting at Turkish troops or their local allies and Turkish drones have responded with attacks on HTS.

The overall impression is one of incessant violence in a multi-sided and confusing struggle. Drone attacks, assassinations, ambushes, kidnappings continue to be almost daily events, and at least ten Turkish soldiers have been killed in the province during the summer. On 18 August, a Russian major general and three other soldiers were wounded when a Russian convoy was attacked in another province near the eastern town of Deir ez-Zor.<sup>33</sup> The general was the most senior Russian to die in Syria so far – an apparently carefully planned killing.

Strikes come from multiple directions. Since Idlib is the main refuge for fugitive senior members of Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaeda (the latter mostly belonging to a group Hurras al-Din), there have been attacks by the US-led International Coalition drones against IS which remains active in north eastern Syria. Two US MQ-9 Reaper Drones were lost over Idlib,<sup>34</sup> one perhaps shot down by Turkish-backed rebels or even Turkish forces. And there are periodic attacks by Russian and Syrian airforce jets on HTS and Hurras al-Din. There seems to be no obvious way in which stable peace and order can be restored and the danger of a refugee surge into Turkey has not gone away.

### **Strikes continue at PKK targets in Iraq**

Northern Iraq, once the main theatre of Turkish cross-border operations, is currently something of a sideshow, though air strikes and some ground operations continue. Air strikes continue to target PKK hideouts in the deep mountain valleys south of the border, the Zap river valley and Haftanin. Government claims of casualties – i.e. mentions that three or four terrorists have been ‘de-activated’ – suggest that these are relatively small-scale. On 17 June special-forces were deployed in an air and land operation against Haftanin,<sup>35</sup> Turkey’s cross-border operations have aroused relatively little comment from the Iraqi authorities until recently, partly because of Turkey’s economically dominant situation in the Kurdish regional government area. But the federal Iraqi government in Baghdad has become restive. On 11 August, Turkish drones killed two senior Iraqi military officials on the Pradost border; the Iraqis were apparently negotiating some sort of agreement with the PKK

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-security-russia/russian-major-general-dies-three-servicemen-injured-after-blast-in-syria-ria-idUSKCN25E25D>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2020/08/18/two-us-drones-collide-and-crash-over-idlib-syria-defense-official-says/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/06/17/turkey-sends-special-forces-into-northern-iraq/>

after a clash with them and issued a strong protest to Ankara.<sup>36</sup> Turkey, however, is pressing ahead with cross-border operations, some apparently jointly with Iran, according to a motion presented to the TGNA on 1 October.<sup>37</sup>

### Greece and Maritime Rights

Turkey's relations with Greece have once more taken a nosedive and one hears individuals in both countries saying privately that a war may be inevitable. This would be a catastrophe for the international system. NATO and the European Union, or to be more exact Germany, are working hard to prevent such a denouement, though it seems unlikely that at a time of extreme financial difficulty, and crisis situations on several other fronts, Turkey would risk armed conflict with an EU state. The present tensions were unleashed, clearly deliberately by Ankara, on 10 August when the *Oruç Reis*, one of Turkey's five marine research vessels, arrived 20 miles inside waters that Greece regards as its territorial shelf, south of the small island of *Kastellorizo* (Meis in Turkish). Though the island is very small with a population of about 500 people, its presence, about one mile off the Anatolian coast, is used by Greece to claim vast rights over the waters and seabed of the East Mediterranean. Greece and Turkey had been due to meet on 8 August for secret talks in Berlin to resolve their differences and Turkey had called off plans to send the vessel out in late July.<sup>38</sup>

A chain of conflicting international agreements in the Eastern Mediterranean triggered the inflammatory dispatch of the *Oruç Reis* to the controversial waters near Kastellorizo. It was an instant response to the signing on 6 August – four days earlier – of a Greek-Egyptian agreement over maritime exclusive economic zones. That, in turn, was a retort to the even more controversial agreement between Turkey and the Tripoli government in Libya, last March. This was an agreement based on the idea that even large islands (such as Crete) cannot generate seabed rights.<sup>39</sup> Just how much this was merely a red rag, and to what extent the *Oruç Reis* was actually engaging in seismic research, is hard to know at a distance. The research vessel had a heavy Turkish naval escort and ships of the Greek navy drew up so close that engine vibrations probably prevented any actual seismic researching taking place. On 13 August, there may have been a very minor bump, eagerly hailed as a victory in the Greek media, though no photographs of even damaged paintwork were produced.

Atilla Yeşilada, a seasoned economic commentator whose videos and news site are probably the front runners among a growing number of good sources of English language information coming out of Turkey, says that, despite his own regular criticisms of President Erdoğan's policies, "In terms of the East Med, Turkey is right. If the world accepts the thesis put forward by Greece, Turkey, a nation of 80 million people will not be able to access the Aegean Sea or Eastern Mediterranean. Not only will we lose our navigation and civic

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2020/08/12/iraq-turkey-drone-strike/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.duvarenglish.com/politics/2020/10/01/turkeys-presidency-submits-motion-to-extend-cross-border-ops-in-iraq-syria/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://armynow.net/greek-armed-forces-on-alert-over-turkish-exploration-off-kastellorizo/>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/why-did-turkey-sign-a-maritime-deal-with-libya-32064>



flight rights, we will also be completely shut out from whatever hydrocarbon resources are lying at the bottom of the Eastern Mediterranean. This I consider extremely unfair.”<sup>40</sup>

### **Ancestral voices**

The confrontation unleashed torrents of vituperative ancestral hostility in the media, and particularly the social media of both countries. There was perhaps rather more from the Greek side of the Aegean where it seems not uncommon to hear the Turks described as ‘Mongolians’ and ‘uncivilised’ – terms which are surely racist. It is notable that the only move for peace was a petition between Greek and Turkish women signed on 15 September, though many intellectuals in the two countries are on easy personal terms and the two countries have strong commercial links. Greece is, for example, currently one of the Turkish textile industry’s main suppliers of raw cotton after the USA.

There is a little-noticed underlying reason for this potentially explosive international dispute. In essence, it is one of the permanently dangerous loose ends created for the EU and the West by the exclusion of Turkey from EU membership after decades of reaffirming its eligibility. A dispute of this sort would have been inconceivable if Turkey were still being groomed for EU membership. Instead Greece, and the Greek Cypriots, have blocked Turkey’s accession to the European Union and incidentally negotiations on topics like the rule of law, thereby assisting the country’s slide into authoritarianism.

### **Autumn war flares up in the Caucasus**

What initially looked like a ceasefire violation between Azerbaijan and Armenia and its offshoot, the unrecognised Armenian autonomous Republic of Artsakh (also known as Nagorno-Karabakh), has turned into another full-scale war. Turkey’s sympathies are strongly with Azerbaijan, whose language is easily understood by people in Turkey. It is clear that Azerbaijan, which, despite its larger size, was not a military match for the well-armed Armenians in the 1990s, has now developed much stronger forces. A ‘frozen conflict’ has existed between the two countries since 1988-94 when newly independent Armenia seized Nagorno-Karabakh. When fighting between the two states erupted at the end of September, it was initially hard to say which side started the latest round. Cross-fire attacks apparently damaged villages on each side of the border.<sup>41</sup> It appears that the Azerbaijanis were initially fighting in the five *rayons* (counties) of lower Nagorno-Karabakh on the plain, seized by Armenians in the early 1990s when they had expelled between 800,000 and one million Azerbaijanis who fled to refugee camps (visited by this writer in the 1990s).

The Baku government evidently wants to regain control of former Azeri settlements, such as the town of Fizuli, and enable some of its population to return. It is surely entitled to do so on moral grounds and in terms of international law. A second strategic aim seems to be to capture positions in the land bridge linking the Republic of Armenia with Nagorno-Karabakh.

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<sup>40</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sg2oFGEaCL8> 10 September 2020

<sup>41</sup> <https://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKKCN24H0YY>



On 27 September Armenia declared military mobilisation and martial law and claimed that its forces had destroyed three tanks and shot down two helicopters and three unmanned aerial vehicles in response to attacks by Azerbaijani artillery and drones.<sup>42</sup> On 4 October Armenia shelled Azerbaijan's second city, Gence (Ganja) and Mingachevir (centre of an Azerbaijani county).<sup>43</sup> In this presumably diversionary attack, 22 Azeri civilians died.

Turkey has denied that it is militarily involved and says that it has only given technical assistance to Azerbaijan. This conflict is spilling over into other regional and even global tensions. There are reports of Syrian Sunni youths being recruited to fight for Azerbaijan, and an Egyptian imam has issued a Fetva (*fatwa*) warning them not to agree.<sup>44</sup> In Turkey there are counter-claims of 300 PKK fighters joining Armenia's forces.<sup>45</sup> Turkish and Armenian demonstrators have protested against each other as far away as Los Angeles!<sup>46</sup>



## Covid-19 and the Turkish Economy

by Mina Toksöz  
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### 'Partial' lock-down cushioned the shock to the economy

The decision not to impose a complete lock-down in March but instead impose an 'enhanced partial lockdown' (of the elderly and young, with weekend curfews for the rest), helped the Turkish economy avoid the deeper contractions seen in many other countries. With some extra capacity in hospitals and supplies of medical equipment, and over-65s mostly looked after not in care homes but by family, Turkey seemed to be managing the pandemic relatively well (even taking into account local data from Istanbul and Ankara showing serious underreporting of death-rates).

Still, second quarter 2020 (2Q20) gdp growth had a record decline of 9.9% year-on-year (yoy). The services and industry sectors fell 25% and 16.5% respectively. That was partly offset by growth of 11% in IT and communications sectors, 4% in agriculture, and 27.8% in finance and insurance. Meanwhile, the official unemployment rate rose to 14% in May. But

<sup>42</sup> <https://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKL8N2GO011>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/azerbaijans-no-2-city-targeted-in-fighting-with-armenia/ar-BB19GJRO> Incidentally Western sources, such as Wikipedia, use the Armenian form of the name of this Azerbaijani city.

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2020/09/fatwa-by-sheikh-abu-al-yaqhdhan-al-masri-on-going>;  
<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/10/01/middleeast/azerbaijan-armenia-syrian-rebels-intl/index.html>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.ensonhaber.com/gundem/300-pkkli-ermenistana-gitti>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/454681101300312/posts/2857828554318876/?sfnsn=scwspwa> and <https://www.foxnews.com/us/armenia-protesters-shut-down-hollywood-traffic.amp>

conditions are bleaker than these numbers imply as the labour force participation ratio has been falling (47.7% in May) as people, especially women, withdraw from the job market. The Covid-19 shock to the economy followed an otherwise relatively positive start to 2020. The 1Q20 gdp growth was 4.4% on the back of a strong turn of the year momentum from 2019.<sup>47</sup>

### **The Economic Stability Shield Programme - around 10% of gdp**

The Economic Stability Shield Programme issued at the end of March included measures that initially amounted to a modest 2% of gdp. However, by September, the Minister of Treasury and Finance, Berat Albayrak, reported that the size of the economic package had expanded to TL494bn, amounting to an estimated 10% of gdp. This is almost double the Turkish stimulus package during the global financial crisis in 2008-09. The measures consisted mostly of a mix of credit guarantees and incentives, and deferrals of tax, social security, and loan repayments. There were also short-term employment and social support programmes covering some 10m people by the end of summer.

The budget position has, of course, deteriorated. The central government budget deficit was up 62.9% in January-August, compared with the same period in 2019, even though there was a budget surplus in August on the back of tax revenue increases from the Special Consumption Taxes and the payment of previously deferred corporate taxes. Government estimates put the *central* government budget deficit at 4.9% of gdp by end-2020. A World Bank report estimated the wider *general* government budget deficit to reach 5.6% of gdp in 2020, up from 3% in 2019.<sup>48</sup>

Supporting the fiscal position is the manageable public debt which, even with this year's higher borrowings, is expected to be around 40% of gdp – modest by global standards today. However, high inflation, rising interest rates, and currency weakness constrain government finances. The decline in the share of foreign holdings of government bonds to less than 5% of the total also limits budget funding options. Hence, to boost budget revenues, temporary increases in taxes on foreign currency transactions and import tariffs were introduced in the spring. The Unemployment Insurance Fund has been tapped and there is also the possibility of the sale of state shares in assets held by the Turkish Sovereign Wealth Fund (TWF). In addition, like elsewhere in the world, on 31<sup>st</sup> of March, the Central Bank (CBT) started its version of QE (quantitative easing, or printing money) with the CBT raising its Treasury funding limit from 5% of its balance sheet to 10%.

### **Sovereign Wealth Fund and public sector banks playing a key role**

As during the recovery from the 2018 crisis, public banks are playing a key role supporting the economy along with the TWF. The latter has been given special powers to acquire stakes in troubled entities to bail them out. Even before the Covid crisis, state banks had been pumping out credit and, with

<sup>47</sup> See Mina Toksöz. 'Idlib and Corona-virus Crises threaten Economic Recovery', *TASR* No 35, Spring 2020

<sup>48</sup> World Bank, 'Adjusting the Sails', *Turkey Economic Monitor*, August 2020.

rising non-performing loans on their books, needed recapitalisation. A flurry of capital raising took place in April-May by the top three banks, Ziraat, Vakif, and Halk of \$2.97bn. As a result, the TWF, that already owns Ziraat, has also become a majority shareholder in Vakifbank and now controls 15% of Halkbank. At the same time Vakifbank and Eximbank raised \$950m and \$678mn syndicated loans in international markets.

Private sector banks have also been under pressure to support the government credit stimulus. Banks remain profitable with acceptable banking sector metrics. However, the non-performing loans were up 18.2% yoy in September adding to the burden of those left over from the 2018 crisis. The uncertainty about the outlook for Covid-19 and the volatility of the currency keep the banking sector foreign currency debt repayments risk high. Yet, the roll-over ratio (the ability of banks to raise new international loans to roll-over their existing ones) stood at around 70-80% with some banks such as Akbank raising a heavily oversubscribed \$605mn in international markets in the midst of the Covid-crisis in April.

### **Third quarter recovery showed resilience of the economy**

As lock-down restrictions were eased from early June, there was a strong rebound in the domestic economy. Electricity consumption -- an early indicator -- was up 3.5% on a year ago by August. Exports also picked up from the collapse in the second quarter, but compared with the previous year, remained weak, and there was a sharp decline in tourism. Recovery in key sectors -- such as automotive and white-goods -- was boosted by consumer credit incentives. The automotive sector capacity utilisation had risen to 90% by August with strong 44.3% rise in sales in the domestic market, but automotive exports were still down 21.5% on the previous year. A similar performance was seen in the white-goods sector, with a 20.9% yoy growth in the domestic market in contrast to a 9.3% decline in exports. Credit support also brought a sharp jump in housing sales over the summer. But, with a large back-log of unsold units, the construction sector struggles to grow; it has contracted since mid-2018 and was down 2.7% yoy in 2Q20.

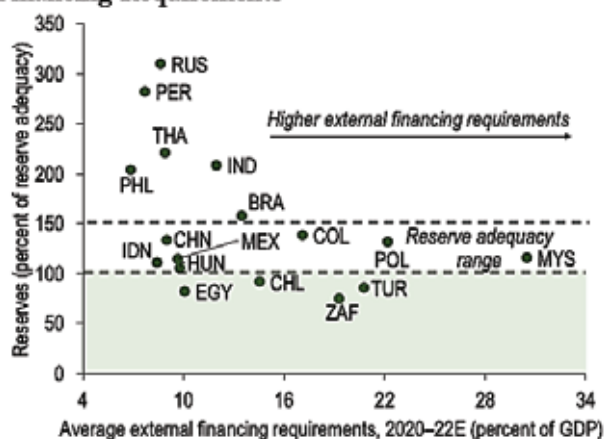
### **But Covid-19 heightened existing economic vulnerabilities**

The summer recovery from the first wave of the Covid-shock showed the resilience of the Turkish economy. However, the accompanying stimulus -- continuing the same policy-mix as the 2019 recovery (credit stimulus and low/negative real interest rates) -- also exacerbated existing vulnerabilities. How the trends below play-out will determine how the Turkish economy comes through the next few years.

- As in many middle-income emerging markets, Turkey's Covid-crisis measures focused mostly on credit support. The fastest growing segments were consumer credit and housing finance that grew 63.6% and 48.5% respectively in September over a year ago. Even though Turkey's consumer debt levels are not high, its rapid pace of increase -- driving the recovery from the 2018 currency crisis -- was already seen as a brewing problem.

- Weak export growth and a historic collapse in tourism income is making an already difficult current account deficit into a bigger problem. There was a \$21.6bn deficit on the current account balance for Jan-July 2020 which is likely to widen further in the rest of the year. Along with high debt repayments coming due in the fourth quarter, this will increase pressures on foreign payments and the currency.
- There is also the long-running problem of the lack of credibility of the government's monetary policy. The CBT insistence on holding its policy rate at 8.25%, while inflation was stubbornly stuck at 11-12%, was one of the main drivers of the \$12.5bn net portfolio outflows in January-July this year. It remains to be seen if the belated 200 basis points increase in the "policy rate" in September to 10.25% and other measures will change this perception.

**Figure 15. Reserve Adequacy and External Financing Requirements**



Sources: IMF, Assessing Reserves Adequacy database; and IMF, World Economic Outlook database.

- Related to this is the currency instability with the Lira hitting new lows as the year progressed. The CBT's efforts to support the Lira by selling foreign currency has eroded official FX reserves. Relative to its external financing requirement, Turkey's official gross foreign currency reserves remain below the adequacy range as measured by the IMF (see chart above showing reserve adequacy for the average annual external financing requirement in 2020-2022, IMF estimates).<sup>49</sup>
- This situation is undermining domestic confidence in the Lira. The share of FX deposits in the banking system remained high at just over half of total deposits.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, daily volume of trades in the informal market -- the Tahtakale Ayakli Borsa (mobile exchange) next to the historic Covered Bazaar, rose from \$5-10mn to \$40mn -- figures not seen since the 1994 financial crisis.<sup>51</sup> Gold imports reached all-time highs in August.

<sup>49</sup> IMF, *Global Financial Stability Report*, update, June 2020. Meanwhile "net" foreign currency reserves turned negative from April.

<sup>50</sup> Mahvi Eğilmez, *Kendime Yazılar*, 'Dolarizasyon yeniden zirveye giderken', 26 September, 2020.

<sup>51</sup> Y. Karadeniz. Kapalıçarşı' ayaklandı, *Dünya*, 31 August 2020. There was also an associated increase in sales of home-use steel safes of 40-60% compared with the situation pre-Covid.

### **Initial macro-policy response was not enough**

Initial policy response to these looming risks consisted of stop-gap regulatory measures to try to contain foreign exchange activity and, since May, temporary tariff increases to slow imports. The tariff increases are mostly on imports from China, aiming to protect domestic white goods and electronics sectors. Taxes on imported luxury cars were also raised.

In addition, from the end of July, there was a tightening of liquidity. The CBT began to withdraw \$9.2bn of the initial \$14.3bn liquidity injection in March as part of the early Covid-19 measures. Banking sector reserve requirements were also raised to slow credit growth. These measures had pushed up market interest rates by early September. As mortgage rates rose to 13.8% – up from a low of 9% in June - and the central bank average funding rate rose to 10.61%, credit growth had slowly begun to level off.

However, neither the liquidity tightening, nor the import tariff increases seemed to be enough. By end-September, the Lira was down 30% against the US dollar – the second worst performing Emerging Market currency after the Rouble. Despite the weak currency, contracting demand in Turkey's export markets kept exports down 12.9% over Jan-Sept compared with the same period last year. Worse still, imports seemed to be holding up, falling only marginally by 1.2% – thus widening the trade deficit. The combination of weak US-dollar and strong Euro was helping some exporting sectors such as textiles & clothing, construction materials, and medical equipment. But others, such as automotives with high import content, were not doing well. The main impact of the Lira depreciation according to Uludağ Automotive Sector Exporters Association was higher import costs.<sup>52</sup>

### **A major monetary policy shift in late September**

Thus, in late September, with a collapsing currency and heavily depleted foreign exchange reserves, the CBT finally took 'orthodox' policy measures to signal a stronger anti-inflation stance and try to attract savers back into Lira deposits. The symbolic "policy rate" (dubbed the "politicians' rate" by pundits) was raised by 200 basis points to 10.25% – the first move up in two years. This was accompanied by the reduction of the "active ratio" that had required banks to lend more (and buy more government bonds) on their existing asset base. The taxes on currency transactions and on interest income on Lira deposits were cut back to previous levels. There was also an easing of swap limits – that helps foreign investors to hedge their currency risks – to try to lure back foreign portfolio capital.

### **...but fiscal stimulus to continue and risks remain high**

Initial market response to these measures was positive. But as the renewed weakness of the Lira in early October would indicate, a difficult end-year awaits. This was somewhat recognised in the presentation, by Mr Albayrak, of the 3-year New Economic Programme (YEP) on 29 September. In addition to a base case scenario of a 0.3% gdp growth, there was a negative scenario

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<sup>52</sup> Y. Karadeniz. 'Aşırı değersiz TL rekabetçi olmadı, ihracatçı 'dengeli kur' istiyor', *Dünya*, 20 September 2020.



envisaging a 1.5% contraction of gdp. End-year inflation was revised up (again) to just over 10% (most economists expect 12-13%). But it may not fall much in 2021, given his dismissal of concerns about the currency – seemingly oblivious to the close correlation between inflation and currency depreciation. This position suggests the central bank will not intervene to the same extent as before to support the Lira; it is also a typical AKP policy stance, speaking to its constituency in the traditional sectors focused mainly on the domestic market.

The number of daily cases and deaths are once again rising in Turkey and globally, heading for a second wave in the autumn. Although, as before, extensive lock-down is not expected, the furlough scheme has been extended until mid-November; more relief measures are likely in the October budget to try to alleviate the ongoing hardship. Hence, fiscal stimulus will continue – a policy option still open to the government given its moderate sovereign debt levels – but only as long as the foreign payments can be managed. This remains the main economic risk factor as Turkey has no major emergency foreign currency credit lines besides the \$16bn currency swap with Qatar (mostly) and China. Nor was Turkey included in the swap lines extended by the US Federal Reserve in May to major emerging markets.

Exacerbating these risks is Turkey's complex geostrategic position and the ongoing regional crises. Even if Covid-19 is managed better in the second wave, Turkish risks may not decline much. Both the EU parliament and US Congress are readying sanctions that could damage the Turkish economy. It seems that every month adds another geo-strategic tiff, sending the Turkish lira to a new low, and forcing another reactive economic policy shift. This may be the case with the government's earlier rejection of emergency financing from the IMF. But how long can this combination of reactive policy adjustments to the slow-burning crisis of high unemployment and inflation, erratic growth, and falling currency go on? Barring a major regional flare-up, it could go on as long international interest rates remain rock bottom, thus attracting international funds into higher yielding Turkish foreign currency bonds.<sup>53</sup>



Journal of Global Faultlines

## Keep the Wheels Turning –

Turkey and the COVID-19 Pandemic

by Bülent Gökay

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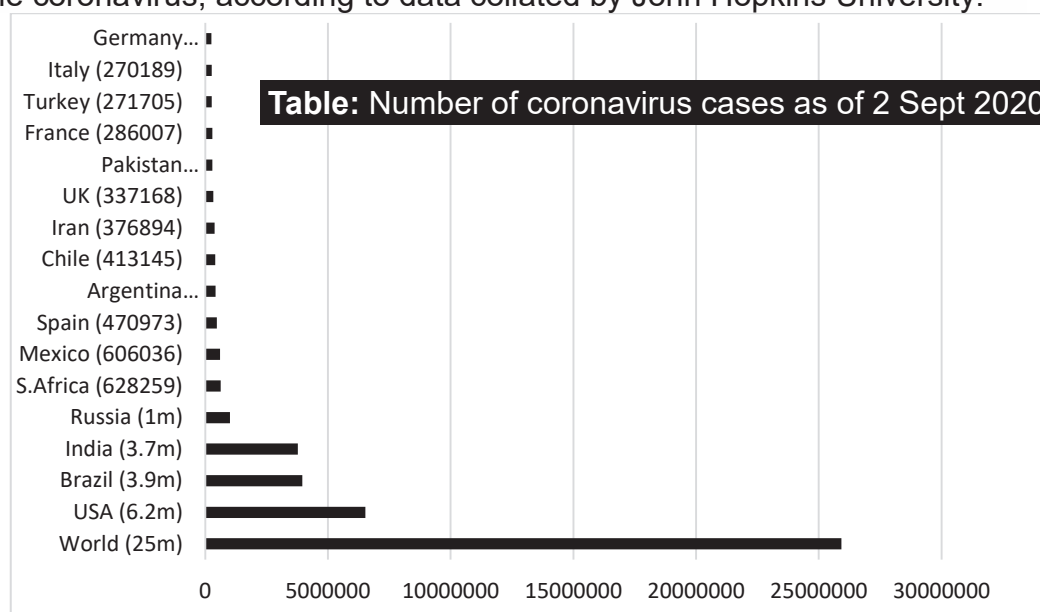
Turkey confirmed its first case of the new coronavirus on 11 March but by late April its recorded infection rate had surpassed that of many other countries, partly due to the increased capacity for testing. Turkey has become one of

<sup>53</sup> On October 6, the Turkish government issued a 5-year Eurobond with a yield of 6.4%; the demand from international investors was three-times the issue amount of \$2.5bn.



the world's top 10 countries in the number of COVID-19 tests carried out. Despite the high number of positive cases, the number of deaths remained much lower in Turkey<sup>54</sup>. In Turkey, the very low COVID-related death rate became a source of controversy both in the highly polarised domestic environment and abroad. Authorities were accused of being non-transparent when Istanbul was reported to have 36% more COVID-related deaths. Later, however, it was seen that many other countries were no different than Turkey in this respect. Indeed, disturbingly high death rates were reported in 17 countries, reaching 65% higher in the UK, for example. Even when we assume that the deaths in Istanbul were about 30% higher than the official records, and all the other countries were reporting accurate data, Turkey's fatality rate still remained among the lowest compared to many European countries and the US.

China sent 50,000 rapid detection kits to Turkey on 23 March and another 300,000 a few days later. Furthermore, Chinese authorities shared vital information with Turkish health professionals through video conferences on treating patients suffering from COVID-19. On 2 September Turkey had more than 270,000 confirmed cases and 6,511 deaths from complications related to the coronavirus, according to data collated by John Hopkins University.<sup>55</sup>



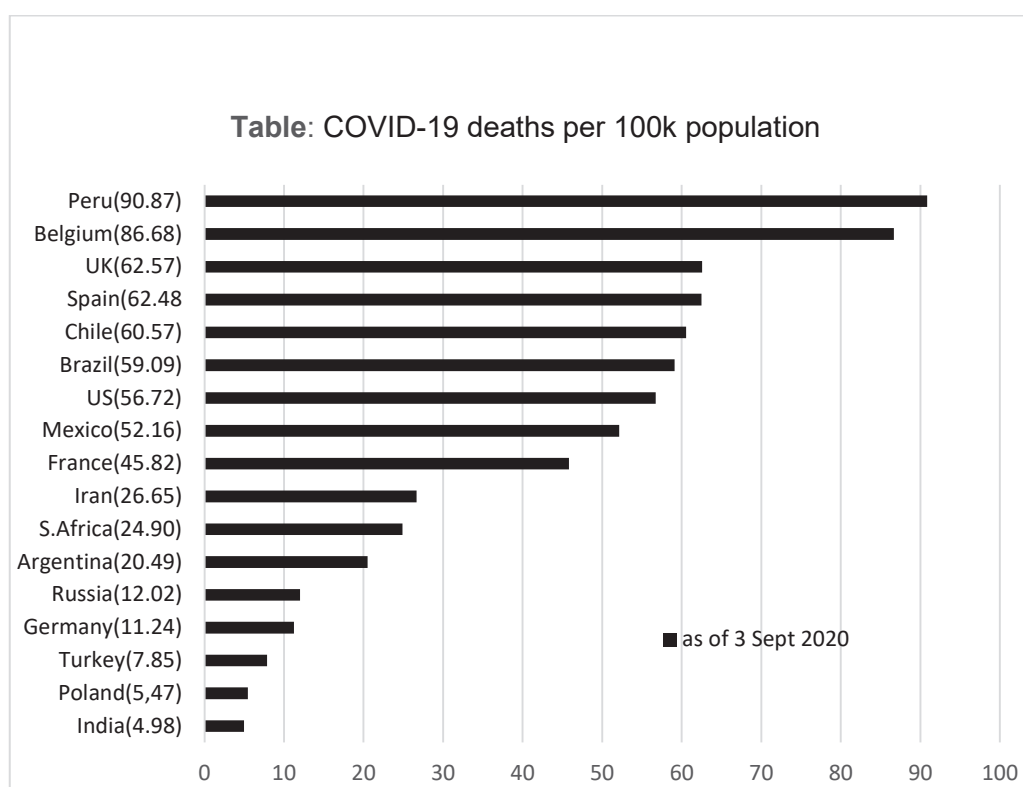
(adopted from Statista)<sup>56</sup>

As can be seen in the table below, Turkey's fight against coronavirus was much more successful than almost all key countries in the West, including Germany.

<sup>54</sup> Ahval, 16 April 2020, <https://ahvalnews.com/turkey-coronavirus/turkey-has-worlds-second-highest-number-new-covid-19-infections-live-blog>

<sup>55</sup> John Hopkins (2020), *Mortality in the most affected countries*, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/mortality>

<sup>56</sup> Statista (2020), *Number of coronavirus (COVID-19) cases worldwide*, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1043366/novel-coronavirus-2019ncov-cases-worldwide-by-country/>



(adapted from John Hopkins)<sup>57</sup>

The most important factor for Turkey's success in the fight against coronavirus has been its demographic structure: Turkey has a median age of just over 30, younger than anywhere else in Europe. Only 8% of Turkey's population is aged 65 and above, the most vulnerable section in the face of coronavirus, while the average in the Euro area is 21%<sup>58</sup>. Another factor in this success was a significant increase in health expenditures, in both the public and private sectors, between 2002 and 2008. Even though in 2020 Turkey has 2.81 beds per 1000 people, ranking far behind Germany (8) or France (5.98), in a sudden crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic it was not the regular hospital beds that mattered but the number of intensive care unit (ICU) beds, and Turkey entered this crisis with the highest distribution of ICU beds in Europe, 46.5 per 100,000 people. This was even higher than Germany's record, 38.7<sup>59</sup>. Most importantly, health professionals in Turkey, who were used to routinely working under stress for long hours, dealing with a variety of illnesses and large numbers of patients, did not seem to have been overwhelmed by the large number of COVID-19 patients in this epidemic. Turkey's campaign against the pandemic relied on the work of very experienced, devoted and highly educated medical workforce, which was the

<sup>57</sup> John Hopkins (2020), *Mortality in the most affected countries*, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/mortality>

<sup>58</sup> World Bank (2019), *Population Ages 15-64 (% of total population)*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.1564.TO.ZS>

<sup>59</sup> Sağlık Bakanlığı (2019), *Sağlık İstatistikleri Yıllığı 2018 Haber Bülteni*, <https://dosyamerkez.saglik.gov.tr/Eklenti/33116,haber-bulteni---2018-30092019pdf.pdf>

key factor in understanding Turkey's successful fight and low fatality rates in this pandemic.

Initially, the Turkish government called for people to stay at home and self-isolate. Mass disinfection was carried out in all public spaces in cities. To encourage residents to stay at home, all parks, picnic areas and shorelines were closed to pedestrians. Some airports were closed and all international flights to and from Turkey were banned on 27 March<sup>60</sup>. All schools, universities, cafes, restaurants, and mass praying in mosques and other praying spaces were suspended, and all sporting activities postponed indefinitely.

Many small businesses in the service sector were closed, and many companies in banking, insurance and R&D switched to working from home. But in many industrial sectors, such as metal, textile, mining and construction, workers were still forced to go to work or face losing their jobs. In Istanbul, where more than a quarter of Turkey's GDP is produced, the public transport system still carried over a million daily<sup>61</sup>. President Erdoğan openly opposed a total lockdown, arguing a stay-at-home order would halt all economic activity. On 30 March, he said continuing production and exports was the country's top priority and that Turkey must keep its "wheels turning"<sup>62</sup>. Instead, the government adopted an age-related partial curfew. Non-essential movement of people over 65 and under 20 years of age was banned. This strict and long age-related lockdown for people aged above 65 years both reduced infection/death rates and enabled less strict containment measures for the lower-risk groups, which in return seemed to help reduce a contraction in production that could have been much worse with a uniform lockdown policy<sup>63</sup>. By responding fairly quickly with testing, tracing, isolation and movement restrictions, Turkey "clearly averted a much bigger disaster", according to Dr Jeremy Rossman, Lecturer in Virology at the University of Kent<sup>64</sup>.

The Turkish government announced a 100 billion lira (£12 billion) stimulus package on March 18. It included tax postponement and subsidies directed at domestic consumption, such as reducing VAT on certain items and suspension of national insurance payments in many sectors for six months<sup>65</sup>. But this was an insignificant sum for an economy as big as Turkey's.

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<sup>60</sup> One Mile at A Time, 27 March 2020, <https://onemileatatime.com/turkey-bans-international-flights/>

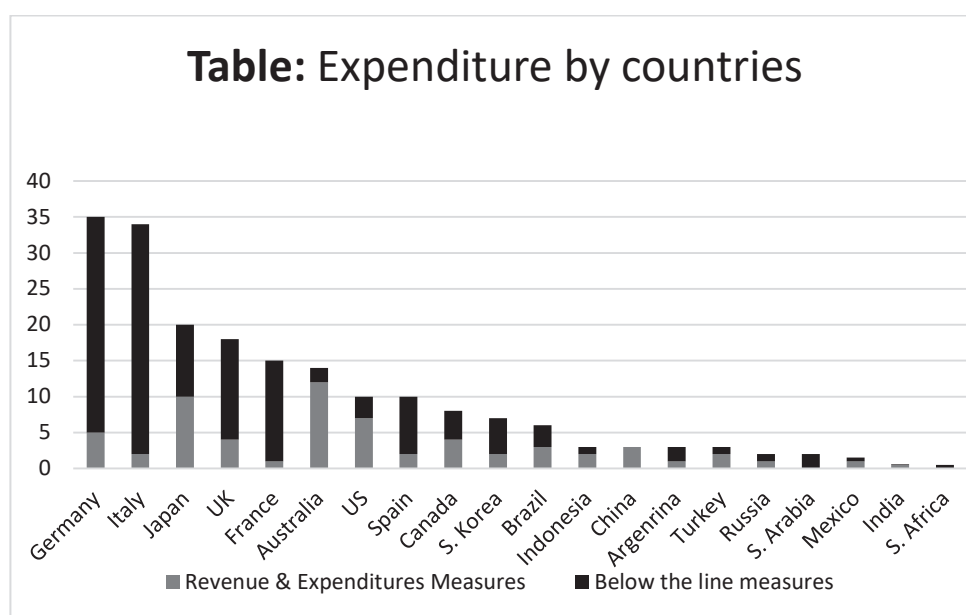
<sup>61</sup> *Ahval*, 20 March 2020, <https://ahvalnews.com/turkey-coronavirus/health-minister-359-known-cases-coronavirus-turkey-live-blog>

<sup>62</sup> Reuters, 30 March 2020, *Turkey must 'keep wheels turning' despite coronavirus, Erdogan says*, 30 March 2020, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-turkey-erdogan/turkey-must-keep-wheels-turning-despite-coronavirus-erdogan-says-idUSI7N2BG00L>

<sup>63</sup> Koru, Ayca Tekin, *COVID-19 and industrial production in Turkey*, Vox EU, 14 May 2020, <https://voxeu.org/article/covid-19-and-industrial-production-turkey>

<sup>64</sup> Guerin, Orle, *Coronavirus: How Turkey took control of Covid-19 emergency*, BBC News, 29 May 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-52831017>

<sup>65</sup> Daily Sabah, 18 March 2020, <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/economy/turkey-rolls-out-100b-stimulus-package-to-protect-economy-businesses-from-coronavirus-fallout>



(adapted from Roberts)<sup>66</sup>

As can be seen in the table above<sup>67</sup>, Turkey was the sixth from the bottom in terms of government spending. The government needed to spend more but was spending less than 1% of GDP on the crisis. Most of the support would go to medium and large companies that were forced to close, and only a very tiny amount to individual workers. In order to benefit from the scheme, a person must have worked at least 600 days in the past three years (450 days for those in Ankara).<sup>68</sup> Those with most need got the lowest level of help or no help from the state. The tourism sector, which accounts for about 12% of the economy, was decimated. Some 2.5 million workers were not able to work for at least three months, as they had been expecting to in the peak tourist months between April and September.<sup>69</sup>

Even before the virus hit Turkey the economy was already weak, still trying to recover from the impacts of the 2016 coup attempt and 2018 currency crisis, both of which caused severe stress to Turkey's economic and financial systems. There has been a considerable flight of capital away from the emerging economies, such as Turkey, who depend, in the current global system, on the inflow of capital from the big global investors and financial institutions. "A shortage of US dollars worldwide led the Federal Reserve and the IMF to lend dollars to certain governments, but denied this largesse to others. The Fed's 'swap lines' covered fourteen central banks, but excluded

<sup>66</sup> Roberts, Michael, *Coronavirus, the economic crisis and Indian capitalism*, Michael Roberts blog, 30 April 2020, <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2020/05/25/coronavirus-the-economic-crisis-and-indian-capitalism/>

<sup>67</sup> Below the line measures, such as loans, equity injections, etc.

<sup>68</sup> Sonmez, Mustafa, *Turks demand 'helicopter money' as coronavirus crisis worsens*, Al-monitor, 30 March 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/03/turkey-coronavirus-economic-crisis-worsens-pressure-for-cash.html>

<sup>69</sup> Küçükgöçmen, Ali and Erkoyun, Ezgi, *Turkish tourism workers exposed to coronavirus 'tsunami'*, Reuters, 25 March 2020, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-turkey-jobs/turkish-tourism-workers-exposed-to-coronavirus-tsunami-idUKKBN21C29E>

Turkey, South Africa, Nigeria and Indonesia”.<sup>70</sup> The investors took all their money back to where they brought it from, and as a result, there were approximately 100 bn dollar-worth portfolio outflows away from emerging markets, more than three times larger than for the same period of the global financial crisis of 2008. All this rush away from the emerging economies crushed the local currencies, while simultaneously inflating the dollar’s value.<sup>71</sup>

In March Turkey’s Central Bank reduced its benchmark interest rate by 1%, and several of the country’s largest private banks announced measures to support the economy, such as suspending loan repayments.<sup>72</sup> As a result, the Turkish lira initially held up reasonably well, compared with other emerging market economies, but it fell to an 18-month low on 1 April as the coronavirus infection rates accelerated.<sup>73</sup> Official interest rates fell below 10%, providing some protection to those holding Turkish lira versus some foreign currencies.<sup>74</sup>

Turkey’s financial options to limit the impact of the crisis were limited. Credit rating agency Moody’s revised its prediction for the country’s GDP from 3% growth in 2020 to a 1.4% contraction.<sup>75</sup> Still, the economy got a reprieve from the low oil price. Turkey imports almost all its energy needs, and with the fall in the price of oil and gas, this meant Turkey could save about \$12 billion (£9.6 billion) in energy imports.<sup>76</sup>

Further help came from Turkey’s close Gulf ally, Qatar. A swap agreement had been first struck with Qatar during Turkey’s 2018 currency crisis; then in late May 2020 the existing local currency swap deal was tripled to \$15bn. Under the updated agreement, according to which Ankara would exchange Turkish lira for Qatari riyal, the maximum limit for currency swaps between the two nations’ central banks was tripled from the equivalent of \$5bn to \$15bn. This helped for Turkey’s depleted foreign currency reserves by as much as \$10bn.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Pettifor, Ann, “Inequality and morbid symptoms of a financialised system”, *real-world economics review*, no. 92, 2020, p.248,

<http://www.paecon.net/PAERReview/issue92/whole92.pdf#page=246>

<sup>71</sup> Georgieva, Kristalina, “Confronting the Crisis: Priorities for the Global Economy”, *IMF*, 9 April 2020, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/04/07/sp040920-SMs2020-Curtain-Raiser>

<sup>72</sup> Financial Times, “Turkey cuts rates in emergency coronavirus move”, 17 March 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/b83d00fa-6856-11ea-800d-da70cff6e4d3>

<sup>73</sup> Ahval, 1 April 2020, <https://ahvalnews.com/turkish-lira/turkish-lira-hits-18-month-low-coronavirus-death-rates-accelerate>

<sup>74</sup> CNN Turk, “Son dakika... Merkez Bankası'ndaki korona toplantısı sonrası faiz indirimi”, 17 March 2020, <https://www.cnnturk.com/video/ekonomi/son-dakika-merkez-bankasindaki-korona-toplantisi-sonrasi-faiz-indirimi>

<sup>75</sup> Ahval, 27 March 2020, <https://ahvalnews.com/turkey-coronavirus/turkey-records-1196-new-covid-19-cases-16-deaths-live-blog>

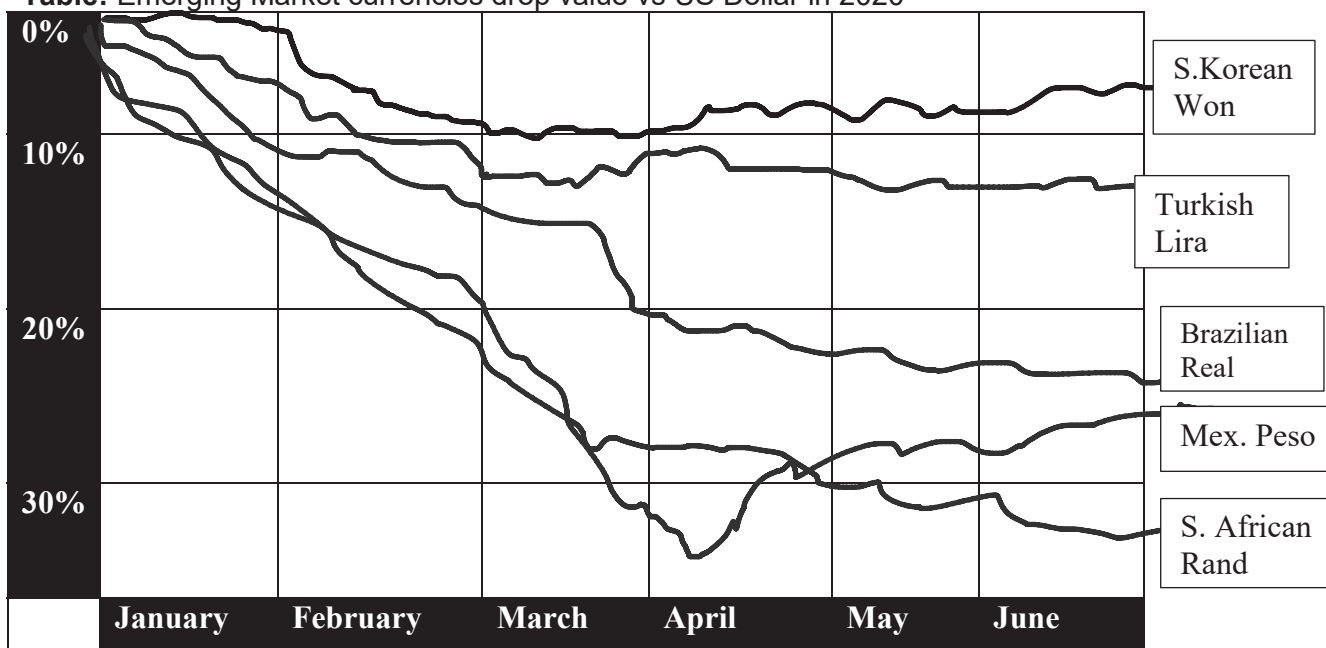
<sup>76</sup> Kutlu, Ovunc and Mutlu, Belgin Yakisan, “Low oil prices to curb Turkey’s \$12B energy imports”, AA (Anadolu Agency), 11 March 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/low-oil-prices-to-curb-turkeys-12b-energy-imports/1762485>

<sup>77</sup> Soylu, Ragip, “Qatar pours \$10bn into ailing Turkish economy in currency swap deal”, *Middle East Eye*, 20 May 2020, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/qatar-turkey-swap-deal-tripled-exemption-clearstream-banking-and-euroclear-bank>

As for the immediate future, the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered an enormous uncertainty shock in terms of economic development, larger than the one associated with the 2008 global financial crisis and more similar in magnitude to the rise in uncertainty during the Great Depression of 1929-1930. According to IMF estimates in April, the severe global recession will result in a loss in 2020 of around 7.5 percentage points of GDP in the eurozone and 6.5 percentage points in the UK, both of which are Turkey's main exports markets and main sources of tourists. It was predicted that Turkey's own GDP would contract by 5 percentage points.<sup>78</sup>

Even though Turkey (0.6 %), together with India (0.7 %), was one of the two G20 economies recording positive growth in the first quarter of 2020, the shock of the global lockdown was very serious<sup>79</sup>. One of the impacts of COVID-19 was felt in terms of the value of currencies in emerging markets. Emerging market (EM) foreign exchange rates were hit hard by the global market sell-off on the back of the pandemic. The South African rand closed down 32% against the dollar over the past three months, while the Mexican peso was down 24%, the Brazilian real was down 23% and the Turkish Lira was 14% lower.

**Table:** Emerging Market currencies drop value vs US Dollar in 2020



(adapted from CNBC and Trading Economics)<sup>80</sup>

According to Turkish Statistical Association (TurkStat) data, the rate of unemployment in March was 13.2% and the number of unemployed was nearly 4 million. The Research Centre of the Confederation of Progressive

<sup>78</sup> IMF, *World Economic Outlook*, April 2020,

<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/04/14/weo-april-2020>

<sup>79</sup> OECD, "G20 GDP Growth - First quarter of 2020, OECD", 11 June 2020,

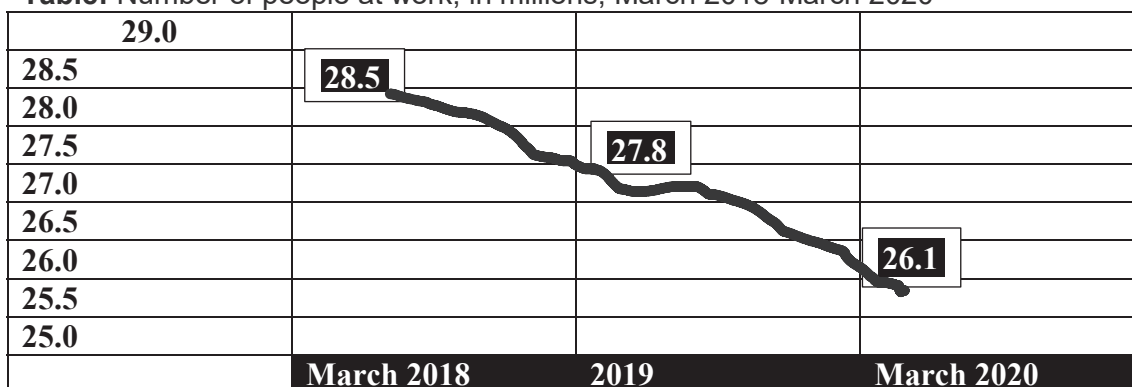
<https://www.oecd.org/newsroom/g20-gdp-growth-first-quarter-2020-oecd.htm>

<sup>80</sup> CNBC, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/04/14/emerging-market-currencies-have-been-hammered-by-covid-19.html> and Trading Economics, "Turkey Hospital Beds", <https://tradingeconomics.com/turkey/hospital-beds>



Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK-AR), however, claimed that the TurkStat figures were "too low to reflect the earthquake created by Covid-19". DİSK-AR noted that it used the International Labour Organization's (ILO) "full-time equivalent loss of jobs" method to calculate the loss of jobs and unemployment.<sup>81</sup>

**Table:** Number of people at work, in millions, March 2018-March 2020



(adapted from TurkStat)<sup>82</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic seemed to have been brought under control in the second quarter of 2020, and part of the economy was back to normal. However, as a result of the continuing partial lockdown measures many consumers remained at home, many businesses were closed, and unemployment increased further. During the rest of 2020, Turkey, alongside South Africa and Argentina, could slide toward insolvency and debt default.<sup>83</sup> After that, everything will depend on how this crisis progresses and how long it will take to end.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Bianet, *Report: Covid-19 caused greatest loss of employment in Turkey's history*, 13 July 2020, <http://bianet.org/english/labor/227322-report-covid-19-caused-greatest-loss-of-employment-in-turkey-s-history>

<sup>82</sup> TurkStat (Turkish Statistical Institute), *Labour Force Statistics*, March 2020, <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=33787>

<sup>83</sup> Reuters, *South Africa default insurance costs jump after rating cut*, 30 March 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/safrica-rating-cds/south-africa-default-insurance-costs-jump-after-rating-cut-idUSL8N2BN3Y5>

<sup>84</sup> It seems South Africa is the worst among this group with struggling municipalities defaulting on payments to the basket-case electricity monopoly ESKOM (\$1.8bn in unpaid bills), and with ESKOM scrambling to protect itself by seizing bank accounts and cutting power, while cities are unable to pay worker salaries.

# Quo Vadis Cyprus?

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## Introduction

Mathematicians posited that a ‘butterfly effect’<sup>85</sup> may be present in complex interactions. The protracted negotiations in Cyprus are a potential example of this phenomenon. Cyprus unification is desirable in and of itself. Still, the unforeseen consequences of a failure to unify the Island may go far beyond its borders, enhancing the potential for conflict in the Middle East in the next decade and even affecting the long-term stability of world politics beyond. Since December 1963, ever since the start of civil strife between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, endless rounds of peace talks proved unsuccessful in the reunification of Cyprus. At present, we are witnessing another low in reunification efforts and, as could easily be seen, potential intensification of tensions that could easily result in a military confrontation that would involve Greece, Turkey and other regional powers. Indeed, the new development that further destabilized Cyprus is the discovery of natural gas deposits in the Eastern Mediterranean. Conflicting claims of Extended Economic Zones (EEZ) by the Republic Of Cyprus (RoC), Greece, Turkey, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) fuel tensions between the two Communities. In light of this new development, coupled with existing disagreements between the two communities, this paper analyzes the social values and political preferences of the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. It assesses the likelihood of settling the Cyprus problem once and for all.

## A Brief Background to the Status Quo

There have been many works in recent years that presented the extensive background to the Cyprus problem.<sup>86</sup> It will suffice for this paper's purposes to note that the problem has been going on since the civil war started in 1963 and culminated in the territorial division of the Island in 1974 when the Turkish

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<sup>85</sup> The butterfly proposal originally comes from Edward Lorenz's findings that even the tiny disturbance by a single butterfly might be enough to alter the patterns of weather all over the world. This phenomenon exemplifies the notion of sensitive dependence on initial conditions in a dynamic system. In other words, small changes of the original condition may produce unpredictably large variations in the long term outcome.

<sup>86</sup> See for example, Harry Anastasiou, *The Broken Olive Branch*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007; Clement H. Dodd, *The History and Politics of the Cyprus Conflict*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; Peter Loizos *Heart Grown Bitter*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1979; and Birol Yeşilada and Ahmet Sözen. *Negotiating a Resolution to the Cyprus Problem: Is Potential EU Membership a Blessing or a Curse?*, *International Negotiation Journal* Vol. 7, no. 2, (2002), pp. 261-285.

troops landed on Cyprus following an Athens supported coup against the RoC president Makarios. Since then, the two sides have been meeting under UN and US auspices to resolve their differences and settle the problem. By the time Eastern enlargement of the European Union neared, the importance of a unified Cyprus did not escape astute practitioners. It was clear that membership of a politically divided Cyprus in the European Union and Turkey's membership aspirations would seriously complicate future peace negotiations on the Island. This harsh but realistic assessment implied that membership in the EU would most likely create the optimal conditions for peace and stability between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots and could provide the needed impetus to restart negotiations on Turkey's entry into the EU. Therefore, the international community pulled together, except China and Russia, to reunite Cyprus before May 2004. One can argue that never before in the history of the Cyprus problem was there so much effort and energy invested by political leaders, civil society, and the international diplomatic community to forge a settlement before the RoC joined the EU. However, all attempts have failed to solve the Cyprus problem as the Greek Cypriots overwhelmingly rejected while the Turkish Cypriots accepted the Annan Plan of 2004.<sup>87</sup> The fact that there was no binding threat for rejecting the Plan enabled the Greek Cypriots to say "oxi" (No!). The EU position on the link between the Annan Plan for reunification and eastern enlargement of the Union made this quite clear.

Before the referendum, the European Council reaffirmed its decisions taken at the 2002 Copenhagen summit, where it confirmed that the RoC would be admitted as a new member state to the European Union on 1 May 2004, and underlined its strong preference for accession by a united Cyprus. The EU outlined its readiness to accommodate the terms of a political settlement in the accession of a united Island in line with the principles on which the European Union is founded. It also outlined a specific protocol on Cyprus, Protocol 10 attached to the Accession Treaty, which described that in the absence of a settlement, the application of the *acquis* shall be suspended to the northern part of the Island until the Council decides unanimously otherwise, on the basis of a proposal by the Commission. In other words: the door would remain open for the integration of the Turkish Cypriots in the EU at some future date.<sup>88</sup>

The outcome was a slap in the face for the Turkish Cypriots who voted for the UN-sponsored peace plan but found themselves shut out of the EU. In stark contrast, the party that rejected the peace treaty now enjoys all the benefits of membership in the Union and sees a new opportunity to use its newly acquired position to press Turkey for more concessions on the Cyprus problem. Yet, realities on the ground are far from what the Greek Cypriots had hoped for.

Since 2004, bilateral disputes between the RoC and Turkey have affected Turkey's relations with the EU and complicated EU-NATO partnership.

<sup>87</sup> <http://www.zypern.cc/extras/annan-plan-for-cyprus-2004.pdf>.

<sup>88</sup> Commission of the European Communities, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12003T/PRO/10>

Turkey continues to block the RoC's participation in EU operations within the context of the CFSP(Common Foreign & Security Policy)-NATO partnership and will continue to do so as long as the Cyprus problem is not solved.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, Turkey refuses to extend the Customs Union Agreement to the RoC even though it is supposed to recognize all new EU members as equal. On the other hand, the EU maintains that Turkey's position is not in line with candidacy obligations and refuses to open certain accession chapters in retaliation. Complications surrounding the Cyprus problem reached new heights during the summer of 2011 when the RoC announced its plans to proceed with natural gas exploration in the eastern Mediterranean south of the Island. The discovery of natural gas reserves in the area ironically could have served as a catalyst for the reunification of Cyprus. Instead, as discussed below, this further complicated the already tenuous situation.

Since 2011, reunification talks resumed on an on-now off-now basis between the President of the RoC, Anastasiades, and the Presidents of the TRNC, Eroğlu and Akıncı. None of these efforts proved productive. The most essential 'second chance' came in June 2017 at the Swiss Alpine resort at Crans-Montana. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres joined the two leaders, hoping for a final deal. Still, the decision of Anastasiades to return to Cyprus for consultations dashed all hopes for a deal. Since that time, the state of intercommunal talks fell to another low and is currently further complicated by the natural gas reserves and EEZ claims of regional powers in the eastern Mediterranean.

Turkey refuses to accept the RoC's claim to an EEZ in the region. It also cites the failed Annan Plan's call for sharing all the natural resources of Cyprus by both Greek and Turkish Cypriots as another reason why the Greeks could not unilaterally exploit gas reserves off Cyprus. For their part, the Greek Cypriots refused to acknowledge the Turkish Cypriots' rights and started drilling in the disputed area.

Given these complications, it can be argued that finding a solution to the Cyprus problem is perhaps more pressing than in recent years for this protracted conflict has affected developments far beyond its immediate locale in a manner resembling the butterfly effect: failure of talks tied to misperception of realities on the ground (i.e., new-found friends of the RoC in the region) can result in the hardening of the Greek Cypriot position on critical issues surrounding reunification talks, the dead-end result of these talks can lead Erdoğan to implement his annexation plan of TRNC, resulting in a Greek and EU reaction to punish Turkey in some fashion, and the destabilization of NATO's Southeastern flank when Russia moves in to increase its influence in the region.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> European Commission, 2009. *Turkey Progress Report*. Brussels: Official Publications of the European Union, pp. 88-89.

<sup>90</sup> Birol Yesilada "Turkey's Cyprus Policy" in *The Routledge Handbook of Turkish Politics*, Alpaslan Ozerdem and Matthew Whiting eds., London and New York: Routledge, 2019, pp. 435-45.

## Where to now?

The late C H Dodd once said, "the problem with the Greeks' view of the Cyprus problem is that they see the Turks as guests who have overstayed their welcome by almost 500 years."<sup>91</sup> One could add to this a similar ethnocentric view from the nationalist Turks that the Island belongs to them fair and square since they shed blood in conquering it from the Venetians. Both views ignore the fact that Cypriots are more than these two ethnic communities and that the Island's peoples have more in common than their compatriots in Greece and Turkey. Furthermore, Cyprus is also home to Armenians, Britons, Maronites, Latins, and, most recently, Russians. The first undisputed settlers came in the 9th millennium BC from the Levant. Since then, every regional power conquered and occupied Cyprus. A typical Cypriot is an ethnically mixed descendant of these peoples regardless of their mother tongue. Greek and Turkish Cypriots lived in relative peace for centuries under Ottoman and British rule. Their customs, cuisine, songs, and borrowed words attest to this fact. The intercommunal conflict between them is recent and began when ethnic nationalists organized an uprising against British colonial rule in the 1950s. For Cypriots to resolve their differences and reunite their Island, certain conditions must be present: shared values, trust, and political will to compromise on thorny issues that have derailed all prior peace talks.

### Social Values of Cypriots

Thus far, I completed three waves of the World Values Survey in Cyprus in 2006, 2011, and 2019. While it is a short period, data obtained provide essential insight into Cypriots' values. In this paper, we will examine some of these that give insight into Cypriots' trust toward others, happiness, and religiosity. Cypriots are generally happy people but do not tend to trust people of other nationalities and differ in their confidence in trusting religious institutions

On average, Cypriots tend to be happy people who hold strong confidence in religious institutions and view religion as necessary in their lives. Feeling of happiness was for Greek Cypriots was 82 percent and Turkish Cypriots 85.5 percent in 2019; 85.5 percent and 88.4 percent in 2011; and 80 percent and 88 percent in 2005 respectively. Trust in church and mosque was 63 and 54 percent in 2019; 66 and 47 percent in 2011; and 70 percent and 53 percent in 2005 respectively for Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. However, Cypriots are not trusting people of other nationalities – 68 percent of Greek Cypriots and 69.7 percent of Turkish Cypriots indicated they do not trust people of other nationalities in 2019. This last point becomes important in explaining their unease about outsiders trying to solve the Cyprus problem for the Cypriots – for example, their trust in the European Union. Furthermore, there is no significant difference between the Greek and Turkish communities in these measures.

In terms of religiosity, the two communities significantly differed until recently. In overall importance placed on religion and confidence in religious

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<sup>91</sup> During a discussion at a conference at Boğazici University in Istanbul in 2007.



institutions, the Greek Cypriots have a higher confidence level than their Turkish Cypriot counterparts. Still, both communities' trust levels are over fifty percent. When we measure religiosity in terms of frequency of church/mosque attendance, survey results show a drastic difference until 2019. During the previous two surveys in 2006 and 2011, 45.4 and 52.6 percent of Turkish Cypriots indicated that they never attend mosque services.

Furthermore, 26.4 and 23.7 percent said they only went to the mosque during special holidays. On the other hand, Greek Cypriots are far more devoted to regular church attendance. In regular attendance of religious services we observe a dramatic shift among the Turkish Cypriots in 2019. Those who said they attend mosque services once a week or more jumped from 9.6 percent in 2006 to 50.5 percent in 2019. This is highly unusual for traditional Turkish Cypriot culture and religious practices and could indicate the results of Erdoğan's Islamization policies in the TRNC – or a more substantial presence of individuals from Turkey (recent settlers) in the sample pool.

It is no secret that since Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in Turkey there has been a calculated policy to expand Islamic education formally and informally in the TRNC. The immigrants from Turkey supported these policies while the majority of Turkish Cypriots viewed it as 'social engineering and cultural imperialism' by Erdoğan's government. According to Ahmet Sözen, AKP's such efforts in the TRNC represent part of the preparations for possible assimilation and integration of Turkish Cypriots to Turkey:

'Only a federal solution would enable Turkish Cypriots to protect their identity... The process's failure means further demographic, economic, political, religious, social, and cultural alteration of the North. The Turkification and Islamisation of North Cyprus will – before long – be complete'.<sup>92</sup>

Therefore, it is timely to ask if Erdoğan holds an ulterior motive for Cyprus, aiming at culturally transforming the TRNC and eventual annexation. We need to look more closely into this development in future discussions.

Finally, regarding trust, it is essential to consider how much trust Cypriots have in the EU. This is important because, aside from the fact that the entire Island is in the EU with the *acquis* suspended in the North, membership in the Union is being viewed by many as a substitute to the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee. That Treaty gives Britain, Greece, and Turkey powers to intervene in Cyprus and justified Turkish intervention in 1974. Do the Cypriots trust the EU to replace the three Guarantor Powers? For an answer, we can look at trust data from the Eurobarometer surveys of the European Commission.

The two communities' trust in the EU displays rollercoaster results in a mirror image since the RoC joined the EU. When one Community has a high degree of trust in the EU, the other Community displays a declining level of trust and vice versa. The low point for the Turkish Cypriots, 32 percent trusting, came following the rejection of the Annan Plan and accession of the RoC into the

<sup>92</sup> Ahmet Sözen, *Turkish Cypriots are Losing their Identity*, incyprus, August 27, 2017. <http://in-cyprus.com/turkish-cypriots-are-losing-their-identity/>

EU. Since then, trust in EU gradually increased among Turkish Cypriots to reach a high of 68 percent in 2013 when hope for reunification seemed high but dropped to about 51 percent by November 2019 following repeated collapse of negotiations between the leaders of the two communities.

For the Greek Cypriots, the all-time low came following the financial crisis and the EU's harsh austerity measures. Whereas the all-time trust in the EU was 60 percent in 2004, this fell to 42 percent in 2010 and further declined to 18 percent in 2013. Since that time, Greek Cypriot trust in the EU gradually improved to slightly over 40 percent in 2019.

At present, the EU enjoys a relatively 50-50 and 40-60 trust/no trust among the Turkish and Greek communities respectively. So, to assume that a plan for a political solution sponsored by the EU would receive overwhelming support of the Cypriots would be naïve. A lot of work needs to be done to gain peoples' confidence in the EU. Moreover, time is not on the EU's side, especially when it comes to the Turkish Cypriots who feel betrayed by the Europeans. Their trust in the EU is likely to decline further with each passing day. The EU's position in the newly discovered natural gas deposits off Cyprus further adds to this danger.

### **A New Complicating Factor that Increases Mistrust**

Over the years, critical disputes during the reunification talks included freedom of movement and settlement, guarantorship, power-sharing, property rights, the status of settlers in the TRNC, and territorial adjustment. Except for freedom of movement, there remain significant disagreements between the two sides. Moreover, without external mediation, the Cypriots are unlikely to resolve their differences over the thorny issues. Yet, as we see above, their limited trust in foreigners presents a serious challenge to foreign mediation. As if this were not enough, the discovery of natural gas fuels the dispute rather than serving as a catalyst for reunification. This subject is far more complicated than explained in the current media. It links Turkey's Cyprus policy to relations with Egypt, Israel and the EU. External Economic Zones claimed by the RoC, Greece, and Turkey overlap in several areas (Map 1) and are further complicated by Turkey's argument that the government of the Greek Cypriots ignores the rights of the TRNC by unilateral exploration in the region (Map 2).<sup>93</sup> To show its resolve, Turkey has repeatedly sent warships into the disputed areas to warn Greek Cypriots and their business partners. According to Thomas Barnett, this matter is intertwined with Turkey's interests in the TRNC and is unlikely to be settled without resolving the Cyprus problem.<sup>94</sup> The situation is further complicated as the French President Macron decried Turkey's threats to the RoC and Greece during his visit to Cyprus and further called for Turkey to withdraw its warships and claims from

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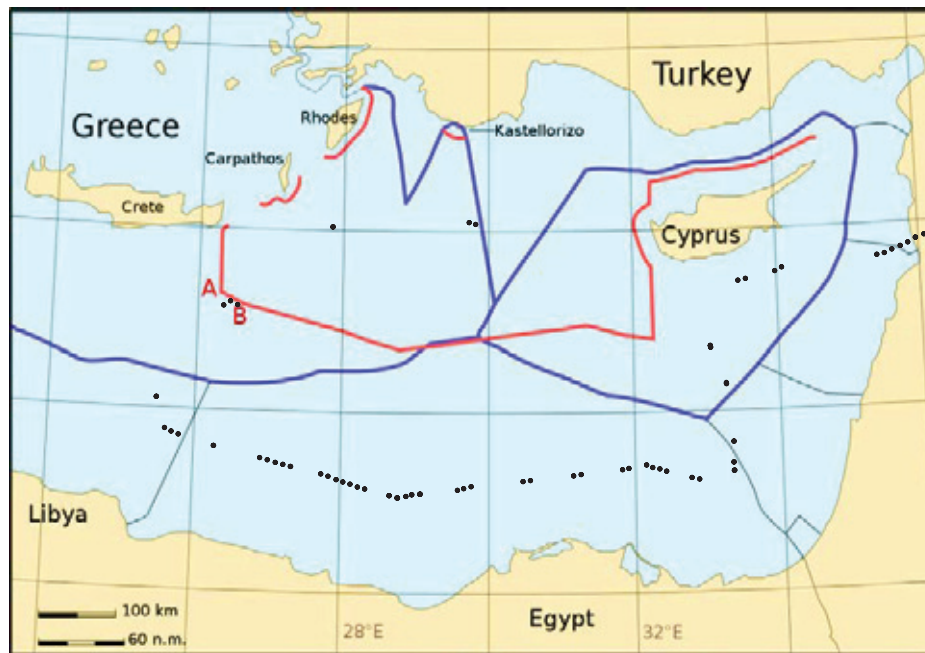
<sup>93</sup> Abdullah Tanriverdi, *Eastern Mediterranean Natural Gas: Analyzing Turkey's Stance*, European Journal of Economic and Political Studies Vol. 6 no. 2 (October 2013):83-99 and Ibrahim Arinc and Levent Ozgul, "Exportation of EastMed Gas Resources: Is it possible without Turkey" *Environmental Pollution*, Vol. 220 (January 2017):1322-1332.

<sup>94</sup> Thomas Barnett, *Turkey's Long Game in the Cyprus Gas Dispute*. World Politics Review 10/10/2011.

the area.<sup>95</sup> Given that France and Turkey also support opposing sides in the Libyan civil war, additional tensions between the two NATO allies will not be constructive for lowering tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean or in the EU-RoC-Turkey relationship.

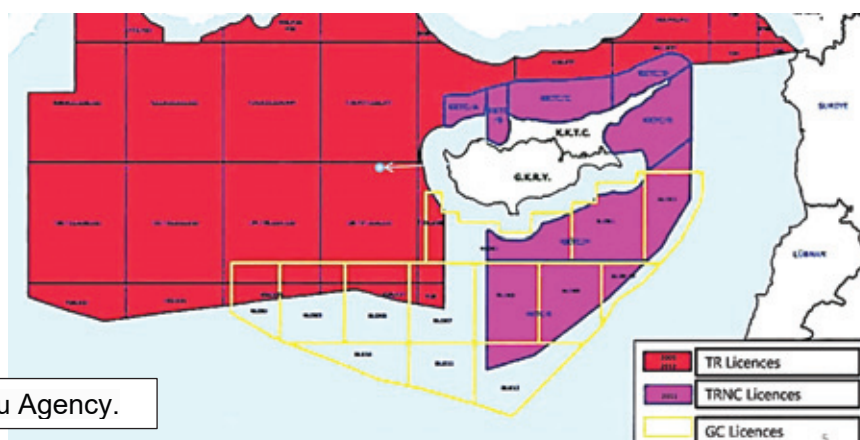
**Map 1: Overlapping EEZ claims in the Eastern Mediterranean**

(The dotted line represents Turkey's claims, and solid line represents the RoC and Greece's claims; the area between A and B represents the agreed border between Libya and Turkey)



**Source:** This file is made available under the Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eastern\\_Mediterranean\\_EEZ\\_conflicts.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eastern_Mediterranean_EEZ_conflicts.svg))

**Map 2: Areas Where Drilling Licenses Issued by the RoC, the TRNC, and Turkey.**



**Source:** Anadolu Agency.

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.financialmirror.com/2020/07/23/macron-decries-turkey-threats-to-cyprus-greece/>

## Conclusions

Cyprus has been and will probably remain to be a thorny problem for the Atlantic Alliance and Greek-Turkish relations. Despite being a small piece of real estate, its location has attracted foreign powers' interests throughout its history. There is no doubt that stakes are high at present. The long-term implications of a settlement are enormous for the future regional stability and global power transition that affects the EU. The unification of Cyprus does not guarantee Turkey's entry into the EU but it is the necessary precondition for serious consideration of this country's candidacy and for the reorientation of its foreign and security policies toward the West. For sure, Turkey's accession to the EU could bring the unexpected gift of increased power to the Union in her competition with other giants like Russia, solidify EU-NATO partnership, and add to stability in the Mediterranean and beyond. All of these potential benefits depend on the successful reunification of Cyprus and this is where the Island becomes a trump card in Turkey's relations with Greece and the EU. If the current state of affairs continues, Erdoğan is likely to intensify pressure on the RoC in the Eastern Mediterranean, further advance Islamization policies in the TRNC, and eventually annex north Cyprus. He will do so to save Turkish Cypriots from the puzzle in which they currently find themselves in. The reaction of the RoC, Greece, and the EU to Turkey's annexation of the TRNC is likely to be swift with sanctions, possibly military ones. Annexation will nevertheless mark the end of the EU-Turkey partnership and further push Turkey toward a Eurasian Alliance with Russia.

Future actions of European leaders in Cyprus will determine whether the butterfly effect will move positively or negatively. Support for the EU is not very high in either community in Cyprus. Unless the EU decides to find a meaningful way of integrating the Turkish North into the Union, chances of reunification will continue to elude the Cypriots for the foreseeable future.



### **Peter Millett**

**High Commissioner to Cyprus (2005 to 2010)**  
British Ambassador to Jordan (2011 to 2015)  
British Ambassador to Libya (2015 to 2018)

### **Bi-communal Activities in Cyprus**

Despite numerous initiatives and efforts over the last 46 years, Cyprus remains divided. The Turkish invasion in 1974, in response to a coup attempt backed by Athens, left 59% of the island under the effective control of the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus (RoC) and 36% under the

control of the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). The rest of the island is taken up by the UN-monitored buffer zone and the United Kingdom's Sovereign Base Areas. The division of the island led to the displacement of over 150,000 Greek Cypriots from the north to the south and 50,000 Turkish Cypriot in the other direction.

Work towards the settlement of what is commonly known as 'The Cyprus Problem' has been based on the formula of a 'Bi-zonal, Bi-communal Federation', in other words, distinct areas where the two communities would run many of their own affairs and join together into one state with a single international identity. This was the approach taken under the UN's Annan Plan in 2004. It would have created a federation of two constituent states with a federal government apparatus at the centre. In separate referenda, the plan was supported by 65% of the Turkish Cypriots but rejected by 76% of the Greek Cypriots. A week later, the RoC joined the European Union. The whole of the island is regarded as part of the EU, but EU law does not apply in the north.

Further efforts to negotiate a settlement in 2008 between Dimitris Christofias, the President of the RoC, and Mehmet Ali Talat, the TRNC leader, were co-ordinated by the UN Special Envoy, Alexander Downer. Despite high hopes, the election of Derviş Eroğlu as President of the TRNC in 2010 changed the dynamics and the talks collapsed in 2012.

Following the election to the Presidency of the RoC of Nicos Anastasiades in 2013, a new initiative was launched based on a joint declaration signed by the leaders of the two communities on the island. They declared that the status quo was unacceptable and that its prolongation would have negative consequences for the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. They affirmed that a settlement would benefit both communities, respect each other's distinct identity and ensure their common future within the EU.

Talks continued and intensified following the election of Mustafa Akıncı as Turkish Cypriot leader in 2015, which culminated in a meeting at the Swiss resort of Crans Montana in July 2017. These talks ended without a deal.

In June 2018, the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres appointed an American diplomat Jane Holl Lute to prepare terms of reference for fresh negotiations. Guterres brought the two Cypriot leaders together in Berlin in November 2019 but they were unable to agree to the terms of reference for relaunch of talks. The dispute over Turkey's exploration for oil and gas in Cyprus' territorial waters is a major obstacle.

Covid-19 has made it even harder to bring the parties together and promote reconciliation. A breakthrough this year is highly unlikely. The UN Secretary General's latest report to the Security Council states that "tensions on the island have progressively increased over time." He noted that the global



pandemic had “added to an already complex situation on and around the island.”<sup>96</sup>

## Five Key Issues

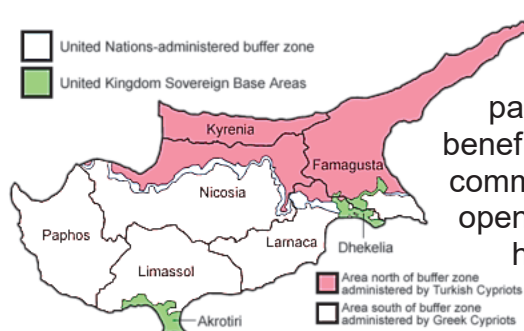
- **Governance:** how will the two federated states be governed and what will be the arrangements for sharing power at the centre? The Annan Plan proposed a Presidential Council in which the chairmanship would rotate between a Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot and in which both communities had the right to veto legislation. There was also to be a bi-cameral Parliament with a Chamber of Deputies in which the Turkish Cypriots would have 25% of the seats; and a Senate with equal representation.
- **Security:** under the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee, the three guarantor powers (the UK, Turkey, and Greece) guaranteed the independence and territorial integrity of the RoC and had the right to intervene militarily. The Annan Plan would have retained the Treaty and given both Greece and Turkey the right to maintain armed forces on the island: 6,000 each at the outset reducing to 600 after 19 years with the aim of full demilitarisation. The negotiations at Crans Montana broke down on this point. The fear of Turkish military action is a major concern for Greek Cypriots. The perceived protection of Turkey is important for many Turkish Cypriots.
- **Territory:** settlement negotiations have focussed on possible territorial adjustments which could transfer areas of Greek Cypriot property, such as Varosha and Morphou to the Greek Cypriot constituent state. Under the Annan Plan, the Turkish Cypriot state would have encompassed 28.5% of the island and the Greek Cypriot state 71.5%. A recent statement by Turkish Cypriot political leaders that they intend to settle Varosha, a suburb of Famagusta that was once a popular tourist destination, has raised major protests from Greek Cypriots.
- **Property:** one of the most sensitive issues is the ownership of properties, particularly those whose owners were forced to flee in 1974. Until then, Greek Cypriots owned a majority of the land in the north of the island and Turkish Cypriots owned property in the south. The restitution of these properties could make the functioning of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation very difficult. Compensation for property was on offer, especially in areas such as the Karpas Peninsula where it is unrealistic to draw the boundaries of the constituent states to include Greek Cypriot properties.

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<sup>96</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus. S2020/865 of 13 July 2020.

- **Miscellaneous:** other issues include the status of the many Turkish Settlers in the north, the application of EU law and funding for the north and the rights of refugees.

**Bi-communal Activities:** Antonio Guterres' recent reports to the Security Council underline the importance of encouraging the communities to work together. Cypriots need to engage in mutually beneficial co-operation, including through strong political and technical support to bi-communal technical committees such as those working on health-related, economic, crisis-related, and humanitarian issues.



A glance at the map shows how small the island of Cyprus is. The prospect of partition would undermine the potential benefits that would arise from the two communities working together. Since the opening of the crossing points in 2003, people have been able to cross, including tourists who have benefited from seeing both parts of this beautiful island.

Moreover, issues such as the environment, health, economic development all benefit from people and communities working together. When bird flu hit the island in 2007, it made sense for medical experts in both communities to collaborate on an issue that would clearly not respect the border. Electricity has also been supplied in both directions when there have been shortages.

A good example of the positive impact of bi-communal activity is the House for Co-operation, located at the heart of Nicosia on the Ledra Palace Crossing. It brings together civil society organisations from both communities and provides a space for various artistic, cultural and educational activities to help build bridges between Cypriots.

An important aspect of this initiative is that it brings young people together. The generation of Cypriots who can remember living alongside families from the other community is fast dying out. The education systems on both sides of the island do not teach the younger generation to respect the other community. And compulsory military service also instils an attitude that the other side is the enemy. Bringing young people together has to be at the heart of the bi-communal work that is essential to the future of Cyprus, irrespective of when a settlement can be reached.

**Stelios Foundation:** One of the major promoters of bi-communal activity is the Stelios Philanthropic Foundation, established by Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou, the man behind *easyJet*. Stelios' parents were born in Cyprus and the Foundation's mission is to support a diverse range of charitable activities, primarily in places where Stelios has lived and worked – the UK, Greece and Cyprus. The Foundation's work in Cyprus aims to encourage bi-communal cooperation between Greek and Turkish Cypriots in order to promote lasting peace on the island. This initiative was launched in 2009 with awards given to

commercial enterprises that were working on projects between the two communities. Since then, the Foundation has donated over €3.75 million to such projects, extending their coverage to a wide range of bi-communal contacts. Last year, awards of €10,000 were given to fifty teams involving one Greek-Cypriot and one Turkish-Cypriot. All forms of human cooperation were eligible to apply, including business, arts, sport, and non-governmental organisations.

Examples of successful recipients of these awards include:

- A company that produces Cypriot ice cream. The Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot co-founders sell cakes and ice cream at locations in both the north and south of the island. The partners said: “Over the years, we have met each other’s families and friends and have a common friendship group that go on holiday together.”
- The production of a school booklet by the Cyprus Marine Environment Protection Association and the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Agricultural Engineers to increase awareness of the importance of sustainable fish production and consumption.
- Two disabled Cypriots, one Turkish, one Greek, who created an accessible workshop in the buffer zone where disabled people from both communities can train, learn new skills, gain an income, and have a chance for social interaction. They said: “We hope that this partnership will lead to more co-operation between disabled communities in Cyprus across the divide.”
- A Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot who got married in September 2019 whose application stated: “Our love is proof that we share the same vision of coexistence, respect and peace on this island.”
- A company in Limassol who manufacture sinks, shower trays and other plumbing materials and market their products in the north through a Turkish Cypriot company. Over the years of their partnership, the families have become firm friends, including their children, extending the partnership to the younger generation.

The environment is a priority area for the Foundation which is supporting a United Nations initiative to recruit twenty-four Environmental Champions, twelve from each community, to undertake training on environmental issues such as biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and peacebuilding. This programme will also campaign against illegal dumping in the buffer zone and is planning to clean-up the zone later this year.

The Stelios Foundation has also promoted bi-communal contact through sport. On 19 March 2019, it funded a day of sport for Greek and Turkish Cypriots in Pyla, the only bi-communal village on the island. It included a game between the Greek Cypriot team Nea Salamina and the Turkish Cypriot Mağusa Türk Gücü. The former Chelsea star Didier Drogba was also present. The event highlighted the value of sport in bringing together sports players, fans and spectators to help to build trust and friendship between the communities.



The Stelios Foundation's work demonstrates the value in engagement between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, not just in business, but in developing links across the spectrum of human activity. Closer links will help to remove hostility and enmity and build trust, confidence and a common agenda for the future.

Stelios also responded promptly to the current Covid-19 pandemic, donating vouchers to nursing staff working on the front line in both communities.

**Conclusion:** The continuing division of the island of Cyprus is a sore on the face of international diplomacy. All Cypriots should be able to benefit from membership of the European Union and the significant advantages that would result from the two communities working hand-in-hand. Keeping the possibility of a settlement open is essential.

A recent meeting with both communities represented.



Left to right

Marios Eliades, one of the Foundation's Trustees, Peter Millett, Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou, Mustafa Acinci, Kerim Fuad QC adviser to Stelios, Bariş Burcu, Acinci's spokesman

Bi-communal co-operation should be regarded as a common good which poses no threat to anyone. Working with fellow Cypriots does not imply particular recognition of Greek or Turkish Cypriot institutions and entities. Such interaction should be encouraged by the political leadership in both communities and not demonised as some sort of betrayal. With political will, the damaging legacy of the past can be overcome to build a better future for all the citizens of Cyprus.

This article was written before the latest TRNC elections.

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## Russian Migrations:

### The Making and Unmaking of Turkey's Black Sea Identity

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#### Part 2

### Gendered Currents:

With the end of the Cold War, the tide in the Black Sea turned. The disintegration of the Soviet Union generated new currents, flows and whirlpools. In the second part of this paper, I return to contemporary Istanbul as a site of gendered space in terms of cosmopolitan experiences and perceptions.<sup>97</sup> If the Russian exodus at the beginning of the 20th century was a consequence of disintegrating empires, the disintegration of the Cold War order exposed the Black Sea region to deregulated neo-liberal markets. Increased mobility and marketability created new commodity chains and gendered transnational networks as a vital means of dealing with economic transition. As a result, 'Russian women' looked for opportunities in the commercial towns and port cities of the Turkish Black Sea coast, following the same routes as financial flows<sup>98</sup>. Traditionally a country of emigration, Turkey increasingly became attractive for migrants from the post-Soviet countries. In these highly feminized migratory flows, Istanbul became the hub of regional informal trade networks and highly gendered markets.

Eder and Özlem draw our attention to the complexity of the transnational networks that blur the boundaries between formal and informal, regular and irregular, licit and illicit exchanges.

'Few shuttle traders migrate to Istanbul, though they continue to shuttle back and forth. Although there has been a considerable increase in marriages between Turkish men and women from the Former Soviet Union as well as a significant influx of migrant workers employed informally in the sex industry or in domestic service, shuttle traders continue to be "permanently in-between".'

Eder here stresses the need to recognize 'the in-between-ness of individuals and the complexities of these flows.' Everyday practices and economic

<sup>97</sup> Part 1 appeared in *TAS Review*, No.35, pp. 23-29

<sup>98</sup> 'Russian women' (*Rus kadınlar*) refers to Russian-speaking women from the post-socialist countries of the Soviet Union. I saw the label applied also to women from Azerbaijan, Moldova and Georgia.



relationships take place in the market place where 'social identities emerge and evolve'<sup>99</sup>. Yet these cultural and commercial encounters cannot be detached from the spheres and layers of regional political economy, geopolitical statecraft and history. Markets are not only governmental sites where power relations operate in the background but are also inherently liminal spaces between global and local; between local and regional; and between cities and states where various kinds of cosmopolitan attachments and detachments are formed and transformed.

In an earlier study of the Post-Soviet 'Russian' women as shuttle traders in Laleli district in Istanbul, Yükseksek suggests that, in transnational markets, both genders develop eclectic idioms of trust and intimacy in order to carry out economic exchange in a deregulated market economy.<sup>100</sup> Traders form gendered social relationships ranging from friendship to sexual intimacy.



The entry of post-Soviet women into the daily life of Turkish society produced highly gendered discourses and practices of bio-politics, with varied and diverse effects. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s Turkish media portrayed 'Russian women' as highly sexualized actors and associated them with sex work and trafficking networks. During the Cold War the deep-rooted fear and belief in a communist threat from the Soviet Union had played an important role in the construction of the Other in Turkey's Cold War NATO identity. Since then the threat of Communism has been replaced by the corrupting and polluting influences of the Russian women in Turkish media and public discourse.<sup>101</sup>

On the other hand, the arrival of Russian-speaking and other migrants has provided the government with an opportunity to brand Istanbul as a city of culture. Sometime Mayor of Istanbul and now Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan, of the conservative AKP party, has promoted the city as a cosmopolitan centre of harmony, tolerance and intercultural dialogue. The impact of the early 20th century Russian refugees on the Turkish national culture is still deeply embedded in the Turkish national collective memory. Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality on its website, *Istanbul 2010, European Capital of Culture*, describes the impact of this period on the contemporary culture of the city:

<sup>99</sup> Mine Eder and Öz Özlem, 'From cross-border exchange networks to transnational trading practices? The case of shuttle traders in Laleli, Istanbul', Cambridge 2010, in Marie-Laure Djelic and Sigrid Quack. eds. *Transnational Communities. Shaping Global Economic Governance*, p.85

<sup>100</sup> Deniz Yükseksek, 'Trust and gender in a transnational market: the public culture of Laleli', *Public Culture*, 16(1), 2004, pp.47-65

<sup>101</sup> *Aksiyon* (Jan, 2000), a conservative weekly closer to Islamic circles, reported 'During the Cold War Turkey fought against the danger of communism. Since the demise of the Iron Curtain we have been confronted with a new threat. The Soviets failed to invade Turkey but AIDS is spreading. We should not fear communism but AIDS.' (my translation: see [www.aksiyon.com.tr](http://www.aksiyon.com.tr)).

'The Russian immigrants who were escaping from the Bolshevik Revolution had the most impact on Istanbul and its people. There were approximately 200,000 Russian immigrants. The Russian ladies' outfits were very welcomed by Istanbul's women and became the latest fashion. Istanbul's population, led by the Russians, went to the beach to swim for the first time during this period. In spite of the occupation, the night life was revitalized during this period. Concerts in cafés, theatre companies and movie theatres became very attractive. Bars and pastry shops were introduced. They brought a moral collapse too. Prostitution among the Russian women who worked at such entertainment places began to affect the city. Worker's demonstrations and socialist activities were also revitalized. Many socialist and labour organizations were established. Strikes and labour activities increased. May 1st was celebrated as Labour Day in Istanbul for the first time during this period'.<sup>102</sup>

The site fails to explain the assumed link between the Russian prostitutes and Turkey's first socialist activities and labour strikes. However, the way the website constructs the city's past retrospectively is an interesting one, as it associates the corrupting influences of 'Russian women' in conjunction with the first socialist movement in Turkey as a threat to the fabric of Turkish moral and national order. This shift from gendered discourse to ideological threats undermines the official claims to cosmopolitanism and complicates the management of diverse cultural cosmopolitan experiences.

Depending on their interests and sphere of activity, different governmental agencies in Turkey exercised and adopted different strategies treating the issue as 'public morality', 'organized crime', 'trafficking', 'law and order' or 'leisure'. In her 2007 study, Eder maintains that the state, or the law enforcers who exercise power in the name of the state, are firmly involved in some of these informal activities. In fact, most of these activities occur in what one can call the 'deliberate negligence zone' of the state. The very appearance of incapacity, inability to control these flows and the very reproduction of boundaries between formal/informal, legal/illegal actually allow the state to become embedded in informality, illegality and criminality.<sup>103</sup>

The ambiguous role of the state has been further complicated by discursive shifts in the management of these movements. Since 2003, the public discourse has gradually shifted from criminalizing the Russian women to treating them more like victims. Turkey started to adopt some anti-trafficking measures and flexible work permits; rescue centres (help lines) have been set up to harmonize Turkey's immigration regime in line with the accession

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<sup>102</sup> See Istanbul City Municipality website, European Capital of Culture: <http://www.ibb.gov.tr/sites/ks/en-US/-Exploring-The-City/History/Pages/TheOttomanEra.aspx> (Accessed 12 July 2010)

<sup>103</sup> Mine Eder, 2007. 'Informal Transnationalism?: The 'Underside' of Turkey's Economic Globalization' [http://www.watsoninstitute.org/events\\_detail.cfm?id=88](http://www.watsoninstitute.org/events_detail.cfm?id=88) (Accessed 20 July, 2009)

process with the EU (Turkish Ministry of Interior 2007). The most important development, however, affecting the image of Russian women in Turkish society is the deepening of economic, political and cultural ties with the Russian Federation over the last ten years.

There have been some parallel changes in the way Russian women have been received and viewed by Turkish media and society. Mixed marriages between Turks and Russian women became a hot topic for Turkish cultural life and lifestyle magazines and TV programmes.<sup>104</sup> As the number of mixed marriages increased over the years, the Turkish public discourse has gradually focused on the role and adaptation of these women to the cultural and moral order Turkish society.<sup>105</sup>

This does not mean that Russian women in Turkey have no agency and choice in the construction of their own cosmopolitan spaces. In an exhibition which took place in Istanbul in 2005 photographs of twelve Russian women from different professional backgrounds living in Istanbul were shot against the urban and oriental landscapes of the city in highly staged and very carefully framed images.<sup>106</sup> In an interview, the photographer, Anastasia Zlatopolskaia, claimed that her aim was to give a positive image of ordinary professional Russian women in Istanbul. Each photograph is accompanied by a statement of these professional Russian women about Istanbul (my translations): Ulia: "Istanbul's magic emanates from its incredible positive energy which is enough for everybody"; Nadejda states "Istanbul is the heart of the universe, I hold on to it like a baby in mother's womb"; Natalia: "Istanbul is full of surprises. Because whatever mood you are in it offers you endless opportunities"; Katia: "Istanbul is a city of contrasts but it lacks the different shades of grey. One can only grasp Istanbul in a real sense when one stops gazing at it as a foreigner." She adds: "I love Boğazici. One can endlessly gaze at this serene scenery. Water is something we can sense the surface of but never know what is at the bottom, our life starts in our mother's womb, in water, and like Atlantis, it disappears and sinks in it." Ludmilla: "I love Istanbul, it is clean, calm and people treat each other respectfully." Alona: "Istanbul gives me an opportunity to touch a different culture and learn a new language, as well as expressing and understanding myself." Tatiana: "What

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<sup>104</sup> As the head of the State Family Planning Department commented on mixed marriages: "This tradition goes back to the Ottoman times; the Ottoman Sultans often married Russian women. These marriages changed the genetic structure of Turkish society." *Akşam*, <http://arsiv.aksam.com.tr/arsiv/aksam/2005/01/16gindem/gundem1.html> (Accessed 29 July 2007)

<sup>105</sup> For instance, the Turkish popular *Haftalık* headlined, in a special issue; 'Russian women are inherently faithful'. The paper also interviewed Turkish men who portrayed Russian women as well educated and well mannered and who make 'highly eligible wives' (14-20 April, 2006). And, in April 2010, when I interviewed senior Turkish politicians and civil servants on Russian and Turkish relations in Turkey, the former Chair of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation said that mixed marriages between Turkish men and Russian women have a direct impact on Turkish society and the country's developing relationship with Russia -with the potential to create a new regional identity in the Black Sea region.

<sup>106</sup> 12 Russian women 2005, Photography Foundation Exhibition Gallery, Istanbul (Accessed 12 October, 2009) .<http://fotografya.fotografya.gen.tr/end/index.php?id=129,178,0,0,1,0>

attracts me to Istanbul is its mystic beauty.” What is interesting in most of these women’s imaginaries is that Istanbul embodies a fluid watery space, a passage opening to material opportunities yet it retains its Oriental mystery under the surface as a liminal site.

In a newspaper interview, a Turkish journalist interviewing these Russian women seems to be intrigued by Ludmilla’s suggestion that Istanbul is a clean and calm city and people respect each other.<sup>107</sup> Zibarova, another Russian woman interviewee, interjects “It is because Ludmilla (a house-wife) lives in Tarabya, next to the American Consulate. It is normal that she describes Istanbul in this way. For me Istanbul deserves to be cosmopolitan.” When the interviewer asks the photographer whether she has met any Russian sex workers she answers: “No I have not met any. I suppose one has to go to Aksaray [an Istanbul neighbourhood associated with ‘Russian’ sex workers] very late at night. I am sure if one seeks one may find Russian sex workers anywhere. I am an educated woman; I have a very good English. But as soon as I arrived in Istanbul people thought I worked in vice trade. It is always difficult to be woman.” Thus, being a Russian woman in Istanbul has no fixed meanings but is subject to multiple and shifting markers, such as those of class and particular location as well as gendered cosmopolitan experiences.

The most important development, however, affecting the image of Russian women in Turkish society is the deepening of economic, political and cultural ties with the Russian Federation over the last twenty years.<sup>108</sup> As the Russian speaking migrants, particularly Russian women from Russia, initially arrived as tourists and temporary workers and also gradually settled in the southern Mediterranean cities – and particularly in Antalya region – they started to form their own communities. As the Russian-speaking tourists superseded the German-speaking and other European tourists, ‘Russian women’ became desirable employees. Legislation has also been relaxed to offer these Russian-speaking and skilled women more regulated and permanent employment, particularly in tourism, entertainment and retail industry.<sup>109</sup> These young, single and highly educated women mainly migrated to the Antalya region not only for employment but also to settle into the host society through mixed marriages and by forming strong social ties and associations among themselves and with the local communities.

Russian brides have also been high on the agenda of diplomatic relations between Russia and Turkey. During an official visit to Moscow in 2012 Foreign Minister Davutoğlu remarked that Russia has finally fulfilled its geopolitical ambitions to reach the warm waters of the Mediterranean via mixed marriages between Russian women and Turkish men. He suggested a more liberal visa regime would facilitate these marriages and that they are likely to



<sup>107</sup> Interview *Akşam*, Eren Aytuğ, Istanbul is our Supra-National Identity 10 October 2005 (Accessed 12 January 2009). <http://www.tumgazateler.com/?a=1209053>

<sup>108</sup> Nearly six million Russian tourists visited Turkey in 2018.

<sup>109</sup> G. Toksöz, S. Erdoğan & S. Kaska, 2012, ‘Irregular Labour Migration in Turkey and Situation of Migrant Workers in the Labour Market’, *International Organization for Migration*, Ankara.



contribute to the closer economic and social relations between Russia and Turkey. He also mentioned the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had relaxed the marriage regulations to allow Turkish diplomats to marry foreigners – as demonstrated by his senior advisor who married a ‘Russian bride’. He stressed that Russian women are culturally and morally more compatible with the values of Turkish society.<sup>110</sup>

Let me end my journey in the Russian Orthodox Church of St Panteleimon in Karaköy, also known as the Russian Docks – an invisible historic site that does not appear on tourist maps and is situated in a decaying old Istanbul neighborhood. St Panteleimon, rather than being a tourist attraction, provides a liminal passage and a spiritual and physical sanctuary for Russian-speaking Orthodox post-Soviet migrants which has survived at least for 150 years. The Church is built on the roof of a former hostel for Russian pilgrims who arrived by sea *en route* to Jerusalem or Mount Athos. Russian refugees also found shelter in these pilgrim hostels on their way from the Crimea fleeing the revolution in Russia. By definition each departure involves loss and transformation. For this reason, its history is coloured by melancholia. Today, many estranged labour migrants (Ukrainians, Moldovans and Russians) visit the Russian Orthodox Church to be close to ‘Nashi’, their fellow Soviet citizens. St Panteleimon offers a kind of liminal passage between the First and the Third Rome and transformational connectivity with the city of Istanbul as the Second Rome. I ask the middle aged lady who has just finished praying: “Do you often come here?” “Yes”, she answers “this is the only place in Istanbul where I feel that I am close to my god and my country”. This place evokes a sense of melancholy, strange and familiar at the same time creating a kind of liminal experience between memory and loss. The prospect of gentrification and commercialization of the Karaköy district threatens the fragile existence of the Church.

In this article I have attempted to illustrate some cosmopolitan experiences and imageries of Russian migrants, exiles and travellers arriving in Istanbul from the northern shores of the Black Sea in three different historical contexts. For them the city has provided a liminal site of reflection between the East and the West, memory and loss; a funnel city between regional and local markets, between intimacy and commodification transforming the life of Russian-speaking incomers. For the receiving society in Istanbul particularly, and in Turkey in general, practices of cosmopolitan hospitality and



regionalism were informed by cultural anxieties and ideological concerns about how to manage and negotiate the gendered differences and otherness of the incoming Russians. Historical memory and cultural experience contribute to cosmopolitan bonding in the formation of a Black Sea identity.

<sup>110</sup> *Hürriyet*, 27 January, 2012, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/rus-gelinlerin-sayisi-artsin-stiyorom-19785998> (Accessed 24/06/2020)





## The United States in the Middle East:

# Oil, Zionism and Disorder

by Maurice J C Vile

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On Wednesday 7 March 1947 President Harry S. Truman, in a speech to the Congress, announced what came to be known as the Truman Doctrine: “wherever aggression, direct or indirect, threatened the peace, the security of the United States was involved.”<sup>111</sup> This speech made by the mild man from the Midwest, represented a profound revolution in American foreign policy. In the nineteenth century the United States had been too preoccupied with its imperial expansion westwards to concern itself with the rest of the world, content to rely on the British Royal Navy to enforce the Monroe Doctrine, which asserted that the New World and the Old World were to remain distinctly separate spheres of influence. Even America’s participation in the First World War did not end the isolationism that dominated American politics, exemplified by the Senate’s refusal to ratify the Treaty of Versailles. It was not until Japan’s bombing of Pearl Harbour that it was realised that it was no longer possible to live as if the rest of the world did not exist. At the end of the Second World War, with its great loss of American lives, perhaps the United States might have retreated into isolationism; but a communist rebellion in Greece, and the Turkish Straits Crisis, when Turkey resisted the demand of the Soviet Union for free passage for its shipping from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, led Truman to guarantee the security of Greece and Turkey, and laid the ground for Turkish accession to NATO. Of course, isolationism did not disappear and President Donald Trump’s “America First” policy is a new muddled emanation of it, combining isolationism with threats to use overwhelming force against those who refuse to conform to his wishes.

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, even President Woodrow Wilson, committed as he was to the concept of national self-determination, could find no rational basis for its implementation in the Middle East, given the complex ethnic patterns of the area. The United States accepted the *de facto* partitioning of the region between Britain and France made in the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and the creation of the new countries that this entailed. Later the League of Nations confirmed the British and French Mandates over Mesopotamia, Palestine, Syria and the Lebanon, as well as the foundation of the Arabian states. American public opinion showed little interest in all this, except for one aspect, which was to become the beginning of an explosive

<sup>111</sup> Nigel Hamilton, *American Caesars*, Vintage Books, London, 2011, p. 63.

movement. In 1917, the declaration of the intention of the British government to create a National Home for the Jews in Palestine was, in large part, the result of a desire to gain the support of American Jews for the war against Germany, at a time when many of them tended to favour Germany, because it was fighting Russia and its subordinate Poland, where Jews had been subjected to ghastly pogroms. Although few American Jews were interested in moving to Palestine, increasingly their support for the Zionist movement became a decisive factor in the ultimate creation of Israel. During the First World War the great naval battles, the use of motor transport, and the development of tanks, all of which became even more important in the Second World War, meant that oil, and the control of its sources of production, became a vital concern for the great powers. The complex interactions between Zionism and oil became the dominant themes of American policy in the Middle East.

The support of American public opinion for Zionism, seen as the national liberation movement for the repatriation of a persecuted people to their ancestral homeland, has been very varied. Initially the majority of Americans showed little interest, and as late as February 1945 President Franklin Roosevelt affirmed that he “would do nothing to support the Jews against the Arabs,” but the revulsion following the post-war revelations of the horror of the concentration camps meant that world support for the need to find a home for Jewish refugees played an important part in the success of the United States’ policy to establish the State of Israel. Since then, American Jewish opinion concerning Israel has fluctuated, and the Jewish community has been divided, according to the changes in the policies of the government of Israel in relation to the Palestinians and the Arab countries. By no means all Jewish Americans supported the Six-Day War or the extension of settlements on the West Bank, and a majority of Jewish Americans opposed the War on Iraq. Faith plays an important part in Jewish voting patterns. In 2016 over 50% of Orthodox Jews voted for Donald Trump, far more than other Jews whose loyalty to the Democrats remained strong. In American pluralist politics, however, groups can play a role out of all proportion to their numbers. In the 1950’s Jews constituted only 3-4% of the population of the United States, many of whom would not have been active supporters of Zionism, and this proportion has fallen to approximately 2% today. However, organised Zionist pressure-groups, the ‘Israel lobby,’ have been very powerful, in part because the Jewish population is concentrated in states which play a significant role in the outcome of presidential elections.<sup>112</sup> In promoting the establishment of Israel and abandoning the Palestinians, President Truman is reported to have said, “I have to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for the success of Zionism. I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs among my constituents.”<sup>113</sup> America has paid dearly for its support for Israel. From 1949

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<sup>112</sup> See Alison Weir, *Against Our Better Judgment: The hidden History of how the U.S. was used to create Israel*, published by If Americans Knew.org, 2014.

<sup>113</sup> Quoted by Hamilton, p. 69.

to 2019 the US provided over \$142 billion in aid to Israel, mostly for military procurement,<sup>114</sup> and replaced Britain as the primary enemy of the Arabs.

Evangelical Christians have also long been supporters of Israel because they believe that the return of the Jews to Israel is a precondition of the Second Coming of the Messiah. As Jerry Falwell said in 1981, “To stand against Israel is to stand against God. We believe that history and scripture prove that God deals with nations in relation to how they deal with Israel.” Indeed, white evangelicals are numerically far more important than Jews, accounting for approximately 20% of the electorate, 80% of whom voted for Donald Trump, compared to 16% for Hilary Clinton.<sup>115</sup> Although there were other reasons than support for Israel for giving their votes to Trump, in the words of Paul Miller, “The religious beliefs of evangelicals and fundamentalists are a driving force in the Republican Party's stance on US foreign policy towards Israel. There really is an Israel lobby that influences US foreign policy, but it is made up of more Christians than Jews.”<sup>116</sup> President Trump's decision in 2017 to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and his later ‘Peace Plan’, which included recognition of the vast majority of Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land, and the recognition of the Jordan Valley as part of Israel, were prompted largely by his desire to maintain the support of evangelical Christians so important to his chances of re-election.

The other major concern of US policy in the Middle East, namely oil, sits in an uneasy relationship to its policy regarding Israel, involving as it does the large-scale sales of weapons to Arab countries that could be used against Israel. Saudi Arabia, as the largest producer of oil in the area and an enemy of Iran, makes it a natural ally of the United States. Arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states have increased considerably under the Trump Administration, partly as a result of the Administration's hostility to Iran. Although the use of American weapons by Saudi Arabia in the Yemen war was strongly opposed in a resolution by a bi-partisan majority in the Senate, they failed to overcome Trump's veto, and the sales went forward. Other sales to Arab countries have included an agreement to supply Bahrain with a Patriot missile system, and a \$3 billion deal to sell 24 Apache attack helicopters to Qatar. To allay Israeli concern over these sales it has been US policy to ensure that Israel always has a Qualitative Military Edge (QME) over its Arab neighbours. Congress requires that when a sale of weapons is made to a Middle Eastern country other than Israel there should be “a determination that the sale or export of defense articles or defense services will not adversely affect Israel's qualitative military edge over military threats to Israel.” The resolution of the tensions between its policy towards Israel and its alliance with Saudi Arabia has been a constant theme of American actions in the Middle East. As Henry Kissinger put it “The United States has an interest in the survival of Israel; but

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<sup>114</sup> *US Foreign Aid to Israel*, Congressional Research Service, RL33222, 7 August 2019, Table 2, p 2, <https://crsreports.congress.gov>

<sup>115</sup> New York Times, 9 November 2016.

<sup>116</sup> Paul D. Miller, *Evangelicals, Israel and US Foreign Policy*, in *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, Volume 56, 2014 - Issue 1, p 9.

we, of course, have an interest in the 130 million Arabs that sit athwart the world's oil supplies."<sup>117</sup>

The most significant example of the importance of oil and Israel in American history is the part they played in the decision to go to war in Iraq in 2003, perhaps the most disastrous intervention America has made in the Middle East. For many years before the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September 2001 the right wing in American politics had been urging the US government to undertake a more aggressive policy in the Middle East, including regime change in Iraq. During the First Gulf War, provoked by Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, when missile attacks were made on Israel, Jewish opinion swung behind the attack on Iraq; but the situation in 2003 was much less straightforward, and a majority of American Jews opposed the war. However, for right-wing Americans, including more orthodox Jews, the failure to remove Saddam had been a serious error.

In 1997 the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) was founded with the aim of promoting American global leadership. Of the 25 original members of the group, the neoconservatives, ten became members of the Administration of President George W Bush, including Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary for Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Deputy Secretary for Defense Paul Wolfowitz. In 1998 the PNAC had addressed a public letter to the then President Bill Clinton, urging him to intervene in Iraq, because "if Saddam does acquire the capability to deliver weapons of mass destruction, as he is almost certain to do if we continue along the present course, the safety of American troops in the region, of our friends and allies like Israel and the moderate Arab states, and a significant portion of the world's supply of oil will all be put at hazard."<sup>118</sup> Although Saddam Hussein was not involved in the 2001 attack, and did not have weapons of mass destruction, American public opinion now saw Iraq as a danger to the US and over 50% of Americans were in favour of war on Iraq even before it began. The significance of the PNAC in influencing President Bush's decision to go to war is disputed, but the closeness to the President of these men, advisers with a long-term commitment to intervention in Iraq, clearly had an effect.

The neoconservatives also reflected the growing tension between America's support for Israel and the role of Turkey in the Middle East. Although a strong ally of the United States, Prime Minister and later President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was becoming increasingly critical of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, culminating in the Israeli attack in 2010 on the flotilla of ships that attempted to break the Gaza blockade, in which eight Turkish nationals were killed. The neoconservatives began to call for Turkey's expulsion from NATO and after Turkey's purchase of the Russian S-400 weapons system the

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<sup>117</sup> Galen Jackson, *Who Killed Détente? The Superpowers and the Cold War in the Middle East, 1969-77,* in *International Security*, Volume 44 | Issue 3 | Winter 2019/20 pp. 129-162, p 135.

<sup>118</sup> PNAC letter to Pres Clinton, 26 January 1998, <https://web.archive.org/web/20131021171040/http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqclintoletter.htm>



conservative press became more insistent: "Turkey no longer is a credible or desirable ally on the basis of either political values or security considerations. The United States and NATO need to part ways with Ankara."<sup>119</sup>

American involvement in Syria began under the Obama Administration, with echoes of the Truman Doctrine. The US intervened on behalf of the rebels attempting to unseat Bashar al-Assad, first with covert operations, then with troops and airstrikes. In 2014 the Americans became heavily involved, at the head of an international coalition, against the forces of the Islamic State that itself was at war both with the Syrian government and the rebels. In September 2015, the Syrian government asked for Russian help against the rebels and ISIS, leading to an extremely dangerous situation. As an ally of the US, Turkey was active in the war against ISIS, as were the Syrian Kurds. As the Kurds consolidated their control over the area in north-eastern Syria adjacent to Turkey, in 2019 Erdoğan decided to intervene militarily to secure the border. President Trump ordered American troops to withdraw from the area, coupled with a threat to "devastate Turkey economically" if it attacked Kurdish forces in Syria.

Relations between the US and Turkey became even more complex when President Erdoğan became more assertive in his policy regarding the oil-producing countries in the region. The 'Blue Homeland' policy is the name given to Turkey's maritime claims in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly to the deposits of natural gas off the coast of Cyprus. This not only involves conflict with the governments of Greece and the Republic of Cyprus, but also reflects the increased importance in Turkish politics of those who dislike the role of the United States in the Middle East, and has brought Turkey into conflict with NATO allies, such as France.



Turkey has been involved in military operations in Iraq and in Syria for years, but in October 2019, the decision to set up a buffer zone in north-eastern Syria and to expel the Kurdish forces from the area, set a very different tone. After ordering the withdrawal of US troops ahead of the Turkish incursion into north-eastern Syria, Donald Trump changed his mind and said some forces should stay to "secure the oil". In March 2020, Erdoğan proposed to President Vladimir Putin that Turkey and Russia should cooperate to use the revenues from Syrian oil fields, many of which are under the control of a Kurdish-led alliance, to rebuild the country. Turkey and Russia support opposite sides in the Syrian conflict, but the readiness of Erdoğan to reach a deal with Putin raised concern in Washington. Similarly, in January 2020, following a request for aid from the internationally recognised government of Libya, the Turkish Parliament approved the sending of troops to Libya to oppose the assault of rebel General Haftar against Tripoli. General Haftar is supported by Russia and Egypt, as well as by the US ally, Saudi Arabia. Although the US is

<sup>119</sup> Ted Galen Carpenter, *It's Time to Expel Turkey from the Western Alliance*, Washington Post, 19 July 2019.



formally committed to the support of the government in Tripoli, President Trump has expressed praise for Haftar, and following the decision of the Turkish Parliament he warned Erdogan that “foreign interference is complicating the situation in Libya.”<sup>120</sup> The reaction of some Republican members of the US Congress was to threaten to impose sanctions on Ankara.

During most of the second half of the 20th century, the Cold War and its aftermath imposed a world order in which the two major powers dominated world politics, and the United States’ position in the Middle East was largely unchallenged. The collapse of the Soviet Union left the US as the sole major player in the field. But far from enabling it to turn the situation to its advantage, it led to growing disorder, and the inability of the United States to pursue a coherent policy; indeed, the United States no longer has any idea of what it should do. The Sunni/Shia conflict, the rise of ISIS, the Russian support of Assad, the involvement of Iran in Iraqi politics, the intervention of NATO partner Turkey in Syria against America’s Kurdish allies, have so complicated the situation that no clear policy option is open to America. President Trump, hardly known for his clarity of thought, veered from one extreme to another, declaring his intention to withdraw all American troops from the region combined with threats to eliminate those who oppose him.

The recent diplomatic rapprochement between Israel and Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates seems to have come as much from the Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, as from the Trump administration, although for some time the President’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, has enjoyed a good relationship with the Crown Prince, both sharing a pragmatic economic view of politics, and driven by their common enmity with Iran. Saudi Arabia has been urging Arab states to have a more cooperative relationship with Israel, the Crown Prince reportedly saying in 2018 that Israelis “have the right to have their own land” and that “our country doesn’t have a problem with Jews.”<sup>11</sup> Sudan and Oman are likely to follow a similar route to Bahrain and the UAE, and even Lebanon is to discuss with Israel the question of their joint maritime boundary in the Mediterranean, an area rich with natural gas. Although not immediately in view, the possibility of some arrangement between Israel and Saudi Arabia itself is being held out as the hope that Israel will come to be accepted by its Arab neighbours. However, important though these developments are, American intervention in the Middle East has little to show for it; Iran now has great influence over an Iraq that had previously been its enemy; Russia now plays a role in Syria; Assad is still in power; the Palestinians are under greater threat from Israel than ever before; ISIS has retreated but is not defeated; US relations with Turkey are at an all-time low; the Kurds after supporting the US are now abandoned. Insofar as the aim was to maintain peace and stability in the Middle East the failure is total, as has been the case in Afghanistan and Libya. Whether that aim was ever attainable is another question.

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<sup>120</sup> Financial Times, 2.January 2020.

# What the UK has meant for Me

by Selim Kuneralp

Ambassador to Sweden, Korea,  
the European Union and the WTO as well as  
Deputy Secretary-General of the Energy Charter



## Early years

During my forty-year long diplomatic career, I have never had the privilege of serving in London. Nevertheless, because of my father's two postings there in the 1960's and early 1970's, I spent some of my formative years in the UK, first at the French Lycée, now appropriately renamed Lycée Charles-de-Gaulle, and later at the London School of Economics.

Those years have had a profound impact on me. Turkey at that time had turned its back on its history and nothing that had happened before the proclamation of the Republic in 1923 seemed to have existed. London in 1964 still bore the scars of the blitz but what struck me more as a schoolboy was that coins with the portrait of Queen Victoria who had died sixty three years earlier were still in circulation. One still counted in pounds, shillings and pence. The symbol for pennies was a 'd' after 'denarius', a unit of Roman currency. I have to say that for a twelve year old who had been brought up in the metric system, adjusting to mental calculations in the pre-decimal currency did not prove all that difficult.

One of the first things that I learned in London was therefore respect for traditions. One of my vivid memories from that time is the funeral of Sir Winston Churchill which I watched on television and which struck me with its dignified and elaborate ceremonial. The image of the Port of London cranes bowing in respect as the barge carrying his coffin was sailing past remains with me to this day.

Churchill's own nephew Peregrine and his wife Yvonne were close friends of my parents and more or less adopted me during the last part of my student days which I spent alone in London. I remember long discussions with Peregrine about history but also current affairs, at their flat in Hans Crescent and their house in Dorset where they invited me to stay when I was preparing my finals. Naturally, his views on topical matters did not match those of the LSE student that I was, but he taught me to respect people's points of view even if you did not agree with them and equally importantly to present your arguments in a logical and calm way. He was a fervent supporter of the death penalty to which I was naturally opposed and we spent many evenings exchanging views on this and many other topics. Despite the age difference, he never patronized me but instead treated me as an intellectual equal. I remained in touch with both of them and visited them over the years whenever

I happened to be in London until they both died in the first decade of the present century.

The Lycée was a completely cosmopolitan environment with pupils from all nationalities and all races. That early experience taught me colour blindness, which has stayed with me ever since.

One of my most notable classmates was the daughter of the President of the newly independent Upper Volta, now Burkina Faso. At the age of thirteen, she used to come to class dressed in furs and wearing jewels that would not have been out of place in the Queen's collection. Observing her made me think at that early age that there was something wrong with decolonization, an impression that has only grown stronger over the years. However, after just a few months, she suddenly disappeared. We later learnt that there had been a coup in her country, the first of many.

The LSE was an equally important influence. It taught me to think for myself and not to take things at face value but rather to question them whenever they did not feel right. The LSE did not make a radical out of me. But studying there was a unique privilege. The personal relationship one had with one's tutor, in my case Peter Reddaway then a red-haired young man barely a few years older than me, whom I had to visit once a week and report to on what I was doing with my studies was one of the unique features of the British education system which probably doesn't exist in too many other countries – certainly not my own. Many years later, I saw Prof Reddaway on BBC TV. The red hair had turned white and I caught myself thinking he had aged a lot before realising that he would have said the same of me if he had had the opportunity to see me.

While the LSE did not turn me into a radical, it provided the setting for the only demonstration and sit-in that I ever took part in. Londoners of my generation will remember that Houghton Street which bisected the school's then premises used to be open to traffic. One day, a taxi hit a student who was crossing the street to go from one building to another. The student was not killed but there was an uproar among my contemporaries, red flags appeared out of nowhere, classes were interrupted and I had the opportunity to watch Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* in the main lecture hall in its entirety for the one and only time in my life. Our rebellion did not have an immediate impact but when I visited the neighbourhood in later years, I was gratified to see that the street and others in the vicinity had been closed to traffic – evidently because the school's premises had expanded to cover much of it.

## **Family connections**

One of the particularities of our life in London in those years was the presence of our British relatives. That did not strike me as particularly unusual. My father Zeki's earlier posting as Ambassador had been in Switzerland where his aunt Saadet, my paternal grandmother's sister who had married a Swiss doctor called Ernst Haeberli, was living with her two sons and their children. So at that age, I assumed that wherever we would go we would have family members.

Another memory from that time is attending the christening at an Oxford Church of my cousin Boris. For me, the experience was noteworthy not because I knew that baby Alexander Boris would one day become Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, but because it was the first Catholic christening that I had attended. He was naturally the centre of attention at the ceremony but I do not remember him having displayed signs of his later ebullience.



Selim K. & Stanley Johnson

We had regular contacts with my father's sister Celma<sup>121</sup> and her second husband, a former Indian Army Colonel called Darley Tucker as well as with Celma's brother Wilfred, grandfather of Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and his wife Irene. They were all living outside London but made occasional trips to the capital to stay with us at the Residence. We have an oil portrait of their father, my grandfather, which I have now inherited and which used to hang on a wall in the Embassy. I remember thinking that Wilfred looked much more like him than my father who seemed to have taken after his mother rather than his father.

I am not going to dwell on the family tragedy that left my father an orphan at the age of eight and Celma and Wilfred in their teens. My grandmother decided to move to Switzerland where her sister was living but also made a

St John Battersby was 16 when he was severely wounded at the Battle of the Somme in July 1916. Three months after he was wounded, St John Battersby was back in France leading men in battle again. A shortage of experienced officers meant they were allowing boys like St John Battersby to stay on if they wished.

A sense of duty compelled St John to return. Soon after coming back he was blown up by a German shell and lost his left leg.

point of ensuring that my father kept in touch with his half-siblings, particularly his sister Celma. A few years later, she married her first husband, St John Battersby, a vicar who had been at 15 the youngest British officer in World War I and was many years later the subject of a BBC documentary called the *The Boy who went to War*. When my father was old enough to travel on his own, he was sent for summer holidays to his sister and her husband in England. St John had lost a leg in World War I.



My father used to claim that whenever he was angry at the government as a result of something that he had read in his morning newspaper, he would break his prosthetic leg because the government was obliged to replace it. However, his son, my cousin Anthony to whom I told the story, said that

this was out of character and therefore unlikely to have happened. It is possible that Celma or her husband made up the story to amuse my father who was a teenager at the time.

Relations with that branch of the family have remained strong over the generations. While Wilfred did not visit Turkey when we were living in Ankara in the 1950s, his son Stanley did, for the first time during his gap year. I was seven or eight at the time and Stanley took it upon himself to teach me the

<sup>121</sup> Turkish-speakers will be surprised at the spelling. However, my aunt was born two decades before the Latin alphabet was adopted in Turkey and she continued to spell her name with a "C" all her life. I have chosen to respect her preference.

rudiments of chess which nobody had bothered to do before. While he did not make a Grandmaster out of me, I think of Stanley whenever I play a game.

I have many reminiscences of contacts with the British side of the family over the years which continue to this day. When we lost my mother in another tragedy, Stanley who was a member of the European Parliament at the time, came over to be with us at her funeral, a fact that I shall never forget.

### **My experience of British diplomacy**

As I mentioned earlier, I have never had the privilege of serving at our London Embassy. However, throughout my career and in all the postings that I have had, and all the positions that I have held including in the Foreign Ministry in Ankara, my British colleagues have always impressed me with their professionalism and generally friendly attitude. One particularity of the British Foreign Service, almost uniquely, is its language training policy which I have always admired and envied. Thus, when I was Ambassador in Korea, my British counterpart Warwick Morris was the only Western head of mission who was fluent in Korean. Most British Ambassadors I have known in Turkey have been Turkish-speakers. Some twenty years ago, at the time when Turkey had been given the status of candidate to the European Union, the subject was naturally very popular in Turkey. Many associations wanted to invite an EU Ambassador as guest speaker at an event that they would organize. As I was in charge of relations with the EU in the Foreign Ministry, some of them would consult me about whom to invite. Much of the time, they also specified that they did not have the technical or financial means to provide for simultaneous interpretation. My answer invariably was that they had to invite the British Ambassador, David Logan, as he was the only Turkish-speaker among his EU colleagues. I do hope that in these times of cut-backs and savings in the diplomatic service, the language training programme is not thrown overboard. It would be a great pity and would do enormous damage to the interests of the UK, not just in Turkey but in many other parts of the world.

### **EU-Turkey-UK**

The UK was preparing to join the European Community at the time when I was completing my LSE studies. It decided to leave the EU just as I was on my way to retirement. I have spent eighteen years of my working life toiling on Turkey-EU relations and some twelve years in Geneva working at the Secretariat of what is now the World Trade Organisation, and much later as Turkey's Ambassador to it.

I couldn't have spent all those years working on Turkey-EU relations without sincerely believing that integration with Europe was really beneficial for Turkey. From the time I was first involved in the process, namely the negotiations on completion of the customs union that were initiated in 1993 to the time when I ended my tour of duty as Ambassador to the EU in 2011, my relentless pursuit had been to contribute to the best of my ability to reaching the objective of full integration. The first step was to ensure that the customs union we were establishing with the EU would pave the way for accession, as our Association Agreement had envisaged when it was signed in 1963. In the



last phase of my career my objective was to try to prevent the accession negotiations that had started in 2005 from being derailed.

Throughout those long years, the UK was always supportive, even in the most difficult times. Thus, after the European Council, under the influence of Christian Democrat leaders in Germany and elsewhere, had decided at the Luxembourg Summit of December 1997 not to include Turkey among the candidate countries, the UK which assumed the Presidency of the Union in the first half of 1998, initiated the process that was to lead to the reversal of this decision two years later at the Helsinki Council of December 1999. Similarly, Jack Straw as British Foreign Secretary was instrumental in getting the Council in December 2004 to decide to open accession negotiations with Turkey.

I have often wondered what motivated the UK to be so supportive of Turkey's accession at the time. The conclusion that I have come to is that successive British governments that did not favour centralizing the EU as advocated by Germany and France perhaps thought that with Turkey in the Union such a centralized model would be difficult to implement because Turkey was too big and too poor to fit into such a model. With Turkey as a member, it was likely that the Union would move to a looser, more flexible type of association which is exactly what the UK wanted.

I used to think in those days that membership of the EU was for Turkey a guarantee of democracy, stability and prosperity in the same way as it had been for the countries of southern and eastern Europe. That was the reason why I worked so hard for that objective and never thought that any member country would ever want to leave an institution which had contributed so much to modernize, develop, enrich and pacify countries such as Greece, Portugal and Spain.

While over the years, I had been able to see how much of an odd-man-out the UK had been in the Union, I was still surprised by the vehemence of the Brexit campaign which I was quite sure would fail. My surprise was quintupled, if that is possible, by the outcome. My purpose here is not to analyse the reasons why this happened. Over the years, others have done it much better than I could ever do.

However, on the basis of my EU and WTO experience, I will limit myself to making a few observations about what the future may have in store for UK-Turkey relations. There are some people, particularly in Turkey, who feel that there are unlimited opportunities for developing relations with the UK, now that it has left the EU and that Turkey's own quest for membership has ground to a halt, at least for a generation and probably for ever.

I am rather more sceptical. To begin with, moving from the customs union relationship which binds both countries through the EU, to a free-trade area as is being considered now will inevitably have a negative impact on bilateral trade because the ghost of rules of origin which had been laid to rest under the Turkey-EU customs union will suddenly come to life and act as an obstacle to trade between the two countries in manufactured products. It is also probable that like other countries which have been discussing the

possibility of concluding a post-Brexit free-trade agreement with the UK, Turkey will want some easing of immigration restrictions which the UK might be unwilling to accept since much of the point of Brexit had been to restrict immigration. In particular, it is likely that Turkey will insist on the preservation of the present regime which allows certain categories of Turkish professionals to settle in the UK under the terms of the Association Agreement between Turkey and the EU, known as the Ankara Agreement.

And of course, Turkey's hands are tied by its customs union with the EU which prevents it from extending to a third country terms that are more favourable than those that exist between that country and the EU. In practical terms this means that the best that can be achieved is to replicate the Free-Trade Agreement that the UK might negotiate with the EU. In the worst case



scenario of a no-deal Brexit, Turkey will not be able to conclude a separate free-trade agreement with the UK, as this would create risks of trade diversion that would be unacceptable to the EU. It is therefore unlikely that whatever emerges in the next few months will be better in terms of trade

relations than what we have at the moment through the EU-Turkey Customs Union. It is a sad reality but true nevertheless.



## La Fontaine's stick

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Translated by Celia Kerslake

The city was beginning to show the first signs of emerging from the darkness of night; the deep silence was broken by a crescendo of birdsong on all sides; and hearing those familiar sounds, houses, streets and neighbourhoods were coming to life again. Street vendors had already started on their rounds, and footsteps could be heard in nearby buildings. Bornova<sup>122</sup> had woken up to another of those spring mornings that give one a feeling of tranquillity.

On the upper floor of a well-kept house with a large garden, its exterior painted in a pastel shade of pink, a man whose elegant clothes declared him to be an English gentleman had woken early and was seated at his desk, which looked out on a vast expanse of meadowland.

<sup>122</sup> Bornova is a district of Izmir that was much favoured by the Levantine residents of the city in the late Ottoman period.

He took a sheet of paper from the drawer, placed it carefully in the typewriter on the desk, and set about producing a fair copy of the draft he had earlier written by hand.

After a while a few young lads came on to the playing field where the green grass was lightly rippling in the wind. The man's attention was distracted. He stopped typing and, without moving from where he was sitting, began to watch the game the boys were playing, in two opposing teams.

The clamour of those on the field mingled with that barely perceptible sound made by the ball as it rolled over the grass. The man put his head between his hands and slightly narrowed his green eyes. Through the half-open window he had caught the scent of grass touched by early-morning frost ...

Not yet fully awake and still trying to shake off his morning drowsiness, the man suddenly felt disconnected from the time and place where he was. The smell of fresh grass tingling in his nostrils transported him to a completely different land and time.

In a city hundreds of kilometres away from Bornova, an exciting match was being watched by spectators on white-painted wooden terraces and by even more lined up along the edge of the pitch like a string of prayer beads. The man was in the middle of the pitch, refereeing this prestigious contest with a stopwatch in his hand and a whistle hung from his neck. At the same time, whenever any spectators were overcome by excitement and trespassed on to the pitch he would order them back with shouts of "Go back to the line, back to the line please!"

It was 4 January 1914, and the match he was refereeing, in knee breeches, sports jacket and peaked cap, was a historic contest between the two favourite teams of the capital, Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe. Both teams had asked him to manage the match, because Mr James La Fontaine was the most trusted and most respected referee in Istanbul. He didn't give any club special treatment, he was decisive and disciplined, and he really knew his job.

These two teams were as yet only a few years old. The eight matches they had played against each other before this one had all been won by the Red-and-Yellow team. And in many of them Mr La Fontaine, known to the Turks as "Ceyms", had acted as referee.

Galatasaray had been founded in 1905, two years before Fenerbahçe, and was a stronger and more experienced team than its rival. It had a tall, agile goalkeeper, Ahmed Robenson, roaming the penalty area.<sup>123</sup> Of its two German players, one, Emil Oberle, had played for the German national team. In midfield it had Kürt Celal, who instilled fear in his opponents with his majestic body, and on the wing Emin Bülend Bey, swift and nimble as a gazelle.



<sup>123</sup> For more information on Ahmed Robenson see Gareth Winrow, *Whispers across Continents: In Search of the Robinsons* (Stroud, UK: 2019).

In spite of all this, the Fenerbahçe players had prepared extremely well for this match. Moreover, the Yellow-and-Navy team had the stars on their side that day. In this ninth match, managed by James, Galatasaray's spell was broken, marking the beginning of the greatest rivalry in Turkish football.

The next day's newspapers wrote that Fenerbahçe had deservedly won the match and the referee had managed the game fairly. As usual, James had not allowed anyone to pull a fast one on him; he had maintained an equal distance from both sides and settled the match with the utmost fairness.



In Bornova the sun had risen in the sky and it was almost midday. James La Fontaine, sitting at his desk with his head bent forward, continued to float about in memories and dreams. He recalled his first visit to Istanbul and how he had met the lawyer Harry Pears, who was to become a close friend. He remembered the Kadıköy Football Club that

they had founded together, and its successes...

Indeed, had the two friends not allied with the Greek Orthodox community of Istanbul to set up a rival to the all-British Moda Football Club? Who had first had the idea of establishing a football league in Istanbul? What a joy it had been, and what fun, when they defeated the proud British Moda Club including sailors from that shy, slender-bodied Embassy yacht, the HMS Imogene.

Then the waves of his reveries took him even further back in time. He recalled the day when he, Horace Armitage and Ahmed Robenson had erected the first goalposts on the field in Kadıköy known as Papaz Bahçe<sup>124</sup>, which was to become the hub of all the early football activity in the Ottoman capital ... They had started with rugby, then moved on to the association football they loved so much, playing many ambitious matches here with teams from Izmir. After the match they would all go to the plush Schana Hotel in Moda and treat their guests to a special dinner. On a similar occasion some years earlier<sup>125</sup> the first Turkish footballer, Osman Efendi, had even raised a glass to both the Queen and Sultan Abdülhamid...

When, several years later, with the financial support of Mr Whittall it became possible to establish a stadium there, they had even published a newspaper announcement of its opening and the basis on which it was to be run:<sup>126</sup>

<sup>124</sup> *Papaz Bahçe* (or *Papaz(ın) Bahçesi*) means 'priest's garden' or (in an earlier meaning of *bahçe* < *bağ-ce*) 'priest's vineyard' – probably reflecting the fact that the houses of most Greek Orthodox priests in Ottoman lands had a vineyard alongside them.

<sup>125</sup> Following a rugby game played in January 1889 in which the Constantinople Football Club triumphed over the Bournabat (Bornova) Football Club.

<sup>126</sup> The announcement is reproduced verbatim from *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express*, Vol. xxix, No. 32 (7 August 1909), retaining the original spelling.

## Union Club

### Est. 1908

COMMITTEE:

**President**, Mr F.E. Whittall; **Secretary**, Mr Ernest Thomson; **Treasurer**, Mr James La Fontaine; HE Djemil Pasha, HE Rifaat Bey, HE Zia Bey, Mr C.B. Charnaud.

EXECUTIVE AND MANAGING COMMITTEE:

**Secretary**, Mr James La Fontaine; **Members**, H.E. Zia Bey, Mr R.F. Whittall.

The Union Club is established by a Group of Turkish and English Gentlemen with the object of introducing and developing Athletic sports and games of all kinds, and providing a suitable centre where such events can be held.

The Club's grounds and premises are situated at Papaz Baghtché, Kadikeui and consist of:

1. A race-course for running and bicycling races, measuring 500 metres to the lap, and banked up at the four corners.
2. A Turf field for Cricket, Association Football, Rugby Football, Hockey and other games.
3. A Grandstand for Ladies and Gentlemen capable of seating 700-1000 people.
4. A Grandstand (capable of seating 150 persons) and enclosed grounds for Turkish Ladies.
5. Club House with reception, Billiard, and card rooms, private balcony with a magnificent view of the field and course, restaurant and bar, Ladies and Gentlemen's Dressing rooms, bath rooms and Lavatories.
6. Tennis Court.
7. Skating Ring.
8. Raised platform for wrestling.

The Club will be definitely opened in September by which time the various works which are now actively proceeding will be finished.

MEMBERSHIP:

A.--- *Full members* paying £t 2 entrance (first year only) and £t 4 Subscription.

*Rights* --- Free use of Club House, Grandstand and Grounds.

B.--- *Members* paying £t 1 (first year only) and £t 2 subscription.

*Rights* --- Free use of Grandstand and Grounds. --- Excluded from Club House.

C. --- *Ground members* paying £t 1 only.

*Rights* --- Free use of Grounds only. Excluded from Grandstand and Club House.

For all information and particulars,

Apply James La Fontaine,

Secretary to the Managing and Executive Committee.

The Union Club stadium, established in 1908 through the efforts of James La Fontaine and his friends on the field now used by Fenerbahçe, was the first modern stadium in Turkey. There is plenty of evidence that the ambitious plans set out in this founding document were all realised, if only for a brief space of time. The Ottoman political environment, both domestically and internationally, was becoming increasingly perilous, and in these circumstances James La Fontaine withdrew from the football scene (1910-11).



After his departure the Union Club stadium fell gradually into neglect and disrepair...

The best account of James La Fontaine is given by Ruşen Eşref Bey, a close friend of Mustafa Kemal, who was also a famous Turkish man of letters, journalist, parliamentarian and ambassador. In the memoirs that he published in 1957 under the title *Galatasaray and Football*,<sup>127</sup> Ruşen Eşref Bey devoted a special section to James La Fontaine. This accomplished writer gave an excellent description of the Englishman who brought modern football to Turkey, started the first league matches in Istanbul and founded the first stadium:

... [u]ntil Galatasaray decided to risk everything and emerged as the first Turkish club – fully aware of the precedent of what had befallen a Turkish club that had been founded before it on an experimental basis and had immediately been dissolved – the game known as football was played in Istanbul only by the British and the local Greek Orthodox lads trained by them! At the beginning there were two main clubs. One of them was called Moda, the other Kadıköy.

These clubs had each adopted the name of one of the districts on the other side of Istanbul: Kadıköy was the club of the Greek Orthodox community whose houses and jobs (as tailors, barbers, sellers of lottery tickets or even ironsmiths) were in Kadıköy...

The founding president of that club was the Englishman James La Fontaine, who lived in Kadıköy and was known for his dedicated service to the establishment and promotion of football in Istanbul. He was a merchant with an office in the vicinity of Bahçekapı, Istanbul, and also had a post at the British High School in Nişantaşı. He was virtually the head of the British community in Moda, or something like a neighbourhood headman, I think... I don't know, it seemed to me there was something about him that gave that impression. In short, it could be said that this Ceyms [James] was the first, pioneering example of a foreigner who served the cause of Istanbul football. He was said to have established the first football league in the city.

Ceyms was a good football player himself. However, in the years that I knew him he was not playing in matches much, but rather refereeing in a golfing outfit, with a whistle in his mouth and a white metal stopwatch either in the small pocket of his breeches or in his hand. I can see his round, energetic face, bright red and clean-shaven, and his eyes tinged with the green of the English Channel, as clearly as if he were standing in front of me now. His



<sup>127</sup> Necat Birinci & Nuri Sağlam (eds), *Ruşen Eşref Üneydin, Bütün Eserleri*, Cilt 4 (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2002), 201-331.

face and something about him produced in me as a child both envy and irritation...

That 'something about him' suggested a feeling of superiority, a belief in himself and a consciousness that he had a mission to teach and educate. You would see this in the pursing of his lips, in his lustreless and infrequent smile and in the way he used his stick: holding its handle tightly in his energetic grasp, he would plunge its iron tip into the grass of Papazın Çayırı,<sup>128</sup> tilting it at a strange and characteristic angle.

James's leadership, which I will describe as benevolent, bore the authority of one who was the mentor of the entire world - or worlds - of football in that meadow...

At this point it may be of interest to explain how James's family had become established in Izmir. James's great-grandfather, also called James La Fontaine, was born in Geneva, probably in the 1770s. After living in England for seven years in his youth, he was naturalised as a British subject by special act of Parliament. He became a member of the Levant Company and set himself up in Izmir, in partnership with Edward Hayes of London and trading under the name of Hayes La Fontaine & Co. He fell in love with a beautiful Izmir girl named Maria Cocchini.

James and Maria married in 1797 and had nine children, the fourth of whom, Edward, was born in Buca<sup>129</sup> in 1806. Edward, who established the separate firm of Edward La Fontaine in the 1850s, married Lydia Maltass and they had six children. The fifth of these, Edward Augustus John, married Blanche Whittall, daughter of another long-established Izmir family with British roots. This couple gave their first male child, who was born in 1881, the name of his great-grandfather, who had been the first of his family to come to Izmir.<sup>130</sup> The child thus named was James Edward La Fontaine, the subject of our story.



James La Fontaine's childhood was spent in Izmir. On his father's death in 1899 he moved to Istanbul and as a young lad of eighteen joined the rowing club that had been set up in Kadıköy. Thanks to his sporting ability he became one of the best rugby players in Istanbul and was invariably a participant in the famous Istanbul-Izmir rugby matches.

<sup>128</sup> *Papazın Çayırı*, 'the priest's meadow/field' was a later version of the name *Papazın Bahçesi*.

<sup>129</sup> Like Bornova, Buca is a district of Izmir that was favoured by the Levantine mercantile community in late Ottoman times.

<sup>130</sup> Giraud, Edmund H, *Family Records - A record of the origin and history of the Giraud and Whittall families of Turkey* and La Fontaine, James, *A short history of the La Fontaine family*, 1934. This composite and very interesting source is accessible at <http://www.levantineheritage.com/book1.htm>

Around 1897/8<sup>131</sup> James and his friends Harry Pears and Horace Armitage founded the Kadıköy Football Club. A few years later James brought the idea of an Istanbul football league to life. The Constantinople Association Football League, which he founded in 1904, was probably the first football league to be established in (what was to become) Turkey. From 1908 the Union Club was formally in charge of it, effectively performing the role of a federation, with James La Fontaine doing the organisational work required. Turkish and Levantine clubs came together in the League, which was open to any club that wished to join. Sometime after the establishment of the League James gave up active sportsmanship and took up refereeing and management. In these roles he was at least as successful as he had been as a footballer, becoming the most respected referee and manager in Istanbul.

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In his study in Bornova, James La Fontaine finished typing out his handwritten draft. He took the sheet of paper out of the machine and began to read aloud from the final section detailing how certain members of the family had served in the Great War:

“James Edward, the eldest son of Edward La Fontaine, remained in Turkey to supervise and liquidate the interests of the firm of Edward La Fontaine & Sons (of which he was then the senior partner) and to act as guardian of his widowed mother and unmarried sisters. He was arrested and exiled to Tchorum [Çorum] in November 1915, but liberated a few months later by Talaat Pasha, the Prime Minister, for services rendered to Eyoup Sabri Bey, General Secretary of the Union and Progress Party, when the latter was interned at (sic) Malta. On 17 July 1917 he was again arrested with four other Englishmen (...) and interned at Modjour, a village not far from Caesarea [Kayseri]. He was released in December of that year, thanks to the efforts of Rahmi Bey, the enlightened Governor of Smyrna, whose extraordinary generous and considerate treatment of enemy subjects will ever be remembered by those who lived, during the war, in Smyrna. James Edward returned to Constantinople a few days before the arrival of the allied fleets, and was thus able to re-establish the interests and connections of the firm and enable it to take fuller advantage of the short term boom that followed the Armistice.”<sup>132</sup>

La Fontaine died a few months after setting down his family history in this piece of writing, which is dated ‘Bornova, Izmir, Turkey, 23 May 1934’. He is buried in the Anglican Cemetery in Bornova. It is highly regrettable that nothing is known of James La Fontaine’s life under the Turkish Republic. Did he manage to re-establish any sort of connection with the football clubs of Istanbul? Or to interact with the football scene in the new, insistently Turkish Izmir? Here in Istanbul nowadays almost no one remembers James La Fontaine, which is a very sad state of affairs. Those of us who take an interest in Turkey’s social and sporting history make a point of mentioning him from

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<sup>131</sup> The precise date is not known. It may have been before James settled permanently in Istanbul, during a period when he was coming and going between the two cities.

<sup>132</sup> <http://www.levantineheritage.com/book1.htm>

time to time and recalling the great efforts he made for the development of organised physical exercise in this country.

The story goes that those who entered James's study in Bornova after his death saw that there was a walking stick immediately behind the door, the famous stick that, years earlier, he used to plunge into the pitch at Papaz Bahçe in 'characteristic' fashion. That stick is said to be somewhere in Izmir still...

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## What is the Sunni Shia divide

by @Trevor Mostyn

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on the Arab world, Iran and India

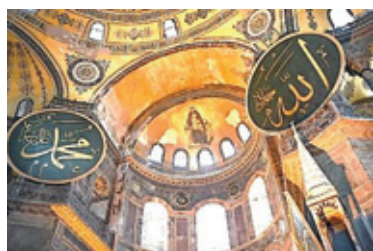
Teaching Islam and Democracy at Oxford University's  
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### Part 1

Turkey reacted angrily to Iranian claims that President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had been implicitly involved in Saudi Arabia's execution, on 2 January, 2016, of the Shia cleric Shaikh Nimr an-Nimr and 46 others charged with terror offences. Erdoğan had refused to condemn the killings, describing them as an "internal legal matter", amid improved ties between the two majority Sunni states. A small but passionate group protested outside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul led by a Twelver Shia organisation called *The Ehli Beyt Scholars Association* whose chair noted that "Sunnis, Shiites, Kurds and Turks" had joined the protests.

It is somewhat ironical that at the time *The Washington Post* journalist Jamal Khashoggi was reported to have applauded the execution of An-Nimr by equating him and the others with al-Qaeda terrorists<sup>133</sup>. The executions were carried out only a day after Mr Erdoğan had visited Riyadh for talks with the Saudi King. It seemed that Erdoğan was positioning himself for a leadership role in Sunni Islam despite the impact on Turkey's Alevi Shia population of about 20%. However, by the time that Khashoggi was murdered in the Saudi Consulate in 2018 Erdoğan's mood had changed and he took the moral high ground, insisting that the murder be properly investigated. Erdoğan had supported groups aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood during the civil war in Egypt whereas the Saudis had supported Egypt's clampdown on the Brotherhood since the abortive presidency of the Brotherhood's President Muhammad Morsi. Although anti-Alevi vitriol diminished in Turkey after Erdoğan's first electoral victory in 2012 the Alawites, among the refugees pouring out of Syria, have been abused by militant Sunni groups. Meanwhile

<sup>133</sup> *Middle East Monitor*, October 18, 2018



Erdoğan has ordered the conversion of the Aya Sophia from a museum back to a mosque, presumably to improve his Sunni credentials at a time of his diminishing popularity.

It is often argued that the schism between Sunnis and Shia is mirrored in Europe's religious wars, Protestants against Catholics, epitomised in the St

Bartholomew's massacre of 1572 in Paris in which up to 30,000 Huguenots were slaughtered. But in reality Europe's religious divide was far deeper doctrinally. Many see Shi'ism as a 'Persian' sect but this is too simplistic. It was the Arabs who brought Shi'ism into Persia. The Arab garrison city of Qum (today the beating-heart of the Islamic Revolution of 1979), a colony from the Iraqi garrison town of Kufa, was one of the main Shia strongholds. The opposition expressed by Shi'ism was a social revolt against the Arab aristocracy rather than a national revolt against the Arabs.

Until the Persian Safavids adopted Shi'ism (the 'sect' of Ali) in 1501 the Sunni-Shia divide for many was unclear, Shi'ism tended to represent the resistance of the disenfranchised against the ruling Sunni (*Sunna*, the 'path' of the Prophet Muhammad), and, to begin with, Arab, elite. It attracted the Mawalis, (non-Arab clients of Bedouin Arab tribes). Many were Persians who had inherited the pre-Islamic culture of sophisticated kingship and were influenced by Greek rational thinking espoused by the Mutazilites of the early 800's as well as by the mysticism that would develop into Sufism.

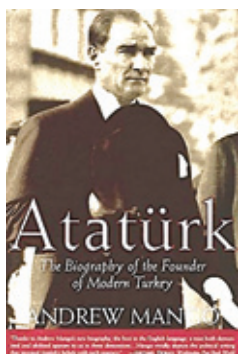
The Sunnis revere Ali as the fourth Caliph, the Shia as the first Imam. Both Sunnis and Twelver Shi'a (those who revere the 12 *Imams* as infallible, spiritual leaders), apart from the Shia *ghulat* (extremists), revere Muhammad as God's final Prophet, share the same Qur'an authorised by the third Caliph (*Khalifa*) Othman and both perform the Hajj to Mecca. Most imams had miraculous births, were born circumcised and praised God from their cradles, with obvious similarities to the birth of Christ.

Arguably, the only critical difference is that Sunnis recognise the first four Caliphs while the Shi'a believe that the Prophet should be represented by the 'Family of the House' (of the Prophet, *Ahl al-Bayt*), in short by Ali, the son-in-law and cousin of Muhammad, and his descendants, the Imams. Extremist Shi'is resort to Sabb, the vilification of the first three caliphs.

The followers of Muhammed Fethullah Gülen in Turkey, once companions, now the nemesis of the regime of President Tayyip Erdoğan, are reported to have had recourse to *taqiyya* (the Shia tactic of hiding their belief when faced with persecution), suggesting the continued influence of Shi'ism in mainly Sunni Turkey. Similarly, the Janissaries, children levied (through the *devşirme* system) by the Ottomans from the Christian Balkans, were beguiled by Sufi Bektashi culture, suggesting an attachment to Shi'ism which flourished discreetly in villages on the Anatolian steppes within the staunchly Sunni Ottoman empire.



The same attraction survived into the modern period, according to Andrew Mango in *Atatürk*, his biography of Mustapha Kemal Atatürk<sup>134</sup>. In December 1919 in Kayseri Mustapha Kemal visited the tomb of Hacı Bektaş, the founder of the Bektashi dervish order and the main shrine of the Alevi in Anatolia. When he dined with the head of the order, Cemalettin, rakı was drunk freely as the two men agreed on how the country, still controlled by European powers, should be defended. The Celebi ('man of God') told Atatürk that he was joining the national resistance movement and ordered his followers to support it. According to Mango 'it was in the heart of central Anatolia where the heterodox beliefs of Turkoman tribesmen had shaped popular culture that Kemalism can be said to have been born on 24 December, 1919.'<sup>135</sup>



During the first two centuries of Islam the Shia divided into three main groups who revere the Imams. The mainstream Twelvers maintain that the 12th Imam had gone into concealment or occultation (*ghayba*) but would return one day to bring justice to the world. The Seveners, the Isma'ili's, today represented by the Aga Khan, likewise revere the seventh Imam and the Fivers, the Zaydis of Yemen, the fifth. The Houthis, as the Zaydis of Yemen are known today, are now suffering a devastating war with hard-line Sunni Saudi Arabia despite the fact that Zaydism is the closest of the Shia sub-sects to the Sunnis. During the Yemeni civil war of the 1960's Saudi Arabia supported the Zaydi Imams against the Republicans supported by Egypt's Gamal abd al-Nasser.

Most Shi'is interpret the Qur'an as either *Batin* (esoteric) or *Zahir* (exoteric, literal), adhering to the Qur'anic line (*aya*) "none but the unbelievers would reject our signs". Each Imam named his successor through *Nass*, divinely inspired designation. For example, Noah designated Shem rather than Ham or Japheth. Among the Sunnis the caliph depends on acceptance by the people, while among the Shia it is through *Nass*. 'Those set in authority' in the Qur'an are the Imams. After the disappearance of the sixth Imam, Ja'afar al Sadiq (d. 765), the occultation started; in other words, Ja'afar disappeared from sight but did not die, the Shia believe. They believe that as the Hidden Imam, he will return as the Mahdi ('The Chosen One') with Muslims who fought at the Battle of Badr, Muhammad's first, victorious battle against the Quraysh merchant clan of Mecca, for a final battle to destroy evil and restore justice to the world.

Today the Alevi, who form some 20% of the Turkish population, claim to follow the Shia sect (Alevi, Alawi, followers of 'Ali') despite pre-Islamic influences which they share with the Alawites (the Nusayris) of Syria and the Druze of Lebanon. Some early travellers assumed that Alevi and Alawis were, in fact, Nasranis (Christians). In all three alcohol is drunk, there are no mosques and women go unveiled. The Alawite *Quddas* (from the Arabic word

<sup>134</sup> Andrew Mango, *Atatürk*, (London: John Murray, 1999).

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*, p. 261

'quds' for 'holy') in which Ali's attributes are proclaimed in prayer, is possibly an echo of the Christian holy communion. They believe in reincarnation and in a divine triad of Ali, Muhammad and Salman the Persian, who created the trench before Medina which halted the Quraysh enemy and allowed Muhammad to defeat the Qurayshi Meccan besiegers in the third and decisive 'Battle of the Trench'.

Khomeini rejected advances by the Syrian, Sunni Muslim Brotherhood after the Revolution, preferring through realpolitik to ally himself with the Syrian Alawites. He may also have condoned the killing in Libya in 1978, allegedly by Qadhafi, of the popular liberal Lebanese Shia cleric Musa Sadr who had cultivated well-meaning links with the Shah and posed a threat to Khomeini's hardline power-base and his concept of the *Vilayet-e Faqi* ('Custodianship of the Jurisconsult'), basically Islamic dictatorship.

Orthodox Sunnis condemn the Alawis and the hardline cleric Ibn Taymiyya (d 1328), who would inspire the fundamentalist Wahhabis of Arabia, considered



them to be heretics deserving death. The outlawed Muslim Brotherhood regards them as infidels. Even many Shia see them as extremists (*ghulat*). The Alawites adopted the technique of *Taqiya* (hiding their faith) to avoid persecution. It has been suggested that *Taqiya* has been an impeccable qualification for membership of the Syrian Mukhabarat (secret

police). However Musa Sadr issued a *fatwa* (legal opinion) confirming them as Shi'is and Ayatollah Khomeini accepted the Alawis as Shia during the eight-year Iran-Iraq war. The political alliance with Syria would allow the Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guards) and the Lebanese Hizbullah ('party of God') to flourish in the region. The Pasdaran leader Qasem Soleimani was assassinated by a US drone strike in January this year and in July this year the Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif tried to stave off hard-line accusations of pro-US treason by proclaiming his close ties with Soleimani.

The present-day Sunni-Shia divide reflects the polarisation of Iranian and Saudi Wahhabi influence since the Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran inspired by Ayatollah Khomeini and since the irredentist influence of Iran sparked by the fall of Saddam Hussein and his Sunni-oriented Ba'thist regime in 2003 in Iraq. Iraq is 70% Shia. The standoff has echoes of the historic polarisation of Persia and the Byzantine Empire but Khomeini clearly saw the Islamic Revolution as non-sectarian at first and it had a deep impact on Muslims everywhere as the October 1979 siege of the Great Mosque in Mecca by Sunni extremists demonstrated.

The split in recent years has been exacerbated by the Saudi crown prince and de facto ruler Muhammad ibn Salman (MBS), with Saudi Arabia implicitly in tune with Israel, its erstwhile enemy, in an astonishing volte face. Enmity with Israel since its creation in 1948 has been replaced by hostility towards Iran whose Islamic Revolution laid claim to the support of all Muslims, both Sunni and Shia. Saudi Arabia's planned new \$500 billion mega-city Neom near the Jordanian port of Aqaba is likely to involve Egypt and Israel although some projects may be on hold since the scandal involving the grisly murder and quartering of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October, 2018.

But how deep are the roots of Sunni-Shia antagonism? We must delve into early Islamic history to seek the answer. Muhammad married his beloved Aisha when, according to most sources, she was six, consummating the marriage when she was nine (some claim twelve).



She briefly lost her moral status among Muhammad's nine wives when she was left behind by the camel caravan heading back to Medina, seeking a lost necklace in the sand. The following morning she was led to the camp by a young man who had found her waiting for a search party that never came and, amid the ensuing gossip – fanned by wives jealous of her favoured position with the Prophet, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law Ali (to whom Muhammad was *in loco parentis*) cautioned Muhammad to divorce her, possibly sharing the doubts of her accusers. Aisha never forgave Ali, sowing the seeds of the historic split. Happily for Aisha, a verse from God soon exculpated her and the slanderers were punished. As for the orphan Ali, he had looked on Muhammad's first wife, the late Khadijah, Islam's first convert to whom Muhammad had remained entirely faithful and who bore him his only children, as his mother. Aisha claimed to have been jealous only of the dead Khadijah and not of Muhammad's eight other wives although they, knowingly, disputed this claim.

In the first *fitna* (Arabic, strife) or civil war after the Prophet's death, provoked by claims that Ali shared the guilt of the third Caliph Othman's murder (he had failed to punish the killers), Aisha, seated on the silk-curtained *houdaj* of her splendid white camel, was defeated by Ali's soldiery and gently ushered back to Medina. However, after Muhammad's death the once hostile Meccan converts overruled the Ansar (Medinan 'helpers' who supported him in Medina after the Hijra – or 'Migration' – of Muhammad and the Muslims from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD) and elected as Caliph Muhammad's closest companion and, significantly, Aisha's father, Abu Bakr. Muhammad's daughter and Ali's wife, Fatima (whose name would inspire the Shi'i Fatimids of Egypt), asked Abu Bakr for her father's estates. Furthering the split with Ali, he refused on the grounds that they belonged to the *Umma* (the Islamic 'Family').

Abu Bakr had chosen as his successor the praetorian Omar, a man pious but so stern that he had his son beaten to death for drunkenness. When Omar was assassinated Ali was again passed over in favour of the aristocratic scion of Muhammad's one-time Qurayshi enemies, Othman, a cousin of the late Quraysh leader Abu Sufiyan. The Quraysh had now prevailed over the House of the Prophet. When Othman, too, was assassinated, his blood dripping over the Qur'an that he was reading, Ali was blamed, as we have seen, not least by Aisha, and Ali's troubles began.

In 628 when Christians from Najran in the South of what is now Saudi Arabia had approached the Prophet Muhammad for theological debate he had flung his cloak around Ali, Fatima, Hussein and Hassan noting that they, like the children of Abraham, were the *Ahl al Bait* (Family of the House), ie The Bani



Hashim sub-clan of the Meccan Quraysh clan. “He whose master I am has Ali also for his master”, he is reported to have said <sup>136</sup>. On his way back to Medina from his Farewell Pilgrimage to Mecca Muhammad had stopped at the pool (*Ghadir*) of Khumm, according to the Shia. Here he took Ali’s hand in his hand and said that Ali was the patron of everybody who saw Muhammad as his own patron. As Baqer Moin notes in his biography of Khomeini, the Shia believe that Muhammad designated Ali as his successor ‘as a divine act, not a personal choice’.<sup>137</sup>

When Muhammad called for pen and paper on his death bed there was panic among the wives lest he name Ali as his heir in writing and with Ali lest he name Abu Bakr, whom Muhammad had asked to lead the final prayer. On the grounds that Muhammad was too frail, Omar (who would become the second Caliph) insisted that no pen and paper be brought. The Shia claim that Muhammad then died in Ali’s arms while the Sunnis claim that he died in Aisha’s arms.

Ali himself was murdered by a Kharijite (Kharaja, Arabic, ‘to leave’. Kharijites, ‘those who leave, break away from Ali’), appalled by his agreement to accept arbitration during the Battle of Şiffin on the Euphrates, between Ali and Mu’awiya, the governor of Syria. The fanatical Kharijites believed that anyone who sinned was no longer a Muslim.

To prove their sinister argument, shortly after Şiffin they questioned a Companion of the Prophet about a line (*aya*) in the Qur’an and when his answer failed the test and he declared his loyalty to Ali they tied him and his pregnant wife up, then disembowelled his wife, spearing the foetus in front of him, and decapitated him.

These frightening extremists believed that the Caliph should be chosen by tribal consensus and were so puritanical that they expunged from the Qur’an the story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife (who in the Torah falsely accused Joseph of seducing her). Today the Kharijites are known as Ibadhis and are found in Oman, with pockets in Beni Isguen in Algeria and in Zanzibar.

At Şiffin Ali had been on the point of defeating the army of the governor of Syria, Mu’awiya, and the latter had cunningly ordered his troops to place pages of the Qur’an on their spears, shouting “La hukm ila li’llah” (There is no rule except God’s). This froze Ali’s God-fearing troops at the moment of victory. Thus began the military rule of the virtually secular and expansionist Ummayyads, arguably the cultural heirs of Byzantium. Mu’awiya was the son of Abu Sufyan, Muhammad’s bitterest enemy until almost the end and whose wife Hind had eaten from the liver of Hamza, one of the first converts, for having killed their son at the Battle of Uhud, the second of the battles fought between Muhammad and the Quraysh. But Sunnis accepted the rise of Mu’awiya on the grounds that the Ummayyads brought stability.

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<sup>136</sup> He is reported to have said this in 628 on his return from concluding the Treaty of Hdaybia with the then Meccan enemy.

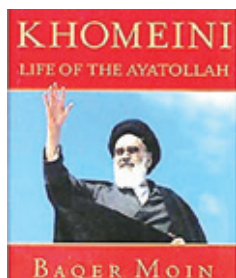
<sup>137</sup> Baqer Moin, *Khomeini, Life of the Ayatollah* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), p15.



Ali's son Hasan briefly took on the mantle of Shia leadership before submitting himself to Mu'awiya. He wanted Muslims to be spared *fitna* (strife). Mu'awiya promised, probably mendaciously, that Hasan would inherit the Caliphate when he died but Hasan died first, maybe poisoned, in 670 and when Mu'awiya himself died a decade later his venal son Yazid succeeded him. Yazid demanded that Hussein come to Damascus and show *baya* (allegiance) to him. Hussein temporised and fled to Mecca. Messages from the garrison town of Kufa in Iraq begging Hussein to come to Kufa and lead a rising against the Umayyad Caliph Yazid suggested that Hussein enjoyed great popularity but the messages were intercepted. Yazid's governor of Basra terrorised the people of the city against supporting Ali while a letter reached Hussein from the poet Farazdaq that although 'the hearts of the people are with you their swords are with the Umayyads'<sup>138</sup>.

There was a tragic inevitability in what followed. With only 72 followers Hussein pressed on. At Kerbela he faced an Umayyad army of 4,000. Most scholars maintain that it was suicide. The brave men around him died one by one and access to the water of the Euphrates was denied. When Hussein raised his baby son – parched with thirst – an arrow was shot through the baby's neck. Hussein's body was buried at Kerbela, becoming promptly the heart of Shia pilgrimage and his head sent to Yazid, whose name was from then on the most cursed of all by the Shi'a. His head was eventually returned to Kerbela and buried with his body.

Hussein's voluntary martyrdom is mourned in the Tazieh passion plays on the tenth day of the Islamic month of Mohurram, known as the day of Ashura (Arabic 'tenth'). Similar to the Jewish Yom Kippur or the Christian Good Friday, the Tazieh plays can be compared to the Christian Passion plays of Christ such as the one that has been held in the German town of Oberammergau since 1634. The story was used by Khomeini 'as a point of departure for the mass movement he staged against the Shah', writes Baqer Moin in his biography of Khomeini. 'On other occasions the focus may be on Hussein's sister Zeinab, her journey in captivity with the rest of his family and her brave and dignified conduct in the court of Yazid'. In other rituals", he says, 'if a family loses a child they may ask for the story of little Ali Asghar [Hussein's infant son] through which they can mourn their own loss'.<sup>139</sup>



The Umayyads ruled with military ruthlessness from Damascus, Kufa and other garrison towns, spreading Islam across North Africa and Spain and into Central Asia. The hated dynasty brutally suppressed Shia attempts at rebellion. In 750 the Abbasid Dynasty emerged from Khorasan, slaughtering the Umayyads almost to extinction and setting Baghdad up as their capital. Although they had chosen Muhammad's uncle Abbas as their progenitor the Shia at first thought that they were allies. They were to be bitterly disappointed. The public face of the anti-Umayyad revolt was a mysterious

<sup>138</sup> John McHugo, *A Concise History of Sunnis and Shi'is* (London: Saqi, 2017), p.70.

<sup>139</sup> Moin, *Khomeini*, p.17



figure called Abu Muslim who defeated Umayyad armies and chose a descendant of Abbas called Abu al-Abbas as the first Caliph. He was nicknamed As-Saffah, the blood-letter. Most of the Zoroastrians who converted shared the Sunnism of the Abbasids, Shi'ism only emerging under the Safavids in the early 16th century.

Sunni orthodoxy emerged in the Hejaz (Mecca and Medina) with the piety of the original Companions (Salaf) of the Prophet, in Syria influenced by Christian Hellenistic thinking and in Iraq by various gnostic doctrines. The eighth and ninth centuries saw the emergence of the four legal schools named after their founders Malik ibn Anas (d 795), Abu Hanifa (d 767), al Shafi'i (d 820) and the more extreme Ibn Hanbal (d. 855). Ibn Hanbal inspired the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia who call themselves Muwahideen, Unitarians, and who were and are at variance with most Sunnis and hostile to the Shia. The Ottomans and modern Sunni Turks follow the moderate Hanafi rite and are therefore more tolerant of Shi'ism.

Part 2 to follow in TASR No 37

GGGGG

## Mustafa Bülent Ecevit

(1925-2006)

who served as the Prime Minister of Turkey four times between 1974 and 2002, was also a poet, writer, scholar, and journalist



This poem was written in 1988 but published much later:  
Bülent Ecevit, *Bir Şeyler Olacak Yarın: Tüm Şiirler*, (İstanbul, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2005), pp. 24-29.

Translation by  
Nilüfer Mizanoğlu Reddy

## Nilüfer Mizanoğlu Reddy

Born one year after the promulgation of the Turkish Republic in 1924 to an enlightened middle class family, (her aunt Suad was one of Turkey's pioneering female school teachers) Nilüfer Mizanoğlu, known as Nili to her family and friends, graduated from the Faculty of Languages, History and Geography in Ankara in 1944. She was a student, among others, of Niyazi Berkes, Muzaffer Şerif, Pertev Naili Boratav and Behice Boran during what was regarded as the 'Golden Age' of that institution which was cut short with the court cases in 1947 leading to their expulsion. She left Turkey at the end of the Second World War to study for a doctorate at Radcliffe College in the United States, but moved on to Columbia University in New York where she met and married Enuga Reddy. She would live in New York for nearly 70 years moving in various circles including the United Nations where her partner rose to the rank of Deputy General Secretary with special responsibility for decolonisation and anti-apartheid. She was involved – as a painter – in feminist art, and took on translations from Turkish literature, mainly women authors. She developed a close personal and working relationship with the late Talat Halman which resulted in a spate of translations ranging from Sait Faik, Nezihe Meriç, Leyla Erbil and the recently deceased Adalet Ağaoğlu. Her translations of Nazım Hikmet's poems were published in book form during the 1950s campaigns for his release from serving a 22-year prison sentence. She has two daughters and four great-grand children.

## SÖYLE ARKADAŞIM

Söyle Arkadaşım' dedi Anadolu Mehmet  
yanıbaşındaki Anzak erine  
'nereden kopup gelmişsin,  
neden çökmüş bu mahsunluk üzerine?'

'DUNYANIN ÖBÜR UCUNDAN' dedi  
gencecik Anzak  
'Öyle yazmışlar mezar taşıma.  
doğduğum yerler öylesine uzak,  
örtündüğüm topraksa gurbet bana.'  
'Dert edinme arkadaşım' dedi Mehmet

'değil mi ki bizlerle birleşti kaderin,  
değil mi ki yurdumuzun koynundasın  
ilelebet,  
sende artık bizdensin,  
sende bencileyin bir Mehmet'

Çanakkale'de toprağının  
üstü cennet altı mezar  
kavga bitmiş mezarlarda  
kaynaş olmuş yiten canlar.  
'ya sen dedi Mehmet  
oyun çağındaki İngiliz erine,  
'yaşın ne senin kardeş  
böylesine erken buralarda işin ne? '  
'yaşım sonsuza dek onbeş'  
dedi ufak tefek İngiliz eri.  
'köyümde askercilik oynar  
çoştururdum trampetimle bizimkileri  
derken kendimi cephede buldum  
oyun muydu, gerçek miydi anlamadan,  
bir sahici kurşunla vuruldum.  
Sustu boynumdaki trampet,  
son verildi böylece oyundan bozma işime  
Gelibolu'da bana da bir mezar kazıldı  
mezar taşıma ON BEŞİNDE  
TRAMPETÇİ' yazıldı.  
Öyküm de künyem de bundan ibaret.'  
Yağmur yağıyordu usul usul toprağa  
gözyaşları düşerek üstüne sanki  
damla damla ağlıyordu uzaktan uzağa  
sahibini yitiren bir trampet.  
'ya sizler' dedi Mehmet  
dünyanın dört kıtasından  
mezarlar dolusu erlere,  
'hangi rüzgâr savurdu sizleri  
bu bilmediğiniz yerlere'  
kimi İngilizdi, kimi İskoç  
kimi Fransızdı, kimi Senegalli  
kimi Hintli kimi Nepalli

## SOLDIER'S STORY

Tell me my friend said Anatolian Mehmet  
To the ANZAC soldier by his side  
Where do you hail from  
Why are you smitten with sorrow all over?

The young Anzac said "From the other end of  
the world"  
"That's what is inscribed on my tombstone.  
My birthplace is so far away,  
This earth covering me is foreign to me."  
'Don't let that trouble you my friend" said  
Mehmet

"since your fate has become ours."  
"You are in the bosom of our land eternally,  
you are one of us.  
You too are a Mehmet."

Over Çanakkale's land heaven reins  
All lost lives joined together."  
"How about you" said Mehmet  
To the English soldier still at game playing  
age  
"brother how old are you?  
What are you doing here so early in your  
life"  
"My age is eternally fifteen," said  
The slightly built English soldier.  
In my village I played the game of soldiers  
That made our folks go wild  
Then suddenly I found myself at the front  
Without reckoning if it were real or a game.  
I was shot with a real bullet that  
silenced the trumpet hanging on my neck  
So my game job came to an end.  
They dug a grave in Gallipoli for me too  
With a tombstone inscribed fifteen-year-old  
trumpeteer  
That's my story and my record.

A gentle rain covered the earth  
As if it were tears falling  
Drop by drop sobbing far away  
The trumpet losing its player  
"What about you" said Mehmet  
Coming from four continents of the world  
Which wind blew you up here  
To places you never knew  
Ending up in soldiers' graves.  
Some were English, some Scottish,  
Some French, some Senegalese,

kimi Avustralya'dan kimi yeni  
Zelanda'dan Anzak  
gemiler dolusu asker  
her biri niye geldiğinden habersiz  
Gelibolu'nun oya gibi koylarından  
şizarak  
tırmanmışlardı dağa bayıra  
siper siper yara gibi yarılan toprak  
mezar olmuştu savaş ardından onlara.

Kiminin BURADA YATTIĞI SANILIR  
Kiminin ADI BİLİNSE DE MEZARI  
BİLİNMEZ  
kiminin de mezar taşında  
on altı on yedi on sekiz yaşında  
EBEDİ İSTİRAHATE ÇEKİLDİĞİ yazılı.  
Çanakkale topraklarında,  
her birinin erken biten yaşam öyküsü  
eski yazıtlar gibi taşlara böyle kazılı.  
'Anlamaz mıyım' dedi 'halinizden  
kardeşler'  
adına yazılı taşı bile olmayan asker  
Anadolulu Mehmet  
1'ben de yüzyıllarca yaban ellerde  
neyin uğruna bilmeden can vermişim  
kendi yurdum uğruna can vermenin  
tadına  
ilk kez Çanakkale'de ermişim.  
Uğruna can verdikçe vatandı ancak  
ekip biçtiğim padişah mülkü toprak  
değil mi ki sizler alamasanız bile  
bu topraklar almış sizi sizleri basmış  
bağrına  
sizlere de vatan sayılır artık  
Çanakkale'de toprağının  
üstü cennet altı mezar  
kavga bitmiş mezarlarda  
kaynaş olmuş yiten canlar.  
Bir garip savaştı Çanakkale savaşı  
kızıştıkça kızgınlığı dindiren  
ara verildikçe ateşe  
düşmanı kardeşe  
döndüren bir savaştı.  
Kıyasıya bir savaştı  
ama saygı üreten bir savaş  
yaklaştıkça birbirine  
karşılıklı siperler  
gönüller de yakınlaştı  
düştüğünce vuranlar toprağa  
dostlar gibi kaynaştı.  
Savaş bitti.  
Ölenler kaldı sağlar gitti

Some Indian, some Nepalese.  
Some from Australia, some Anzac from New  
Zealand.  
Shiploads of soldiers  
Each and every one with no inkling of why  
they came  
As they came ashore in the enchanted bays of  
Gallipoli  
Climbed over the hills and meadows  
The earth opened up into trenches like wounds  
At the end of the war became their graves.  
It is thought that some are buried here  
Even some names are known, their graves are  
not  
In some tombs "THEY ARE IN ETERNAL  
REST"  
Inscription was engraved. They were at the  
Ages of sixteen, seventeen and eighteen,  
buried  
In the earth at Çanakkale – their life  
Stories ending much too early.  
Don't I understand my brothers  
Anatolian soldier Mehmet who didn't even  
have a gravestone  
Me too for centuries in foreign lands  
Died without knowing for what  
I felt the first time  
Dying for my land in Çanakkale  
It was only my homeland when I died for  
that  
Sultan's property I cultivated  
Even if you can't have them  
These lands have embraced you in their  
bosoms  
For you Çanakkale is your homeland too  
Çanakkale's earth  
Has heaven above graves below  
The light ended in the graves  
Finished lives Intermingled  
Çanakkale war was a strange war  
As it got hotter it softened the anger  
When there was a ceasefire  
It turned the foe into a brother  
It was a tough war  
But it created respect  
As the trenches across became nearer  
The hearts too became closer  
When all those who were shot fell on the  
ground  
They became all intermingled  
The war is over  
The dead remained the living departed  
Villager went to the village homeowner to the

köylü köyüne döndü evli evine  
kır çiçekleri geldiler akın akın  
çekilen askerlerin yerine  
yaban gülleri, dağ laleleri, papatyalar,  
kilim kilim yayıldılar toprağa.

Siper siper  
toprağın savaş yaralarını örttüler  
koyunlar koruganları yuva yaptı kendine  
kuşlar döndü gökyüzüne kurşunların  
yerine.

Çiçeğiyle yemişiyle yeşiliyle  
silah yerine saban tutan elleriyle  
geri aldı savaş alanlarını doğa  
can geldi toprağa silindikçe kan izleri.  
Yeryüzünde cennet oldu öylece

o cehennem savaş yeri  
şimdi Çanakkale Gelibolu  
bahçe bahçe, ülke ülke  
mezar dolu.

Üstü cennet altı mezar  
Çanakkale toprağının  
kavga bitmiş mezarlarda  
kaynaş olmuş yiten canlar.  
Huzur içinde uyusun  
vuruştıkları toprakta  
kavgadan kinden uzakta  
yan yana dostça yatanlar.

house  
Field flowers sprouted abundantly  
To fill the place of the departed soldiers  
Wild roses, mountain tulips and daisies  
They blanketed the earth as if they were  
kilims  
From trenches to trenches all over  
They covered the war wounds of the earth  
The sheep turned the trenches into their  
sheepfolds  
The birds returned to the skies in place of  
the bullets  
With its flowers, fruit and grasses  
With hands holding ploughs instead of guns  
Nature took back the fields of war  
The earth became alive blood spots  
disappeared  
So the earth became heaven  
Not hell like a field of war  
Now Çanakkale Gelibolu  
Are all gardens yet the whole land  
Is covered with graves

Heaven is above, below are the graves  
In the land of Çanakkale  
The fight ended in the graves  
All lost lives became intermingled  
Let them sleep in peace  
In the land where they had fought  
Away from the wars and hatred  
Resting side by side.

## CYPRUS

We are looking for a regular contributor who will write a **CYPRUS UPDATE** for the *TAS Review*. For this issue we have been served extremely well by two contributors. But we need someone to continue the coverage of new events in the island which has been provided for many years by Professor Clement Dodd. If you might be able to write this feature for *TAS Review* please contact one of the Co-Editors.

## FELEK\*

In a spring of Galata

Felek waylaid me  
she took me by the hand  
whispered in my ear  
the beauty of summer breeze  
in distant lands

she urged me to take the trip  
as she did to all things  
in the beginning of time

I paused  
bewitched by excitement  
and fear  
my young heart pounded

she squeezed my hand  
and promised  
in her own way  
all would be well  
in lands beyond seas.

On my return  
from lands beyond seas  
I knew  
Felek did not keep  
all her promises.

I bumped into her  
in Galata  
in high winter  
she recognised me instantly  
and smiled.

as she was turning away  
I took her by the hand  
my tired heart fluttering  
gasping to overcome my fear  
I put it in her ear  
sod you.

Erhun Kula

Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul

\*In Turkish mythology Felek is a powerful Angel who maps out everybody's life. Sometimes she draws the wrath of the people who do not like the flow of their lives.



## Noteworthy Events

compiled by Ayşe Tuğrul Colebourne et al.

### Lectures, Talks & Conferences

**'Venetians in the Ottoman Empire; Constantinople, Smyrna and Aleppo'**

Anglo-Turkish Society

**Chair:** Phillip Mansel

**Date and time:** Postponed from June to November 2020, 6pm

**Venue:** Royal Anthropological Institute, 50 Fitzroy Street, London W11T 5BT

**More information:** [www.angloturkishsociety.org.uk](http://www.angloturkishsociety.org.uk)



**5th Restoration, Archaeology and Museum Technologies Fair and Conference**

TG Expo International Fairs



**Dates:** 18th November to 20th November 2020

**Venue:** Lütfi Kırdar International Convention and Exhibition Center, Istanbul

**Website:** <https://www.expointurkey.org/heritage-istanbul-2020>

New technologies give opportunities for cultural heritage by creating worldwide interest, enriching communication and techniques. Aimed at institutions preserving, and transferring cultural with sectoral suppliers, the 5th Restoration, Archaeology and Museology Technologies Fair and Conference will bring together professionals of accredited institutions, governmental bodies, service and product suppliers in restoration, archaeology and museology sectors. With world-famous participants, it will once again be among the most important meetings for the sector. Heritage Istanbul, under the motto 'Securing the Future for the Past', first took place in 2015.

## BATAS Webinars 2020

### 'Turkey and the West'

A two speaker-panel will look at Turkey's external relations with the European Union and the United States following the US elections and the European Council meeting on 15-16 October.

**Date:** 27 November 17.00-18.30

Admission to this event will be free of charge and the Zoom joining details will be provided via Eventbrite. The Eventbrite link, as well as information about the panellists, will be given at [www.batas.org.uk](http://www.batas.org.uk) and in the notices of the event that will be distributed by email and posted on Facebook.

## ICOET 2021: 15. International Conference on Ottoman Empire and Turkey

The International Research Conference

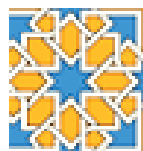
**Dates:** 24-25 June 2021

**Venue:** Paris, France

**Website:** <https://waset.org/ottoman-empire-and-turkey-conference-in-june-2021-in-paris>

This conference aims to bring together leading academic scientists and researchers to share experiences and research results on all aspects of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. It will be a premier interdisciplinary platform for researchers, practitioners and educators to discuss recent innovations, trends, and concerns as well as practical challenges in the fields of Ottoman Empire and Turkey.

## Political Economy of Turkey



### British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) Annual Conference

**Dates:** 29 June – 1 July 2020

**Venue:** University of Kent, Canterbury

**More Information:** [www.brismes.ac.uk](http://www.brismes.ac.uk)

A part of the conference is devoted to Turkey and the Turkish area.

## Concerts

Talent Unlimited

**Soloist (Violin):** Ezgi Sarıkçıoğlu (first half)

**Soloist (Violin):** Berfin Aksu (second half)

**Date and time:** Monday, 16 November 2020, 13:00



**Venue:** St James's Church, 197 Piccadilly, London W1J 9LL

**More Information:** Free Lunchtime recital at St James's Church, Piccadilly, London

**Booking information:** [canan@talent-unlimited.org.uk](mailto:canan@talent-unlimited.org.uk);

Eventbrite: <https://tu-autumn-concert.eventbrite.co.uk>

Talent Unlimited

**Pianist:** Nuno Lucas

**Violinist:** Dillon Jeffares

**Date and time:** Friday 11 December 2020, 13.00

**Venue:** Free lunchtime recital at St James's Church, Piccadilly, London.

**More information:** <http://www.talent-unlimited.org.uk/future-events.html>

### Miscellaneous

Yunus Emre Institute

**Turkish Courses** for A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 & C2

**Dates:** 28 September - 23 January 2021

**Times:** Evening classes (18.00-20.00); Saturday classes (10.30-13.30)

**Venue:** Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centre, 10 Maple Street, London W1T 5HA

**For Details:** [londra@yee.org.tr](mailto:londra@yee.org.tr)

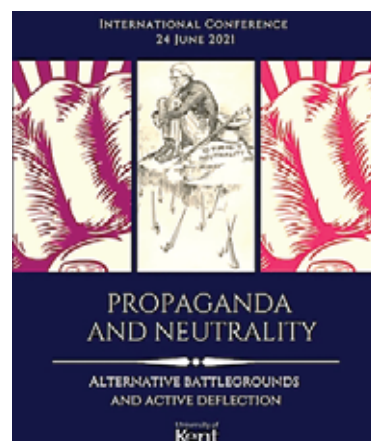
These courses will be taught on Zoom

## Conferences & Organisations



### CALL FOR PAPERS:

The University of Kent's  
Centre for the History of War, Media and Society  
is organising an international conference on



**24 June 2021**

**at the Institute of Historical Research in London**

**'Propaganda and Neutrality:  
alternative battlegrounds and active deflection'.**

Keynote speaker: **Professor Jo Fox**, IHR Director

Neutral states have played an important role in international history. Neutrality has often been a constitutional matter of principle, but for others it has been a political or military

necessity. Neutrals have often acted as mediators, safe havens and buffers, or fallen victim to short-cuts in other states' conflicts. Others have ideologically or financially supported one side in a conflict, but have taken a stance of official non-belligerence – militarily neutral, but ideologically committed.

Neutrals have also played the role of alternative battlegrounds for non-military conflicts – through means such as propaganda, rumour-spreading and espionage – either as hosts to proxy engagements between belligerent states; or through belligerent states applying pressure for neutrals to join their side in a conflict (or at least not join the other side). In the latter case belligerent states have often targeted both Governments and the wider population.

**Papers related to Turkey within the scope of the conference will be welcomed.**

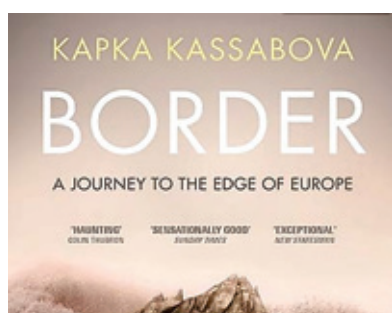
For more information about the conference and how to submit a proposal visit <https://propaganda-and-neutrality.jimdosite.com/> or Inicio | Propaganda and Neutrality

Information and support by

**Edward Corse**

Author of: *A Battle for Neutral Europe*

## Books



# Border

## A Journey to the Edge of Europe

by Kapka Kassabova

Granta Books, 2017, xviii + 379 pp  
ISBN 978-1-78378-320-5 (pbk);  
ISBN 978-1-78378-319-9 (ebook)

Probably it's just as well, as the writer Kapka Kassabova suggests, that the region known as Thrace has never developed into a nation-state: "Macedonia is quite enough, thanks" is a characteristically witty aside from the author of *Border*. This relatively little-known region (nurse of hard men from Spartacus to Talaat Pasha, Mustafa Kemal and Todor Zhivkov, to name but a few) constitutes the south-eastern 'edge of Europe' in the book's subtitle, and provides the historical, geographical and cultural web of events, places, personalities and indeed deeper mysteries that is cleverly unravelled in this fascinating and very unusual piece of writing. Have you enjoyed and been stimulated by authors such as Patrick Leigh Fermor, Colin Thubron, William Dalrymple and Robert Byron? If you have, you are likely to enjoy and to be stimulated by the very individual and multi-layered approach (and generally light touch) of *Border*. It's not all about Turkey, of course, but it does offer some interesting facts and observations about Turkey-in-Europe (not just the officially 'European', border-enclosed part on the maps that is called Eastern Thrace) and about Turkey's past and present political, cultural and simply human connections with Bulgaria, Greece and the Balkans generally.

Kassabova (of whom more a little later) writes incisively about this tough and fateful border region. In the Cold War it was 'Europe's southernmost Iron Curtain, a forested Berlin Wall darkened by the armies of three countries. It was deadly, and it remains prickly with dread to this day' (p. xvii). Since those words were written a few years ago, the very same areas haunted by the ghosts of Balkan refugees and would-be fugitives from communist eastern Europe have witnessed a more recent refugee crisis, and many of us will remember events in this neighbourhood whose news value earlier in 2020 became suddenly eclipsed when another, bigger crisis came along. Kassabova also refers tellingly to the 'three alphabets, three currencies, three versions of history' (p.123) when she visits the twin border cities of central Thrace, Edirne and Svilengrad, and the neighbouring corner of Greece.

I was drawn to reading this book (which I came across only at the start of this year) partly at least by my own past experience of the region, first in the 1970s and then just a few years ago. My first trip to Turkey was by train in 1971, and I retain the memory of a friendly Bulgarian family sharing their simple meal with me in the compartment as we rattled through their country. I also have a memory of going again by train in the opposite direction on some occasion in that decade, and of some Turkish fellow-passengers staring out into the plains of central Bulgaria and wistfully remarking on how all this had once 'belonged' to them. I had already travelled through Northern Greece in my student days before I lived and studied in Istanbul in 1973-74, when relations between Turkey and the Greek military regime were particularly tense, and found myself having to make a couple of winter trips across the border to Alexandroupolis in order to renew my residence permit.



Let's just say that it wasn't the Greece of the holiday brochures. I recall, too, seeing at that time back in Turkey a number of vaguely threatening slogans such as **BATI TRAKYA BİZİM!** (Western Thrace Is Ours!), referring to the territories roughly from the Nestos valley west of Xanthi eastwards to the frontier with Turkey. In 2017 I revisited Northern Greece, travelling from Thessaloniki through to Edirne, and particularly enjoyed a stay in and around Xanthi, an interesting market town with its Turkish community and old Ottoman quarter and also its fine Folklore and Historical Museum, which includes displays on the formerly very important tobacco industry in these parts. I was reminded of that museum when reading in *Border* about the author's visit to nearby Drama and her remarks about the history of the 'oriental tobacco' trade in Macedonia and Thrace. I was also reminded, when I read Kassabova's various references to the sense of isolation and danger she was aware of in this region, of a terrible incident that I read about just a month after passing through Western Thrace on that recent trip. This was the tragedy of a British lady in her sixties, Celia Hollingworth, who in late September 2017 was apparently attacked and almost completely devoured by feral dogs and/or wolves while walking alone near an archaeological site on the coast south-east of Komotini: again, not the Greece of the holiday brochures.

Kapka Kassabova was born in Sofia and her childhood was spent in Bulgaria under communism, with summer visits to the corner of the 'red riviera' close to the mysterious and forbidden entity called Turkey situated across a very hard border. She describes how it was from this heavily-watched holiday playground that East Germans, Czechs and other Eastern bloc visitors would try (often with fatal results) to escape to the West across the strip of land dubbed the 'Furrow of death' (p.56).



Kassabova's family managed, however, to leave Bulgaria, initially for England and later to New Zealand, and now she lives in the highlands of Scotland. She has found her very individual voice as a poet, novelist and writer of narrative non-fiction, weaving together personal memoir, travelogue, history and self-exploration. She achieved acclaim in 2017 with the publication of *Border*, which either won or was short-listed for a number of literary awards. Early in 2020 her most recent publication *To the Lake: A Balkan Journey of War and Peace* (a similar treatment of the equally little-known region of the southern Balkans around Lakes Ohrid and Prespa) was a BBC Radio 4 Book of the Week.

*Border* is certainly an unusual piece of writing with an original design and format, and is hard to pin down to any one particular topic. It is not an academic book, nor one written with any specialists in mind. Yet there is so much of interest in these pages: regional history and geography in general, mythology and chthonic mysteries, stories of migration past and contemporary, references to people-smuggling, encounters with an extraordinary range of characters, all with their own fascinating personal stories, activities and perspectives, and a good deal of information about the lives and movements of Bulgarian Turks and other Balkan Muslims such as the Pomaks. Kassabova has a talent for 'humanizing' the history through the encounters and conversations she relates; she also has a poet's gift for arresting descriptions of places, for example of the eastern Rhodope mountains on pp.220-21, and for memorable turns of phrase throughout (Bulgaria's expulsion of its ethnic Turks in 1989 was "the last cretinous crime of twilight totalitarianism", p.140).

The author's central aim is to tell "the human story of the last border of Europe" (p.xv). As she sees it, border zones are "always the periphery, always out of mainstream sight", and from her current perspective of living in the Scottish highlands she had decided in the middle of the past decade that she really wanted to investigate what was going on in her "native Balkan peripheries" after an absence of some twenty-five years; hence the production of her two recent books. In *Border* this investigation takes the form of a circular journey, alone, beginning and ending in the remote, mountainous south-eastern corner of Bulgaria called Strandzha (in its official spelling) and its equally little-known Turkish mirror-image Istranca, including its stretch of the Black Sea coast. Apparently the Turkish side of the mountain range is called *Yıldız Dağları* (the Starry Mountains), so Kassabova refers rather mysteriously to "Starry Strandja". The middle sections of the book find her moving westwards into the border plains of Thrace ("with its corridors of traffic and trade") and then the passes of the western and eastern Rhodope mountains "where every peak is legend and every village is not what it seems" (p.xviii), before she spends time just across the Turkish border. She tells readers at the outset that most real names of places and of the people she encounters have been withheld or changed, for various good reasons. From time to time she calls onto the stage great travellers of the past such as Herodotus and Evliya Çelebi; and her sections (very often with mysterious, intriguing but also inviting headings such as "Girl Between Languages" and "The Village Where You Lived For Ever") are preceded in an original format by a page or two by way of preface on relevant historical, cultural, mythical or other background information (for example, on Thrace, the Rhodopes or tobacco). As you read the book, it may at first seem too mysterious, or too deep and other-worldly or even disjointed. But gradually it becomes clear that





the individual stories emerging are deftly united by a number of underlying and recurring themes, human forced migration and suffering being just one of them. Fortunately there is some comedy as well as tragedy in the overall narrative.

One recurring theme is the past and present interaction, at the personal as well as political or mass level, between Turks, Bulgarian and Greeks. Not everything can be mentioned here, but I was interested to learn more about the fate of the three hundred thousand ethnic Turks of Bulgaria who in 1989, as “the last victims of European communism” (p.128), found themselves refugees on the margins of Turkish cities, exiles in an unfamiliar land. There is a lot about this aspect of history, and a good section set in Edirne and the nearby Bulgarian border (and casino) town of Svilengrad, or ‘Silk Town’. There is also interesting information about the Pomaks, living especially in their fortress villages in the western Rhodopes and around Drama in Greece: they were descendants of indigenous converts to Islam in the Balkans whose names had been officially changed multiple times in communist Bulgaria and who had been regarded with more suspicion even than the ethnic Turks. Finally, the closing part of the journey takes place in the generally untouristed north-eastern corner of Turkish Thrace, where the author is shown around by the person called Nevzat who is based in Kirklareli. There are some fascinating bits of information here, for example regarding the village originally called Paspalovo whose name was changed to Armutveren as a result of its Bulgarian Christian population being exchanged for Pomak Muslims, and about the story of the family who had faithfully staffed the only Turkish lighthouse on the Black Sea coast between İstanbul and the border with Bulgaria, the Limanköy Feneri near İğneada. Kassabova also passes on some hard-hitting comments and observations from her photographer companion Nevzat about environmental threats to this corner of Turkey, where “pharaonic follies” in the form of monumental government projects “had come at Strandja like a wrecking ball” (p.316). On the coast a nuclear plant “squatted over Strandja’s future” (p.316), and Nevzat’s comment was that the government felt they could do anything there because Strandja was unknown to the world.

While nowhere claiming to be an expert on Turkey, the author is at least even-handed in her treatment of Ottoman and Turkish history, with a lot of her more acid comments reserved for her native Bulgaria and other Balkan states. One point she makes more than once is that the notion of the Turkish ‘yoke’ or ‘slavery’ has often been used by Balkan states as “the explanation for their past, present, and possibly future woes” (p.161), whereas in reality the Ottoman Empire was not a slave economy but one based on taxation. In fact, she tells us, it was the Gypsies of Romania “who endured centuries of appalling slavery, and ‘the Turks’ had nothing to do with it” (p.161). History is also full of awkward ironies, she suggests, when pointing out that the great Ottoman architect Mimar Sinan (creator of those wonderful mosques and other monuments in İstanbul and Edirne) was not an ethnic Turk but had been taken from Orthodox Christian parents: a somewhat uncomfortable fact in today’s Turkey, “split as it is between Atatürk’s rusty nationalist ‘homogeneity’ dogma and the conservative Islamists’ post-Ottoman tristesse” (p.162).

As well as the many such insights into the Balkan aspects of Ottoman history, I enjoyed reading about the various links between parts of Anatolia and the whole Thracian area. There is the story, for example, of Stefania, whose Anatolian Greek grandparents had to move from Cappadocia in the exchanges following the Greek-Turkish war, and via Athens and Thessaloniki eventually settled in the very different environment of the border villages of the western Rhodopes. Then there is the story of the *Rosa damascena* grown to produce attar of roses, so important for the perfume industry, and of the curious historical link between the two regions in the

world that have the right soil conditions: Bulgaria's Valley of the Roses near Kazanluk and Turkey's very own Rose City, Isparta in south-west Anatolia.

All in all, this is an unusual and fascinating book that delves deep into so many aspects of the relatively unfamiliar corner of Europe that forms its subject. Even if some of the layers seem a little baffling, and if chthonic mysteries aren't really your thing, there is still plenty of information and stimulus on or nearer the surface here for anyone interested in this western end of the 'Turkish area'.

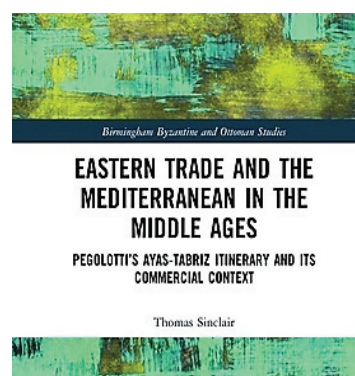
John Moreton  
University of Leeds

## Eastern Trade and the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages.

### Pegolotti's Ayas-Tabriz Itinerary and its Commercial Context

by Thomas Sinclair

Abingdon, Oxon & New York: Routledge 2020, 439 pp,  
ISBN 978-0-7546-6516-8 (hbk),  
978-0-429-34811-2 (ebk)



At the port of Ayas in Cilicia, during a period of eighty years ending in 1337, Italian and other European merchants bought or loaded precious eastern products – silk, spices, cloth of silver or gold. Ayas was connected with Tabriz in north-west Iran, a market for goods from China, India, Iran itself and the Persian Gulf, by a commercial artery passing through Asia Minor and Armenia. Apart from Cilicia itself the territory through which the road passed lay under the direct rule of the Il-Khans, a branch of the family of Chingghiz (Jenghiz) Khan; the Il-Khans' capital was precisely Tabriz.

The route is detailed in an itinerary contained in a trading manual known as the *Pratica della Mercatura*. The *Pratica's* author, Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, was an official in the Bardi bank, the largest in Florence, the banking capital of Europe at the time. The itinerary is a list of toll posts along the way with the amounts of tax that are levied by the Il-Khan's government at each post. The *Pratica* as a whole must have been finalized around 1340, whereas in my opinion the composition of the itinerary took place somewhat earlier, in the period 1322-27.



I was drawn to this itinerary, not only by the road's importance at the time, but also by the series of place names so deformed that their identification has remained unsolved since the first efforts by scholars in the 1860s (the text was first published in the mid-18th century). I was sure that if all relevant clues were followed up a complete solution was possible. Thus far the motive; but the book required that the account of the route be preceded by an assessment of its commercial importance. Between the 1250s and the fall of Ayas in 1337 the route needed to be set within the whole sheaf of east-west commercial routes through the (present-day) Middle East, Asia Minor, the Black Sea steppe etc. But, taking the whole complex of routes together, what was the commercial importance of the Ayas period within the late

Middle Ages? So I examined the equivalent complex of routes in a period (1100-1250s) before the Ayas itinerary and in the period after (1350s to 1500).

In the first of these the European economy was expanding towards its late medieval high in the early 14th century. An avenue of movement developed running from Tabriz to Erzurum and Sivas, then to Sinop or to Antalya via Kayseri and Konya. Some of the eastern goods, originating in China, came to Tabriz through Samarkand and Bukhara in Central Asia. A second major line took goods from Baghdad to the cities of Upper Mesopotamia (Mosul, Mardin, Urfa, Ayntab/Gaziantep) and so to Aleppo; like Sivas, Kayseri and Konya the Upper Mesopotamian cities give off all the signs of opulence (building, minor arts) in the period. Thirdly, spices came up the Red Sea to Cairo and Alexandria and were then brought via Crete and the Peloponnese to the Italian and other trading cities.



In this and other periods I examine the striking of coins as an indication of the direction and volume of trade. For example, if we look at the Erzurum-Sivas road identified just now, we find that in Sivas and eastward the Seljuks and other dynasties first minted in copper, sometimes imitating Byzantine designs, until the 1180s, when silver coinage started to be struck. This is a sure sign of the recrudescence and thickening of long-distance trade, with western silver (paying for eastern goods) travelling eastwards along the route.

During the period of the Ayas itinerary itself, the European economy expanded, to a high in the first decade of the 14th century though, paradoxically, production of a more industrial nature continued to expand until the fourth decade. During the period as a whole we see in Florence, Venice and Genoa an efflorescence of building and architectural quality and a tremendous expansion in each city's inhabited area. Silver mines continued to open until c. 1300, after which they closed one by one. A general contraction from 1340 was speeded by the banking crashes of the years 1340-42. The demand for eastern goods fell and the supply of silver available for purchasing them diminished.

The city of Tabriz was a link for ways from Central Asia, from the Iranian silk-producing regions and from India and China via Hormuz on the Persian Gulf. The spices, silk, other cloth and so on were brought down the road to Ayas, turning off the previous Konya-Antalya road at Sivas. I undertook an analysis of the goods available at Ayas in order to determine which had come from Tabriz (Pegolotti himself has a list of goods available at that city) and their original provenances further east. An arm of the Ayas itinerary took off at or near Erzurum and went to the port of Trebizond, from which goods could be taken via Constantinople to the western trading cities. Trebizond now functioned as a rival outlet to Ayas. Finally, spices continued to travel up the Red Sea and were exported, ultimately to consumers in European cities, via Alexandria.

At the mints lying on or near the Ayas itinerary, after a reform introduced by the Il-Khan Ghazan, an empire-wide coin type (i.e. the same type was struck at mints in Iran and Iraq) was adopted. I follow a decline in the coins' weight which begins slowly but which accelerates until, in the late 1330s, it reaches a frightening speed. The depreciation can only be due to the dwindling supplies of western silver brought in by trade with Europe.

The Ayas route thus takes its place as part of a network of east-west connections existing between the 1250s and 1337 when east-west trade reached a peak. Probably the Ayas road was the pre-eminent line of movement in the period, but to substantiate this one would have to look at the coinage of the parallel routes (examining the mints on or near the Ayas-Tabriz road was a wide enough task in itself). This apart, the Ayas route was unique to its period: political and trading relationships in the preceding and subsequent periods were such as to make the same itinerary impossible.

When it came to examining the line taken by the Tabriz road, four cities lay on the route which had previously been identified. Apart from being useful fixed points, these cities and their growth are potent indicators of the volume of trade. Ayas in Cilicia, which at the time was an Armenian kingdom, was a purpose-built city whose port is first known to have been in commercial use in the late 1250s. It has a limited walled area housing the relevant government apparatus, whereas the dwellings and communal buildings of the European merchants spread over nearby high ground. With Ayas should be associated the city of Famagusta in Cyprus. The latter city was re-walled in 1310; its churches, monasteries and communal houses were essentially those of the Italian mercantile cities.

At Sivas three large *madrasas* (Islamic colleges), which still survive, were finished in the year 1271 – though eight more are known to have been built, as were four *masjids* or neighbourhood mosques. There was a Genoese trading community here. Erzincan displays many of the marks of a successful trading city: Armenian merchants prominent in its population, evidence of a Venetian community, prolific poets drawn to the city. Erzurum was something of a conundrum: evidently prosperous in the 13th century, it contracted from the second decade of the 14th century onwards. But, at Tabriz, the walled area was enlarged to a circumference of around 12 kilometres, and there was intensive building of *caravansarays*, mosques and *madrasas*. Four different East Christian denominations were drawn into the city, and six different Italian cities were represented, principally, of course, Genoa and Venice. After the Ayas itinerary and the mid-14th century economic crash in Europe none of the four cities shows the same building activity or the same volume of coins minted, and in particular the Italian presence is missing.

Fixing the line of the road between the four cities was a different issue. Some clues were already available: for example Pegolotti's 'Scaracenti' had been identified with Karakent, a village toward the southern edge of the plain below Mt. Ararat. Some *caravansarays*, whether still standing or not, were useful markers. If a convincing identification with one of Pegolotti's toll stations could be made then the *caravansarays* helped to fix the line of the route. It was helpful to be *au fait* with the archaeological remains along the way. This made further identifications possible, for example Pegolotti's 'Gandon', the first station after leaving Cilicia, with what had been Roman Comana Cappadociae. Above all, the network of Roman roads revealed by the two Roman itineraries, the Antonine Itinerary and the Peutinger Table, seemed a fruitful framework for placing the toll stations.



Ultimately, one arrives at a picture of the route's alignment which snakes through the Amanus mountains and then over the Antitaurus, and crosses to the Roman road between Kayseri and Sivas. Thereafter, Roman roads are followed through the plain



of the Kızıl Irmak, and over a shoulder of the Köse Dağ into the basin of the Kelkit Çay. From there the line makes a long detour down a tributary of the Upper Euphrates to Kemah, then ascends the Upper Euphrates to Erzincan. At Erzincan the network of paved Roman roads is left behind: the route proceeds eastward to a difficult pass and into another basin of the Upper Euphrates, arriving eventually at Erzurum. From that city the route snakes eastward as far as the plain beneath Mt. Ararat, then progresses south-eastward, again through a series of plains, to Tabriz.

The route is designed to pass almost exclusively through level or gently sloping territory, in order to ease the task of camels and horses. Merchants pay taxes mainly for the privilege of transit, but sometimes also for protection by special guards along the way. This is especially true of the last handful of names on the itinerary, which in reality are the names of districts rather than settlements: the function of the officer is to police the district and liaise with local tribes. For example, on the plain below Ararat, besides paying tax at Karakent, merchants had to pay a tax to the officer responsible for the plain 'sotto l'arcanoe' (under the Ark of Noah). The itinerary explains several second-rank settlements along the way, in particular that of Akşehir, now Pürk (Pegolotti's "Greboco", Roman Nicopolis), a mint only of the late Il-Khans. The study explains the position of each toll post or district. It does so sometimes in terms of cross-routes; for example the obscure settlement at Bayro on a high plain east of Erzurum, a short-lived mint, in reality lay at the crossroads between the Tabriz route and that taken by traffic from the Lake Van area and ultimately from Upper Mesopotamia. In other cases, the explanation is the danger from which a special guard would protect the traveller.

Many conclusions emerge from the book. Perhaps the most salient are these: first, pre-Ottoman history as well as Ottoman history has to be studied, not merely in the cause of understanding Ottoman institutions and political history, but even as a vehicle for understanding present-day Turkey; second, trade between east and west is a critical factor in understanding the position, function and size of cities in the east, let alone Europe; and third, we have to look at the actual course of roads along the ground, even in the late Middle Ages, in order to understand trade.

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Compiled by Arın Bayraktaroğlu



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**The Social and Cultural Meaning of Money in Central Asia**

Webinar

**23 January 2021 (9 am to 3 pm – UK Time)**

Convened by **Dr Gulzat Botoeva** and **Dr Oybek Madiyev**

This workshop is devoted to the topic of everyday, real-life experiences of money and its meanings in Central Asia and its wider region.

Previous scholarly attention has focused on the macro-level dimensions of money, for example, Central Asian countries' fiscal debt to foreign companies and banks, the role of remittances in national GDPs as well as high-level corruption and money laundering. While that research makes important contributions to Central Asian scholarship, this workshop is interested instead in showcasing how the habits of saving and spending money, by individuals and within communities, are intertwined with the social, cultural, and political spheres of life.

The workshop will address the following questions: What are the meanings and interpretations of money in local Central Asian contexts? How are different kinds of money earmarked for various purposes? Are there multiple monies that various actors use? What are the experiences of cashlessness? How are social, cultural and political aspects of money and monetary relations intertwined with each other?

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\* Obligatory items



Galatasaray football team soon after its founding. The man with the ball is Ali Sami [Yen], founder of Galatasaray Sports Club. The man with the cap in the back row is James La Fontaine, who was going to referee the match that was about to start. (Galatasaray Sports Club Archive)



Players and administrators of Kadıköy Football Club after winning the Istanbul Football League championship in the 1905-6 season (1906). Third from the left in the back row is Yannis Vassiliadis, one of the club's administrators, and fourth from the left is its president, James La Fontaine. (Mehmet Yüce Collection)

James La Fontaine's grave in the Anglican Cemetery in Bornova, Izmir. (Mehmet Yüce Collection)



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## Request for contributions

TAS *Review* welcomes articles, features, reviews, announcements and news from private individuals as well as those representing universities and other relevant institutions. Submissions may range from 250 to 2500 words and should be in A4 format and, preferably, sent electronically to the Co-Editors at [garethwinrow@yahoo.com](mailto:garethwinrow@yahoo.com) and/or [sigimartin3@gmail.com](mailto:sigimartin3@gmail.com). Submissions for the Spring issue would be particularly welcomed by 1 March 2021 or earlier.



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